

Interview I  
Tape I  
Side A

Q. Sure. First question. How long have you been in Rochester?

A. I came to Rochester roughly in September, 1939.

Q. Where were you from originally?

A. I was born in or near Berlin, Germany in 1921. Which by simple arithmetic tells you or me that today I must be about, what 55 years old?

Q. Yea, that was my next question. When did. . . you came over about when?

A. I came over in 1939, I had left Germany in 1937. My first flight with my family, tried to immigrate to Italy but the same anti-Jewish laws that Hitler first had promulgated in Germany because of the active arrangement finally went into effect in Italy and we left. We obtained a visa to go to Cuba and I came to Rochester as a student because I was interested in photography. And the Eastman Kodak Company after some correspondence had suggested that what was then called the Rochester Engineers and Mechanics Institute, which is today the Rochester Institute of Technology, had a special course in photography. So, I came as a student to this town.

Q. It raises a couple of interesting questions. First, what made your family decide to go to Italy and then why did you pick Cuba?

A. Essentially I think that my. . . I was reasonably young or unreasonably young as I would think today, my parents had figured that they couldn't possibly live under Hitler. And my mother came from Austria and she had some relatives in the Italian part of the Tyrol, which used to be Austrian. So the thought was we could stay away until we thought things would blow over. Of course, they didn't. And was very difficult in 1938 to obtain visas for any place. My father had been a publisher of books, of the so-called Utschstein Felag,

A. (Continued) Utschstein Publishing House in Berlin and had many contacts with writers. There also were quite a few had assembled in Florence, so I . . . we ended up eventually in Florence. Then oh, about half a year I worked there, I enrolled officially at the university, learned Italian and also worked on the side. Because officially I was not permitted to work. And then because I couldn't find any other place, Cuba was a way-station essentially for the States.

Q. Then you were able to get a visa to the States?

A. Not exactly. I had a student visa with which I came to this country. And in fact I came before my parents did, they were waiting for an immigration visa. And that was possible in 1939, later on when I tried to go back to Cuba to exchange it for. . . for regular immigration visa this couldn't be done any longer and eventually I went to Canada for a couple of days to change my status and then came back.

Q. One of the things I'm very curious about, you had an interesting early life. And I'd like you to describe the conditions in Germany. You'd be about 16?

A. I was. . . I was 16, 17. . . I guess 17 when I left. And I must say that personally I did not suffer any indignities. My mother had been in a concentration camp, but I had not. And I cannot from firsthand claim any experience of the horrors which eventually overtook the community and the country.

Q. I guess what I'm really curious about would be what was the atmosphere in the Berlin Jewish community in the 1930's?

A. I don't think one can generalize in those terms. I happened to live in Berlin and the friends I had. . . I led a rather protected life I believe. I . . . as a youngster that's all a bit of excitement, you know, doesn't realize that that can be the final ticket. And I certainly didn't. I suspect my stupidity was enormous.

Q. Was there a feeling that it would simply blow over?

A. Largely, unreal what eventually was called the "final solution." But, slaughter of the innocents could take place in the Twentieth Century, just didn't. . . it couldn't be expected. There was no precedent for it. I wouldn't even . . . the statement now because I do remember Goebbel spoke about the Armenians in Turkey, it was excessive in a way. But Turkey and Germany were not considered the same. One was considered a . . . a civilized country, the other wasn't.

Q. Sure.

A. It was just. . .

Q. Was your family relatively comfortable? Your father was a publisher?

A. Yes, I grew up in a . . . in a very comfortable home. He, himself, came from very poor. . . from a very poor community of . . . well his family had lived for centuries in what's called Bestalia, little town called Fauberg. You know, the band of Fauberg, Fauberg. The name of the town where my family had originated. And he was a single son of a widowed mother and came from very, very poor background. But had obtained a fellowship, we'd call a fellowship, to go to university much against the advice of uncles and others who claimed that the son of a widow shouldn't be fooling around trying to go to university. But earn a living for himself.

Q. Of course.

A. But, he was successful and he won prizes, obtained offers for work and made it a very comfortable home. And I might add he died in this house and was prepared to celebrate his 95th birthday and he decided that was it, called the children together and said it's time to die and died.

Q. He simply died?

A. Yea. So he lived a very full life. Very strong intellectual. . .

Q. About how. . . how old would he have been in 1930's when he came over?

A. In his sixties.

Q. In his sixties?

A. Uh-huh. Oh, maybe late fifties.

Q. Do you recall how it became known to yourself that you were leaving? Did your folks simply tell you or was there much ado or preparation?

A. Yes, they had left earlier to go to these relatives I had mentioned in Italy and I was in boarding school. And then one day a telegram came that I should pack up and join them. And I grabbed what I had, you know, a little suitcase. I thought I'd be back very shortly. But, of course, I never did return until the war, you know, then I was in. . .

Q. Do you recall Hitler's speeches? Do you recall that mentality?

A. Yes. Yes. Quite an. . . but also apparently very evocative of emotions.

Q. You. . . you got a paper. . . with my own background I can't. . . absolutely fascinates me, I can't imagine that. Why do you think he had a following?

