

Tape 1
Side 1
Interview 1

Q. This is Nancy Rosenbloom. Today is June 3rd, and we're interviewing Morris Levinson for the Rochester Local History Project of the Jews in Rochester. Perhaps you'd like to give us some biographical data just to test the recorder, Mr. Levinson.

A. Is it working?

Q. I hope so.

A. Well, can you tell before . . . instead of going through a lot of . . . My name is Morris Levinson. I was born in 1899 in Rochester, New York. I would like to state now, I'm not a historian. I have no records or dates of the subjects I am about to review. However, I have memories, deep-rooted memories of the past. This project is a U. of R. sponsored by the Rochester Oral Jewish History to rekindle Jewish life in Rochester from 1936 to date, 1976. So, I will ramble on expressing my thoughts. I believe the Jewish Children's Home would be of interest to many people. Rochester was one of the few cities in the country that sponsored a Jewish Orphanage Home. Jacob Hollander was the first superintendent and after many years, the institution closed. During the operation of the home, at it's peak, over one hundred children resided in the home. In Rochester today, many of the children residents are prominent in business and civic life. After the home closed, a scholarship fund was developed. I was elected chairman of the fund and helped hundreds of home children through college, and children of home residents. Today, the scholarship fund is very active. The present chairman is Nathan Robfogle (spelling?) a prominent attorney and treasurer is a former child resident of the home, Sam Itkin (spelling), who holds a prominent position with

A. (Continued) the Board of Education. The home was located on Gorham Street. Alfred Hart (spelling?) was the president for over twenty-five years. There are many Jewish men and women in their twenties are not aware today that such an institution ever existed. The home was a tremendous outlet especially for Orthodox Jews, men and women to devote their time and effort to the welfare of Jewish children. Jewish Home and Infirmary. Although I am a director of the Jewish Home and Infirmary, I could not do justice as to its prominence and to its function in our community life. Men like Joseph Silverstein, Mort Nusbaum, are better equipped to explore the magnitude the Jewish Home and Infirmary played in caring for the aged. This story should be had and told for prosperity. Temple Beth El. I am Morris Levinson was president of Temple Beth El, however, at least of Beth El's former rabbis have in the past spent hours researching the history of Beth El, and these excellent documents, no doubt they're in possession of Temple Beth El's or the U. of R.'s use. Born and growing up in Rochester, one gathers an insight of the Jewish Community. A strong belonging, a special love. Only a polished writer can explain. The close-knit family life, the unvarnished desire to help each other, never to cause each other anguish or pain, knowing each other in poverty, we all practiced the ideals of social work, long before we ever knew or met a social worker. Yes, we lived in a ghetto bound by Central Avenue on the south, by Clifford Avenue on the north, by Hudson Avenue on the east, and St. Paul Street on the west. It was a hard life, yet, a good life. Rich in memories. It might be interesting for the present generation and future generation of Jewish folks to know that from this ghetto, I am happy and proud to say that Rochester today has three or four Jewish Communities. Brighton, Pittsford, Irondequoit, and Henrietta. My personal opinion is that this is good for any . . . for all Jews who live in any community. The Hitler wars. After all that has been written and the millions

A. (Continued) of words spoken, and the thousands of pictures viewed, only a fool would try to add a new dimension to this horrible tragedy. However, some Rochester Jewish historians have explored our community devotion to this problem. I believe the Jewish Community Council is in possession of this material. Quickly, let me be brief and recall an unforgettable picture in my mind: When some German-Jews were able to flee Germany, the place of their birth, many families came to Rochester and received with open arms . . . and received with open arms by such local people as Arthur Lowenthal, Mort Adler, Henry Stern, and others, to be commended in the human manner in which they poured devotion and loving care on these unfortunate refugee families from Germany. Arthur Lowenthal is with us today. And, one of the last German-Jews who gave his time and devotion to the problems caused by Hitler. And, I firmly recommend that his story be placed in the archives of memory for all to read. Alfred Hart. With some reluctance, yet with a strong desire, because I was employed by this unusual gifted man, local Jewish historians have not forgotten his name and memory. Yet, like so many Jewish men in the past, his contribution to Jewish life in Rochester was of great value. Alfred Hart was American born with a German born father and English born mother. In the early days of life, he left the Reformed Temple and became a key person in organizing a Conservative Temple now known as Temple Beth El. Rochester is a well-organized Jewish Community. Rochester can be proud of its Jewish institutions, because its main purpose is to serve people, men, boys and girls with culture and religion. Rochester has been blessed with well-rounded out, intelligent Jewish folk who truly want to be helpful to make life more pleasant and more meaningful. If, perchance, in the year 2000, a college student or a Jewish person not born yet, should listen to tapes describing Rochester's Jewish Community, please don't be harsh with us. That's the way it was, that's the way we visualized Jewish

- A. (Continued) life in Rochester; now it's your turn to improve life for generations to follow.
- Q. That was very interesting. You've covered a whole spectrum of topics that I think are important. And, maybe, we could just go back and talk a little bit more about a couple of them. Have you always been a member of Beth El? Well, when . . . when was Beth El first . . .
- A. Beth El, to the best of my knowledge, is celebrating its fifty-third or fifty-fourth year. I am seventy-seven years of age, so without going into details, there's a lapse of many years. And, living in this so-called Joseph Avenue ghetto community where, I don't know how many Orthodox Synagogues were within a stone's throw away from where we lived. My family were members of a Orthodox Synagogue on Hanover Street, and we attended services at Vada Cola (spelling?). Many people gave it a nickname, and that's unusual for a synagogue, and refer to it even today, although it's been out of existence for many years, as Coxy's Shul. That originated when the cornerstone was laid in this particular synagogue, Coxy's Army was on the march.
- Q. Who was Coxy?
- A. I'm glad you asked the question, but I'm not sure I can correctly answer it. I think he was a belligerent officer who marched on Washington in what year I don't recall.
- Q. So, since then it was known as Coxy's Shul. After you grew up, though, you became a member of a Conservative congregation?
- A. Like so many Jewish families after marriage, I moved to Brighton and have lived in Brighton in two locations fifty-one years.
- Q. Oh! And, then, when you moved you joined . . . well, Beth El used to be on Park Avenue.
- A. Yes.

Q. So, that was still a good distance?

A. Yes. We joined Park Avenue Beth El, and I would say, we lived, probably, two and a half miles from the Park Avenue Beth El location. And, my wife, without exception, would take her children every Saturday, rain, shine, or snow, to services at Beth El.

Q. Have you seen a lot of changes in the religious aspect of moving from an Orthodox to a Conservative congregation, or even within the Conservative congregation?

A. Well, that's a question that ought to be answered by probably a man of the cloth whether it's a lay person . . . There is a possibility that the membership in the Orthodox congregations are probably at low ebb, because Beth El, a Conservative's Temple, has twelve hundred and fifty members, and Brith Kodesh, a Reformed Temple, has twelve hundred and fifty families. So, there's twenty-five hundred families, and we're told that there are three and a half people per family, and the last . . . the last count which the Jewish Community Council, with the help of the University of Rochester . . . we have twenty-two thousand Jewish people in our area.

