

Interviewee Elizabeth Schwartz

Interviewer Dennis B. Klein

Date(s) of interview June 2 and 11, 1976

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

We talked at Miss Schwartz's spacious apartment, nicely appointed in white and green. Miss Schwartz, herself in white and green the first day, was bothered by an ear infection and could not speak loudly.

#### Background of interviewee

The subject came from a family of mixed Jewish persuasions--orthodox and less observant, Polish and English. She therefore observed from within the many aspects and changes of the Jewish community adapting quickly to German-Jewish friends and reform Judaism. She was active as a teacher at B'rith Kodesh and in public schools 8 and 9, serving later as principal.

#### Interview abstract

An interesting metaphor for her life occurred when she was a child: her mother, wanting to be close to the center and Jewish life in Rochester, was not comfortable with the Eastern European composition and thus decided that her family should be close but not singularly tied to Jews. Miss Schwartz was, for example teaching at B'rith Kodesh while serving as the only Jewish teacher at public school.

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

\_\_\_ Social history I (A), 138-606

\_\_\_ Family I (A) 25-138

\_\_\_ Demographic/residential I (A)  
138-149/212-260/580

\_\_\_ Economic

\_\_\_ Political/civic I (A) 200-240;  
I (B) 17-140; II (A) 510-end

\_\_\_ Zionism/Israel II (B)  
296-496

\_\_\_ Jewish community I (B) 104-174/195-250  
II (A) 285-460; II (B) 280-296

\_\_\_ community relations I (A) 606-end  
I (B) 21-84

\_\_\_ Religious life I (B) 250-end

\_\_\_ Jewish education II (A) 10-245

\_\_\_ Anti-semitism II (A) 462-508;  
II (B) 160-280

#### Interview loc

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

--see following page(s) --

ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ

June 2, 1976  
Tape 1, Slide A

- I. Biographical 15-606
  - Parents 25-138
  - Personal (residential, school-secular and Jewish, teaching) 138-606
- II. Jewish experience while teaching in public schools 606-end
  - Emma O'Keefe 615-630

Tape 1, Side B

- II. Jewish Experience while teaching in public schools (cont) 21-84
- III. Jewish organizations 104-174, 195-250
  - Young Judea 104-174
  - Hadassah 245-248
  - "Friday Night Club" (secular) 200-240
  - Menyan ("Teachers") 240-250 (?)
  - ~~W. O. R. G. G. G.~~
- IV. B'rith Kodesh and Reform Judaism 250-end
  - Rabbi Landsberg 285-300, 338-355
  - Rabbi Wolf 300-305, 355-370
  - Rabbi Bernstein 305-320, 495-517, 558-610
  - Personal adaptation to Reform Judaism 420-430
  - Holocaust: effect on Reform Judaism 440-490
    - Survivors absorbed into B'rith Kodesh 520-556

June 11, 1976

Tape 2, Slide A

- V. Jewish Education 10 -- 245
  - Brith Kodesh 10 -126
  - (enrichment)
  - Bernstein's influence 70-80
  - Ben Goldstein's influence 80-86
  - limitations in, 90-126
  - "Jewish Education Study, Rochester 1976" 126-160
  - Structure in Jewish Community 160-280
  - (~~consolidation~~)
- VI. Consolidation in Jewish Community 285-365
  - Jy 285-36J (Tobias Roth = 344-347)
- VII. Hillert at Geneseo 370-460
  - Jewish demonstration 380-435
- VIII. Quota at University of Rochester 462-508
- IX. Secular Education 500-end
  - Busing, integration 525-end

ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ

June 2, 1976

Tape 1, Slide A

- I. Biographical 15-606
  - Parents 25-138
  - Personal (residential, school-secular and Jewish, teaching) 138-606
- II. Jewish experience while teaching in public schools 606-end
  - Emma O'Keefe 615-630

Tape 1, Side B

- II. Jewish Experience while teaching in public schools (cont) 21-84
- III. Jewish organizations 104-174, 195-250
  - Young Judea 104-174
  - Hadassah 245-248
  - "Friday Night Club" (secular) 200-240
  - Menyan ("Teachers") 240-250 (?)
- IV. B'rith Kodesh and Reform Judaism 250-end
  - Rabbi Landsberg 285-300, 338-355
  - Rabbi Wolf 300-305, 355-370
  - Rabbi Bernstein 305-320, 495-517, 558-610
  - Personal adaptation to Reform Judaism 420-430
  - Holocaust: effect on Reform Judaism 440-490
    - Survivors absorbed into B'rith Kodesh 520-556

June 11, 1976

Tape 2, Slide A

- V. Jewish Education 10 -- 245
  - Brith Kodesh 10 -126
  - (enrichment)
  - Bernstein's influence 70-80
  - Ben Goldstein's influence 80-86
  - limitations in, 90-126
  - "Jewish Education Study, Rochester 1976" 126-160
  - Structure in Jewish Community 160-280
  - (consolidation)
- VI. Consolidation in Jewish Community 285-365
  - Jy 285-36J (Tobias Roth = 344-347)
- VII. Hillett at Geneseo 370-460
  - Jewish demonstration 380-435
- VIII. Quota at University of Rochester 462-508
- IX. Secular Education 500-end
  - Busing, integration 525-end

ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ

June 11, 1976

TAPE 2, Slide B

- IX. Secular Education (cont) 17-60  
Busing, integration (cont) 17-60
  
- X. 1964 Riots 60--  
Mildred Johnson FIGHT 97-114  
Sol Alinsky FIGHT (Minister Florence(?)) 115-140  
Baden Street settlement 140-150  
Observations on attacks on Jewish stores 160-185,  
.Lindenberg 185-192
  
- XI. Observations on attacks on Jews in recent years 194-280  
Schaeffer Market 205-225  
Synagogue bombing 225-260
  
- XII. Jewish organizations 280-308  
Morigahr 280-296  
Hadassah 296-308
  
- XIII. Zionism 336-370
  
- XIV Israel 370-end (496)

Interview 1  
Tape 1  
Side A

- Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Miss Elizabeth Schwartz at her apartment. Today's date is June 2, 1976. And this is the inaugural interview for the oral history project sponsored by the Max Adler Foundation. And I just wanted to open up by asking you when you were born and where, get a general feeling for your background and an overview of your life generally, so you can just. . .
- A. I'm a native Rochesterian, born in Rochester of course, in 1904. And have gone all through the schools and resided here all my life.
- Q. All your life. And your parents, were they born in the States?
- A. No. My mother was born in London and came to the United States when she was two, and was raised in Canada, married in Canada. Dad was born in Russian Poland and emigrated to the United States when he was about 25, landed in Boston and went up to Montreal and that's the way the family started.
- Q. I see. Now, let me get this straight. Let's follow your father's line for a moment. He was born in Russian Poland. . .
- A. Yes.
- Q. Specifically where?
- A. Very close to the German border. I can't tell you the. . .
- Q. The town.
- A. . . . the town.
- Q. Was it a small town?
- A. A very small town. He was one of six children and had served in the Army for three years, and at the close at that time chose not to go home but to come to America. He was the only member of his family to come to the United States.

Q. And the others stayed. . . ?

A. All stayed.

Q. When did he come over to the States? Do you remember the year? Or approximately when?

A. I would. . . I would say it would be around the early 1890's.

Q. Early 1890's. Do you know why he came to the States? I mean. . .

A. No, I made a mistake. It was probably in the 1880's when he came.

Q. OK.

A. He had been away from home. His father was gone and when his service ended he felt completely out of touch with everyone at home and decided this was the time to make a break and come to the United States.

Q. Now it's a big break to make.

A. Yes it is.

Q. Was it just because he felt out of touch?

A. That's the story we know.

Q. OK. OK. And he came to Montreal?

A. No, he went to Boston.

Q. Oh, this is out of Boston. . .

A. And he then heard about his landsman in Montreal, and he went to Montreal to be a landsman, and that's. . .

Q. What is a landsman? I don't know whether. . .

A. A landsman is just what is says a land man, someone from the same town.

Q. OK, I see. There was someone from the same town in Montreal?

A. That was our grandparent.

Q. That's a new word to me anyway. And so he went to Montreal. Did he. . .

A. He met mother and that was it.

Q. Oh, I see, in Montreal?

A. Yes, right.

Q. OK. We'll get back to your mother in one second. What was your father's occupation?

A. He was a tailor.

Q. He was a tailor. And so he pursued this. . .

A. And my grandfather was a tailor so that they had that in common.

Q. This is your father's father?

A. No. My mother's father.

Q. Your mother's father was. . .

A. Maternal grandfather.

Q. I see. Family history is. . .

A. We never. . . we never knew his. . . his father had died when he was a child.

Q. I see. This is now back in Poland.

A. That's right.

Q. And your father was . . . pursued a tailor. . .

A. That's right.

Q. . . profession, both in Poland and as soon as he came over to America and Canada?

A. Yes.

Q. Now how long was he in Boston? Was it. . .

A. A few months.

Q. Not very long. Since he landed there and the landsman. . .

A. Went to Montreal to meet the Morrises and that was it.

Q. OK, fine. And then what happened after Montreal for your father?

A. They were married in Montreal and moved to Toronto, and our oldest brother was born in Toronto. And then my grandfather had the wanderlust, he went to Detroit, didn't like it, came to Rochester and the whole family moved to

A. (Continued) Rochester and remained here.

Q. Now what year about was Rochester. . . ?

A. Let's see, 1895.

Q. 1895. So really there's really about 15 years. . . about 15 years between leaving Poland, you mentioned 1880's and we're landing in Rochester. . .

A. It wasn't 1880, it was later than 1880, the late 1880's.

Q. The late 1880's. Really not many years at all then between the leaving and finally coming to Rochester.

A. That's right.

Q. Why Rochester? Was there a landsman connection?

A. No, Rochester was the center for men's tailoring. And my grandfather was a tailor. . .

Q. Right.

A. . . . And really an entrepreneur. He had a shop of his own in the days when Michael Stern, for example, was a very important manufacturing concern. And my grandfather and two uncles and Dad operated a shop.

Q. Here in. . . ?

A. In Rochester.

Q. Their own shop? They had their. . .

A. That's right. They used to manufacture coats. It was known in those days as an outside shop because the material was sent from the main factory, cut in the main factory, and sent to them to be made. And then they'd return the finished product.

Q. To. . . ? To. . . ?

A. Michael Stern.

Q. To Michael Stern's. So it was kind of a middle man situation?

A. That's right. Well, no. It was a small operation. In other words, they



A. (Continued) would have a pant shop in one place and a coat shop, and somebody else would make the vests, that kind of thing.

Q. Oh, I see. I see. And that. . . that. . . that system of manufacturing had changed over the years?

A. That's the way they did it.

Q. Right. OK. Fine.

A. But the family always called it an outside shop, meaning it was not done in the factory itself.

Q. OK. Very good. Was this hired out by Michael Stern? I mean there was a contract. . .

A. Yes.

Q. . . . situation?

A. My grandfather was paid by Michàel Stern.

Q. OK. So it was by contract then? He was not a free lance. . . ?

A. No.

Q. OK. Now your mother. She was born . . .

A. In London.

Q. In London.

A. In 1878.

Q. OK. What. . . what was her name?

A. Esther Morris.

Q. Esther Morris. And your father's name?

A. Was Myer, m-y-e-r.

Q. M-y-e-r. OK. Now. . .

A. And she was not two years old when the family, very interesting, moved to New York. They were there for less than a year, but her brother was born in New York. And he was about a year old when they moved to Montreal. My

A. (Continued) grandparents, maternal grandparents, had three children, each born in a different country.

Q. I see. Well, that was very good planning. And your mother then moved to Montreal when she was very young?

A. She was about two years old. . .

Q. Two. . .

A. Three years old.

Q. This would be about 1904, 1905?

A. No, 1878. 1878.

Q. Oh, I thought 1902. Where does the 1902 date? That was. . .OK. So this is in 18. . .?

A. Around 1882, 1881 they moved to Canada because my Uncle Michael, Michael Morris who was very active here in Rochester at a later time, was born in Montreal.

Q. And that's the reason why your mother moved up to. . .?

A. Well, her parents. . . well, she was just a very little girl at that time.

Q. Right. And how long was she in Montreal?

A. She was there until she was married. She was married at age 16 in Montreal, and then they moved to Toronto, and that's where her son was born, my brother Max was born in Toronto.

