

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

Interviewee Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum

Interviewer Tina Isaacs

Date(s) of interview 6/14/76; 6/22/76; 6/28/76

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

All three interviews took place in Cantor Rosenbaum's office, no one else was present. The second interview lasted only forty-five minutes due to a prior commitment on the Cantor's part, so a third interview was necessary. Cantor Rosenbaum was a friendly and helpful interviewee, especially interesting because he is not a native Rochesterian, and is therefore less chauvanistic about the city.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Samuel Rosenbaum is the cantor at Temple Beth-El, a Conservative synagogue. He is the ex-Vice-President of the Cantor's Assembly of America. He has lived in Rochester since 1946 and is an acute observer of the cultural scene here.

Interview abstract

A very productive set of interviews. All topics were discussed in detail. Of special interest would be the discussions on the changes Temple Beth-El has undergone, Rochester's status as a cultural community, intermarriage, and the JY/JCC project.

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social history	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jewish community
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Interview log

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

--see following page(s) --

Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum: Interview Log

Tape I Side A

Background

Born N.Y.C. 1919; parents Russian
Hebrew education : 5 days per week
Hebrew High School
Attended N.Y.U.
Violin and music lessons
Plans to be a doctor
Language at home: Yiddish
Choir singer

**Cantorate

Studying: 3 years

*Medical School rejection

Anti-semitism
Quota system

*Anti-Semitism

Zionism

*Jewish Home Life

Women's work roles

***Children

Education
Upbringing--permissiveness
Values

Contemporaries damage children through Spockian permissiveness

***Rochester: Changes in religion'

Empirically less religious
People go to synagogue less often
Synagogue attending community
Rochester as atypical in its religiousness
Leadership

Army's influence in making men more religious

**Beth-El

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*Auditorium on Winton Road

*Park Ave. area; Why did people leave?
sense of community

**Affluence of membership

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different class of people now; professional and managerial
numbers of membership

Tape I Side B

***Changes in Beth-El

pre-1946 Henry Fischer
Rosenberg
Popularity of services
Innovations in services
Karp

*Leadership vs. participation

**Solomon

daily service

***B'rith Kodesh

*Bernstein
recapturing tradition
Temple Sinai

*Controversy over Rabbi Miller

Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum: Interview Log cont.

- lack of sensitivity
- *Reform/Conservative/Orthodox friction
- Eastern European Jewish/German Jewish friction
- Zionism--Bernstein--loyalty to Israel
- ***Bernstein
 - Defender of just causes
 - Zionist Action Emergency Committee
 - *1946 UJWF campaign opening
- Riots
- Joseph Ave.
- Cohen's Restaurant
- **Riots
 - personal experiences
 - Causes-- anti-Semitism?
- Anti-Semitism in Rochester
 - Letter to the Editor in D&C 1976
- Quota system at U of R
 - 1946-1956 no communication between "town and gown"
 - Hillel on campus
 - Rabbi Levine

Tape II Side A

- Political/Civic Organizations
- **Differences between the local Democrats and Republicans
 - City management
 - *Voter registration
 - Patronage
 - Attitudes towards the Jewish Community
 - Horton and Keeting (75)
 - Anti-Semitic political occurrences
- Changes in the Jewish Community
 - Leadership
 - *Coming of corporations instead of family businesses
 - *Germinow (130)
 - Small town ambiance
- **Old Temple Beth-El
 - Nostalgia
 - *Fire
 - *Sisterhood Meetings
- Baden Street
- Friends of the Library; Art Gallery; Philharmonic; ACLU
- ***Rochester as a Cultural community
 - Art Gallery
 - *Philharmonic
 - Jewish participation
 - *Walsh editorial in D&C : Anti-Semitic Program
 - Corporation participation
- Theatre
- Media
 - D&C
 - *Local TV News
- Cultural education
 - Board of Ed. cuts
- Hebrew School teaching of Jewish Culture

Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum: Interview Log cont.

Museum and Art Gallery, Channel xxi: trying to bring in
Jewish programs
*Eastman House Shows

Tape II Side B

Community Relations between Jews and Gentiles
Jewish participation in secular activities
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Jacob Hollander (32)
Jewish community as a closed community
***Intermarriage
Product of an open society
Going away to school
Children of mixed marriages
**Parents of younger generation--home environment
Reversal of trend
*Hillel School
***Intermarriage
Statistics
**Marriage ceremony--temple policy
attitudes of the clergy
Rochester's rate of intermarriage
***JY/JCC
Philosophy
*Anti-professionalism
*Changes
Open to entire community
Ghetto concept
Impetus behind building the JCC
Possibility of branches
Jewish Organizations: Federation, Zionist Orgs., Haddassah,
Council of Jewish Women, ORT
Changes in the Federation
Attracts the young
Israel mindedness of the Rochester community
Changes
Bernstein (572)
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UN: changes of opinion

Interview I
Tape I
Side A

- Q. This is Tina Isaacs interviewing Mr. Samuel Rosenbaum. It's Monday, June the 14th and I'm in Mr. Rosenbaum's office. Mr. Rosenbaum could you please tell me a little bit about yourself? Where you were born and your, sort of, childhood experiences?
- A. I was born in New York City in 1919. The only child of Isodore and Bertha Rosenbaum who emigrated to this country in 1913 and 1914 from the Ukraine, Russia. They were married in 1918. My father was a grocer and remained in that business until he retired some . . . some eight years ago. His retirement did not last very long, lived for six months after his retirement, died. My mother died in 1951 at a very young age. My education was a public school education plus a Talmud Torah education. Went to what is commonly known now as Hebrew school five days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday. Each time for approximately two hours. I went to a large Hebrew school, probably the largest in those days, 1800 pupils. School was the Hebrew School of Williamsburg. Williamsburg was then a very fine middle-class Jewish community. After graduating from their school, I went on to a high school sponsored by the Bureau of Jewish Education in New York City at the time. And that high school since it involved religious schools from all the burroughs met in various places during the week. That is, you might be one day in Brooklyn and one day in Manhattan and another day somewhere else. As a result it became rather difficult to . . . to continue because it meant a great deal of time riding back and forth. Those were the days before mothers chauffeured kids to school. I transferred then to the Herselia Hebrew High School, which was then on East Broadway in Manhattan, next to the Daily Forward

A. (Continued) building. And studied there for three years. I graduated but that coincided with my entrance into New York University. So my formal Jewish education stopped at that point. The Herselia Hebrew High School still continues in various forms and is a very fine school and was, I have a suspicion, an even finer one although I probably didn't appreciate it when I attended it. We went for three hours three times a week and to get there I had to walk to Williamsburg Bridge from my home and then take a trolley over Williamsburg Bridge and walk from the Williamsburg Bridge to East Broadway in order to get to the school. With the result that sometimes the entire operation took some five hours, which didn't leave me much time for anything else. Alongside of that I played the violin from the time I was five until it was determined that I would not be Yasha Haifitz, about 11. It was about at that time that it was discovered that I had some vocal ability as a youngster and through the efforts of the Hebrew School's music teacher, who was a man named David Perney, who prepared me to lead Sabbath services in the large junior congregation. And I did that and became rather successful at it. I was urged to become a boy cantor, making the circuit of adult synagogues. But, my family was very much opposed to this. They felt that if I wanted to do it for the Hebrew school that was all right, but that they weren't interested in my making that a profession. My parents and I both were convinced that I would be a doctor like one of my uncles. And as a result all the other things were nice but they weren't my major concern at the time. At the age of 12 somebody sent my name into a Yiddish radio program that featured young performers, most of whom had egos bigger than their skills. But nevertheless, I met a number of people who became lifelong friends of mine as a result of that two years experience, singing on the radio every Sunday. I also developed a rather extensive repertoire of Yiddish and Hebrew and cantorial material, which stood

A. (Continued) me in somewhat good stead. Language in my home in the early days was Yiddish, both my parents spoke Yiddish. Although my father and mother did speak English to some degree, that wore much more so as we all grew older. But the Yiddish was enforced by the arrival in my fifth year, in my sixth year and in my seventh year of other immigrant members of my family who came to live with us until they could go out on their own or until they got married. One time we had my mother's sister and brother and my father's sister living with us. And since they only spoke Yiddish, the Yiddish was strongly re-inforced and I'm very grateful for that up to this time. Books were a very important part of my family life, even though my father worked a great deal. In those days grocery business started at six o'clock in the morning and lasted until 10 o'clock at night. The only time off was the Sabbath. My father closed his store at sunset on Friday night, didn't open it until after sunset on Saturday night. My father read to me a great deal. Mostly in Yiddish. I remember that I learned most of the Sholom Aleyhem from my father who enjoyed Sholom Aleyhem and enjoyed reading. We studied a little together, but he didn't have too much time for that. Besides he felt that the Hebrew school education was a very good one, and indeed it was as I look back on it. And he was content that I was getting enough formal education there. On the high holidays we went to a large synagogue in our community where my father was a member of the Board. And with his modest means a strong supporter of the synagogue. I never sang in choirs as many cantors did when they were young except on one occasion when the great Cantor Pincher came to the United States. One of the first positions he accepted was in our synagogue. And my mother committed me to join the choir since I would be able to live at home, wouldn't have to go away. And so I did sing in the choir as the alto-soloist with Pincher. In later life I was a cantor I again met Pincher and we resumed

A. (Continued) our friendship, which was very strong until he died a couple years ago. I think that that's probably all of my younger days that you're interested in. I studied for the cantorate with a famous cantor who was also known as pedagogue in those days there were no schools for cantors. You had to study master to pupil, master to pupil. His name was Jacob Byemel and he'd held an important position in Philadelphia for some 25 years. And practically lost his voice and had gone into teaching primarily. He was a very great Jewish scholar and a fine musical scholar. Had originally come from Denmark where he had conducted the orchestra and was a generally all well-rounded, well-qualified musician. He was a composer of some note in the Schumann / Schubert style, but very authentic Jewishly. And was one of the few teachers of cantors at the time that insisted on explaining the theory of the cantorial art and not just giving out sheets of music for people to learn and go ahead and sing. So in a sense I had the kind of education that students at cantorial schools are getting now, not necessarily in the same formal manner, but I managed to . . . to learn most of the things students have today, including repertoire. Most of my colleagues who studied as I did came out with one . . . one service so to speak, that of the man who taught them. My teacher felt that as there were greater composer than he, that whenever there was a classical composition he always have it to me in addition to his own, so that little by little I was exposed to the famous 19th century and early 20th century Jewish composers. And it also instilled in me somewhat of a desire to build a library because he had one. And he was a very fine role model as far as I was concerned, except that he was terribly poor which I thought was a shame. And really when I stop to think he taught me for three years, not everyday, but several times a week. And I remember now that my father paid him without bargaining, was all he asked for, the munificent sum of \$450 for the three years work. I'm rather astounded that

- A. (Continued) he was able to make ends meet. In my career I found a number of his students, although I had met very few of them when I was studying with him. I really wasn't overloaded with students. He was not a quick teacher. In other words, you had to do it the long way and so anybody in search of an immediate job of some kind wouldn't go to him because he insisted on doing it the old-fashioned and hard way. And since I wasn't in it for . . .to become a cantor, I merely. . . my father thought it would be a good idea and I agreed with him if. . . if I knew it just have it in my back pocket, you never know what's going to happen.
- Q. So at this point you still wanted to be a doctor?
- A. Yes. When I graduated from New York University I was not accepted at any of the local medical schools, which is not strange since they had a very stringent Jewish quota. I was accepted at an out-of-town school, but being an only child my parents wouldn't hear of it. It was not common for people to go away to school as it is now. And late in August, 1940 I received an admission to Fifth Avenue Flower Hospital their school of medicine. Obviously somebody that they had accepted had gone on to another school and I had been put on a supplementary list. I was unable to take it because that summer my father's business suffered bankruptcy after 30 years and those days scholarships and loans things of that sort were just not available. And so I had finished my cantorial course and I went to serve as a cantor.
- Q. What. . . did you resent the fact that. . . that there was a Jewish quota in medical schools? I mean, how did that affect . . .?
- A. I resented it somewhat but I almost accepted it. It was so well-known, it was so open and absolutely clear that there was almost no point in resenting it. I was not an activist in resenting it. I did nothing about fighting it. I was very pleased when they accepted me at Flower. And sorry that I was not

- A. (Continued) able to take it. But while I had an occasional not regrets, but thoughts that it might be nice to have been a doctor, I . . . I don't feel that I was particularly cheated at this point, maybe because I have some sense of fulfillment in what I've done since.
- Q. Is that the first time that you had ever experienced anti-Semitism?
- A. Well, you found it in sort of tangential ways. Occasionally you read about it, or heard about it. I experienced anti-Semitism because I read the Yiddish papers and during the early days of Hitler's regime, Yiddish Press was the only place that was printing details of what was going on. The other newspapers barely treated it until it became so terrible that they could no longer ignore it. So . . . but I didn't look upon that frankly in the same way that I looked on American anti-Semitism. I just felt that a madman out for his purposes to . . . to kill every Jew he put his hands on. And it was a great tragedy in our lives. My father, in addition to being interested in books, exposed me to the Yiddish theatre. We . . . our family was acquainted with people in the theatre. The actors came to my father occasionally for a loan. I . . . I find that that was very helpful. It gave me kind of a broad feel of Jewish culture. And he was also a Zionist in the days when you had to be a little crazy to be a Zionist. As I remember that he would drag me to Zionist meetings, which I used to open by playing Hatikva on the violin. Perhaps that's why it took so long to realize the Zionist dream, when I stopped playing Hatikva things got better. So, those were the main influences as I look back, rather positive and good influences considering the fact that both my parents worked in the business that demanded all their energies and all their time for six days a week. And yet we had a very good Jewish home. Reasonably observant Jewish home, not ultra-Orthodox Jewish home, but the Sabbath was Sabbath. And of course it was a kosher Jewish home. And the

A. (Continued) Sabbath I remember as being the . . . the biggest pleasurable moment in our family life, the only time we could be together. And we enjoyed it. It was . . . no matter how tired my father was Friday evening changed his clothes, sat down to dinner together, which was also a novelty. And never failed to make kiddush and to . . . to make the three of us, there were only three of us. Or when we had, of course, uncles and aunts, feel that this is something very worthwhile, very precious. My father liked to sing very softly, he never was a singer. But he . . . but he was content he would, on Saturday, I could hear him humming and I . . . everytime I think about it the hum . . . Saturday afternoon humming comes back to me as part of the . . . the whole image that I had of my father. My mother was a very determined, very bright lady and very . . . a great source of strength to him and to me. And her death at an early age really left both of us rather bereft. And so he lived a very lonely fifteen years because at the time I was beginning to serve a congregation. And then when I moved to Rochester in 1946 and the war intervened, he really had a great deal of time to spend by himself, which I regret there was nothing I could do or anybody. Family helped, but primarily he was . . . I imagine he was very lonely.

