

Interviewee Goldie Greenhouse

Interviewer Maurice Isserman

Date(s) of interview July 22, 1976

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

The interview took place in a sitting room in the Jewish Home for the Aged. At first only Mrs. Greenhouse and myself were in the room. Later we were joined by her daughter Annette Osband, and still later by a third woman (who was waiting to see her own mother in the Home). As a result, the tape becomes a little confusing at times, with 2 or 3 people offering contributions at the same time. Mrs. Greenhouse was very friendly, but sometimes grew confused, and her daughter was very helpful in straightening out the story.

Background of interviewee

Mrs. Greenhouse was born in Russia around 1896 and came to Rochester at about age 16. She and her husband worked at several garment factories in the city, managed a grocery store, and were active Labor Zionists. She is currently a resident at the Jewish Home for the Aged.

Interview abstract

In the course of relating her life story, Mrs. Greenhouse touches briefly on a number of interesting topics, including her experience in immigrating to this country, working at Michael Sterns and other garment factories, and raising a family in Rochester. She and her daughter also offered useful information on Jewish life in Russia, the social basis of Labor Zionism, social and ethnic splits within the Rochester Jewish community, anti-Semitism, and the early history of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

Interview index (corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and casset recorder numbers)

Social history

Jewish community

Family

community relations

Demographic/residential

Religious life

Economic

Jewish education

Political/civic

Anti-semitism

Zionism/Israel

Interview loc

- a) corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and casset recorder nos.
- b) including references to others in the Rochester community

--see following page(s) --

Goldie Greenhouse, interviewed by Maurice Isserman, July 22, 1976

Personal background

Life, anti-semitism, lack of freedom in Russia.

Attitudes towards America--"gold in the streets.

Arrival in Rochester (1911?)--first neighborhoods.

Worked in Michael Sterns for \$5 a week until fired for asking for a raise.

Worked in Hickey Freeman.

Marriage and birth of children.

Husband owned grocery until Depression, later managed grocery store, and went back to work in garment factories.

Learning the language--bilingual home, read Forward, Der Tag.

Labor Zionist activities--Mrs. Greenhouse active in Poale Zion,

Farband, Hadasah, Mothers Club of Jewish Orphan Society,

Pioneer Women

Religious training of children.

Attitudes to Israel, threat of anti-semitism in the US

Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

Social basis of Poale Zion.

Baden St. Settlement--daughters took dancing, sewing lessons.

Belonged to Misbaum Shul--religious observance.

How Rochester Jewish community has changed over the years.

Russian Jewish, German Jewish split

Anti-semitism.

Jewish Home for the Aged.

Interview I  
Tape I  
Side A

Q. In the Jewish Home on July 22, 1976. Mrs. Greenhouse, where were you born?

A. In Russia.

Q. Where in Russia were you born?

A. Oh, in Vilna State, you know, Gevernia they call it in Russia.

Q. And when was that?

A. Pardon?

Q. When were you born?

A. When? Well, I'm 80 years old, so . . . I was born 19. . .

Q. 18. . .

A. 1894.

Q. Yea. So this was just outside of Vilna?

A. No.

Q. This was near Vilna or. . . or just outside of it that you were born?

A. Oh, that's Vilna Gevernia, it's Vilna State.

Q. Oh.

A. The State is called Vilna.

Q. Oh, I see. And is that. . . that's a fairly large community?

A. Well, I was born in a tasma, they called it a city, but it actually was a town.

The name of it was Radischuitze, that's why I couldn't . . .

Q. Uh-huh. And were they. . . were there mainly Jews living in that town?

A. Well, we have a Jewish community there, we have a. . . three synagogues. And, poor city in Russia.

Q. What did your parents do?

A. Well, we did several things. My father, he should rest in peace, was a cigarmaker.

- A. (Continued) And then my . . . a lot of people were jealous of him so they, you know, they made some trouble for him and he had to quit. So then they had a little bakery and used to take it out on the market to sell. Used to have a market on Thursdays, Thursday and Sunday. So that's the way they made a living.
- Q. And when did you come to this country?
- A. I came in this country in 1911.
- Q. So you were 15 years old then? Is that right?
- A. Sixteen, I think.
- Q. And why did you decide to emigrate to the United States?
- A. Well, excuse me, a brother of mine and my sister were . . . were in America. And there really was no future for me, so they sent for me. They sent for my brother of mine, too. They went to the brother, but he . . . they found something . . . by the way, Libera in Russia and to England, Liverpool.
- Q. Liverpool.
- A. And before you get on the boat they examine you, they give you doctor examination. So they found something on my brother Ian, he was a butcher, he worked for a butcher. So he had some marks, yea? So the doctor thought he should go to another doctor, yea. If I was, you know, smarter I would stay. I had money with me. I should have gone, taken him to the doctor. So, but my brother wasn't too anxious to go, although he had to go into the Army. But, I suppose he had his love there and. . . and rather she was very little. So he went back and the Army got him and he . . . war broke out, and in a few months, few months later . . . that was the First World War started and they got. . . he was a strong fellow, and so they took him into the Conseluns, the Czar at that time, the Prince's Army. You know, they have an Army. And he was killed one of the first ones. That's about six months later.
- Q. So then you continued on to America by yourself, is that right?