Q. So Montreal was an important city for your family history?

A. And Toronto, too.

Q. And Toronto, too. OK. Then your. . . then your parents moved to Toronto after they were married and then to Detroit. . .

A. No, my. . . only my grandfather went to Detroit.

Q. Oh, OK.

A. He was the explorer.

Q. OK.

- A. He went ahead of the family and decided Detroit was not for them. And then he stayed in Toronto for a little while, he came to Rochester and decided to bring the whole family to Rochester.
- Q. And everybody involved in the tailor. . . in the tailor business then, you grandfather and your parents? Involved. . . I see. . . And again into Rochester about what year? So we can establish that?
- A. I would say 18. . . about 1896.
- Q. OK.
- A. Because my brother was born in Toronto, and my sister was born here in Rochester. So it was around 1896.
- Q. OK, fine. And then since then your family has been Rochesterian?
- A. Mmm-hmm.
- Q. OK. Very good. Now let me ask about yourself. You were born. . .?
- A. In Rochester.
- Q. In Rochester. And the year was 19. . .
- A. Four.
- Q. 1904, I think that's where I got that date before by the way. OK. And you were educated in Rochester, and would you tell me about. . .?
- A. I was born off Vienna Street, it was an alley, Crystal Place. . .
- Q. This is in the Joseph Avenue area?
- A. Well, it's not too far, closer to Hudson. Born at home as were my two sisters. We went to No. 18 School because the family moved North Street. And we went to No. 18 School all of us. From kindergarten I was at No. 18 School through the sixth grade because at that time they had opened. . . before that they had opened the Washington Junior High, it was a pioneer high school, junior high school, when I was a kid.
- Q. In what way was it a pioneer?

- A. There were just a half dozen junior highs in the whole United States at that time, and Washington Junior High, with a man by the name of Glass as the principal, was a show place for that kind of school.
- Q. This meant seventh through ninth grade?
- A. It was. . . it was seventh through ninth.
- Q. OK. And this was the new middle school, I guess.
- A. Yes, right.
- Q. But it wasn't called the middle school?
- A. No, it was called the Washington Junior High School, very proudly.
- Q. Well, that's fine. And you were a part of it then? You went to school. . .
- A. Of course, I was not in the initial class, but I did go. I didn't graduate from Washington Junior High because I ran into some. . . a bit of a problem and that required special kinds of care. And so I was transferred to East High School in my ninth grade and had to leave all my friends at Washington Junior High and make a new way for myself at East High School.
- Q. Now, you're. . . you're talking to somebody who doesn't know Rochester very well, and I'm sure you'll be talking to people who won't. East High School is where? This is outside of this neighborhood isn't it?
- A. At that time, you'll be interested to know, that Rochester had two high schools, one on the east side of the river and one on the west side. And they were known as East and West High School, and very keen rivalry. No matter where you lived east of the river you attended East High School so that Washington Junior High relieved some of the load on East High School by taking the freshman class.
- Q. OK.
- A. But, it fed into East High School.
- Q. This is Washington Junior High fed into East High?

A. That's right.

Q. There was no analogue for West High? That was simply from the public school immediately into. . .

A. Right.

Q. . . . into West High.

A. That's right. East High School is still standing on Alexander Street near University, between University and Main.

Q. OK. And you . . . now to get some dates. When did you begin at East High School? You really didn't finish Washington Junior High?

A. No, I didn't. I went to East High School in my freshman year, and I graduated from East High in '23, so it must have been 1919 when I went there. . . 1920 probably. I had the first term of the ninth grade at Washington Junior High, and then I transferred in the middle of the year.

Q. You almost finished? You only had a semester to go.

A. But I didn't have the fun of graduating.

Q. OK. I see. And you also had to leave as you mentioned. . .

A. All my friends. . .

Q. . . . friends.

A. I was thrust into a brand new situation all around.

Q. Which is not easy, I'm sure. But why. . . your family moved, I. . .

A. No, no, no.

Q. They didnot.

A. I. . . that was because they discovered that I had a curvature of the spine, and it required special treatment, the doctor was asking for a physical exercise six days a week, 52 weeks a year for four years. And his office was at the corner of Alexander and East Avenue. So I could go from high school to his office very easily.

Q. That was a long walk? We're talking about a walk. . . ?

A. Well, I always walked. I never. . . I didn't have the money to ride. In those days there was a streetcar. And I walked two miles to school and back.

Q. It was about two miles, but still at Vienna Street. . .

A. No, no, no.

Q. We're not there?

A. By this time we had moved three or four times.

Q. OK. This is what. . .

A. We're not way north.

Q. This is what I want to establish because it's very interesting to see, you know, the places that . . . where the Jewish community has lived.

A. All right. For that, I was born just off Vienna Street.

Q. OK.

A. Two or three years later the family moved to North Street and we lived on North Street for a long time. My grandfather's shop was still in the same spot, which was Colline Street, which runs off North Street. By this time my grandfather was gone. He died five months before I was born. And my two uncles and my father ran that shop. Shortly after I would say probably around 1908 or so they moved the shop to Clifford Avenue.

Q. All right. Now where. . . where is. . . ?

A. Clifford is north of where we were. And we moved north of that to Wilkins Street. You're still going north. And from Wilkins Street we went to Avenue B, which is off St. Paul.

Q. This is all within a short period of time?

A. Well, I'd say about twelve years.

Q. OK. That's moving quite often within that period of time. What prompted this moving about?

- A. Part of it was the size of the family because by this time. . .by the time we moved to Wilkins Street there were two more children, and that means we now had six.
- Q. OK.
- A. And so. . .
- Q. The growing family required the move?
- A. That's right.
- Q. And did you. . . were you aware of the fact that there was any reason for moving to particular parts of the city? Moving northward for example. I mean, was there any logical choice? I mean, the size of the home obviously was. . . was important. But, what about the location?
- A. That was interesting. That Mother was particularly unhappy in the center core of the Jewish neighborhood, and we always lived on the fringe. After the Vienna Street area. . .
- Q. That would have to be after because Vienna. . .
- A. . . . they moved to North Street, and there were very few. . . we were on the periphery of the Jewish neighborhood. When we went to Wilkins Street again there were Jews around, but we were on the edge. When we went to Avenue B again the whole Jewish community was moving north, there was quite a center in the east and there was a very large segment north.
- Q. Of Jews? Jewish. . .
- A. Mmm-hmm.
- Q. Now, my understanding is that. . . if we can go back to Vienna Street, this was . . . certainly correct me if I'm wrong, Eastern European Jewish?
- A. Yes.
- Q. This was. . .
- A. There were very, very few German Jews living in that part of town.

Q. OK. So when we're talking now about a Jewish community, we are really talking specifically about an Eastern European Jewish community?

A. In fact, I just correct. . . I must. . . one of the most significant. . . in my life had to be that a German Jewish friend, who lived on a street near my grandmother's. Grandma's house was in the front and the shop was in the back-yard. And a little girl by the name of Celia Shulman lived three or four doors away. And her people were members of Temple B'rith Kodesh, and the mother at around the age of nine wanted her to go to Sunday school and she wouldn't go alone, and so I was invited to go. And I'm very proud of our congregation because at that time they had a rule that permitted many children unaffiliated to attend their school, and I was one of those.

Q. At where?

A. At Temple B'rith Kodesh.

Q. B'rith Kodesh.

A. I was allowed to go with Celia. And I don't know whether I should tell this but. . .

Q. No, no. Feel free.

A. My grandmother happened to come over there first Sunday, whether it was intuitive or not I don't know, but she wanted to know where I was. And my mother told her that I started in school at the Temple B'rith Kodesh. And Grandma was horrified. She was a devoutly Orthodox Jew, and she waited until I returned. And as luck would have it in those days the children did not have books, but they had leaflets. And each week you'd get a leaflet and you could put it in like a notebook, like up there, and at the end you'd have a book. That week the story was Moses and Bulrush, and Grandma knew the story very well. And I could tell it to here. And we sang some kind of a song, I don't remember Grandma, but it began "In telhoun. . ." And Grandma was so thrilled



A. (Continued) with it that each week she would give me the coins, that was charity money, and she would wait each time to come back and hear the story. So, a German Jewish girl colored my life very, very much in a very Eastern European area.

Q. I was. . . I mean first of all Celia was living in this. . . in this. . .

A. She was on . . .

Q. In the. . . in the. . .

A. Yes.

Q. . . . Eastern European area. That was unusual in itself that there was a German Jewish family. . .

A. By the way, she married an Italian and converted.

Q. These ways. . . who know. . . Were you aware of the fact that she was from a different background?

A. No, because we played together all the time, and there was no difference whatsoever. I stuck with the school. She dropped out.

Q. Oh, I see. Well, when you got to the school, did you feel there was a different environment or something different from your own background or education?

A. No, Celia was at my side so I felt comfortable. And for some reason I have always felt welcome there. From the first day I stepped into it. Maybe it was because Ben Goldstein was in charge of the school, and he was a very dear friend of my Uncle Michael's. I recognized him, and maybe that helped.

Q. Were you isolated in fact though as coming from a different background?

A. I never felt it.

Q. You never felt that. So you don't know then if there were other. . .?

A. And I was a very sensitive, shy little girl, so that I think that had I not been well received. . .

Q. You would have sensed. . .

A. . . .I would have known.

Q. Now this. . . this did cause some tension within your family, or reaction within your family?

A. Only the first day until my grandmother saw that I wasn't being converted, and she realized that I was getting the same thing that she could read in her sidur. That it was exactly the same stories, her little girl could tell it to her. And she was very happy and encouraged my going all the time.

Q. But your family went to a different. . . ?

A. My parents belonged to an Orthodox synagogue.

Q. Was this Beth Israel?

A. No, I can't tell you the name of it. It was the Ryan Street Shul we called it.

Q. Right.

A. And later it became Beth Hamedresh Hachodosh.

Q. OK.

A. Well, if you were a native Rochesterian you'd know it as the Big Shul.

Q. Important and large?

A. It was called the Big Shul. . .

Q. The Big Shul.

A. It was a beautiful structure with a magnificent dome, that's the way I remember it.

Q. Gee, I would love to see that. That isn't still. . . ?

A. Gone.

Q. But it was on Ryan Street?

A. No, it was on Hanover Street. The little shul was the Ryan Street Shul.

Q. OK. Boy, there's so many details, it's incredible. And did you, in fact, go to any of these. . .

A. Services?

Q. . . services?

A. Oh, yes. As a . . . as a young child I must have gone. We'd go to the synagogue and sit with Grandma up in the balcony and look down at our Dad and uncles.

Q. So you have distinct memories then?

A. I have very distinct memories.

Q. And when did. . . ?

A. And my grandmother was a reader. She was a reader. And all the ladies would gather around her, and I can shut my eyes and see Grandma reading and all the women around her. While the service was going on on the main floor.

Q. And you . . . you were on the balcony as well?

A. Oh, yes girls had to be up.

Q. Right.

And when did you then begin going to B'rith Kodesh?

A. I was nine years old.

Q. Now wouldn't that seem because that. . . for example, on the high holydays or on any of the holidays would you be going to services at B'rith Kodesh, and your family going to services. . . ?

A. No, I was going with them.

Q. OK.

A. Because they never had Sunday school on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. They didn't have schools that day, on the holidays. And we were not members of the temple, so I didn't go. When I was confirmed and thereafter I went to B'rith Kodesh.

Q. OK. And this was perfectly acceptable within your family?

A. Yes.

Q. And as you mention you've gotten confirmed.

A. Mmm-hmm.

Q. And . . .

A. And the year following I began teaching there.

Q. At B'rith Kodesh?

A. Mmm-hmm.

Q. And your family accepted this? This was. . .

A. Very shortly thereafter I became a member and paid dues myself so that my two brothers could attend as members. And our whole family became members of B'rith Kodesh, all but my sister Ella who, after her marriage, joined Beth El.

Q. So from your experiences with both the shul and the temple, do you think that there was within your family because they kind of followed you into this program, that there was a conversion going on, you know, in the . . . within the Jewish. . .?

A. What do you mean conversion?

Q. Well, from an Orthodox. . . or persuasion is much better, of course.

A. Yes. I think that the feeling was that we could not attend a synagogue that I can remember gained any educational programs to the children. And my parents were always interested in education and wherever you could get it is where they were interested.