A. There was a great deal of uncertainty in Germany about which way it was going. On the one hand, Germany had lost the war. On the other hand, the Germans by in large did not seem to believe that that was the final roll of fate, somehow they felt we could have done better, others they didn't. The. . . the Depression economic uncertainties, difficulties in fact, made it quite easy for. . . for rabblers to hold out a goal of a rich, huge, ever-enlarging Germany, the depth and image would only last a thousand years. It is not all that uncommon really if you think back because actually we ourselves in this country frequently think of ourselves as having been given. . . exactly, let us go on to look after poor and uninformed people and lead them out of their poor ways.

Q. Is that part of the mentality do you think?

A. Not in those words. But, super nationalistic, I think that, you know, whoever isn't one of us is not only against us but he also really is gonna be inferior.

A. (Continued) So, . . .

Q. Was . . . was Berlin a stronghold?

A. Not as much as some other cities.

Q. I was wondering in other words if it was difficult to live in Berlin particularly.

A. Well, some areas it surely was, but it was my personal experience that was not . . . I think I must say and this will come as a shock to you, that when I hear some of my colleagues, my Jewish colleagues, talk, who lived in the Bronx or in Philadelphia, young Jews growing up had a tougher time than I did. They tell me certain streets they could walk and if they ventured out of this they'd better have a baseball bat in their hand because there was . . . there was gonna be a fight. That's simply experience. Now. . .

Q. No, I can see. . . I can see the analogy in my own . . .

A. OK.

Q. Move it up to Italy for a while. Was there. . . was there any difference under Mussolini?

A. Yes, a large difference. The. . . the Italians I got to know they're rather ashamed of the skulduggery that Mussolini engaged in. There was a distinct dislike towards the German Nazis. The Facists, this was a matter that didn't bother them much, was more of a laughing matter, it wasn't taken all that seriously. But, all of a sudden the. . . the German immigration into. . . in view of racial priorities and religious antagonism was something which was . . . which was very foreign it seemed to me to the Italians, at least the ones I knew. Again, I have to express these are just personal views. I had . . . I always felt, incidentally, as an example of my feelings personalized, I was in the infantry during the war and I thought if I ever get cut off, I find myself behind Nazi lines I felt the easiest way for me to . . . to get away would be to try to get myself into Italy.

Q. Into Italy?

A. Yes. That, you know, I thought. . . that flashed through my mind that there as I was wandering through some mine field, and you never know what's gonna happen next.

Q. Interesting what runs through your mind.

A. But, the connection with this conversation came up. Just as I would not want even an American uniform, I would have not wanted to have been captured in Germany where if it came to it, it really was a place where I felt at least. . .

Q. I see. Was your father a bona fide publisher when he left Germany? In other words, did he give. . . had they stopped that?

A. He was in 1934, he was pensioned off and the publishing house which had brought out such things as Nothing New on the Western Front, popular books of this type as well as classics, was . . . in fact it existed even after the war, some of the men had been laid off, but he was essentially pensioned off and that was. . .

Q. Was there any lasting bitterness on his part towards Germany?

A. No. He suprisingly little. He never. . . he never felt very good about travelling, but he felt very close. . . actually considered Germany his. . . well, with his family there. . . in fact, he wrote a book about it. Oh, not so much about his experiences, the history of the town over the centuries . . . (Transcriber's note: background noise drowns out the next few words.) . . . but he had kept track of what happened and this little town of Fauberg, where his family had resided for many centuries was very, very close to his heart. In fact, when. . . when time came to die, this is what he talked about.

Q. Did he ever go back?

A. No, he asked me to do it, to look after the graves of the family, which I did. He . . . no, he . . . he never could really ever fully understand what happened. He essentially blamed it on Hitler, which I think is an over-

A. (Continued) simplification, but be that as it may, he had no . . . no lasting bitterness. He was . . . I don't know why. You see, after what happened, you know, the millions that got killed in cold blood. I carried much more than he did and emotional morass in which we find ourselves when we think about these matters.

Q. Raises question about yourself, did you have a lasting sense of bitterness?

A. Oh, yes. I have. And I did go back as I mentioned. Of course, I was there during the war, but that . . . that was really so different circumstances to even mention. But, in 1956 because my father didn't feel like travelling, I . . . and I had . . . I had to go to some . . . what . . . I had to go overseas anyhow, and I wrote to Fauberg and to the Lord Mayor, told him. . .