Q. So, besides the congregation changing in ritual, it seems to have really grown tremendously.

A. Well, needless to say that our parents . . . of many people today who are the first generation of American born Jews, and without exception, they kept saying that Jewish life and religious life was to diminish. My personal point of view is whether it was caused by Hitler, whether it was the birth of Israel . . . I think it goes without saying that Jewish life and possibly Jewish religion, is stronger than ever. I believe the attendance to synagogues is greater . . . per Jewish capita than before.

Q. Down off Joseph Avenue . . . that's where you grew up. Was it basically a

- Q. (Continued) immigrant community down there, or were there still old, old style, old generation German-Jews living there as you grew up, or . . .
- A. My belief is that the German-Jews never lived in the so-called Jewish Community or ghetto.
- Q. So, that Shul, Coxy's Shul, was by and large an immigrant Shul?
- A. Yes. Yes. With the exception of the first-born American children in the United States and Rochester.
- Q. Did most of the Jews that went . . . belonged to Coxy's Shul move out about the same time together, or . . .
- A. No. I think it took years and years. I think, for example, in my life, needless to tell you that, probably, a hundred percent of membership of Beth El comes from Orthodox families. There's a possibility that eighty percent of B'rith Kodesh Reformed Temple are . . . come from Orthodox families.
- Q. You mentioned that the German refugees started coming in the 1930s. Did . . . were they well integrated into the community?
- A. Yes. With few exceptions, they were well integrated, and I would like to recommend to you that through Arthur Lowenthal to get a story from one, two, or three refugees who came over. For example, we have a girl in our office who's husband was killed as a Jewish scapegoat. Is still with us, and in the years she's been with us, once or twice she's gone back to Germany to visit her married sister. And, she gives us some very interesting stories, although she is very reluctant to speak of the past.
- Q. Do you recall any incidents of anti-semitism in Rochester, or in the 1930s, perhaps, in Rochester?
- A. Well, I don't have to tell you that between B'nai B'rith and some other Jewish institutions who have been the watch dog in that area and doing a good job. Sometimes, my personal opinion is that they're a little bit overbearing, but

A. (Continued) we could not do without them. I support them, and they should be supported. Your question of anti-semitism in the community, of course, if you want to go back . . . fifty, sixty years ago, whenever we got out of our little Jewish Community, many so called non-Jewish boys were not hesitant in calling us "Christ Killers". Needless for me to tell you that that has disappeared . . . that type of anti-semitism, many years ago. It seemed to me that we are accepted in the community by the non-Jewish Community. Catholic priests and nuns in the last two or three years, I've seen them at Temple Beth El services. I'm happy to say I think they're much more tolerant and as years go by, with they're past training and become more intellectual in regards to Zionism, Jews as a whole, and Israel. It's my belief, and I'm sure the belief of many understanding Jews, that the relationship is much improved.

Q. When you go back to the 1930s, we always read about Father Kaufman?

A. Kaufman.

Q. Kaufman? Did he have a large impact on the Rochester Community, do you think?

A. Well, he was a horrible individual and eventually became a stigma in the Catholic Church. I don't recall what the Catholic Church did to him, but I can remember that they kept taking away more and more power from him. But, during his time, and he had a tremendous radio-listening audience. And, anti-semites in those days loved him, and Jews feared him.

Q. Was there an organized attempt in Rochester to fight him or . . .

A. Yes. In those days, the Jewish Community Council was not as strong as they are today, and as efficient as they are today. And, I think it depended greatly upon rabbis and B'nai B'rith to protect their interests.

Q. Maybe we'll jump back to the present, and I'll risk asking, maybe, a touchy question: Do you have any recollection of the 1964 riots in terms of . . .

A. Yes. Of course, it is established that the colored folks in the seventh and

A. (Continued) eighth ward got permission to hold a dance on Joseph Avenue, and close the street for several blocks to give them an opportunity to celebrations. And, it happened to be a very hot night. The celebration was all aglow. From what I'm told, and from what I remember, black officials at the function asked a policeman to remove a boisterous, intoxicated individual. And, from that little epic, things begin to happen. It was serious. I think that police and city officials handled it as well as could be expected under the circumstances, not having any previous experience with that type of riot. The amazing thing, to me, was it continued for several days and grew and went into other colored areas. And, eventually, it petered out. I remember my wife has many, many relations in Israel, and they called us by telephone and recommended that we move out of the city to safeguard our lives. I suppose they had a right to that, although they should know from the problems they have in Israel that if they have a border problem, people in other parts of the world, Jewish people, think it's all over Israel and it might be in one spot that . . . an area of three, four, five hundred square yards. But, of course, it grew into other communities also. We're hoping that the blacks and the whites and the public officials have learned a strong lesson from that.

Q. Since in part that was the old Jewish Community and there were still a few Jewish businesses down there . . .

A. Well, they suffered badly, and that helped the flight of Jews from that particular area away from the area. Yesterday, I had a visitor from out of the state, and we went out to dinner, and they wanted to see the new bridge over Irondequoit Bay, and they wanted to see the old Jewish Community. I took them down Joseph Avenue, St. Paul Street, Hudson Avenue, Clinton Avenue, and I found it difficult with all the buildings and the homes down, as to where I was. These people left Rochester quite some time ago, and they were astounded

- A. (Continued) to see what has happened to the area where we were born, brought up as children.
- Q. Did you feel that riots might have been expressing a special tension between blacks and Jews? That there was something besides a general feeling of upheaval or . . .
- A. Well, as you know, and the historians will tell you that practically in every city in the northeast . . . I can remember as a youngster where colored people, blacks, were living fifty years ago on Ward Street, the streets parallel with the railroad tracks and where ever colored people came from the south to the north, they always attached themselves to a Jewish Community.
- Q. When you say attached, do you mean worked for, or just moved into?
- A. I would say moved into. No other area would accept them. So, it must translate itself into the fact that that . . . whether the Jews accepted them, they didn't oppose them.
- Q. Yes, I see. There is a difference. Maybe from here, we'll move on to Zionism, because you mentioned that you have some family in Israel. Have you ever traveled to Israel?
- A. I've been to Israel twice. Once in '62, and once in '69 or '70. The first trip I made with my wife. She found twenty-one relations there on her family's side. The second trip, I took my son Sid and my daughter-in-law Arlene on the trip to Israel and other European countries. And, needless for me to tell you that the family grew. I also found a cousin in Israel, who corresponded with us . . . with me claiming she was a relation, and she was behind the iron curtain. We helped bring her into Israel, and it was a delight to meet her and her husband. And, needless for me to tell you that we have been communicating through the mail ever since. And, we found many . . . through her and other connections, on part of the family, we found several cousins . . . children of

A. (Continued) my mother's brother in Johanasburg. And, they've all been here and visited us in the last few years, and now I am convinced when we hear the story of the wandering Jew, and when it happens in your family, it makes the statement so more . . . so much more solid. When we asked them how they got to Johanasburg, their families told them: 'persecution chased them away'. And, I suppose in one sentence it can be said that is the history of the Jew. The wandering Jew.

Q. Where did your parent's family come from?

A. They came from a community called Mienstoff (spelling?). It was on the border of Germany, and they were . . . have to cross over the river to get their mail in the post office on German soil. They were all destroyed by Hitler that we know of except this one person who now lives in Israel. A very delightful person, some day I hope to bring her here. She hasn't been feeling too well.

