

Mrs. Freida Mandel
August 23, 1976 Tape 1 Interview 1
Nancy J. Rosenbloom

Side A

- A. Mrs. Mandell arrived in Rochester from New York City in 1926.
She has lived in the Joseph Avenue area for 50 years.
- *** B. Activities of women in the 1920s and 1930's (Service to Poor)
- (Spelling?) Bitter Cholim
Little House on Kelly Street (for wayfarers sent to solicit)
Ledes HaSedek ~~v&zz~~ visits to Jewish patients at State Hospital with Rabbi Solomon
Sonye Circle at B'rith Kodesh Visits to Craig Colony
BEN GOLDSTEIN
Jewish Children's Home
"Alfred Hart Synagogue"
Replacement of Home; Foster Home service
- C. Recollections of Joseph Ave. ~~use~~ Area
Jewish Home and Infirmary "Big Old Mansion on St. Paul Street"
Mr. MELZER
Ladies Auxillary
- ** D. Women's roles "women found time for everything"
- ** E. Rochester arbeiter ring Yiddish culture in Rochester
Comment on shoe industry
Use of Yiddish language, changes over the generations.
- F. Sephardic community. Charity would be given to them if they needed it. Charity was given regardless of national origins.
Free Loan Society.
- H. Mrs. Mandell worked with her husband in the store and had no daytime extra "curricular" activities.
- ** I. Depression - Recollection of Welfare in the 1930's.
Self-help gardens.

SIDE B

- J. Jy, JCC
Originally Mandells were part of the original donors to move the Jy building to Andrews Street.
Current member of JCC and participation in some of the activities for "senior citizens"
- ** K. Hebrew education of her children (3 daughters)
Talmud Torah
Beth El
anecdote about getting the children to Beth El from Norton Street
- L. Residential patterns
Norton Street 1926-42
St. Paul area 1942-56
Varinna Drive 1956
- M. Mrs. Mandell worked all around the store. Despite living in a non-Jewish neighborhood she never felt isolated.
Her children were the only Jewish children at 39 school.
- N. Recollections of first learning about the Holocaust
- O. Shuls on Hanover Street; each town from Europe had its own shul.
- P. Intermarriage "Higher education responsible" ; it is

Interviewee Mrs. Freida Mandell

Interviewer Nancy J. Rosenbloom

Date(s) of interview August 23, 1976

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

I interviewed Mrs. Mandell at her home on Varinna Drive. We had several interruptions including a lengthy telephone call that seemed to upset Mrs. Mandell. She is quite willing to talk but she was nervous about the tape recorder. A second interview is warranted.

Background of interviewee

Mrs. Mandell arrived in Rochester in 1926 from NYC when she married Hy Mandell. She worked in the store, raised three children and has been active in many charitable pursuits of the nature that few people pursue because there is no glory there.

Mr. Mandell has also been interviewed.

Interview abstract

Mrs. Mandell talked about women's activities in the 1920's and 30's; her recollections of the Joseph Avenue area, the depression and several stories about herself and her family.

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

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| ** <u>Social history</u> | *** <u>Jewish community</u> |
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Interview loc

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

--see following page(s)--

Interview I
Tape I
Side A

Q. Today is August 23rd, my name is Nancy Rosenbloom and I'm interviewing Mrs. . . .

A. Frieda Mandell. . .

Q. Frieda Mandell. And at her home. You said you've been in Rochester since 1926.

A. I came here in 1926.

Q. Ok. So then we'll go back to talking about what we were talking about. Why. . .
what brought you to Rochester, by the way?

A. I got married and came to live here.

Q. Where are you from?

A. New York City. Born and bred, New York City, married there and came to live here. And I've been here these 50 years. When I came to Rochester our Jewish population was centered in the Joseph Avenue/Clinton/and St. Paul areas. And it went as far. . .almost as far as Norton St. People then had a different idea about what should be done for its general population, the poor, the needy, the helpless. And many Jewish women formed little organizations that took care of the wants of the community. A Jew would be too proud then to ask for charity, so they had organizations like Bikker Cholim, which took care of the needs of families that didn't want to ask for help. If they found out that somebody was in need, they did things on a secret plan. The organizations had members out who heard just wants and needs, reported it to the committee and the committee would deal with it, the family got its milk every week, a chicken for its shabbath, or a meal for its youngsters. They would leave the food and never identified themselves. They came from Bikker Cholim. And, for the needy that really was the break. They felt no sense of obligation to anybody that they owed anything to. There was the Little House on Kelly Street