Q. Now Fauberg would be East . . .

A. No, no that was West Germany.

Q. It is West?

A. Yea, oh yea, it's West Germany. It's an hour out of Cologne. . .

Q. Oh, I see. I thought it was near Berlin.

A. No, no, no.

Q. Oh, I see. I see.

A. I wrote that I had intended to come provided that he could tell me that the Jewish cemetery still existed and hadn't been completely vandalized. He wrote back, you know, of course everything is fine or some such stupid word. And my wife and I went there. We stayed for two days, met one Jewish surviving family. One . . . one member of the whole community that had been maybe 3,000 Jews in Fauberg. And looked after the cemetery, I was very glad to leave there. I didn't feel comfortable because I had to meet mostly people who were older than I was and I . . . I felt uncertain, where have they been? Did they have any blood on their hands or not? On the other hand, I might

- A. (Continued)           add, I had occasion to visit the local school, the gymnasium, in Fauberg. That pleased me because I was much taken by the younger Germans. They're really not the same type that I had known. They didn't stand at attention, they were sort of sloppy in a way I appreciated.
- Q. OK.
- A. And they were altogether human and interested and. . .and I could. . . could relate, but there were too many older people around so I left.
- Q. Were they. . . the younger Germans when you went back in the 1950's, were they a different type than the ones who had been staying in the boarding school in the thirties?
- A. To my mind they were. Primarily because I liked the way they talked, not just to me but the way they talked to their professors, in a way which was unthinkable in my day. They'd interrupt them or they'd even crack jokes. It was. . . it was much . . . well, it was a light atmosphere, it wasn't heavy-handed. . .
- Q. A healthy atmosphere.
- A. Yea, I would call it that. Not authoritarian. So I. . . I rather appreciated that. On the other hand I. . . I wasn't comfortable and I left.
- Q. Sure.
- A. I did go back to Berlin a couple of years ago because my. . . my youngest boy ended up in Germanics of all things. And he was at Boston University and he took one year . . . he wrote to various people and I helped him, give him some names, and he actually went to work. . . work on a farm because he had been in Israel for a year. He had gotten on well with the horses and decided he can do it equally well with the Germans.
- Q. OK.
- A. But, the one farm people we knew had just. . . couldn't stay there and another opportunity arose for him to go to Berlin. He ended up in Berlin working in a

A. (Continued) . . . in a music shop. And his idea was to learn German and support himself while doing that and he claimed to have repaired instruments in that store, I. . . since he didn't know anything about instrument repairing I'm not sure, at least they thought he repaired them. I'm glad. But I had the opportunity with my wife to visit. And for the first time I thought I'd go back to Berlin, not because I was interested in Berlin but because my kid was there. And I. . . I wrote him. . . now this is getting very personal, I don't know if it makes any sense but. . . very briefly put, we suprised him. He thought we were in Rochester. . .

Q. That's a suprise.

A. . . .ran into him on the street in Berlin.

Q. Oh, my word. That's. . .

A. Yea, that. . . that worked out very nicely.

Q. Did he recognize you?

A. Oh, yea. No trouble. He really was a bit shaky for a few minutes, but we fixed that up with a beer or two. And then it turned out he really had learned German very well. In fact one of his favorite stores, which unfortunately is true, we went to some store I think to pick up a bottle of wine or something like that and I spoke to a storekeeper in the way I used to speak Berlin German, Berlin dialect. And maybe I put it on a bit heavy. But this guy turned to my son, pointing to me, said what's with him, where did he come from? Which, of course, my. . . my kid was doubled up.

Q. I can imagine.

A. The. . . anyway the situation was a bit of a disappointment because as . . . as you can notice my English is not very perfect. It turns out my German isn't either. Was tough. Well, so I thought about the matter and considered what could have been wrong. And quite apparently the Berlin idiom had changed.

Q. That's it. Sure.

A. And. . . and what, thirty years?

Q. Thirty years, that's right.

A. And the sort of idiomatic expressions I preferred in my youth sounded damn. . .

Q. Sure

A. Sure, exactly. Archaic. So it went. So that was the one time I went back.

Q. What was Berlin like when. . . can you. . . can you contrast it to. . . and then we can move on?

A. I. . . I can't really compare it because after all I was a youngster when I left. And I was very much taken by the Germans. I thought it was a vibrant city. My. . . my son had. . . it. . . it. . . you know, he took me to some of the places where he also played music at night, some of these singing nightclubs. And I thought. . . it struck me as a much healthier place than some of the ones I have seen here. Because for one, people were drinking beer but there was no rowdiness, there was no dope that I could. . .

Q. Big change from when you left. . .

A. That. . . that was a change. . . quite reassuring. In fact, I remember the. . . the one time I saw a commotion of young. . . young people were sitting on the steps of a church, they were Americans. And they were carrying on something fearful I thought, which embarrassed me. So I went over because I was gonna tell 'em. . . to. . . to behave. By the time I crossed the street and was ready to talk to them I found out they just looked like Americans, you know blue jeans and. . . and. . . and raggedy beards. And I. . . but they were Germans.

