

ROCHESTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT (Rochester Jewish community 1925-1975)

Interviewee Philip Liebschutz

Interviewer Brian Mitchell

Date(s) of interview June 14, 1976 (1), June 29, 1976 (1)

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

The interview took place in Mr. Liebschutz's office on the third floor of the Columbia Bank Building (Four Corners), 31 East Main Street. Mr. Liebschutz was very friendly and anxious to determine what in his life might be incorporated into the project. As the interview progressed, he enjoyed recalling his past and increasingly opened up. He developed into an eager participant and displayed a notable sincerity and sense of wit which blended nicely in the interview.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Liebschutz is a lawyer-banker who just retired as President of Columbia Savings after thirty years. He began his law career as a trial lawyer and increasingly devoted himself to estate management --- particularly the Markus and Adler trusts. He headed Rochester's Selective Service Board for a period which included Korea and Vietnam. He participates in professional and civic organizations and is on the Board of Nazareth College. He has participated in the Israel Bond drives and the United Jewish Welfare Fund.

Interview abstract

We discussed Mr. Liebschutz's law practice and his years at Columbia Savings. He outlined in extensive detail his relationship with Charles Markus and his connection with the Markus and Adler trusts. We also dealt with his activities (and the problems encountered) in Selective Service. Finally, we touched upon his participation in Jewish associations --- specifically, the Israel Bond Drive and the United Jewish Welfare Fund. He also offered his thoughts on a variety of contemporary issues.

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

* Social history

 Family

 Demographic/residential

 Economic

** Political/civic

*** Zionism/Israel

*** Jewish community

** community relations

 Religious life

 Jewish education

* Anti-semitism

Interview log

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

--see following page(s) --

I. Occupation:

**

a. retired as President of Columbia Savings; President for over thirty years

1. assets rose from 2½ million to over \$500 million
2. continued to practice law; trial lawyer, eventually business and estate work

*

a. not hard to practice during the Depression one needed to be dignified and responsible

b. H. Douglass van Deuser --- attorney for Columbia helped Liebschutz and L. eventually succeeded him (1938)

**

3. Rockefeller appointed him to the State Banking Board (11 years)

*

a. also elected to Federal Home Loan Banking Board

II. Civic Affairs

a. chaired Selective Service system (including Korea and Vietnam)

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1. draft resisters destroyed his draft board in Vietnam years ; picketed as "Chairman of the Death Board"

a. enjoyed the fact that it was a civilian rather than a military board; was conscientious about legal and moral reasons

**

b. (aside) arrived in Roch in 1926, born in Auburn, NY in 1904; went from high school to law school at 21 years

1. formed friendship with van Deuser -- \$12 week -- worked weekends at Oaska Lake

*

2. joined the National Guard (1929); Troop F, 121st Cavalry

a. staunch advocate of military service

III. Markus Fund

a. Charles Markus brought from Chicago by George Eastman "most learned man I ever knew"

1. at one time, largest buyer of silver in the world (after US)

2. did not get involved in religious affairs until the Nazi regime came to power

a. became a major contributor to the welfare fund

3. met Markus through his father-in-law (Firestone) and Ben Goldstein

Markus a backelor who loved people; loved music

*

IV. Jewish Associations:

a. Markus Fund --- "health, education, welfare, and civic-mindedness" of Jewish community; restricted fund which allocates to almost any cause

a. eg; camps, cultural programs

b. Markus also supported black causes, hospitals

*

b. Adler Foundation

1. Adler a client who was "an unhappy man" --- wife had left him, son a disappointment

a. a precise person with the highest degree of honor

*

2. Fund has a surplus funds allocation --- result? U of R Oral History project

**

a. thoroughly familiar with the project

c. professional

1. served on the Board of Nazareth College

2. active on the Budget Committee of the Community Chest

3. organizing trustee of the Brighton Library

4. chaired the Monroe County Charter Association

*

d. why law? lack of knowledge, parents poor, not a good student (father a saloon keeper) --

1. sold tickets to people who wished to bring their relatives over; would deposit their money with him

END OF
SIDE I

**

e. Israel Bond Drive

1. relates that the money ~~is~~ segment of Roch adverse to buying bonds as they felt that Israel could not pay them back

**

f. Jewish Community Center

1. became a focal point for the Jewish Community -- interested as a place where young people could congregate

*

a. Mr. Markus influenced the acceleration to build the Center

1. institution that cuts across all lines

**

g. United Jewish Welfare Fund --- 20-30 beneficiaries; protected the community against excessive solicitation and unworthy requests

*

1. services have expanded --- give to out-of-state as well as local agencies

*

2. Chairman of Fund during the Partition period

a. Jews have learned how to give; but they have not diminished their giving to non-Jewish causes

b. latent prejudice may exist but not at the leadership level

*

1. business associates not primarily Jewish

V. Contemporary Issues

a. contributed to Israel buy buying bonds

b. been to Israel twice; impressed by their dynamic achievement

*

1. Israel "can't help but survive"; no feelings on Russia, more concerned with black Africa

**

c. not pro-UN

1. branding Zionism "ridiculous"

END OF
SIDE II

Possible Contacts:

Ben Goldstein

Nelson Kirschenbaum

Joseph Silverstein

Charlotte Rich (NYC) Leon Sturman's sister

Elmer Lewis

Irving Germenow

Interview: Philip Liebschutz June 29, 1976

- ** I. born in Auburn, New York --- August 18, 1904; mother from Germany, father from Galicia
- * a. arrived in US in the 1890's and settled in Syracuse
 - ** 1. later moved to Auburn
 - ** b. kinship connections played a vital role --- believes that family units have broken down
- ** II. father a saloon keeper in partnership with a step brother
- ** a. saloon became the immigrant's club with connections to the steamship lines --- father acted as a holder of the immigrant's deposits
 - 1. based upon trust and personal contact
 - 2. ended when Auburn voted to go dry under local option in 1915 and parents operated an eatery on Oaska Lake
 - a. parents formed an endeavor "which best suited their capacity"
 - ** b. mother the pivot around which the family evolved --- operated an open kitchen
 - 1. did not have great adherence to some of the Jewish traditions --- did not keep a kosher home
 - c. father loved his business and to be of service to people
 - d. had a brother who lingered for months before he died --- hard for his parents to overcome the memories but eventually successful
 - b. brother worked in William H. Seward Bank; family a closely-knit one; when eatery burned down all eventually migrated to Rochester
 - * c. Auburn a typical small town with a high degree of intimacy
 - 1. not a large Jewish population but a closely knit one --- all branches went to the same synagogue
 - d. German was spoken frequently; parents could only understand a smattering of Yiddish
 - 1. parents had a very vivid recollection of deprivation in Europe and cultivated the American sense of opportunity in their children
 - *** e. remembers some anti-Semitism - recalls being called "Christ-killers" --- as long as people have frailties, there will be some degree of latent anti-Semitism
 - 1. never
- *** III. wife the daughter of S. Firestone --- renowned Roch architect.
- a. wife went to Cornell but never finished; her two sisters completed their course work at Cornell

* b. father built Iola Sanitarium Hickey-Freeman, Stromberg-Carlson, etc.