A. (Continued) which was called Dachnusus Porhim. And that was the house where they housed the wayfarer. In those years, Rochester had a lot of men who came and mishalochim. A mishaloch is a solicitor for an organization. They come in behalf of the various yeshivas, both here in the United States and in Europe. At that time not so many in Israel as the Eastern part of Europe and they solicited from. . . from the different Jewish people in the city, from the various synagogues. And in order for them to have a kosher house to stay in, there was a group of women who took care of a house on Kelly Street and they called it Dachnusus Porhim, the wayfarer could stop, it had a kitchen. They could prepare their own little food that they brought in. There was a nice bed to sleep in. The women of this group saw to it that there was always linen, nice clean linen, and that there was a bottle of milk in the refrigerator, that there was tea bags for them to have a cup of tea. They kept it strictly kosher house in this place. There was the group called the Ledes Hasedek, ladies organization also. Charitable work was their field. And they catered a lot to the Jewish patients at the state hospital. These women would call on the hospital. They'd go with Rabbi Solomon and for every Jewish holiday they set a table for the Jewish patients. And can. . . Rabbi Solomon conducted services. And those at the state hospital felt their attachment to their faith through the work of these women. In B'rith Kodesh there was a group called the Sonye Circle, it started there. And these women gave their time to patients at Craig Colony for the epileptics, which is in Sonye, New York, a distance of about 42 miles from Rochester one way. And there again it brought the Jewish atmosphere to the confined people in this Colony. When I started with this group, Ben Goldstein from Temple B'rith Kodesh was the ritual leader on Craig Colony for the Jewish faith. When Ben Goldstein had an automobile accident coming home from Craig at Sonye, it was

A. (Continued) bitter winter and he had an accident on the icy road. And from then on he could not go and eventually he gave up the work and Rabbi Hyman was appointed to take over. Rabbi Hyman still goes. I have gone to Craig myself for about 34 years once a month bringing Jewish foods to the patients, visiting the various buildings. For holidays, all Jewish patients who come out. . . who can come out are brought to Shanahan Hall and we set up for them the traditional meals related to the various holidays. For instance, for Pesach, we give them a real Seder. For Rosh Hashannah, they have the traditional New Year's service. Rabbi Hyman conducts the service. For Chanukkah, we have a lovely Chanukkah party for them and they get Chanukkah gifts. And in that way it keeps them reminded of the fact that they are Jews and these holidays belong to them. Shut it. . .

Q. Ok. How about the activities of the Jewish Children's Home?

A. The Jewish Children's Home was on Gorham Street. And Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Hollander ran the home. It was not like we find on homes for children today. Today's homes are institutions, but the Jewish home was a real home. It was a house. And Mrs. Hollander was the mother and Mr. Hollander was the father. And all the children that were in the home. . . I can't say how many. . . were given personal attention by both Mr. and Mrs. Hollander. Many, many very fine young men and women have come out of the Jewish Children's Home. In . . . as I said before, the home was a regular. . . a big house and everybody lived in . . . as one family. And they really had a mother and a father while they were in the home.

Q. About how many children were there?

A. Gee, I don't know offhand. Then in time Alfred Hart saw fit to build a synagogue on the grounds and they called it the Alfred Hart Synagogue attached to the Jewish Children's Home. I. . . I can't remember whether they built an extra building for housing the children. But those children who were in the

- A. (Continued) home really knew what it meant to live in family style rather than in institutional style. With. . . with time the home became obsolete because the social services took over and had child placement service and put the children into individual homes so that they had a family attachment, each child with an individual family. I think that it worked out pretty good and they were really like foster homes for these children. And eventually our home just didn't exist anymore. I think the building still stands. I won't say for sure. If urban renewal hasn't torn it down, it was right there on Gorham Street. I don't know what's become of the synagogue, it's been closed ever since Mr. Hollander gave up being supervisor of this Jewish Children's Home. And. . .
- Q. Do you remember were they mostly immigrant children?
- A. No. Children from homes where there were tragedies, children from homes where there was disharmony, parents arguing rather than see the children become victims of circumstances, they were put into the. . . the home was there to take them and if they could, they did. There were orphans in the home. It was never called Orphan's Home. It was called Jewish Children's Home, and it took in children from broken families. Mother was sick and they . . . no one to look after the child, it went to the home for the duration of time that it needed that help. Once the family unit became a unit again, the child would leave.
- Q. How about the Mother's Club. Were you involved in that?
- A. Mother's. . . Mother's Club was the women's. . . again, it was these same women who were involved with the Dachnusus Porim that took an interest in the children in the home and the Mother. . . the Mother's Club used to see to their personal needs. And if it was a Bar Mitzvah, the Mother's Club always took over and gave the boy a nice Bar Mitzvah. They acted like second mothers