Q. You said your mother worked, very interested in that.

A. It was a "Mom and Pop" store.

Q. Yea. You are married?

A. Yes.

Q. Does your wife work?

A. Yes, sure. My wife works now that our children are grown. I have a married daughter, son who's 28 on his own in New York, he's a writer. And I have another son who just graduated from college, lives in Washington. My wife went back to school, she's a graduate of Hunter, classmate of Bella Abzug, friend of hers.

- A. (Continued) And went back to school and, oh about eight, ten years ago, to get her M.A. in library science. And she became a librarian. And went to work for the first the Rochester School System and then the Greece School System. Became terribly disillusioned with the low levels of both systems, lack of professionalism and other things that troubled her. And the waste of time and energy and human resources, things of that nature. And the lack of commitment on the part of a lot of people. So she left and went to work as a volunteer for McGovern. And as a result was picked up by the Monroe County Democratic Committee, where she became an expert on political finances. And she still works there sometimes. And took on a part-time at a neighborhood library which we used to use all the time in our own neighborhood which she's very fond of, it's a good library. Still retains that job. For a while when I was getting started it was rather difficult to make ends meet. And she worked as a bookkeeper part-time when our youngest son was four or five here in town. I have no. . . no regrets about that nor do I have any objection to it. Nor do I think it's in any way wrong. I think it's great, especially now that there are just two of us, certainly much more important for her to do that than to sit around and mop the floors, although they. . . they are mopped too.
- Q. Could you tell me a little bit about your children?
- A. Yes, Michael was born here in Rochester as were all my children. Bright, rather introverted, great, great reader and went through high school and then attended Cornell Labor Industrial Relations School. Graduated and decided to remain within the fold of university town and university. He's been in the last two years the managing editor of the Cornell Sun, which is in addition to being the college paper is the morning paper of Ithaca. During the last year the practice has been for the editorial people to be paid based on their earnings

A. (Continued) at the end of the year. And he received a fine bonus at the end and decided that that might be his field. He wanted to be a conscientious objector. Somehow he heard about it in the school teacher's position and taught school for six months in and around Binghamton. He found that the level of the school was just so abysmal that he. . . he said I'd rather be a conscientious objector right straight out than. . . than go through this sham. He's a very sensitive and very honest young man. And he felt it would be a grievous sin to take money for being a babysitter for fourth grade. So he left that and he heard of a position that the university in the Public Relations Department and he became after a while Assistant Vice-President of Public Relations or something at Cornell and put out their house organ, weekly, almost a cross between a newspaper and a magazine, semi-magazine. And he stayed there for two years and finally decided that he had to leave the womb and he. . . and he took the summer off to go to Europe on his own earnings and came back, looked for his picked job in New York. He had determined that he wasn't coming back to Rochester. And finally found one in a civil service paper called Cheat, which is noted primarily for following up tests and things like that, it's not a very exciting paper. But it gave him great honor around New York City Hall, labor people and so on. The result of which he's now assistant to Gottbaum in the Civil Service District 37, which is the civil service employees union that's been so prominent in the New York economic picture. And I think Gottbaum is probably the sanest and the most calmest and the most reasonable of all the labor leaders because he's. . . he's managed to hold. . . hold various factions together in the labor conflict they have and still work out some kind of modus operandi for the city. So I think he's getting valuable experience. He's a. . . he puts out the paper for the. . . weekly paper. And in addition does political work as well. Goes to Washington and with Gottbaum testifies with him or sometimes in his

A. (Continued) place. Our daughter Julia who's second went to Boston University. And graduated in psychology, met a young man from Rochester there, strangely enough. And they decided to get married. He is now attending the University of Chicago Law School, just went through his second year. Julie took her Masters at Boston College while he worked before going on to law school. And she is now the Assistnat Personnel Director in Evanston, Illinois. A job that she likes very much, very exciting, very rewarding, fulfilling. And he's just finished his second year, working this summer. And I think that. . . that's going to be very good. With reasonable good luck they should . . . should make it very well. He's bright. David, our youngest, just graduated from George Washington. He was not admitted to law school, but he'd like to primarily because he wanted to remain. . . remain in the Washington/Virginia area. So he's now trying to find some kind of paralegal work, which he did while he was an undergraduate. And either that or work on the Hill in some kind of business, and hopes to maintain his residence in Virginia. And, as a resident of Virginia, hopes to get into University of Virginia Law School with a little more ease. So those are the children. There are no grandchildren yet. There is a dog and a cat.

Q. Do you think that you brought up your children the same way that you were brought up yourself?

A. Not to the same degree, I don't think. I think we, obviously, responded to the. . . to the atmosphere in which we lived. We were not permissive parents, but we were not completely authoritarian either. The worst thing you could say in my. . . in my house was, you know, the . . . all the kids have it or. . . or Joe has it, Joe does it or something . . . that. . . they knew that that was the worst thing that they could say. . . that they could say that. . . I think that they had all three of them to one degree or to more degree or less some

- A. (Continued) difficulty with the fact that I was in the position that I'm in. Public figure and public figure that supposed to stand for some ethical or moral ritual standards, which they were expected to observe out of deference for me. Not out of the fact that I'd hoped that they were meaningful. I think that they are. They have a good Jewish education. I don't think any one of them is overly observant. They go to holidays, they. . . I think reasonably observe dietary laws at home anyhow. I know, of course, we visited them in their apartments, I've eaten there and I know they wouldn't ask me if they didn't think it's OK. I'm sure they. . . they don't observe on the outside, but I think that they're good human beings, it's very important. They're all three interested, outgoing in the sense of wanting to help people. I know they all. . . all three of them pick up stray people and stray cats and stray things. And I think they respond to the. . . to the needs around them. I think Michael's probably the most sensitive to them and probably felt it the most because he was the oldest and life was a lot more formal when he was growing up than it was in the later years when I became more and more of a fixture and had generally all kinds of standards loosened up, even in the synagogue. So that I think David had the best of it, we were pretty relaxed by the time he came along.
- Q. Your answer makes me think of two separate lines of questioning. One is that what is religion itself? And the other is values. Now it seems to me that although your children might be less religious, that the values have been carried on. And I was just wondering if you could, you know, comment on that a little?
- A. Well, those are the things that we stress. We were never, you know, demanding about ritual practices in our home because of my memories of the Sabbath and also my wife's memories. The Sabbath is Sabbath. And they grew up, you know,

A. (Continued) for eighteen, twenty years in that atmosphere and I think a lot of it rubbed off. But it wasn't Sabbath just for the sake of eating gefilte fish. It meant something and it was a time when. . . when there was some spiritual elements in the air and I think that they felt that. I think the fact that they all are interested in books had something to do with our interest in books. Our fortune is spent on books and on music in our house. And those are the things that they grew up with. They all played instruments, not particularly well, but. . . And they all pick up the instruments when they come home, sometimes just to renew acquaintances with them. Julie I think is the best. She's a fair pianist even at this time. She was the most serious. And in terms of decency and I guess you get that by osmosis, by the kind of atmosphere you see. And by seeing what we condemn and what we praise and how we live and try not to live. We try not to demand anything of them that we ourselves are not prepared to do, which is not often the case. And again I don't try to recreate them in my image because they're living forty, fifty years later and they're living different time and different situation. I can't quite accept everything that their generation accepts, but . . . but I understand it and I appreciate it. And I know that our generation is culpable for a great deal of their unhappiness, their unrest. And I feel very guilty about that, not personally, but guilty about the whole. . . whole of my contemporaries, many of whom don't really realize, you know, what they've done. Completely let go of any kind of standards in their lives, the lives of their kids even more. You know, whatever. . . whatever the baby did, it was the Spock theory, you know, you just. . . with all due respect he's ruined more kids than he's helped. Despite the fact that he's well motivated, it, you know, from the feeding all the way down. And I. . . I get it now. I deal with children all the time. And you can recognize them a mile away. The mother who, if you just look sourly at her kid,

- A. (Continued) there is this feeling, why did you look sourly. I . . . I'm not criticizing, but why. . . you know, you have to always defend criticism. And they can't conceive that that's what he's coming here for, school to be not hurt or anything, but at least to be evaluated, to be . . . be criticized in a sense. So, I tried not to do that. I tried not to be dishonest with them. And I think that they've been more than . . . more than fair in their honesty with me. They've never done anything to my knowledge that they haven't told me about, told us about. And even though there were things that they did that we felt were wrong, so long as they honestly defended them and they weren't hurting anybody, we never. . . never came down with a shotgun and never felt that we had a right once they reached reasonable maturity to . . . to plan their lives for them. We could suggest. But many people feel because they've given birth to children that they owe them.
- Q. I'd like to pursue the same type of questioning, but on the community level. Now you've been here since, you said, 1946. Do you think the community is less religious than it was then, more religious, you know, about the same?
- A. Well, I think that relatively the same but empirically less.
- Q. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?
- A. Well, I think that the proportion of people who care about, I'm not gonna say observant, but who care about what the synagogue stands for, is the same. I think most people in this community are rather hold the synagogue to be of some importance, much more so than in many other cities. . . cities. I hold a national position and so I speak with some knowledge of what's going on in other places. However, the use they make of the synagogue and the . . . the influence it has on the rest of their lives, I think is less. That. . . that's basically what I meant. The synagogue is still important, it's still. . . they still want to come here for the milestone events. They still believe in Bar Mitzvah

A. (Continued) for their children, Bat Mitzvah. They still want to be here to be married. They'll come back and want me or if as I say Rabbi Karp had been here and because they grew up, the ties still mean something. We're not just ships, you know, that passed in the night. They want to be married in the building here, in the synagogue. 'Course they're aware that even funerals are held here because the family feels this is the place and it has more sanctity than a funeral chapel. So, there is, you know, it's not all black, but I don't think that. . . that it. . . that it influences their lives as much when they leave you. I think they could go out of here and do something which is violently anti-Sabbath. Even after having participated very sincerely in the Sabbath service.

Q. Do less people attend the Sabbath services?

A. No.

Q. No. The same.

A. This has always been the synagogue-attending community and there is hardly the week when we don't have standing room. I mean, we. . . we manage to do something about it. And that is a phenomenon. It's. . . I know it sounds like boasting, but it's true. It is happily most statistically true. And it's not only because we have a Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah. They'll come during the next two months when both the rabbi and I will not be here and lay people conduct services. And while you may not have the full 700, so you'll have 400, which is, you know, just unbelievable.

Q. You think Rochester's atypical in that respect?

A. Yes, I certainly do. I know from all of my colleagues who tell me that Saturday mornings, you know, they have a . . . a corpus guard unless they have a Bar Mitzvah. In which case they have a crowd that cares nothing about what's going on, just sitting there, just bodies, that's all. Whereas we have

A. (Continued) a core of three hundred or four hundred people who come week in, week out, in the rain or the sun, doesn't matter. As long as they're in town, they're here. And kids, this is the strange thing, home on Thanksgiving or Christmas vacation or what have you, will make it their business at least once to come by and say hello on. . . on a Saturday. Not all of. . . I'm sure that they're not overflowing with piety, but you know that's an honest tie to a synagogue. It's an honest thing. And if they feel that close, then by golly, I think, you know, we've done something. We've not lost completely the connection.

Q. What is it about Rochester that makes it like this? Do you have any idea?

A. I don't know. I came here and found it this way. It's . . . it's been enlarged and I think it's had outstanding leadership, rabbinical and I hope they've had a good cantor in me. Over the years they've brought only credit to . . . to the synagogue. Rabbi Karp and Rabbi Bernstein and the early days of my tenure Rabbi Rosenberg, who had other problems, who nevertheless was a very aggressive man in terms of developing the potential of this synagogue, which up to that time was. . . was dormant, '46. Ten years, the two of us came together, this synagogue had a complete rejuvenation, absolutely complete. From the little congregation of 400 families in a 75, 80 year old converted church on Park and Meigs to first half of this building and then under Rabbi Karp the whole building and to 1500 or 1400 families. Part of that is just good luck. Xerox grew and Kodak began to import Jewish executives and technicians. It still is obviously important for most people, especially in smaller communities, to be identified somehow as Jews. And one-third of the population I believe in that very strongly. I think the Army did that. You see, when you're in the Army you. . . you either have. . . you either were a Jewish or Hebrew on your dog tag or you were Catholic or Protestant. And as such you

A. (Continued) were one-third of the Army despite the fact that numerically you were. . . you were a tiny, tiny statistic. And being one-third of the Army you wanted to identify. And the same thing is when you go out to the community, I think that carries over. Not everybody went to the Army but I think that. . . that's how the suburbs will go. And that's why, you know, the . . . that's when the great building boom started. G.I.'s came out and they didn't want to. . . didn't to go back to. . . to living where they had been living. They wanted a new life. They were entitled to it. So they . . . they'd dreamed about it for all the years they were away, so they went and made it real. And all suburbs were successful, that's one of their strengths of Rochester. It's not a suburbia. When we moved from Park Avenue to here, we lost nobody. Whereas in other communities when this congregation moves from the center of the city to a suburb, let us say from Boston to Newton Center or to other parts, they start from scratch practically. They're. . . even though they may have been an important congregation. But here, the people followed. As a matter of fact, we followed the people.

Q. Can I ask you that? Now the temple on Park and Meigs burnt down in '57 right?

A. Yea.

Q. And then for three years you were on the corner. . . you were at Winton Road?

A. We had here an auditorium, plus the school which has since been completely renovated when they put up the rest of the building. But daily services and ad a matter of fact the. . . we missed one service with the fire, that's how everybody was. . . was cooperating. Saturday night I don't believe we had services. Sunday morning, the morning service was held here and prayer books had been gotten and filin had been rescued and. . . and, of course, we had Torah scrolls here because we used to conduct. . . for a while we were already conducting Friday night services here on an alternating basis, some here, some

A. (Continued) there. And high holiday services at both places. So we were in a sense set up. We had an arc that we moved into position. And that auditorium doubled, if anybody gets credit it's the maintenance staff. Saturday morning it was a synagogue, Saturday noon there was the reception, Saturday night there might have been a party, Sunday morning it was an auditorium for . . .for . . . for the Hebrew school putting on a play. Sunday afternoon it was Sisterhood luncheon. I mean this type of room was put up and knocked down more times than a punch-drunk fire. And they never failed us. Then they cordoned off one corner of the room for a daily chapel and for two years, whatever it took, we were able to, you know, didn't drop a stitch. We received a number of invitations from churches in the area to use their facilities, everybody was most kind. But we really felt that we didn't need to. . . didn't need to resort to that.