Q. OK. Now I don't know much about this. The shul did not offer them.

A. As far as I know. I was never. . . it may have. I know that the Leopold Street Shul. . . the Leopold Street Shul as they called it, did have a very fine school, but we were not members. So, as far as I know there was nothing offered at Ryan.

Q. OK. So this. . .

A. I can't answer whether there was. . .

Q. But the fact that there was a strong educational program at B'rith Kodesh, and you mention I think here Ben Goldstein?

A. Yes.

Q. Who was persuasive and accepting, and perhaps progressive, in his educational methods. This is what persuaded you, at first, and then the rest of . . . of your. . .

A. I must give full credit to the rabbi. The rabbi was Horace Wolfe, who has always been an outstanding figure in my memory because he was warm and understanding. And one of the greatest moments of my young life was the conference that I had with Rabbi Wolfe prior to confirmation. And I remember distinctly his saying to me anytime you want to come back and teach in our school we'd love to have you. And it worked out that way.

Q. That's impressive. Coming from him whom you respect very much. Did you know him fairly well?

A. Only as the rabbi because in those days services were on Sunday at our temple, and therefore, we saw very little of the rabbi. But in the con. . . in the confirmation year we got to know him.

Q. He was generally a respected figure?

A. Highly. He unfortunately died young.

Q. When. . . when did he die? What was the year?

A. I think it was about 1926 because Rabbi Bernstein, Philip Bernstein, followed him. . . '25, '26, '27. . .

Q. And you were teaching at this point at B'rith Kodesh?

A. I was at the normal school as a student, and I began teaching at B'rith Kodesh before I graduated.

Q. Did you have ambitions to teach Jewish education as a full-time. . . ?

A. No.

- Q. It was just a part-time. . . as you were studying at the normal school?
- A. The same Ben Goldstein went to the city normal school and asked Gertrude Lehrer was was a sixth grade critic teacher and the only Jewish person on the staff whether she had any students she'd recommend, and I was one of those she recommended.
- Q. You mean for. . .?
- A. Before I graduated.
- Q. Recommended for what?
- A. Teaching at Temple B'rith Kodesh.
- Q. I see. I thought that Rabbi Wolfe. . .?
- A. Oh, he had said that to me only as a pre-confirmation time.
- Q. Oh, I see. I see. So then you got the official encouragement?
- A. And he was still. . . he was still living. Rabbi Wolfe was still living at that time. But, ill. . .
- Q. OK. So at what point. . . well, let me establish one thing first. How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- A. I do have. I have two sisters and three brothers. There are three and three. All living.
- Q. And they're all in Rochester?
- A. All but one.
- Q. OK. All right. I just wanted to get that clear. Now, when did you decide to go to normal school? Did you decide to do teaching as a career?
- A. I was the first member of the family lucky enough to graduate from high school. And couldn't afford college, tuition was free at the normal school. Of course, was two years as against four at the high. . . at the university. And so I went to the normal school. In those years we had a mid-year graduation. So I graduated from East High School in January, 1923. I went to the city normal

- A. (Continued) school for two years and graduated in January, 1925. As I said before I graduated on Friday night and began teaching Monday morning. And that was the best. . . do you have any questions?
- Q. No, go ahead.
- A. Very interesting. We lived on Avenue B and the woman who made the assignments called me in to her office and said how would you like to go to No. 8 School? And I was startled by that question, and I said what grade. And she said fourth grade, I said I'd be thrilled to. She couldn't understand my behavior. The night before my brother, Dominic, had complained that No. 8 School had announced that his teacher was leaving in a week to marry and moving out of town. And when I was asked would I like to go to No. 8 School, all I could think of was Dominic's in my class. But when she said fourth grade, Dominic was in the fifth grade, so I was relieved and happy. And that was my first experience. I began teaching one half block from my home, with my little brother, Dominic, in the next classroom.
- Q. That's great, and you were teaching the fourth grade?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What was. . . where was No. 8 School located?
- A. On the corner Conkey Avenue and Avenue B. It's still one of the oldest buildings in the City of Rochester.
- Q. Buildings generally, not just schools? OK. So you started teaching in about 1925.
- A. 1925. January, 1925. . .
- Q. That's marvelous. And you were teaching at the same time at B'rith Kodesh?
- A. Yes.
- Q. So you were doing both?
- A. Yes.

Q. Now how long did this continue? Double education like that?

A. Many, many years.

Q. This was the dominant theme?

A. I left B'rith Kodesh officially in 1958.

Q. That is many, many years.

A. Mmm-hmm.

Q. And where was B'rith Kodesh located at this point?

A. Originally it was at corner of Gibbs and Grow Street, right across from the main YMCA building, not too far from the Eastman Theatre. It's now a parking lot, and the new building which was dedicated about sixteen years ago is on Elmwood Avenue.

Q. I've seen that. OK. So then until 1958 you were teaching at B'rith Kodesh, and at the No. 8 School?

A. I was at No. 8 School for twenty years and taught grades four, five, six and seven. In 1945 I was promoted and became a supervisor and teacher at No. 19 School, which is in the southwest. . . southwest section of the city. I spent a year at No. 19 School as a supervisor and teacher and then moved to No. 9 School as a supervisor and teacher for one year. And those are two very unusual schools, very different from No. 8. No. 8 School had about 50% Jewish children. Nineteen school had none and No. 9 School was the school that was in the heart of the Jewish neighborhood originally and now was moving into the black area.

Q. Where was No. 9 School?

A. It was on the corner of Joseph and Baden Street.

Q. OK.

A. Right in the. . . right in the heart of that segment.

Q. When did you go over to No. 9 School?



A. 1946, September.

Q. So at this point it was not Jewish. It was. . .

A. There were still some Jewish children in the school, but only a fraction because it was. . . the Jewish. . . most of them had moved out and the blacks had moved in.

Q. By 1946?

A. Yes.

Q. So you have changes with very. . .

A. Very noticeable.

Q. . . . at this point. OK.

A. No. 9 School had once been the elite Jewish school, and some of our finest men and women in Rochester began at No. 9 School.

Q. Is this school still standing by the way? That building. . .

A. It's going to be pulled down. It was occupied until June and now they're moving to a new site this September.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. Over on . . .

Q. Going to be pulled down, that's very interesting. So at this point. . . well, I suppose earlier then it was 100% Jewish?

A. Not 100% but predominately Jewish for many, many years. And those were the Eastern children mostly.

Q. Right.

A. The children of Eastern Jewish parents I should say.

Q. When do you think this change began to occur? Was it before you taught there?

A. I would say in the thirties. As. . . as the Jewish community moved to the. . . to the southeast and further north in Rochester.

Q. Which you were, incidentally, a part of that movement?

A. Only we moved away ahead.

Q. Before. Right. OK. I want to ask you about. . . before we talk about your experiences in these schools, the No. 8, the No. 9 School, there was a point you mentioned before that I find very interesting to hear what you have to say about it, was that your family. . . I don't know who specifically this might have been, were living on the periphery of these Jewish neighborhoods you mentioned. Was this. . . I assume this was done more or less deliberately, there was a pattern. Each time there was kind of a peripheral relationship.

A. I think it was part of mother. . . my mother's feeling. She was more comfortable . . . she was a very social kind of person but she did not blend into the Eastern European community as readily as my father did.

Q. OK.

A. And so she felt more comfortable. She was a very busy housewife; she did all her own sewing for six children. And baking twice a week, and she was a housewife and she felt happiest living out.

Q. Out but not away?

A. Never away.

Q. OK. So that that therefore explains the peripheral relationship.

A. Yes.

Q. And your father for him it was close enough to. . .

A. Yes. That's right.

Q. OK. Now this No. 8 School was about half Jewish? Did you feel any religious or Jewish contact with the students as Jews, or was there really a true public, non-sectarian. . .?

A. It was a truly public school. And I have to say that Emma O'Keefe, who was principal at that time, was a tremendous person. A magnificent administrator, a wonderful human being, and very understanding. And everybody who knew Emma

- A. (Continued) knew that this school was run . . . she ran a tight ship, is what I think we would say. And loved the children and had wonderful relations with them and their parents. A strong PTA. And good strong faculty because she would tolerate no nonsense.
- Q. Well, what about. . . and you said there was this. . .
- A. And as far as the children were concerned, we had brilliant youngsters, many of them. I could name dozens of men and women who are active in the Jewish community today who were. . . who were my pupils, dozens.
- Q. OK. Why did you move to the No. 9 School? Why did you. . .?
- A. 'Cause I was promoted.
- Q. Promotion.
- A. Yes.
- Q. And this school was right in the center, kind of a. . . did you find it ironic to move right back in the Joseph Avenue, Baden. . .
- A. No. No because I never knew that type of town. The family had moved away when I was a baby so that I never knew. . . all my experiences at school, for example, kindergarten at age four was at No. 18 School which is a mile away from No. 9.
- Q. Now Vienna Street though is in this area.
- A. That's where I was born.
- Q. That's right.
- A. I never knew it because I was a baby when we moved.
- Q. But it is kind of a. . . but you did return in fact even though in your own life. . .
- A. That's right.
- Q. . . . it was not a . . .
- A. It had no meaning.

Q. Had no meaning. You felt nothing, therefore, when you went back, when back in your old neighborhood or something of this sort? Now, this was 1946 I believe, and what about the relationship between the Jewish, well there was a black student enrollment?

A. We can go back. You asked some questions about No. 8 School. Good middle class. Many of the men were what we would term today blue collar workers. They were all anxious for the best for their children, and therefore most were very cooperative. And I'd like to mention one experience that I had in the early thirties. I was teaching at the B'rith Kodesh and now at No. 8 School. When Christmas time came we started a Chanukkah, Christmas celebration. I shouldn't boast about it because later on we retracted, but at that time we brought in the Menorrah and the Jewish. . . and my principal thought it was so great that she told the superintendent and I was invited to come to a principals meeting and report on the activity. Ten or fifteen years later Rabbi Bernstein and I decided that that was not such a good thing. And because it was. . . well, no matter how you cut it, still it can be religious practices in the school.

Q. OK. Let me interrupt you for . . .

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A. (Interview I)

Interview I  
Tape 1  
side B

Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Miss Elizabeth Schwartz. And this is Side B of Tape No. 1. And you were telling us now about . . .?

A. That about ten or fifteen years later we decided that no matter how you looked at celebrating Christmas or Chanukkah it was . . . you were using religious symbols and rightly it belonged in a church or synagogue rather than in a public school.

Q. Weren't there religious symbols like the Christmas tree. . .?

A. Oh, yes. That's why we introduced the Chanukkah Menorrah, but you don't . . . don't release one by adding a second.

Q. Well, you in fact removed. . . you didn't remove it though? It was just. . .

A. No we drew some parallels.

Q. Well, from my point of view that's kind of a healthy thing to do, but do you think that might have created . . . with Rabbi Bernstein's opinion and your own that that might have created. . .?

A. Actually, as. . . as we lived with it we realized that that was. . . that it would be better to avoid symbolism because a Jewish teacher would teach it one way, a Catholic teacher would teach it another way, and so it was decided . . . In fact, when Herman Goberg was the superintendent of schools he used to write. . . send each principal each year a very beautiful letter suggesting that Christmas be observed . . . that the holiday season be observed as a holiday season and teach it in terms of spirituality, the goodwill, brotherhood, rather than specific hymns and songs or symbolism.

Q. His effort, therefore, was to reduce any particular . . .

A. That's right.

Q. . . .manifestations of this?

A. That's right. And then a kind of evolution, as far as I personally was concerned. . . .

Q. But did you feel that there was a reaction of any sort that prompted a decision not to continue with this?

A. I think we were advised that symbols like the creche and choosing material that belonged in the church was now coming into the school and could be used as a . . . as an excuse.

Q. Excuse for. . . ?

A. Introducing religious. . .

Q. Oh, I see. So they decided not to do this. What about on the high holydays, for example? The school, I assume, was not called off. . . ?

A. That's right.

Q. But. . . but. . .

A. Always from the first year that I taught I always notified my principal that I would not be in school these days, send a substitute. In fact, when I began teaching we lost salary for those days.

Q. Now that's. . .

A. And it was only the last couple years of my whole experience that I was paid for the high holydays.

Q. Didn't you find that. . . ? How did you react to that?

A. Just accepted it.

Q. You accepted it.

A. Like we accepted everything else. We didn't object.

Q. How do you feel about that today? I mean, do you understand why you accepted that? From my point of view it seems like it's a form of perhaps discrimination?