- A. Well, I. . . I had a little hard time. I had to get a lot of help. I wanted to get away from there, you know, where I was and. . .
- Q. Why did you feel that?
- A. Pardon?
- Q. Why did you feel that way, that you had to get away?
- A. I'm gonna tell you why. There's so many reasons for it. I had no life there. If you go from anybody to go to a different city for a few days, you have to have a pass for it, you have to have a paper. There's. . . there's no freedom. Used to go for a walk, you know, few couples would go for a walk, you know kids, and believe me they didn't have to be afraid of us. They would come and say break it up, break it up. The police would watch, break it up. And there was no future there for a young, especially young Jewish people.
- Q. Were you aware of a great deal of anti-Semitism in. . .?
- A. Pardon?
- Q. Were you aware of a great deal of anti-Semitism in Russia?
- A. Oh, my goodness. I'm telling you, I really don't remember everything just as things happened, but it happened so much. They had no chance at anything, you know what I mean. They have to build up something yourself to make a living, and it was very hard for people were very poor, and I suppose you get used to it, you remain that way. But I felt I. . . I knew there was no future for me.
- Q. Why did you. . . well, I know your family, members of your family came over earlier, but why did you choose America as opposed to some other country to. . .?
- A. Ahh, you know when they talk about America, gold in the land, gold was in it. And the saying gold, where did they get the gold, they pick it up from the streets, everything is gold on the street. And being there I knew that I had no future, you know what I mean? And here I have a brother and an uncle, he should rest in peace.

- Q. Were there other people from your town who had come over to . . . to America?
- A. Other people from where?
- Q. From your town?
- A. Oh, a lot of people were. . . went to America, there was too many things going on. There's one thing that I have. . . Jewish people used to do whatever they can to finagle and make some money. I think that would be interesting if I told you.
- Q. Please do.
- A. He. . . this man came from out of town to ours, it was a small town. Wife and child they had, and they lived. . . they rented a room near our home, see? So he says to me, you know I can put a good lookin' kid, you know I was 14 years old and. . . He says, I see you know how to bake and to help, you know at the age of 14. So, he said, what do you want to work so hard for? You come with me, I'll take you to America and you'll get a good job, and you'll do. . . you 'll do wonderful. But, I already had heard . . . I had heard that they . . . they take women like that, young children and then they went. . . they go to sell me in America and they. . . the Latin countries, they take the Jewish kids. Did you ever read about it?
- Q. Yes, I think I have.
- A. So, I says to him, look here, I got a family. My family was gonna take care of me, you're not gonna take care of me. So, he didn't say anything more. Then, so but he came from. . . I don't know where he came from, so we used to have a market on a Thurs. . . Thursday they used to have a market, the people from the surrounding. . . ours was called a city, they came from the farms to do their shopping. So, he went and he got together fifty people, they call 'em peasants, you know. Mezucktem, in Russia they call 'em mezucktem. And they invited them to his house, he went to. . . he invited them to the house, and he said I'm

- A. (Continued) gonna take you. . . do you fellows want to go to America?  
All said, of course we want to go to America. So, he says well, you have to bring me a fifty dollar deposit, fifty rubles. And I'll get you to America. So, they did. They came the next week with the money. And he took 'em, put 'em on the train, took 'em to Vilna, fifty miles I think from our the town where we were. And he ordered the drinks for them there. They sat down to drink, had a bite to eat and he disappeared, and I don't know. . . How do you like that?
- Q. Right.
- A. Jewish people used to do those things. There's a lot of different things that they used to get in, children, young girls. You don't hear of it now anymore, I think your most of . . .
- Q. So you came over and where did you first settle when you. . . when you came to America?
- A. Well, I came to my brother.
- Q. Where did he live?
- A. He live on Herman Street.
- Q. In. . . in Rochester?
- A. Yea. I've lived all my life here. I mean as long as I'm here, I've lived in Rochester 'cause I have an uncle, my brother. . . my father's brother.
- Q. Now was that a. . . a Jewish neighborhood that you first settled in here?
- A. Oh, sure. You know, the. . . the Joseph Avenue and. . .
- Q. Joseph Avenue. . .
- A. . . . most of the Jewish people live there.
- Q. Did you always live in that neighborhood?
- A. Pardon?
- Q. Did you always live in that neighborhood?
- A. No, we didn't. We lived there until we were married there. Then, we. . . my

- A. (Continued) husband got a work and I worked in a shop. I started at \$3 a week. And till I learned the trade, you know. Then when I learned the trade I went up to Hickey-Freeman's.
- Q. Hickey-Freeman.
- A. And over there, I worked there for. . . I used to baste canvas. And there was a Mr. Cohen . . . were you ever over in Rochester here?
- Q. Excuse me? Was I. . . no, I just came here a few years ago.
- A. Oh, so you wouldn't know. But you heard of Hickey-Freeman's?
- Q. I've heard, yes.
- A. Clothing. . . noted. . . noted for the best clothing. They. . . they used to make clothes for people in for the actors. One of our actors. . . somewhere I know. . . I used to. . . I worked by myself. No, I didn't go to Hickey-Freeman's right away. I went to Michael Stern.
- Q. Michael Stern. When. . . when was that that you started to work at Michael Stern?
- A. Well, it was. . . let me see, twelve. . . about I think maybe about when I was seventeen years old. This couple of years I struggled until, you know, I learned the trade then. . . I used to be. . . when I came to Michael Stern, they made me for . . .for they over. . .the canvas-basters. But I wanted to tell you first about Micahel. . . Michael Stern. . . no. . . that was. . . gee I got a little mixed up there. I was. . . gee, I can't think.
- Q. That's OK. Take your time.
- A. Pardon?
- Q. Take your time, we have a lot of time.
- A. That was Hickey-Freeman's when. . . where I. . . when . . . to the. . . made the clothes for the actors. And when I was first in Michael's. . . Michael Stern's, right, and I started to work there and I was piece work. . .

Q. Piece work.

A. No, week work, excuse me.

Q. Three dollars a week.

A. Week work. And they paid everybody a flat rate, \$5 a week. So they had . . . they had some people, a couple people coming in from Russia. . . from Chicago. And they . . . they used to stand there with a watch and see how long it takes you to make a coat, you know, to baste it. So, it was. . . you know, they had to do whatever they wanted because they give you a little money to get along.

Q. Hello.

MO. Hi. You making a recording?