Q. Do you think the temple would have moved anyway?

A. It was going to move, surely. It was a very fortuitous fire. Nobody was hurt so, you know, very fortuitous because we had already started the campaign.

Q. I see.

A. And that made it clear that we had no choice. In the early days there'd been some question. An old guard felt that they wanted to remain in that area and had we remained we would have died there.

Q. Why did people move out of the Park Avenue area?

A. Well it was like anything else, Park Avenue affluence I think was increasing. And while the Park Avenue/Harvard area was very lovely, we lived there for many years, Brighton I guess was lovelier. And it was open. . . more open space at the time. Today it's hard to imagine, it's just as cluttered as Harvard and Park. I'll tell you one of the fondest memories I have is Saturdays when in the days before too many people rode people would start to

- A. (Continued) walk from. . . at the end of services from Park and Meigs down Goodman and up Harvard and drop off at the various streets. And liter. . . literally hundreds was, you know, it was like. . . like. . . like Jerusalem, would walk down and people would stop at each other's homes for a kiddush and things of that nature. There's a marvelous sense of community. And then suddenly people started to move out, regretfully, but they moved out. Either they were doing well in their businesses and felt there was a big boom and people moved. And by the time we decided on this piece of land, took a survey and almost half of our membership lived east of Culver Road, which was at that time the center of . . . of our area. And very shortly thereafter it increased, increased, increased until very few lived in the Harvard area at this point.
- Q. Is the membership of Beth El, the congregation, is it more affluent now than it was when you first came here?
- A. No I think it was more affluent ten years ago. I think we have, in terms of the individual, you're not talking about the resources of the congregation?
- Q. No, no. I'm talking about the individual.
- A. I think we now have a managerial class. In. . . in the early days we had an entrepreneur class of leadership, people who ran businesses. We had very few retailers in this community, which is strange. Many synagogues, one of the reasons for the adoption of the Friday night service was that many Jews were in the retail business, Friday night was a . . . was a business night. And so they established some 60 years ago this late service, which was not traditional. And you know it's dying now because there are no more Jews in retail business. And retail business isn't open anyhow, and so that service is petering out. The entrepreneur class though, those that came here and started a business and saw it really grow and the first generation of their sons, but second

A. (Continued) generation for the most part did not want to go into the family business and went into the professions. So we either have professional people or managerial people. For the most part. Or people who are sale. . . sales reps for. . . for companies and there's a small group, obviously, as there always were, of people who work for a living, you know, who work for some employer. But if you look we have a large array of dentists, doctors, lawyers and the people who work for Kodak and Xerox, either in the scientific or the administrative levels in the higher echelons. And the same for. . . for lots of other businesses that have sprung up all around town. You. . . you can't, you know, as in many communities if you need an automobile, there's a Jewish automobile dealer. If you need a coat, there's a Jewish haberdasher. It's just not so in Rochester. Not in the retail business anymore.

Q. Then again you think Rochester's atypical in this sort of respect?

A. That I don't know but I would imagine so. I would imagine so.

Q. Now you. . . you have as many new members coming each year as you did before, do you not?

A. Well, that varies. I don't have the statistics, but in the last five years we've been very happy if we've come out with a net gain because as you know the last two years Xerox fired a lot of people or laid them off, that's a nicer way of saying it. And they've gone out looking and they've found things in other communities, so we've lost some very nice people. We've picked up people moving in. They haven't completely stopped hiring people. But I think that if we were to make a survey we would find that we have almost everybody who's interested is a member and at this point we are higher than we've been in a good many years. We're 1380 something.

Interview I
Tape I
Side B

- Q. And this is Tina Isaacs interviewing Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum. Do you think that the temple has changed from rabbi to rabbi? So you came here with . . .?
- A. Came here with Rabbi Stewart Rosenberg at the same time, who then stayed to ten years and then went on to Beth Sedic in Toronto, Canada. From what I gather of the history prior to that it was a traditional congregation where and a reasonably active congregation. In those days the rabbi's sermon, especially on Friday night, was much looked forward to. Rabbi Rosenberg's immediate predecessor was Rabbi Henry Fischer who despite a terrible speech impediment was one of the most fascinating that I've ever heard. I've heard him since. He's returned a number of times. Who, unfortunately, never wrote anything and so it's difficult to follow his . . . to get an insight into his thinking and into things that he spoke about. But, it's my understanding from many sources that the temple was packed on Friday nights. And that that was the high feature in the days before television, days before other kinds of entertainment. And even though Rabbi Rosenberg would . . . tended to be a dramatic and dynamic speaker, we began to feel the impact of television on Friday night. Friday night in the early days if you . . . well you don't remember, was . . . was fight night and, you know, the rule was they had to get home by ten o'clock 'cause Pabst Blue Ribbon was presenting the fights that night. And as a result even those days the Friday night popularity began to wane. We were fortunate that our Saturday service has maintained, said before, maintained its vitality all the way through. And in spite of the fact that the ritual committee had . . . has struggled, maybe because of the fact that we have had a very sincere series of ritual committees who are not looking to,

A. (Continued) you know, to serve any other purpose than to make the service a reasonable and acceptable to as many people as possible. I've struggled with all kinds of attempted innovations. We have tried a number of things. And we find that the service today is substantially the same as it was thirty years ago. Now some people may consider this terrible because no progress, quote, had been made. But I'm not sure whether if in the long run this is not what most people want. We obviously have shortened the service in that we don't repeat the Amnidah except when we do have a little extra time. But outside of that we . . . we have had substantially the same kind of service. We shorten our reading, reading of the Torah. But, we haven't shortened the time that we give for it. The rabbi has ample time to teach the portion of the week in addition to his regular sermon, which gives in the middle of the service. There were, with Rabbi Karp, the service became even more traditional generally. There was introduction of more and more English readings, but these were only extras. They were not in place of, nothing of any importance in terms of the, what we call in Hebrew the Mackveyah Shomfeelah, the calling of prayers so to speak. Or the steelwork of the structure of the observance was never damaged or taken out. Adding a prayer in English or contemporary reading, OK, but it doesn't change anything. Nor does it make it a radical service. We never went in for the fads and the rock services and so on. I did several of them because I thought that our people ought to hear them, but I did them on Sunday nights for a concert night as concerts. I felt that our people should be exposed to what's going on. But we have never. . . never really had any strong move. For a little while there was a . . . this. . . this business of, quote, creative services which is a dirty word to me because only God can create from nothing. And, you know, kids who said that they want to create a service. Well they can create a series of readings or something, fine, but let's not call it a service. I

A. (Continued) mean the service has certain elements in it and if you don't have the major part of them, I don't consider that to be a service. I think that if kids want to experiment it's fine, I'm not opposed to it, but when adults begin to do that then it's a problem. There is a tendency in the . . . in . . . in the air today that, you know, participation is very important. But somehow when we get to the synagogue people feel that participation means leadership. Now that's two entirely different things. When one goes to a baseball game, one doesn't say to the manager, hey let me play third base for this inning, you know, I like the game and I'd like to. . . They'd throw me out of the park. If you want to participate you yell or you stand up or you cheer or you follow the box scores everyday or you read books. That's how you participate. You go to every game, you watch it on television. Same thing with opera or, you know, or philharmonic. You don't say let me conduct the second movement. And yet that's exactly what people come and say. We won't. . . we don't feel satisfied, fulfilled, unless we're leading. Well, I think you have to earn the right to lead a service. Judaism demands certain things of the people who lead the service, certain knowledge, competence, certain sincerity. The person who leads it then can't go out, you know, and go to MacDonald's for . . . for a hamburger. While as a participant he can do whatever he wants, but I think as a leader he can't. And this is something that we've been battling with because it sounds good, you know, participation. Well the way a Jew participates in the service is to davad, that's the flaw. We're different than a church. Church you sit quietly and you sing the hymns, you know, three times during the hour. And the preacher preaches the sermon and that's it. So, I can understand that they'd like more participation. But maybe what they'd like is to do a little davading, which. . . which we have built in. The problem is, and again I'm like my teacher, I'm. . . I want to

A. (Continued) attack it from the long way. If somebody sincerely wants to participate, then he ought to enroll in adult classes of study and learn and then he'll find some joy in participating. Just as going to a symphony concert. You know, I think about music, you could be bored to death. But if you become interested and learn and read and listen then you go with some enjoyment to get something out of it. So, they've. . . we've never been. . . never succumbed to that kind of nonsense. Occasionally you'll have somebody from the congregation read or something in English, just to change the voice really, just to relieve the monotony of listening to one. And I can understand that. Or if they do some kind of joint reading, but, quote, to lead the service because they can quote it like a parrot, I can't. . . I can't buy that. And I think that this is one of the few things where. . . where even professionals don't know the stand that there's a sense of professionalism in this that's required. Just as. . . I look with question on the people who want to make medical decisions about themselves without any knowledge of the meaning of any of the symptoms that they encounter but who want to have the last word, you know, whether they should or they shouldn't. But they're entitled to that, but I think they ought to have some medical knowledge to base that on, otherwise they're just playing Russian Roulette. So I don't know if that's really oral history, but it's part of the things that I think we've escaped with some . . . some good fortune.

Q. What sort of influence has Rabbi Abraham Solomon had over this temple?

A. Rabbi Solomon is souley generous. He is one of a kind, one . . . no other. . . there will be no other. He's had tremendous influence on the temple. His influence is that he is . . . from his point of view the world's greatest role model as far as I'm concerned. He is punctual, he is careful, he is neat, he is thoroughly competent. He is observant and for a person who. . . who wants

A. (Continued) to be fully traditional, and not crazy Orthodox, but fully, reasonably traditional, he could do no better than to . . . than to model himself after his . . . his professional behavior. One of the great things that he has done is that he has maintained that morning and evening service, day in, day out, whatever cost, it's always done. He's always there, always proper. It's never degenerates into ten guys telling dirty jokes before the service starts and then, hey come on, it's time for Mikvah fellows. Never happens here. And I noticed that when the rare occasions when he's away and he'll ask me to cover, let us say, the minute the men come in and they don't see him sitting there, they do that. They talk about the T.V. out loud and so on. Well, of course, when the service starts. . . but when they see him sitting there, there's a sort of a hush. You go about your business, you put on your trillin, you sit down quietly, you may converse, but the whole atmosphere is different. Not that he frightens them obviously, but there's a sort of an air, you know, somebody's watching and this is a certain way that you have to behave. The great thing is that in maintaining it he has taken the men who have come to say kodish and taught them to lead the service, taught them the hard way. Everyday after the services takes one guy in hand and for six, seven months, then he starts them off for the short service, longer and longer, and in that way is able to . . . has made people who were. . . who know what they're doing, who don't feel embarrassed, know how to put on a trillin. And he's made followers who will follow him, will fight for him unto the death. They really will. And they form an important constituency in this congregation. They're not a lot. They're 25, 30 regulars. On Saturday there are a few more, Saturday afternoon, Saturday evening. But you cannot overrate his importance to this congregation. He's given it continuity. First of all he's been here 56, 57 years and he's the thread that. . . that, you know, that runs through it. And

A. (Continued) he's. . . occasionally was mellowed in his older age and has become a very. . . very sweet and a very nice human being. He was a very tough kind of character in the old . . . the old days and. . . and maybe it's just as well because he. . . if he didn't like an innovation he pretty soon got his troops not to like them either and, you know, they mounted a terrible battle in favor of tradition. And most of the time they won out. So he's sort of a guardian of the. . . of tradition and for the actual work. And of course the performance, I don't mean in a bad sense, but his. . . his ability to chant the Torah and to lead the service in the sections that he does is impeccable. It's impeccable as he is. So I'm sure he's a man with faults, he's a human being, but in terms of what he's done for the congregation, it cannot be overestimated.

Q. Do as many people attend daily services now as when you came?

A. I would think so. I would think so. Maybe a small. . . maybe 10% less, but . . . You see, nature being what it is it provides us with people who are in mourning from time to time, sometimes a slow period, sometimes it's a fast period. Terrible way to talk about it, but it's true. And sometimes you'll have deaths where. . . where people simply are not interested. They'll come for a day or two and then. . . and he doesn't, you know, doesn't grab you by the arm and say you have to do it. But if he sees that you're coming and gathers. . . it's very easy to gather with somebody that's just sitting there or somebody that's participating. And he will usually approach. He'll make the approach, would you like to learn how to read? Would you like to. . . without embarrassing them and does it just beautifully. In addition to that, the 50, 60, 70 year old members of the congregation many of them were pupils of his in Hebrew school that he had on his own in the early days. So he has a. . . a core of people who look upon him as their teacher.