A. No. I just felt that I had the privilege of working if I wished, and I guess

- A. (Continued) I never really thought about the fact that . . . I just took it for granted that if I wanted to be out I would not be paid because I was. . . Because in those days you were not paid for the first five days of illness. If you were sick from Monday to Friday you lost that pay unless you were sick the second week.
- Q. So this was a common practice then?
- A. Yes.
- Q. There was no. . .
- A. That's the way it was in those days.
- Q. Right. And there've been changes for the better, I'm sure.
- A. I think so.
- Q. OK.
- A. You were asking about No. 9 School and the changes. The community was so different from any that I had experienced either at No. 8 or 19 School. . .
- Q. Excuse me, was this 19 or 9?
- A. I was at 19 School for a year as a supervisor and teacher when I left No. 8, and then I went to No. 9.
- Q. And 9 is at the corner of Joseph and Baden?
- A. That's right.
- Q. OK.
- A. And the. . . those. . . there was no comparison by my own. . . No. 8 School was middle class. Nineteen School was a rung below. And No. 9 School was the lowest in the social scale in my. . .
- Q. OK. I want to ask you that how many Jewish faculty members were there at the No. 8 School, I mean approximately? Was that. . .?
- A. I was the only one.
- Q. You were the only one?

A. For many years.

Q. And yet there were. . .

A. Except my first year. For the first term there was another teacher, Matilda Johnson Schwarz, and she was only there for a year. And it was six months. . .

Q. Well, at least the Schwartzes were well represented.

A. That's right. Schwarz without the "t."

Q. Without the "t." OK, well they had to balance it I guess.

A. And at No. 9 School I don't remember any Jewish teachers. At 19 School there were two.

Q. Did you feel that the proportion of students was about 50/50 at No. 8? And yet you were the only Jewish teacher?

A. It just so happened there were about six hundred children in the school. I was very comfortable with the faculty, with the neighborhood.

Q. So there was none. . . no. . . you weren't even aware of the fact that there weren't any there?

A. No, I had Young Judea Club around the corner, the synagogue on St. Paul Street at that time. And that. . . that. . . that was an Orthodox community.

Q. When you were around No. 8. . .? You mentioned this Young Judean Club, would you tell me something about that and what it was, your involvement?

A. Girls around eleven years old in the Beth Joseph Synagogue. We met. . . I had the key to the synagogue and one evening the girls would meet, I'd unlock the door, we'd have our songs and stories and activities. We'd lock it up and off we'd go.

Q. What. . . what about. . . what years were these approximately?

A. I would say between around 1930, '32.

Q. When you got. . . when you got involved in this? Now. . .

A. I'd been a member of the Young Judean group myself.



Q. Oh, you were? Before you. . .

A. As a youngster.

Q. And when was this?

A. When I was about . . . when I was in junior high school, and Philip Bernstein, Rabbi Bernstein, was our leader.

Q. Oh, he was involved in this?

A. He was a student then and just before he went to college he led the group, he eyed the girls and had a boyfriend sitting. . .(Laughter) The Ahbolam was the name of the Young Judea group.

Q. So it wasn't just girls. . .?

A. Yes, just girls.

Q. Well, then what was. . .?

A. He was the leader.

Q. Leader. . .

A. The Zionist group even that early.

Q. Oh, was Young Judea a Zionist organization?

A. Yes.

Q. OK. So your interest in Zionism then goes back quite far into your. . . very early in your life? Do you remember when that first was manifested?

A. I was active as a teenager.

Q. You were a teenager? So this would be about in the early twenties?

A. Probably.

Q. Do you know what prompted you? What. . .

A. Yes. The girls I went to school with.

Q. OK. Now what school are we at here?

A. That was when I was still at junior high school.

Q. OK. You're at the Washington Junior High School. And your friends. . .

- A. My friends. . . I'd go around. . . we're still friends. One was Edith Levinson, another was Gertude Worasky and her sister Alice, Lillian Gould. We . . . very familiar names, people who have lived in Rochester a long time. And they're still around and we're still friends.
- Q. And you all found Zionism an exciting. . . what was it in your reaction?
- A. Well, I think it was. . . you know, I don't think it was Zionism as much as a club I feel. And a charismatic leader.
- Q. Which is Rabbi Bernstein? Was Zionism a prominent theme in this club?
- A. No.
- Q. It wasn't?
- A. Not that I remember.
- Q. I see. What was the purpose of the club then? Why organize. . .?
- A. Sociability and I guess I didn't even look for purpose. It was friends.
- Q. Meet friends. Was there. . . Was there a split within this club between the German and Eastern European. . .?
- A. No. It was. . . this is in the northern part. . . we met in the Vienna Street area.
- Q. Oh.
- A. By this time I was living north. The girls came from that area, and we lived the other side and we met at the junior high.
- Q. OK. So there really was an inclination for Eastern European Jewish. . . there really was that represented more than German Jewish representation?
- A. That's right. Oh, yes.
- Q. I see. And you then had a social meeting and it was a way to meet.
- A. A very happy club.
- Q. And you continued your involvement to a point of leadership when you, yourself, were in the thirties?

A. That's right.

Q. And how long were you involved then in the . . .?

A. Just a couple years.

Q. And you decided. . . ?

A. I'd had enough.

Q. Right. But I mention that your interest in Zionism goes back early in your life, apparently not in connection with this Young Judea Club?

A. I don't think I can use the term Zionism. I don't think that's apt.

Q. OK.

A. Because I didn't sense it was that at all.

Q. What were you sensing? I mean, what. . . it was a. . . ?

A. A kinship with other people, mutual background, and there was a kind of understanding for instance.

Q. OK. I mean, the reason I ask you these questions is because you became involved in the Young Judea in, well, the early twenties and this is right after the Balfour Declaration when Israel became an important center.

A. We had sixty teachers at that, but I don't think it really had significance to me at that time. Later on. . .

Q. Later on it became significant. Zionism, I know, has many, many, many interpretations and shapes. One interpretation is apparently what you're describing. That is a sense of nationhood in the broad sense, not the land and the soil of Israel but a Jewish feeling for other friends. This is what you're describing.

A. That's right.

Q. OK. Very good. You have had, therefore, through school and the neighborhood in which you lived, close ties to Jewish friends, in business, your father's business, your teaching I guess not so much.

A. But, I've had. . . all my life from the time I went to high school I have had very close friends in the non-Jewish world. I hate to say it, but some of my best friends are not Jewish.

Q. And this was always true?

A. Always.

Q. From your childhood. . . So you really had healthy relations with non-Jewish as well as Jewish. . .?

A. I feel that.

Q. There was no. . .?

A. Two of my closest friends I met when I went to East High School as a freshman. One was a Dutch immigrant. . . emigrant, Rita Vanewal, and she's still a very good friend of mine.

Q. OK. Very good. I wanted to ask now, you. . . your relationship with the Young Judea Club went to the thirties, the mid-thirties, I guess. Did you have any other organizational affiliations, really either within or without the Jewish community? Let's say within to begin with. Any organizations. . .?

A. I don't remember when I joined Hadassah, I can't tell you that. But I always belonged to organizations. In those days there was an elementary classroom teachers organization known by a funny title, the Friday Night Club. And I was always active in that. We had a group of Jewish teachers, a club called the Moriyah, m-o-r-i-y-a-h I think, a Hebrew word meaning the teacher. And I was always very active in that, an officer, several. . .

Q. It was a very nice club?

A. The Moriyah.

Q. This was . . .

A. Jewish teachers.

Q. Jewish teachers.

A. And elementary.

Q. When was this club formed?

A. Before I began teaching.

Q. Before.

A. But I was invited that first year. And we met for I would say about sixteen years after and then disbanded.

Q. So, just to get some base. . .

A. I would say around 1940.

Q. It disbanded. And it started you would say. . .?

A. I don't know when.

Q. OK. But before you were teaching, therefore before 1926. Why did you join this club?

A. Because I was flattered to be invited. And it was good to be with other Jewish teachers.

Q. OK. As opposed to just teachers, 'cause of the Jewish. . .?

A. Well, it was a little group as against the large group that encompassed the city, like the Friday Night Club.

Q. OK. And what went on in this club? Were there discussions. . .?

A. Yes, and social. We had luncheons, dinners.

Q. Was it ever to improve the educational process?

A. Not. . .

Q. Anything of this sort?

A. Not effectively. I think that many of the girls did not have the . . . many of these I think did not have a social life in their own schools, and that was. . .

Q. OK. So this was primarily social in its. . .?

A. My faculty was a very social faculty, did many things together so I didn't need

A. (Continued) that.

Q. And as well. . . it was non-Jewish as well as Jewish?

A. That's right.

Q. But this Friday Night Club was specifically Jewish?

A. No, the Friday Night Club was the entire city elementary. . .

Q. OK. OK.

A. The Moriyah was Jewish.

Q. Oh, OK. These are two different clubs. That's why I'm confused.

A. Yes.

Q. OK. Fine. And what about any other organizations or clubs that. . .?

A. I don't remember any.

Q. What about getting involved in Hadassah? When. . .?

A. Because I was. . . I was the kind of school teacher that spent a great deal of time preparing. I was going to the University, doing work. I was teaching Sunday school, and I was very involved in family so. . .

Q. So enough is enough. Great. OK. But you did enter Hadassah and this is. . . this was when? When did you become involved?

A. I don't remember.

Q. Was it in the forties?

A. I think it was. . . I would say so because it was Junior Hadassah at first and then Hadassah.

Q. OK. I wanted to ask now a line of questions about B'rith Kodesh. You were involved for many, many, many years.

A. That's right.

Q. Are you still a member of the temple?

A. Very much so. I'm still very active there. As I explained earlier, I began attending the school at age nine, went through the school, was confirmed, and

- A. (Continued) then about a year or two later began teaching. And I taught the kindergarten program although I was not a kindergarten teacher, that was in the . . .
- Q. Children introduced to. . .?
- A. Whenever we had a kindergarten class, and that was my job. And through the years I taught all the grades through the tenth grade. And then became principal of the school for a number of years. In 1958 when I was transferred to a very large elementary school as the principal I decided that I could not do anymore of this to be fair. But I was a trustee for years.
- Q. Which is. . .?
- A. I was elected to the Board of Trustees of the temple. And then I've been on various committees. Right now I'm Vice-President of Sisterhood.
- Q. I see. In your trusteeship, when was this?
- A. It was at a very interesting period. During my service on that board the plans of the new building and then. . .
- Q. OK. This is. . .?
- A. It was a very exciting time.
- Q. Now the big question I have is that so many years affiliation with a temple, this is important, in Rochester there were many, many changes obviously. And I'm interested if you can relate or describe in a broad way, and perhaps we can focus in on some of the important pivotal points. . .?
- A. I was in the confirmation class with Rabbi Landsberg's granddaughter, Martha Bleiter. We were very good friends. And her grandfather, Rabbi Landsberg, liked to be called Dr. Landsberg, was an ultra-Reform rabbi. He was followed by Rabbi Horace Wolfe who was extremely opposite. He was very social-minded, was aware of the . . . in Jewish. . . He understood that his congregation was the German Jewish congregation and I was the Orthodox congregation. And he

- A. (Continued) was . . . we had two orphan institutions, the Reform orphanage which was on Vincent Street, and the Orthodox orphanage on Gorham Street. Rabbi Wolfe worked to draw the two groups closer together. And he was only here a few years until his death. Phil Bernstein built on that foundation and did a beautiful job. He was accepted by . . . by this time the Conservative group was organized, Beth El, and Rabbi Wolfe was. . . Rabbi Bernstein was recognized by all branches and helped to draw the community together. When he took over we had services on Sunday morning. . .
- Q. Now you're talking about Rabbi Bernstein?
- A. Yes. Rabbi Wolfe, too, always had services on Sunday morning. It was through Rabbi Bernstein's leadership that the congregation moved to Friday night services. And during his time they introduced a Bar and Bat Mitzvah, many of the practices currently there. So I have seen a great movement.
- Q. OK. And the movement, it seems to me, is towards some kind of unification within the larger Jewish community. The various tri-partite. . .
- A. Yes. Whereas services in Dr. Landsberg's time were done in English and German, because there was great German group. Today many. . . there are few families that trace their origins back to . . . he was the fourth generation in the congregation. But many are present members are Eastern European background.
- Q. Well, that surprises me because I always thought that the B'rith Kodesh was always a German Jewish lineage.
- A. That was originally.
- Q. And that. . . this has changed then?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did you know Rabbi Landsberg?
- A. I remember him as a little girl. I remember him. I remember he used to come



A. (Continued) to. . .truly I never spoke to him.

Q. You never spoke. . .?

A. No, I never knew him really.

Q. Did you hear him give sermons, conduct services?

A. No.

Q. Or any educational. . .?

A. No.

Q. . . . contact. . .His. . . His idea] was the Reform movement, and he did what he could to promote that?

A. Yes. But it was very different from what we know today.

Q. OK. What was it like then? Because you're the first affiliation with B'rith Kodesh was under the influence of Rabbi Landsberg, even if you didn't know him.

A. He was passed by that time and through teaching we never got into the temple. Because as a little girl I was going during Rabbi Wolfe's time, I was going to the religious school, and that was on Sunday morning. And the services were held in the temple. We could hear the organ through the auditorium when we came to the hall, we could hear the organ. But the only time we went into the temple, the only time I went into the temple, was on confirmation when the whole school marched in for confirmation. Other than that I didn't know. I could look in and see the black coats and the striped pins of the ushers, but it was at . . .

Q. I see. You mentioned that. . .

A. That was Rabbi Wolfe.

Q. Rabbi Wolfe.

A. This was what I remember.

Q. OK. And he was making some changes. . .

A. Yes.

Q. And he was really then what you. . .

A. He was modifying. . .

Q. And this is the influence you were feeling?

A. Right. German was no longer the language.

Q. OK. What other. . . what other changes?

A. Hebrew was starting. There was a Hebrew group. I think there was an attempt to build into religious practice that we know today and some of the customs of today.

Q. It was there. . . more of a . . . I mean, the use of Friday night services, this was Rabbi Bernstein's innovation, and the use of Hebrew. . . these are trends. . . Well. . .

A. And teaching the service of the Shabbat, and holiday practices, the seder. We had congregational seders, and encouraging children to observe the holiday, parents became involved. He did a great deal with parent meetings to acquaint the parents with the facts he was teaching.

Q. OK. What. . . what was happening was to increase the identification with Judaism.

A. Right.

Q. Because obviously having a German-English format under Rabbi Landsberg was not nearly as observant of the religious rituals and the customs of the Jewish religion as it became to be under Rabbi Wolfe.

A. Rabbi Bernstein by this time.

Q. Rabbi Bernstein, OK. And with Rabbi Wolfe, however, this was . . . your educational experience. . .

A. That's right.

Q. You were being introduced. . . so that your exposure really was much a part

- Q. (Continued) of this movement toward the consolidation of Judaism within Reform. So you certainly accepted this. . . and as. . .
- A. I knew no different.
- Q. That's right. And I assume you promoted this.
- A. And I came from a home where there were Friday night candles and we had a seder because my background is Orthodox basically as a little girl.
- Q. I mean the contours of this is difficult to follow for me because you have the Orthodoxy of your family, and you have within the synagogue a movement that is acceptable now, but must have been you know a little confusing then. Did you feel any of this confusion or any. . .?
- A. No.
- Q. Between the family observations, the. . .
- A. I think I was so comfortable with each that I didn't see any kind of friction or any pulling away.
- Q. Nothing of this sort.
- A. No. Because there was acceptance. . . whatever I brought from the temple into the home was acceptable and certainly the temple accepted me, so. . .
- Q. But certainly. . . I mean, from my point of view the divisions between Orthodox and Reform is quite large, and there would be some things I could not accept and other things that I would. Your. . .
- A. As a. . . I can remember the first time I rode on Rosh Hashanah.
- Q. OK. Good example.
- A. We lived a long way from temple, and my sister and I had walked for the services. Mother went to shul and we went to Temple B'rith Kodesh. And it started to rain, and we got on the streetcar. And I know. . . I can remember the strange feeling it was.
- Q. So you had then that sense of the difference or change in your own religious

Q. (Continued) life?

A. Right.

Q. Although it felt strange, did you feel. . . ?

A. I didn't feel that I was. . .

Q. Any guilt or. . . ?

A. . . . sinning.

Q. Right, any of that. Nothing like that?

A. No.

Q. So you were following along this line very comfortably. In fact, you were maybe ready for it. I mean, I know this. . .

A. That's right.

Q. Under Rabbi Bernstein this continuation. . . well, there's actually two things happening here from what I'm hearing now. One is that within Judaism specifically there is more of a consolidation within Judaism. And within the Jewish community at large there's more of. . . well, I guess a consolidation there as well. Reform, Conservative now, and Orthodox.

A. Don't. . . don't forget that the early thirties, 1932, '33, we were starting to hear about Hitler and Rabbi Bernstein was very much aware of what was going on in Europe. And the sermons were. . . was disturbed by what he was hearing. And I remember going to Rosh Hashanah services and hearing, I can remember the phrase he used to begin his sermon two or three years in a row, "Watch me, what is the next?" And then he would follow it with a report. So that I do. . . through his great acceptance, the things going on in Europe. And that had something to do with building up as the 19. . . the late thirties and we were getting all these terrible reports. I was not aware. . . as aware of it myself except as we got it through his interpretation.

Q. You said something was building up?

- A. And therefore I think we looked for strength. And strength came from faith, and I think that we looked for values, and you went back to the strong convictions that . . .
- Q. This is actually fairly early in 1933, 19. . .
- A. At least that's the way I seem to remember it.
- Q. Yea. I know that at least in American politics that recognition was not. . . came very late.
- A. Maybe. . . maybe that's too early. But, I sort of remember that, but certainly in the late thirties.
- Q. And this made yourself. . .
- A. I think all of us.
- Q. All of you. Including yourself. You found that the synagogue and the Jewish religion had an important, much more . . . or gaining importance because of the experience in Europe. And Rabbi Bernstein saw this as one important moment in the lives of Jews to consolidate the community?
- A. Mmm-hmm.
- Q. OK. He continued his practice, I assume, of. . . of introducing into religious observance other. . . other. . .
- A. By this time he had established a beautiful rapport with his congregation. Not only his congregation but his background also was that of an Orthodox Jew, and he likes to tell that his whole life centered around. . . within one mile circle. He was born in the heart of the city. He went to No. 10 School, which is where the Post Office is now. He went to East High School, and then when he came back as a rabbi he went to B'rith Kodesh, which is a mile from where he was born. . . or from where he grew up.
- Q. So it all happened. . . this all happened right in the circle.
- A. It was that he. . . his father was also a tailor and he

- A. (Continued) could relate to the Orthodox community because of his background. And they could accept him. His own congregation learned to love him very quickly. And therefore he could spread a great deal of influence.
- Q. What about in the thirties? There was an influx of Jews from . . . from Germany and from Austria and central Europe to the United States. These are the survivors of the Holocaust. And there were a number of Jews that came into Rochester to settle. Did they affiliate with B'rith Kodesh?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Was this an important factor in their lives. . . ?
- A. Yes.
- Q. And also in the lives of the active members of B'rith Kodesh?
- A. Yes. Quite a few . . . I knew them as the children who came who had difficulty with the language because they were German, and their parents are still members of our congregation. Some very active members of the congregation. They came in the thirties.
- Q. Was there a number. . . I mean was there a large number?
- A. I don't remember them as a large number.
- Q. Was there an impact nonetheless?
- A. That's right.
- Q. What kind of. . . what. . . what. . . can you describe that? What reactions were of yourself, for example, or other members?
- A. Well, one of the men was a very famous scientist and his children, I remember, as the outstanding children. They. . . those I met seemed to be unusual youngsters. And so. . . and their parents like were very interested in their children. Other than that I had no contact.
- Q. OK. And B'rith Kodesh was still in the downtown location?
- A. Right.

- Q. Was there any effort to assist settling the families or any kind of services provided for. . .?
- A. I believe there were many efforts. But, I was not a part of that.
- Q. OK. What about the . . . when did Rabbi Bernstein. . . well, he is still functioning but he is not the head. . .
- A. Rabbi Emeritus, he retired three years ago.
- Q. OK. So the Bernstein era is really over with.
- A. He was rabbi for 47 years.
- Q. 47 years, incredible really. And he really had not only an influence within B'rith Kodesh but within the community of Rochester at large.
- A. No, world. . . world influence.
- Q. World influence.
- A. Because during the war he was . . . he headed the Chaplaincy, the Jewish Chaplaincy, and spent a great deal of time in Europe and in the Far East. He was away for that period of about four years, and he had coming in weekends his uncle who lives in Syracuse; Rabbi Freedman, and then young students or first year graduates of the Hebrew Union College to replace him until he returned.
- Q. Here in Rochester?
- A. Yes.
- Q. He was also involved, I believe, in . . . I have it here. . .
- A. The rehabilitation. He was. . . we had a Torah at our . . . in our temple that was given to his son, Steve, who had the first Bar Mitzvah in Germany following the war. He was very active. He likes to tell. . . Rabbi Bernstein loves to tell about the generals, how they worked very closely to bring out the fourth of the Jews left in the Holocaust area.
- Q. And was he involved as well in . . . in the settlement of Jews coming to

- Q. (Continued) America? Was this part of his involvement? It may not have been.
- A. I don't recall that.
- Q. I thought I'd read something there. Now after the thirties and, of course, the forties, during the late forties and fifties, was there any notable changes within the composition of the B'rith Kodesh congregation?
- A. Yes. By this time the congregation had increased in size so that we had, for example, in the school double. . . double sessions we had so many children coming. Therefore, we had to move our services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to . . . we used to have two services. Then that was deemed unsatisfactory and we moved to Eastman Theatre for Rosh Hashanah.
- Q. Which is right around the corner.
- A. Across the street. And they would transport an arc to the stage for the service. And it was at that time they started to build the new temple building.
- Q. So the major change at this point was the increase in size?
- A. In size, yes. And we were getting. . . we were getting people who preferred Reform Judaism who were coming from the synagogues and some traces from Beth El. Also many people were coming into Rochester and. . .
- Q. And Rabbi Bernstein himself was a major figure?
- A. Figure who was. . .
- Q. Right.
- A. Right.
- Q. Now you mentioned something that's very curious to me. That today there is Eastern European. . . that the present congregation can trace their families to an Eastern European. . . ?
- A. I would say many of them. Many third or fourth generation.
- Q. OK. What I'm trying to separate out now is that it wasn't that Eastern



- Q. (Continued) European Jews who affiliated themselves with B'rith Kodesh, it was this change was in the families occurred through families and not through the immediate. . . if I'm making myself clear here. . .?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Because B'rith. . .
- A. It wasn't the first generation.
- Q. Right.
- A. Or the second generation, but it was now third and fourth generation.
- Q. After . . . after people had settled in Rochester and were American and identified themselves as American Jews and not as European Jews, except family. . . B'rith Kodesh had that ethnic composition of German Jewry in the beginning, but. . . but this changed.
- A. We might remember that in the period that we're talking about Beth El, the Conservative congregation, began. I would say it began around 1920, my guess is '20, '25. And they are. . . it is a larger congregation than B'rith Kodesh. So you also had a great many more people affiliated with this congregation now, people who in the old days might have gone to one of the little synagogues.
- Q. And these little synagogues, shuls, they've closed?
- A. There are some, but they're not as strong as they were.
- Q. Do you know when that change was happening? I mean, what year there was a decline in attendance?
- A. It started in the late thirties, early forties.
- Q. And the temples and synagogues became the center of Jewish religious life?
- A. There would be now a few Orthodox synagogues, small ones. . .