1. became very attached to his father-in-law

** c. children --- son graduated as rabbi from Hebrew Union College, presently serving in Malden, Mass. (Tom)

1. Peter --- went to Colgate; presently a lawyer although he served the State Department as an undercover agent in Vietnam

a. returned dissolutioned

2. daughter a volunteer at the RIT urban extension

3. youngest son just graduated from Albany Law School

4. Tom married --- produced three grandchildren

a. keeps in close communication with his children

5. believes that his children have a profound respect for tradition and a greater concern for knowledge

** d. intermarriage all right for some people "if they're equipped to handle it"; could readily accept his children marrying non-Jews

* IV Neighborhoods --- at first lived in a rooming house then shared an apartment; always lived in the Park Ave. section until he moved to Brighton in 1936

a. frequently went down to Joseph Ave.

b. moved to Brighton with the birth of his first son, good neighborhood, large back yard; superb school system

** V. reflected that Fr. Coughlin had an audience based partly upon curiosity --- inconceivable that he was challenged so rarely

a. looking back, hard to believe that the Nazi hoocaust etc. happened

b. Fr. Coughlin was a welcomed addition to people who wished to feed their own prejudices

1. wondered why the great religious leaders never took an opposing position to the rampant prejudice in the early days

END OF
SIDE I

** VI. belongs to B'rith Kodesh --- has belonged all his life and is from a reformed heritage

a. believes that there is an increased sense of Jewish identity throughout the world --- when a Jew does something bad, all Jews are disgraced

b. has been very active --- interested in the synagogue as a place for the continuation, understanding of the Jews

** 1. all aspects of Jewish education have a strong sense of the need for Jewish education

a. its important to understand where we've been if we're going to understand where we are going

*** VII. represented the Brighton Republicans --- believes that we need people in politics who are concerned with the civic good

a. tried to bring good leadership to Brighton

b. joined the Republican Party because he was attracted by the people who were Republicans --- most people who are involved in a political party do not do so for phil. reasons

*

c. still a committeeman -- not as active

* VIII. if any town survives, Rochester will ----"should say a prayer for Eastman Kodak"

a. have advanced the black community tremendously since the riots

* b. Jewish-blacks relations good but often misunderstood

1. becomes a question of black leadership

2. should publicize the good aspects of the black community in greater detail

c. Roch's Jewish community suffers because the children of the community's leaders have not followed their parents into leadership positions

1. community unique in many respects --- has a high sense of social and civic responsibility

IX. Other Sources:

a. Abe Chapman ---- through him discuss Max Holtz, impartial mediator between clothing industry and labor

b. Sam Dicker

c. Max Adler ---

d. Ben Goldstein. Mo Levenson, Ben Forman, Saul Linowitz, Harry Rosenthal

e. Bernard Heuman, nephew of Saul Heuman --- active at time of JYMA; Pres. of Auto Club, Director of Lincoln-Alliance Bank; currently with Timely Clothes

f. Dr. Stabens about Simon Stein who sent many boys to medical school

END OF
SIDE II

Tape 1
Side 1
Interview 1

- Q. Try it again. This is Brian Mitchell interviewing Mr. Philip Liebschutz at his office in the Columbia Bank Building, 31 East Main Street, on June 14th, 1976. Okay. To begin. Could you explain the nature of your occupation? I think we'll discuss professional aspects first.
- A. Well, I have just recently retired as president of Columbia Banking Saving & Loan Association and am now devoting my time to my own personal affairs together with my law firm, Liebschutz, Sutton, Delew, Clark & Darcy.
- Q. Okay. How long were you president of the banking company?
- A. For over 30 years.
- Q. Wow. I didn't realize so long.
- A. Yes. We started . . . I started as a officer of the association when it was a very small institution located on a upper story of a downtown building with around two, two and a half million dollars in assets, and built it up to its present size of over \$500,000.00 . . . er, over \$500,000,000.00.
- Q. My word. That's quite something. At the same . . . and, during this period did you keep your law firm going?
- A. Yes. During this period, I continued to head up my law firm, and it was a very exciting period, because it started with the aftermath of the depression, although I was admitted to the Bar in 1926.
- Q. I didn't realize.
- A. And, just got nicely launched as a lawyer when, of course, the depression came along. And, I continued as a very active trial lawyer for many years, and then, developed more into business, real estate, and estate work as conditions required.

Q. It raises a whole series of, I think, interesting questions. First: What was it like to be a lawyer in the depression? Is there a difference then and now?

A. Yes. Of course, the economy didn't move as fast during the depression as it moves now. The standard of living wasn't as high as it is. People were concerned not only with the normal things that we have concern with today, but they were concerned with the use of money. Of course, one can only recall the bank holiday, and the very interesting aspects of the bank holiday which occurred in Rochester when the banks were all closed.

Q. In 1933?

A. Yes. The need for handling the interchange of the needs of people without any ready money and with banks closed, was probably a very unusual but extremely exciting time. But people survived and, I think, one of the great things about the legal profession as I attest is the fact that people did rely upon lawyers for trust and confidence, and they got through that period.

Q. Was it hard to get established during the depression?

A. No. I think it was not hard then; it's not hard now. I think if young people have a contribution to make to the community, they will find an opportunity to get established if they're dignified and responsible and intelligent and industrious.

Q. I see. You took the Columbia banking system over, perhaps, around 1945, '46?

A. Well, you see . . . take it over . . . this is a mutual system. There are no stockholders. I was associated with a man by the name of H. Douglas VanDuser who was elected to the Bench as a judge in this community, and he was the attorney for the association. I think he was elected in 1938. And, I followed him acting as attorney for and director for . . . of the association which was then headed by a very notable Jewish citizen of this community, a man by the name of Max Holtz, Max L. Holtz. Mr. Holtz was the president of one of our

A. (Continued) smaller but very important clothing firms in town here. And, he got involved as the impartial chairman for the settlement of all labor disputes between management labor in the clothing industry. And, it was almost of national acclaim, the wonderful relations . . . relationships which existed in Rochester in the clothing industry. There was never such thing as a strike. And, he was a man who was very close to Sydney Hillman and all the great labor leaders of the country. And, his great interest was labor. He was a learned man. He never married. He was very versed, and he . . . his family were the founders of the Columbia Banking Savings & Loan Association back in, I think, it was 1886. And, after the Civil War. And, when he retired from the clothing business, he devoted his time to Columbia. Well, he did a superior job of serving that industry, but unfortunately, he died in 1938. That was just about the time the Federal Home Loan Bank System was getting organized, which gave great impetus to home financing industry. And, I was asked to succeed him which I did. So, and, I think, it was 1938. And, I continued in my law practice and then devoted my time as a parttime employee of the association. And, we just continued to thrive and eventually we bought a building, this building we're in now. We bought from a local bank. Of course, the real estate market was depressed then. I think we bought this building for \$19,000.00 here.