- Q. OK. There's another very large temple in town, B'rith Kodesh, do think that there. . . the experiences there, from your perceptions of it, are pretty much similar to the experiences here?
- A. No, not at all.
- Q. OK. Could you elaborate on that?
- A. Well, I think that in the early days the temple was still generally run by the old German Jewish class who were satisfied with Rabbi Bernstein because Rabbi Bernstein was not too demanding in terms of ritual practice and so on. Was rather concerned with social themes and justice, equality and very rightfully concerned about them. It was not a . . . a ritual-oriented, even in the Reform sense, synagogue. You came there, but you came there to hear Rabbi Bernstein's message, see what he was up to and so on. The music and the service were just secondary. The later generations when the Reform movement began to move more center, away from the ultra, ultra Reform and began to recapture some of the things they'd thrown away, only because the Reform members were children of. . . of members of the Orthodox and Conservative synagogues and missed not hearing, let us say, a cantor sing. Just no matter how little they cared that night they missed it. And they missed Bar Mitzvah, even though they didn't care that it should be as detailed as it is here, let us say, or required. But they missed the idea. And so the newer, the successive men who were successors of Rabbi Bernstein had to. . . to in a sense try to convince the old school guys that they had to begin to. . . to meet the needs of the new flock, the new generation of Reform members. So, some of them, as you know, seceded and formed Temple Sinai where they hoped in the beginning to try to recapture the days of their youth. They wanted Sunday services and the austerity of the old Reform service and the, you know, the church-like quality. Well, I think they were luckier than they thing because they have, I don't remember who the first rabbi

A. (Continued) was, but certainly with Harvey Goldman, they have a . . . a very fine and traditionally oriented rabbi. I don't mean that he's necessarily as . . . wants to make out of it a Beth El, but who's not at all turned on by . . . by that kind of nonsense. That generation has generally died down, died out anyhow. And you find now young people. They have Bar Mitzvah, they have . . . it's turned out to be no more ultra Reform than . . . than B'rith Kodesh is itself. I think too what's happened is that B'rith Kodesh has carried parti . . . their democracy to its ultra extreme and to the point where it becomes ridiculous. I really do. I . . . I understand that there are meetings where, you know, where the performance of all the professionals are openly discussed. You know, how did he do yesterday, how did he do today. Which is a terrible thing. It's like the hospital meeting everyday and seeing . . . checking over the surgeon. Either he's competent, and you know, you let him go until he does something that's not . . . needs definition. Or you get . . . you get somebody else. But, don't keep taking his pulse every day. The renewal of Rabbi Miller's contract was just, I think, atrocious, terrible. Showed a tremendous lack of understanding and sensitivity towards . . . to a human being. And once they'd renewed his contract then to start a committee which supposedly concerned that Rabbi Miller is too Orthodox, which is nonsense. They . . . they don't understand what Orthodoxy, they think that he's Orthodox. Now he . . . he's made in my estimation some rather poor choices as to where to return to tradition. He's picked some of the most bizarre things to reinstitute. There are things on which he would be on firmer ground, you see. I think the thing that affronts them most is the wearing of the sneakers on Yom Kippur, you know, you're not supposed to wear shoes. There are more important things in Judaism than more meaningful. And I think that he was unwise in that. But it's certainly not something that you kill a man for, not something that, you know,

A. (Continued) despise him or hold him up to . . . to condemn, which . . . which they did. He had . . . likes to throw in Yiddish words. Well that has nothing to do with Orthodoxy, that's a speech pattern or cultural pattern or . . . for them. . . that shows how little they know. They're really not an informed leadership. Obviously this is reasonably confidential and I think that that's what the root of that problem is. From the outside. I've never been at a meeting, but you do hear in the community what goes on. I have friends who are members of the congregation who are in positions of leadership. And they admit to me that this . . . that this is the problem. A lack of sensitivity in laying out a program with their professionals. This business of the cantor, if he's too good it's not good, if he's not good enough, it's not good, and no idea of what he should do and shouldn't do. I think the lines of authority are snarled there. I think that the . . . that an executive director should have no say over ritual aspects of the synagogue. His business is the business of the congregation. And yet, Jerry, whom I like very much, I understand his political power in the congregation, which I don't think is healthy. And it's not fair to the . . . to the other professionals. I mean there are areas where he should reign supreme and in other areas where he shouldn't.

Q. Do you think there are conflicts between the Conservative community and the Reform community?

A. No. That is a very healthy situation here. It never was. In the early days there was some pirating of members. Not pirating, but there was some flow of members as they became more affluent they thought they ought to change their affiliation. But it was very small and it stopped very shortly after they saw that the . . . the congregation here was making strides to be progressive and we've talked about building. And so they . . . that stopped it I think.

- A. (Continued) But there never was this battle between them. Relationships were always of the finest. In times of personal problems of my own I've often gone to Rabbi Bernstein, whom I consider to be a friend and a very wise person, and felt no . . . no compunction about it. And I know other people who feel the same way. And there never was any attack from the pulpit as in the early days they used to be from Orthodox pulpits. You know, jibes about the first year we hired a policeman here for the high holidays, all the Orthodox rabbis had to make some reference to it. Not only do they ride, but they hire a policeman, you know. Well, we ride, you know, that. . . that's our principle. That's stopped now, too. I think generally the relationships between all of the congregations are much closer. Possibly because nobody holds their principles as strongly as they did at one time, that may be the reason. But, there is no . . . no inter-congregational friction whatsoever, none at all. Nobody, as a matter of fact I'm sure the business offices are both. . . B'rith Kodesh and we operate together if somebody comes to me and goes there, they check to see if they're escaping some kind of obligation here or vice versa, what the reason is. Nobody wants to. . . there's enough for everybody, nobody has to steal from anybody else. So, I think that's one thing that we've never had here, although it's prevalent in many. . .
- Q. In your experience in this community, have there ever been any frictions along. . . between the German Jewish descendants and the Eastern European descendants and . . .?
- A. In the early days before . . . right after the First World War there was and before, too, a great deal. But that's gradually subsided.
- Q. And by the time you came to the community was there any still?
- A. No, that had long passed. We weren't dealing with that generation. That generation had established its own synagogues, I mean the Eastern Europeans.

- A. (Continued) And they didn't need their help. They had already by the thirties and forties certainly more established and could make it on their own. And as a matter of fact the Orthodox and Conservative movement formed the bulk of the Zionist movement which united them on that group. And Bernstein himself being pro-Zionist sort of dragged, screaming, dragged his congregation screaming and kicking into the Zionist movement as well. And, of course, now they're. . . there's no difference between any of the congregations in terms of their loyalty to Israel and their devotion. But I think you'll find that in the areas of Welfare Fund contributions and Bond purchases that the two congregations don't compare. And if you'd like to take a survey of that I don't know if they'd give you those statistics, but you'd find that there's a lot less given and sold there than there is here.
- Q. Could you tell me your impressions of Rabbi Bernstein? He's a very important figure in the community.
- A. Well I can't add to what's been written about him. When I came I learned, you know, to my great delight that he was a young man in the thirties who invited Norman Thomas to speak from his pulpit, which was not a fact to be taken lightly in those days, when his pulpit was really the property of the German Jewish group who were normally opposed to everything that Norman Thomas stood for. He always defended unpopular but just causes. He is a very orderly speaker and a very articulate spokesman for Jewry. And I think the years of. . . of his activity in the early days when he constituted the. . . the Zionist Action Emergency Committee were remarkable years, really remarkable. For one man he did what today, you know, their whole staff of 20, 30 people in Washington doing what he and one or two other people did all by themselves. He is bright, he's proud and I think of all the good things that you can say, a diplomat and in the very best sense of the word. He's most solicitous with representing

A. (Continued) fighting wherever he spoke. You didn't have to shudder. But this might interest you in terms of where we have gone. In 19. . . September, 1946, Phil Bernstein came back from Germany to open the United Jewish Welfare Fund Campaign. And the campaign opening took place right after the high holidays in Eastman Theatre. And as the new cantor of Beth El I was invited. I've since become known as. . . this title I've given up, but for a good many years I was Billie C. Manroe of Rochester. I don't know if that means anything. Billie C. Manroe was an aging opera star who in New York did political rallies, baseball games, you name it, she sang the 'Star Spangled Banner,' Billie C. Manroe. And so I was known as Billie C. Manroe because all that they could think of with the Welfare Fund in those days or to bother to get a cantor to do was lead the 'Star Spangled Banner.' Well my instructions were to sing the 'Star Spangled Banner' and to close with 'Hatikvah.' And when I came I went backstage at Eastman and I was told we're not sure whether you're going to sing "Hatikvah." This is 1946. And right after the Holocaust. The question of whether the "Hatikvah" would offend some of Rabbi Bernstein's congregants because while he was pro-Zionist he had not; you know, it took a long time for his people to follow him. And at intervals of 15 minutes during the program, I stayed backstage, I sang the "Star Spangled Banner" went backstage, and there were whispered conversations. Somebody would come back, well I think you're gonna sing it. No, no you're not. Wound up that I did not sing it. And that was very significant, very poignant to me. Later it was explained, somebody explained that I was new in town I didn't know what the forces were. But that gives you an idea of where we have gone since 1946. In 1946 it was not considered Jewishly politically wise to sing "Hatikvah" at the opening of the United Jewish Welfare Fund.

Q. Do you think that Rabbi Bernstein sort of single-handedly. . . ?

- A. No, I wouldn't say single-handedly but he certainly was most important influencing his community, no question about it. Everybody else was in it certainly, Beth El and all the Orthodox congregations were obviously pro-Zionist.
- Q. I meant in his community.
- A. But in his community I don't know of anybody else who I think single-handedly did that and certainly deserves that credit among others.
- Q. Well before we talk about Israel, I'd like to talk about one other sort of community occurrence and that is the '64 riots. Now when you were. . . when the congregation was at Park Avenue and Meigs, did you have a significant population from the Joseph Avenue area?
- A. Not at all.
- Q. Not at all.
- A. You mean people coming here from Joseph Avenue?
- Q. People, no. . . people who lived in Joseph Avenue and came. . .?
- A. Were for worship? No.
- Q. No.
- A. There were eight or nine synagogues in Joseph Avenue. . .
- Q. Right.
- A. . . . area alone, so. . .
- Q. What were your impressions of the area, I mean even though you didn't know people firsthand?
- A. Oh, well, you knew because all Jewish shopping took place there and it was the only Jewish restaurant there, Cohen's at the time. So, and it was not nearly as bombed out an area as it is today. All of those stores which were up before they threw them down were functioning. There were Jewish. . . it was a street of Jewish merchants, all the way up and down the avenue. There was already blacks living there obviously, but they did not constitute a serious

A. (Continued) proportion. And nobody took much cognizance of them. You saw them come into this area to . . . to do day work and then they disappeared, you know, with the evening. And generally the stores were almost European in their primitiveness. Little . . . little vegetable stalls and little grocery store, everything, you know, cluttered. It wasn't a single new establishment. Cohen's was the most luxurious establishment. It was really far from luxurious. But it was a great center of a lot of people came there, a lot of Kodak people and so on, and it was a great place for mixing all kinds of . . . Lot of college kids came there to eat. Wonderful place, the Cohen's were very warm people. Fed a lot of people on the arm for the longest time, I'm sure. And the riots changed that.

Q. What . . . what were your impressions of the riots?

A. Well, we were already in this part of town, I already. . .

Q. Right.

A. . . . lived on Nunda Boulevard. It was at the beginning didn't know what to think, but it was rather awesome. I remember that Saturday was a very eerie day, almost nobody was out on the street. And you thought to yourself, you know, you imagined the worst. What would happen if, you know, if an army of blacks sort of decided to march on the city, what could you do? And, of course the curfew. And we had planned, the Karpis and we, to leave Sunday morning for Camp Raman to visit our children, it was visiting day. And we decided that we would go, you know, although you're not supposed to leave town. We left, oh, about five o'clock in the morning, had no problem getting out of town. Scooted out the side and we were out of town. When we came back that evening we got off the Thruway, and we were late that evening, about 10 o'clock. We were stopped right on West Henrietta Road, they wanted to know very carefully who we are. And we showed them. There was a lot of police. Oh, every ten feet there were

A. (Continued) State Troopers, policemen, you name it. And they said where are you going? We told them. Well they obviously radioed ahead because when we passed another barricade they. . . they told us which way to go, there are. . . you know, several ways to go, you go here and then go that way and that way, stay on the main. . . And at every barrier we slowed down, would signal, and obviously somebody looking, saw our license plate number wasved us on, we were OK. We hadn't infiltrated somehow. So, that gave us a very terrible feeling. The next. . . during the middle of the next week the National Guard came because they started, you know, flared up. And Rabbi Karp had gone away and they called me for the National Guard, they were quartered on Culver Road, they called me if I would hold services for the Jewish National Guardsmen there on Friday. My son, Michael, was with me. . . not Michael, David, Micahel was at camp. Very impressed, they sent a jeep after me. And prayer books and so on. I went there. There was not a single person who was interested in a Friday night service. I stayed there about 15 minutes or so, late Friday afternoon. And the Colonel said, well I guess rabbi, he didn't know what I was, that I guess we posted the announcement and if anybody wanted to they could have come. He said I guess if you'd like we'll take you home. No need to take any more time. So I don't know whether they had any Jewish National Guardsmen or whether they just weren't interested. Anyhow he dropped me off at home and that. . . that was my son David's big day. He went in the jeep.

Q. What do you think caused the riots?

A. I really don't know but I'm sure it was neglect. I'm sure it was partly the beginning of consciousness-raising that had caught on there, and the partially just rowdyism flared up. I really . . . it's testimony to how little we knew about them that if you'd 'a told me I would have said that this is the last place because they were never a political factor. They never. . . never said

A. (Continued) a word publicly. There was never any public outcry, never a meeting, nothing. And it was just like out of the dark, which is. . . which tells you a lot, you know, how little we. . . we knew. Because if you didn't go to Joseph Avenue you didn't see them. There were just no blacks. Never thought anything about it because, you know, you didn't see them.

Q. Do you think the Joseph Avenue Jewish community did anything to exacerbate the sentiment?

A. No, I don't think. . . I think they just. . . just that they lived there. I can't picture that.

Q. Do you think the riots were anti-Semitic or anti-white?

A. Anti-white. I don't. . . I think they. . . this was the only white community they knew. I don't think that they dared, obviously, felt that they could move out into the other area. I'm sure they must have felt that if they did that they'd really bring down the. . . you know, the ire. They burned their own. . . their own places. I don't think it was anti-Semitic. I mean the whites happened to be Jews. I think. . . the. . . the stores were too grundy to have taken that kind of advantage of blacks. I know there were neighborhoods in New York where blacks were cheated and so on and mistreated in a sort of a quiet way. And I could understand they wanted to get back, but I can. . . I don't think that there was anything resembling, you know, anything worth. . . They were little stores, they were little nothing. Two or three barrels of herring, you know, was. . . was a herring store. That kind of thing. And I can't. . . particularly büsy unless some guy was sore at some grocer who didn't want to give him credit.