Interview II  
Tape 1  
Side A

- Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Miss Elizabeth Schwartz at her apartment. Today is June 11, 1976. This is Tape No. 2, Side A. Suppose we talk about your experience in education over the years. You mention that you've been involved the last 45 years in education, both secular and Jewish. Would you tell us broadly what changes you observed in that time period?
- A. My experience as a teacher in the Temple B'rith Kodesh School started in kindergarten classes, and I had the opportunity through the years covering all the elementary classes. In those days children attended school on Sunday, and we never thought in terms of anything but a Sunday school. Classes were about an hour and a half in session, and an assembly period for a half hour, assembly being a junior service type of thing. At that service there would be a hymn book and singing, responsive readings, and we always a kind of story or sermonette. It was an opportunity for the children to learn responses and the important hymns. In the classroom originally we had no textbooks, but rather leaflets. The youngsters would get a leaflet each week and compile those, a notebook kind of thing. We . . . in the lower grades we did a great deal with the Bible stories and told a kind of ethic lesson from the story. We would do a great deal of the holidays when they came. But over the years I have been able to see an enrichment in the class. The . . . many of the children today attend a mid-week or twice a week classes and then a weekend. Therefore, we no longer call it the Sunday school, but religious school. And we . . . we saw the introduction of Hebrew and in the early days none of the youngsters read Hebrew. They used transliteration instead. We now introduce Hebrew and a majority of the youngsters know how to read the

- A. (Continued) Hebrew and many of them are Bat Mitzvah and Bar Mitzvah. That's something that occurred probably twenty years ago, that's a guess at the time. But, the concentration also was on observance of holidays in a much deeper way than the superficial study in the past. We stress observance of the holidays, the Shabbat in the home. And I think it's a very much richer kind of experience.
- Q. When do you think this changed? The unification of Jewish learning as that occurred?
- A. Well, many. . . I think the experience in the forties, the war years and the post-war years, the Holocaust era, did things to all of us. The birth of the State of Israel in '48 added to the experience, and therefore the desirability of Hebrew and Hebrew learning was intensified. I think that as people went through those experiences they realized how important it was to know more about Judaism.
- Q. So you would isolate the forties as the period when the big change came? When there was more meeting. . .
- A. Well, in our temple I think the . . . the influence of Rabbi Bernstein was great. And his tendency, having come from an Orthodox home himself, his tendency was to enrich the service. And bring more meaning into it by bringing in and switching from Sunday morning service, by using the lighting of the candles in the temple, the kiddush, all these. And I think started before that period, but there was a gradual addition, but I think the real crunch came in the forties.
- Q. Was there anybody else besides Rabbi Bernstein that you recall?
- A. Very definitely. Ben Goldstein, Benjamin Goldstein, who was the Executive Secretary. And for many, many years the director of the religious school. A man of great personality, a man of deep religious and great conviction.

- A. (Continued) And who lived his Judaism.
- Q. This question comes really from my own experience in Hebrew school. I . . . I was not very satisfied really with my experience. In fact, we talked a bit before that I was more or less turned off to Judaism because of this experience. Have you felt that there were some problems, limitations, through the years that had to be recognized for this reason?
- A. I think that one of the very important things you should bear in mind is the fact that a major part of a child's religious education comes weekends. And frequently, too frequently, the youngster is brought to the religious school by a parent or in a car pool, dropped off. The adult goes on in wintertime to bowling or some other relaxation, and therefore the child has not had a very good introduction. But, I think also you find a correlation between the parent who is temple-oriented and the child's willingness to come to religious school as against that youngster who comes only because his parents feel a duty to have him go.
- Q. So the addition of a couple of days during the week seems to promote this kind of. . . ?
- A. I think. . . I think the more you know the better you like it, or . . .
- Q. Right.
- A. . . . could be dislike it.
- Q. So that over the years with the introduction of further times to meet, for example, do you think that has raised the child's interest in Jewish education? That it has in fact contributed to . . . ?
- A. I think I can say that because, for example, after confirmation for a long time we had almost no attendance of youngsters in the post-confirmation classes. Today those classes are larger. We have a very active youth group at our temple, originating in the religious school and then moving out. And it's a

A. (Continued) social group, but it's a very active one and I think the two tie together. So that it would seem, and I'm not active in the school right now, so I can't make the real comparison, but I would say it seems that more youngsters are more interested than the past.

Q. OK. I am holding right now in my hand the study entitled "The Jewish Education Study of Rochester, New York 1976," which you were Chairman, I believe.

A. Yes.

Q. Why was the study done?

A. The Federation, the Jewish Community Federation, authorized the study and paid for it. It was the belief of the Federation that a tremendous amount of energy was being expended in the community in the area of Jewish education, in the various congregations, plus the Jewish Community Center, plus things that the Federation is doing. The Bureau of Jewish Education is supported by the Federation funds. And in their desire to do long-term planning and to do the social planning they felt that we were due. We had not had a study for some years, and they felt that it was important to take another look at what's happening in Rochester. Were we getting our . . . were we getting the return for all the expenditure of effort and funds? And, therefore, this study was commissioned. We worked in seven different areas, and as the study indicates, we had task forces. We involved about 130 people in various committee activities. And over a period of a year and a half kept regular input and reaction. And right now we're at the stage where we're trying to implement the study.

Q. Are you still involved in that stage?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. Did the study . . . was that prompted by a sense of ineffectiveness in Jewish

- Q. (Continued) education here in Rochester?
- A. That would be a negative way. We knew that there were some very good things happening educationally in Rochester. We knew there were areas that needed improvement, and certainly areas that were lacking. So this was the attempt to do that.
- Q. You mention as well that the institutions in Rochester each had their own invested interest in education. That exists today in Jewish communities around the country. One criticism of that has been, I have heard, that there's been no consolidation or no effective singular way or approach so that one can organize. . . ?
- A. Now you're getting into a very delicate area. That's a very delicate area because there are those who would favor coordination and cooperation and joining together of resources for what could be considered a very much more effective kind of program. There are others with vested interest who fear that a Bureau of Jewish Education or a Federation could take over. And the fear would be that the influence of congregations would diminish. So that the implementation committee right now is finding that we must move very gently and with great understanding of the viewpoints of those two very different feelings.
- Q. How does the viewpoint of the Jewish Federation differ from say a congregational approach to education?
- A. From my experience I would say that the Federation looks at the problem . . . well, think of the umbrella picture, the overall view, the greatest good for the greatest number, whatever you wish to see. Whereas, each congregation thinks in terms of its investment in people, in time, in philosophy. Each . . . each has its own individual thinking and would like to keep. . . for example, would like to keep their youth in their own building because then they would

- A. (Continued) be coming back there with the identification, the pull of the home rather than a coordinated. . .
- Q. Where do you stand on this controversy?
- A. Having been a loyal member of B'rith Kodesh all my life, I see that my own congregational, personal involvement when I think in terms of, for example, a community high school, it seems to me that the youngsters would have a greater opportunity in the community high school than they would in an individual schools. First. Secondly, I see a very great need for people to know other people. For example, Reform Jewish boy to know the practices of the Orthodox and the other way around. And they don't get it by staying in their own individual congregations.
- Q. So that you see as a limitation in having education centers in congregations?
- A. That's one of the limitations, yes.
- Q. Are there any others?
- A. Well, that's the first. Too, the second is as I said if you have greater numbers you can get diversity of courses, you can get. . . you can choose the best of teaching faculty in each area and, therefore, everyone has the opportunity to meet the best.
- Q. Do you think it's a good movement for the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform to share their approaches to religion in education as well as. . .?
- A. I think it's very important. If we're going to. . . if we're going to work together for common goals, I think that a place like the Jewish Home & Infirmary for the elderly who no longer can be kept in the home, all Jews should be there and there should be accomodation for each's own philosophy, point of view.
- Q. I know that with the establishment of the . . . the Jewish Welfare Fund, in the thirties I believe, this was an effort to bring together the various

Q. (Continued) Jewish divisions at that point?

A. In my early days as a pupil in the religious school I knew boys and girls who came from the orphanage on Genesee Street, that was a Reform orphanage. Two years later when I was a teenager I discovered there was an orphanage on Gorham Street for Orthodox youngsters, and that was just the beginning of the Conservative movement so it didn't really count. Today, of course, we've eliminated orphanages, but there was that great diversity fifty years ago.

Q. Then. . .

A. And I would hate to see it continue. And it seems to me that the Jewish boys and girls should have, especially at the high school level where they're old enough to understand and appreciate differences, they ought to get that experience.

Q. Two major events in our century have really done more to bring Jews together than to separate. That has been the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. In connection with that, with the for example fund raising drive, United Jewish Appeal, to raise money and that the various factions within Judaism would contribute to one major cause, do you agree that this has been. . .?

A. Very definitely. In working on the UJA drives you get a diversity. It's great to see people with the very wealthy, poor, working together as team mates for a common purpose.

Q. It seems from what you're saying that the trend is such that perhaps one can foresee, perhaps you can foresee, elimination of these divisions. Perhaps this is a Nineteenth Century European phenomenon and that in American today, with the growing unification of the various divisions within Judaism, perhaps one day there won't be any reason for. . .?

A. I don't. . . I don't see that. No, I don't because I see a very . . . a group



- A. (Continued) of young people, young parents, who have become definite in their thinking patterns. People, young people, who are very Orthodox. Young people who are very Conservative or Reform. So that I think that separate ideologies are healthy because it's a kind of thinking that people are doing and they're not just taking by rote what was handed down from father to son. But what I would hope to be established was the fact that you may practice your Judaism in the way you want to and let me do it my way.
- Q. So you see divisions between areas where Judaism can be united and areas where they should remain separate?
- A. Mmm-hmm. Democrat, Republican, American. And the same in Judaism.
- Q. I see. We can come back to this. Let me ask a couple questions in relationship though to your experience in Rochester as a Jew. The establishment of the JY was a significant step to unify the community back in I think it was '28, 1929, the building of the JY itself.
- A. The first. . . the first JY was earlier than that. My Uncle Michael, my mother's younger brother, was I think one of the first officers. I think he was a secretary or some such. . . or was an early secretary if not the first. Uncle Michael. . .
- Q. Full name?
- A. Michael Morris. And Joe Goldstein's family, I think, in terms of those. . . I was a little girl and my Uncle Michael would go to the JY, which was then on Hyde Park, an area now demolished and close to where the main Post Office is today. The building you're referring to, the JYMA. . . JYM&WA, was built around 19. . . the early 1930's as I recall because I think they started it earlier and ran into difficulty around the Depression years, that they had to try to get. . . I remember hearing my brother-in-law talk about the 333 Club or some such. . . Men pledged \$333, why I don't know. But, that sticks in

- A. (Continued) the back of my head as part of the JY.
- Q. What was the earlier JY?
- A. It was a big old house, beautiful house set back quite a way. It was a beehive of activity. Now that was. . . I remember the place, and I remember going to it, but I don't remember taking part in it.
- Q. Do you remember its location?
- A. Yes, it was on Hyde Park.
- Q. Hyde Park. Did it have a particular . . . did it attract a particular segment of the Jewish community?
- A. Well, only as I remember it, now we thought Uncle Michael was top of the social order. He, at that time, was a bachelor, had a car with a running board, very important. He had a telephone in his home. These were things that I didn't enjoy in my home, but so Uncle Michael was a hero. I would hear him talk about the parties that they were going to have at the JY. That. . . that's my memory of it.
- Q. Were you affiliated in any way to the JY?
- A. Not until it transferred to the other building.
- Q. And what was that relationship? Were you. . . how were you involved?
- A. I never did go to the gym classes. I belonged to a group that met at the JY, our Hadassah meetings were held at the JY very frequently. That was my only contact. I really didn't spend very much time there.
- Q. It was, was it not, a big event though within the community to have this location?
- A. Oh, yes. People used it hard for gym classes, for swimming, for socializing. They had a library. We had a beautiful auditorium and a very active drama group. They would have a speaker, concerts. They had a very full, rich program. Tobias Roth was the director for a long time, he was also a member

- A. (Continued) of our congregation. Very. . . and a rather strong director as I recall.
- Q. I believe that the building itself was finally completed in the mid-thirties, after the. . .the low point of the Depression. That included, I think, the Christian community as well. It was . . . it involved leaders. . .
- A. Always because it was a . . . an affiliate or was received funds from the Community Chest there. . . they had to be open for all. Now they did have not apartments, but they did have rooms in the upper floors where people lived.
- Q. There was close enough connection between the JY and the . . .
- A. YMCA for example.
- Q. . . . the YMCA only because of the nomenclature. You have JYM. . .
- A. By the way, I'm not qualified to answer because I don't know the relationship.
- Q. OK. Let me ask you now about the organization of Hillel at Geneseo. I think we were talking a bit about this. Were you connected with. . .?
- A. I was on. . . I was on one of the committees in connection with the Hillel Foundation, and we worked with Rabbi Joe Levine. Geneseo was just a small part, it was one of the. . . He visited the campus at Brockport, Geneseo, R.I.T., Community College in Rochester, and University of Rochester, those were the five. And Geneseo was a part of it. One night I did go to Geneseo, if you're referring to an experience I had there. When we had. . . we went out to an interfaith dinner. Once a year the . . . I don't know what the exact organization is, student organization, has an interfaith common meal. And the year prior an Arab had been the spokesman. The year that we were invited the representative from the Consulate in New York was to be the speaker. And it was very dramatic. We went out because we were concerned that there was a core of pro-Arab sympathizers. And the feeling in

- A. (Continued) Rochester seemed to reveal that the students were not as comfortable, the Jewish students were not as comfortable as they could have been. Geneseo is a small town in a rural area and many of the students were coming from New York and could feel quite isolated. So Rabbi Levine and Rabbi Levin tried to get out to Geneseo as frequently as they could. And we saw real strong feeling that night when Professor Small and his wife, at the quiet time when the speaker was to be introduced by the rabbi, the professor and his wife walked from the back all across the hall, the front, past the speakers table, and then turned and walked all the way down the aisle and walked out. It was a shocking demonstration of pro-thinking no matter what faction. And dramatized to all of us the need for a Hillel Foundation in the towns like Geneseo.
- Q. Do you recall the response, the initial response of both the Jewish and non-Jewish?
- A. Dead silence. Dead silence. I think it spoke louder than any words.
- Q. Was. . .
- A. I never personally heard of any student reaction. I don't know whether Rabbi Levine did get some reaction.
- Q. And what was your response?
- A. My. . . my own feeling was that we better do more and more and more so that when we came home we were very sure to let the people at the Federation know that Hillel Foundation was very important.
- Q. And the importance of Hillel. . .
- A. Was. . . was demonstrated by what we did in the community. Rochester was one of the first to sponsor so heavily, Federation sponsor financially, the Hillel Foundation.

- Q. And your objective was prompted by this incident, and you were attempting to help organize. . .?
- A. Well, I only did a very small part. I had. . . I was a member of the committee really, and when I worked on Allocations, for example, could remember and that was. . . so it was like that. We've never forgotten it, and in fact have tried to stress the need for more activity on campuses.
- Q. For. . .for Jews?
- A. Mmm-hmm.
- Q. What was the response do you recall of the Jewish community?
- A. The Jewish community, I feel, has been great in that area because the. . . when you think in terms of the University of Rochester's history, in 1931 my own. . . no in 1927 my own brother was refused admittance to the University of Rochester because of the quota. The following year he was admitted as a second year. . . as a sophomore and graduated in 1931. He was the first class to graduate on the River Campus. So,. . . and today the University has in the area of 48 to 50% Jewish students so that we now see a great difference in University. We have a Chair for Jewish Studies named after Rabbi Bernstein, which makes me very happy and proud. And we see an acceptance of Jews on campuses, tremendous number of faculty, I believe, are. . . I know half a dozen that I could name right fast.
- Q. Do you recall anything more about the time at the University of Rochester when this quota was enforced? And why that was changing?
- A. No. At that time I. . . I wouldn't know. I was going to classes at the University at that time. I started in 1928 in what they called extension, going after school or evenings or Saturdays, summers. And that's the way I earned my degree. There was no. . . no strings attached to enrollment in that area. But, my brother did see that. But I can't tell you any details.

Q. Did your brother talk about this at all?

A. No. We knew that he couldn't get in. He went to Syracuse for a year. There was no question in his sophomore year. Lou was very happy there. My brother Donald graduated in '36 from the University. And both boys were very happy on campus. They had friends, Jewish friends. There was a fraternity, Kappa Nu was the title then. Now it's SAM I guess. But the talk was quota. I can't tell you the details.

Q. OK. Let me ask you about your experiences in secular education. And I'll start with the other end with probably the turbulent sixties. A number of changes in education were. . . were going on at that time, specifically there was bussing of children. And you, as. . . well, you were not principal or were you?

A. I was a principal.

Q. As a principal of a school were, of course, very much involved in this change in education?

A. We were almost you might call it a target school. That's not a fair word to use, but I went to No. 39 School at the north end of the city near Norton and Portland Avenue in 1958. The riots occurred in 1963. And our community, 39 School community, was basically Italian. There were always in that community for years. . . for many, many years always a very tiny core of blacks who lived in the area off Waring Road. They were always there. When I. . . in 1958 I met grandchildren of the original black parents. So we had a few Negro children. We had a handful, maybe five families, of Jews. The largest ethnic group was Italian. The community. . . there was a large school. When I went there in 1958 we had 1100 pupils, but the population had reduced because many of these families moved to the suburbs. This was the school right close to the city line. And they moved to the suburbs and

A. (Continued) we had many vacant rooms. So when after the riots the Board of Education decided to try integration, our school had the space and was an outlying school, and therefore they chose to send the children. We received about 140 children in the initial drive. Approximately 25% of all the children who were transferred came to us. They came from No. 9 School and No. 6 School. No. 9 School was an upper grade school at corner of Baden and Joseph Avenue. And No. 6 School was a primary school in the same area, a related school, at the corner of Hudson and Firmament Street. This was the initial area for blacks. Now the greater number live in the southwest area. But this northeast area was the original Jewish area and now very heavy black community. The children came to us by bus. And that first morning I shall never forget, February, 1964. Newspapers had said that we were to receive the largest number. And I was in school at seven o'clock in the morning, but I didn't beat the television crews, they were there ahead of me. And we didn't know what to expect on the outside, but we were highly prepared. We spent a great deal of time, we the faculty, planning our reception of these children. And things were. . . because of the total planning the faculty did, things worked like clockwork. The youngsters came in and in very short order were dispersed to their classroom. And the teachers had all been prepared. The children were prepared to receive them, and things moved smoothly. Mrs. Julie Levin. . . tonight in the newspaper Mildred Johnson's picture is on the front page. She had hoped to run for the President of FIGHT. And Mildred Johnson's son, Philip, was in that original assignment. He was a kindergarten child. And the big crew came in the morning by busses. Philip was in the group that came in the afternoon, about seven or eight kindergarten children, and they came in a mini-bus. But before the mini-bus arrived a group of six black women appeared. I was to learn that Mildred Johnson was one, a tall,

A. (Continued) strong, very vocal woman. She came bustling into the office and wanted to know what we were going to do to receive the children. And we suggested that she stand by and see. And she followed right along with the youngsters to the classroom, visited, and this was on a Monday morning. Tuesday night we had a PTA meeting, and Mrs. Johnson was right there. And she spoke right out, and we were very proud of the fact that our PTA sent letters to all these parents inviting them to the meeting. And they came. It was a very interesting, exciting experience because it was not only the involvement with busses, with receiving children into classrooms when all of a sudden in the middle of the year seven or eight youngsters descend into. . . are dropped into a classroom. They. . . it isn't like one coming in, and you receive the one and try to help that child adjust to the program. When you have seven or eight come in, and the difference in preparation for, in adjustment to meeting the experiences, differences of experiences is great. And then, too, these youngsters had always gone home for lunch and now they had to stay for lunch. There was a lunchroom problem. It was wintertime, they couldn't go outdoors to play. Inactivity. It was a very real experience. It was a very tense time. It required. . . there were teachers who could adjust to this. There were teachers who had grave problems. They did not know the black children. They, in some cases, were afraid. In some cases they were over-sympathetic. It was a real learning experience for all of us.

Q. You mentioned that there was some tension. How did that manifest itself? Was it children themselves unsure?

A. I. . . I'm sure that the youngsters. . . yes, there was a grave trouble in the City of Rochester preceding this. This was known as open enrollment. The boys and girls in the contributing schools, nine and six, had the opportunity and the privilege of transferring. They could stay in their



A. (Continued) own schools or they could go on open enrollment. This was a choice the parent had to make. They didn't know where they were coming. They didn't know what was going to happen. Before that Rochester had tried something different. We had a crowded condition at School 3, which is off South Plymouth Avenue. And a new School 30 on Otis Street. Otis. . .

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (Interview II)

Interview II  
Tape 1  
Side B

- Q. This is Dennis Klein. We're talking with Miss Elizabeth Schwartz. This is Tape No. 2, Side B. Would you continue with this fascinating story?
- A. School 3 was overcrowded; School 30 was a brand new school and had space. And so the administrative staff decided to have a transfer program between 3 and 30. And there was great resistance on the part of the local community around School 30. And it was a nasty episode. There were headlines in the newspapers, much talking, much antagonism. So that I think that we were all afraid a few months later when this transfer was about to come to how the children would be received, how they would blend, how the black children would feel coming into us, how our children would react to them.
- Q. Do you, yourself, believe in bussing as a principle?
- A. I believe in it very strongly. I was active in it. I think now that there are other ways. I see now the need. . . today Rochester's non-white enrollment is a half percent more than half. In other words it's 50.5% non-white and 49.5% white. Therefore, I see the real need to improve the . . . the schools. I always did believe in a neighborhood school. I thought while we were in it, I believed in it heartily and worked very hard to make it work because I felt that it was good. I believed in it thoroughly. But today, having a perspective, I think that we ought to be concentrating on greater quality. There . . . in the fifteen. . . in the twenty years. . .no, fifteen years . . . oh, my arithmetic is bad, eleven years, since open enrollment we haven't. . . the opportunity to identify with important blacks who have made it. In this morning's paper there was a picture of Bernard Gifford who was in Rochester, and certainly reached close to the top. And I think that you turn the TV on,

- A. (Continued) the children can see blacks who have made it, so that the images that we thought they had to see, they see now. And I don't think it's as important to integrate as it is to give them quality education.
- Q. That seems to be reflecting the mood of the country, both in the white and black communities. It's very interesting that this change has occurred in such a short period of time. Do you think that the riots in the country as well as in Rochester affected your thinking on the change from integration to the emphasis on quality?
- A. We found those riots very difficult to take. It was a real shocker to all of us who had lived in Rochester all our lives. And I don't think I still comprehend the reason, except for the . . . the mob psychology that could have produced that. Because it's true that living conditions were bad, working conditions may not have been good. I worked at No. 9 School where we had . . . in the same area, on the same street, where the riots were at their height, where . . . where they started. I worked at No. 9 School in 1946 for one year. And I know it was an old, old building, but it was clean, it was well cared for. Mr. MacNeil was the . . . one of the best administrators Rochester has ever known. He had what he thought was a good staff. They worked hard; they were concerned and considerate of the children. I would say that the children in that school were as well provided for as in 16 School where I went immediately following, which at that time was the elite school on the west side, 100% white. Completely different clientele, completely different approach. The needs were different, and therefore the teachers reacted differently. But, for that reason I couldn't understand the riots.
- Q. What was your reaction, your immediate reaction, when they broke out in 1964?
- A. Horrified. Horrified. How could it happen?
- Q. And shock? You mentioned that Mrs. Mildred Johnson was involved in the FIGHT

Q. (Continued) organization.

A. Yes.

Q. Did you gain insights from her or from people involved in FIGHT?

A. Mrs. Johnson and I were very good friends. And I always felt that if I needed help at any time I could always turn to her. In fact, when a problem did arise I didn't hesitate to call. She came frequently. She came of her own accord, you could always call on her. Her son went all through our school while I was there. And she is a woman who has dedicated herself to social work. She has worked with, as she calls them, my boys, mostly graduates of Attica or Elmira. Boys who were. . . had difficulty, and she has done a magnificent job with them. Virginia Wilson Foundation, I think it's called, is named after her mother.

Q. Do you have any recollection. . . recollection of Sol Alinsky and his. . . ?

A. Yes, very definitely. He was the man who helped organize FIGHT. And Minister Florence was the first President of FIGHT. I suppose in retrospect it's what we needed, but we found it very hard to take. Sol Alinsky was abrasive; he was hard; he was, we felt, unfair to Eastman Kodak because he attacked Eastman Kodak so. There was a company that had done so well by its employees and nothing ever had to have a union, still do not. And yet he made them a national topic for talk. Minister Florence sent his children on open enrollment, and I was very grateful that they went to 38 School instead of 39 School. I could take Mildred Johnson readily, but I didn't know how I would take Minister Florence. As I say, maybe it's what the city needed, but I felt and still feel that the blacks could have achieved much more with a gentler approach.