Q. That's amazing.

A. So, that case I said. . .

Q. I guess the Westernization is. . .

- A. Had had. . . had taken on, but it wasn't only they were loud, that wasn't all.  
And I . . .
- Q. One of the reasons I ask is that my vague readings on Berlin in the 1930's, it had a dynamic kind of situation all its own. And I wondered if you could recall any of that.
- A. No, I. . . I was. . . I know exactly what you're talking about, the sort of thing that you read about, the penny opera, Hasenclaver, people who wrote about Berlin in those days. But, that's an atmosphere, milieu which was quite foreign to me. I was a youngster and I wasn't exposed to that.
- Q. OK. We'll push it up to America. . .
- A. All right, sure.
- Q. . . . going chronologically. I'm having a great time. OK.
- A. You might want to check it first thing that my voice carries over.
- Q. Yea, I think that would be wise before we continue. OK. We'll move up to Rochester. What made you come to Rochester?
- A. When I was cooling my heels in. . .in Cuba together with my parents waiting for the immigration visa to come, which everybody told me was gonna be a matter of months if not years, I decided I better do something else but sit around. After all, I was then, what, 18 years old. I didn't know enough Spanish yet, I had started learning Spanish. It wasn't all that difficult for me because I had known Italian.
- Q. Raising the question before we go on, now, you. . . you speak German, English, Italian and Spanish.
- A. No, I. . . I did speak Italian. I did speak little bit of Spanish, never enough.
- Q. You. . . did you find languages easy?
- A. No, not particularly. I mean, I . . . I did learn French much more and I still carry on in French, but on occasion when I tried to give a lecture in French

A. (Continued) somebody leaned over and said, Herz everybody here understand English. So I gave up on my French.

Q. That'll do it.

A. Well, but for a young fellow languages are not all that difficult. One always gets by. But the question really arose in my mind what was I going to do? Although there were other members of my family with me, I had one brother in England. You know, everybody was s sort of scraping by. I felt the parents were getting older and how was I gonna help support them and myself. So, my first thought was that I thought maybe, you know, had the romantic idea of America was still a rather wild and unsettled country, so why don't I go into farming. And talking to some Americans in Cuba who were visiting there, who they were, but somehow people were quite friendly. They talked me out of it. They said, look chances are you know which end of the horse is back but maybe not very much more, that ain't enough. You haven't been brought up on a farm, your background really doesn't lend itself to that. On the other hand, these people told me, we have been watching you and you've been reading some technical books on photography, which was enough. I fancied myself a bit of photographer. I learned how to do my own processing and noding as a boy and just was interested in it. They said, look, you always can get by as a photographer. Most little villages will have a one studio or portrait finishing place. That is a reasonable way. . .

Q. Good, secure job. Sure.

A. And that made sense to me. So, these folks talked me out of the farm work, which I sort of had thought about, and I wrote to the only place I knew about concerned with photography was Kodak. So I wrote to Rochester where Kodak is located, excuse me while I light up.

Q. Oh, sure.

- A. I told them I want to get into photography, what I could. . . what they would recommend or something like that, I forgot exactly. They turned my letter over to Rochester Engineering and Mechanics Institute, which today is Rochester Institute of Technology, who sent me a nice little note saying we understand you're interested in photography. We have a course in photography and sent me some pamphlets and we'd be pleased to hear from you. Now this was not forget what was involved in money and it was not inconsiderable. But the family in council decided this was a reasonable way of handling it, to scrape whatever there was together and in fact bet. . . bet on me that I was gonna make a living that way.
- Q. Raises . . . raises another question was your . . . were your parents able to. . .
- A. They took on enough. . . they. . . they had enough resources to live without charity for about three years, which was quite appreciable. I thought they were stinkin' rich, you know. Three years, I was a kid. And in fact this was one of the reasons I simply had to get out of Cuba because every penny was being turned around and it didn't make sense to me. I mean, I was terribly stupid.
- Q. No, just young.
- A. Yea, but some people are. . . it still bothers me that I didn't have that appreciation. So, I'm a little bit more understanding of my children maybe, though they claim I'm not. Anyhow, it seemed there was no way I was just gonna sit. And everybody in the family decided that was the right thing to do, even though it was gonna take a major part of the savings out of the family holdings. It would. . . it was an investment in my future and in the family's future because we. . . we reasoned that in a few years I'd be able to. . . to help out and repay it, in fact, look after my then aging parents. After all, they were past their fifties. That's my age now, I don't consider myself all that aging. On the other hand, you know, I'm living here at home. But I'm not

A. (Continued) being knocked around from pillar to post. So I did end up in Rochester and I have to tell you that photographic line didn't last very long. I quickly found out that I was not an artist. Oh, I probably could have made a living as a photographer, but I noticed that most of the . . . my friends were very much better as photographers. They had a view of things which frequently I didn't have. You know, the perspective. They saw things which I didn't see. It was a bridge. For heavens sakes, don't you see the way the shadow is falling and we have to wait until the sun moves to get this effect. Well, you know, to me it was a bridge, a bridge, a bridge. So, on the other hand I did have a real interest in the processing end of it. And once had been interested in, much younger fellow, in chemistry and that came back and I found myself fascinated. Well, what one would call maybe the solution chemistry or photographic process, toning, reaction, fixing, induction, various aspects of it. And I actually . . . what was then called . . . well, called R.I.T. in my last year switched from straight photography to something which was called photographic technology. And, indeed, my first job was in a processing laboratory.

Q. Now you get out of R.I.T. about 1940 then?

A. 1942.

Q. '42.

A. I . . . but that time I should say my family had much against my better judgment come from Cuba and joined me in Rochester.

Q. Oh.

A. Yea. Yea, all right. I should indicate that I came by myself in 1939 to Rochester, not with my family.

Q. You came on a student visa?

A. I came on a student visa. But, moved to the old "Turkish Bath" on Fitzhugh

A. (Continued) Street.

Q. Right.

A. That's before your time. The "Turkish Bath" doesn't exist. Within a couple of weeks I found out that it really was more than a "Turkish Bath". . .