Q. Do you know of or have you had any personal experience with any kind of anti-Semitism in Rochester?

A. I've had not overt, but sidelong. There was something really and I can't

- A. (Continued) remember now, some public announcement that Rabbi Feldsman wrote a letter to the editor. . .I really don't. . . just two, three months ago. But it just escapes me. I remember thinking that it was a nasty and anti-Semitic dig that, you know, I see them in the letters to the editor. I have felt no personal anti-Semitism at all. No I can't say that.
- Q. Well, were you ever aware that there might have been a quota system at the University of Rochester?
- A. I was informed by people who'd gone there that. . . that there was a quota system and that things were. . . names were . . . were recited that. . . Morrie Shapiro for instance couldn't get into the medical school and so on, things of that nature. And that when the thing began to ease everybody said that the former deans and chancellors of the university must be turning over in their graves because one year there was a Succot on, first big year when they had a lot of Jews, which obviously nobody would have thought of when I first came. There was no communication the first ten years between "gown and town." There really wasn't. You didn't even know it existed. Kept to themselves and occasionally a pupil who came to the community, who got in and lived on the campus would come, but you heard nothing, no. . . no connection between the two.
- Q. And has that changed?
- A. It's changed tremendously. All the Jewish faculty members that have come on and the great percentage of Jewish students. And Jewish students who wanted to be publicly identified as Jews, who had some courage about it and who demand it, you know. And I think once administration realized that a new day was sort of dawning, they gave in.
- Q. Have you. . . were you at all connected with the Hillel on Campus?
- A. I used to do some things for and with Rabbi Levine in the early days before

A. (Continued) that was established I'd give a program and so on. But we discussed together, we did several major things, exhibits and concerts and things of that nature. He called on me as 'a resource person at any time. We officiated at some weddings together and college students. . . I gave a course for. . . they had a sort of a free university when that was in style. You don't go to school there, you go to school in a hovel there, that makes it kosher. So, I gave a course in Jewish music. I think it lasted about three sessions and then, like all the other sessions they just petered out, kids got. . . got tired of it. I think I'll have to call a halt at this time, if you don't mind.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE B

Interview II
Tape I
Side A

- Q. This is Tape 2, Side A. It is June the 22nd. And I'm in Cantor Rosenbaum's office. Mr. Rosenbaum, do you belong to any political or civic organizations in the city?
- A. I am a registered Democrat but beyond that I do very little work with a . . . with a political organization.
- Q. I see.
- A. Although I taught politics, but I had never, quote, worked for a candidate or anything of that nature.
- Q. Do you think that. . . now you weren't here when the Democrats were in power in the city earlier on during the thirties, but . . .
- A. No.
- Q. But do you think that there's any difference between the local Democrats and the local Republicans and the way they handle. . .?
- A. Yes, I think there's a very definite difference. I think that there's a definite difference between Republicans and Democrats. Democrats basically right or wrong are oriented to people needs and. . . and the Republicans, sounds like old hat but it's true, are oriented to capital needs. And while I'm not crying out for Socialist state, I am a Democrat because I believe they come closer. . . the Democrats come closer to serving the real needs and to be a little more concerned. I don't want to be too cynical. Most parties get tied up in their own underwear as one of our very fine people used to say. And get tied up in profits of governing. So that really a limited amount of progress in any party can make. You can't come in and sweep City Hall clean or the Federal government clean. There are certain commitments that go beyond the

A. (Continued) time when one party steps out and another party comes in. However in this current turnover from the Republicans to the Democrats I find that there has been a refreshing change. Number 1, the City Manager while appointed by the Democrat Party has been 100% free to act on his own. So much so that many times he's embarrassed the Democrat Party in terms of some reasonable political patronage. He's not recognized that at all. I happen to know that from sources close to him and happen to know him. I find that he's turned a deaf ear, as . . . as deaf an ear to Democratic invitations to . . . to act in a certain way as to Republicans. He's a professional and for the first time I think in many years free to act. I have found for instance the current scandal about the Voter Registration Commission that the voter registration people were . . . were for years free to be sitting on their hands and making everything they . . . and making every process they could to discourage voter registration and to discourage voting by mail. And have done nothing creative to . . . to encourage people to register and vote. This is very cynical action by Republicans and by one for many Democrats in denying the new appointment to the Democrat designee is I think a very cynical act. Normally it's understood that the commission has one Republican and one Democrat representative. And in all history the Democrats appointed and whoever was in power approved it. And the Republicans appointed and so on. So the first time now a young man who is equipped, who has the talent, who has the know-how, who has the background having been a political worker. Also by the way a graduate seminarian and a person who is interested in the needs of the people and who would go out and do something aggressive about registration. Being now denied. Now there is an option, we're getting into political areas, but there is an option for the Democrats to overrule that denial, but it lays them open to legal action by the Republicans. And considering their being in

- A. (Continued) cahoots with denying him the post in the first place, who's to say that they won't go even further? I think that the . . . the patronage of the Republicans has been just monstrous. And I think that while a certain amount of patronage under the Democrats exists that it is not nearly so much, maybe because they haven't been in power that long. I think it's a good idea every so often to go to the ranks without and get a new party. But I think generally I am sympathetic with Democratic. . .
- Q. Do you think that either party is . . . is more sympathetic to Jewish community?
- A. I think it is. . . it has been up until last year or two sympathetic to the Jewish community and I would be hard pressed to choose. Of course, I think of Congressman Horton who has been absolutely magnificent in his support of Israel and in support of goals, the proper goals, of the Jewish community. Never failed to be helpful and not only to vote the right way himself, the right way as we think it, but to help the others to vote with him. So it's hard to say. A man like that I know former or the late Ambassador Keating, while Republican in the Senate and while a Senator also treated the Jewish situation in that way. And you couldn't ask for better Jewish partisanship than they gave. The Democrats have been traditionally ethnically oriented and so, just as they favor the Irish segment or the . . . the Polish and all the others, they I think as a matter of course would favor the Jewish group. They have generally down the line been sympathetic to Jews, Jewish aspirations, especially as far as . . .
- Q. To your knowledge have there ever been in Rochester anti-Semitic political occurrences, you know? Either a politician who was anti-Semitic or some . . .?
- A. None that have come to my attention. No one knows what goes on in the smoke-filled room, but except those who are in there coughing. But, publicly I . . . it's hard for me to recall any incidents of that kind.
- Q. OK. Last time we were discussing changes in the Jewish community and you

- Q. (Continued) were talking about, oh, things economic. Can you offhand think of any changes on the whole that the Jewish community has gone through since 1946 when you came?
- A. Well I believe when we. . . when I first came, when my family first came, the leaders of the Jewish community were also the heads of large firms, local firms, not retail firms but firms, Rochester Smelting and the Rosenbaum family and Frankel family were in big business, so to speak, not on a national scale but. . . but beyond. . . business that reached beyond confines of Rochester. The Jewish community was involved in the legal trades to a great degree. It may be that Jewish corporations have taken over, but they're not Rochester corporations and one doesn't think of them in terms of their religious or ethnic background. A corporation comes in from out of town and buys one of the factories that make men's suits, they're part of a multi-million dollar combine that you don't think of in those terms. I think generally the . . . in some families the sons, the grandsons have stayed in the business but more have gone out of the business. They. . . in those times too there were people in the supply business and the paper business and the food business, there are supermarkets, I'm sure you know. The Robfogel Paper Company, the Kolko Paper Company, who still exist and do a great deal of business and in each case family members have retained the firm. Some have gone out of business. One of Robfogel's sons is the president of the corporation. Another has left the business and is an attorney. The Kolko family all the sons are in the business. It's doubtful whether the grandchildren will be. There are also some nephews and cousins who are in the business. Generally it is a family-oriented business, built up for and by the family. And that was the level. There were some retailers, but very few. I think that many, many of the people who are now in the leadership are relative newcomers to the community.

A. (Continued) Some of the old families, but lot of newcomers. A large firm, of course, is the Germanow/Simon firm and those sons are still in the business. They run the business. One son of the Simon family is, several sons of the Germanow family have remained in the business. Also beyond reach, beyond the Rochester, again not on a national scale but bigger than just Rochester alone. Not only is it a very interesting firm, some discussion should be held with. . . with the Germanow sons.

Q. Yes, someone is. I'm not personally, but I know they are being. . .

A. Mr. Harry Germanow, the late. . . one of the late founders wrote a personal biography which is very interesting and gives a . . . an idea of the difficulty of a Jew entering a machine tool industry, which is the primary manufacturing implement used in his business. And in the early twenties it was an almost unheard of thing for a Jew to have the skill or to be in that business. And he pioneered in many ways pioneered socially too. Tradition of the company that the company closes down Friday afternoon, twelve o'clock. Although Germanow was not an observant Jew, he felt that he wanted to do this, give his workers at the time when people weren't . . . when there was really no union activity and so on. There was a great deal of compassion and feeling for the people who had worked and loyalty. Of course it was a smaller type of corporation. I don't know their situation is now, but I know they do close at 12 o'clock on Fridays. Giving a long weekend to all their employees. At this point some of the young leadership grows up in the ranks, opened businesses, succeeded and are now have the time and the money to become involved in Jewish community affairs. I think if you took a list of the leaders of the Jewish community, that is the organized Jewish community you would find that not all of them are sons of former leaders, but there are new people who've come up. But now that I rethink it, probably most of them are Rochesterians.

Q. Do you think that Rochester ever had sort of a small town ambiance that it has lost?

A. No I don't think it's lost. I think it has a . . . not so much small town, but small to middling kind of town. And, up until very recently there was the "WASP" ethic of half-showing. . . well, understating everything except for the George Eastman House, the very wealthy people in town did not live in show places, so-called. And the Jewish community followed that, although they lived little. . . in a little more showy fashion they also lived rather subdued lives. It wasn't until they began to move out of Rochester for the winters and emerged from the cocoon and began to . . . to lead more overtly rich men's lives. But generally the emphasis in Rochester was to understate the old temples, or at least was. If you looked at it in reality, took away the . . . the aura of nostalgia and the love that people had for what the temple represented, it was a building built in about 1860. When I came there were only still there were only carpet runners. The floor had never been completely carpeted. All the social events took place in what was called the parlor. Two rooms off to one side of the synagogue itself, which was in a terrible state. It was painted and it was reasonably clean, but it was so old that the place had a distinct aroma of its own which is not always pleasant. And obviously a terrible fire trap, which proved by the eventual fire which destroyed it. And yet there was a certain nostalgia about it, attached to everybody now. Oh, wasn't it wonderful. Then I said, what was wonderful about it was that it was a small community with 400 members, everybody knew each other, everybody knew each other since they were born practically, and it was a nice place to meet. But, when I first came here the first day I was aghast that so important a congregation and I find that really, at first sight, broken-down looking kind of place. It took a long time to get feeling warm about the cherry wood furnishings, the pews

A. (Continued) and so on. And there was a lack of proper sanitation facilities and the lack of a good kitchen and all of the things that really people would have been ashamed to live in the kind of houses in which they worshipped and which they supported. And that's what I meant last time when I said that when the new staff of Rosenberg and myself and head teacher named Sol Labin came, we literally turned the congregation around and made it take a look at itself. We realized that we were getting too big and too wealthy to continue to suffer the indignities of that building. The school building next door was an old house which was built before the church which we took over. And in winter was infested with coal gas and 'course in the summer didn't matter. In the back there was a firetrap of a warehouse, wherever something could no longer be used, it should have been thrown out, it was put in the back there, maybe we'll use it. And the year I came they got new seats for the pupils which were thrown out by an old church in Avon, somebody saw and picked up. It's hard to imagine the. . . the cream of Rochester Jewish society standing for that. But, again, no one had. . . had shown them just what they could do.

Q. How did the fire start?

A. Well there had been a very large attendance at the Friday night service. There was a double Bat Mitzvah that night. And we believe that our superintendent at the time, who was a smoker, when people left, began to clear out. He was not Jewish and obviously felt no compunction about smoking. He must have laid his cigarette down, there was an old-fashioned dumbwaiter that led from the main floor in the back to the kitchen below. And the dishes were usually loaded on trays or whatever and then taken down and then washed in the kitchen downstairs. He must have left his cigarette on the ledge, the wooden ledge of that. And then, of course, that was the perfect chimney. And cleaned up and it must have

A. (Continued) smouldered, 'cause that's where the fire. . . the firemen tell us the fire started. Had it started, you know, at nine o'clock in the morning, the room that was most destroyed was the upstairs auditorium where our junior congregation was, and from which there was one exit which led directly to the source of the fire. And one narrow exit which would have led out, but which was narrow and dark and really terribly unsteady. That whole upper thing was destroyed, as was the temple. The arc, standing up was not damaged because it was built on a fire wall and the fire sort of came around it and never really touched the arc. And none of the scrolls from the main arc were scorched or . . . 'course they were smoky, but two scrolls and the arc upstairs were both burned. But it was remnants that they were burned. However we were already engaged in a fundraising campaign which only made it more definite and speeded up the process.

Q. I take it you don't feel too much nostalgia for the old temple?

A. Well, I do, but I think I can also. . . not having been born here I can also see it as it actually was. And it left a great deal to be desired. But I suppose it served . . . In those days the most elegant ladies would come for a Sisterhood meeting, roll up their sleeves, take off their white gloves and cook, prepare the luncheon and so on, and it was considered a great honor. There were at the time only two caterers. No one would ever think of catering a luncheon, catered a wedding or Bar Mitzvah party, but you didn't cater a luncheon, Sisterhood luncheon, that you did yourself. And that brought them a great deal of, you know, feeling of closeness, something that everybody could engage in and everybody could get pleasure out of. And it's a sense of accomplishment, you know, you work and get your hands dirty and. . . and you really felt it would mean something. And of course whatever they charged was profit.

Q. So, does that kind of a thing go on here in the new temple?

A. Well, to some extent but not to the same amount. Luncheon is catered by a caterer because the women just don't want to get in there and have to make a luncheon for 300 people or 250. But, women and members of the Sisterhood still serve so there is some help serving. And maybe 10, 12 women for each meeting. I remember even the club, the monthly luncheon meeting, has waned. Sisterhood next year will have only four. They'll have other events, but the business of a luncheon is no longer an attraction. Our tastes change and the modes change. And that . . . usually these attract only the older women. And the younger women who come. . . our younger women bring their mothers, you know, help them get there and they'll stay. There are some young girls. The leadership is all young, but some of the people who come to luncheons have pretty much been the older set.

Q. Were you ever connected with the Baden Street Settlement?

A. Not at all.

Q. What were your impressions of it?

A. Well they were very vague. I knew some of the people who worked in the later years in the Sol Alinsky time, but otherwise I really don't like to comment on it.

Q. OK. What sorts of community organizations do you belong to?

A. Well, we belong to the Friends of the Public Library. We belong to . . . to the Art Gallery. We are subscribers and have been for many years to the Philharmonic series. Both Mel and I belonged for a number of years to the ACLU. We have discontinued our membership in the past two or three years. Mrs. Rosenbaum is active in Democratic politics, both professionally and volunteer.