Q. I know that one of those approaches was the Baden Street Settlement, that they've always encouraged social services in what is now the black community,

Q. (Continued) the Joseph Avenue area.

A. The Baden Street Settlement was there a long time before any blacks were visible in Rochester. Baden Street Settlement was a very important place right in the heart of the Jewish community. I did not know it because we . . . we didn't patronize the area, but today it's a real health center and it's done a magnificent job as I understand it.

Q. I was referring to that settlement in the sixties, which . . . and, of course, exists today.

A. I don't remember that the Baden Street Settlement played a big part at that time.

Q. There was some involvement.

A. Could be, but I'm not aware of it.

Q. OK. So that your reaction to FIGHT then, you found, was important in its contributing to a political voice for the blacks, but it was just very difficult time for everybody?

A. Yea, as their name signifies, they felt that in order to get where they wanted to go they had to fight their way.

Q. During the '64 riots a number of Jewish stores were . . . and Jewish proprietors were attacked.

A. That's right.

Q. Also, I believe, the director of the Baden Street Settlement at the time, his name was Lindenberg, the name . . . are you familiar with . . . ?

A. Yes. I remember the name.

Q. Do you think there was an element of anti-Jewish sentiment expressed by the blacks as part of this riot?

A. I would say that the fact that there were stores up and down the street, Joseph Avenue, that were Jewish and those were looted, windows broken, really

- A. (Continued) in some cases destroyed, could be . . . it could be said that that was anti-Semitic. But we had the same thing over in the Clarissa Street area on the west side. They destroyed, and I know one or two Jewish establishments over there, but I don't remember that they were injured or attacked particularly. So from that point of view I would say it wasn't exactly anti-Semitic. I think it was . . . now for example Mildred Johnson took a bull horn and went up and down the street appealing over the loud horn for people to stop destroying. I think it was just one of those things that built up the mob idea, and it built up. And I don't think at that point that there was this kind of thinking. There could have been, but I am not aware of it.
- Q. Mr. Lindenberg served as director, as I said, of the settlement. But, stepped down shortly after the riots. Do you have any reaction to that?
- A. No. I didn't know Mr. Lindenberg at all. I knew him as a name, but I had no contact with him and I wouldn't know whether he left because he was feeling antagonism. I don't know whether people associated his position with his name, that is the fact that he was Jewish. I can't answer that.
- Q. It seems that the attack on Jewish stores in the Joseph Avenue area perhaps was merely an anti-white reaction rather than anti-Jewish?
- A. I would. . . that's what I would say because you had the same kind of activity in the non-Jewish area. They didn't attack homes. They didn't attack synagogues. It was the stores up and down the street.
- Q. While we're on that subject, are you familiar with the . . . the Schaeffer Market incident of a couple years ago?
- A. Yes. You mean the man who was blinded?
- Q. Yes. He was Jewish, and I believe that he was blinded by a black.
- A. Right.

Q. Do you think there was. . . well, what was first of all your recollection of this incident? I don't myself know much about this.

A. I don't remember the details. I think the man was in the store and was accosted by a young black who was out to steal. And my understanding is that he resisted, therefore was struck and unfortunately blinded. He. . . but I. . . I think people put interpretations on the incident. But, I think it was an incident. I think he was attacked because somebody was out to steal rather than attacked because he was Jewish.

Q. Were those interpretations anti-Semitism? Was that. . . was that. . . ?

A. Some people attached that to it. Some people did put that interpretation on it, but I'm not aware that that was the prevailing attachment.

Q. Did the newspapers. . . ?

A. As I recall it that was . . . that was put in, but . . . the paper, but I don't think it was highlighted.

Q. The connection with this, I also believe very recently there were . . . well, within the last five years, some synagogues in the Rochester area that were . . .

A. Bombed.

Q. . . . bombed?

A. That's right. Beth Shalom on Monroe Avenue was one, and I believe the synagogue on Norton Street was. And just very recently there was a trial of a gang of gangsters admitted, I believe, that this was part of a plan that they had. I don't know whether it was anti-Semitic or not. Out in Henrietta one of the temples was bombed. And there was great worry that there was a movement, an anti-Semitic movement. There was a great deal of thinking about that, but it died down and now it looks as though it was part of a gangster plan.

- Q. What was your immediate response to the theory of the bombing?
- A. We were all horrified and very worried. I know that in our own temple they turned lights on on the outside of the building. We still have them on the outside. Whenever we were having a big affair we'd have police protection for just a little while. There was real concern.
- Q. Were you concerned that there perhaps was a wave of anti-Semitism in the area?
- A. We were worried about it. I don't know. . . I think everyone had a right to be worried, but it wasn't only. . . There were some churches that were hit. There were some homes that were hit.
- Q. Do you did not really take any steps to . . . ?
- A. Only for protection and to watch and be concerned. The police worked very hard to try to find the culprits.
- Q. So that we've been talking about a series of incidences, even going back to I suppose we can include the quota system at the U. of R. in the same kind of context as what had happened at Geneseo, and the occurrences of the '64 riots, and the Schaeffer Market incident, and the synagogue bombings. And despite all of this, your feeling is that in none of these instances did it anti-Semitism play an important role?
- A. Well, you know, as we enumerate these things it sounds as though we had much to worry about, and yet I think at the outset I think I told you that as a person I had not known personally any anti-Semitism. That I feel very comfortable, I'm using the present tense, I feel very comfortable in Rochester, in circles wherever I go. So that it's almost a contradiction, and yet I think that these are episodes enough to make us wary and, I think, it's important to be aware. . . to be aware of, to analyze, and yet you know if it were another faith, the Catholics could. . . could look to various incidents. Just think what the. . . what the newspapers and the TV did to



- A. (Continued) the episode at Our Lady of Lourdes Convent just a short while ago. They could say it's anti-Catholic in the same way.
- Q. OK. Let me ask a series of questions in a more positive sense. You . . . you had mentioned earlier that you belong to a group called the Moriyah. . .
- A. Moriyah.
- Q. Moriyah. Thank you. And . . .
- A. It's a Hebrew word. I can't give you the exact derivation but we always called it the teacher.
- Q. This is a Jewish. . .?
- A. It was a Jewish group and that was . . . that was in existence when I started to teach in 1925. It disintegrated about fifteen years later.
- Q. You were active in this group?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You also were active in Hadassah? When did that begin?
- A. Oh, I don't remember when I joined. It was Junior Hadassah in those days, and I was active in that group. Oh, and it was also Business and Professional Hadassah. And . . . and then for a long period of time I retained membership but was not active.
- Q. And you mentioned that you belong to these groups because primarily because of sociability, that you wanted to have this contact with. . . with other people?
- A. Not only other people, but other Jewish people. And with Hadassah, of course, we knew the good work it was doing and it was very important.
- Q. Why Jewish people? This is a point I wanted to clarify from the first tape.
- A. Because I was working in a school where I was the only Jewish person, and I always had a strong feeling for things Jewish, I guess. And therefore, despite the fact that I belonged to other organizations I have always retained my high

- A. (Continued) school friends, non-Jewish, normal school professional friends. I've always retained them, and we're very close to this day. Yet, there was always that pull toward my own kind, too.
- Q. I'm very interested in if you can tell us what was the nature of that pull? What was it really that can be defined that . . . because you've been involved so actively in this non-Jewish, as well as Jewish, affairs, and yet there was as you had just mentioned this pull to Jewish groups?
- A. I don't know. It's a subtle kind. I feel comfortable when I go with my friends at Delta Kappa Gamma for example. When I went out to Geneseo last week with professional . . . former colleagues in the schools, just I feel . . . I feel just as comfortable with them as I do the group I play bridge with today, Jewish group. Yet, they're . . . there was something that made me want always to have friends of my own kind.
- Q. The Hadassah or Junior Hadassah group was Zionist, was it not?
- A. Mmm-hmm.
- Q. Was this part of your attraction to, as well as Young Judea. . .?
- A. No, I don't think so. For example, I just paid dues to the Zionist Organization of America this year. And yet as Rabbi Miller said the other day Hadassah members are Zionists, of course. And but . . . that was not the motivating force. I think I've always been aware of the needs of Jews and that was the pull rather than the Zionist.
- Q. By Zionism you mean Israel?
- A. A loyalty to Israel.
- Q. When you first became active in Zionism, this goes back. . .
- A. A few years.
- Q. Yes, a few years. During the war was it, the first war? Or perhaps even before?

- A. Well, I belonged to a Young Judea group and Hadassah, those would be working groups that had a purpose. And I think that really when I started doing UJA work for the Teachers Division in Rochester I really started to concentrate on the needs of our people.
- Q. The . . . of Israel?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Of Israel. The reason that I go back to this point once again is to clarify that Zionism did mean to many people in the early years, the early part of the Twentieth Century, not the land itself, not Israel, but just what you're talking about, the sense of other Jews.
- A. That's right. And that's what it meant to me.
- Q. And that's what it meant to you. So that you were really in that sense an active Zionist? Not in the sense that we know of Zionism today. . .
- A. That's right.
- Q. . . which is Israel? So that you were conscious of your affiliation with Zionism in this sense?
- A. That's. . .
- Q. Specifically the Zionist. . .
- A. Mmm-hmm.
- Q. When did you become involved in the UJA and. . . and your thoughts about Israel became more intensified?
- A. I would say when I started to work on the UJA drive when the Federation began the Teachers Division. I think I was one of the first workers in the group and chaired the committee for a long time. I still am associated with that branch despite the fact that since retirement I am now a part of the Women's Division.
- Q. And you have been in Israel before yourself?

A. Yes, I'm going on July first for my fourth trip. I went to Israel first in '63, and then in '69, so that I had. . . I have a great advantage of having been there when staying at the King David Hotel in 1963 we were forbidden to walk beyond even out onto the porch because the barbed wire division went through their backyard. In 1974 we swam in the pool where the barbed wire was strung previously. In '69 we went with the American Jewish Congress, and they put us up at the Intercontinental Hotel, which is in the old part of the city where the verboten part in '63. So that I've seen changes, marked changes in Israel, very exciting. Have you been?

Q. I have, yes. Would you ever live in Israel?

A. No. I have great fondness for it, a great love and work hard for it and hope that it will prosper and increase. But, America is my home.

Q. Let me ask you this question if I may. If the State of Israel, and the "if" is historically rooted, were threatened, its existence, today and was in clear danger, what would your response be to this? How do you think you would respond?

A. The way I did in '73 and the way I tried to do. . . I would do as much as I know how financially. I have all through the years tried with my non-Jewish friends to get them to understand what Israel is and what Israel achieves. For example, I've talked to groups many, many times, showed pictures. And on my way out to Geneseo with that group the other day we talked a long time about why I was going back to Israel for the fourth time. This, I think, is very important, and I try to do it repeatedly. Get people to understand better what Israel is, that we can be loyal to Israel and yet be very loyal Americans.

Q. Well, let me ask then, what is Israel? What does it represent?

A. A place for those who need it. It's. . . to me, it's identification for

- A. (Continued) people who have been rejected, driven out of various countries, whether it be South America or Europe, for them to have the opportunities that we enjoy here. So that in one sense it is a haven, secondly I feel that because Israel exists life is easier for Jews in America.
- Q. Would you elaborate on that point?
- A. We can look to Israel as the homeland of Jews, and therefore we are established and recognized.
- Q. Are you implying that in the case of hardship for Jews in America there is this place Jews can go to?
- A. I never thought to that extent. I would...I cannot see at this time that Jews would need to seek. . . American Jews would need to seek refuge in Israel.
- Q. But you do see a relationship between American Jews and Israel?
- A. Yes. For example, there are Rochesterians who are now living in Israel, happy and very glad they made the change. For them that was good. It would not be for me.
- Q. But the American Jewish contribution to Israel has been extraordinarily significant. And it seems as if there has been a sense of responsibility by American Jews for the State of Israel. Would you say that this responsibility is for the. . . on the one hand, true. That there is the responsibility, a sense of responsibility. And why Americans would feel the responsibility in that we have not had a threat to our existence as Jews here at home?
- A. As a solicitor for the UJA I can tell you that people who give token contributions to the Community Chest, for example, who are not generous with their temples, give tremendously to the UJA. And I think that that comes from a feeling of need and maybe. . . maybe in some cases a feeling of gratitude that they're safe.
- Q. Is that your feeling?

A. In part. In part.

Q. OK. Well, I want to thank you very much for this interview.

A. Sure, we sure covered the waterfront.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B (Interview II)