Q. No kidding. Wow! (Laughter)

A. We're down right near Four Corners of Rochester. And, we continued to prosper. And, the branch system. So, finally, we branched out. And, without going into great details, we brought it up to its present posture. Now, during this time, of course, I got involved in many things, both as a lawyer in my law practice, and then, through my civic work. As far as the banking field is concerned, Governor Rockefeller appointed me a member of the State Banking Board which is composed of members of the banking industry as well as public.

Q. Could you explain your duties in connection . . .

A. Yes. I served on that board for eleven years under . . . In fact, Jim Farley who just died sat right next to me and across the table from me in the banking board was Elliot Bell who was former financial editor of the New York Times, and later, also, superintendent of the Banks of the State of New York. And, this is the board which regulates the financial . . . the state chartered financial institutions in the State of New York. And, it has a great many responsibilities with regard to the conduct of banks, as well as the review of legislation which is gonna control the banks. As you know, we have both the federal system and a state system. And, the systems must cooperate and co-ordinate together.

Q. Sure. What made Columbia Banking grow in Rochester?

A. Well . . .

Q. Is there a good climate, or . . .

A. The savings and loan system has grown all over the country. While I was serving on the banking board, I also was elected to the Federal Home Loan Bank Board of the State of . . . the countries divided up into districts, Federal Home Loan Bank districts.

Q. I didn't realize that.

A. And, New York State is in the second Federal Home Loan Bank District which is composed of New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands; and if you'll hold for just a minute, I'll see if I . . . to your question, I think, several things contributed to the growth of the savings and loan business. One was the federal insurance of deposit accounts or savings accounts. And, second was the advent of the Federal Home Loan Bank System which acts as a reserve institution for savings and loan associations. The . . . there're some six thousand of these associations, probably more than that now, but when I

- A. (Continued) was on the board, and I think I was on the board for . . . I forgot, six or eight years, there was some six thousand of these associations. And, their primary purpose in addition to giving a home for savings accounts of people, is to finance homes for them to live in. And, it's the largest single factor in furnishing funds for . . . home buyers. The system changed from the early days when it used to be that if you were a member of the system, you could get a mortgage loan from the association that you identified yourself with provided they had funds. And, the funds came from periodic savings. And, of course, now it's expanded so they have advances available to the system from the Federal Home Loan Bank System. I'll give that to you. I've got a little fact book around here which you may like to put into your library.
- Q. Okay. We're discussing . . . the book in question is the Federal Home Loan Book of New York, Pamphlet 37th Annual Report. And, it'd be for the year ended December 31st, 1969.
- A. Now, this happens to be one that's dated. It's 1967, but it tells you a little bit about the system.
- Q. I see. Okay. This is a Savings and Loan Fact Book for 1967, U.S. Savings and Loan League. Okay. Thank you.
- A. You were asking about the banking board. I'll let you take that. When you get through . . . That happened to be the board I . . . this man here is, well, that's Bill Dencer who is superintendent of banks. Patterson. Morgan.
- Q. Interesting fellow there.
- A. Yeah. (Unintelligible) the kid from New York, you know, he . . . Well, he's Sol Corban. Now, he's . . . what was he? He's just having . . . Well, that just gives you a little background.
- Q. Now, this would be '70. So, you . . .
- A. I was on the banking board . . . I was on the banking board for, I think, for eleven years.

Q. For eleven years.

A. Well, just to . . . because I don't know how much detail you want. During this time, of course, I was very active in civic affairs. I was chairman of the selective service system for this county until my age disqualified me. I think I was on that for 15 or 18 years.

Q. And what would be your . . .

A. Well, I was charged with the responsibility of administering the selective service system of the drafting young men into the service or giving them exceptions so as to protect themselves and their needs which would result in a hardship if they had to leave their homes.

Q. Were you participating in the selective service board, say, during Korea, or during Viet Nam and so on?

A. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q. Were there any particular problems in Rochester?

A. Yes. One of the particular problems . . . when the draft resisters raided our draft board . . .

Q. Oh, they did?

A. And, destroyed it. Took all our files and destroyed . . . in fact, the newspaper files are full of that. You can probably . . . And, pickets out in front of the bank here calling me . . . what was it they thought of? The Death . . . President of the Death Board, Chairman of the Death Board rather than the Draft Board. They paraded up and down in front here. But, these were few, you know, people who were motivated to follow their convictions no matter how offensive or destructive it was to other people.

Q. It seems as though it was pretty disruptive.

A. But, we survived that. In fact, it was an experience that I look back on with . . . It just comes to my mind here because of my convictions about

- A. (Continued) service. I mentioned to you that I enjoyed my service on the Draft Board. I enjoyed the fact that it was a civilian operation as against a military operation.
- Q. Against the military. I see.
- A. And the kind of people I had with me on the board were people who were not just militaristic. Everybody has to go in. But, who tried to keep . . . make people go in who should go in, but by the same token, if there was a good legal reason or a good moral reason why one shouldn't, so that . . . We met over there many, many years . . .
- Q. About from when to when to serve?
- A. Well, let's see. Well, it was . . . it must have started in '53.
- Q. 1953.
- A. Let's see. That's my . . . I was about fifteen years.
- Q. About fifteen. I see.
- A. But, that was kind of an aftermath to my own service, because I came to Rochester in 1926.
- Q. Where had you been before?
- A. Well, I lived in Auburn. My home was in Auburn, New York. And, I was born in Auburn in 1904, and then, I went to school in Auburn and I was . . . I went from high school to law school. In those days you could do that. And, I graduated from law school when I was 21 years old. Now, as you look at today's standards, that's almost infantile. You're very young at 21.
- Q. Indeed you are.
- A. But, in those days it was . . . at least it didn't seem to me to be unusual. I got . . . formed a friendship and an association with a man who became a very good friend of mine and that's Judge VanDuser I mentioned. I went to work for him for \$12.00 a week.

Q. Was that good pay at the time?

A. Well, it was . . . I lived on it. I didn't have any other income, and my folks in Auburn out on Nowaska Lake, and I used to go home weekends to help dad to work. They had a summer eating place, and I liked to cook. So, I used to go back, and I was the cook.

Q. No kidding! Oh!

A. (Laughter) And, at Nowaska Lake. And, I'd go home . . . the law offices were always opened on Saturdays. In those days, we'd work until noon. I'd get the trolley, take the trolley to Port Byron, transfer from Port Byron to Auburn, and go home. And, work in the kitchen, and Sunday night, reverse it and come back and go to work Monday morning. And, I thought none the worse of it. Well, then, after awhile, I felt the need for some recreation as well as additional (unintelligible) sport. I joined the . . . we had then the National Guard. The old 121st Cavalry. And, that was a wonderful experience, 'cause I made lifelong friendships out of it.

Q. Say, in the late '20s?

A. It was in, I think, in '29, I think. Yes. And, it was a cavalry regiment. And, as you look around, you'll see horses around the office here. That was the start my relationship with horses. We had a great troop. That, of course, if you look over there, you'll see I'm up . . . I'm mounted on one of them. Particularly nice horse here.