Q. Oh, I think I. . .OK.

A. You see how dense and innocent I was?

Q. You really must have been.

A. I really was.

Q. My gosh.

A. Some of my friends who came to visit, you know, after I got to know them decided this is no place for me to stay and so they put me into one of their places and we roomed together and it was more reasonable. And you know I had a very good welcome here in Rochester, particularly by my friends. But I was that way by myself.

Q. Did you like Rochester?

A. Eventually. Because primarily I . . . I got to know people my own age. Many of them did not come from Rochester and at R.I.T. the Photographic Department was a focus for many youngsters from different parts of the country. And I would judge that less than 50% of the entering class came from. . . from this area. C. B. DeBlett was running the department at the time. And I. . . I felt. . . I felt very good. People really were . . . were most. . . most helpful. Made me feel at home. I had good experiences also in the older community. In fact, one day while I was still at the "Turkish Bath" war broke out in the Continent, which was September now. . . September, '39.

Q. Started. . .

A. Yea, right. And actually it turned the. . . the guy who was running the dubious "Turkish Bath" was a. . . was a Jewish-Polish fellow who in a way

A. (Continued)            tried to shelter me from some of the goings on in the "Turkish Bath." I didn't realize that at the time, but he. . . he invited me, I think, for the first Sabbath meal I had. And then on Sunday I recall somebody came from. . . from the League Church Institute, a minister and his wife, asked me if I wouldn't join them for Sunday dinner. Which I was only too glad to do. And so it went, other people did the same thing. I. . . I sort of was passed on, in one respect, but. . .

Q. In a way though, you were perfectly glad to be.

A. I. . . I was. . . it was really a very, very nice and warm way in which I was welcomed, which is I think. . .

Q. OK. College ends you have to look for a job.

A. Well, looking for a job came much later. I should say before that I . . . I always had a . . . a night job. I. . . not always, after the first year. Again, this was not strictly legal because I was a student, but there was a place on Spring Street which was recently written up again, called the House of Foran, f-o-r-a-n. Jack Foran was the head. It was a beer joint, had been a speakeasy I understand. And Jack Foran was a real. . . was a real character about . . . he had been in the First World War in the Navy, had been a . . . a boxer in the Navy, a champion, which was very helpful because he also acted as a bouncer. And if I couldn't handle people, I always could holler for Jack.

Q. OK.

A. And he closed the place at two o'clock and whoever was there, and I was supposed to be jerking beer and wait on tables, I was there. And then he kept on until the small morning hours. And mostly with discussions. Like many Irishmen he was very articulate and he'd hold forth and he'd bait me at times to get into an argument. And . . . and he got it. And I think. . . I very much liked working in that place, it was an. . .

Q. I can imagine.

A. . . . it was an extra education. Newspaper people used to hang around there, fellow students from R.I.T. It just was across from R.I.T. That was the job I had when my parents came in 1941. And I didn't let them know what I was working in the evening. I told them I was doing something else I think. Until they found out because when I didn't show up at four o'clock in the morning, they called the hospitals and I wasn't at a hospital. They called the cops. They didn't know about me, until when I dragged myself in they realized I was up to something different than I'd told them. But, . . .

Q. You weren't quite so sheltered.

A. No, by that time ths shelter had gone.

Q. Yea.

A. And that's why I hadn't been all that pleased for them to come to Rochester.

I tried to fob California off on them. I said they'd have a much better future in California than in Rochester. But they came here and my mother took a job as a cleaning woman in a hospital. So, she was working. My . . . my father eyes had gone very bad and he couldn't. . . he couldn't work. So, I was working part-time. Mother was working full-time.

Q. So between the two of you. . .

A. Yea. And so these things were moving. Then . . . well, of course when the war broke out first in '39 while. . . while I was here the first week I . . . I wrote to Canadian offering my services, you know, I was a healthy fellow. And I knew what the war was all about in contrast maybe to some of the local youngsters. But the Canadians wouldn't have me because I was an enemy alien. You see, I was a German. And the same thing happened in December, 1941 after Pearl Harbor when I tried again in the Americans. I tried the Navy, in that case. Went down to Fitzhugh to the old Post Office and presented myself and the guard patted me on

A. (Continued) the back and said, no can't handle it now because you're not a U.S. citizen. So, I. . . I was not in the war until November. . . December, 1942 they finally accepted me.

Q. So you served until about '45?

A. Then I served until '45. And meanwhile I had a job at Carhart's photofinishing place.

Q. Oh, yea. Yes.

A. Didn't like it all that much, wasn't doing enough chemistry. And I kept on reading about chemistry and particularly about the chemistry of silver aolides, light sensitive systems, quite a few of names at Kodak were familiar to me of the researchers. So I presented myself there once, said I. . . I'd like to work for them. And one fellow. . . two of them as a matter of fact wanted me. I was terribly flattered. I was gonna wash dishes for them, they didn't pay any attention. My meager knowledge in chemistry didn't really impress them, but what did impress them at that time. . .you see, here was a guy who wasn't apt to be in the Army because, you know, I'd been refused. And they were looking for some help and so it wasn't my. . . my ability to wash dishes and then keep retorts clean or keep the chemicals in good shape it was that I was a body who wasn't apt to be available. . .