Q. When did your parents come to Rochester?

A. My mother came here when she was seventeen years of age. My father was already here two or three years. They got married in Rochester.

Q. Were you the oldest child?

A. No. I was the third oldest. I had two brothers that passed away that were older than I am.

Q. How did you come into contact with Mr. Hart?

A. Well, that is a good question. My oldest brother married Mr. Hart's sister.

Q. Maybe I'll turn the tape off for just a second.

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1, INTERVIEW 1

Tape I
Side II
Interview I

- Q. This is Nancy Rosenbloom. Today is June 3rd. I'm interviewing Morris Levinson on Humboldt Street. We were talking about how you came in contact with Mr. Hart. Perhaps you'll tell us the story.
- A. As I indicated, my brother, Abe, married Mr. Hart's sister, and we got acquainted with the family. And, he ran a store on North Street. And, I was seventeen or eighteen years of age, and he hired me, employed me, and that developed into a long, long connection with the Hart Company. After a few years, not more than three or four years after I joined him, we got the idea, or he got the idea of opening up a series of stores. And, we opened up the first store on Hunt Street which was the first self-service store in the United States outside of California. Self-service originated in California. Before he passed away in 1936, we operated 141 Hart Stores. When he died in 1936, I became president of the company and remained president from 1936 'till 1970 when I got to the ripe old age of 70 years of age. As I indicated at the outset, I was born in 1899, so you can see my age today. He never seen a supermarket, although he talked about it before he died, because California had them prior to 1936. So, we . . . with the great help and assistance of a departed officer of our company, Jack Rueben, who passed away a few years ago, we decided the time was right for getting into the supermarket field. And, we laid out a program of, eventually, closing 141 of Hart's Stores. And, during the process of closing the Hart's Stores, we were opening up Star Supermarkets. Needless for me to tell you that was quite an ordeal. But, we didn't want to do it quickly, so it took us several years to close up the Hart's Stores. So, Mr. Hart, who died in '36 never seen a Star Supermarket, although he had visions of it. Ten or eleven years ago, the family decided that they didn't want no

- A. (Continued) part of the operation, and they owned . . . the estate owned . . . oh, ninety-five, ninety-six percent of the business. And, the question was to either sell the business or go public. And, it was my strong feeling that we try the public route, which we did. And, since then the family's had no connection with the Star Supermarkets.
- Q. Over the years, though, you would the Jewish family business or . . .
- A. Yes. Yes. It was owned by Alfred Hart. And, of course, when he passed away, in his will he developed a trust whereby the widow received sixty percent of the income, and each one of the four daughters received ten percent of the income, and Mrs. Hart was alive yet. And, she's past eighty, and that program is still in progress.
- Q. On Front Street where the original Hart's Store was, was that a Jewish neighborhood itself?
- A. A Jewish what?
- Q. Neighborhood?
- A. Oh, no. The merchants . . . many of the merchants were Jewish people who . . . I don't want to go into the history of Front Street, but you probably have some idea of what it was. A combination of second-hand stores and some good operators who ran first-class stores, and many saloons, and many people who patronized the saloons. And, from that came the rescue mission on Front Street that took care of the so called underdogs. As I indicated, as long as we're on the question of the Hart family, and I indicated that he was a very unique man, a very religious man, left the Reformed Movement and helped develop the Conservative Movement in the community. And, it might interest you to know as a American born man that as long as I knew him, that he attended Temple Beth El religious service every morning. He was a very conscientious person, and a very honorable . . . unique in the sense that he was very modest at every stage

A. (Continued) of his life until his death. Being the president of the Jewish Orphanage Home which was its name . . . I was told, and I'm sure it's true, that from where he lived at 1200 East Avenue, that very often on a Saturday afternoon would walk to Gorham Street which is probably four or five miles and entertain the children with poems or stories. He wrote a book that I scrambled through the office here, and located one of them called The Higher Ideals. It's a very interesting book, and I'm gonna give it to you, and if you think any part of it could be incorporated in it, you or somebody could add to what has already been said.

Q. It looks like a prayer book.

A. He was very proud of that.

Q. Are these all his own thoughts more or less?

A. I think they are. I can remember one idea that you run across if I can recall it, I haven't looked at it in twenty-five years or more, where he says, "Life would all be happiness if everyone understood the true love of brotherhood." And, it goes on. There was a time when I could recite many of them.

Q. Did he write this for the children or . . .

A. He distributed that book to the boy scouts, to all the people he'd done business with, to friends. It was never sold.

Q. It looks like a beautiful little book.

A. So, you can have that with my compliments.

Q. Okay. Thank you. When did the Jewish Orphanage end? Was that incorporated into the Jewish Family Service?

A. As I indicated in my statement to you earlier that dates, I do not have.

Q. Okay.

A. But, they went out of business . . . The numbers of children began to fall off. Some of our historians at the orphanage at that time said that the lack

- A. (Continued) of immigration had a lot to do with it. That was one thought. The other thought was the social service workers and Social Service Department of the State of New York developed a new social technique that children are much better off in foster homes than in institutions. Needless for me to tell you that in those days, Mr. Hollander, the superintendent of the home, and many other people connected with the home, disagreed with that premise. And, of course, much of the support came from the Chest. And, the Chest agreed with the social workers opinion in those days that children should have a foster home and not live in an institution. But, if you ever check with the graduates of the Jewish Home or Orphanage, they'll tell you today that they had a great bringing up.
- Q. Was it a religious bringing up, do you think?
- A. Well, it . . . yes. It was a home, and a very Orthodox background.
- Q. This might sound like a silly question, but did they speak Yiddish or English, or were they immigrant children?
- A. I would say that English was the spoken word, although without exception, each and every one could speak Yiddish.
- Q. And, the teachers at the home, were they . . .
- A. They went to public schools.
- Q. They went to public schools.
- A. And, they went to Hebrew Schools away from the home.
- Q. So, it was more of a living . . . a place to sleep and grow up. Maybe I'll return to Zionism for a moment.
- A. Well, I'd wished you'd forgotten it, because that is a subject that I could not give you any information that would be of use to people in the future. I am a Zionist. I've been a Zionist member for years, but that is a complicated item unless it is handled in a tactful intelligent manner, understand,

- A. (Continued) better to come from people who are . . . have the expertise in it.
- Q. The only question I was going to ask was whether or not you felt there's been a change in Rochester in terms of more support for Israel since 1948? Whether . . . whether . . .
- A. That is a good question, and I might say that it would seem to me that, especially the so called leaders in the Jewish Community, spend eight to ten months a year in the United Jewish Appeal and the Israeli Bomb Drive. It is taken up so much time of so many individuals that I know that I don't know where they have time for any social life, but I would gather that being involved in the United Jewish Appeal and bombs gives them all the social life that they enjoy. It is fantastic what has happened in Jewish world away from Israel. My little travelling in Italy, in England, in France . . . it is amazing how the hearts of Jewish people are tied up with Israel. That is something that historians no doubt have written, will write, and if Jews are around five hundred years from now, I think, it will probably be more widely read than the Bible.
- Q. As you recall, in 1948 when they first passed the resolution to form the State of Israel, was there a lot of excitement in Rochester?
- A. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I think, the Orthodox area picked it up first, the Conservative Movement came in, maybe, you know, a month later. The Reformed Movement came in. There was no place for a Jew to go knowing, as they used the term, the wandering Jew, here was an opportunity to have a State to gather in and maybe the time has come when the term wandering Jew will be a forgotten phrase.
- Q. I see three children in your picture.
- A. Yes.
- Q. Are they also living in Rochester?
- A. All live in Rochester, and all live within walking distance from my home. I.