Q. Oh, yes. Oh, they're beautiful.

A. This is a . . . horses that I drive. Well, as I say, and those were days . . .

Q. They're beautiful horses.

A. Those were days when you didn't . . . the average person didn't belong to a yacht club or a country club; he took his pleasure where he could afford it, and where it was available, and I had the good fortune of getting involved with

- A. (Continued) a group of fine people. And, we had the 121st . . . the troop (unintelligible) 121st cavalry. And, I'm a staunch advocate of military service as an essential element to make people understand their opportunities. Not only their responsibilities, but their opportunities to get involved. Well, I . . . Then later on, you know, the European situation with the . . . Jewish situation, I got involved with the Welfare Fund. In fact, I finally became president of the United Jewish Welfare Fund just at the time of partition.
- Q. I think then what we'll do is we'll stop and we'll back track a bit, and then come up to that again.
- A. Okay.
- Q. Okay?
- A. Okay.
- Q. So, let's see. We'll start with your . . . your law firm. Specifically, did you . . . we left, I think, when you were making \$12.00 an hour working for Mr. VanDuser. Okay. What happened after that?
- A. Well, I became associated with young lawyers who came in, and we formed a partnership. And, we continued to grow, and our clientele expanded. And . . .
- Q. Did you specialize in a particular type of law?
- A. Yeah. I used to do a lot of trial work. Trial work. I was representing people in court. Litigation.
- Q. Did you find it interesting?
- A. Very much so. Very interesting, but very taxing. I think trial work is very hard. Although, I formed associations with people in business that continued, like, there's . . . the Wabaca Oil Company who is a big business concern. I finally became the director of that company, got involved with their business affairs. I found through Mr. Merkus when he died; of course, prior to his

- A. (Continued) death, I was his confidant and helped him with his interests in many civic affairs. The same with Mr. Adler who's . . . your familiar with. I got a . . . had a multitude of very wonderful people to be associated with.
- Q. For the purposes of this interview, although I've read the material, I'd like to ask just a few questions related to it. Could you go into Charles Merkus a bit? Could you explain who he was and . . .
- A. Yes. Well, Charles Merkus came from a family from Chicago who was brought here by Mr. Eastman. He probably was the most learned man I ever knew, and the most sensitive man concerning the needs of other people.
- Q. I noticed in the pamphlet that you passed out that most of his education came from himself.
- A. He could read and write German fluently; French. He was very close to Mr. Eastman. In fact, during his regime, Mr. Merkus was the largest buyer of silver in the world, other than the United States Mint. He understood it thoroughly; the ramifications and that kind of thing. He was a man who was never involved in religious tradition, although he was a good Jew. But, he didn't get involved with religious traditions until the Hitler regime, and he saw the need for doing something to arouse the world. He was terribly concerned.
- Q. There is a question that comes to mind. Were the policies of Hitler against the Jews known during World War II to the Rochester community?
- A. Certainly. Certainly.
- Q. It had come then pretty thoroughly?
- A. Oh, yes. Yes. I'll always remember when a boat load of Jewish refugees tried to land, I think it was in Havanna, and they were turned back because there was no port open to 'em. Mr. Merkus literally was . . . he was just livid. He just couldn't believe that humanity had disintegrated to the point where

- A. (Continued) they would refuse to give haven to people who were gonna be killed if they didn't get in. And, he became very much aroused. In fact, he was a big contributor to the fund. Mr. Merkus was never a big . . . he was never a big millionaire as far as earning . . . he had a good salary, but he was a man who gave a high percentage of his earnings to the fund. And, he was for many years one of our largest contributors. He had . . . he loved children. He served on the child welfare board here in the community for many years. He loved to write poetry. In fact . . .
- Q. I noticed that. Yeah. I was surprised.
- A. My daughter was the recipient of . . . whenever he'd go out of town, he'd write her a little poem. He was a man of great (unintelligible). He'd come over to the house, and he'd get down on the floor and play with the children. Not with saying, he was a man of high industrial involvement . . .
- Q. Could you explain your association with him?
- A. Yes. The man you see above there happened to be my father-in-law who was also was a very learned man, and they used to sit down . . . he'd come over to our house and visit, and through my father-in-law and Ben Goldstein who's name you'll hear more about . . . they . . . we became very great friends. In fact, Mr. Merkus . . . my children always called Uncle Charles. He had a very intimate family relationship. He lived a bachelor's life. He loved music. He just loved people. And, it was just a natural thing for a man who lived alone. He lived at the Normandy, and who had affiliate with my family. My father-in-law was a widower at that time, and he'd be over at our house. He lived with us, and Mr. Merkus would come over. So, it was kind of like an adopted family.
- Q. I get the impression that the Rochester community then as probably . . . my question is then as now, was a close knit community.

A. Well, you have to back up a little bit on that. Years ago, Rochester was anything but close knit. It was a community of Jewish, er, German-Jews and Polish Jews, and other types of Jews, and I think, one of the great contributions that Rabbi Bernstein made, and you will find this as you interview, is the unifications of the Jewish people. Not in the assimilation, because we still have Orthodox, Reformed but in the cooperation and the ability to stand together and to socialize together. One time you couldn't get into the Irondequoit Country Club unless you were a German-Jew. My father-in-law who happened to be . . . who is an engineer and an architect, it was a Romanian. And, of course, he always said that they let the barriers down when they took him in. And, so that, the . . . the fact in Temple B'rith Kodesh where my mother and father were married, I think, around the latter part of the last century, it was strictly a German institution. And, there were many of the old Orthodox synagogues were ultra-conservative. And, so that, one of the . . . if there is such a thing as a fringe benefit from the catastrophes that occurred, I think, is the fact that Jews are Jews no matter what their family origin is. And, they worked together as evidenced by the United Jewish Welfare Fund, our Federation, and the Jewish Community Centers.

Q. Is the homogeneity that's characteristic of Rochester today something that's found only in Rochester, do you think, or is it?

A. I'm not . . . I wouldn't know about that. I would think it . . . I think there're elements of it, because when you stop and think of the fantastic sums that the Jewish communities have had to raise for welfare, and bear in mind, not only for welfare, but . . . Now I'm on the subject, I just happened to locate the introductory message that I used at the dedication of the new building of the Jewish Community Center. And this, you can have this. 'Some forty years ago, the people of this good community gathered at the new building

A. (Continued) at Franklin and Andrews Streets to dedicate what was then considered a monumental achievement; the opening of the facility known as the JYM&WA.' That was the old building downtown. In fact, I've got a picture of it here. Now, this was in 1930. In fact, my father-in-law was the architect. Let me just read the . . . 'From reading your program tonight, it would appear that we're meeting here today to dedicate this monumental structure which is a worthy tribute to our architect builder and the many people whose combined efforts this structure has been achieved. Yet, in a larger sense, it is much more significantly, we must recognize that our meeting tonight is in reality a tribute to the courage and vitality of the American Jewish community.' This goes with what you're talking about. 'This building and land surrounding it in all directions, is but a symbolic representation of the strength of our Jewish community which is had the fortitude and the foresightedness to bring this into being without in any way diminishing our contributions to other aspects of life and our vital institutions.' Then I said, 'During the past year, not only have we done this, we've made available millions of dollars to the UJA, built Beth El, B'rith Kodesh . . . ' These are the synagogues we've built. ' . . . Jewish Old Folk's Home. At the same time, Jews have been very generous contributors.' This is very important. Red Cross, Community Chest, and we gathered . . . so our pride is . . . in achievement of our civic mindedness. ' . . . as a permanent monument the great strength and vitality of the Jewish community.' That's just a . . .