Q. Yea.

A. This is my daughter.

Q. Well, what. . . what about Michael Sterns? What were you doing?

A. So they get an operator to come in to see how they. . . they do the work. So he watched us and he looked down and they'd had about six or seven kids, you know, young boys and girls working. And he noted that I was the fastest. He says, does he. . . does she get more money? He says no. He says why not if the work is that fast? And Nelson put his. . . he should worry. . . worry about a . . . shrug and I. . . I couldn't stand it any longer, when to work for you know, price \$5 a week, what can you do, even in the olden times you couldn't do too much at \$5 a week. So, I. . . I went up and I asked him for a raise. He says you don't get no raise, you go hop on the street. And I says I'll see you in hell before I'll go out on the street. I says, how dare you talk to me like that?

Q. Was that the forman?

A. Then I walked out and then I went to Hickey-Freeman's.

Q. Who. . . who were you talking to, was that the foreman or was it

*Miss  
Osherson*

*77*

Q. (Continued) Michael or Stern or. . . ?

A. It was a fellow from out of town.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. From Chicago they came in to the. . . putting in a new system there for them. So they. . . they put in a lot of. . . people quit because they used to stand with a watch and watch. . . watch to see how long it takes.

Q. Right they were efficiency experts or. . .

A. Pardon?

Q. Like they call 'em the efficiency experts or something like that?

A. Whatever they did call 'em I never even knew. They were very. . . I don't know how a person could be so mean really and truly.

Q. So when you went to Hickey-Freeman was the Amalgamated already there?

A. Oh no. We didn't have the Amalgamated. The Amalgamated came in 1912 or '13 I think here. Oh, then they were gettin' . . . when I went to Hickey-Freeman at that time and I was started at \$14 a week. That was already big money.

Q. And you. . .

A. And I worked there for a time. And then I got married and I worked after I was married for a while. And then a child came so I gave up my work and stayed home. And my husband was a tailor also.

Q. Where did he work?

A. Let me see, where did Daddy work? In. . . in Michael Sterns I think it was. Or did he work in. . . gee, I. . . I really don't recall what. . . where he worked. But then we accumulate a little money, we. . . open up a grocery store.

Q. Where was it. . . ?

A. We'd open the store on. . . on North Street.

Q. North Street. When was that that you opened the grocery store?

A. North Street and it bumps the University Avenue.

Q. Do you remember what year that was?

A. So we . . . took in a brother and they were doing pretty good, saved up a little money. And then we heard that they're gonna tear . . . knock down all the blocks by University Avenue there and the neighborhood where we were. So, he wanted to have a store in the neighborhood because we were doing a pretty good business. So, a real estate man came to us, he happened to be a relation. So, he told us what's happening, that they're gonna send in . . . University Avenue is gonna be a big business area and the temple was built there on the corner of Main and so . . . he told us . . . and we got together a few dollars and we bought a building. We bought it I think for \$30,000. And it was put in . . . not a very big thing. So, then it happened, they started tearing down University Avenue that leads to the, you know, the other way. And to make a long story short, we . . . we were offered a big price. So, it was, you know and then . . . the real estate man told us, he says now is the time to sell it and he says you'll . . . you'll do all right. So, they sold the building, we were in partners with a brother of his. And we had a little trouble with his wife and . . . well they wanted all the detail, is that all right?

Q. Yea, sure.

A. So, so then they dissolved partnership, too, you know they . . . after they settled with the business. So then the, you know the real estate man when they found out somebody that has a little money, they're . . . you know, they look for . . . for business. And they had a building here on . . . where was it on . . . the big building?

MO. Arnet Boulevard.

A. Arnet Boulevard and Wellington Avenue there. And we had it I think about five years. Then we . . . 1929 came along, the big Depression. And apartment that

- A. (Continued) they had paid \$65 a month, you couldn't rent it for \$30. So, as a result we had to lose because we invest all the . . . put the eggs all in one basket.
- MO. At that time you say Dad had a business in that building, too. He had a grocery store.
- A. You remember that? Yea, sure. So, he started out. He had to go to a bankruptcy and they started out lookin' for a jobs, do something. So we had a little luck.
- MO. Went back to the old homestead which was on Baden Street, where they had started from.
- A. I was gonna come to that.
- MO. Well.
- A. Yea. So, we started lookin' for a job, you had a house on Baden Street. We gave it over to his parents, my husband's parents. So then we started lookin' for a job, but he worked. . . my husband worked for a . . . there was an Uncle Sam Stores here in Rochester. And they. . . they got hired at that store. They knew the. . . the boss. So, and they had a nephew workin' for him in that store. But, the nephew got sick. So, he go. . . they had to go to, I think he had a heart condition or something.
- MO. To Arizona.
- A. Yea. So, he took the job.
- MO. It was managing a grocery store.
- A. They were. . . they had grocery stores, like the chain. . . chain stores they had. So, they worked for \$25 a week. You know, we . . . all the event they had to go to. We had. . . we had nice apartment there where he lived, had to go into one of those apartments on Hudson Avenue. And the children had to change schools and they cried, my that was my. . . the worst thing I lived through.

- Q. I'd like to talk about some of the earlier period when you first came to this country. You just. . . when you came here you didn't speak English did you?
- A. Well, I'll tell you I came in and lived with my uncle and the children. They all spoke English.
- Q. So, was it a difficult process to learn English?
- A. Yes, it was very difficult. But, you know, you have to learn and so you try hard.
- Q. Did you go to a. . . to a school or did you just pick it up?
- A. No, I'll tell you. I had tutors. you know.
- MO. Just as a little aside, Mother was a very, very beautiful young lady. And there were a lot of men. . . lot of young boys that were only too willing to teach her English. She was about 16 and absolutely gorgeous. She had a lot of tutors.
- A. Sidney Rhinehart, do you remember?
- MO. Yea.
- A. The father had \$50,000 in those years and he. . . he wanted to teach me enough English to become a nurse. You know, at that time you didn't have to. . . but, I didn't like nursing. So, I stuck to the. . .store to the tailoring.
- Q. When you were married, did you continue to speak Yiddish in your home, or did you just speak English?
- A. Oh, that's where I really learned English is in the home because everybody spoke English.
- Q. They. . . there was no Yiddish spoken at home in. . . when you. . .?
- A. Oh, yes. My father and mother and I speak English. . . I mean Yiddish. We spoke Yiddish. What did you say to your grandfather?
- MO. Oh.
- A. You hope the Mama. . . you. . . you . . . no, what is it?