- A. (Continued) to these children. And it. . . it was a beautiful set up for those who, unfortunately, had to have that help. But, our Jewish Children's Home really was a credit to the Jewish people of Rochester, just for the way it maintained its children. Mother's Club the very same way and that, too, as these. . . as the children's home gradually went out of existence, the Mother's Club just went out of existence, too.
- Q. These were the same women. . . ?
- A. As a rule, you found the same women involved in this type of work.
- Q. Did they mostly live in. . . in neighborhoods. . . ?
- A. Well, they lived any. . . lived within the boundaries of our Jewish sector. I would say from about Kelly Street to Norton, from Hudson over to St. Paul. At that time, Joseph Avenue was the main street for Jewish life. That is, it had its butcher markets and its groceries and its herring stores and drug stores and dry goods stores. Mr. Nusbaum had a real department store there. The cap maker was on Joseph Avenue and the nicest Jewish bakeries were on Joseph Avenue. Even until recently, our best Jewish bakeries were on Joseph Avenue. But, with urban renewal and everything being torn down, those things all became extinct. If you go through the neighborhood now, you try to visualize what stood here and sometimes it's hard because many of these streets have disappeared.
- Q. You mean the whole re-routing of the traffic. . . ?
- A. No, no. Not so much re-routing of traffic as. . . instead of having streets they've taken these streets and put 'em off the map and they have made projects. So that. . .
- Q. Oh, oh.
- A. . . . now where Chapman Gardens are today, were small streets years ago, and the Jewish people lived on these streets. Kelly Street today, there's no resemblance of what was once the house that was Dachnusus Porim. Wouldn't

A. (Continued) even know that it ever existed.

Q. How about the Jewish Home & Infirmary? Was . . . was there a Women's Club?

A. There's been a Ladies Auxiliary all the time. 'Course now it's in full bloom. Now, a lot of our young Jewish women identify themselves with the Ladies Auxiliary of the Jewish Home.

Q. Years ago?

A. There was a small. . . the Home was small then. Years ago the Home was also, just like our Jewish Children's Home, the Home was a big old mansion on St. Paul Street. And I don't know how many bedrooms it had. . . mis. . . when I first came to Rochester Mr. Meltzer was in charge of the Jewish Home. The . . . Jewish Home. . . he lived in the Home and I don't know whether they had ten or twelve occupants, residents at the Jewish Home. It was not called Infirmary then, it was just a house where they housed these old people, saw to it that their needs were taken care of, got their meals, had a little synagogue there. And a Jew was a Jew in the Home if he didn't have a place to be with his own family. And eventually there was . . . became a Ladies Auxiliary. And today the Ladies Auxiliary is quite a thing. It gives birthday parties, it has volunteers. Saturdays they serve tea in the home, the women play a very active part today in the Home.

Q. I'm interested in sort of a different kind of question. Why. . . how. . . why did women have so much time to devote to. . . did they just make the time to devote to charitable acts? Did most women work?

A. I think. . . I think that years ago people had feelings for each other. Most people had good sized families. There was no television, no country club, no playing golf. The whole life was a different life. It was a life where one felt for the other. If there was sickness in a house a neighbor thought nothing of cooking up a pot of soup and bringing it into the house where the

A. (Continued) mother couldn't take care of the needs of the family. They'd go in if there was a new baby born, they'd go in and help. Women did not go the hospital years ago like they do today. The women scrubbed and did their own housework, washed and ironed. . . there was no drip dry here at all. Yet, they always found time for helping a neighbor. I. . . I think that there wasn't as much selfishness or self-interest at that time. It was. . . most of them came from foreign countries and they know. . . they knew what it meant to help one another and that was the way they did. They lived that way, practiced it that way, and had compassion one for the other. Today, life is a different life. Even. . . even with all the conveniences we have today, there are not too many women who will give of themselves to help organizations where they would not be recognized as being a giver or a doer. Little organizations like the Sonye Circle that I belong to. It's a lot of work, but where we were once 23 ladies, today we are only 3. And we three keep up this work. You can't recruit new help because they don't care to go that far to do thi. . . to do anything. When I think of how the women used to fill their baskets and shopping bags and go on the railroad as far as Mount Morris. And from Mount Morris, they'd be picked up and brought to Craig, they felt that they had accomplished something. And they did.

Q. If I'm not mistaken, Craig isn't. . . has more than. . . it has handicapped people as well. . .

A. It. . . it has epileptics. . .

Q. . . and mentally retarded. . .

A. . . epileptics and retarded. They become handicapped because of the seizures and falling and injuries that come as a result of having these epileptic spells. Today, with new medicines, you don't see as many seizures and you don't see as many crippled people on the Colony as there used to be

A. (Continued) years ago.

Q. Are there as many people at Craig as there used to be?

A. Yea.

Q. Because they are trying to bring them back into the. . .

A. Yes, there. . . with the new medications, dylantin and phenobarb and other things, they control the seizures and not having seizures, they are gradually brought back into community life. A lot of them are. . . are placed with families. They have what they call half-way houses. They let 'em out into these half-way houses and they get their feelings again of life in a community. And then they're placed to do work to the best of their abilities. And that way, they are earning their way through life. They're able to be on Social Security. And they have the freedom of being in public again rather than confined to the area that the Colony covers.

Q. Were there ever many Jews at Craig?

A. The population used to be about 10% of the hospital. I think at one time they had close to 300 Jewish patients. Today, they've got about 100. But, when I started to go to Craig, they had 2300 patients on the Colony and now I think there's about 1100.

Q. So that's good.

A. And, they don't call it Craig Colony anymore, they call it Craig Development Center. And it's really remarkable what dylantin and phenobarb and other types of drugs have done to get these people back into circulation again.