Q. Be around, sure, sure right.

A. And on the other hand they were very understanding when within a month when I was accepted, it was just one month working at Kodak in the Research Lab, I burst in on the guys and said, "Hooray, I've been accepted." You know, they . . . they're not. . . they were very kind about it. Kept writing while I was in the Army and in fact I went back after the war. When I came back I went back to these guys.

Q. OK. Very good. Actually I think we'll switch over to Side 2, this will be the

Q. (Continued) end of Side I.

A. All right.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE A

Interview with ARTHUR HERZ  
July 5, 1976  
By Brian Mitchell

Interview I  
Tape I  
Side B

A. We'll try it once more.

Q. We'll try it once more noting that this is not a Kodak tape.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE B (Transcriber's Note: Apparently there was some problem with the second side of this tape recording properly. It is blank except for the above sentences and some garbled sounds at the beginning.)

Interview I  
Tape II  
Side A

Q. Side 2.

A. I suggest you might again identify a Side 2 of what.

Q. OK. This is the opening of Side 2 of the interview with Mr. Arthur Herz. OK.  
And again, it's at his home in connection with the University of Rochester Oral  
History Project.

A. All right, thank you. I'll go on from here and before I do maybe you'd just  
check now to see if my voice still carries.

Q. Good. Thank you.

A. Well, I had. . . upon graduation in 1942 I had approached Kodak for a job  
before I went to Carhart. I went to the business/personnel section where I was  
directed. They gave me some sort of examination, what would you do if you  
wanted to get a green tone on a . . . on a print? How would you tone it? What  
if a blue tone and whatever. And I think I handled these things quite  
reasonably. And from there I was sent to Kodak Park, Mr. MacMillan, and I felt  
I was getting the run-around. In fact, the sort of thing like don't call us,  
we will call you. And, of course, no. . . nothing happened. I tried a few  
more times then I decided to hell with it. I needed a job and I went to Carhart.  
But then I met a guy, an Italian chap, and he asked me where I was working. He  
had also graduated. He was about to go into the Army. And I told him my  
experience and he just laughed at me and said, look my name is Temolia and I  
know I'm not gonna work at Kodak, you are Arthur Herz and you're not gonna work  
at Kodak 'cause I'm Italian, you are Jewish. There's not a chance. That was  
the first time I realized that there might be such a thing as employment  
preference, which would make it difficult or impossible to get a job. But  
some time later while working still at Carhart's, I ran into another man who

- A. (Continued) working at Kodak in the Research Lab. He said I don't understand that because we are short of . . . of young people to work as technicians. Why don't you go to the Research Lab directly and ask for a job, which I did. And . . . and then I did get the job. Later on I understand it wasn't all that simple, you know, it involved clearances and what not because I was an enemy alien. But that was the first time I learned about . . .
- Q. That. . . that kind of practice. . .
- A. . . . some employment practices.
- Q. Sure.
- A. Never did I experience any. . . anything else which gave me the slightest idea that there might be religious or ethnic prejudice against me at Kodak. I mean, I've had trouble with people. I've got kicked out of an office or two on occasion. But that was on a personal level, that. . . I pounded the table at the guy and he pounded it back at me and he was my superior so I ended up on the outside. But, you know, that was a. . . you know, strict personal interaction. And I must say that I had left. . . actually I did leave Kodak some time later because there was the war then. But after I came back I again left Kodak in 19. . . 1950 to go to graduate school. I'm jumping a little bit. Let me just recap. I worked for Kodak Research Lab for a month, was accepted by the Army, was glad to leave, came back in 1945 just with a small bullet hole which didn't matter so they were glad to. . . to take me back. And I started both night school and Kodak at the same time. And I did have a very nice job as a technician for a man whom I respected tremendously, from whom I learned a lot of chemistry. And because of that interaction, the man was B. H. Kalb, a very well-known chemist, and my own night school training I decided I wanted to become a chemist. I did finish night school at the university in 1950 with a degree in general studies. And I felt even though I had married the year before

A. (Continued) graduation that I really wanted to become more professional in my field. And I discussed it with a number of people at Kodak and some said you're a fool to leave because you'll never catch up, degrees don't mean that much and others said, absolutely you. . . you ought to leave and do at once studies. To make a long story short, one day I did talk to people at the University of Rochester, but I already had had a child. I couldn't move. My folks were living here, they were getting on in years. And unless I would be accepted in graduate school at the university here I wouldn't go to any other school. They accepted me. In fact, I went back to Kodak and said I'm leaving in September to start graduate school, I've made my decision. I left Kodak and there was no. . . people were very nice, but they said look, you're on your own. You did fine, but if there's no job open. . . become open. . . a job become open. And I finished graduate studies in three years, had more kids on the way, but I still had help from the government because I was a. . .

Q. Veteran, sure. The way my father did it.

A. Yea, OK. You. . . you know how it works. It was a marvelous time for thin living, but magnificent because we really. . .