Q. That's one of the characteristics, then, that you would stress, the fact that the Jewish community is terribly civic minded.

A. Yeah. Right. Here . . . here's two more.

Q. Sure.

A. 'This building and all that it represents should always be a living reminder

- A. (Continued) of the great confidence which we as Jews have had in the future of our country, together with the opportunity which we possess to be concerned with and provide for the health, happiness, and welfare of our people.' That was Merkus . . . 'As you travel to the nursery schools, the golden age lodge, health (unintelligible), you will comprehend the magnitude of this facility and thrill with the pleasant sight of observant people of all ages participating . . . ' Well, you can . . . these are just scrapnotes that I had in my file when you called me.
- Q. Well, again, I'm very glad you bring these things out. Anything like this is very much worthwhile putting into all this.
- A. Well, when you go to the J . . . now here was the . . . this is a picture of the old one. And, then, in 1930 we built this. And, then, you ought to get from Herman Chekovsky (spelling?) at the JCC, his report on the campaigns that built this building through the joint efforts of the Jewish community, the Catholic community, and Protestant community.
- Q. Okay. Could you explain that. Just from what you . . .
- A. Yeah. Well, you . . . they got it all in news clippings and things. I think I'd only be burdening your record if I gave that to you.
- Q. All right. Fine. Fine.
- A. But, you can get that . . .
- Q. Well, I'll tell you what. We'll move back to the . . . just for a second, to the state of the Merkus (unintelligible). Could you explain its nature, its purpose, and so on?
- A. Yes. The purpose of the fund is to provide for the health, education, welfare, and civic mindedness of the Jewish community through the resources that were provided through the activities of the Jewish Community Center. And, they appointed Joe Goldstein and myself and then president, I think it was Freddie Formen who was president, together with the presidents who came along afterwards,

A. (Continued) to be the administrators of the fund. It's an unrestricted fund so long as it's . . . let me withdraw that. It's a restricted fund, but its use is directed toward the uplifting of the civic involvement of the Jewish people.

Q. Okay. Then to whom would they contribute? To what type of activities?

A. With practically without limitation . . .

Q. Can you give a couple of examples?

A. . . . so long as it has to do with the welfare of the Jewish community.

Q. Okay. Okay.

A. And, we had provided for camps. We provided for cultural programs. We have provided, of course, for the facility itself. I think when the final chapter is written, it'll be in excess of \$2,000,000.00 that we put into the new building.

Q. About how large is the size of an average contribution? Do they vary?

A. Contribution . . .

Q. Well, on the part of the Merkus Fund . . .

A. Well, it would be meaningless, because if they needed to put hot water . . .

In fact, the camp which is now the Seneca Lake Camp was largely acquired through the influence of Mr. Merkus. Mr. Merkus, however, when he . . . under his will, did not leave his resources exclusively to the Jewish community. He was very much concerned about the Negro community. He was concerned about the hospitals.

Q. I didn't realize that.

A. He was concerned about the hospitals, and if you . . . Well, someday I'll get out a copy of his will, and give you an idea of the people who benefited from it. And, the same with Mr. Adler who's name . . . Mr. Adler was a great believer in a broad spectrum of philanthropy. He, for many years, was the

A. (Continued) largest contributor to the United Negro College Fund.

Q. Again, something I didn't realize.

A. So, going back again to Mr. Merkus, he believed in the opening up of the minds of people. In the early days, he started a program for the bringing of great Jewish scholars here, to have them come out to the Colgate Divinity School and deliver a lecture to the young men who were . . . I suppose now it'd be young men and women, but in those days . . . men who were going to go out and be the religious leaders of the Christian community, about a better understanding of the Jews. So that, we're interchanging names between Merkus and Adler here, but they were two great men.

Q. Could you explain your connection with the Adler Foundation, and that should clear things up.

A. Yes. Mr. Adler, Max Adler, became a client of mine through the news that he got about some unfortunate person that I happened to be helpful to. Frankly, I've even forgotten. But, he came in and there was a lady up in the hospital who had multiple sclerosis, and she . . . he was very unhappy about her representation that people are taking. He wanted to know if I would look into it. I did, and I took care of her. And, then one thing led on to another so that Mr. Adler who was, I think it's no great secret, was a rather unhappy man. He was . . . his wife had left him. His children . . . his son was, to some extent, less than a pleasure to him. I should probably say that he was rather unhappy, but I don't want to degrade him too much. Mr. Adler was a precise person with the highest degree of honor and integrity, and he built up a business that served the clothing industry and selling fabrics and yarns, and things of that nature. And, he became associated with a young man who was very aggressive, very successful, a supersalesman. Unlike Mr. Adler, he . . . his great strength was in his aggressiveness, while Mr. Adler's great strength

A. (Continued) was in his dignity, and his concern for ethics, and prestige. And, the business grew and became very profitable. And, this young man demanded, and rightfully so, a buy and sell agreement between himself and Mr. Adler predicated on the proposition that the young man would survive the older man. Well, as like happens so many times in life, the young man died first, and all of the inequities that were incorporated in the agreement against Mr. Adler turned out to be inequities against the young man who insisted on those things. And then, Mr. Adler through, largely through, the efforts of Ben Goldstein, had another young man who became associated with him, Howard Schonfeld (spelling?) who was possessed of all the good qualities of both parties of . . . the company grew and grew and grew and became very successful. Mr. Adler was always concerned with other people, particularly his employees. And, in drawing a will, he provided for the sale of his interest to this young man who came in, and he set up . . . he had a son who divorced his wife, and she became an invalid. Mr. Adler's daughter-in-law. A very serious invalid. In fact, she just died a couple of weeks ago. He provided a trust fund to take care of her together with some of his other responsibilities and provided a trust fund. He surplused income from the trust fund which spilled over into a charitable trust. I'm one of the trustees of the charitable trust, and David Gray who was one of my law partners, is another. And, Betty Schonfeld . . . since then, Howard Schonfeld died, too. So that we had a dry trust with a spill over. Well, we've had some very good years coming into us. We were spending \$40, \$50,000.00 a year for his daughter-in-law, and then she died, and the trust is now gonna be free to the burden of supporting her. And, it's a substantial trust.