Q. To go back to just how women managed their day with all the. . . with so many activities. Do you think most of the women. . . let's say, if their husbands owned shops down on Joseph Avenue, did they also work in the shop?

A. They. . . the women. . . do you know years ago, women found time for everything. And a charitable act on their part to them was very important.

- A. (Continued) And they knew what it meant to have to help anybody. They made it their business to see to it that part of their time was set aside for doing something for others, aside from doing everything for themselves. Today I feel that most of the . . . most of the women find belonging to the Mars Club and getting there on time or getting out on the golf course or now, the new fad is tennis. They make it their business not to make a date for the time that they want to use for themselves. Whereas years ago, the feeling was, oh, I've got to go like to the Little House on Kelly Street and see to it that the linen is clean because yesterday, somebody slept in that bed.
- Q. Right.
- A. Today, I. . . I haven't run across people who really feel that a thing like that is as important as keeping a date for tennis.
- Q. Yea. Of course. . .
- A. With all the things women had to do in those years, and they baked their own bread and cooked their own meals and there was no pre-packaged stuff, there was no T.V. dinners. There were children in the house maybe five, six, a family of three children was unusual. Yet and. . . as a rule there'd be a Bubby or a Zadie or somebody in the house with the rest of the family. Still in all, they. . . the women always found time to do something for those in need. It never was hard for them.
- Q. Well, what are some of the other organizations from the early years, before. . . how about early Zionist organizations? Were you ever. . .?
- A. That I didn't get involved in, but I remember. . . there was a Zionist library and there was a Zionist group here and they had a library on Chadam Street or Ormond Street, across the street from where the Post Office is today. But that gradually fell to the change of time. I don't know whether there is a Zionist library here in the city anymore at all.

- Q. OK, you were just telling me a cute story about. . . maybe if you'd like. . . the way we got into it, I had asked you about the Arbeiter Ring. . .
- A. Yea, you asked about Arbeiter Ring and I said that the Arbeiter Ring is today called the Workmen's Circle. Years ago, it flourished. People who were of the working class belonged to Arbeiter Ring, and it had a school to teach the children Yiddish. It was on the corner of Joseph and Sullivan Street and it was there until a few years ago. The building was sold and the Ar. . . slowly the Arbeiter Ring membership dwindled. And the few members that were left rent a place now on Clinton Avenue, small quarters, but they still hold fast. How long that'll last, I don't know, but now we have Labor Unions, other groups to take care of these things and as far as learning Yiddish, well. That's up to our today's young people. A lot of them don't care to learn it. But they teach it. They teach it in JCC has a Yiddish class, the Hebrew schools teach it. Our shoe industry is gone, our tailoring industry is gone and most of the people that belonged to Arbeiter Ring were in those industries at that time.
- Q. Oh, there were a lot of Jews in the shoe industries in Rochester?
- A. Oh, shoes and tailoring and. . .
- Q. Women as well as men?
- A. I don't know about the women working in the shoes, but there were plenty of Jewish shoemakers and loads and loads of Jewish tai. . . tailors. They worked in different phases of the tailoring industry. One was a cutter and one was a. . . a seam binder and one put linings in and one put collars on. Each one worked in a different phase of making up a garment. But, tailoring really had plenty of Jewish people working in it.
- Q. Well, we. . . when you were talking about Yiddish, you speak Yiddish?
- A. Oh, sure I do.

Q. You're American-born?

A. Right.

Q. And. . .

A. My . . . my parents were married in this country.

Q. But you learned Yiddish as you were growing up. . .

A. I learned. . . we. . . in our house at home our grandmother lived with us. And our grandmother would never speak English to us because she wanted us to know Yiddish. That was the language that kept the people in the Diaspora together. And so anything we'd say to my grandmother we would have to say it in Yiddish. If we said it in English, she would answer us and say I don't understand you. You will learn Yiddish, but I'll never learn English. Because at that time my grandmother was in her middle seventies and what one could expect then they had no classes for foreigners to study the language. Those things came after World War I with the influx of immigrants from European countries. They had classes for all these foreigners to learn English. My grandmother came here before 1900. And, so she never. . . she never cared to learn English. She just held onto the language that she was brought up with.

Q. Well, among the women, let's say working at the Little House on Kelly Street, people spoke in English, or did people speak in Yiddish?

A. They were Yiddish. . . in those years, the women all were Yiddish-speaking. But, they. . . they were bi-lingual. They knew English and they spoke Yiddish. And most of the wayfarers who came through spoke Yiddish.

Q. So the language of daily. . .

A. Conversation was mostly Yiddish. You came on Joseph Avenue to buy anything, you asked for it in Yiddish.

Q. OK.

A. And the merchant really knew what you wanted.

Q. How about your own children? Do they speak Yiddish?

A. No. They . . . they speak at it, but not fluently. They understand it well. They all went to Hebrew school and learned Hebrew, but of course they didn't teach Yiddish and my own mother spoke Yiddish and English. And her conversation with the children was always in English. And the children, they . . . they can sort of grope their way through, but they're not fluent in the language.