MO. You didn't hope the . . . you didn't hope my totie, the Mommy hope the totie.

Q. So you went and you learned Yiddish also when you . . . when you were. . . ?

MO. Well, my grandfather was a Mulamit, which is a . . .

A. A Hebrew teacher.

MO. Teacher. . . and we lived upstairs, it was an extended family situation.

Q. Right.

MO. And he had his Hebrew school downstairs and the family lived upstairs. But there were always a lot of young people coming to the house who spoke English.

Mother only wanted to speak English, didn't want to speak Yiddish.

Voice. May I interrupt? May I just. . . ? What was your grandfather's name?

MO. Greenhouse.

Voice. Oh.

MO. Israel Greenhouse, yea.

Voice. Yea. Because my brother were taught by private teacher and . . . and I, too.

But then I went to the Hebrew school on Baden Street.

MO. Yea, no he used to have the Hebrew school in his home.

A. You lived on Baden Street?

Voice. No. I went to Hebrew school on Baden Street, the Talmud Torah.

MO. And mother was always very anxious, now I'm speaking. . . see Mother . . .

Mother really didn't speak English very well.

A. Oh, yea. I was wonderin' if you know the Rhineharts on. . . ?

MO. My Dad never learned to speak English as well as she, but this was very important to her vanity.

Q. Did you receive Yiddish publications in your home, the Yiddish newspapers? Or did you just receive English. . . English papers?

A. Well, I was such a busy woman I didn't have. . . I couldn't get much schooling.

So I lived for a time with my brother and sister-in-law and she had three

A. (Continued) children. And I had to do some sewing for them and then when my school there. . . she knew I used to save up all the dishes from morning till night, so by the time I got through with the dishes, some of my girlfriends used to wait for me, and I hardly made it. And then they. . . well, I was just busy woman, I couldn't do too much studying. But, thank God my children did it all for me.

MO. We always had Yiddish papers coming to the house for years.

Q. What papers did you receive?

MO. The Forward, always. Used to have. . . Wondered if you had Yiddish papers coming to the house?

A. Der Tag.

MO. The talk, the talk, and The Forward. Yea. Always. I remember those coming, always.

A. I read the Yiddish paper now. I read the English, but my writing and my. . .

MO. Mother only believes what she reads in the Yiddish paper. It's official if it's in the Yiddish paper.

Q. When were you married? How old were you when you were married?

A. How old was I?

Q. Yea.

MO. Twenty. . .

A. Twenty-four.

MO. Twenty-one.

A. Twenty . . .

MO. Twenty-one.

A. Twenty-four. . .

MO. Twenty-one.

Q. And was. . . your husband was also an immigrant?

A. My husband was an ardent Zionist, and he spent all his time in the library talkin' about Zionism and working for Zionism.

Q. Did he belong to the Poale Zion?

MO. Yes.

A. To Poale Zion.

MO. He was one of the founders.

Q. I spent this morning speaking with Benjamin Owerbach. Do you know Mr. Owerbach?

MO. He spoke to Mr. Owerbach, Haver . . Owerbach this morning.

A. Yea?

MO. He is a very good friend.

Q. Oh.

MO. She knows him as Haver Owerbach.

A. Oh you talk to Owerbach?

Q. Yes, I talked to him this morning.

A. My husband used to belong to the same club.

Q. Uh-huh. And did you belong to the Farbund?

MO. Farband.

Q. Farbund?

MO. The Farband.

A. Oh, sure. He was a member of it.

Q. Were there any other fraternal organizations that you belonged to, or benevolent organizations?

A. No, I really didn't.

MO. The Mother's Club of the Jewish Orphan Asylum.

A. Oh, I forgot, yea. Yea, I used to be a . . . I forgot already.

MO. Hadassah, Pioneer Women.

A. Yea, I belonged to the Pioneer Women, and I still do. The home for the Jewish

A. (Continued) children. They, you know, they developed a home, they could handle more children. So, they became a . . . organized a mother's for the little children. And they send money to the Israeli children.

Q. Tell me about the Pioneer Women. Were there many members in Rochester?

A. Oh, yea, they have a big membership here.

Q. They still do?

A. And they're doing wonderful work. Everybody that works is very, you know, like you want to say it, sincere, you know. They do a lot of hard work.

Q. When did you first join the Pioneer Women?

A. Well, quite a . . . quite a few years ago.

MO. It goes back a long way.

Q. 1920's? 1930's?

MO. Maybe it was a little later than that. Maybe it was around middle thirties.

A. You know when we had the . . . used to go collecting for the, you know every year, used to go collecting. So, I used to go from the Pioneer Women, used to have a . . . oh, what in the world they call it?

MO. Blue boxes, for the flowers or what?

A. No. Blue is for the . . .

MO. The Jewish National Fund? The Jewish National Fund?

A. The Jewish National Fund that goes with the Pioneer Women.

MO. Tell you the kind of people they are. That when my father had financial reverses, his feelings were still so strong that Israel has to be supported, he borrowed money and paid. . .

A. Excuse me. . .

MO. Paid very high rates of interest so he could continue to contribute and buy bonds.

A. Elmer Louis was the . . .

MO. The UJA.

A. The UJA. We used to go out, we had committee from the Pioneer Women to go out for the UJA, 'course now, I can't do anything. I gotta have a broken hip and I gotta stay put.

Q. How many children did you have? Two?

A. Two.

Q. Both a . . . daughter. . . two daughters? Or. . .?

A. This daughter of mine, just graduated the U. of R. with a Bachelor Degree. And . . . (Mrs. Greenhouse breaks down and cries, indecipherable: Transcriber's Note.) Honest. . . just this year.