Q. Do you think that Rochester is a particularly culturally interested community?

A. Well, I'm gonna say something that's very. . . I think the. . . the precious

A. (Continued) mud town, the name of that book, is reasonably applicable as far as culture is concerned. This community for all its wealth doesn't hold a candle to other cities of . . . of comparable size. Certainly, our Art Gallery is nowhere near the Buffalo Gallery in content, although they've built a lovely little building for the gallery with very little in it to attract. And when they do put on a show, an exhibition, it's a very limited kind of thing. And there. . . it just doesn't have the materials. That's not because they don't want to but somehow they. . . they've not acquired any kind of art nor do they go out aggressively to do that. I don't think that they. . . that the community accords that nearly what it should. Until very recently the community gave lip service to the Philharmonic but did not support it. Raised a string of most incompetent and unsuccessful conductors merely because they wouldn't hire a very successful conductor. They were afraid that we would get. . . we would mind too much in the days when they wanted to control the situation. Jews for the longest time, except one or two figureheads like Rabbi Bernstein who was a member of the Philharmonic Board of Directors or what-have-you. Today of course it's different. The mainstay all these years good part of it was in terms of the subscribers. And the same thing with the Art Gallery. You look down at who are members, you know the rank and file, you find there was this snide remark in the Democrat and Chronicle by Marco Walsh the music critic some time ago about the way the people who . . . who . . . who sit in the lefthand front section of the Eastman Theatre on the Philharmonic behave, which is to me a very overt and anti-Semitic remark because all the Jews who subscribe or most of them somehow prefer, have developed that they sit there.

Q. What. . . what sort of behavior was. . . ?

A. Well, what happened was that a lady called him and asked him whether he couldn't do something about the socialization that goes on in between, during the

A. (Continued) intermission and before the concert begins. Well this is not a synagogue, it's supposed to be OK. That's what you come there for. Behavior during the music is impeccable, or is as impeccable as any other part. Somebody whispers, somebody whispers. But this lady, who I think is completely off base, called him. And I think his response should have been, you know, I'm sorry about that but . . . He should have let it go. Instead he wrote a very long column about how that bothered him too and he asked to be changed, which he did. He sat in front of me, and this year he had his seat changed upstairs. But he had his seat changed as he told me because the acoustics were better upstairs, and they were, they are, not because. . . at least that's not what he told me. Then he went on to report on the Philharmonic's concerts in the Miami area and spoke about the . . . about the . . . the people who attended who walked in there wearing white shoes. Now you know that kind of thing and eating hard candy and so on. Well, you know, Miami everybody wears white shoes. But, again, it was a slap at . . . at the Jews in a very nasty way. And I almost broke my long rule about not writing letters to the editor, personal thing I have about. . . I think that the . . . the men in a professional right the people look upon it as, you know, well what else. . . better for lay people to write if they're disturbed or if they have some point of view on a Jewish subject. I'm not talking about. . . And I think it was really. . . we talked before about overt anti-Semitic, it was a really snide and anti-Semitic jab, although never once obviously did he use the word "Jew." But, those who sit in that area know exactly what it was, people who have had those seats for 20 years. And among them the people who are on the Board and who. . . who give the most money and whose names you see on the program as sponsors and so on. Without them the orchestra wouldn't be really where it is today. Now we pretend to be very cultured, but yet if you look at programs you find that the conductors

A. (Continued) learn very soon that they have to play Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Mozart and maybe a little Wagner once in a while or what-have-you, or Moller. But once, you know, you get into the contemporary things we're accepting it better but not nearly as open to innovations and to try. You don't have to like it, but you know let's not force, pressure the conductors to . . . to . . . to howing the same. . . people who work in the same line all the time. I think Zinman is trying very hard to do something along, you know, that way. And hopefully the pressure won't get to him. With all this flaunted generosity, Kodak and Bausch & Lomb and all the big companies in town, don't do nearly enough in my estimation in terms of what they can do and could do, what similar corporations do in other communities. You know, Dow holds centers and so on. . .

Q. Right.

A. . . . instead of the thing now is to operate subsidies, though we deny it. Seems to me with some imagination no reason why the company corporations in town couldn't endow the suburbs and the park. Why Monroe County has to pay the cost up to \$30,000 when. . . when you know to really run a fine series, there's no theatre. It has not been able to. . . well, you know, they expect them to be self-supporting. They can't be anymore than the Philharmonic is self-supporting. I mean, and Channel 21 is not self-supporting. That's supported by the community.

Q. Why do you think there's a lack of support? Now I. . . I go to the symphony almost every time, and I've been twice in two years where there was anywhere near a full house. Why do you think?

A. Well, we talk a good deal about how cultured we are, but we really aren't. Very small contingency of people who care about it, and the others ride along on that reputation that Rochester is a great culture city. It has potential for it. It has a fine library system and I think it has the cultural assets

A. (Continued) in the community. Because there has to. . . a little bit aggressive about the use of the library. It also has its problems. Lot of nonsense that doesn't go on there and. . . and the red-tape, the bureaucracy that develops in any kind of community thing. I don't know of any great grants to the library system, but it would not be out of order. Or perhaps to the. . . to the gallery it would not be out of order in terms of acquisitions. Result to acquire things or at least get the money to borrow them for. . . for exhibitions or for shows, it's not gonna happen. I can see that the level of this community of media is disgraceful. I think there's nobody on the Democrat & Chronicle can write English. I think that our. . . the. . . the new. . . news stations, the announcers cannot put a sentence together, the local announcers let alone the NBC who are not so hot, but the local announcers cannot write an English sentence. They literally cannot write an English sentence. And the result, we've begun to accept such sloppiness and I think that's a mark of a lack of culture when. . . when the media itself cannot speak the language. When we spend all our time and have no more imagination than to everyday there's another fire and another slaying. Now these are news, they're not. . . that's fine, but somehow in that half-hour let's have some. . . some other kinds of things. Let's do some investigating. Let's do some. . . some educating, you know. Some. . . some public interest things that we think people should be made aware of obviously. I think the only interesting guy on all the three stations is George Beahan, on 13 who talks about sports, who has this thing and who has. . . and who knows his business and who, you know, talks like he does. The weather. . . the weathermen are reasonably good, but you know, I'm not really interested in what's happening in new cars today and I just think that much. . . that's a sign of poverty, you see, when you spend as much time on the weather as you do on. . . on any other segment of local news, you haven't

A. (Continued) anything to say. It's very convenient to start telling me about, you know, in California it did this and so on. I don't . . . unless there's been an earthquake or something, I don't care if it's rained in California, if it hasn't rained, I really don't. I am curious about what's happening and what's going to happen in and around our area. It'd be nice if they would, you know, maybe give some service to the many, many Rochesterians who commute to New York or Washington or so on, that I can understand. But beyond that I don't care what's in Utah and I don't care really why we're having three days of rain. Tell me it's rain and very briefly. I think the whole weather report could be done in 30 seconds.

Q. Do you think there's a lack of cultural education in the city? Could that be part of it?

A. Of course.

Q. What. . .

A. There's no priorities. We know now that the Board of Education has. . . has cut with and cut. . . forced to cut and cut in addition the services, social services, cut the director of the music department for the whole City of Rochester has been dismissed. Now people give lip service to music and to art and our temple's just as guilty. Aside from the events that I put on in our school we have very little first-rate music instruction and art instruction and literature instruction. Literature from . . . important literature. Obviously we are not going to teach Shakespeare, but we have a Jewish history and our Jewish poets. And we have. . . kids should be made aware of it. And they. . . no longer, it would be much more helpful to read some of the poetry of A. M. Kline in English than another three words in . . . in the textbook. And I'm not opposed to teaching the Torah, obviously. But we have no real music program, no creativity. And the kids come from a school system that

- A. (Continued) does have. Generally, Brighton school especially the suburban schools have fine music programs, or have had up to now. But that's the first place you cut, whereas in my mind that should be the last place. I'd rather see two more kids in a class, you know, studying French together than cutting whatever little air there is in the program that's not boring, that could be exciting and worthwhile.
- Q. Do you think things are getting worse?
- A. Well, they're not getting any better that's for sure.
- Q. To your knowledge, has there ever been any sort of Yiddish theatre brought in here?
- A. Yes, in the early days before I came this was one of the stops when the season folded or closed in New York or Philadelphia some hardy troupe would go on the road. Today it's a financial impossibility to go on the road, least with Yiddish theatre. But what happens is that some of the national Jewish organizations occasionally, usually the older ones, the Farbund and the organizations of that kind, get together three or four actors who. . . who will go on a ten or twelve-week tour, who can travel maybe in one car, do what you call one. . . one night stands, give concerts really, very little drama. The last drama which was shown here was by Jacob Bonami and he had a great name in Yiddish theatre. Maybe 20 years ago at the old JY. But since then there has been no Yiddish theatre. We have had individual Yiddish performers whom we've brought, mostly here, stars. Bolov and Marion Crescent and other people of that stature. And they've given concerts or given readings, dramatic cameos, so on. But there's been no. . . nowhere does exist the possibility. I know the one producer of the Yiddish theatre in New York now who talked with me about the possibility. When they looked into the cost. . . Theatre is not theatre unless you bring some kind of scenery, even if it's only a flag, some kind of

A. (Continued) lights, some kind of excitement. Otherwise it's pretty dreary. So, it was just impossible unless a congregation or institution like would underwrite so that they could walk away at least with their costs covered. Not even make a profit, but the costs recovered, the actors are given employment and maybe they get a better break in terms of the scale that they have to pay them and there's a little more money in it for the producers, he's got enough money go to again next year, otherwise you put him out of business. And nobody works, you see.

Q. Has the Memorial Art Gallery or WXXI or Eastman Theatre tried in the past or now to bring in Jewish culture in any of their programs?

A. Very, very little. I get very little support. As a matter of fact you get more support when you have a project with a commercial and with 21, not to be really critical. I don't think we've made too much of an effort, but we haven't made any inroads there. The Art Gallery I think. . . I think a program, we've had one at the Art Gallery which had to do with Jewish things. I have much more success some years back with the Eastman House. There was a director or assistant director, I think his name was Harold Jones had his own gallery in New York. Was a very sensitive and very talented photographer. He used to take picture of scenes without people, that is scenes where people should be but there aren't people. He had a very dreamy kind of quality. And he understood what we were driving at and he helped me mount not only several shows here, but they have a vast amount of immigrant materials. But also arranged several lectures with some of the leading photographers today who are not publishing all over the place and who were then working as graphic arts and just beginning to be known. And we had a number of series here which I worked on with him of ideas as shown. . . as in photography and. . . and how. . . how one studies it, how pictures can be deceiving in terms of what you see,

- A. (Continued) do you see what's there or don't you see. Combined with psychological tests after seeing certain pictures to describe what you'd seen and so on. To help people to look and to really see, rather people look and don't see, you know. So, a very, very exciting period for about, oh, five years he was here and then he left to go into his own gallery. So we've never done anything with his successor.
- Q. Do you think part of the problem could be that people don't live in town . . . I mean, Jewish people don't live in town anymore?
- A. No, but there's. . . Rochester in the metropolitan area is close enough so that it doesn't. . . I don't think it has an effect.
- Q. OK. I'm just trying to get at, you know. . .
- A. Well, the Art Gallery where else could they go? There's no art gallery in the city. I mean there are private galleries, but if there were something going, well they're interested in going to see it. None of the suburbs are that far or complicated to keep people away.
- Q. So it's just lack of. . . pure lack of interest.
- A. I think really people don't want to put their money where their mouth is. You know, they all talk about how cultured we should be, you know, but we're really not.
- Q. Yea. That's fascinating.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE A

Interview III
Tape I (Note: Same tape was used as for second interview on June 22, 1976)
Side B

- Q. This is Tina Isaacs interviewing Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum. It's Monday, June the 28th and we are in Cantor Rosenbaum's office. Cantor Rosenbaum I'd like to talk to you a while about community relations between the Jewish community and the Gentile community in Rochester. And first of all, I want to ask you what you think about people from the Jewish community participating in larger community activities?
- A. Well, if you mean secular community activities like joining with non-Jews in the orchestra and the gallery or in Community Chest drives, by all means. We're part of the community, we're citizens of this community and we should feel no . . . no different than . . . no special status and no . . . no hesitation at working on such drives. And also should feel no hesitation in voicing our opinion as to how the funds collected for such drives should be utilized. And if it means supporting Jewish institutions who apply to the Community Chest, for instance, I think we should speak out. I feel we have a legitimate cause to defend or to . . . or to bring to the attention of the community.
- Q. Do you think that most of the people who do volunteer work for the Jewish organizations also do volunteer work for other organizations?
- A. Well, I don't think so. But I think the high leadership of the Jewish community feels it. . . its responsibility and rightly so. I think also give leadership in the wider community activities. I think that somehow it's just a vague impression, I have no statistics to bear me out, but there are certain people in the Jewish community that give their major effort to civic undertakings and not particularly to Jewish organizations, vice versa. Lot of Jews who work on the Welfare Fund drive or the Bond drive and so on and. . . and not

A. (Continued) do anything at all on the Community Chest. For instance in all the years I've been here I've never been solicited by any Community Chest worker who was Jewish. So, obviously there are not a great many of them. The late Jacob Hollander was very active in the Jewish. . . in the Community Chest drive. And for years was. . . was known as a great fundraiser there, and of course, was highly active in the Jewish community. But outside of him and outside of one or two Jewish presidents of the Chamber of Commerce or the Saturday Afternoon Luncheon Club, which has a different name, I can't remember now, I can think of I think Joe Goldstein and Sol Linowitz who were presidents of that luncheon event which met once a month and great speaker were invited to come. There is I don't think we. . . we. . . we accede our population statistics in the statistics of people who work in the community. And I think that that's regrettable. I think we should . . . we should bend every effort to participate. We're citizens, we've won our equality. At least, certainly, on paper and we should exercise that equality.

Q. Do you think that the Rochester Jewish community in a sense then is closed?

A. I think it was closed from the outside. I think those activities in the early days were looked upon as "WASP" activities and didn't particularly accept easily Jewish volunteers. And I should say it perhaps a little softer. They didn't go out of their way to solicit Jewish or other ethnic group for that matter. I think it was entirely a "WASP" kind of operation. And only later on, in more recent times, do you detect some Jewish names in the. . . in the leadership. I'm not sure it's any longer a policy, but I think that that's so. Also I think it should, I feel that the . . . the civic organizations like the Community Chest seem to have lost the prominence that they once had in the eyes of the general community. You don't . . . you don't really hear much excitement from them. They go about their business and they do it as a cut and dried affair.