Q. OK.

A. I want you to know that we came. . . I came from a family of five children. And our grandmother always spoke Yiddish to us, yet, three out of the five speak it fluently and two were not fluent at all. They could manage to get through in saying anything they wanted to say, but to take them into conversation, they couldn't.

Q. How. . . how were they. . .

A. Age space between us? My oldest brother, he speaks the language well. I speak it and write it, and read it well. My . . . my sister, who's gone, she understood it well, but didn't speak it well. My . . . the next brother who is next to the youngest, the same way like my sister, but our youngest brother speaks it very fluently.

Q. Oh, so it didn't go according to the age.

A. No, no.

Q. It was the two. . .

A. We two oldest spoke it well. And our baby spoke it well. Even to this very day.

Q. Of course maybe. . . did you used to take care of the youngest one? Was it the older children. . . were the two. . .?

A. Well, we didn't take care of anyone in particular. We all took care of ourselves. The oldest kind of looked after me and I looked after my sister. And

- A. (Continued) both of us girls looked after the two younger ones. But, we always conversed in the family, we always spoke English to each other. My mother spoke Yiddish and English to us, but my grandmother spoke only Yiddish. And it rubbed off that my oldest brother, on my youngest brother, and on myself.
- Q. Do you still subscribe to the Daily Forward, or whatever. . . ?
- A. No. No, I don't subscribe to the Yiddish paper, but I do pick the paper up every now and then from a lady whom I visit. She's 95, and she doesn't know English. She speaks English, but she doesn't read it, and so she gets the Jewish paper. And there are interesting articles in it, and every so often she'll say, Mrs. Mandell, you have to read this article. And she'll give me the paper. So I take it home and read it and I can understand then why she wants me to have the article.
- Q. How about the Sephardic Jewish community? Did you. . . they were down. . . located geographically. . .
- A. In that same area. Well, all the Jews were in that same area. Slowly they began to move away from Joseph Avenue and they came out Monroe. And some of them went out St. Paul Boulevard. I think the Sephardic Jews today are sort of congregated around Norton Street area, around St. Paul, Norton. They have a synagogue of their own and they have a rabbi of their own. Their ways are different from ours as far as practices of religious services are concerned. I don't know if there are many of them now that still hang on to the old traditions. A lot of them also have come out this way, out Monroe Avenue and belong to Beth El. And some belong to B'rith Kodesh. And. . .
- Q. Of course, in the early years, they may have been as much in need of charity. . .
- A. Well, they got it. It made no difference. . .
- Q. From the general community, or just. . .

- A. From the various organizations that were charitable. Helping hand in. . . in need. Among the Jewish people, it didn't make any difference if you were Sephardic or if you were a Hungarian or a Russian or a Polish Jew. What was important was that you needed and so they helped. They used to have a free loan society here that would lend money to people who needed help. And these people would pay it back on a weekly installment plan. If I remember correctly the Baden Street Settlement used to have a loan association of that nature. And they called it the Gemulis Hetsa Society, which loaned out and people were honest enough to come each week and pay back and. . .
- Q. Did you ever participate in any activities of the Baden Street Settlement?
People used to like come for sewing lessons. . .
- A. No, no. I was business and I didn't have time to go to the daytime activities or any projects that were offered.
- Q. You were in business. You were working with your husband or. . .?
- A. Right. Working together with my husband in the store. And I didn't have time for the daytime extra-curricular activities. I always did altruistic work. I would. . . well, go to the State Hospital, go to Craig, visit in the Home, if anyone was. . . needed help, I would take them. . . many times I would take a person from the Home to a doctor's office because they had no way of getting there. Today we don't have that today, we've got the Jewish agency has various. . . Jewish Federation and other groups that provide the necessary transportation. We have "Meals on Wheels" that bring meals to Jewish people who just can't get out to get 'em.
- Q. How did you used to take people from the Home to the doctor's?
- A. I. . . in my. . . in a car. My car, picked them up and take them. Many times a lot of them would have a urinary problems. I would. . . Dr. Mella and I would take many people to Dr. Mellon's office and wait for them and bring 'em

A. (Continued) back to the Home.

Q. How about today? What are some. . . are you active in Hadassah or not?

A. I'm a member, but not active. My children are active in Hadassah.

Q. But that is. . . it's a little bit of a different type of organization.

A. A different type of work. The Hadassah's work for Israel, mostly for Israel. And I work for mostly with local organizations. Had. . . all the young people are happy to identify themselves working for Hadassah or the Council of Women. Different groups in the synagogues and in the temples, but my work. . . I always did the work that a lot of people didn't care to do.