MO. And her other daughter is a professor of nursing at the U. of R.

Q. At the Strong?

MO. At the Strong. She's the Burn Nurse Clinic there. She's got a world-wide reputation as a burn specialist.

Q. Did you give your children a Jewish education?

A. Oh, yea, well they didn't like to. My father, he should rest in peace, used to try. . . try to teach 'em jargon. . . you know, Yiddish. Say "ah, bah," like that. Used to. . . but they're very devoted to Jewish. . . to Judaism.

MO. My family is Orthodox. My sister's Reform.

A. Her son and the other little Joe, got a . . . got a little girl, two and a half years old. They teach her how to bend. . . she puts her hands like this, Shabbath. . . cause it's the Shabbath.

MO. Her greatgrandchild she's talking about here.

A. Yea. Well, I'm telling you. I live to see us all die.

Voice. I think if you spoke to every one of the residents here, they all have the same story to tell. Did you hear what I said?

A. No, I don't hear so good.

Voice. I said, if you. . . if this gentleman, this young man, spoke to every resident here, they'd have the same story to tell that you are telling him.

A. Probably do. I didn't know, maybe it's a little different, but the all had. . . everybody had a hardship.

Voice. I was reading World of Our Fathers. . .

MO. I am, too.

Voice. My daughter gave it to me for Mother's Day.

MO. Very slow reading.

Voice. I'm familiar with it, not that I experienced that because I was born in Rochester, I'm visiting here from Connecticut. My mother's here in the Home. But, my aunt, my mother's sister lived in the Bronx and in downtown New York and when I was very young we'd go to visit. And you know Hester Street and all. . . all of that. So, it all brings back these memories, and. . .

MO. An interesting.

Voice. My aunt, my cousin and my uncle brought his daughter over after the First World War, so, I mean, it's all very familiar.

Q. Yea. It's a good book.

MO. See, Mom, I don't know whether she meant. . . see, I'm reading it, too. It was one of my graduation presents. Did Mom mention that Dad was her first cousin, so it was. . .

Q. No, she didn't.

MO. . . . sort of an extended family situation that she came to. Because there was one brother, her. . . one uncle of hers who came first and he was the one that practically brought everybody in the family.

Q. Yea.

MO. So that when Mother came, she had a place to come to, which was a big help because so many people came to nothing, you know?

Q. Right.

MO. But she came to a family. And my father's family were nice to her, but her brother. . .she had a brother and his wife who were here. The wife treated her like a servant girl, this is what she was talking about. She had the three little babies, and my mother was a very convenient, you know. . .

Voice. Babysitter.

MO. A very convenient babysitter.

Q. Right.

MO. And she really took advantage of her. But, Mom isn't one to let anybody keep her down.

Voice. I'm curious. What's. . . what is the advantage of this? I mean, what's the objective here?

Q. Well, this is an oral history project that's being sponsored by the Jewish Community Center and the University of Rochester.

Voice. Oh.

Q. And it's. . . well, it's looking towards writing a history of the Jewish community in Rochester for the last fifty years, and we're interviewing some 90 people this summer.

Voice. Oh, I see.

Q. Myself and five other people who. . .

MO. Very interesting. Matter of fact, when Rabbi Stuart Rosenberg wrote a history of the Jews in Rochester, my father was interviewed by Rabbi Rosenberg.

Q. Right.

MO. And he interviewed him about the early history of the Farband, because as I say, my father was among the pioneers. In fact, he used to spend all his time in the library there.

Voice. It wasn't Israel at the time, it was Palestine, they were all. . .

MO. One of the disappointments of my father's life is that he never did get to Israel. But, what he did do for it. My . . . my daughter was living in Israel at the time and she was coming back and my Dad died and I'd written to her that he died. So she brought some soil so Dad would have some Israel. I guess I know it would have meant so much for . . . for him to go but, by the time there was an Israel. . .

Voice. We took our grandson last year, he was Bar Mitzvahed there by the Wall. My son's son. My husband's gone, 12 years. He was a great Zionist also. Somehow or other I guess it rubbed off on my son, too.

MO. That's nice.

Voice. But when this Israeli commander was shot my two boys were in camp so my son sent word quickly to Jonathan, the older one who was Bar Mitzvahed, and he said to me well, mother, it may not be that religious, but a Zionist he's going to be.

MO. Yea. So anyhow. . .

Voice. I'm sorry I. . . I interrupting.

Q. No, no I'm glad to get all this on tape.

Voice. But, it's so. . . it's so interesting.

MO. Yea.

Voice. Really.

A. I guess everybody could tell a life's story, everybody lives through a lot.

Voice. Because I. . .

A. The Russian people had the hardest time.

Voice. As Jews we have to support it. Right?

A. Right.

Voice. I says as a Jewish. . . as an American Jew, . . .

A. Yea.

Voice. We have to support Israel. Right?

A. Sure, should by all means.

Voice. Because we, as Jews, are never secure anywhere, not even. . . even. . . even in the United States, this is my feeling.

A. I'll tell you the way life goes on now you're never secure even here.

Voice. Well, this is what I'm saying.

A. I mean not only our people, but. . .

Voice. Well, but they always pick on the Jews first.

A. They always pick on the Jews first.

Voice. We are always the scapegoat.

A. Right.

Voice. And that's it.

A. You can't change that I don't think.

Voice. Well, we. . . we hope maybe it'll change.

A. As long as there's a Jesus, then we believe in Jesus, you can't change it because we killed their God, no? God taught him.

Voice. It's very sad.

Q. Well, let me. . .

Voice. To look and see. . .

Q. . . . pick up the. . .

Voice. What is your. . . I. . . I saw you at Beth El I think.

MO. I think he wants to. . .

Voice. Yes, I'm going to leave. I'm going in to see my mother. What is your. . .

MO. Osband.

Voice. Oh, Osband. You know Selco.

MO. Sure, yes.