- A. (Continued) And I guess that's when they launch their annual campaign you hear about it, but the newspapers used to be filled with pictures of the Community Chest drive and everyday the goals were photographed. You don't see that anymore. I don't know to what to ascribe that but. . .
- Q. Oh, OK. I was just gonna ask you why.
- A. No. I really don't. . . don't have enough of the facts, but I think that that's an observation that's valid.
- Q. OK. So then you think it's very important for Jews to participate, just throughout. . .?
- A. As citizens of Rochester, sure.
- Q. OK. Now I want to talk to you something else about relations with the Gentile community. And that is intermarriage. And I'd like to talk. . . I'd like you to give me your opinions both specifically, you know, as far as people you might know, and in general, you know, what your impressions are?
- A. Well, it seems to me that intermarriage is the price we're paying for. . . for our newly-won freedoms and for the open society in which we live. In the days when Jews were not permitted certain places, and I'm not longing for a return to those days, kids grew up more reinforced by the concept that non-Jewish girls and non-Jewish boys were not for them. And they knew it almost from childhood because they saw it in their parents' lives. They saw it in the lack of non-Jewish friendly neighbors. They may have had a neighbor with whom they exchanged hello and good-bye, but the business of non-Jewish neighbors visiting the homes or having dinner or going there for dinner or for a picnic or for some other thing was very rare indeed. Was. . .
- Q. Also in Rochester?
- A. Oh, particularly. It was the five o'clock shadow kind of business. . . business with them.

Q. You were speaking. You said five o'clock shadow. . .

A. Yes, that was a well-known fact here that people did not mind doing business with Jewish firms or with Jews or employing them, but after five o'clock they were well-known two or three clubs which Jews could not join and at the time there was the Philharmonic organization which Jews had only one token Jew or two at most. Which does not exist so much now, although I have a feeling that at least one club still does not easily admit Jews as members. You can come there for dinner if you're a guest of a member, but that's about. . . that's about the. . . the total of it. So, I. . . I think that in some sense that has improved a little. But so long as kids go away to school, which is now the pattern, which again was not the pattern in the former generation, a small group of college students went away, but a large group of them trying to find a school within the confines of their community or close by. So that they were in closer contact, if not supervision, from their parents and their family and as a result the parents' mores and the family's mores. Today a kid goes away in September, you don't see him until. . . or her until Thanksgiving and then one, two, three and a few days around Christmas time and more or less you find that they're gone off to visit someone else. Or someone else comes to visit you, and in the younger generation we find that religion matters but in a different way. We no longer have Jews who are closet Jews, no longer have Jews who change their name. Look at Broadway. You know, in my generation or before my generation all the comedians, all the performers changed their names, you know. Eddie Cantor was Eddie Yiskowitz and you could go right down the. . . the row. Today Gabriel Kaplan is certainly a Jewish name, David Steinberg. I mean, you can't miss it. So obviously there is certain pride and a certain refusal to hide one's origins. But, I'm not sure what Judaism means to them beyond the fact that they're not ashamed of

A. (Continued) the name, which is a step in the right direction. Steinberg happens to come from a very well-educated Jewish family. His mother and father were both Hebrew teachers. But, I. . . I don't know what influence that had on his life and on the way he lives and on how he carries himself through. . . through his. . . his engagements. So we don't have that. And I think the kids are the same way. They don't deny they're Jewish. They don't want to leave the Jewish faith, but they see no reason why they can't marry a Protestant or a Catholic girl, who also feels the same way about her religion. That is, it's a recognizable fact and it's something you inherit, and it has nice nostalgic memories and they wouldn't give up Chanukkah or Passover, but they also see no reason why they cannot accept Christmas and Easter and all the other things that come along. Whether they're right or wrong, whether this openness and equality and feeling of equality will remain when they mature and when their children, when there are directions for children. People who have no children always say we'll let the children decide, but children of five cannot decide whether they should go to a Hebrew Sunday school or let us say or Hebrew religious school or Catholic religious school. Somebody has to decide for them. And if you're gonna wait until they're fifteen, you've wasted an awful lot of time. And they have lost an awful lot of. . . of good things that can come from any religion, religious experience in their lives. So, the reason for that is I think that religion just doesn't mean anything to the younger generation in terms of . . . it's not worth. . . it's. . . it's worth keeping, but it's not worth getting excited about and it really plays no part in their lives and it plays very little in the part of their parents' lives. Their parents still, you know, hold on. They come to the synagogue, they support the synagogue more or less, Jewish Community Center, they support Jewish institutions. They buy

- A. (Continued) Bonds. They give to the Welfare Fund. But, whether we actually change their lives in any appreciable way except for a small, what we ought to call 'em weavers and seekers, a few . . . small group of people who takes it seriously, who . . . believe in what Judaism has to say, even though they may not be Orthodox, but to whom Judaism means a certain way of life. Even if on Saturday it means that you . . . just that you don't go shopping, or just that you don't use the vacuum cleaner. But there is a difference in Saturday morning than there is in any other morning. At least it's begun with attendance at synagogue. That group is small and the educated group among that group is even smaller. The literate group I should say, not the educated.
- Q. So it's not really the young generation today that's become less religious, it's the generation before it?
- A. Absolutely. I think that the . . . the parents of the younger generation are the ones who if there is fault to be assessed then they should take a good portion of it because they have not. . . they are people who have gone and made arrangements for a Bar Mitzvah and then went out to a club and had a non-kosher lunch to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah. Had a wedding recently where . . . where the couple was married in the temple and they were going to have the dinner somewhere else. And the girl desperately wanted to have some Jewish symbolism about the . . . the wedding dinner. And she confessed to me that no there would not be a kosher meal served. Well how do you make a motze over a non-kosher meal? It's just ludicrous. And she was very upset by it that she couldn't have some symbol. Finally we found that there were one table of Jews, and this bothers me more than anything else, who were being served kosher meals, either T.V. dinners or what have you, and it would be perfectly all right for them and their table, obviously, to make a motze and

A. (Continued) so that they would in a sense be used, quotes around it, to give an air of Jewishness. And this girl comes from a family that absolutely no observance, although they're long-time members of the congregation. But, yet, she felt the need for some Jewish symbolism beyond the wedding ceremony itself. And I think because the family didn't think it important, she lost out. The family thought it important that insisted on her schooling and had followed through, this is the big problem, kids. . . families leave kids with us, whether weekdays on a Sabbath, and you know say just like you leave laundry, wash it and return it to me spiritualized. And we want our kid to have a Jewish spiritual experience. We want them to love Jewish ethics. Well, you know, you can't really teach. You could make people aware of them, make people understand them, but you can only learn that by osmosis, by living with it and by observing what. . . what others do and seeing that it's worthwhile.

Q. Do you think there's any hope of reversing this trend?

A. I'm really not a prophet and I really don't know. I know that there are always small groups that do understand this and that do carry forth. And frankly I'm very grateful to the authentic Orthodox who maintain their discipline because they, at least, help shove the thing somewhat over into perspective. And give some sense of stability to Judaism, or provide a norm, or provide a basis for a goal on which people. . . to which people can aspire. And they are, in a small statistical way, very, very strong. There are a lot of young. . . in Rochester a lot of young couples who. . . who . . . most of whom seriously pursue Orthodox life, careful about what they eat and observe. . . I'm sure they don't observe every last of the 613 commandments, but who try under. . . under very trying circumstances to lead a Jewish life. There are others who do it as a fad. They happen to run around in the same social circle and it's the thing to do to send your kids to Hillel School. And you send them to Hillel School.

- A. (Continued) Well, that's fine. I wish more kids went to Hillel School. The question is, what happens when you get home?
- Q. Why did. . . why did the temple. . . why did Temple Beth El originally not want the Hillel School here?
- A. That's not so.
- Q. Oh, that's what. . .
- A. Not at all, No.
- Q. Oh, OK.
- A. What happened was when Hillel School sold its building, and I think the whole community felt that it should since it was in such great debt, that it should sell its building and get some assets and then rent space. The plan was worked out by the Jewish Community Federation that they would stay two years here and stay two years at B'rith Kodesh. Now I have not kept up on the reason why they did not return here, I really don't know. There were some housekeeping questions which were serious problems. We really don't have as much space as we need and as we'd like to have. We just don't have the time to clean the building properly. And so for us it became a problem. Now whether B'rith Kodesh has managed to solve that more expeditiously than we have, I don't know. I haven't kept up on that, but I know that they've stayed there more than two years. There was even talk here of. . . of Hillel School building a building adjacent to ours and somehow run into a partnership, but that this would be their building but that they could use our public facilities. I don't think anything has come of that.
- Q. But you personally approve of the school?
- A. Well, as a matter of fact, if somebody will look back on the records I was one of the committee, Board of Trustees, when it was founded. And very much approve of the school and my three children all attended the school, but left before

A. (Continued) graduation because at that time, when they were all there, the classrooms. . . the classes were down to three and four kids and I felt that that was not healthy situation. It turned out to be a competition in each class between four kids. You know, when you have twenty the competition is less obvious, but four everybody is fighting and everybody's uptight. And I believe four kids in a classroom is not a class. So, they. . . much to their own loss had to be fitted in and they were younger children, but their Hebrew knowledge was that of high school kids. So they had a very tough time getting back into a situation where they could. . . at one time be on the same level Hebraically and yet approach the social level, which they didn't. . . In other words, a ten year old was attending classes with 15 year olds here, and probably knew more than they did Hebraically.

Q. Yea.

A. But certainly wasn't suited to. . . to hobnob within the class.

Q. OK. I just. . . aside from. . .

A. Not only I but all the rabbis, past rabbis, I believe Rabbi Rosenberg was here when Hillel School was founded and he certainly was in favor of it. Rabbi Karp, both children went and graduated Hillel School. I believe Rabbi Elkins' children go to Hillel School, so nobody here has opposed it by any means.

Q. I didn't mean to put the question quite so negatively. . .

A. Well . . .

Q. But I had heard that, you know, there. . . there were problems setting up.

A. There were. . . if there were problems, they were only technical housekeeping problems.

Q. OK. I apologize.

A. No, no, no. That's all right. Let's lay that to sleep.

Q. OK. I want to get back to intermarriage and those sorts of things. First of

Q. (Continued) all, do you have any idea at all what, say, the sort of statistics are on intermarriage?

A. Well the statistics are very deceptive because, as our Jewish historians tell us and Jewish statisticians, while the rate of intermarriage has grown there . . . in . . . in the town's language, on the bottom line, there has been no appreciable loss. In other words when somebody intermarries, it's not like it used to be in the thirties that they go into the church and get married. The intermarriages usually go before a Justice of the Peace or a Judge or some other secular kind of marriage, with the result that technically the Jew remains a Jew and the other partner remains whatever. . . that's the whole. . . that's the big thing with the young people. We both can remain what we are. Well, I'm not sure they can. I don't think that that. . . that when one's children arrive that that's as easily solved as they imagine it will be. But the temple's policy remains. . . it is now faced with the dilemma as intermarriage increases families, quite rightly, no longer reject their children which used to be the custom if your son intermarried, you sat shiva for him and cut him off. Today it's a question of shall you try to accept on the terms which exist or are you going to lose the child altogether? And most families, I think wisely, try to make the best of things. If there's a conversion possible, that's even better. If there is no conversion, then at least there ought to be harmonious or peaceful relationships between parents, the in-laws and the children. Now many . . . number of the families resent the fact that we don't publish news of such matters in our bulletin. It's a very strong and firm policy that we cannot do it. The temple does not stand for intermarriage. We may see it. We may have to accept it in the cases of A, B, C or D, but we surely don't preach it as a solution to our problem. And we certainly don't . . . don't approve it by virtue of the fact that even if the clergy officiates

- A. (Continued) in any such so-called mixed marriages, nor does any other clergyman in Rochester.
- Q. Oh, I see.
- A. No rabbi in Rochester or cantor will officiate with a non-Jewish clergyman, although you see it a great deal. . .
- Q. Oh, so you won't do that double sort of service?
- A. Because it is nonsense. Kids have to learn. . . I respect them for what they want but they cannot. . . they must show me respect for what I believe. I don't believe that you can have a ceremony in order to. . . to worship two Gods. . . all right, we worship the same God, but you cannot have two rituals in the same. . . it cannot be meaningful, at least as far as Judaism is concerned. Maybe Catholics or Protestants or Buddhists or whatever, you know, they can accept that, fine. But I can't accept it, nor obviously can the Rochester Board of Rabbis accept it. A wedding is either a Jewish wedding or it's a Catholic wedding or it's a Protestant wedding, but it cannot be half and half. And in such cases I always tell the parents don't make a fuss, at least have a secular. . . But that when it comes out, little girl or the little boy wants. . . wants her cantor or her rabbi to be present. Somebody she's known all her life and she has some affectionate relationship with, and it kills them. Now my own daughter had a very dear friend who grew up with Judy, oh, for ten, twelve years. And then met a young Catholic boy who was the nicest boy you could meet and very nice boy, and a good boy and I'm sure he's making her a fine husband. And after much counselling with me back and forth, he has an old mother who very hard to accept. . . for whom it's very hard to accept this decision. Her parents have made peace with the idea. And she came to know if I'd officiate at the wedding. She wanted to arrange for the use of the temple. And I told her it couldn't. For the longest time neither she

A. (Continued) nor her parents talked to us because it seemed like we were copping out on them. And they finally imported some schister, I must use the word, rabbi who. . . who officiated at a mixed ceremony. They imported him from out-of-town because no Reform rabbi in town, you know, you think perhaps a Reform rabbi, but no rabbi, certainly no Orthodox and no Conservative rabbi, would participate in that wedding. And I couldn't make it clear to her that it had no. . . had nothing to do with my affection for her as a human being and my best wishes for her for a successful marriage. But, officially I certainly can't condone or accept, no do I personally, that being the way. Therefore I cannot participate. . . I. . . I've never done it, but I would imagine if two Jewish young people wanted to get married and I felt very strongly about that this marriage, in my opinion, was, you know, was a bad one, I know it sounds like I'm interferring, but the. . . I don't have to participate in it. I'm not condoning, I'm not saying don't get married, but I don't want to be a party to this. . . this wedding. And I would have the right to do that, and so I feel the same way about intermarriage. But it's very hard to explain to parents why Mrs. So-and-So's daughter's wedding is announced and this wedding which took place the same day is overlooked in the temple bulletin. In a sense is complaining to the temple Board about its policy. It's not complaining it wasn't done, it's the people involved understand that that's an important policy, but they want the Board to re-evaluate it.