Q. OK. You were. . . we were just talking a little bit about the Depression.

A. Yea.

Q. And you told me a good story that I didn't know about the self-help gardens.

A. Well, we talked about people being on Welfare, which today is not unusual. I made a comparison of Welfare in the years of the Depression and Welfare today. In the years of the Depression, Welfare checks did not go to the Welfare person. They'd have to report to an office every week. They were allowed 50¢ for prescriptions, they were allowed a half a ton of coal a month. And that was delivered to the residence where they lived. They would be sent to the supply houses that would give them the necessary things that they needed, sheets, pillow cases, clothes. They were not at liberty to spend the money the way they wanted. They had a regular set up for it. So much was allowed per person, not per family, per person. And whatever the needs were, that person was given it. The doctors, they had regular doctors that they were sent to. They'd take a prescription to the drug store and the drug store could only fill the prescription up to 50¢, beyond that no dice. People were taught to help themselves. Land was cleared that was unpaid tax land and self help gardens were created for the individuals. Each man was given a plot. He planted what

A. (Continued) he wanted. He tended to his own garden, and when fall came he had food to set up for the winter. There was lots of home canning done then. People knew the responsibility of keeping alive. They did all they could for themselves and it was not a strain on our government or on our state like today. Today a Welfare person gets a check every month, does with it as he sees fit. He's allowed food stamps, which gives him his food at half. . . practically half the cost that you or I would pay in the store for it. Everything is subsidized. And the Welfare client today has the right to rebel. . . to. . . to go to a Welfare office. . . I've seen many times where offices of the Welfare Department were emptied out because there was word around that they'll be a riot here today because the Welfare pick-up person didn't get this, that or the other thing. Those years, you didn't hear of these things. In those. . . in the years of the Depression many people lost their homes and the reason was you paid interest on your mortgage and a little payment every six months on your house. And a person could live a lifetime and still not have his home all paid for. It was after President Roosevelt took hold that a new set up was made, amortization of mortgages on a home. Anybody bought a home, paid a downpayment and every month paid off part of that home just as he would if he was paying a landlord rent. So that by the end of 20 years, his house was his own and banks would not become property owners like they did in the 1930's. What shall I say? We live. . . we live in good times, not good times today, but our good times have plenty of shortcomings.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE A

Interview I
Tape I
Side B

Q. Today is August 23rd. This is Side B. This is Nancy Rosenbloom with Mrs. Frieda Mandell. I wanted to ask you. Are you a member of the JCC or have you been a member of the JY earlier?

A. We've been members of the JY from when it was on Franklin Square. And the Little House on Franklin Square gave way to the new JY building that was built on Andrews and Franklin. We were one of the donors. . . the original donors that helped make the \$300,000 towards building that building. We've been with the JY right through, even to the Jewish Community Center right now on Edgewood Avenue.

Q. Are you a member of any groups that meet there?

A. No. No.

Q. Senior Citizen Group, or. . . ?

A. I partake in the Senior Citizen activity, but I don't belong to any group. I just got through having a trip with them to Toronto. We went three weeks ago, had a lovely time. I have been with them on trips to St. Lawrence Seaway and on trips to the mountains for a five-day spell. I try and I. . . anytime they've got a good feature in the movie or a form of entertainment or rally, we go.

Q. Both you and your husband went to Toronto?

A. Mmmhmm. Oh, yes, yes. And he belongs to the gym and the men's Health Club. He really enjoys every minute of it.

Q. So it was a good thing that they moved? Closer. . .

A. Oh, yes. . . right now they seem so very far away from a lot of. . . for a lot of people. But I predict that within the next ten years, they will be in the

- A. (Continued) hub of all activity. People are going farther out and the JY will be a focal point for everything.
- Q. Have you traveled to Israel?
- A. Oh, yea. We've been there twice.
- Q. But. . . but. . . with a group or. . .?
- A. We went once by ourselves. And the second time we went with the American Jewish Congress. And we had two very lovely trips. And I hope one day we'll go again.
- Q. Maybe to backtrack a little to the 1920's and '30's. . . How about Hebrew education during those years? You have three daughters. . .
- A. I have three daughters. And I would take the two older ones I would. . . we lived on Norton Street then and we were far away from any form of Jewish education or from synagogues. But, I would take my children for Hebrew instruction to the Talmud Torah, which was on Kelly Street or Baden Street, one of the two. There, they had a regular Hebrew school, classes, which catered to the children that lived in the immediate vicinity of the Joseph Avenue area or the Jewish section at that time. I'd take them down on the bus and I'd do my shopping while they were in the Hebrew school and when they got through, I'd pick them up and we'd go back on the bus. That was before I was driving.
- Q. Do you remember what kinds of classes they had? Hebrew training or reading the Bible or. . .?
- A. They taught them the Hebrew and they taught them to read out of the Homas and out of the Sider. Their form of education wasn't like it is today in the Hebrew schools. Today everything is done in a classified way. There is. . . in those years the idea was to instill knowledge in the child, however it was instilled. Kids would go to the Hebrew school, there might have been 20 kids in