Voice. I'm sorry I have to leave.

MO. That's OK.

A. No, that's all right.

Q. Let me pick up the story. You were managing a grocery store in . . . in the 1930's during the Depression.

A. Oh, from there?

Q. Right.

A. So, my husband got a job in a tailor shop and I run the store for a year myself.

Q. Where . . . where was this store located?

A. Corner of Baden and Hudson.

Q. Ah, so it was mainly a Jewish neighborhood?

A. Yea, a Jewish neighborhood. So, I couldn't take it anymore, you know, have to take care of the house and the store. So then we gave up the store. And what did Daddy do then after. . . ?

MO. He went to Bond's.

A. Oh, he went to Bond's. Yea, yea. He went to Bond's before I gave over. . .

MO. Right.

A. He kept on workin' there, that was it.

Q. So, you must have had a . . . a long association on and off with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, either yourself or your husband as you were working in all these clothing factories?

A. Yes.

MO. Daddy was connected with the Amalgamated for quite a few years.

A. Oh, yes.

MO. He worked during the stri. . . I mean he was one of those who went on strike and all that.

A. That's right.

Q. When did. . . when did he go on strike?

- A. Oh, the strike was in 1912 or '13.
- Q. Oh, he was in that. . . that first strike?
- A. The big strike.
- Q. Uh-huh. So he was a sort of a pioneer union member, huh?
- A. Yes. Yea, you could say that.
- Q. Well, what. . . did he continue to be very active in the. . .
- A. You know, I work there too. But, when they see I had about five boys workin' for me basting, I used to take care of. So when everybody stood up, I stood up too. The boys . . . the learner. . . they didn't wanna. I just pulled the shears . . . scissors out of the hand. . . I said, you're going down with me. And I thought that was it though, I would be able to come back to . . . then we went to New York, my sister and I went to New York. And we waited until the strike was over. So I told them I was going to a wedding. They wanted me to come and work, but I said, I have to go to New York to a wedding. So, they said all right. When I came back though I wanted to go back there, and I thought maybe they wouldn't take me. But I came there and they were glad to . . . put me right to work. There was another fellow there that. . . oye, she pulled the scissors our of their hands, and she. . . and walked out with them and she thought maybe she was jealous of me. So I worked and I. . . when I got to be. . . and I was to become a mother and I had to work there until I was. . . I couldn't work anymore and I. . . and after that, I . . . we had a store, as I said, and I had to help in the store. And took care of the babies. My husband isn't alive, but there was a lot of understanding between us, you know what I mean. And we were hoping for better times.
- Q. Were many of the people who were in the Amalgamated, were they also in the Poale Zion?
- A. Were they what?

- Q. Were they also Labor Zionists? Did . . . were they strong. . . ?
- A. No, I wouldn't say that. They weren't Zionists. They were. . . they had a union. They worked for the union that's all. The working man there was a lot of them that worked as Zionists.
- Q. Did they. . . ?
- A. You don't mean just the leaders do you?
- Q. No, I'm talking about the rank and file.
- A. Oh, yea there were a lot of them that worked. Some were Socialists. There was a big Socialist Party here at the time. And there were a lot of them were Zionists. That's quite a big group of Zionists. The more learned people I think were Zionists, yea?
- MO. There were a lot of small business people among the Zionists, the Poale Zionists group, rather than Amalgamated Workers.
- Q. Did they tend more to. . . well, say choice between joining the Farbund or the. . . or the. . . the Workmen's Circle, did Amalgamated members join the Workmen's Circle and the small businessmen join the. . . ?
- MO. Join the Farband.
- Q. Do you think that's. . . that was. . . ?
- MO. That seemed to be, yea.
- A. I think, you know when I think to myself sometimes and I how in the devil did I do all the things that I did? You know, in the line of help and work and. . . I was on my feet.
- MO. You were young.
- A. What?
- MO. You were young.
- A. Young, oh, yea. Sure, everybody's young once, you know?
- Q. Did you ever have any connection with the Baden Street Settlement?

A. No, I wouldn't say that. We used to. . .

MO. Just a minute. I used to go dancing there.

A. Yea, I used to take 'em dancing and to. . .

MO. And I used to go sewing there. I used to go there a lot. Doesn't remember.  
I remember.

A. I remember I used to take you dancing, but I don't remember your sewing.

MO. You didn't have to take me sewing. I went myself.

Q. Was it a fairly important institution?

A. That's why I don't remember.

MO. Oh, my yes. That was a big thing. Everybody went there.

Q. Was it a center of activity?

MO. Oh, yes.

A. They learned dancing there and. . .

Q. What other kinds of activities did people you know say take part in there?

MO. People went there to learn English I know. And it was quite a health center,  
too. People used to come there for shots or health advice, new mothers,  
foreign mothers.

Q. They had a clinic or. . .?

MO. They had a clinic there. But, for me and my friends it was primarily going  
for the dancing class and the sewing class and it was a very important part of  
our lives.

Q. This is when you were a teenager or. . .?

MO. Oh, no, no, no. Because when I was a teenager we were already out of the  
neighborhood. I would say that starting when I was about four years old I  
started going dancing there. And I still remember. About four years old I  
used to go dancing. I remember. . .

A. I wanted 'em to know everything. I got an old piano that they should play the

A. (Continued) piano. And when this young lady played the piano for six months she was very good teacher, so she took her to the side, only she made a big hit, but she wouldn't . . .

MO. Incidentally, this might be an interesting piece of history. Their old homestead at 275 Baden Street was one of the original. . . was I think the original planning meeting place for the JYMA, which later became the JCC.

Q. Where. . .were they involved in the planning for that or. . .?

MO. I don't think so. I think that came before they owned the house.

Q. Oh, I see.

MO. When they bought the house, they were told. . .

Q. I see.

MO. . . . that one of these original planning meetings was held in that particular house, 275 Baden Street. The street and the house are gone.

Q. How long did your family own that house?

MO. I would say about 20 years. Did they own the house on Baden Street about 20 years?