Q. It's turning into a pretty lucrative one?

A. Yes. So, but, we've always made allocations of surplus income from the trust.

- A. (Continued) And, one of the things we did was to create this \$10,000.00 gift to the Jewish community to establish something that couldn't otherwise be provided for. In our opening statement, I told you, I kinda goosed them along, and they came up with this project which we think would be consistent with Mr. Adler's desires. He was a Harvard graduate. He has made contributions to many educational and civic institutions.
- Q. Okay. Because I would like to get into issues like the Jewish Community Center and so on, I don't want to spend too long on this, but there are one or two more questions I'm gonna ask.
- A. Okay.
- Q. First question: Are there any political or civic organizations that we haven't talked about yet?
- A. Well . . .
- Q. That you're connected with that you think we should bring up.
- A. Yeah. I was political leader of the town of Brighton; their republican political leader.
- Q. Which . . . I'm gonna hold off until next time to discuss, okay?
- A. Okay.
- Q. Any professional organizations and so on? We talked about the State Board.
- A. Well, I've talked about the Banking Board. Of course, I'm on the Board at Nazareth College.
- Q. I didn't realize that.
- A. And . . .
- Q. Okay.
- A. (Unintelligible) the Community Chest; I served on the budget committee of the Community Chest for a good many years. There's a (unintelligible) service.
- Q. So, in general, you would say that you have a pretty strong involvement . . .

A. Yes. I'm one of the organizing trustees of the Brighton Library.

Q. All these are important.

A. I don't know.

Q. Sure. Positively.

A. You have to kind of let people know what you want them . . . here. Now, this I don't want to go . . . politically, I was chairman of the Monroe County Charter Study Commission to . . .

Q. To reform . . .

A. To reform the Charter of the . . .

Q. The County Administration and so on.

A. Yeah. Like, this is our report. You can take all that stuff.

Q. Okay.

A. But, give it back when you're through with it.

Q. Positively.

A. Yeah.

Q. All right. Well, we'll hold off on that. I do have one final question before we move on to the organization.

A. Yes.

Q. It'll stop. What made you go into law?

A. Lack of knowledge.

Q. (Laughter)

A. No. I got . . . my people were poor people. I lived in Auburn. I was not a good student (unintelligible) compared with . . . I got through high school in 1926. You had to decide on something. And, my father was the saloon keeper. And, this ties into why I got into the banking business, and there's a little humor attached to it. When Frank Willy who is now the chairman of the Federal Reserve and from the Federal Deposit Insurance, became superintendent of banks,

A. (Continued) I was on the banking board, and they wanted to throw a little party for him in New York to introduce him to the members of the board. Well, I was on the board then, and Sam Pierce who is a Negro from New York, a very outstanding gent, Sam Pierce, we were all invited to go to the River Club in New York . . . this is humor. I don't know whether you . . .

Q. Oh, go ahead.

A. But, I don't think any Jew or any Negro ever crossed the threshold of the River Club.

Q. Did you get in?

A. But, we went there. And, when they sat around the table, and we had, you know, all the highchy were there, and everybody was called upon to talk about their experiences and how they happened to get into the banking business. Well, I, of course, couldn't resist the temptation but to tell them notwithstanding my lack of letters, because I didn't go to college . . .

Q. Sure.

A. . . . that I had a background in banking which I thought gave me a foundation which either equalled or exceeded theirs, and of course, that immediately captured their attention. And, I told them that my father was a saloon keeper. He operated a saloon in Auburn, New York, where he had a . . . contact with various steamship companies: North German Loyd, Holland, American Lines, (Unknown) Line, and he sold tickets to European people, particularly Poles, and Ukrainians, and Russians who wanted to bring their families over to this country. And, he had a contact with the railroads and the rolling mills there where they employed all . . . mostly all Europeans with strong backs. And, they would come in there, and they didn't trust the banks. They'd leave their money in the saloon. And, when they wanted money to send over to Europe, they'd buy American Express Money Orders . . . And, so, my background . . . and

A. (Continued) those were days in which no interest . . .

Q. Oh, I see.

A. . . . was paid on the money.

Q. Exactly. Right.

A. And, I said, as far as though days when all this interest . . . the newspapers then were advertising at the time of this meeting about the rate of interest the banks were paying, and I said that those were days when interest was absolutely insignificant. All these poor people wanted was a place where they could come and get their money when they wanted. And, that was the principle . . .

Q. And, a place where they could trust.

A. Yes. Yes. Of course, this lead up to about 1917 which is just the time of the war was going on, and of course, the local option that we had in New York State, the Mullen-Gage Act, which was the . . . making local option and the community of Auburn went dry.

Q. Oh, I see. Okay. (Laughter)

A. So, it terminated the business. It terminated my early . . . involvement with the banking business. Well, that was . . .

Q. I think probably on that note, we'll stop Side A.

A. All right.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE I, INTERVIEW I

Tape 1
Side II
Interview 1

- A. And, this is the thing I worried about, you know. The people who . . . and Joe Silverstein.
- Q. I've done him.
- A. Did you?
- Q. In fact, I have to see him at 3:00 o'clock tomorrow.
- A. He's a fine . . .
- Q. He's a nice fellow, isn't he?
- A. Oh, yeah. Oh. Of course, he knows so much about . . . much more about the people. I may know about segments, but he knows about individuals.
- Q. We had the best time talking about politics in the 1930's. Oh, he's such an interesting fellow.
- A. He became vice-mayor of the City of Rochester, he was Comptroller of the City of Rochester.
- Q. In the '60s. And, he was on the Israel Bond Committee.
- A. Oh, yes.
- Q. Fascinating.
- A. I was organized the first Israel Bond Drive in Rochester.
- Q. Okay. You know, this is a good time to begin in getting into that. So, why don't we start there, okay?
- A. Well, in fact, I've forgotten on it. See, one of the problems I suffer from is lack of memory. I'm 72 years old now, and but, they wanted to set up a bond drive in Rochester.
- Q. That would probably be late '40s . . . '48, '49?
- A. I would think so, but I tell you who you ought to get to . . . Nelson Curgenbaum.
- Q. Okay.

A. Do you know Nelson?

Q. I don't. Again, I may not be interviewing him.

A. All right.

Q. But, any names that you might . . .

A. I said . . . Robert Nathan who then was one of the economists here. I think he was financial advisor to Franklin Roosevelt. And, we had meetings here. And, there were a good many of our people who felt it was wrong that they didn't mind giving money . . .

Q. Why? I'm curious.

A. Well, they figured that this . . . there's a difference between philanthropy and business. They didn't think the State of Israel could ever pay loans.

Q. Sure. Oh, I see.

A. To give the money out. And, we had Nathan here, and even fellows like Freddie Formen who have since have gone, didn't think it was possible. He later became one of our most enthusiastic persons. But, I remember I went to Atlantic City and came back, and we set up an office here. And, we did remarkably well. I . . . you'll have to get the statistics from them. I don't . . .