- A. (Continued) the class, they were taught the holidays and they were taught the prayers and stuff. And our children know Hebrew today because of the education they had in Talmud Torah. And my youngest daughter got her education at Beth Joseph Center because then we lived closer to Jewish activities. So she graduated from the Hebrew school at Beth Joseph. Our children went to Beth El Sunday school, over on. . . when Beth El was on Park Avenue. And that was the one day a week Beth El did not have a real Hebrew school then . . . and. . . but they did have a lot in Sunday school and my children went to the Sunday school.
- Q. Well, when did you move over to this street?
- A. 1942.
- Q. So, you've lived here on. . .
- A. Oh, here on . . . ?
- Q. Well, I'm just saying. . .
- A. What we. . . lived on Norton Street from 1926 until 1942. In 1942 we moved over St. Paul Street area. And twenty years ago we came here, which made it 1956.
- Q. So, in other words, when you. . . your daughters were going to Sunday school at Beth El. . .
- A. We were on Park Avenue. . . they went on Park Avenue when we were on Norton.
- Q. But you were driving across the city. . .
- A. No, then I didn't. We lived at the end of the line. And the bus had a bus loop in our. . . next to our backyard. There was a Mr. Cohen who drove the bus. For a long time I would take the children as far as Main Street and put 'em on a Park Avenue bus. Sunday school started at 9:00 o'clock. And I'd get 'em on a Park Avenue bus and the bus would leave them off on the corner of Meigs and Park. Then after a while a Mr. Cohen, who was the bus driver,

- A. (Continued) and rode the Portland Avenue line realized that each Sunday I was taking those children to Main and Clinton and crossing them over and putting them on the Park Avenue bus. So, one day he said to me, Mrs. Mandell I'm gonna help you out. Leave the children with me and I'll see to it that they get across to the bus stop to get a Park Avenue bus. And from then on he took care of my children. But, they were confirmed in Beth El, they were all married in Beth El.
- Q. I guess one of the things that I was interested in about the Talmud Torah was at the time that your children were growing up it was more like a community. . .
- A. Oh, yes, sure. . .
- Q. I mean, it wasn't children and. . .
- A. Oh, no. It was a regular school, whoever wanted to send their children to learn Hebrew could send them to the Talmud Torah.
- Q. Did everybody seem like satisfied with the education there?
- A. Oh, yes. Sure, they. . . they gave a good Hebrew education. There were those, just like any school, there are those who excel and those who just get by and those who just fluff the time away and get nothing out of it.
- Q. Was it the type of thing where they would go every day?
- A. No.
- Q. Two or three times a week. . .?
- A. Three times a week. Three times a week. And it was two hours each day. And they had good rabbis, good teachers; it. . produced a lot of very fine students.
- Q. Was Mr. Tanidge there?
- A. He was there at the time, yea.
- Q. Let's see, what are other topics that. . otherwise I would ask. . may I

Q. (Continued) ask you. . . you said you worked in the business. . . ?

A. With my husband.

Q. Your husband. . . well did you. . . . did you . . .

A. Oh, I worked all around the store. I sold. We had a soda fountain, so I waited on the fountain. If it was a drug customer I could wait on drug customers. I was good-man-Friday to everything that went on.

Q. You didn't have mostly Jewish customers though?

A. No. We. . . we had no Jewish customers because we were in a non-Jewish area. My children went to 39 School and they were the first Jewish children in 39 School. And for quite a while mine were the only Jewish children in the school. Then a family moved in on Randolph Street who had children and a family moved in on Brookhaven Terrace who had children. And so I would say that 39 School population of Jewish children was maybe 10 for the whole school. But, we were the only ones for the longest time.

Q. Did you ever feel isolated there?

A. No.

Q. Because you participated in other Jewish. . .

A. No, because I . . . knowing that everyday or every other day I'd get to Joseph Avenue, I never felt stranded. And I indoctrinated the children the best that I could as regards Jewish life and living it. Our house was always a kosher house, no matter where we lived, made no difference, kosher house even to this very day.

Q. But they must have grown up a lot without Jewish friends.

A. Right. They did. All their friends were non-Jewish. But they did make good friends in the Sunday school. Even to the point where one of the girls was a bridesmaid to my oldest daughter. To this very day they're the best of friends.

Q. How about incidents of anti-Semitism?

A. Never. Never. I don't ever remember anyone saying "You're a Jew, you're different." Never.

Q. How about. . . when do you recall first learning about the Holocaust?

A. When the rest of the world heard about it.

Q. Read it in the newspapers?

A. Yea.

Q. Through the Jewish groups?

A. No, through the newspapers. I think that even the Jewish community didn't learn through emissaries, people who got out, got away. They knew at that time there was a Hitler, and that there was political undercurrents. We had a grocer, a Mr. Bletz who ran a grocery store corner of Conkey and Avenue B. And he was fortunate to get out of Germany when Hitler started goosestepping. He got out before the Czechoslovakia fell, and that was long before Hitler really took hold and started his massacre of Jews the way he did. Then as time went on, of course, we knew what was going on in Europe. Sad to say.