A. (Continued) have three great-grandchildren.

Q. Great-grandchildren? They're just children; then, they're still children.

So, your grandchildren also stayed in Rochester?

A. My one grandchild is in California, and a great-grandchild is in California.

One grandchild is in Syracuse, and two great-grandchildren are in Syracuse.

Q. Okay. Also, I know from reading a little bit about you, you also are affiliated with the Museum and Science Center?

A. The what?

Q. The Museum and Science Center?

A. Yes. I was a director there for a number of years. About two years ago with my health and age not what it should be, I'd given up some connections with civic and educational institutions. However, I must say that I'm still a director of the Jewish Home and Infirmary and a director of Temple Beth El. You've got to have some connections.

Q. Did you have anything to do with the JYM&WA, as it evolved in the 1920s and '30s?

A. For some particular reason, no, other than they put me on a committee . . . The committee I was on had to do with . . . it was an investment committee of the JY. I reluctantly answer that question that two years ago, I was approached to become a director, and I remember saying to them, "I'm now seventy-five years of age, or seventy-four years of age. I think it is absolutely wrong on your part that this time in my life to ask me to serve as director." However, in their building funds, I've helped them. I've been a very good contributor to the funds to develop the present building.

Q. Were you sorry to see the JY move from downtown?

A. No. For the simple reason that after at least ten years prior, many people, many organizations were complaining that they were a little bit reluctant to

A. (Continued) go there in the evening. And, some day they had to come.

Q. Well, originally the JY had a dormitory facility.

A. Yes.

Q. For older people?

A. For anybody who wanted to live, Jew or non-Jew, of course, being supported by the Chest, it could not be just a Jewish organization. But, because of that, they found themselves with a number of people that did not fit into the facilities of the JY. I don't want to use harsh words, but they found it impossible to operate dormitories, and closed them several years ago. They have no dormitories in the new building.

Q. Right. Did the Jewish Home and Infirmary also get some Community Chest funds? Did that get into a . . .

A. Yes. They're a (unintelligible) agency, but they receive no monies now, nor does any non-profit institution of that kind, because medicare, and medicaid, state help, federal help, county help, and where the Community Chest would pick up much of the deficit every year, for the last several years with the income Jewish Home and Infirmary has between those who can pay . . . Of course, you know the rates are very, very high today. So many people there are not able to pay, the cost of keeping them there is greater . . . far greater than their income when they were working.

Q. The Home and Infirmary has really expanded tremendously in the past.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think just because more and more people are reaching that age, and . . .

A. Well, they have 237 residents now, and as I said, the cost is high because they employ 190 people to take care of 237 residents. And, people would say, 'Well, why so many employees for 237 people?' But, they forget that they must have people around the clock. And, if you work 40 hours, you gotta have three

- A. (Continued) shifts and requires a lot of employees, and the cost, of course, is high.
- Q. Before the home expanded to be able to accommodate more Jewish people, did people just remain in their families or with their children?
- A. Well, that's a good question. With the cost today of ambulant people, say, around \$1,000.00 a month, and bed-ridden people about \$1,300.00 a month, if the law could ever be changed where . . . where the government would allow families to keep their parents and, I think that they could reduce the cost in half. There was a time before social workers gained so much momentum that when a person made application to come into the home, they would go to the parents, they would go to all the relations, they'd go to the in-laws, and get as much money out of them as they possibly can. Under a new law, which I don't know the name, which went into existence seven, eight, nine, years ago, that is definitely out. You have no right, unless a person has some wealth. And, of course, there too creates a problem. A person can go into the home and having, say, \$10,000.00, and if you're gonna pay \$1,200.00 a month, understand, it isn't too long. And, then they allow to make him pay until his wealth gets down to \$1,800.00.
- Q. You would say, though, that it's primarily the Jewish Community today that keeps the Jewish Home functioning? It's their funds rather than the Community . . .
- A. No. I would say, as I indicated, medicare, medicaid, the Red Cross . . . I think, of the capital investment, the last new part of the building that was developed which cost a million . . . \$100,000.00 I think. Reluctantly I say I was able to raise ten percent of that money from friends of mine and people I know.
- Q. So you would say that in Rochester today the Jewish Community is as closely-knit as it's been over the years?

A. Yes. I would say, I think I observed that in my remarks. I think that the Jewish Community Council with the able work of Elmer Louis who retired. I think that the Jewish Community is closely-knit. I think that the Jewish Community, we hope, that segments of the Jewish Community don't go out on a tandrums and take up certain subjects that would do the Jewish Community harm.

Q. For example?

A. Well, there are numerous items. I would hesitate to enumerate them other than individuals writing to the editors sometimes. They think they represent the Jewish Community, and it might be Velvo or Hattie who has some gripe, and it those things . . . And, we can't control 'em all, but they do a reasonably good job.

Q. I feel like we've covered an awful lot of material. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

A. No. I don't think I have anything to add, and . . . other than to say that you indicated at the outset that you come here as an amateur, and I told you at the outset that you are interviewing an amateur. And, from the tapes . . . I don't think we got into any serious arguments.

Q. Right.

A. How long would it take to run that?

END OF SIDE II, TAPE I, INTERVIEW I

Tape II
Side I
Interview II

- Q. Today is August 18th. This is Nancy Rosenbloom, and I'm interviewing Mr. Morris Levinson and Star Supermarkets. To test the recorder, just . . . wanna . . .
- A. This is the second sitting with Nancy in regards to the business life, the social life, and community life in Rochester.
- Q. Well, maybe we'll start here, then, and I wondered if maybe you'll tell us a little more about the early history of the Hart's Stores.
- A. Is that (unintelligible)?
- Q. Yeah, I hope so.
- A. Nancy Rosenbloom has been asking about the history and founding of Hart's Store's by Alfred Hart. To the best of our knowledge, Alfred Hart opened his first grocery store in the year of 1890 on North Street.
- Q. At that time, who was living around North Street? Were those . . . was that largely an Italian . . . no, no, no. Was that a Jewish immigrant neighborhood, or just a . . .?
- A. No, North Street consisted of a rooming house area, because it was so close to Main Street. Most of the homes in the immediate area were rooming houses. About 1960, Mr. Hart moved his store from 460 North Street to 68 North Street, about two blocks from Main Street. It was then . . . the whole conception of operating this new downtown store changed. He employed several people, salesmen, who travelled the city at large taking food orders one day, delivering it the next day, and the consumer paid for it the following week when the second order was taken.
- Q. Is that some sort of a credit?

A. One week.

Q. One week credit that you'd extend . . . that he'd extend to anyone?

A. Anybody. In 1918, I joined the company, and took on the job for one year of soliciting orders. And, after that, I became the assistant manager of the store and remained in the store. After several years, A&PT Company began opening up a large number of stores throughout Rochester, and it had a sizable effect on the number of customers who traded with us and left because it was nearer and probably somewhat more economical.

Q. Who was AT&T?

A. A&P I said.

Q. Oh, A&P. Now, are they . . . they were already a chain, and . . .

A. Want me to tell you more about that?

Q. Well, just a little bit about the competition.

A. The A&PT Company in those days had 300 stores in America, and of the 300 original stores that they had in the United States, three or four of them were in Rochester. And, eventually, they might have had 30 or 40 of those small, neighborhood stores in Rochester. Mr. Hart in those days was toying with the idea of self-service stores, and we opened our first self-service store on 68 Front Street. That worked out so well that the next store was opened at 158 West Main, and that worked out pretty well. And, eventually, we turned our main store on North Street into a cash and carry, self-service store, and gave up the operation of credit and delivery and the salesmen taking orders. We grew very fast during the ensuing years, and before Alfred Hart passed away in 1936, we had 141 Hart's Stores in the Rochester shopping area and surrounding towns. There was a movement in the ensuing years or supermarket operation . . . operations. Mr. Hart, before he had died, had never seen a supermarket. In 1936, when he passed away, I was made president of the company, and we could see the

A. (Continued) handwriting on the wall as far as 141 neighborhood stores were concerned that the development of supermarkets was a method of distribution that was sound and we had to get into it. So, we planned to eliminate the Hart's Stores, and in three years, or possibly four years, we kept opening Star Supermarkets and closing Hart's Stores. And, in the three or four years, the Hart's Stores were no more in operation. Today, we have 40 Star Markets and with inflation, we can boast now that we have a number of Star Markets where a single market transects more dollar business in a week than the 141 Hart's Stores did in a week. Of course, in the days of the Hart's Store, our average rental was \$50.00 or \$55.00 a month. Today, we have a number of stores where our rental runs \$8,000.00 to \$9,000.00 a month. Not boasting, our most important competitor was the A&PT Company. In 1976, the A&PT Company closed all its stores in Rochester. Loblaw's, a very severe competitor, has closed most of their stores, and to the best of our knowledge, before 1976 expires, there'll be no more Loblaw Stores in Rochester. During the transition period of Hart's Stores to supermarkets, the independent stores were very much effected and where the community boasted of hundreds of small independent stores, they eventually disappeared. However, in the early 1970's, many good independents came back into business, and developed independent supermarkets. And, we have a number of them in our community who are doing exceptionally well. What new developments in food distribution have taken place from the small store of delivery and credit to the supermarket of . . . on a cash . . . on a cash and carry basis: there seems to be a new trend spreading around the middle west and some of the northeast part of the country to combat supermarket operations by opening up a new type of distribution called a warehouse food distribution. Carrying a minimum variety of food products, for example, if there should be eight different brands of peas, they'll carry two. And, if

- A. (Continued) there should be five different sizes of Kellogg's Corn Flakes, they'll carry two. And, they tried to impress the housewife with savings by buying in case lots and in half case lots, in dozen lots, and from what we hear, they're doing very well.
- Q. Do you think there was something other than just . . . not just, but good business sense that allowed you to outstrip your competition between, let's say, 1936 and '76 that was the placement of the stores and certain areas and . . .
- A. Well, locations are very important, yet so many stores are now in shopping plazas and say, just recently, a tremendous shopping plaza opened up in East-View between Rochester and Canandaigua. And, there probably isn't five houses within a mile of the project, but it's accessible by new, modern roads and people are getting more accustomed to travelling ten and fifteen miles to a shopping center, which is something new for people. It was customary years ago for people to shop in the area they lived. That is no more true. They have an automobile; most people are on wheels, and they travel.
- Q. Well, back, let's say, in the 1930s, would you say that that trend had already started where people . . . like, for example, the area around Joseph Avenue. Would people who had already moved away from there . . . had the trend already started that they would shop in their new neighborhood, or that they would go back down to the small stores . . .
- A. That is a good question. In the early days when people moved away from the so-called ghetto neighborhood, they weren't able to get kosher products, the herring, the smoked salmon, so many things that they would . . . One of the great inconveniences in those days of a Jewish family moving to Brighton or out Monroe or Park Avenue was the fact that they had to come to Joseph Avenue at least once a week to get the products that they were accustomed to getting.

- A. (Continued) Eventually, that changed. Some of the Jewish stores started opening up in the Monroe-Park Avenue area, and that was the death note of small Jewish stores in the ghetto area. And, on top of that, the area changed so that Jews were leaving. This didn't take place in a week or a month. It took place over a period of many years. And then, the supermarkets found that . . . they were compelled to handle many ethnic foods. Today, ethnic foods are consumed by many American people. They like a kosher style pickle. They like . . . they've learned to like herring. There's so many items in the supermarket today that . . . outside of kosher meat, a Jewish housewife can pretty nearly satisfy herself with food that she's been accustomed to buying, well let's say, their mother bought, or even her grandmothers bought. Supermarkets are in that field with both feet now.
- Q. Well, in the early years when, let's say, you first started stocking . . . I don't know . . . I suppose the Hart's Stores, as well, would have things like dairy products. I mean, all you did was co-ordinate . . . I mean, it wasn't as if you were just entering the field. I guess what I'm asking is whether or not people'd come to you and say, "Gee, it would be great if you carried kosher pickles", or whether somebody from . . . in the business says, "Aha! I see this lady would like kosher pickles, I think I'll stock kosher pickles."
- A. Well, in the Star Market in most stores where there's a possibility of Jews living in the periphery, we handled kosher salami, kosher frankfurts. In the Park Avenue store, in the East Avenue store, and Pittsford Plaza, we . . . you could go in and buy Yoursid (spelling?) Candles. Now, if anybody told me 30 years ago that the supermarket would handle Yoursid Candles, it would be hard to believe. But, of course, the most important thing today is, when you compare food distribution with the days of the Hart's Store, in those days we handled 650 items, and today we handle 6,000. The variety is fantastic.

- A. (Continued) I sometimes wonder if it's altogether necessary. I often tell our boys we handle twenty-one different kinds of dog food, and we have only eighteen different kinds of dogs.
- Q. (Laughter) In competing with A&P then, for example, was it a combination of things of being able to offer more . . .
- A. Yes. The combination was that the A&PT Company with over 15,000 small stores, was so burdened, overly burdened, from coast to coast, to get into the supermarket field and in some areas, they were eight and ten years late. And, when they did get in, it was too late.
- Q. Whereas this is a local concern, they were started locally . . .
- A. Which?
- Q. Hart's Stores and Star Supermarkets. You were much more able to keep your hands . . .
- A. Yes. Yes. The supermarket industry showed its greatest progress by local, independent operators. It grew so fast, it was a new frontier, and many people who had business experience and ingenuity but were not grocers, got into the supermarket operation and many of them became very successful.
- Q. From another . . . another small question. Now, if I'm not mistaken, the blue laws had been on the books since the 1930s. Is that . . . the blue laws? Now, I know . . .
- A. Oh, I think the blue laws had been on the books for . . . oh, maybe in the 1890s.
- Q. Oh, that early?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Well, as a Jewish businessman, were the Hart's Stores, for example, closed on Saturday?
- A. Well, it might interest you to know that under the blue laws, if you closed, if

- A. (Continued) your sabbath was Saturday, and you closed Saturday, you could keep open Sunday. I think, I touched on this briefly when you originally came to my office, but when I joined Alfred Hart in his one store, he was from German extraction. He was a member of B'rith Kodesh, and there came a time in his life where he felt religiously, it wasn't giving him what he wanted, and was one of the founders of the Conservative Movement in Rochester. And, Beth El was born from a group of men of which Mr. Hart was one. When I came to him, I was amazed and surprised that his store was closed on Saturday until 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. And, until his death, even when we had 141 Hart's Stores, all stores were closed on Yom Kippur.
- Q. So, then, for example, the stores were open on Sunday, and legally . . . the stores were legally able to be opened on Sunday.
- A. No. No.
- Q. No?
- A. The Sunday item came about in the last five or six years.
- Q. Even if a store was closed on Saturday?
- A. Well, all our stores were open on Saturday when we'd become a chain.
- Q. Oh, the supermarkets.
- A. But, when they had one store, understand, he would open the store at 4:00 o'clock.
- Q. Okay. Okay. Let's see. Are you pretty . . . actually, is that . . . were you one that fought for allowing the stores to be opened seven days a week? I mean, did you sort of think the blue laws were . . .
- A. No. I might say that while I was president and I retired as president in 1970, our boys then were trying to impress me with the fact that around the country, supermarkets were opening on Sunday and doing well. And, I restrained them from doing it, and I might add, when the management team came in, they tried

- A. (Continued) one, or two, or three locations open on Sunday. And, competitors done the same thing, and eventually most supermarkets are open on Sunday. I think the A&P was very late or lax. They were having economic problems, and they didn't want to add more expense to opening on Sunday. Of course, as you know, the law now has been changed. And, you probably heard that Sibley, Lindsay, and Curr has informed the public that sometime in September or October they're gonna start opening up their branch stores, not their downtown store, but their branch stores.
- Q. I hadn't heard. I have another question to ask that has to do with union. Now, did the supermarket . . . is the supermarket unionized? Are your workers? I know the truckers, and the people . . . your distributors must be members of teamsters.
- A. Supermarkets, generally speaking, are unionized.
- Q. Is Star a . . .
- A. Star is unionized.
- Q. Since the earliest days or . . .
- A. No. I don't think it goes back more than . . . oh, twelve or fifteen years.
- Q. Oh, okay. So, that's very recent.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Because one of the questions . . . because Rochester had the clothing industry for so long, and because there are so many stories involved with Abe Chapman, and with the clothing workers, I wondered if there were any . . . I suppose unionizing the supermarkets was not as . . . there was no violence or no . . . it wasn't objectionable at the time.
- A. You mean organizing the supermarkets?
- Q. Would that be a fair assessment?
- A. No. No. I don't think there was ever those problems. There might have been

A. (Continued) problems of organized labor trying to get you organized.

Q. Oh, coming into this . . .

A. Talking to people might have taken a year, or two, or three, before they were able to convince people that that is what they should do.

Q. But, they never had problems with . . . between management and the unions? You never had . . .

A. No. I don't think we ever had a strike. Is that what you're talking about?

Q. Yes. Never the same kind of conflicts, as for example, in the clothing industry where they did, you know, forty, fifty years ago had a lot of conflicts?

A. No. You know, many people can tell you stories that Chapman don't like.

Q. But nobody will. I mean, they haven't put it on tape.

A. Are you talking to Chapman?

Q. I'm not personally, but somebody is. Yeah.

A. Somebody ought to ask him why the industry left town, went broke.

Q. I think that's a good question. Okay. Well, maybe another question I'd like to ask you as a long . . . such a long-term resident of Rochester: How about the changes in downtown Rochester? You mentioned earlier on that you had a store on Front Street. Now, Front Street's gone today. You live within the city limits, don't you? Or do you live in Brighton?

A. I live in Brighton.

Q. Brighton. Well, how about . . . just some of the changes in downtown Rochester do you think?

A. Well, I think that McCurdy's and Forman's deserve a pat on the back for spending the millions of building Midtown. I think, I've read articles where it probably was the first time in the country that a program of that nature was taken on. It was done for one purpose: to generate more traffic in downtown

- A. (Continued) to give the public a splendid opportunity to shop in one area under a roof, air conditioned. However, it could have been a lot more successful if the downtown merchants, especially Sibley's, McCurdy's and Forman's would remain downtown. But, when they open up beautiful stores surrounding downtown in the outside communities, I think, they've learned a lesson that business people have said for many, many years: You can't have the pie and eat it. And, that's what they attempted to do, and little by little there was a leakage of traffic downtown. Needless for me to tell you, the average housewife and even the average male likes the idea of going to a shopping center, free parking handy to the stores. The average housewife . . . don't have to be oversensitive to her attire, and the same is true of the male. So, it is my best opinion that there will always be a downtown, but a small leakage of traffic taken place year after year.
- Q. I had one long-term resident of Rochester tell me that downtown Rochester started changing when they broke West Main Street off from East Main, and, well, let's see. In those years, there was still a Hart's Store on Front Street. Do you think there was a noticeable change in business from that early . . . from the . . . I guess that'd be from the 1920s, wouldn't it?
- A. Oh, yes. West Main Street was never a good business area from Fitzhugh Street down to Bull's Head. Never developed. North Clinton Street never developed from Main Street to Central Avenue. South Clinton fared a little better. But now, it's gone. Many stores are empty. When I drive down South Clinton from Main to Court Street, very little traffic, hardly anybody walking. Where that used to be a busy, busy street.
- Q. Had the Hart's Store already moved off Front Street before Front Street . . .
- A. Yes. As we developed more and more stores around the neighborhood, of course, that took it away from Front Street. You know, like . . . like McCurdy's.

Q. Only you closed.

A. Yes. Opening up a lot of stores, people came to Front Street . . . remember there was no parking, there were some good meat markets on Front Street, and some of the busiest saloons in the United States..

Q. That's what I heard. And, a lot of bums on the street. Would you put that back in the 1930s though?

A. Hmm?

Q. Would you put that back in the 1930s when it was thriving like that?

A. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Q. But, it wasn't the kind of area where people were afraid to go down, was it?

A. In those days?

Q. Yeah.

A. No.

Q. It was . . .

A. No. No, I think . . . You mean Front Street?

Q. Yeah.

A. It was a busy shopping street. A very busy shopping street, and I think, in those days, the so called bum or drunk was only interested in himself, of being a bum and being a drunk, and not molesting people. People would molest them, but they wouldn't molest people.

Q. So, you weren't really afraid that . . . yeah, you just sort of let them do their thing, and you'd do yours. In your opinion, do you think downtown Rochester is ever going to come back again, or do you think that the trend is definitely . . . not only the trend, but that people moved to the suburbs, that people would rather shop in the suburbs?

A. You know, I must confess to you that I never had too much confidence in people in politics when they become seventy years of age. And, I don't have too much

- A. (Continued) confidence in people that age telling you about the future. I have more confidence in people in their thirties and forties. People my age sometimes . . . the officials of our company tell me that I'm a little pessimistic. As I indicated before, I'm not an investor in real estate, but if anybody asked me to buy a piece of property of Main Street between Franklyn and the Four Corners, I would say definitely no. And, of course, the value of real estate is tumbled, and tumbled, and tumbled. Yet, property in the outskirts ten, fifteen, twenty miles away is more expensive than Main Street.
- Q. Well, you know, that all . . . in my mind that all goes back to the amount of money the city can make from taxes, etc. that . . . and it will put back into the city in education or in cultural programs that has to do with the whole quality of life in this city. I guess that . . . that's also something that's changed in the fifty years. Where downtown used to be a . . .
- A. The City of Rochester is mightily interested in . . . rightfully so, of saving downtown. They've always felt it was an anchor for business life. I think they're fighting a lost cause, but you mentioned culture. To support arts and culture has gotten to a point where the taxpayer is saying, 'You've given us enough culture and art, and we can't afford any more.' I think there was an article in this mornings paper stating that . . . I'm not sure if I'm correct in it, I just glanced at it, that are average taxpayers' debt. Monroe County is exceedingly high and higher than many counties in New York State. That surprised me very much.
- Q. And, of course, the county and city are two different entities in part.
- A. Yeah. Yeah.
- Q. Let's see. This is another question that has to do with the supermarket that's a little bit off what we were just talking about. How about the role of advertising? Has that changed considerably over the past forty years?

- Q. (Continued) Star Supermarket relies heavily . . . not heavily, but relies on advertising.
- A. Yes, I think that Madison Avenue has changed advertising to a point of . . . it's getting disgusting. For example, on television there's a television program of a woman who walks over to her car and there's a police ticket on it. The ticket says, "cadillac". She says, "My car's a ford". Now, you get the significance there. They would never tell about another person's product, understand. And, today, they have no hesitation in saying product "B", mentioning the name, is better than product "C". To me, I think that that is hitting below the belt. It's like last night in Kansas City when the Reagan republican is a better republican than the Ford republican. And, you watched it from 7:30 to midnight, and some of it is disgusting, but that's politics, and that's our way of life, and I wouldn't want to change it for any other method of . . .

END OF TAPE II, SIDE I, INTERVIEW II

Tape II
Side II
Interview II

- Q. You were making a good point about . . . about consumerism. You were making a good point about consumerism, and I changed the tape. So, maybe if you want to repeat that.
- A. No. There's been a strong movement on the part of consumers referred to as consumerism. And, there's no question that whether it be the plumber or the roofer, or painter; you might have given him a bad job, or over-charged him, and I don't know too much about that type of operation, but when it comes to food distribution, and we're only speaking of our community, that with competition as keen as it is, management of supermarkets operations are bending over backwards to give people as good a deal or a better deal than the competitor. And, of course, the consumer's been told from time to time when we ran 141 Hart's Stores, we'd have to have a gross mark-up of about 24 to 25%. And, today, with volume, we're able to retail the food with a gross mark-up of about 21%. I don't know of any other industry has been able to work on a lower gross than they did 30, 35 years ago. And, the savings that to the consumer is fantastic, and yet the food prices are the highest in history. You know, it's like at the Kansas City; they tell you that more people are gainfully employed today, and that is true. And, more people are unemployed today, and that's true. Now, to the average high school boy or girl, that won't make too much sense. But, as you know, it does make sense, you got more people. Every June when those thousands of graduates from high school and college, they're thrown into the labor field, but it's interesting to know that there are more people employed and more people unemployed. And, that creates for a situation that is not good.
- Q. You know, on that point, would you say that when you were a young man first

- Q. (Continued) starting out, let's say, 1920, did you have a feeling that there were opportunities, that, you know, things were open, that you could move ahead, that if you worked hard, you know, you could do it?
- A. I think, to be truthful, I think the average man of my age when I went to work was looking for a job. Now, I don't know what would have happened to me or many people like myself if there wasn't a bit of luck connected with it. Now, many people take a position that luck plays very little part in the average fellow's life. I think he's wrong. I think the fellow who depends on luck together, he's wrong. I think that the people in my day who were honest, had some courage, and some degree of common sense, and didn't leave it to fate. I don't know how better to put it, and I'm giving it to you off the top of my head, but of course, in those days, you had the Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth, and MIT graduates even in those days who are called "wiz kids". They refer to them today as "wiz kids." They're trained, and they come from good stock and develop a tremendous amount of knowledge. Like a good lawyer. For some particular reason, I've always had a lot of regard for lawyers, the good ones and the poor ones that trained to do things that the average lay person can't accomplish. Any other questions?
- Q. Well, you know, to just pursue that one step further is because today you hear so often that there are not the same opportunities today, that everything is closed, you know, and I just wondered whether . . . and young people my age, for example, have the sense that things are closed.
- A. Well, let me tell you this: In our company, we have 2,200 people. In over a period of 60 to 70 years our company's had three presidents. With 2,200 people, how many top officials can you have? And, I do know that today some people have left Stromberg-Carlson and opened up a business of their own and started from scratch. And, some have been tremendously successful, and

A. (Continued) some are still probably employing 10, 15, 20 people and waiting to grow. When you asked about the opportunities, you know, in those days an experienced grocery clerk got \$12.50 a week. Kodak was paying \$15.00 for factory workers. I would say that with technical situations today that a person, whether they're getting into electronics, whether they're getting into computers, whether they're getting into any other item . . . An item come to our president's desk, he put it on my desk this morning and a lot of reading . . . I must confess that I scanned it. At my age, I don't want any more knowledge. I wouldn't know what the hell to do with it. But, it was a program developed by Grayson. He was the head of the Wage and Price Control in the Nixon Administration, and he is the . . . developing funds and mentioned several companies that have already contributed three, four, five million dollars to develop a program of . . . you want to turn that off a second? And going to spend millions of dollars to develop programs of increasing productivity. Mr. Grayson says that in the last twenty years, six or seven countries, European countries, including Japan, have increased their productivity greater percentage wise than we have in America. And, he said if we want to retain and maintain the economic position, that American has been in the forefront for so many years, that these companies that are contributing millions of dollars can see the importance of maintaining productivity. How the workman, or how the unions feel about it . . . If I was a union representative, I would say that that is the proper approach. But, I don't think that many of them will agree with it. If they take the position that productivity means the workers got to work harder, and that isn't so. Productivity is to create a system of producing merchandise. For example, consider today compared to forty years ago the farmer who gets now "x" hundreds of bushels of potatoes per acre compared to what he got back thirty, forty

- A. (Continued) years ago. With the small percentage of people are on the farm, with modern techniques, and productivity, the volume of production is so much greater than ever before in history. Productivity caused by the harvester, the modern potatoe digger, the cutting of hay and bundling it all at the same time with one piece of equipment. No, productivity . . . ecologists and the schools should be in the forefront of developing students of . . . in courses that productivity is important.
- Q. You know, it's sort of ironic. You said that fifty years ago the grocery clerk got \$12.50, and the clerk at Kodak might have gotten \$15.00. It's ironic in the sense that Jews, for example, there weren't that many Jews working in Kodak, if I'm not mistaken. And, that's another big change in terms of Jews being able to enter most fields, you know. I don't know if I'm asking a question or just making a comment.
- A. Well, I think what you're trying to say is that Jews, because of their characteristics, their background, I think, their parents, as old fashioned as they were, wanted their children to get an education. They wanted their children to go into business. They wanted . . . wanted their children to be doctors, a lawyer, and there's no question that heredity in that area had a lot to do with it.
- Q. I find this discussion very interesting. I just want to ask one other little question. We were talking about advertising. Originally, the Hart's Stores, how did they put forth the fact that they might have a sale, for example, on one item? Whereas today, you know, you pick up the newspaper, you see Star Markets featuring such and such.
- A. Well, it might interest you to know that here is material that is the sales and promotion. The boys put it on my desk. I have nothing to do with it. A month and six weeks away. We have to bring merchandise in from all parts of the world, especially from Florida and California. And, I think, probably five

- A. (Continued) hours a week, a group of six or seven or eight gets together and plan the promotion for sometime in September, and maybe think in terms of even October.
- Q. But, like, forty years ago, you would come into the store and know what you want, or would there just be handouts?
- A. Well, years ago, needless for me to tell you, with 650 items, it was . . . it wasn't complicated like it is today. And, the world is changed, not only in America. When I say the world, I mean the world. You go to Paris and you see the biggest supermarkets you ever seen. And, the American government back many years ago, not more than ten or twelve, asked our industry to help European countries get into the supermarket field. And, I remember the boys telling that when they opened their first store in Italy, I think it was Naples, and it didn't work out too well. People were so in the habit of going to their little stores, European countries had little stores. One sold meat, one sold produce, one sold canned goods, or whatever it might be. And, the first six or eight months in Naples, it didn't work out. Word came back to us that people weren't in the habit of going into a grocery store, and when the housewife said how much this is, and you said 22¢ in their money, she says I'll only pay you 19. You went into the supermarket, you paid the price. No matter how they haggled, that was it. And, they didn't like it even though they're buying it reasonable. However, today in Holland, Switzerland . . . You know, it is becoming more factual today than ever before, although it was a fact always that what happens to America, rubs off on the world quickly. If, for example, if we inflation here, it's over the world in a short time. A Toronto businessman told me when I was in Canada when I asked a question back three, four years ago, how long does it take to rub off Canada; he says, "Two weeks". European countries now are beginning to talk the same way.

- A. (Continued) America, get your house in order, and when you have problems, it rubs off on us. When everything . . . when the economy is good here, it's good around the world. Everybody felt that way except DeGaulle, and he . . . if he had lived another five years, I think he'd a put France into a lot of trouble.
- Q. Well, then, something you said just reminded me of another question: Did people try and bargain prices? Did people try and bargain prices at the supermarket here in America, here in Rochester, back, let's say, in the 1930s?
- A. No, I think they took it very quickly; excepted it because they knew values. And, the supermarkets gave them values, of course, I don't have to tell you that inflation, especially in food, and I think it's horrible. I think that inflation is . . . politicians are telling us today . . . is one of the worst economic problems we're facing. And, they talk about that as number one, unemployment number two. And, those are the two great things that control the economy in the country. I'm not an economist, but I think I said this in my previous remarks when you were here that in the last 50 years, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, you had inflation. And, when the whistle blew, prices went down, wages went down, and they started from, say, scratch. And, then worked up again. Here we're told we have a recession the last couple, three years and inflation at the same time. And, economists don't know what to do with it. Some of our great economists that's been in Washington, that wanted to be helpful, never dealt with a combination of recession and inflation at the same time. When you never dealt with it, you don't know what to do with it, even if you're an economist. But, at the rate we're going now, with wage structure going up and utilities going up, and everything we buy, whether it be bags or electric power, is going up in price, and that affects us and

- A. (Continued) everybody we buy from. So, on that basis, I would live another five or six years to see whether our economy and the world economy can stand this. For example, the boys are telling me now that coffee is gonna be \$2.00 a pound next week or the week after, and bread keeps going up continually, and are you a food buyer, you do some shopping?
- Q. Yes.
- A. Well, since I retired, for the first time, my wife makes me do some shopping, and I'm horrified at the price . . . I don't know. She asked me to get a couple cans of red salmon, \$2.20 a can, and I tried to remember back when it was 29¢. Now, what we can do about it, I don't know. I will say this, when Nixon, and I don't like to use that name, put Wage and Price Control into effect, understand, he should have held it. Held it, understand, because people are complaining now, and they were complaining before. But of the two evils, understand, Wage and Price Control of the two evils, I would accept the Wage and Price Control.
- Q. Let me ask you one last question: Go back to the 1930s. Were you a supporter of FDR or his policies? Franklin Delano Roosevelt? Was he the big hero that?
- A. Yeah. I think that Franklin Roosevelt in the '30s, when everybody was fearful, and we didn't know what kind of a government we were going to have, and I want to tell you, if you had a president in those days that wanted to give you a dictatorial government, understand, that everyone was so low in spirit, and so low in economics that you would accept most anything in those days. No, I think in that era when one looks back, it was a fantastic era to go through. I think that what has taken place in Kansas City last night, and some of the speakers, they don't mention Roosevelt too much, but Connolly made a great talk stating what could happen, understand, don't be unhappy with what you've got, understand. But, what could happen, and what can happen.

- A. (Continued) No, I thought that Roosevelt had done a good job. I think that most presidents with the exception of our previous one, who got all fouled up and . . . I'm hesitant to say this, but I will say it: that, I think, it's a great thing that it did happen to show the American people and politicians what can happen. And, what pleases me most is that instead of creating a revolution, it was just the opposite. Now, if we can retain that lesson . . . I don't know. I would like to feel that the American businessman has got so much to lose if the American system don't work. And, not only the American businessman, as I've said before that what happens in American, rubs off on the world. If America goes bad . . . I think Connolly said yesterday how many democracies we have in the world today. I think he said thirteen. Now, I don't retain it. But, I think he said thirteen. And, of course, you gotta have some leadership that gonna take care of 200,000,000, 210,000,000 people in America, and many people take the position that one man can't do it. And, I maintain that even with . . . in a democracy, one man can do it. One man, Hitler, he did it. One man, Mussellinni, he did it. The one or two people in Russia, he did it. So, it's an amazing thing when you stop to think to think of the power that one man can have. And, that's something that we in the democracy . . .and democracies are falling. I think Moynihan when he was here the other day said he was ambassador to India. It was a democracy. No more democracy today.
- Q. It reminds me of the fact that people in your generation have lived through the Russian Revolution from 1917 on through ensuing political developments that I can scarcely ask you to recount all fifty years.
- A. No. I think the intelligent people in this country and in every country have a job to perform. And, especially the elected people. And, I for one, even though I don't have too much confidence in people when they get over 70, I

A. (Continued) absolutely believe in that that the intelligent people, the political minded people have a job to do, and when they're elected, the citizens of the country, no matter what country it is, should work with them, not fight them. I think there's some value to what was said the other night that you can't have a democratic congress and a democratic president at the same time. You haven't got nothing to fall back on. Now, even though Ford has the reputation of he throwing, I don't know, 58 bills, understand, I wonder . . . I'm not a political . . . I've never studied political science, but there must have been some fair reason, reasonable reason for him vetoing 58 bills. Anything else you want to ask to me?

Q. I think that's it.

END OF TAPE II, SIDE II, INTERVIEW II