Q. Sure. Sure.

A. But, I was the first . . .

Q. Who asked you to set up the bond committee?

A. Who what?

Q. Who asked you to set up the bond committee?

A. Well, I assume it was the leadership. They asked someone to do it, and I . . . we did it. (Unintelligible) I'll tell you, Joe Silverstein and Nelson Curgenbaum and some of those people. And Charlotte Rich who . . . she ran the office for awhile there. She lives in New York now, but she was . . . Leon . . . Leon Sturman. Does that name mean . . . His sister is . . .

Q. I'll be interviewing him.

A. . . . Charlotte Rich, and she accepted the appointment of office manager of the bond drive. But, they've got records up in the bond office of how much we raised each year. And, you can get that.

Q. Well, the idea, I guess, is just to get your recollections of it, and we can worry about the figures later.

A. Well, my recollections of it was the . . . that sophisticated people were of the opinion that it could not succeed. I remember we ran out . . .

Q. That's very interesting.

A. . . . at Jessie Horwicz' home one night. In fact, we had a speaker out there. And, we had some of the money people there. And, they . . . now. Of course, one of, I think, one of the real items of note is that these bonds with interest have always been paid. There have been new issues (unintelligible). But, the bond office can get all that for you.

Q. I think they're paying something like $4\frac{1}{2}$ percent.

A. Well, it's different rates on different bonds. I'm trying to think of the civic things, but . . . I think you've got enough.

Q. Okay. What I'd like to do now is move into some of, that's interesting, but we'll move into some of the associational stuff. Could you explain your activities and your association with the Jewish Community Center? It seems to me the most central thing that we could ask.

A. Well, yes. I happened to live through the campaign in the late '20s when they built the building, 'cause I just recently come to Rochester. We . . . the Jewish Community Center that we built as a result of the campaign in the late '20s, '30s became, kind of, a focal point for the Jewish community. In fact, Sunday nights we'd go down there and have a supper of Jewish food, you know.

Q. Oh. Sure.

- A. Harry Goldman says that one of the great things the Jews failed to exploit was their food. Jewish food is so good.
- Q. (Laughter)
- A. But, it became a great success, and my interest in it was a place where young people could congregate. In those days it was more for sports than it was for social or civic activities. And, later on, it became expanded for social and cultural activities. Mr. Merkus largely, I think, influenced me to get . . . to accelerate my activities in it. And, I just naturally gravitated to it, because I saw the need for it and the good that it was doing. And, that is why I've continued. And, of course . . . have you been (unintelligible). It is the institution that cuts across all lines of religious tradition, all lines of age, and it has a little something for everybody. Just . . . in the finest posture.
- Q. Were you connected, or do you know any stories relative to the building of the various centers?
- A. Oh, yes. In fact, I was co-chairman of the building committee.
- Q. Which is what I'd like to get into. Could you explain what the problems and so on that were encountered and the like? Did you get any response from outside the community? The Jewish community? Was there Catholic, Protestant help?
- A. Yes. Not that way. It was industry.
- Q. I see.
- A. We got Bilty of Sibleys, and John Remington, and others . . . was extremely helpful to us. Many of them . . . in fact, I would say most of the major industries made unsolicited contributions to us. It was, gee, I didn't think about preparing it, but . . . (Unintelligible). You got his name on this? Was co-chairman of the . . .
- Q. (Unintelligible)?
- A. Yes. Well, Irving Germanow (spelling?) ought to give you that. In fact . . .

- A. (Continued) But, they'll have files out at the JCC. I'd rather you pick it up from them.
- Q. Sure. Why don't we just shift focus a bit. What . . . could you explain the purpose of the United Jewish Welfare Fund, and your connection with it?
- A. Well, the United Jewish Welfare Fund was the vehicle which saved us from multitude solicitations. There is . . . I don't know how many beneficiaries, but there must be twenty or thirty different beneficiaries. And, to have each one of them come around and solicit and each one have to have their budgets reviewed, it was an impossibility. It's almost like the United Community Fund. It's the same problem.
- Q. The same principle. Yeah.
- A. Yeah. And, it gave protection to the community against unworthy funds, because if you came in to solicit to me for the XYZ Fund, I would give or not give depended upon what you told me. But, I'd have no opportunity for checking or evaluating where we have an evaluation done by professionals who know whether or not . . . whether there's a worthy cause that should be supported.
- Q. So, there's also an evaluation . . .
- A. Oh, yes. Very much so.
- Q. Has its services expanded over the years?
- A. Oh, to be sure. It's a very vital fund, and we now . . . we give not only to foreign . . . out of city or out of state agencies, but to many local agencies are supported by it.
- Q. I see. And, in your connection with the Welfare Fund, you were chairman at one time?
- A. I was chairman, I think at the time of . . .
- Q. What were your duties?
- A. . . . partition.
- Q. This is . . . absolutely fascinating, so if you'd explain your duties and any

Q. (Continued) recollections that you might have, that would be . . .

A. Well, I'll tell you who you ought to see on that is Elmer Louis.

Q. Elmer . . . yes. I met him.

A. Will you? Have you interviewed him yet?

Q. In fact, he was the one who . . .

A. Is it on? Yeah. Elmer Louis was the executive. I don't know that I can give you great significant events, perhaps one thing which may cover a lot of it is: we took the United Jewish Welfare Fund from a small little relief agency into a big agency with a high degree of professionalism, with a high degree of skill, a high degree of dedication, and made it a very functional agency. And, we brought standards to it. I think Elmer Louis made our United Jewish Welfare Fund here, perhaps, one of the outstanding in the whole country. And, it was an agency that people had confidence in, had respect for, and they supported it.

Q. Obviously, since it's a central agency and it is a welfare fund, there were contributions involved. How would you go about soliciting contributions?

A. Well, leave me degress for just a moment and tell you how we went about soliciting contributions to build Temple B'rith Kodesh.

Q. Fine. Sure.

A. We got an attic room upstairs here, and we used to invite people to come to meet with us in the attic up here, and we'd serve them a \$10,000.00 sandwich. You would serve the sandwich and before you left, you were expected to give \$10,000.00.

Q. (Laughter)

A. One of the characteristics about Jewish people is they learned how to give. And, they've set standards, and we made known what the needs were. And, I think Jewish people are very responsive and patterns were set. And, solicitations remained. And, I think, when the cause is just and the person has

- A. (Continued) the ability, there's a difference. I had a man come in put . . . at the bank here, and put on a mortgage of \$10,000.00 so he could give \$8,000.00 to the United Jewish Welfare Fund. Well, this is the kind of things that went on. It's a real tribute to the Jewish people.
- Q. Then, I guess I'm . . . for the purposes of this tape, if I'm summing up your position right, you say that the Jewish community as a whole is a giving type of community, and also, it's socially civic minded, socially service minded, and so on.
- A. Yes. It has organizational ability. I think coverage with the fact that we could cover the community. And, we have brought people together who knew about the resources of other people, and who had an evaluation based on, not only their ability, but their interests, because many people have interests without ability, and many people have ability without interest. But, you've got to bring both of them together. And, I think, it's the method of approach. I think, perhaps, a fella like Joe Goldstein did as much to help put this all together as anyone. And, of course, if you go into the JCC building, you'll see a picture of Simon Stein. And, you . . . I don't have to tell you the story about that, but he was involved in the original building. I think he gave the first large gift toward it. But, you know, it no longer is a mystery that Jewish people expect to give, and they do give. And, they don't . . . I think the important thing that I want you to remember, and I put . . . the same as . . . notwithstanding their gifts to Jewish causes, they have not diminish their involvement and their giving to non-Jewish causes. I think that's a very important point.
- Q. That's a very important point. How would you say, then, in the fact the relationship between the Jewish community and the other communities of Rochester are primarily . . . we'll take religious.