Q. I know. . .

A. . . . knew what we were doing and why we were studying. My wife was working part-time as a kid's model and. . . we had a great time. But when I was through in 1953 I looked for other jobs, had a very good offer. . . In fact, people came unasked to me, unfortunately from what is known as the Xerox Company, because I had a. . . because my background in the area of photographic work they were. . . made an appointment, asked me to come and see him. He was the Director of Research in Xerox. I had a. . . frankly I had a. . . took a personal dislike, antipathy to Deshower. I knew some of his behavior, vis-a-vis a black neighbor, which made it almost impossible for me to work for him.

A. (Continued) I decided I would not take that offer. Eventually I went back to Kodak.

Q. Was there any difficulty getting into Kodak?

A. No. They were very pleased to have me and. . . and in regard to your. . . at least that's what I was told and I have every reason to. . . because after all there were other places, I mean very obvious in terms of the initial salary they offered they were eager to have me. And I must say at this time because you raised the question earlier, within a few months of 1953 that I rejoined I was sent on some sort of a informational assignment where one goes, at that time new people went through the various Kodak plants and were acquainted with what was going on. And one stage we ended up in the business office on State Street and questions were solicited. And at that time I asked the person who was running the show to what extent Kodak employment actually had changed. I repeated my own experience and that of Temolia.

Q. It's an interesting question.

A. And . . . and it was a straight question and I think I got a straight. . .

Q. Oh, yea. . .

A. . . . I got a straight answer. The man admitted that there had been, was before his time, but he had heard that there had been such employment practices. He said as far as he knows they are not any longer carried out. In fact, by that time I believe it was even against the State's law. And I could see for myself, as a matter of fact, that a number of Jewish people had come in. There were Italians. We had a few blacks in the Research Lab. It was not . . .

Q. I. . . I spoke with Garson Meyer. . .

A. Yea, yea. Well, Garson Meyer was always one of the guys that was pointed out. You know he was the. . .

Q. Yea, yea.

A. . . . the token Jew. Actually that. . . they always had a token. . . token black, too, for a while. But, I think that they're. . . at any rate the argument was undoubtedly it existed, it doesn't exist anymore. Period. And I believe, and since I have myself hired a good many people, I've had contact with the personnel people at Kodak office. This is a dead horse as far as I can see.

Q. Is your association with Kodak continuing?

A. Yes.

Q. I wasn't. . . I wasn't sure. . .

A. Yes, yes, yes. Research Laboratory.

Q. OK. Look a couple of. . . I don't want to take up too much more of your time, but I'll ask a couple of general questions, OK? Call it quits. First of all, what do you think about the Jewish community of Rochester? Do you actively participate. . . participate in Jewish organizations?

A. Yes, I do. First I should say that like many people going through life we develop different times different views towards religion. At one time I. . . I was not enamored of my Jewish. . . my Jewishness I should say. I felt we had not done as well as we should as Jews in terms of having a sense of responsibility towards the community at large, was turned off. I thought there must be better ways. And I. . . was just a development. I never. . . this was just a sense. I never swore off, if you will, I never disassociated myself. . .

Q. No, I think I understand.

A. But this was one stage of my development. And I was pretty well turned around from that. I've been active certainly in my temple which is B'rith Kodesh. I am particularly interested in trying to make any barriers that exist for, largely in this community for the blacks or Puerto Ricans, in housing. I'm active in. . .

A. (Continued) in that field.

Q. I see. OK. Well I guess a couple questions on that then. First of all, was your heritage Reform Jewish?

A. I would say basically yes. Although what we call Reform Jewish here today is not what it was in my youth. Again, Reform not static, the very word Reform indicates that. There are ups and downs, there's a cyclic nature. When I first came to this town the Reform Jewish way was very foreign. . . foreign to me. I had to remind only recently some of my fellow members at Temple B'rith Kodesh that in 1939 services were held on a Sunday, not on a Saturday. That Rabbi Bernstein had a starched white collar and. . . and a swallows tails. It looked like. . . like the local Episcopal Church. And, in fact, that was the general idea, relations idea which because of the war then changed. And we are very much more turned towards Hebrew today. And some of. . . the reason I brought that up at a recent meeting. . . annual meeting of our temple, some of the people feel we. . . we are too much turned towards Hebrew and after all this is supposed to be Reform, isn't it? That I could find out how Reform had changed and depending on the time, the development of people's notions on one . . .

Q. Do you think that's good? Do you see the changes constructively?

A. I'm all in favor of changes if they meet the needs of. . .of people within some framework which maintains some of the verities. I think we are. . .we should be flexible. And, in fact, this flexibility I pointed out in discussions I . . . with some of my Catholic friends who could not get used to the post-Vatican II type of Mass, and who have been turned off. In our discussions I pointed out that this was a very sudden change, but the pendulum will swing. And that by now Reform Judaism is some 200 years old. After a while, you know, the rough edges wear off and I. . .I could sympathize with people who. . . who

A. (Continued) were very much turned off by the sudden change.

Q. Sure.

A. But I. . . I'm comfortable with the way things are.

Q. Now, you said, to switch it up ahead and actually to go back a bit into what we were talking about earlier, you said your interests lie with breaking down discrimination barriers against primarily blacks and Puerto Ricans in Rochester. Do you think Rochester is. . . is a good town to live in?

A. If you're not black, yes.

Q. OK. Do you. . . do you think it's any worse to live in Rochester if you're black than to say live in Boston, New York, whatever?

A. Well, certainly when I look at what's happening in Boston today I couldn't answer that positively.

Q. Watch your tongue. (Laughter)

A. Well, my. . . my kid's there too. Who live in Roxbury, incidentally.

Q. Yea, I guess we should go, your wife. . .

A. Well, I just. . . I feel we haven't made enough progress. We. . . until Xerox came to town, ours was a rather stuffy community. And I think Xerox has done very much to help put pressure, impetus, and to. . . as far as the industrial pressure is concerned towards change which would be wholesome.

Q. Do you think Rochester retains its sense of stuffiness?

A. Not as much, no. No, I think we. . . we are. . . we are much easier now. We are. . . but, again things have. . . things have improved at Kodak for the Jews and the blacks. I would say that the same is true of the community at large. The same community has not stood still. And I've. . . I'm active in the Housing Council. I'm active in Tempro, which is a housing unit of our temple. We . . . we find the border or the barrier is not as stiff and unsurmountable as it used to be for poor blacks.

Q. Yea. Another question. What do you think of . . . of the future of Rochester's Jewish community? Think it's . . .?

A. Rochester has a . . . a very strong Jewish community largely because of the clothing industry which had brought many Jews to this area. Like all cities there's a centrifugal force which drives the middle class out of the city so that they become dispersed. We don't have strong Jewish neighborhoods anymore, unless you consider Brighton. . .

Q. Right. . .

A. . . . a Jewish neighborhood, which may well be the case. I don't. . . my kids claim it is. I . . . I can't. . . I don't know.

Q. Or even perhaps Irondequoit to a . . . to a lesser extent. Isn't there another Jewish segment. . .?

A. There's some, yea. I . . . I think maybe that's right because in contrast to Gates, for example, you'll find more Jews per square mile in Irondequoit or Brighton.

Q. That's farther out. Well, it's pointed. . . there are Catholic suburbs and. . .

A. Yea, yea. Well, but they're dispersed. We don't have ethnic neighborhoods any longer in the sense that we had earlier. So, the focus is very much more diffused in terms of living. I, myself, had voted against my temple moving out of the city. I had voted against the Jewish Community Center moving from . . . from the city out to Westfall Road in that area because I felt we needed a focus. Clearly this is not the view of most of my fellow Jews because they want it the other way.

Q. OK. Just one or two questions then on contemporary issues. One of the things that has struck me in the past just from perusing the newspapers quickly is the Ugandan incident. What are your feelings on it? What. . . did you support that incident personally?

- A. Well, let's be specific. Which inci. . . I don't support Idi Amin.
- Q. You really get to me. OK.
- A. If you. . . if what you are asking. . . if what you are asking, do I approve of what Israelis did? Yes. In free the hostages, I must say it was a matter of tremendous relief to me because of what I could see coming was a. . . a 100 Jews or so who were gonna be killed by the terrorists or PLO people, I don't care what they are called. There might be some ringing of hands.
- Q. But that was it.
- A. But that would be it.
- Q. Yea.
- A. As far as I could see from the reports there was. . . it was essentially a conspiracy involving the government of Uganda as well as the kidnapers. Under the circumstances I. . . I was pleased, in fact relieved, in fact more than that, a bit proud of the elan shown by the. . . the Israelis taking things into their own hands. How they got together to get the people out of there. Taking a chance, and carrying it off.
- Q. And they did.
- A. They did. And I must add, even if it had been unsuccessful, even if they had been killed. I still would have preferred that than being slaughtered in cold blood like so many lambs.
- Q. Yea. I think that's. . .
- A. OK.
- Q. OK. One more question. . .
- A. Sure.
- Q. About the State of Israel. It's a basic question, but it leads on to a. . .
- A. Well, I don't. . . as I told you earlier, I came out of Germany. Except for my immediate family who went with me, everybody else got killed. You know

A. (Continued) millions, millions died.

Q. That includes your relatives?

A. That includes my relatives. But people who were not my relatives who died because they were Jews. I did not, not because of any valor on my part, it was chance. I don't put it in the hands of God because he does not control the evil in man. The fact that I survived without any special merit puts some responsibility on me to try to help the survival of others who are threatened, My brethren just because they are Jews. I was. . . I have very strong feelings about survival of Israel Jewish community. I would be very pleased if any of my children would go there and settle. At this stage they are not. My own part, at least in terms of support, I think I. . . I've helped.

Q. OK. One more question and we literally call it quits. OK. Do you think Israel will survive? As a nation-state specifically?

A. I have nightmares that it does not. At least I. . . I have nephews and nieces, never mind if they are personal blood relations or not. I don't think I'd want to live myself in Israel.

Q. Good place to end. . . End of Side 2.

END OF TAPE II, SIDE A