A. Oh, they owned it 20 years.

MO. Did you own it about 20 years or longer?

A. Oh, it was longer. Let me see.

MO. The house that I was born in.

A. You were born there.

MO. Yea.

A. You were born there on Baden Street.

MO. It was about 20 or 25 years.

A. I think it's more than that.

Q. So your family. . . your family was fairly stably based in one place during. . .

MO. Yea. . .

Q. . . . all that time?

MO. Yea. My grandfather died, I think it was in '35, and my grandmother in '37.  
And they died in that home. They both died at home.

A. Really, we live on Conkey Avenue about 20, 25 years.

MO. We. . . we're talking about the homestead on Baden Street.

A. Oh.

MO. When you first came to America, though, you lived on Stephanie Place though  
didn't you?

A. Yes, 75 Baden Street.

MO. 75 Stephanie Place, and then you moved to Baden Street.

A. Left a beautiful. . . all beautiful place.

Q. What. . . what synagogue did you attend when you lived at Baden Street?

MO. The Nusbaum Shul. My grandfather was one of the founders, among the founders.  
And he had his lifetime seat by the western wall.

Q. And then what one did you. . . did your family change?

MO. Well, it's quite interesting. In spite of the fact that my grandfather and  
grandmother were extremely Orthodox, very, very devout, none of their children  
went along that way. And Mother and Dad never really belonged to a synagogue.

Q. Oh, they didn't?

MO. But, other than being life members of the Nusbaum Shul, but they never really  
had any other affiliations.

Q. Why. . . why do you think that? Was there just sort of a decline in. . . in  
religious fervor, or was it more social reasons or. . . ?

MO. Well, as happens in so many cases where the. . . the parents are extremely  
devout, the children just go to the other sector. Some how or other they feel  
. . . they're educated, they start questioning.

Q. Right.

MO. Doing a lot of questioning, and it's just not. . .

Q. Well, I mean this is a fairly common story among the people I've talked to. . .

MO. Yea.

Q. . . . I just was wondering if. . . what the reasons were.

MO. But, it's quite interesting in that as Dad, in his last years, he started wanting to go to temple again, synagogue for the high holidays. He hadn't gone for years, but the last four or five years of his life, he died when he was 85, he started wanting to go.

A. He had such a life. . .

MO. He was very, very, very learned. I mean, there wasn't a thing. . . there wasn't a question that would stump my Dad. You could ask him anything that you wanted to know. And he seemed to feel that knowledge was a religion in itself, not the actual practice of Judaism. Somehow or other you'd get the feeling that he was a real. . . you get that feeling in Israel when you speak to a good many people there. They feel that they know their history, they're willing to die for their country, that makes them good Jews. My father was pretty much the same way, he felt that knowing his history and knowing who he was made him a good Jew and that the mere empty practice of a lot of traditions, customs, really didn't make you a good Jew.

Q. So, I mean he was. . . he was more inclined to reading history than say the Talmud or. . . ?

MO. He would read history, but he would also read the Talmud, and as I say you could very seldom stump my Dad on any question. I mean, if you asked him a question that he didn't know the answer to immediately, he knew where to look for the answer.

A. You know what. . .

MO. That to him. . . well, I always considered my father a very religious person

- MO. (Continued) in spite of the fact that he didn't go for a lot of tradition.
- Q. Do you think that many of the other people who say work in the garment industry now still maintain this kind of respect for education?
- MO. They were pretty much like my father. They were pretty much like my father in that they did not practice Orthodox Judaism.
- Q. But, they. . . they studied on their own or. . . ?
- MO. They studied on their own. They were charitable, very charitable and very, very hard-working for the causes that they believed in.
- A. Oh, yea. My husband gave all the time to the cause of Zionism. He neglected business in fact. And he would take care of what was . . . well, what he was supposed to.
- Q. Well. . . How do you feel that the Jewish community in Rochester has changed over the years? Have you seen any real changed in it?
- A. Well, we certainly did. . . some are . . . got to be prosperous and then they move away. And people. . . prosperous people I feel have . . . have. . . have you know, these other prosperous people, you know what I mean? There's classes. Two classes, three classes I think. The poor, the middle-man and the. . . and the wealthy man.
- MO. And never the twain shall meet. Mom's kind of had a sad experience in the family with a sister who became extremely wealthy and forgot about her poor brothers and sisters.
- A. You can. . . you can't . . . the rich and the poor, you know? It's natural I suppose, you know. They do different things, they can live different and. . . they don't care too much about the poor requests, you know. Even the middle class.
- Q. Do you feel that the Jewish community today is more united or less united than it used to be?

A. Well, I think they are more together.

Q. Why is that?

A. Would you say that, honey?

Q. Why is that you feel they're more united now?

A. Well, it's in their nature, I guess. You have your. . . well-to-do, mingle with the well-to-do people, gotta get dressed the way they are. They gotta travel, and be able to tell. . . to tell 'em about their travelling all. . . they don't talk small talk, you know, they talk big.

Q. Well, I know there used to be a division between the German-Jewish and the Russian-Jewish community in Rochester.

A. Oh, that's awful. That's terrible altogether.

Q. Do you remember that?

A. Finally the. . . the. . .Germany. . .

MO. Datsche Germany, used to call 'em. The Datsche Heday you used to say.

A. The what?

MO. The Datsche Heday.

A. The Datsche Heday, yea. You couldn't name 'em. They wouldn't meet with you. Why they didn't . . . when there was before Rabbi Bernstein, there was Rabbi what's his name? Remember?

MO. Landsman?

A. Landsman?

MO. Wolfe. Rabbi Wolfe.

A. Rabbi Wolfe. Oh, they couldn't. . . they couldn't come. . . they didn't even know. . . they didn't go there because they didn't want to know anything about the Russian Jews. And then when. . .

Interview I  
Tape I  
Side B

Q. I just came up here to go to school.

MO. Mom, I gotta go home.