- A. I would think the Gentile community has nothing but great admiration for the Jewish community. Admiration and respect. And, I think while there is latent prejudice with individuals, it can not be placed at the doorstep of the leadership.
- Q. I see. I see. On a personal note, this is something we can get into more detail next time, have you ever experienced any overt anti-semitism?
- A. I think if anyone wants to look for it, they can find it.
- Q. Sure. Good answer.
- A. If you want to close your eyes to it, you can ignore it. Now, I was taken, I think, by face value by most of the people that I had any contact. I think when a person tries to be something they are not, they will find over anti-semitism confronting them. But, if you try to act natural and decent, and don't look for it, it won't make itself apparent to you.
- Q. I see.
- A. But, Rochester's been a good community.
- Q. That raises another interesting question. Who would you say your business associates are? Are they probably primarily people within the Jewish community?
- A. No. I think in the first place, during my legal career, I represented insurance companies very extensively. With my involvement with the bank here, I . . . it was no Jewish involvement. The State Banking Board, the Federal Home Loan Bank. Oh, I was also very active in their trade organization, our savings . . .
- No. I have not had to leap over any apparent hurdles of anti-semitism. I hasten to say they are there, and if one wants some . . .
- Q. It's an important point to bring out. Sure. Okay. There will be a few, just a couple of more questions then I'll let you go. Okay. Just contemporary issues that would interest me, and I'd like to just hear your opinions. Have you actively contributed to the State of Israel in any way? If so, how?

A. Well, by buying bonds. By having, you know, contributions to the Welfare Fund. And, also, I've been to Israel twice.

Q. I was wondering: have you travelled to it?

A. Yes. I've been to Israel twice. In fact, I have in my . . . in fact, I'm going to the airport this afternoon to pick up two Israelis citizens that my wife and I have brought over here.

Q. I see.

A. They're distant cousins, but they were Romanians, they . . . he was an attorney in Bucarest (spelling?) displaced. Got to Israel, couldn't speak the language. Through the efforts of the . . . what we call the JDC, the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency, they were taught Hebrew, became admitted to the Bar. He practices in Israel, but he has no money. In fact, my wife has helped him to get a home, and we have just now brought them to this country. And, we've . . . they've been to Boston to visit my son. They've been to New York to visit my wife's sister. They're coming back to Rochester now, and then, they're going to Montreal where he has a brother. And, his brother is in the banking business. As a matter of fact, just a little side story: During the war . . . war days and persecution, my father-in-law, whose pictures here, was receiving envelopes with money from Paris. And, no letter, no communications, anything . . . amounted to thousands of dollars that he'd just take it and put it in the bank in a savings account and let it ride. After the war was over, things settled down. He got a letter from this man who was Solomon Smelavechie (spelling?), he was a Paris banker, saying that he had suggested to various refugees who were being persecuted that if they wanted to get anything out of the country that they could send them to Mr. Sigmond Firestone in Rochester, New York. So, Mr. . . . my father-in-law immediately acknowledged, yes he has this money on deposit with interest just let him know who to send it to. So, it was a good many thousands of dollars there that was

A. (Continued) dispersed.

Q. (Laughter) Sure. And, it collected interest all those years, too.

A. Sure. Yeah. But, again, I think it illustrates that the world is full of trustworthy people.

Q. If you're willing to open yourself.

A. Yeah. Well, most people . . . most people are honest. Most people honorable.

Q. What were your impressions when you went to Israel? Were you impressed by any thing in Israel that characterizes . . .

A. Oh. I went . . . the dynamics, the achievement. You couldn't help but get the feeling of pride, the feeling of almost lack of understanding how there could be any doubt about the need for support. And, as you contrast it with what happened in the Arab countries where . . . all you had to do was go down to the Haddasa Hospital in Jerusalem and see how the people from the Arab countries came in there for relief. Or, go in up around Barasheba where they set up a little clinic to see how the Arab people with all sorts of bodily ailments come in and got relief. And, when you see the industrial development in a town called Ashdad which was, when I was there originally, it was in the desert. And then, went back last year and saw a thriving metropolis. Of course, I went to Israel the first time with my son who . . . with the (Unknown). He was on the golf team there.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. If you . . . probably somebody'll pick you up on the (Unknown) Games. It's a Jewish Olympics.

Q. I've heard the name. Exactly. Sure. Is there a difference in attitude of the people of Israel versus the people in America? Do you think that they . . . there's more dynamism and so on over there?

A. Well, I think when you go to a frontier town, you know, you get the spirit of

- A. (Continued) the west, you get the spirit of Jerusalem there. I think they have the spirit there, but it's burdened with taxes and crowding. You go into Tel Aviv and it's such a big city, and everything moving so fast. Of course, Jerusalem and (Unknown) are two of the cities that I . . . I think Jerusalem is just a magnificent city. And, I . . . the thing that bothers me is my inability to understand the lack of skill amongst the Christian world that they couldn't have seen what was happening over there in the early stages.
- Q. Before now, yes.
- A. Yes.
- Q. Do you think that Israel will survive?
- A. Oh, it can't help it. It can't help it. In fact, I don't think there's any question about it.
- Q. Do you fear for Russian interference?
- A. Well, of course, you know, if you read the newspapers, I don't know. I haven't any feelings on what Russia's participation is. I'm more concerned with the black countries. When I went there the first time up at the (Unknown) and the Hebrew University was so . . . high percentage of blacks. Now, they've gone back to their own countries, and whether or not they have the social mindedness to have some concern for the place where they got their help in education, I know I . . . I think that Israel has got a great opportunity if it can work with the African nations, more so than Russia.
- Q. One last question. What do you think of the United Nations? Has it been effective?
- A. I don't know. I have no comments on it. I'm not anti it, but I'm certainly not pro. I think the things they've tolerated there are just non-productive other than to give people an opportunity to ventilate and to blow off some

A. (Continued) steam. This branding Zionism . . . racism is ridiculous, and they tolerate it.

Q. Do you think the peace-keeping force has been effective?

A. Well, I would think so. In fact, when I was there, I was . . . saw some of the U.N. people down there. Yeah. I think they've been a factor whether they've been an answer, I don't know, but . . .

Q. Good point.

A. I think it's been good. At least, I can't see any harm in it.

Q. Okay. This will be the end of side two, first tape.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE II, INTERVIEW I