Q. Do you think there is more or less intermarriage in Rochester than, let us say, a comparable city its size?

A. I think it's a little less, but not much. I think it's a little less.

Q. Is there a reason for it being a little less, do you think?

A. I don't know. I mentioned before that there's something

- A. (Continued) in the genes of this city, if the city can be said to have genes, that leans slightly in favor of tradition. Synagogues, Jewish community, I think that the Jewish community set up is by far one of the best in the country in terms of the sincerity of the people involved and the loyalty and dedication of both the volunteers and the quality of the professionals.
- Q. Now I'd like to talk to you about certain Jewish community organizations, and I'll start out with the JY and the JCC. Have you participated in the . . . in that organization at all?
- A. I have done a great many things with the JCC, the JY. I . . . I don't think that the way they're set up and their philosophy that they contribute more than a place where people can spend leisure time and physical activity. I think in spite of all their attempts they have absolutely no grasp of what it means to put on an intellectual and whether it's drama or music or what, they. . . they approach everything with a social worker outlook. And I think that a professional, if he's a professional must be aggressive in his profession to his institution. He must suggest and must outline, and of course be discovered by the lay people who run it. But if the professional has no viewpoint from which to start out. . . in other words if I didn't feel this way about intermarriage then . . . and the rabbi let us say, then the field is open, anybody can suggest anything. But once they know that, number one, this is the tradition and this is the way the clergymen feel, and I think that's why people engage professionals. I think, but there is no profession except Judaism where amateurs feel so knowledgeable that there is a growing, you know, that this whole business of . . . of anti-professionalism, anti-establishmentarianism and so on. I think that's just a lot of hogwash. If I went into the . . . to the operating room at Strong and I was being operated on or a member of my family and I said, gee, I really want to participate in this, how

A. (Continued) about letting me open, you know, make the first incision. You know, people would. . . they would throw me out for being off the wall. And yet that's what you get all the time. What. . . well why can't we have a lay person sing 'Hadonolam?' Well that's gimickry, that's nonsense. Person wants to lead a service, there's more to it than singing the service. There's a certain amount of dedication, amount of knowledge, certain amount of responsibility, religious responsibility that I feel. Anymore than a layman preach a sermon, layman may be able to give a talk on a specific subject, but the warrant to preach a sermon, I think, is the warrant of a rabbi and a teacher, certainly a person who is steeped in Judaism and who's going to sell Judaism. And not, you know, not participate in a democracy, which may coincide, ti may not. And you find this constantly in. . . in synagogues. People who are member of the ritual committees and members of other committees who really tell you I know. . . I cannot read Hebrew, but . . . this is what I would suggest for the service. And such people would not appear on the Boards of hospitals or on the Boards of the Philharmonic or on the Board of any other institution. Nobody goes to a baseball game and yells out I really want to participate in it, let me play third base for one inning. He'd be thrown out. Play third base, guy's got a lot of bruises, a lot of knicks, a lot of nights on a bus and one-night-stands, a lot of practicing. That's why he plays third base for the. . . for whatever team.

Q. Well. . .

A. And I find that that's a creeping danger which professionals will have to learn how to deal with.

Q. Do you think that the philosophy of the JY and the JCC has changed at all over the years? I mean, . . .

A. No.

Q. Do you think this new. . . no.

A. No.

Q. Remained constant?

A. I think it's the same philosophy. I'll give you an example. Twenty years ago we . . . group of us who were interested in music organized. . . this is before musical groups were proliferating quite at the rate we are now, we had a Philharmonic and that's all. We organized an orchestra at the JY, the old JY, which met on Sunday mornings. And we engaged a teacher from the Eastman School to conduct, very fine. And we began to have rehearsals. And, of course, have an orchestra occasionally you need a bassoon or you need an oboe or an English horn or some other odd instruments, violins, you know. So we began to scour the towns around and we found some non-Jews who played the odd instruments, which we desperately needed. And we were delighted to find that the man was giving up going to church to play the bassoon in our orchestra. When he came we were told by the JY at that time that he couldn't play because he wasn't a member of the JY. That kind of nonsense, and. . . and to some extent it still exists. I don't think that social workers without real Jewish backgrounds can. . . can originate and carry out a Jewish program. They can carry out some nice things, carry out all the . . . and, you know, they're. . . their athletic things are important, should have. . . But I'm one who has never quite understood why we cannot swim at the YMCA. I know why we can't davad at the YMCA and I know why we can't study Talmud or can't study . . . gracious, at the YMCA. But if we're truly Americans and equal, why do we need a segregated swimming pool in order to swim in?

Q. So you think it's a good thing that the. . . that the JCC is open to the entire community?

A. It's a good and a bad thing because they originally felt that it'd be a good

A. (Continued) place for Jewish kids to meet other Jewish kids. Now Jewish kids meet everybody. I . . . I think that the whole concept was a ghetto concept which ought to be rethought. Now not only locally, but wherever. That it is. . . we should meet together for things that are Jewish. And the things that are not Jewish. . . Now we have the most expensive, if not the most. . . one of the most expensive buildings for the purpose of using leisure time in America. And in these times and in this day it is absolutely obscene for us to have spent seven and a half million dollars on a building that could have been built for half of it. And it could have been built for less. There's no reason why the opulence that is evident should. . . should be. This synagogue is not opulent, it's big, but it's not opulent. You can't, you know, we. . . we tried to make it dignified and so on but we. . . we didn't get, you know, three-foot high carpeting and we didn't get oak wood that. . . that we used other things that simulated oak but are not oak. We've tried to be modest, be realistic. Because it's a big building it requires certain treatments, but it could have cost five times as much had we let go and really, you know, wanted gold lame curtains instead of just nice blue curtains, the way we have. And I believe that that's the biggest obscenity in this community. Especially when it was being planned in a time of unrest, black community was beginning to feel its oats and unemployment was rising, and all the troubles that beset us were at their most crucial then. Here comes the Jewish community and completely oblivious, seemingly, to the state of the world and spends eight million dollars or commits eight million dollars. Now of course it doesn't have the funds necessary to run it. So all the fine promises and the . . . the brochures and so on, all kinds of things, don't work out because you cannot reach in and get housewives or househusbands, I don't want to appear sexist, to come in and teach courses, you know, of which

- A. (Continued) they just have a smattering of knowledge or which they have read the book an hour before class begins. And they're constantly seeking to justify some of the Jewish programs. And you find that the only Jewish program that succeeds is a nostalgia thing like, "I Remember Joseph Avenue," which is very nice but we don't need an eight million dollar building to remember Joseph Avenue. Their serious things are disregarded with . . . with a vengeance. I just don't think it is a competent and a valid institution in our economy.
- Q. Do you think that the monetary, well, sort of lavishness and the unprofessional attitude are two sides of the same coin?
- A. No, I think that the lavishness probably was more the result of the lay people at the time who planned it and who really didn't think it through. Part of it also was inflation that what they thought they could get by with four million dollars turned out to be eight million dollars and which they should have thought about. Alternate plans should have been made. I can see how they could economize on the building. I think the building was needed. Much more needed would have been two or three modest branches in the Irondequoit part of the city, which is not served at all by any institution and needs it very badly. And a branch where they . . . where they are, perhaps a branch here in Brighton somewhere, and a branch there, could have been built for that kind of money. And Jews have to swim together. Oh, I guess it's . . . I shouldn't be that, you know, picky. Then you know they don't need nine million dollar, eight million dollar institution in which to go swimming in. By the way that's the most. . . the only successful part is the part that has the physical activities. And fin, I'm all in favor of that. My doctor's after me to do more than what I do, but I don't know whether that justifies that kind of expenditure.
- Q. OK. What other Jewish organizations do you personally participate in?

A. Well. . .

Q. Or have any knowledge of?

A. Jewish Community Federation, obviously which overrides all. The various Zionist organizations. I think Hadassah continues to do a magnificent job. You know, Hadassah ladies, that's almost a cliché, get a little intense. But the fact remains that in this community they run an all-year-round thrift shop which raises a great deal of money. And where four, five women everyday hang around in a relatively unsavory part of the community and deal with. . . with other elements of the community that. . . well, that come and. . . and are customers there, without any pay, without any compensation, without any. . . beyond what they're doing. And I think they're to be congratulated. That's. . . I mean that's doing the job, seems to me. And the same thing is true in their other things. They try desperately, more successfully than others, to have some element of Jewishness in their programming, for which they should get all the credit. Jewish. . . Council of Jewish Women has come a long way. It used to be almost "WASPy" in the early days. A nice Jewish girl wasn't found there, but now it has I think blossomed to a very fine degree. I think there is some more activity in Rochester, I'm not overly aware of it. ZOA has probably gone the way of all old-time Zionist organizations and almost does not exist here in the community. And I'm not sure that there's a need for it. The same thing is true with the Labor Zionist organization. It still exists in the terms of some adherents, of which I am one. Mizrahi Zionist organization exists and continues its activity. I don't know how successful. I think Hadassah's most successful in getting younger. . . younger girls as they come up.

Q. How has the Federation itself changed in your experience here in Rochester?
Has it?

A. Well, there was no Federation, it was a very loose organization in the early days with just a name only. And now they've begun to really organize the community. And very frankly the Federation is where it's at from now on. I'm not sure that it should be. Questions arise of Federation supporting the school, of Federation allocating in the future the funds for running synagogues, which I think would not be a good thing. But, at this point the Federation has attracted all the young leadership. It has a great deal of excitement to offer and a great deal of activity to offer of a kind which young people in the business world can understand. Fundraising they understand very well. With it has come a very honest attempt, I think, on part of Federation to try to educate these young people to what the needs are, not only in terms of money but to make better Jews of them, to put it on a very simple level. And I think that some of their weekend programs and their continuing Scholar-in-Residence program, altogether too small a group, but they are beginning to make an impress, so much so that graduates of those programs come to our Adult Education Program and demand a higher level here, which is good. We have a Hebrew saying that the competition between scribes makes for better books. And that kind of competition I'm willing to face all the time.

Q. OK. Do you think that the Rochester Jewish community is very Israel-minded?

A. Yes. I think almost to a man. I . . . I don't know anybody who is anti-Israel. I really don't.

Q. Was there a time when . . .?

A. Yes, you know, the early days the German community, the German Reform community, was very much anti-Israel. And Rabbi Bernstein showed a great deal of courage as a 30 to 32 year old young man espousing Zionism when the prayer book which . . . from which he and his congregation prayed had cut out everything about Zionism and did not recognize it as a valid goal and striving of the Jewish

- A. (Continued) people. Until the time when he turned it around. And now I think that B'rith Kodesh is just like any other organization in Rochester when it comes to Israel. It's at the service of Israel, it's available. And there's not a day or night that an emergency. . . there's no question. And even not an emergency.
- Q. When do you think that the community sort of . . . when do you think the Reform community joined the Zionist movement?
- A. Well I think that five or six years after World War II, a big turnover. First of all they died out, second of all the existence of Israel was so apparent, a need for an Israel, that you really had to be hidebound, very, very closed eyes in order not to see that this is where we had to go.
- Q. What are your own personal experiences, either in Israel itself or, you know, with the Rochester community ?
- A. Well I find Israel a very exhilarating. . . I find that it is human so the Israelis are like the rest of us only more so. They have their faults, they have their fine qualities. I find that I learned never to criticize Israelis except if I'm in Israel. I don't discuss even Israeli politics because I believe that I have no right to do that. I'm aware of it, but I don't take sides because I think that if I want to take sides I should go there to live. And so long as I'm only sending money and only, I underline only, there's a big difference between making out my check here in the comfort of my home or enduring some of the. . . I'm not talking only of the wars, but the actual trials and tribulations of living in Israel. And I include the bureaucracy and all the other built-in things which make it really a difficult experience. And I don't look at people who become olim how. . . how difficult it is and how many of them last as long as the tax shelter period lasts and then after that just. . . just don't see how the Israelis do it. The Israelis are born

A. (Continued) that way. You know, born in the sense of an atmosphere without money and where everything goes on credit and this great big bubble keeps going. And so they manoeuvre better in it than Americans who are used to paying their bills at the beginning of the month and paying their taxes generally speaking. So, it's a very sticky situation but I believe that the role of American Jews should be to support Israel's policy, whatever its government, its duly elected government policy is and should do everything it can to aid and abet that policy. That's what the Israelis want and. . . and we should not try and emulate. . . to undermine what they want. We should be heard if they ask us, but like all off-spring they don't listen.

Q. Did you support the U.N. in its inception?

A. Yes.

Q. Has your opinion of it changed at all over the years?

A. My opinion of it has changed, but I do believe that it would be a disaster to . . . to dispose of it at this point. It is a place where at least. . . at the very least and not much more, people let off steam, governments let off steam. And while the terrible things that are said about Israel are uncomfortable and unpleasant I'd rather endure that than have somebody drop a bomb on Jerusalem anytime. A small. . . small thing to endure. There's no doubt a research into anti-ism or anti-Semitism that we have to try to root it out wherever we see it. It's better that it's spoken there, at least you can attack it, than if it's whispered in the cloakrooms out in back. So, I think that . . . that the U.N. as an institution must. . . continue because it is a forum. I think that a lot depends on who's Secretary General. I don't think much of Waldheim and I don't think that he's even attempted to be at hand, maybe he can't be. His position depends on the votes of the third nations, of the you know Third World. But I certainly think that it would

A. (Continued) be a mistake for the United States to drop out. Israel is not even dropping out and she's much more injured than we are, and I think for the same reason. It's a . . . it's an ear and a door to the world and no matter how besmattered it is and besmirched, it's still someplace where you can still talk. For whatever. . .

Q. Do you think the survival of Israel is necessary to the survival of Judaism?

A. Well, I think we're rapidly making it so, although if you mean in a political sense, yes. If you mean a religious sense, no. Unfortunately Judaism is flowering more under duress than under liberty. We tend to get very loose and very forgetful and so on. And everybody said at the beginning of 1950, the second half, would be the test whether we could endure as well under the bright sunlight of freedom than in the dark corners of the ghetto where outside and inside required that we stick together. And we had belief in some kind of common cause, which is Judaism. Actually we get very little in the terms of Judaism from Israel, that's strange. You know, Keeme scionte se Torah, but it's not so. Most Israeli religious customs are a little too exotic for us, they don't quite suit us. If anything we're beginning to make inroads on their synagogue practices, very small, very, very small. But nevertheless we're beginning to be recognized there.

END OF TAPE I, SIDE B