A. You gotta go?

MO. It's been great. I've gotta get this on tape one of these days.

A. You gonna go?

MO. I'm going.

Q. Can you tell me your name so I can put it on the. . . since it seems to be a joint interview, I might as well have you both down.

MO. Oh, dear. I'm Annette Osband, and I'm Mrs. Greenhouse's daughter. Mother tell you how old she is?

Q. Yes. Would you like a copy of this tape because I. . . I can make it, I mean that's part of the. . . our policy is if people want copies. . .

MO. That would be fine because I really have been wanting to make something like this for a long time because I know it's there are legends here that. . . that are lost unless they're recorded.

Q. Right.

MO. I mean there are so many things.

A. Do you always leave the answer. . .?

Q. Since coming to Rochester, have you ever been aware of any anti-Semitism from the larger community towards the Jewish community?

A. Well, I'll tell you, I used to mingle with the Jews in the Jewish community years ago was at the Jewish community. And I had Jewish friends, I . . . I mingled with a lot of, you know, with our own people. I don't want to go, if goyem don't like us either, but I. . . I don't. . . I like my own people.

Q. So you never really came in contact with any non-Jewish people?

A. Oh, yea I have a lot of contact with . . . belong to the Zionists organization, we belong to the Farband, you know. And I always mingled with Jewish people and always was around Jewish people.

Q. Were you ever aware of any restrictions that Jewish people faced from different institutions in the city?

A. Like anti-Semitism?

Q. Yea.

A. Well, I'll tell you where I . . . I noticed that. I was . . . in four months I fell four times, and I was in four different convalescent homes. And three, the fourth I came here. I . . . I didn't feel at home with 'em there, it was mostly goyem. Tell me when I came to one the doctor had a convalescent home, so I want to find out if you got. . . you know, the doctor came in to talk to me 'cause I knew, he knew I was from, you know. So, I had a doctor there any Jewish people, he says there's one. . . one man there. And how many in the convalescent home, I don't know exactly how many people they had there. But, honest, I don't know they just. . . they just told me there's a lot of anti-Semitism. A lot of 'em can't hide it from much. You know the way you go in for a . . . always wanted to be the last one. And I says, that's why I tell 'em here, lot of 'em kick. They're 240. . . forty inmates here. And they keep kicking you about the, you know, they want to cook the way their wives cook for 'em. So, when I went to four different convalescent homes, three and this was the fourth, so I said, look it, we are Jewish people. And this is the only home we have here in the city, and I says, if you would have the . . . the experience of one other homes, you would worship this home. I says it's clean, it's. . . they. . . they cook the Jewish way, you know what the Jewish people like. But some like one thing and some like another. I says how

A. (Continued) can you expect to cook individual for each one of us here? Like the wife used to cook. It's impossi. . . physical impossibility. Unless you pay a lot of money like in the hotel, like in the hospital now they take the . . . you give 'em a menu, they take 'em. . . they take your. . . your. . . whatever you like. And they. . . they. . . they give you whatever you like there. But, they can't. . . charge \$90 a day. I says, you don't pay \$90 a day here. And they can't do it for less, to have all the help and the. . . the expensive things they probably want. But, I'm telling you, I'm perfectly satisfied here. I tell the people that they should. . . they should just forget that they're not in their homes 'cause. . . a little joke I heard. A young couple got married and the wife tried to please him, whatever he make, it wasn't like her mother made. Oh, she felt terrible, she tried her best to. . . So, once she burned a roast, so she says what am I gonna do, what am I give you for supper, we don't have anything for supper. She handed him the roast and she put it on the table, he says that just like my mother. Huh? So, how can you. . . how can you please everyone?

Q. Right.

A. And some of the people, well they're old. I suppose they can't use their hands so much, you know.

Q. Well, I'd just like to go back to that question about the German-Jews and the Russian-Jews. Do you feel that . . . that division is no longer as important in the Jewish community as it once was?

A. Well, I think maybe now they're coming a little closer.

Q. Why do you think that is?

A. I think because of the hardships that they've gone through. But, not. . .not too much.

Q. Do you think that they. . .

- A. I just don't come in contact with 'em, I just couldn't tell you exactly but . . . I know that. . . they're. . . they were all. . . I noticed that they're. . . they just don't let you get too close with. . .
- Q. Oh, so you think that it's still operates?
- A. Yea, but I don't think they. . . the Russian people worry about it.
- Q. Do you think the organization of the State of Israel has. . . has helped to bridge that gap between the two?
- A. Well, a little, not all yet. It'll take a long time before they'll get our high-falutin' ideas of the mind out. And after all people learn more, you know, now they belong to temples, and they. . . a lot of the . . . our Jews belong to the German temple, B'rith Kodesh.
- Q. Right.
- A. You know who attracted a lot of people, Rabbi Bernstein.
- Q. Rabbi Bernstein.
- A. Yes, he's a very smart man. And, I think he attracted a lot of the. . . our people went along there to the temple. And the same in the. . . in Temple Beth El, you know Rabbi . . . not the Germans so much but the high. . . rich people. And they, of course, they don't mingle with our . . . everybody in our people don't mingle with those . . . those. . . lot of money and they go to places that are certainly. . . have more experience, they're more intelligent and they don't like too much in common with us.
- Q. So you. . . so you. . .
- A. Do you agree?
- Q. I don't know. I'm not. . . I really don't know.
- A. You didn't come across. . .?
- Q. No. No, I'm not that familiar with the community here, but I mean just in what you have to say about it.

A. What are you a playwright?

Q. Excuse me?

A. What is your profession?

Q. Well, I'm a student.

A. Oh, you're a student.

Q. Yea.

A. What is that. . . a rabbi or. . .?

Q. No, in history.

A. You'll go to Israel?

Q. I've never gone, I'd like to go.

A. You were there?

Q. Hmm?

A. You were in Israel already?

Q. No, I haven't been, but I would like to go.

A. Oh.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE B