

Interviewee Clifford Lovenheim

Interviewer Brian Mitchell

Date(s) of interview July 7, 1976 (1)

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

This interview took place at Mr. Lovenheim's home (400 Ambassador Drive). We met at 9:00 PM in his livingroom. Mr. Lovenheim attempted to answer the questions as precisely as was possible.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Lovenheim is President of Great Lakes Press. He has lived in Rochester since he was approximately five years old and still maintains an active interest in his publishing firm.

Interview abstract

Mr. Lovenheim dealt in great detail with the growth of his firm from a small general publishing firm to its present size (app. 44th in the US) with a number of specialties (eg: Jigsaw Puzzles).

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

<u>§</u> Social history	<u>**</u> Jewish community
<u>**</u> Family	<u>*</u> community relations
<u>***</u> Demographic/residential	<u>__</u> Religious life
<u>***</u> Economic	<u>**</u> Jewish education
<u>__</u> Political/civic	<u>__</u> Anti-semitism
<u>__</u> Zionism/Israel	

Interview log

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

--see following page(s) --

Interview: Clifford Lovenheim July 7, 1976.

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THE FIRST SEVERAL MINUTES OF THIS TAPE HAVE BEEN LOST DUE TO MECHANICAL FAILURE. WE BEGAN BY DISCUSSING THE RISE OF THE GREAT LAKES PRESS AND WILL PICK UP OUR CONVERSATION AT THE POINT WHERE MR. LOVENHEIM AND I WERE DISCUSSING THE PLANT'S SPECIALTIES. SEE THE BEGINNING OF OUR SECOND INTERVIEW FOR A SUMMARY OF THESE MISSING MINUTES.

\*\*\* I. Great Lakes Press:

- a. competition is extremely rough -- compared it to a "battle royale"
  - 1. success of the firm based upon luck "Been in the right place at the right time and ..."
- b. his previous work had been as a salesmen on commission for a large Detroit firm
  - 1. no Rochester office, office was his "mother's telephone"
- c. 300 people now employed at the Press, firm a family firm younger group is beginning to take over the firm
  - 1. present plans include continuing the business but taking the time to enjoy oneself

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II. Education:

- a. lived on Sawyer St. and then moved to Avenue D., primarily a German Catholic neighborhood
  - 1. moved to Hanover St. -- small street full of synagogues

- b. grandmother went to the English-speaking classes -- whole Joseph Ave. had a great impact on his life
  - 1. no one had anything, no one bothered to lock their doors

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- c. father from Budapest and mother was from Vienna--
  - 1. father from a wealthy Budapest family in banking and freight-fowarding business
    - a. would rent a freight car and find products that would be needed in other countries
    - b. grandfather had been a pawn broker until he turned to banking and factoring
  - 2. father's younger brother ran the business -- father had some race horses and he became interested in the mistress of a Prussian Cabinet officer who was transferred to America
    - a. father followed them to NYC

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- 3. only one cousin escaped the Nazis, Austrian who became the Dean of the Canadian diplomatic corps

- a. remainder of the family wiped out --- one of the reasons that "I stopped speaking German was that there was such a revulsion in me"

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- 4. first moved to Port Henry where the iron mines employed many Slovaks
  - a. father became the "court interpreter"

\* d. interested in athletics, formed a team which eventually  
termed semi-pro (an all-Jewish team, called "Clermont Foot-  
ball Team)

1. graduated from East high school; eventually attended  
Syracuse on a football scholarship until scholarship  
was cancelled when he hurt himself

\* e. did receive some Jewish education; formal education  
began only as an adult when he began to educate himself

Interview with CLIFFORD LOVENHEIM  
July 7, 1976  
By Brian Mitchell

Page 1

Tape 1  
Side 1  
Interview 1

Q. Give it a couple of seconds. Okay, this is Brian Mitchell interviewing Mr. Clifford Lovenheim at his home, 400 Ambassador Drive, on July 7, 1976, in connection with the University of Rochester Oral History Program. Here we go.

Note: The rest of this tape could not be transcribed as the cassette tape was ruined apparently at the time of taping.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1, INTERVIEW 1

Tape 1  
Side 11  
Interview 1

- Q. Okay. This will open side 11 then. One of the . . . before we move off the subject entirely, one of the last questions that I have in mind to ask was: in 1936 you started up the Rochester business. But, previous to that, you had done work in printing. Could you outline basically what you . . .
- A. Well, I was a salesman. I was working on commission for a large Detroit printer. And, I was selling printing in this area. I started in Great Lakes Press when I was twenty-six years old. I began selling printing in 1931, I was twenty-one. And I was a pretty good salesman. They wanted me to become Sales Manager at the magnificent salary of \$75.00 a week which was a lot of money in those days. But I was making more money than that as a commission salesman, and your skin is closer to you than your underwear, so why work for seventy-five dollars a week? Especially when I had an idea of going into business for myself and having all the marbles.
- Q. Okay. What kind of relationship with Detroit . . . was it centralized from Detroit and you operated the Rochester office?
- A. There was no Rochester office. The Rochester office was a telephone in my mother's house, and . . . but they had a plant in Detroit. There was a plant in Detroit.
- Q. Okay. Last question we'll ask on this: who would . . . if you had to characterize your business associates, who would you say they are? Like people primarily in printing throughout the Rochester Community?
- A. Well, Great Lakes Press has been in business for forty years. This is our fortieth year. We began in 1936. And, now my brothers are in the business. My brother Andrew's my partner. My brother Earl is the Manager of our jigsaw puzzle operation. Leo K. Caplain has been with us a good many years; he's

A. (Continued) our Creative Director. Phil Sensal was a man we started in business with. He's getting up to retirement age. He was our Manufacturing Director. We have a very large organization. We have three hundred key people. I don't even know all their names. I used to know, not only the names of everybody who worked for me, but what their wives' names were, what their children's names were. I remember once we went to a Syracuse football game. We went in two automobiles so . . . It was quite different then. And, we have a say, a middle management group that's just dying to be management. My son is very active in the business. He's an MBA, a Harvard MBA. My son John. My brother Andrew's son in law. Larry Glasser, he's an MBA from Columbia. He's also very active in the business. These are the two young fellows who are taking over more and more of the obligations and responsibilities of the business. And, they're gonna run the business.

Q. What are your own plans?

A. My own plans . . . I don't really want to retire. I'm having too much fun in business, but I don't want to work anywheres near as hard as I used to. I go to New York every couple of weeks. I'm going there Tuesday. I'd like to take off more time to play golf. I'd like to take trips with my wife. We just came back from Stratford where I was up there on our year . . . yearly indoctrination of Shakespeare. Weren't too good this year, we didn't think. We enjoyed it much more in other years. I have a place in Florida in the winter where I spend two or three weeks a month down there playing golf.

Q. I guess the idea then would be for you keep your hand in it, and to enjoy yourself, too.

A. Yeah. Sweet but not too sweet.

Q. (Laughter) Okay. Okay. We'll switch off now to another topic entirely which is, sort of, past education. Knowing now what I do, you were about four or

Q. (Continued) five when you came to Rochester.

A. That is right.

Q. Okay. So, you were educated basically in Rochester?

A. I was educated in Rochester.

Q. Okay. Could you describe, first of all where you're from and the school you went to, grammar school?

A. Well, the first grammar school that I went to . . . we came to Rochester, and we lived on Sawyer Street. How my father found that place, I don't know. But, we lived there only a year or so. It was on the west side of town. We were the only Jewish people there. And we moved to 673 Avenue D. That's where my brother Andrew was born. My brother Earl had been born already.

Q. Is that over by St. Paul (unintelligible)?

A. Avenue D runs from St. Paul Street east to Hudson Avenue.

Q. Okay.

A. We lived at 673 Avenue D which was in between Joseph and Hudson. It was primarily a German-Catholic neighborhood. I went to Number 22 School. And even though . . . we lived in a double house, and even though the other people in the double house, the landlords, were Jewish, they had no children. So I grew up without any Jewish children to play with at that location. All of the children I played with were Catholics, and they all went to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Convent, which was right up near Twenty-Two School. We walked to school together. They went to the convent and I went to Twenty-Two School, which was on Zimbrich Street. And I got out of Twenty-Two School a few minutes before they got out of convent school, so I waited for them in the convent school. And, I got to know the catechisms and the New Testament pretty well just by being with those kids.

Q. Sure.

- A. One day I got into an argument with my mother, and I called her a dirty old Jew. And she let me know that that was no way to talk. I learned it at the end of a hairbrush. I remember that.
- Q. That'll do it.
- A. At the convent school, they were having a Christmas Pageant about the Christ Child, and I had been to all their rehearsals, and I knew the part of the Christ Child pretty well. So, they drafted me to play the part of the Christ Child, because I knew the lines. The other kids didn't. So, when they put on the pageant, they had a monsignor or a bishop, I don't know who it was, some visiting high mucky-muck from the Catholic Church there. And, one of the sisters apologetically explained to the Monsignor that I was Jewish and I was playing the Christ Child.
- Q. It seems appropriate . . .
- A. He grinned. He grinned very broadly and he says that there was nothing wrong with that. I remember that very vividly. But we lived on Hanover . . . on Avenue D until I was seven or eight years old and we moved to Hanover Street, which was right in the heart of the Jewish section. And that's really where I grew up. Hanover Street doesn't exist any more today. But it was a street with seven or eight synagogues on the street. It began at Kelly Street, and there was a synagogue . . . the Carcsa (spelling?) Synagogue, and then there was the Big Shul, Beth (Unknown). And next door to Beth (Unknown) was the one called the Little Shul (Unknown) Israel. And we lived right next door. We lived in between (Unknown) Israel and Ely Kobaleski's Saloon. And then a little further down the street was the Light of Monastere and Israel, which was the Turkish (Unknown) Synagogue. That's now located on Norton Street and they just call themselves Light of Israel. And then there were a few more down the street. Hanover Street was a very small street, but it was full of synagogues at that time. And, we . . . I . . . we learned that on Hanover Street,



- A. (Continued) I was seven or eight years old, and I immediately became friendly with a kid my own age who lived across the street almost, by the name of Nathan Goldberg. We were close friends when I was seven or eight years old, and he's today one of my very closest friends. And he's a week older than I am so I have to have respect for him.
- Q. (Laughter) Does he remind you?
- A. Oh, yes. He . . . he'll be sixty-six next Christmas Day, and I won't be sixty-six until New Year's Eve. So, I have to show him a great deal of respect. But, we're very close friends to this day, and we see each other a couple or three times a week, and it's been a very rewarding, rich friendship over a great many years. We're old friends. That was my introduction to Hanover Street. I grew up on Hanover Street. I went to Number 9 School. I remember Number 9 School extremely well. I went to the boy's club which was a social work endeavor of Number 9 School. We were all poor people living there. And there were some very wonderful young men who were going to the U of R at that time. Bill Humel who was a full-back on the football team. Mercer Brugler who became president of Falder Company. Red "Kick" Calaghan who was quarterback on the football. There were a whole slew of them who interested themselves in this social work situation. And we learned how to play Karum, and God knows what else. We used to go there once a week. It was a wonderful experience. When we lived on Hanover Street, my grandmother came to live with us from Vienna. The war was over. I remember it very well. I was twelve years old. And the language in our house immediately became German, because she didn't speak English. We all spoke German.
- Q. Can you speak German?
- A. I used to speak German very fluently. German was really my mother tongue. But after my grandmother died, I stopped speaking German.

Q. When did she die?

A. She died in 1937, that was forty years ago. As a matter of fact, when I was in Vienna last year, I was able to speak German. I . . .

Q. You got away with it?

A. Oh, yes. I got away with it. You don't ever really forget it. But, my grandmother went to the English-speaking classes. There were a lot of immigrants on our street. They all went there. And, she learned to speak a little German, but she was too old. And I remember Hanover Street with its synagogues and the whole Joseph Avenue very well. It was very . . . it had a great impact on my life. We were all poor kids. I remember I organized a Hanover Street Olympics at the time of the Olympic Games. We had our own athletic competitions. We ran around the block. We jumped from the curb. We did all kinds of things. Hanover Street was an interesting place. Nobody had anything. Nobody bothered to lock a door. First of all, everybody was honest. Second of all, you could open any door with a nickel skeleton key from Woolworth's, that's all. People around us, they didn't steal anything. And you'd leave a bike outside or a rake, nobody would take it. People were just different. Today it's not so.

Q. Could I stop for a second and ask you a couple of questions. First of all, your father I presume is originally from Austria?

A. No. My father was Budapest. My father was a Hungarian. At that time, it was one country. My father was from Budapest, and my mother was from Vienna.

Q. From Vienna. I see. Since we're getting into the whole neighborhood structure and so on, I'll back track here, and then we can move up to the point we're at now. For the purposes of the tape. Okay. First of all, what made them leave Austria-Hungary and second, how did they meet each other?

A. Well, my father came from a quite wealthy Budapest family that was the banking

A. (Continued) and freight-forwarding business. My father's family used to rent an entire railroad car at the wholesale rate, and then find Hungarian products that were gonna be shipped out of the country. And they'd fill up the car with that. In other words, Hungarian pepper, Hungarian wine, Hungarian iron, God knows what were shipped to, say, Denmark went one of my grandfather's cars. My grandfather got into that business, I don't really know how. He had been a pawn broker originally, and a wine grower. He got into that business. They not only arranged for the transportation, but if you were a Hungarian pepper farmer and you wanted to ship, say, \$200.00 worth of pepper to somebody in Denmark, it might take you eight months to get your money out of Denmark. So, what my grandfather used to do would be to factor the money. He would not only deliver the freight, but he'd give the Hungarian pepper growers, say, \$180.00 cash and he'd collect \$200.00. He became . . . they became very wealthy people. And . . . they had offices all over the world. They were in the shipping business. They were really a wealthy people. And my father's younger brother ran the business. But, my father was interested . . . was not interested in the family business. The story he told me was that he had a couple of race horses which he used to race all over the continent of Europe. He was a dandy. And, he became interested in the mistress of a Prussian cabinet officer. And this Prussian cabinet officer was made Minister of New York City. He of course took his mistress or secretary along with him, and my father decided to come over to America. Well, he liked America. Somehow, I don't know how it happened, but my father's brother met my mother's sister, and they became engaged and got married. And my father went to Europe for the wedding, and at the wedding he met my mother, who was . . . who was my uncle's wife's sister. That's how it became. And, of course, the family was wiped out by the Nazi's. My cousin's the only one who escaped. I have a double cousin in

A. (Continued) Montreal who was the Austrian-Hungarian Consul. General today.

Q. No kidding!

A. In Montreal. He's the Dean of Diplomatic Corps. And I'm going up there for our annual visit. I go there once, he'll come here once. And he and his sister live in Montreal. The only relatives I have on my father's side.

Q. They were all wiped out in (unintelligible)?

A. Absolutely. They found my uncle floating in the Danube, that's all. Just wiped out. Our whole family was wiped out, completely wiped out.

Q. There's no way of course, being where they were, for them to get away out of there.

A. No. No way. No escape. That's . . . just completely wiped out.

Q. What about your mother's family?

A. Well, that was my mother's family, too.

Q. Oh, yeah. Of course.

A. All the same family. I was in Vienna, and there's just nothing there.

Q. Do you like Germany as a result?

A. I think one of the reasons I stopped speaking German was there was such a revulsion in me for Germany. You gotta . . . you gotta admit that I spoke German as fluently as I speak English.

Q. I see.

A. It was my mother tongue. It was the language in our house even though . . .

Q. You heard it continually.

A. . . . even though my mother spoke English before I was born, she studied English in school in Vienna. But, I grew up speaking German. Reading German, speaking German all my life.

Q. So, your father decided at the Viennese wedding to come back to America with your mother?

A. That's right. How did he land in Port Henry? Port Henry had an iron mine not

- A. (Continued) far from Port Henry called Iron Mountain. They did strip mining basically, and employed a great many Slavic, and Slavacian, and Hungarian miners. And, every two weeks they'd come streaming down the mountain with their pay in their hand yelling, "we want women, we want whiskey." And, they'd all wind up in jail. And, my father ran a little general store in Port Henry. And, also got a little income as being the court interpreter, because he could speak Hungarian as well as English. That's how he got to Port Henry.
- Q. I see. I see. It's an interesting parallel since my Irish ancestor (unintelligible).
- A. So, there you are.
- Q. Okay. Now we moved them up . . . I think we're pretty familiar. We moved them up to Canadaigua. We placed them in Rochester. We're now late grammar school in your own life.
- A. We're in . . . on Hanover Street. And, I think it was an important part of my life. I formed friendships there that lasted me all my life. I went to Washington Junior High School from Number 9 School, and from Washington Junior High School, I went to East High School. And, I made very close friends. And we formed a football team, because there was no high school football in Rochester, called the Clairmont Football Team. It was all Jewish boys, and we used to play other amateur football teams throughout the city. We were probably one of the best football teams there was in our class in the city. And we grew up to be a semi-pro football team.
- Q. You had an interest in athletics, then?
- A. Yes. Joe Borsick who was my close friend, who was also on this Clairmont Football Team, went to the U. of R., became a football player at the U. of R. Irving Nory was manager of the football team. He was a close friend of mine. And we see each other . . . run into people once in awhile, from time to time.

- A. (Continued) Bob Smith who is our jigsaw puzzle sales manager used to play on the Clairmont Football Team.
- Q. I see how close those ties have been taken.
- A. Yeah. There have been very strong ties. The Clairmont Football Team was an important turning point, if you want to call it, in my life. It took a lot of poor kids and gave them a direction and it gave them a sense of being able to accomplish something, and get somewheres on their own. And it was an invaluable experience. I went from East High School . . . I got out of East High School in 1927, I was sixteen years old. And, I didn't go to college right away. I knocked around for a couple of years. We just didn't have any money. And finally, a group of Rochester people and Syracuse University alumni decided to send me to Syracuse University on a football scholarship. And, I went to Syracuse University for a half a year, and I got hurt in spring training. I cancelled my scholarship and that was the end of my university education.
- Q. I see.
- A. Well, that's how it was in those days. And, while I was there, I messed around with the water polo team. Anything to stay on training tables, so you could eat. And, somewheres along the line I picked up the ability to type very fast on the typewriter, and I got all kinds of weird jobs typing envelopes or postal cards, or God knows what.
- Q. I've had those jobs myself.
- A. So, you know what I'm talking about.
- Q. Oh, indeed!
- A. But, they cancelled my scholarship and then the depression really hit, and that was the end of my formal education.
- Q. So, you were lucky to get the job with the firm in Detroit?

A. That's right.

Q. One other question on education (unintelligible). Did you receive any formal Jewish education?

A. Well, as a kid when we lived on Hanover Street, I did go to (Unknown, Fayder?), which I disliked very much. I had a very intolerant sort of a rabbi who didn't really teach us anything. And, my formal education in Judaism didn't begin until I was an adult, and I developed a . . . I made up my mind I would educate myself, which I did. I read extensively, and I still do. I'm pretty well read, and I understand Jewish ethics, and Jewish philosophy, and Jewish history, and Jewish literature, which I think are important. Jewish point of view.

Q. What do you think that point of view has to say to the world? What do you think makes that point of view unique?

A. Well, I'm gonna tell you. Do you read the New York Times Magazine?

Q. Well, I read it sometimes.

A. Did you read it last Sunday?

Q. No.

A. There was an article in the magazine called, 'The Best Man' by a writer by the name of Martin Marty, who's got a very delicate sense of humor, and a bit-ter sense of humor. He writes about how the conventions up at the . . . presidential conventions were deadlocked and the . . . finally they selected a best man. And, guess who they selected as the candidate. They selected Jesus. And, there was a lot of hup-dee-doo because He wasn't an American. They had to get a congressional act passed so He could run for president. They got that done, and they came up with a wonderful slogan, "Nobody votes against Jesus". This is in last Sunday's New York Times. Now Jesus is inter-viewed and He runs for office, and He's asked about His views on abortion. And He always says, "Well, my father and I have stood for life." He quotes the

A. (Continued) New Testament and the Old Testament, and He makes it embarrassing for people all the way through. At any rate, the great night finally comes, and the election takes place and the poles are one hundred percent right. Nobody voted against Jesus. Nobody. But also, nobody voted for Him. That's my point of view.

Q. Okay. I see. This is the end of side II.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE II, INTERVIEW I