Q. You mentioned a little while ago that on Hanover Street when you first came here there were a dozen shuls. . . ?

A. Well, in that area there were.

Q. That area. Were they a lot of smaller shuls? Why was there . . .

A. There was. . . there were. . . why there were so many? There was the Big Shul, it was called the Big Shul, it was really a magnificent structure. Then there was a shul called Rhine Street Shul. And there was the Coxies Shul. And there was the shul called the Kipperless Shul. The reason for all these little shuls was people who came from certain areas wanted to stick together. And so they made their own little shul. A lot of them didn't have a rabbi, they'd bring in a rabbi for the high holidays, bring in a rabbi or someone to conduct the services on the high holidays. But the rest of the

A. (Continued) year they were down among themselves. . . in those years, going to the synagogue was an important thing for a Jew. Slowly the Jews have weaned themselves from daily prayers. Those days it was. . . they considered almost a necessity to get to the synagogue in the morning to pray and then go about their daily work. I know Rabbi Kurtz, rest in peace, used to belong to a shul and they called it the Poilishish Shul, people from a certain area of Poland. And that shul was in the back of a house. Once it must have been a tailor shop, and they divided it up into small sections and one section became a shul and all the people that lived in Rabbi Kurtz' little town in Europe went to that little shul. You'd never know it was there, but it was there. On. . . on Hanover. . . on Hanover Street was four or five synagogues that I knew of, the Coxies Shul, the Big Shul, the Kipperless Shul, the Pois. . . the Polish Shul. . . Then around the corner was the Ryan Street Shul. Then you went over to Ormond Street, that had Nusbaum's Shul, and it had a. . . a few across the street from it.

Q. How did everybody get along?

A. Fine. And you know what happened a lot of time? Where there was disharmony, somebody pulled out of a shul and started a shul of his own.

Q. Some one in trouble's always gonna leave?

A. That I don't know.

Q. They must have.

A. They must have. Could be in those days they did. Today, with all our beautiful shuls and big memberships, many of the shuls don't even have a minnion for morning services.

Q. Let's see.

A. Lot of people are three-day-a-year Jews, and they go to the synagogue for Rosh Hashannah, Yom Kippur, and for the rest of the year you don't see or

- A. (Continued) hear of them. I know of some of the synagogues pay for older people to come in the morning so that they have a minnion.
- Q. That's amazing.
- A. Oh, yea. I know that many times in. . . in the Beth Joseph on St. Paul Street they have to borrow an. . . an old man from the Jewish Home to come over to be the tenth man.
- Q. That's something. Why is it that's so?
- A. Well, people have different sense of values today. Years ago, their religious association was most important. Today other things are more important. They come to the synagogue for a Bar Mitzvah, for a wedding for the high holidays, God forbid if there's a death in the family, they'll maybe go to the synagogue for the first 30 days and then after that they'll come when it's years time.
- Q. Let me ask you about intermarriage. Was intermarriage a problem back in the thirties?
- A. Not like it is today. Today, they don't even consider it a problem. Today they take it for granted and that's it. It was. . . it was a terrible thing then to say that so-and-so's son or daughter married a non-Jew. And people almost hung their heads in shame that their children would do things like that. Because they were brought up to know to be a Jew is a sacred thing and to hold to your faith is most important. And intermarriage was. . . it was heard of, but rarely. Today, it's just taken for granted. I know a family where there are three children and the oldest boy married a Jewish girl and the oldest daughter married an Italian boy and the youngest daughter goes out with a Chinese boy.
- Q. That's a big difference. . .
- A. I'm telling you, eventually our Jews will be like the League of Nations.

- A. (Continued) You'll have every kind married into our Jewish faith. It's sad, it's very sad. We were God's chosen people and now. . .
- Q. Well, what. . . what do you think it is? I mean, people say, oh they're not brought up in a kosher home. . .
- A. No, I personally feel that a lot of this intermarriage is the result of giving our children higher education. When they're in. . . when they're under the wings of the family home, the atmosphere is there. They go away to college and they're thrown into an entirely different atmosphere. They meet up with young men and young women from all over. And love is a funny thing. It doesn't stick with only one kind. They. . . two young people meet, and they have something in common, they take to each other and before you know it, they become deeply involved and that's it.
- Q. So, it's not something that you think can either be. . . trend that can be reversed or. . . or?
- A. God forbid. Unless something happens that the Jew is made to know that he belongs to his own kind, I don't think he'll ever reverse it.
- Q. Do you think there's unity in the Rochester Jewish community? Do you think there was more . . . I'll make it a . . .
- A. No. No there's. . . there have always been differences.
- Q. Back in the 1930's, did people feel a community spirit, or is that just something. . .?
- A. No, I think it. . . it's the same. . . each group stuck with its own, as a whole. Maybe now, because of what happened since Hitler and the formation of the State of Israel, Jews are more Jewish activity conscious. But that don't say it makes them better Jews. They like to identify themselves with doing for the State of Israel and helping others to. . . But I don't think it makes them change their way of life. There are plenty of Jews today who came from

A. (Continued) very religious homes who no more abide by the rules and regulations of Jewish life than a goye. It's not unusual. . . I'm gonna begin to say that strictly kosher Jewish homes today are not as abundant as they ever were. It's easier the other way.

Q. Yes.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE B