

Interviewee Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Bittker

Interviewer Nancy J. Rosenbloom

Date(s) of interview June 16, 1976. July 15. (2 tapes)

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

I interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Bittker at their home on East Avenue. They also conduct their catering business out of their home and from time to time on the tape interruptions are evident. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bittker were quite willing to be interviewed and although Mrs. Bittker does a good deal of talking, Mr. Bittker's contributions are also very interesting.

Background of interviewee

Mr and Mrs. Bittker have been in the catering business in Rochester since the late 1940's. Mr. Bittker is a native Rochesterian; his wife was born in Poland and came to the United States in 1928-29 at the age of 7. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bittker are intelligent people with active memories.

Interview abstract

During the first interview, we spoke mainly about family background, the catering business, and reminescences about Rochster in the 1930's and 1940's.

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

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| xxx Social history | xxx Jewish community |
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Interview log

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

--see following page(s)--

Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Bittker
June 16, 1976
Tape 1
Side A

A. Family Background

Mr. Bittker is the grandson of the Goldstein family; Mr. Goldstein operated Goldstein Soda Water. The Bittker family also owned dairy farms around Cobbs Hill and Red Wing Stadium. The Goldstein family had been in Rochester since the 1890's. Mr. Bittker's father was the second oldest of ten children and was born in Germany.

Bittker's Catering began in 1946-7 when Mrs. Bittker and her sister-in-law began to service cocktail parties and Sweet Tables. Mrs. Bittker had several anecdotes to tell.

Mrs. Bittker's father was an immigrant to Rochester in 1923. He then brought his wife, son and daughter to Rochester in 1928. Mrs. Bittker is fluent in Yiddish, she understands German but not Latvian or Russian. Her father was a plumber. Mrs. Bittker experienced no anti-semitism in Rochester despite the fact of having settled in an Italian neighborhood. She attended foreigner class at no. 9 school where she learned English. Mrs. Bittker recounted several anecdotes about her childhood. She attended no. 19 school, no. 18 school, Washington Junior High School and graduated with the first graduating class from Washington Senior High School.

Mr. Bittker grew up on Buchan Park. He attended Rabbi Solomon's academy. Classes met at 4, 5:30 and 7 five days a week. He was born in 1918 and moved to Clifford Avenue in 1927. There were many Jewish children on Avenues A, D among them SAM POZE AND SAM KOLKO. Mr. Bittker was bar mitzvahed at Beth Joseph. His mother was in charge of the Mother's Club of the Jewish Children's Home. He referred to Will GREENBERG, HAROLD SNYDER, SAM WARE. Mr. Bittker has one sister.

Mrs. Bittker attended Talmud Torah with her brother. She has memories of YOUNG JUDEA, YOUNG ISRAEL, HASHOMER HASHEAIR, Sunday school at the old JY and the old house that used to be the JY.

Mr. Bittker's participation at the JY was mainly through sports. Anecdote about Rabbi Bernstein who shared a party line with Mrs. Bittker's family as she was growing up.

Mr. Bittker graduated from Monroe High School. They were married in 1941.

Residential patterns : Bittker's have lived on East Avenue since 1950. Mr. Bittker attended Mechanics Institute, worked at the Quality Bakery, Bausch and Lomb and then was in the Army.

Mrs. Bittker has reminiscences of Danischevsky's Dairy. Her first awareness of the Holocaust was quite late.

Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Bittker.
June 16, 1976
Tape 1
Side B

Continuation of family anecdotes:

- B. No memory of anti Jewish sentiment in Rochester.
- C. Anecdotes about business
- D. Anecdotes about Joseph Avenue
Changes in store ownership on Joseph Avenue.
Attitudes towards blacks.

E. Activities in Jewish clubs:

Knights of Pithias Mr. Bittker is a member for business purposes.

Mrs. Bittker attended Adult Education classes at Beth El, she is a member of a variety of sisterhoods, Mizrachi. She would not call herself a Zionist although she has travelled to Israel on two occasions. The first trip was with Rabbi Bernstein in 1967. They had special appointments because they were with Bernstein. Second trip was organized with Histradut and her husband accompanied her.

Mrs. Bittker does believe that Zionism is important to Jewish identity. Her son is not active in Jewish community at all. He is an attorney outside of New York. Grandson is still too young.

Mrs. Bittker was confronted with the quota system at the University of Rochester. She had been accepted and had started school when she had to drop out for family reasons. Girl friends of hers who wanted to attend the Uof R and could afford to pay tuition were nonetheless denied admission because of the Jewishness and went to the state university system instead.

Mr. and Mrs. CLAYTON BITTKER
Nancy J. Rosenbloom July 15, 1974

TAPE 2

Side A

- A. The catering business is not a business that interests young people today. The Bittker's have three partners, Mr. Bittker and Mrs. Bittker's two brothers.
- XX B. Intermarriage. The Bittker's will not cater if the synagogue has not allowed the marriage in the temple (i.e. the Bittker's will not cater in the synagogue). Intermarriage is an increasing problem. Mrs. Bittker attributes it to college social life. More enthusiasm for Israel might be a lift but not a preventive of the problem. Mrs. Bittker would like to see back to kashruth as a cure for loss of Jewish identity. They recognize the problems facing Kosher people, i.e. more expensive meat. The Bittkers themselves purchase wholesale meat from Chicago or from Lippman's market. Anecdotes about business.
- X C. Recollections about fire at Beth El.
- X D. Role of Jewish woman in home. Women's liberation is the "most overrated subject in America" Jewish women "have it good". Jewish philosophy advocates that men treat women well.
- XX E. Unions:
Recollections of Abe Chatman as a power in the clothing industry but all they really had to say was that their dealings with him on a social level have always been very cordial. They remember the Arbeiter ring as a club composed mostly of clothing workers. They had their own Jewish and Hebrew school. Any card carrying communists there might have been in Rochester gave up in the pre-Hitler years.
- F. Recollections of the Talmud Torah.
- G. There is a need for the organized Jewish community. There is a need for the federation. The Ugandan event was a "beautiful episode." The UN really is of no support for Israel.
- XXX H. Russian Jews: They have a mother-daughter Russian Jewish pair working for them. Very interesting anecdote about woman in Kiev and her refusal to listen to an American attempting to give her clothing for her baby.

SIDE B

- I. The Russian Jewish immigration experience is not similar to Mrs. Bittker's own immigration experience. There are no relatives for these people to rely upon. The mother speaks Yiddish but not the daughter.
- XX J. Public School education in Rochester: The Bittker's felt the public school system was excellent when their son was in school. The children were mixed but they do not regard the school as a leveller. The Bittker's lived where they did in part because of the excellent schools but also because they needed a building that could be zoned commercially, since they do most of their catering from their home. The Bittker's have one son, who graduated from Monroe, Uof R and Harvard Law School. He was fairly observant when at home out of respect for his parents but is not observant today in his own home. The Hillel at the UofR was quite active although their son did not participate in it.
- K. Changes in Rochester: Mrs. Bittker is not that comfortable ^{shopping} downtown anymore. They are not particularly fond of living in the city but they must remain because of their business.
- L. Anecdotes about Rochester politics: SAM DICKER "figurehead mayor" JAY KAMINSKY; supervisor of 8th ward particularly effective during the depression in securing jobs for people and other economic issues: SAM POPICK

Mr and Mrs. CLAYTON BITTKER
Tape 2 Side 2
Nancy Rosenbloom

also active in 5th ward.

M. The Bittkers are optimistic about the future of the Rochester Jewish community although they have complaints about specific urban problems including the tax structure, economic problems. This is a good city for cultural activities.

Interview 1
Tape 1
Side A

Q. No. That's all right. Today is June 16. This is Nancy Rosenbloom, and I'm interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Bittker, Clayton Bittker, at their home. Maybe you could just, want to say anything, just. . .

Ms. Just to get it going?

Mr. We'll have to get it started. . .

Q. Well, maybe just some background information then. We'll start with. . .

Mr. Do you want this on the table?

Q. OK. Good. OK. How long you've been in Rochester and maybe just a little. . .?

Ms. Well, my family. . . I came to Rochester in 1928. My father came five years before that. But Clayton's family has been in Rochester many, many years. As a matter of fact, I think you're. . . your grandparents, the Goldsteins, came before the turn of the century, like in 1890. And they had the first soda water company in Rochester, they were the original soda water people in Rochester. They had the Acme Soda Water Company.

Mr. Well, first of all it was called the Goldstein Bottling Works and later on became the Acme Soda Water. . .

Ms. And they used to deliver soda water with a horse and wagon in those days.

Mr. That goes back a number of years. . .

Ms. And his father's family had farms. They had a farm where Cobbs Hill is now. In fact Mrs. Cobb begged them to buy Cobbs Hill and they. . . they just didn't. . . that is Clayton's grandfather, didn't want to. They also had a farm where the Red Wing ballpark is now. And then later on they had a farm on Ridgeway Avenue where the new hospital is built now.

Mr. Well, around that area.

Ms. Yea. Right.

Q. What kind of farms?

Mr. Dairy farms, mostly. Then they also. . .

Ms. And produce.

Mr. They raised some produce. . .

Ms. And they had a big gravel field where they used to . . .

Mr. They used to sell gravel to the various construction companies.

Ms. Uh-huh.

Mr. You see? They'd have big trucks or wagons come in and haul away. . .

Ms. And many of the old-time Rochester people used to go out there weekends and use it as a country club. That was before the days of the country clubs. So they used to use Bittker's farm for their country club. I remember Dr. Mendelsohn telling me about that years and years ago.

Mr. Yea, they used to have a large area of their friends and relations drop in to. . . they'd come out on a Sunday and spend the whole Sunday out there. They had cornrows or, you know, whatever they could. . . I remember many years ago when I used to go on the farm as a little youngster, we'd go out and pick the fresh corn and find a great big, huge pot and put it on the stove inside and cook it, and then we'd take it outside and grill it more or less. I also remember that the horse and wagons, you know, used to come in and pick up. . . well, they. . . they used to come in the city and as a matter of fact pick up some their friends and bring 'em back on the farm and spend the whole weekend. Not really the whole weekend, every Sunday out there.

Ms. Well, it was a huge house.

Mr. Yea, well first of all the family was. . . besides my grandmother there were ten children.

Q. In your. . . in your. . .

Mr. In my father's family.

Ms. His father is the second oldest of ten children.

Mr. Right.

Q. And where is your father from?

Mr. My father was born in Germany but he came to Rochester when he was about two years old, which was a few years ago.

Q. Do you remember where in Germany?

Mr. No, that I have no idea. It was never discussed, never. . .

Q. Maybe like about when he came?

Ms. Oh, it was about 85 years ago because. . .

Mr. Then again it was about the turn of the century.

Q. So in his family there were ten children?

Mr. Well, we can figure it out because my father's been gone now since 1957. . . and he died in '72 I think it was. So. . .

Ms. '72 would be say twenty years. . . 19 years. . .

Mr. 1880 roughly.

Ms. So had he lived. . . in other words he came over about 90 years ago. And I guess they came. . . he came right to Rochester. His family came right to Rochester.

Mr. That's right. My mother's brothers. . . well, none of my father's or my grandfather's brothers, some settled in New York and a lot of them settled in the Detroit area.

Q. Why did your grandfather settle here?

Mr. I have no idea. I have no idea.

Ms. I think basically your. . . your grandfather was an agricultural person. The others who went. . . stayed in New York and went to Detroit all went into. . .

Ms. (Continued) mercantile, business.

Mr. Right.

Ms. His father always a farmer. He always had big farms.

Mr. Well, he was . . .

Ms. Your grandfather, right.

Mr. And then my father stayed here, too.

Ms. Right.

Mr. And three or four years till after he was married.

Ms. See, as each of the sons married, their wives didn't want to live on the farm. So as each one of the sons married they would stay there maybe six months, a year, and then they would move into the city. And then they opened up a dairy business here in the city, Bittker Dairy. And that was in existence until about, what, ten years ago?

Mr. Oh, more than that.

Ms. Sixteen years ago, yea. Meyer and Irving. . .

Mr. Couldn't go on working. . . obvious. . .

Ms. Right.

Q. And there was also the soda water business?

Ms. No, that was his other grandfather.

Mr. My other grandfather. . .

Ms. His mother's. . . his maternal family.

Mr. Yea, my mother's family was in soda water, my father's. . . when he came off the farm and moved to the city, he went into business with them. And he worked in the soda water business till he couldn't work any longer, till he retired. And he worked a number of years.

Q. About 1960?

Mr. Yes, it was shortly after that because . . .

Ms. About 1950. . .

Mr. I came home from the service in '45, my father was still in it. About five, six, or seven years. Right, he got out of it around 1950.

Q. Well, since we're talking about the business maybe I'll go right into your own business then. How, . . . how did you get started?

Mr. Well, let my wife answer that for you.

Ms. Well, I started it with Clayton's sister, with his sister Mary. And together we started it in I think 1946, '47. And the way we started is a lot of friends and relatives used to call us, you know, to do parties. You know, we just had a knack for it. I had some education in it at Michigan. I had taken a lot of courses while Clayton was going to school, and I was there, too. And I had taken some courses in food and economics while in Michigan. And several people called us to do parties and my sister-in-law said, well if we're going to do parties, let's do it as a working. . . as a working thing. And that's how it started. And then it got. . . you know, it got rather large and Mary was being married to a Utica man, she was leaving Rochester. So I said, well, he'll fill in the void. We needed somebody else. And he came in with us, and that's how it's been.

Q. What types of. . .

Ms. Well, we started in doing cocktail parties, and it wasn't till several years later that we got involved in, you know, heavier food.

Mr. Cocktail parties and reception food, after dinner. For example, Mrs. Cohen and Mrs. Nathanson and. . . or even Mrs. Zuzzer.

Ms. A lot of baking. . . yea. . . right.

Mr. And after the dinner we would come in and do a sweet table for them.

Ms. The sweet tables were big things in those days. You see, what they would do is they would have a dinner for, let's say, the family and a few very close

Q. And let's see, it's a silly question, always. . . always kosher?

Ms. Well, our. . . our catering has always been, yes. We. . . we. . . our pots and pans are always kosher, our own dishes are always kosher. Naturally most of the temples' dishes are kosher. Now you take a Reform temple, we use their dishes, you know, and word can get 'round after. . . a lot of people will say well it's not strictly kosher 'cause it's one set of dishes. So that is the people's choice. (Transcriber's note: Mr. and Mrs. Bittker then speak at once, words are unintelligible.) Yes, everything. . .

Mr. Transported down there and then as far as we can see, it's kosher till it touches their dish. But, we still feel it's. . . it's still a lot more kosher than going into a restaurant. . .

Ms. Right. We never mix meat with dairy, even if it's going on a country club's dishes or Reform temple dishes. We never, never mix meat and dairy. After all, we keep meat and dairy apart.

Q. Have you noticed changes like at B'rith Kodesh in the last. . . well, let's see, in the last thirty years that you've been in business?

Ms. Well, years ago they never used to have. . . I remember when we had the first Bar Mitzvah at B'rith Kodesh. The young man would probably be like, what, forty years old now. He was a dentist then and I can't remember his name, can't figure out who it was now. But that was the very first Bar Mitzvah. That would be like twenty-five years ago, maybe, twenty-six years ago. I remember at the old B'rith Kodesh when we had the first Bar Mitzvah there.

Mr. Well, they hadn't had any. . .

Ms. No, no Bar Mitzvahs at all. No.

Mr. Then they do have a little more religion. As a matter of fact, I understand that's one of the problems today that a lot of people don't understand at B'rith Kodesh.

Mr. (Continued) has too much religion.

Ms. But, we don't feel that way.

Mr. No, definitely not.

Ms. But, I know there is a certain. . .

Mr. Group who feels. . .

Ms. . . . here in Rochester who feel that they joined an ultra-Reform temple, they want it that way. But, that's not our feelings at all. We. . . we like it the way it is.

Q. Are you members of B'rith Kodesh?

Mr. No.

Ms. No, we 're members at Beth El and also at Beth Sholom. We're member. . . our son. . . we have one son, he's 31 now. And when he was a little guy my father used to look after him weekends. My mother used to help us. In fact, she . . . she saw my two younger brothers through college by helping us in the catering. And my father used to take Don for the weekend, and they lived right across the street from Beth Sholom when Beth Sholom was on Field Street. And he joined Beth Sholom because it was so convenient for him to go to Hebrew school there. So he did spend so much time with my father. And then afterward we joined Beth El because we used to do so much work there that we felt we should be members there. And we didn't want to drop out of Beth Sholom. . .

Mr. And well, we go to Beth El now. . .

Ms. We go to Beth El for services.

Mr. That's where we attend services.

Ms. Yes. For holidays. . .

Mr. But, we still are members of both.

Ms. Yes.

Q. Does your son live in Rochester?

Ms. No, he's a lawyer. He lives in . . .

Mr. Westchester.

Ms. Westchester County. He works for . . .

Q. Let me backtrack a minute. We started talking before the tape went on. Your family. . . your father's from Latvia? And when and why did they choose to come to Rochester?

Ms. Well, I think in those days there was everybody's dream to. . . they all knew they'd have a better life in America, let's say. There are many, many things that the Americans have that the Latvians never could hope to have. And, he came like all. . . like many Jewish people and some relatives brought him here. And then the idea was that he would take out citizenship papers, and as soon as he could, which meant five years of schooling, and as soon as he had his citizenship papers then he could automatically send for the rest of his family because otherwise there was the quota system, and they wouldn't let that number of people come in. You know, I mean, you might have to wait many, many years before your quota. . . the number of your quota was much. . . But if your father was a citizen, I don't know if it's true now, but if your father was an American citizen, he could automatically bring his family over without them being in the quota system. And that's how my brother and my mother and I came here.

Q. Oh, you were born in. . .

Ms. Latvia.

Q. . . .
I came here when I was seven years old.

Q. . . . usually know Latvian?

Ms. . . . probably not, no.

Mr. Well, your brother came over. . .

Ms. Well, my brother still. . .

Mr. He was a couple years older. . .

Ms. He lived in Latvia and he got. . .

Mr. He does have an accent.

Ms. Yes.

Q. So, you must be fluent in Yiddish?

Ms. In Yiddish, yes, in Latvian, no.

Q. Yiddish only.

Ms. Yiddish and English, yes, that's about it. And I understand German through my Yiddish, and I can speak a little German because I've had several years of German in school. So that. . . that's all. I. . . I don't know Latvian, I don't know Russian. The schools there are. . . were private schools and my parents weren't able to send us to school because my father. . . you see, the American dollar, that would go a long, long way. And with ten American dollars you could be. . . in those days, because in . . . in Latvia. . .

Mr. That was after your father was here sending money back.

Ms. Yes, that's right, send money back.

Q. Your father settled in Rochester?

Ms. Yes, he settled here because his relatives. . . our relatives were here, you know, so that's how we came to Rochester.

Q. Can I ask you what business he was in?

Ms. He was a plumber. Right.

Q. OK.

Ms. And that. . . that's how. . .

Q. Can I ask you what year?

Ms. Oh, sure. We came in 1928.

Mr. Well, you came in 1928. Your father came five years earlier.

Ms. My father came about five or six years earlier.

Mr. Right.

Ms. Five years earlier probably when I was two.

Q. Do you recall when you came. . . I don't call it anti-Semitism but do you recall knowing you were Jewish?

Ms. Knowing we were Jewish, yes. But, I don't recall any anti. . . anti-Semitism as a child. And that was strange because we settled in an Italian neighborhood on Norris Street, which I understand years ago had been a Jewish neighborhood and the Jewish people. . . well, there was still a few there when we moved in and they were moving away. And Italians were there, and I played beautifully with them, and I never remember being discriminated. As a matter of fact there was one summer that one of them took me to summer school in a church, and I even appeared in a play. . . a Christian play with Christ rising and all that. And, but that was my summer, you know. It was. . . in those days we couldn't afford camp, the Depression was just starting to set in. And, you know, we. . . my parents couldn't afford to pay to send me to camp or anything.

Q. When you came to America did you already speak English?

Ms. No. Oh, no. We had to go to foreigner class. At No. 9 School they had what they called foreigner classes. In fact they had several classes, you know, for different age groups because there were so many coming in. And whether you came from Italy or Poland or wherever you went to these classes. And they concentrated on teaching you English. And once you were. . . once learned the language then they would put you in a class where they thought you would be adapted to. And, of course, I mean. . . I didn't find it difficult over a period of years to make up, you know, two, three classes.

- Ms. (Continued) As an example, they put one. . . when I got through with my foreigner class I was maybe two years behind, they put me in the second grade, but a month later I went to the third and then from the third I went to the fifth. So, you see, it wasn't. . . it wasn't that difficult to catch me up.
- Q. What about your mother? Did she also go to No. 9 School?
- Ms. No, my mother. . . my father did. My father had an excellent command of English, and he went. My mother never did go. She always was a home person. And we could never get her. . . she might have gone to 9 School for a short time, but not much. And she could. . . she understood English very well, and if someone. . . and if she knew that someone didn't know Jewish, she would speak English with them. But if she knew the person knew Jewish she would resort to speaking Jewish with them.
- Q. So at home you spoke Yiddish?
- Ms. Mostly, yes, definitely, oh yes.
- Q. And then you went probably to classes. . . ?
- Ms. No, I went to Washington High School. I went to. . . from 9 I went to No. 18 because that was the school near home. When I was through with the foreigner class I went to No. 18. And then from 18 I went to Washington because in those days it was a junior high school, and after you would progress and you became a senior high school.
- Q. Do you remember why it changed from a junior to a senior high school? Is it that it just happened?
- Ms. They just had enough students there to do it because we had almost 2000 students in Washington High School.
- Q. I think Washington High School was one of the old pattern high schools?
- Ms. Yes, it was. In fact, once if I remember Mr. [unclear] principal there, he. . .

Ms. (Continued) you know, we had assemblies there every Wednesday. And he used to be very proud of announcing that that was the first junior high school east of the Mississippi River. Yea, that was one of the first junior highs. Now I understand your. . . I mean, the last several years they've gone back to this middle school or junior school, the whole bit. But, in those days the thing to do was to keep the students in grammar school until 8th, 9th grade and then go right into like East High School or Franklin. So Washington was the original junior high school.

Q. And from there you say you went to Michigan?

Mr. No.

Ms. No, that was after we were married, Clayton was a student. . .

Mr. We got married and then. . .

Ms. He went to school at Michigan.

Mr. I was at school. . .

Ms. No, we were not. . . we were not. . .

Q. Let me catch up on you. You grew up on. . .?

Mr. Well, I was born on Buchan Park, and our family business, of course, at that time was just down the street on. . . then we lived there until. . . well, there was an unfortunate accident in the family and my mother's uncle was killed in an explosion. And then we combined forces more or less with my aunt, who was a widow, and we all moved together on Clifford Avenue near St. Paul Street. From there our religious training more or less was over at. . . at least attending shul I should say was over at Beth Joseph. However I did attend the old famous Rabbi Solomon academy as. . .

Q. The Talmud Torah?

Mr. No, no, no. Rabbi Solomon. . .

Ms. Rabbi Solomon from Temple Beth El. . .

Mr. Temple Beth El.

Ms. He had a Hebrew school in back of his house.

Mr. He had three classes a day.

Q. Oh, my.

Mr. He had one at four o'clock and five-thirty, and one at seven. Three days a . . . three times a day and for six days a week. No, Fridays we didn't and Saturdays we didn't.

Ms. But, didn't you go to Hebrew school on Sunday?

Mr. On Sunday we did. We had to attend for two hours. . .

Ms. Because I know I went to . . . and I went on Sunday.

Mr. No, we went. . . well, went five days then 'cause. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. . . . Friday and Saturday we did not.

Ms. Right.

Mr. And Rabbi Solomon taught me and a lot of others our moftiv or our Bar Mitzvah. And he always used to refer to it as the academy 'cause he had a regular machine going. You'd be suprised how many people in the city have attended Rabbi Solomon's school.

Q. So he taught probably the Torah and . . . ?

Mr. He taught everything, whatever. Because during the week, of course, we used to learn how to read or write, and then on Sundays we used to . . . it was called Sunday school more or less 'cause on Sundays he would always give us a history of the Jewish Religion. You know, always give you all the forms and . . . cause of the . . . things. . . he was a great guy, and he still is. He has a good memory. He remembers all his students.

Ms. Someday all his students ought to get together and make a party for him.

Mr. It would be a good idea. He's been around a long time and he taught

Mr. (Continued) many, many people.

Q. OK. So about what was it really that. . .

Mr. Well, . . . well, you mean years what? As far as . . .

Q. 19. . .

Mr. Well, I was born in 1918 and then we moved I think onto Clifford Avenue after that accident I mentioned before, roughly around 1927 I think it was.

Q. Was Clifford Avenue a Jewish neighborhood?

Mr. Yes, it was. Clifford. . . not so much Clifford but St. Paul Street, Huntington Park, which backed up to Clifford Avenue and so forth. I know I used to play in the area with a lot of Jewish youngsters there, including Sam Kolko and the Berman family, Pozes. Lived on the street, Sam Poze's family. And, oh, there was many of them. Right in around that area. Avenue A and so forth, Avenue D.

Ms. So, that was considered the better Jewish area.

Mr. The better Jewish neighborhood, yea.

Ms. In fact, when your Grandma first bought that house, Grandma Goldstein first bought that house on Buchan Park, people said, my gosh, you're moving out in the country. You know, that was Clifford Avenue.

Mr. That was Clifford Avenue. Even now it has matured actually, but it was . . . (Transcriber's note: background noise drowns out Mr. Bittker's voice.) Orthodox city, you know, shul in the city.

Q. Were you members of Beth Joseph?

Mr. My father was, of course, I was too young to be a member, but my father was.

Q. So, you were Bar Mitzvahed at Beth Joseph?

Mr. Yes, I was Bar Mitzvahed at Beth Joseph.

Q. Let me ask you something else then. Do you have any recollections of the Jewish Children's Home? The Children's Home?

Ms. Yes. . .

Mr. Yes.

Ms. His father was president for years and years.

Mr. My mother was active in the mother's club there for many, many years.

Ms. In fact, I saw a picture. . .

Mr. I've got an album upstairs of the notes and the pictures and the various things right upstairs in the attic now that my mother saved for many, many years. I at one time had offered it to Mr. Hollender and I either never got around to giving it to him or he had so many things of his own that he didn't know what to do with it anymore. But, I. . . I know in the attic there are many notes of the mother's club meetings.

Q. Well, can you maybe briefly. . . what types of things did the mother's club do?

Mr. Well, I. . .

Ms. Well, I. . .

Mr. Go ahead, dear.

Ms. Well, I just want to say one thing that I think they did that was a beautiful thing. They were responsible for seeing that some of the certain children went to college. As an example, Will Greenberg. Now, they were. . .

Mr. And Will Greenberg is, of course, now. . .

Ms. They. . . they saw that if the child was. . . could make the grade, that he had an opportunity to go to college.

Mr. Well, Mr. Hollender pushed a lot of 'em along, too. He was good for that.

Ms. He was a sick man.

Mr. Oh, he was very sick. . . very sick. But a lot of them thought a great deal of him and what they had. . . when he was living, when they had Bar Mitzvahs. . . even though they had been out of the home for many, many years, they always invited him back to their sons' Bar

Mr. (Continued) Mitzvahs.

Q. Do you recall when they closed the Children's Home?

Mr. Yes. I don't remember when it was, but I used to go down there quite often. I belonged to the Boy Scouts for the Jewish Home. And we used to meet down there. I remember most of the fellows at that time were in the home, I don't remember the names, but oh there are so many of them. Like Ruby Snyder or Dave . . . I recall now, his brother. . .

Ms. Harold.

Mr. Harold Snyder, there was Will Greenberg. . . no Will Greenberg wasn't a part of this. I think he may have been a scout member though. There was one fellow who, Sam Ware, who used to be there also, and he was for thirty-five or forty years as a national. . . he was the scout master, I remember, at that time. Oh, there was so many more.

Ms. Well, wasn't Max Sumer at the home at one time?

Mr. Yes, I don't remember Max.

Ms. Oh, he was older.

Mr. Max was a little bit ahead and I don't . . .

Ms. What about his brother, the one who's in California?

Mr. No, I don't remember him at all either.

Q. One. . . one of the things that I. . . I heard that when the Jewish Children's Home closed there were some unhappiness on the part of the. . .

Mr. Community you mean?

Q. . . . community that. . .

Mr. Well, they probably felt there was a void because they had been around for so many, many years. Mr. Hollender took good care of it, and they probably felt, what is gonna happen to these youngsters. But, of course, conditions had changed by that time and they usually went other. . .

Ms. I think so because there weren't that many left who needed a home.

Mr. Right.

Ms. Or the relatives were able to have them. . .

Mr. Were able . . . right.

Ms. And once Social Security came and even if a mother is left a widow with children, with Social Security she could manage to keep them at home. We had. . .

Mr. And. . . and people. . .

Ms. We have a waitress now who was left with three young children about two years ago. With working part-time and with her Social Security, she manages. Her kids don't lack for things they really need.

Mr. Matter of fact, she also goes out to her. . . this one person that we're speaking about right now is a . . . a German girl who came over from Germany and even since she became a widow, she's gone back to Germany a couple times for a visit. So it's a good example. . .

Ms. Economic conditions have changed. . .

Mr. Yes. Right.

Ms. . . . from those days till now. In those days particularly you didn't. . . in the Depression if a woman was left a widow, you know, she was destitute because especially with children, and that's why the Jewish Home played such a major part.

Mr. Well, this is one reason why before I mentioned also when my uncle was killed in the soda water plant that at time we doubled up, you know, as I mentioned before, and we all moved together because she was a widow with two little youngsters. And we bought the house on Clifford Avenue, that is the family house and we lived together for many, many, many years.

Mr. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Mr. I only have one sister. And my sister's about three years older than I.

Q. Still living in Rochester?

Mr. She has moved back to Rochester after being in Utica for about 26 or 27 years. When she became a widow. . . after she. . . she would visit here also when she retired. My sister's come back to Rochester just about a year now.

Q. As long as we're talking about different organizations of that kind, did you have any participation or links at all to the Baden Street Settlement?

Mr. I didn't, but I think you had. . . Talmud Torah you went to. . .

Ms. Well, I went to the Talmud Torah, but then I dropped out when I. . . my brother Phil was four years older than I am. And the day he was Bar Mitzvah, I remember he'd had a lot of Hebrew in. . . in Europe. I mean, there they start very early, much more concentrated than it is here. He could read and chant when he was little. And when he was thirteen he says this is it, I've had it. And I was nine at that time, and I said, well if Phil isn't going, I'm not going either, that's all. Because we lived quite a distance from there and we had to walk, there was no chauffering in those days, you know, mothers didn't pick you up. We probably didn't even have a car. And I just refused to go after that. So that was when my Hebrew stopped.

Q. Do you have any memories at all of the Talmud Torah?

Ms. Oh, yes, I remember. But, Mr. Bush and his father. . . his father was the principal, and there was Bermiker and. . .

Q. Panitsch?

Ms. Panitsch, yes. Mr. Panitsch used to be my mother's. . . my mother's neighbor on Field Street. They lived right upstairs from my mother. And let's see who else. Bitinsky was there. And those were. . . the rabbis. . . the teachers in those days.

Mr. Well, I didn't have much to do with it. I know. . . I know I went to one or two special occasions there, but I never. . .

Ms. I did go. . . I. . . I used to belong to the Young Judea. And I belonged to the Young Israelis, and the. . . oh several. . . the. . . what was the name of that radical one, the. . .

Mr. Don't say that word. . .

Ms. I can't. . . Now it's very much in fashion.

Mr. Hashomer Hasheair.

Ms. Hashomer Hasheair.

Mr. Right.

Ms. They used to meet in . . . well, that area's all torn down. It's where the Post Office is now. It's an old. . .

Mr. There used to be a house right. . .

Ms. Yes. Right.

Mr. Me, too, I remember going to it as a boy.

Ms. Right.

Mr. But that used to stand many years ago.

Ms. Many years ago. And then I used to go to Sunday school at the old JY, that was also around that circle. The old JY there?

Mr. I used to go to the JY for many, many years, too.

Q. Sunday school.

Ms. I just went for athletics. . . I just went. . .

Mr. Athletics or wrestling and boxing and gym, swimming. Oh, yes, that was quite an active place in those days.

Q. Let's see, you must. . .

Mr. That was before the new. . . before the JY was built across the street.

Mr. (Continued) This was when they had the house. You don't remember?

Q. No, I'm thinking of the new JY building, the one on. . .

Ms. No.

Mr. No, no, no. Not that. . . not that one that they moved out a couple of years ago?

Q. Yea.

Mr. No, this is before.

Ms. This is a house with a big auditorium added in back. It looked like a two-story house.

Q. It's not there anymore?

Mr. No.

Ms. Oh, no, hasn't been there in years and years.

Mr. It's where the Greyhound station is now. There used to be a. . .

Ms. Around that. . . there used to be a circle there. . .

Mr. Oh, it used to be a very nice place. . .

Ms. Another temple used to be there, that was torn down and then the old JY building, the original. I don't mean the old. . .

Mr. Not. . . not the one on Norton and Andrews, not that one.

Ms. This is before.

Mr. Across the street there was another one.

Ms. It was a much smaller building.

Mr. Oh, yea. But. . . but it was an active place.

Ms. Actually what it was at one time it was a big house because I know we used to go to Sunday school. It was. . . the upstairs was like big bedrooms, you know? And then they took and they added a big old gym and . . .

Mr. Well, they added a gym in the back, and they added a swimming pool.

Right.

Q. This was an old house then?

Ms. The old house.

Mr. In the old house.

Ms. Not that it's there now.

Q. So about. . . this is still the 1930's? This must be the. . .

Mr. Yea, right. I'd say it was about in the thirties. I'd say it was about the thirties.

Ms. Just before they built the new one.

Mr. Because I. . . I remember distinctly one person especially, Aaron Braverman, who is now the . . . started a Hebrew school at B'rith Kodesh. I remember seeing him there. I remember meeting him, going to meetings and you used to attend . . .

Ms. Hashomer Hasheair.

Mr. Right.

Ms. And he had just come back from Israel then.

Mr. Yea, right. He just came back from Israel. Right, OK. That's going back.

Q. Let's see.

Ms. You know, it must be. . . let's see. . . when I went to high school. . . to Sunday school there I was in high school. And I was graduated in '38, so that must have been like '36, '37 that we used to go to. . .

Q. What were some of the activities that the club did?

Ms. Well, we just used to have meetings, and I know for the Young Judea we used to go out collecting money every once in a while with little pushkeys. They used to give us a little round pushkeys, and we used to have to either go or stand in front of the theatres or something, and I guess the money went to Israel. I really don't know, but that was the idea behind it.

Q. This was a social club?

Ms. Right, it was a combination. The Hashomer we took very actively, in the first place it was a radical agency, thought it was radical because these young Jews were the ones who eventually became kibbutzim. . . kibbutz people, you know? Who went to work on the kibbutz. In fact, when we . . . Zvi. . . Zvi Braverman was. . . was one of the leaders, and he's in charge of a kibbutz now. Aaron's brother. Aaron's older brother. Yea.

Q. Did a lot of Jews and groups go and come back to Rochester?

Those who went stayed?

Ms. Those who went stayed. But you never know. I'm talking about youngsters who were maybe fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years old. Eventually maybe years later some of them went. My own group of friends did not. They did it more of a social thing, and they really weren't that dedicated. And to my . . . my closer friends, none of them really became kibbutz people. But Hashomer Hasheair was basically to involve young people into that.

Q. I heard one. . . or I read someplace that the old JY was originally formed as sort of a Jewish defense league type. There was anti-Jewish sentiment.

Mr. It might have.

Q. No, I just wondered what your reaction was.

Mr. No, I never had anything in regard to that.

Ms. I never used the . . . I never. . . I only used it once a week for Sunday school, so. . .

Mr. Well, no I remember more. . . moreso for the activities, the athletic activities. Formed. . . we had a club one time, we used to be doing checkers and things like that.

Q. What about Rabbi Bernstein? Did he play an instrumental role in that?

Mr. I don't remember Rabbi Bernstein from that. The first contact I really had

Mr. (Continued) with Rabbi Bernstein was . . . the major contact, of course, when we entered the catering business, but I do remember him when I was in service in Europe. I remember reading and hearing of him being the chief rabbi for the Armed Forces or whatever the position was. But I never did see him overseas, I wasn't really acquainted with him at that point.

Q. OK. Let me go back into your biographies so. . .

Ms. May I say one thing, though, about Rabbi Bernstein? We lived on Buchan Park and his mother lived right across the street.

Q. Oh.

Ms. And we had the same party line.

Mr. Phones.

Ms. On the telephone, you know? In those days you didn't have private line unless you were a millionaire. If you were just the ordinary person you had a four-party line. And he would call his mother and every single day no matter how busy the rabbi was, he would call his mother every day. It was a . . .

Mr. You were listening in on the telephone?

Ms. No, no. Oh, no. Come on, Clayton. But, I mean, you know, if we'd pick up the phone you'd hear Rabbi talking to his mother. Yea, we felt that was just wonderful.

Mr. You were gonna add something?

Q. I was gonna say let's. . . I know. . . you graduated from Washington High School. (Transcriber's note: everyone talks at the same time for a few seconds, unintelligible.) Let's see. Do you. . .

Mr. No, I attended Washington Junior High also.

Q. Is that where you met?

Mr. No, no. I didn't meet Ruth till many years later. Matter of fact, I didn't meet Ruth till about 1938 or '40.

Q. Oh.

Mr. Well, we were married in '41, and it was a couple years before.

Ms. It wasn't even that. . . I had a year of high. . .

Mr. Yea. But anyway I. . . I attended Washington Junior High School. I graduated from there. In that days it was not made into a junior high. . .

(Transcriber's note: Phone ringing in background drowns out voice.)

. . . a few years later it was made into a senior high also. From there I went to Franklin. . . I did two years at Franklin and our family then moved from Laburnham Crescent to just off Linden Avenue. And by living up that way I had to automatically transfer to Monroe High School, and that was in a pretty Jewish neighborhood, too, as far as permanent residents, Crosswood Terrace, Keeler Terrace, Reserve Street, Rosedale, Shepard. . .

Ms. Yea.

Mr. It all was very, very nice.

Q. Can I ask you, did you. . . do you remember any distinct differences between being in the Jewish neighborhood around St. Paul Street and the Jewish neighborhood around. . .?

Mr. No, no.

Ms. Don't you think that the people around Monroe Avenue would always feel that they were at that. . . better?

Mr. No.

Ms. Having lived on the other end of town I. . .

Mr. No, Ruthie I don't. . .

Ms. Yes. We lived off Joseph Avenue. . .

Mr. No, I didn't notice any differenece from the . . . my friends from one side to the other side. I did develop a lot more friends, naturally, when we lived up near Monroe Avenue because I was with them more. And I'd . . .

Q. And then you've stayed in this general neighborhood ever since?

Mr. Yes, except when the . . . when I came home from service . . . when I first came home from service we moved together with your parents for about two months. Remember? We found a place on Catherine Street. And from Catherine Street. . .

Ms. Housing was very hard in those days.

Mr. Yea.

Ms. This was in 1945. . .

Mr. Right.

Ms. And remember there had been no construction at all from the time the United States went in the war, that was like 1940, '41, and you just couldn't find flats or apartments or anything to rent. And we heard of this little apartment on Pleasant Street. The outside was horrible, but actually the inside was very modern. And we. . . we just grabbed it.

Mr. We grabbed it, and then we stayed there for a couple years, and until we bought a little cottage on Kappel Place, which is also off North Goodman, near Clifford. We stayed there a few more years, until we bought this place in 1950. And since 1950 we've been here.

Q. OK. So, let's see. In between the time you graduated from high school, I guess the next big step was that you went into the service?

Mr. No, no not immediately. I did take some . . .

Ms. Well, you took some work at Mechanics Services. . .

Mr. Yea, at Mechanics Institute, R.I.T. now. I took some courses there, and I did learn some sort of machine work. And I went to work at Bausch & Lomb. This is around 1939, 1940. Well, first let's go back a little bit further. A short time after I graduated I'd go to work for Quality Bakery when Abe Brokowitz owned it. And then I went to . . . took some classes at night. . .

Mr. (Continued) Mechanics Institute, and from there I went. . . I got a job at Bausch & Lomb. And then once the war broke out I. . . well, as a matter of fact I went into the service in January of '41, which is almost a year before Pearl Harbor. And then from then on. . .

Q. And then. . . let's see, so you were married in. . .

Ms. We were married in December, 1941.

Q. And then eventually after the war you went to Michigan?

Mr. During the war.

Ms. No, during the war.

Mr. I was stationed in the south, of course, but then I. . . because of the training I had at Mechanics Institute I was. . . I was sent. . . I requested an ordnance assignment. . . well before. . . let's go back a little before that. When I went into the service first in January, '41, I was just drafted, and I went into a field artillery unit and I stayed with them till about August when I took sick. And I was in the hospital for quite some time. When I got out. . . well, I got. . . no, at Bausch & Lomb, matter of fact, got me out. Isn't that right?

Ms. Yea, Bausch & Lomb. . .

Mr. Bausch & Lomb got me out. . . I had a secret job at Bausch & Lomb, and they got me out and I stayed out till Pearl Harbor Days, and then I was called back in again. And I stayed in Port Niagara for only eight days and Bausch & Lomb got me out again. And then I stayed out for almost a year until I went back in. When I went back in I requested an ordnance assignment because of the training I had at Mechanics Institute. And from there on until 1945 . . .

Q. So when you were both together in Michigan. . . ?

Mr. Ah, yes. During the time when I was. . .

Ms. He was at mechanical school. . . .

Mr. Yea, right. See, the service sent me to school in Michigan; Pontiac, Michigan.

Ms. And I guess they gave a housing allowance and they were quite. . . .

Mr. Yea.

Ms. . . . generous with their money so we went out that. . . .

Mr. In those days, the early days, it was generous. It's not today.

Ms. Yea, in those days. . . .

Mr. So Ruth joined me out in Michigan for about two months I'd say.

Ms. Yea, and I stayed on.

Mr. Yea, you stayed on afterward because you got a job with better pay than the \$11 you got here in Rochester.

Ms. Well, now, I got more than. . . .

Q. What were you working at here in Rochester?

Ms. I was working at Danischevsky's Dairy, who was. . . . who was sort of in the family, you know, relative. And. . . .

Mr. That was on Mon. . . . on Joseph Avenue.

Ms. Corner Joseph and Harmon. I was working there when I was in high school, I'd work there Saturdays and Sundays and once in a while after school.

Q. So then you. . . 'cause you mentioned that when you were at Michigan you took some courses. . . .

Ms. Well, that's right, because they were open to servicemen's wives, and I. . . . I had a lot of time. You know, after I would get through working I even. . . . Clayton was allowed to come home twice a week. So I had evenings and it was a good way of filling them in. You know, I found out about. . . . they were offering them so I took them.

Q. Since we're talking about the 1940's. . . . I'm not always the best organized questioner. Do you recall when local Jews and you first became aware of

Q. (Continued) Hitler and. . . and what he was doing to the Jews.

Ms. You know, that has always been a puzzle to me ever since. I keep saying this over and over again. Why, in those days, were we not more aware of what was going on in. . . in Germany and the surrounding countries? Why were we not made aware that so many of our. . . so many of our people were being killed? I'm sorry, I don't remember that at all, and I've got a very good memory.

Mr. Well, the only thing that I was a little acquainted with is because at that time, as you remember, . . .

Ms. Some of your relatives came over.

Mr. Sure. Some of our relations came over. I think it was 1938. . .

Ms. '39.

Mr. Horace came over. . . Horace left and came over, I think, in 1938. He came over alone. And then . . .

Q. From Germany. . . Germany?

Mr. From Germany. One of my uncle's sponsored him and he came over in 1938, I believe it was. And then around 1939 they were able to get out his mother and father and his younger brother. And that. . . at that time I remember being aware to some extent, but not to. . . not to the extent that it turned out to be.

Ms. Let's face it. We. . . we weren't babies, we were teenagers or. . . I mean why weren't we aware? I just don't remember whether it wasn't in the papers, whether people weren't made aware of this.

Q. The organized Jewish community wasn't talking about it?

Ms. No, I don't remember that.

Mr. I remember. . .

Ms. I don't remember them. . . I don't remember there being meetings about it.

Ms. (Continued) Or else maybe everyone was so involved in their own problems. Remember we were. . . we had a Depression. We were just coming out of it a little bit. The young people of the nation were being drafted, perhaps we were so involved in ourselves that we didn't realize it. But I just can't believe it. I just feel that the news media somehow did not get ahold of it, or else it was suppressed in such a way that the Jewish people were just not aware. Because I know I lost many relatives in Latvia. I know as hard as times were had we realized we would have tried to bring some of them here.

Q. Had you been corresponding with your relatives?

Ms. Very erratically. Very, very erratically. Not. . . not a good letter writer at all. And the thing is everytime we sent a letter they wanted money, and there you. . .

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (Interview I)

Interview I
Tape I
Side B

Q. OK. This is Side B. Today is June 16. Nancy Rosenbloom interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Bittker at their home. Now let's see. We were talking about briefly between 1945 and when you entered the . . . do you mind repeating?

Mr. Well, I think when we left off I remember that I came home from service. I went back with Bausch & Lomb for a while, for a couple years. And then I tried the Bond Clothes because an uncle of mine passed. . . made quite a success of it in the clothing industry. But, of course, the clothing industry then was on its way down, you know. And I stayed there for a while, then I went back to . . . I went to Gleason's rather because I got a better offer. I was making better money. And, of course, in those days I was interested in getting a little further ahead. Not that you got that far ahead, but it was a better paying job.

Q. Were there that many Jews who had gone through Mechanics Institute and been trained. . . ?

Mr. No, no. Very few Jewish fellows. As a matter of fact, very few Jewish fellows went into the machine shop business. One I particularly I remember Meyer Narowitz who had. . . his son's wedding coming up shortly. I remember him from way back in school days. He went into the machine shop business and made quite a . . .

Ms. Was he at R.I.T. with you?

Mr. No, no he wasn't. I went to Franklin and Washington with him, and I remember he went. . . after he graduated he went to the Bureau of Science, which was done for many, many years as a toolmaker. And from then on he

Mr. (Continued) went on into teaching. And I'm not sure whether he's even now teaching in the mechanical line or not. Where else were we. . .

Q. Let's see. I remember I asked you why you left why you left your soda water. . .

Mr. Oh, well this business had deteriorated and . . .

Ms. Besides, there was just too much family involved.

Mr. We had several other in the family. . . we had several other relations who even then were in the soda water business and including the Qual-bet beverages which was the Hoolit family. And then an uncle of mine left and went in with Jack . . . (Note: end of sentence fades out.) . . . for many years. And when he saw the business was going down he went to Miller Soda Water, and it just wasn't.

Q. Was that a Jewish company?

Mr. Oh, yes.

Q. It was?

Ms. Oh, yes.

Mr. Not much of Millers left now, but . . . yea.

Q. Then we start. . . started talking a little bit about anti-Jewish feeling in Rochester. And maybe. . . you mentioned. . .

Mr. No, I. . . I don't remember. . . I did have a few Gentile friends who lived on. . . or rather near us on Clifford Avenue. I remember playing ball with them, going to their home or their coming to mine. But I never felt any. . . matter of fact one of them was definitely a German family who hadn't been into the States that long. And we always got along very, very well. I don't remember any anti-Semitism in those days.

Q. Over the years has that changed do you think?

Mr. Well, I think for the most part not necessarily, not too much. . . we've been in contact with a lot of Gentile people who we work with, especially the

Mr. (Continued) waitresses, and I have a very good. . .

Ms. We have a good rapport with the Gentile girls who are waitresses. We're invited to their homes, and . . .

Mr. We've had them here.

Ms. . . . we've had them here.

Mr. Right. And we go out to dinner once in a while with them.

Ms. Because. . . yea.

Mr. And so on and so forth.

Ms. Right, right.

Mr. Yea. No, actually we've gotten along very, very well with our Gentile. . .

Ms. And, of course, we know that there is a lot of mixed marriages now. That's become a . . . unfortunately, that's become a terrible thing.

Q. Well, what is. . . well, you know. . .

Ms. Well, of course, we don't cater the mixed marriage unless the person. . . the Gentile person has converted because most of our catering is done at temples. I mean and unless both are Jewish or have become Jewish there's no wedding at the temple. Once in a while we do have weddings or . . . where let's say the . . . the ceremony might be at the U. of R. chapel, and then they might have hired one of the temples just for the dinner.

Mr. Or they have a house party. . .

Ms. Or they'll have it in their house.

Mr. Wedding in the house. . .

Ms. Right.

Or even a reception in the house or dinner in their home. . .

Right.

Or afterwards which we have done on mixed marriages.

Mr. But, of course, they're not permitted to be married in the temple unless they're. . .

Ms. We did have one mixed marriage years ago that Rabbi Bernstein performed, and he did that out of . . . this way, he said the boy. . . the girl was Jewish, is Jewish. The boy is Gentile. He was brought up in a very diplomatic family. His father was once a diplomat from Europe in Washington. And they absolutely had no religion at all. And after interviewing the boy, talking to him at length Rabbi Bernstein felt that should that boy ever take any religion at all it would be the Jewish religion. He was just brought up. . . his mother and father were both very, very highly educated people, diplomats, a beautiful family, but didn't believe in any religion. So he officiated at that wedding. That's the one that I know of where Rabbi Bernstein officiated. We once had a mixed wedding where . . . a couple of them where they would bring in a rabbi from New York.

Q. Why would a rabbi from New York be. . .

Mr. Well, most rabbis in this area especially. . .

Ms. In this area. . .

Mr. . . . will not perform a mixed marriage, but certain rabbis in other cities for perhaps a nominal fee or whatever it was they would perform. And I know several. . . there's a rabbi who lives in Buffalo today, several in New York. And some of the families insisted upon a rabbi marrying them instead of being married in a church or by a priest or a minister or by a judge or whatever it was. So they would go to the problem. . . the expense and the problem of bringing in a rabbi who would perform a mixed marriage.

Q. And you have no position in terms of catering to them if they ask you, you will?

Mr. As long as. . .

Ms. As long as the food is kosher. Now we did a . . . a mock seder in a . . .
in a Catholic church and the . . .

Mr. Just before Pesach this year. . .

Ms. A week before Pesach. . .

Mr. The Holy Apostle Church.

Ms. Yes. The Holy Apostle Church, and we prepared all the food and first we
were just going to prepare the food and they were going to pick it up. And
then they got thinking they really don't know how to serve it, you know. So
they said, well, we'll have our own people waiting on tables, but if you
would be there to, you know, . . .

Mr. Show. . .

Ms. So Clayton and the boys went down there and they, you know, heated everything
up and, you know, served it. . .

Mr. They served it on paper plates. . .

Ms. And the best waiter of the whole bunch was the priest of the church.

Mr. He was fantastic.

Ms. He was just one of the guys, you know. There was nothing standoffish about
him, he just joined right in and he moved and. . . Clayton said he heated
and he set tables, everything.

Q. Is the first time you've ever done anything quite like that?

Ms. No, every once in a while we get something similar to it, not exactly.

Mr. Well, not. . . not quite like that because this was a catered. . .

Ms. Right, yea.

Mr. We have done a few times some Gentile people who insist upon having our type
of food, but then again they get the same food as if they were serving a
Jewish wedding or party.

Ms. They still don't get mixed. In fact, a lot of times the . . . will call

Ms. (Continued) us up for a wedding and the name, you know, doesn't sound Jewish, I say are you aware that we are kosher caterers? And sometimes they'll say yes we are, and sometimes they'll say no we're not. And they want to know what the difference is. And I have to tell them, well we can't serve ham and we can't serve shrimp. And if you use me you cannot have cheese with it, and some say fine, and some say well, thank you very much for telling me, that's it, they hang up, you know.

Q. Well, do you think that's how some of your customers come to you, is by looking in the phone book or . . . ?

Ms. Sometimes. Most. . . most times, word of mouth.

Mr. Yea, right.

Ms. But, once in a while you do get, you know, someone who picks up. . . .

Mr. Yea, from the yellow pages they do pick it up, but not that great. When we do have Monroe's clubs we usually sent out. . . even though there's the yellow pages does say kosher caterers, so they may not be aware we're kosher caterers.

Q. Can I ask you how many people work with you?

Ms. It varies as we need 'em.

Mr. Anywhere from a couple to ten, fifteen or eighteen.

Ms. You know, he was just making out a list of the waitresses before you called . . . before you came. And now this. . . this week we'll have a lot of people. I mean one party alone will take . . .

Mr. Twenty some odd. . .

Ms. Twenty-two waitresses, and then the other parties will take waitresses.

Mr. Yea, but that's. . . that's an exception.

Ms. Right.

Mr. See, most of the time, four or five or eight or ten.

Q. What . . . what are there, about two or . . . two or three other Jewish caterers in the city?

Mr. Well, the only ones I think are. . .

Ms. You have Steve and Barty. . .

Mr. Steve and Barty and. . .

Ms. What about that woman. . .

Mr. Right.

Ms. I mean or is she. . . is she kosher or not?

Mr. She's kosher, too, but she doesn't do very much.

Q. Over the years it seems to me anyhow that. . .

Ms. Well, there were others, Mrs. Burstin, Mrs. Cohen. Now Mrs. Cohen catered our wedding.

Q. Mrs. Cohen?

Ms. Mrs. Cohen. From Woodbury Street. And there was Mrs. Zitsker and there were the Harlow girls.

Mr. And the Nathansons.

Ms. Mrs. Nathanson.

Q. Let's see.

Mr. Mrs. . . . Zelda Millfield.

Ms. Yea, Zelda, who is still around.

Mr. But she doesn't cater any longer.

Q. Have . . . have the affairs gotten larger over the years?

Ms. Different.

Mr. More complicated.

Ms. Than our wedding. Yes, much more complicated. They used to be. . . there used to be no cocktail party as such. There used to be a dinner, and it would be a big dinner, but it would always be chicken and gefilte fish . . .

Ms. (Continued) It used to be very, very standard dinner.

Q. Wow.

Ms. And now everyone wants something different. A lot of people think they're gourmets and they. . . they pick up a gourmet cookbook and right away. . . and they. . . and, you know, you have to make so many different things. Each one has their own ideas, and sometimes they don't realize what you can make for ten, fifteen people would take too long to make for two hundred. Like, we were going over a menu this morning. And the woman. . . it's a buffet, and it's about two hundred and twenty-five people, and she wants each piece of fish in the buffet line to be decorated in a certain way, which would be time-consuming. And I said to Clayton, look, when the waitress comes in she's got to waste time at the buffet table, you don't have time to decorate each little tiny piece of fish that way.

Mr. Yea, but they don't feel that way.

Ms. It's just too time-consuming, you know.

Q. Do you have any opinion about why things are more complicated now?

Ms. Well, I think people are more cosmopolitan, more sophisticated. . .

Mr. Right.

Ms. More of the younger element. . .

Mr. They go out more. . . they go out more. . . they go to the country clubs. . .

Ms. They do traveling.

Mr. Right, and they see these things, these various things. To them it looks beautiful and think it can be done, but it. . .

Ms. Now we. . . I had a woman come in here the other day who'd come with her sister, and she said she just came back from a tour, from a trip, and she said the vegetables were absolutely wonderful. They were all fresh, no frozen. . . you know, we use fresh frozen. . . the frozen vegetables. Once

Ms. (Continued) in a while we try. . . when service is for a few we might do that. And she says you can just taste the difference. And I said, you know, I bet you were in a country where labor is very, very cheap. And if you wanted. . . when you ask for frozen vegetables they would be a fortune. She says yes I was in the Orient. And Shanghai, Singapore. And she says the vegetables are marvelous. I said, sure, what they pay people there they can afford to buy peas and have somebody hull them.

Q. Yes.

Ms. But we can't do that.

Q. Yes. You do most of the work yourself?

Ms. No. No, no. We have people. For instance, we have two partner. . . Clayton has two partners who work with him. I've dropped my partnership, I just work. . . he has two men working with him, my brother who's been with the . . . how many years Clayton?

Mr. Since about '55 I think. About twenty years.

Ms. Yea. He used to have a grocery store on Joseph Avenue. He owned . . .
(Transcriber's note: can't understand the next few words.) Now that might have been before your time, I don't know.

Mr. I'm sure it was.

Q. 1955 is not before my time.

Ms. Yea, well at one time all the Jewish people used to come to Joseph Avenue to do all their shopping. And the food there was marvelous.

Q. Until. . . if I can just interrupt for a second, until about when? Would you say Joseph Avenue started to. . .?

Ms. 1950, '55. It might be. . .

Q. OK. We were just remembering Joseph Avenue a little bit.

Ms. Oh, yes. Well, you see, I've started to work on Joseph Avenue at

- Ms. (Continued) Danichevsky's when I was fourteen, you know, working in the evening. And Saturday night. . . it started on one day. . . the streets were just loaded with people walking, nobody drove, you know, they might park their cars on the side streets.
- Mr. Yea, but they would walk. . .
- Ms. But it was Shabbas and all the meat markets were open and our. . . our creamery was open till midnight. They had people there till then. I remember we used to pour the sour cream by hand, it wouldn't come in jars. And we used to charge 3¢ for a bottle. And, you know, my aunt was. . . is a Danichevsky, and we saw Ann Kolko, I don't know if you know her or not, but we saw her in a restaurant about six months ago. And she came over and she says, I have to tell you this. I was at a flea market and I bought a Danichevsky creamery bottle, and I paid three dollars for it. And I thought. . . and she said it was just that I had to have something to remember Joseph Avenue by. And the stores were all immaculate. They were beautiful stores. There were creameries, bakeries. . .
- Mr. Lawrence's. . .
- Ms. Lawrence's Delicatessen.
- Mr. Right. Herring. . .
- Ms. Cohen's Restaurant, everyone would stop in for a corned beef sandwich there. Fox's had a place there.
- Q. This is through the 1950's? Or forties?
- Ms. Well, no, this is earlier, earlier.
- Mr. Earlier, you're going back. . .
- Ms. It was the 1940's.
- Mr. 19. . . early forties, 1940's.
- Ms. And during the war, too.

Mr. Well, not so much. I think it was around 1935 to 1940 when you got the bulk of that.

Ms. Well, I . . . I must have started working in '36. And it was till about the middle forties. Oh, yea. I remember even when . . . when the boys were leaving for the service Joseph Avenue was still in its heyday.

Q. Now when and why do you think it changed?

Ms. The supermarkets, for one thing, started to carry the Jewish type of food. They started to carry cottage cheese and sour cream and sweet butter and smoked fish and pickled herring. And these people didn't have to come to Joseph Avenue to get that anymore.

Q. And by then the people had moved out to the suburbs?

Ms. Yes, they were moving away.

Mr. Started to move away. . . .

Ms. Although even when I worked at . . . (Note: one word is slurred.) . . . people from Monroe Avenue would come . . .

Mr. Right. Right.

Ms. Some very prominent people would. . .

Mr. Started to change at that time and they moved out to Monroe Avenue and further out into Brighton, Irondequoit.

Ms. Yea, and now my uncle opened up a Danichevsky's Creamery on Monroe Avenue as an example.

Q. Did he close up the shop on Joseph Avenue?

Ms. No, no, no. That was run with a brother.

Q. Oh, I see.

Ms. Yea, they ran an entire one. . . They both carried the del . . . Danichevsky homemade cottage cheese and homemade. . .

Mr. Butter. . .

Ms. . . . sour cream and homemade butter. You know, it was. . . it was beautiful. And people would come from miles to get that, you know. And there was not. . . I remember at fourteen years old I used to walk home myself at midnight. We lived maybe about two blocks away, and I was never afraid. My father wouldn't think of coming down to pick me up.

Q. Yea.

Ms. This. . . this was no crime on the streets.

Q. The way you remember, did that neighborhood change in steps? From maybe Jewish to Italian to black, or was it more of a. . . ?

Ms. Jewish to black.

Q. Directly.

Mr. I'd say so, yea.

Ms. Jewish to black. There was not.

Mr. 'Cause it was when we came back from . . . when I came back from service and we first lived on Catherine. . . on Catherine Street, it was starting to change. That was 1945, '46.

Ms. Yea.

Mr. It started to deteriorate at that time. And that was the same time that your brother bought Simon's Creamery on Monroe Avenue.

Ms. Yea, right.

Q. Now did they continue. . . like, did the blacks in the area come down and go around the corner and shop at the same Jewish shops?

Ms. The first ones that came did, but then the Jewish people started to move away, the businesses and the population started to run. And after they had run the stores would be either boarded up or converted to black stores, you know.

Q. You mean black ownership?

Ms. Black ownership or a very low class. . . like I remember Danichevsky's Creamery. When Vicky gave it up first one or two other people had it, and each time it'd be. . . well, the first one who bought it from her was Jewish. It would be. . . but it was lower, he wouldn't keep the place as clean. Then a Gentile. . . Gentile person took it over and became more beer and. . . bread and beer, you know, that sort of a thing. Where we never had beer. And then after that the black person took it over, it was another step down, and then it was boarded up and eventually the city just tore the whole area down.

Q. Now you were living on what street in the riots?

Ms. We were at the Sheraton doing a party that day when we had the riots. And when they started out the only thing we were worried about was the bus service for our girls. The busses were stopped. And we were not involved on Joseph Avenue in those days. We were living here, and they didn't affect us in any way at all, you know, that came much later already.

Q. Somebody was to say to you FIGHT, you know, the organization, or Saul Olinsky, would that evoke anything at all or. . . ?

Ms. Not a positive response, no, if anything it would evoke a little bit of negative response.

Q. You never gave them money or. . . ?

Ms. No, I didn't. . .

Q. . . supported them or. . . ?

Ms. No, I didn't. I felt there were too many organizations already to support. I mean, that's my own feeling.

Q. Sure.

Ms. That there were too many organizations supporting them already, and I feel that I don't care who some person is as long as they. . . they're honest and they produce, and they pay for their money. I don't care if their skin

Ms. (Continued) is purple or black or white or pink. What difference does it make? Now, . . .

Q. We were talking about the riots. . .

Mr. The riots. . .

Ms. I had. . . I had. . . I had a cleaning lady here who was black and she was absolutely a beautiful person inside and out. And. . . and she did cleaning until she got a much better job, and she doesn't do cleaning now because she has a much better job at the school, which is fine because she went back. . .

Mr. Well, she wasn't well educated, but she was very, very nice person.

Ms. No, but she went back. . .

Mr. She was trying to push her family ahead. . .

Ms. Yea, and she has a daughter who was at Community College. . .

Mr. Right.

Ms. And she was just a beautiful person, that was my own. . . Now we did have. . . we never had black waitresses, no.

Mr. No. We had. . . we had black people helping us in the kitchen many, many years ago but. . .

Ms. They were very, very independent.

Mr. Very, very much independent.

Ms. Like this one boy who this one waitress got us who works at Sibley's in the kitchen department to help us weekends. And he came to Clayton and he says I want double time. And Clayton says well, what do you mean double time. And he says well I already worked my forty hours at Sibley's, now you pay me double time. And Clayton says, well, you didn't work for me. So that. . . that's his. . . you know, that's a thing. . . I'm sorry. . .

Q. Do you remember when Mr. Schaeffer had his. . .?

Ms. I remember reading about it, but that was long after we were living here.

Ms. (Continued) Many . . . when we were on Joseph Avenue it was beautiful. There was nothing like it. It was beautiful.

Q. OK. Just before we took this side. . . sidetrack, we were talking about your brother also part owner. . . ?

Ms. My brother, my oldest brother, Phil, the one who had Simon's Creamery. When he got out of Simon's Creamery we needed someone to go in with us and be a partner. And then about a year and a half ago, Louis Alderman, who was my sister-in-law's partner in Utica, gave up. . . my sister-in-law gave up business and moved to Rochester, he joined us. And that's when I dropped out of the business as a partner, I just work.

Q. You probably work just as much now. . .

Ms. Yes, except that if I don't want to sometimes, and they don't need me, I just say no.

Q. Let's see. Maybe I'll ask you . . . Maybe I'll ask you about your participation in different Jewish clubs and activities. Do you have any affiliations with. . .

Ms. Well. . .

Mr. The only Jewish club I really belong to is the Knights of Pithias, and I'm not active at all in it except I do bowl with them, and I do see them quite often. I do see them often because of business purposes, you know, I do a lot of work for them. But, as far as activities, I don't seem to have that much time. . .

Ms. Well, for one thing, you don't have that much free time.

Mr. I agree.

Ms. I . . . I did take adult education classes at Beth El a few years, you know, . . . that Wednesday class. The past year I didn't, but the . . . the two . . . three years before. . .

Q. The last three years before that. . .

Ms. The last three years I did go.

Q. And Hadassah?

Mr. Well, she's. . .

Ms. I'm a member. . . I'm a dues-paying member, and that's about it.

Mr. Well, there are a lot of organizations where you're a dues-paying member.

Ms. That. . . that's it. I belong to many, many sisterhoods. B'rith Kodesh, Beth El, Beth Shalom, many sisterhoods; ORT. . .

Mr. Hadassah and ORT. . .

Ms. Hadassah. . .

Mr. Mizrachi.

Ms. Mizrachi, right. But I don't go to any of the meetings because my time is very limited.

Q. Are you Zionists? Mizrachi. . . Is Mizrachi a Zionist organization?

Ms. They're a religious group. I don't know if they're Zionist. They may be. They may have some Zionist tenets, I really don't know.

Q. Have you been to Israel?

Ms. Yes, I've been there twice. Clayton and I together have been there once. I went. . . the first time I went with Rabbi Bernstein's group, and that was a fantastic trip.

Q. When was this?

Mr. Oh, it was before the '67 war.

Ms. Yes.

Mr. Just two months before.

Ms. '66, 1966. . .

Mr. No, '67.

Ms. Oh, was it in '67?

Mr. You went in February of '67, it was a few months before the war.

Ms. It was. . . it was sponsored by B'rith Kodesh. Rabbi Bernstein was with us. And he got into some places that nobody else could. For instance, the guide that we had was absolutely marvelous. But beside that, we went like down to where Ben Gurion lived in the desert and he gave us a private interview.

Q. Oh, with Ben Gurion himself?

Ms. Yes, yes.

Mr. And that was only because of Rabbi Bernstein.

Ms. Because of Rabbi Bernstein we got into so many places.

Q. How many people were there?

Ms. Unfortunately, it was very small, it should have been larger, they. . . I think there were about 19 of us, 18, 19. It was a very intimate group.

Q. What was. . . how was it formed?

Ms. At B'rith Kodesh, but you know, at the same time several of the people who were supposed to go on the trip dropped out because Had. . . the Buffalo Hadassah was having a trip the same time, and it was about \$100 less. They . . . and really they didn't get to see any of the . . . lot of these places or really we had the royal carpet. As an example, one day Rabbi Bernstein called us and he said, there's a plane of Russian immigrants. . . now this was in '67 before Russian immigrants were that prominent, coming into the airport, would people like to go out and see them? And we said yes. And we went out and saw these people as they were just coming down on Israeli soil. And how they were welcomed by their relatives. It was a fantastic trip. We went to. . .

Mr. You visited some of the mayor's . . .

Ms. Yes, Teddy Karnick.

Mr. Right.

Ms. We had a kiddush and a Friday night dinner with the Mayor in Jerusalem.

Ms. (Continued) And he then he spoke to us about all his tribulations, all his problems. Or like when we went to. . . what was the name of it? The Technion, the Chairman of the Board of Technion greeted us and took us around the whole thing.

Mr. Because of Rabbi Bernstein.

Ms. Yea. Or when we went to the Hadassah Hospital. It wasn't just one of the ordinary guides, it was the. . . the president there, who took us around. You know, it was really a V.I.P. town.

Q. Now the second time you went you went. . .

Ms. We went with another couple, we joined a Histadrut group. Because. . .

Q. What?

Mr. Histadrut.

Q. Oh, right.

Ms. Now that is a Zionist group. We asked Nelson Kirschenbaum and he said that Jewish Congress had the best one. And we called and they said that their tours were all booked at the time that we were free to go. So then we said well what would be the next best. And he said try the Histadrut, and we did. And they took us, but there was such a difference. The only thing is the next day we were able to go into the. . . into the Golan Heights.

Mr. Yea, well we went. . .

Ms. The second time.

Q. What was the year that you went together?

Mr. Oh, when was that? About five, six years ago, wasn't it?

Ms. Four or five years ago.

Mr. It was five.

Ms. Was it? Five years ago.

Mr. Five years ago.

Q. But you said you're not Zionists?

Ms. I don't. . . I don't. . . I'm very pro. . . having Israel as our homeland. I think that's very important to keeping a Jewish identity and keeping anti-Semitism down because you have someone who will speak for you. Who will get up in the United Nations and. . . and say I am talking for these Jewish people. Whereas if you remove Israel who is going to do that? Who . . .

Q. When you. . . when you say someone talking for the Jewish people, do you identify with what they're saying though? Do you usually agree?

Ms. Yes, I do.

Q. Regardless of . . . I don't know. Regardless. . .

Ms. I'm very pro Israel.

Q. Whatever their position is.

Ms. Right. Not that I want to live in Israel, but I feel that if the Jewish people in. . . anywhere in the world are to have a voice, they've gotta have their own country.

Q. Do you think your son feels the same way?

Ms. Unfortunately, no, I don't think so. He's . . . he's Jewish. He knows he's Jewish.

Mr. Well, he's not active in any. . .

Ms. He's not active in any Jewish organizations.

Mr. Yea, and his son is too young yet for attending any Hebrew school or. . .

Ms. Right. And as a matter of fact he just bought some land in a very Gentile neighborhood to build a house. He bought some land in Bedford, and that's strictly an old line. . . in Westchester County. It's an old line, you know, a "wasp". . . a "wasp" area if there ever was one.

Q. Would you ever consider doing something like buying a house in Meadowbrook or. . . isn't Meadowbrook the renowned area. . .?

Ms. It used to be years ago, but now of course, that's broken. But I remember back. . . I remember Becky Bernstein telling us that once she tried to buy a house in Meadowbrook and the agent very gently told her that Jewish people just didn't get a chance to buy there.

Q. I wonder if that's the same as with the quota system at the U. of R.?

Ms. I ran into that, yea. But, if . . .

Q. You mean you. . . you wanted to go?

Ms. No, I. . . I. . . I was enrolled and my father had a heart attack and I dropped out. I was just there a few months, but I managed to make it because I was tops in. . . I was the top girl in my class. But, I know a lot of my friends who wanted to go had to go to Albany or somewhere else, they just couldn't go to the U. of R.

Mr. There was a lot more quota than there is today.

Ms. Yea.

Mr. Now today it's. . .

Ms. I remember David Chaltoff was the top boy and Harold Fleischer was after him, and we were the only three that the U. of R. accepted from our graduating class.

Q. And because they had. . .

Ms. Oh, they definitely had a quota system. We know that, they told us.

Q. Yea. OK. That was. . .

Ms. And in those days the U. of R. was only \$350 a year tuition, plus you could live at home. . . Plus you would. . . you wouldn't think. . . if mean if you could possibly go to the U. of R. you wouldn't think of living anywhere else but home.

Q. No. Was that the number one school that you wanted to go to?

Ms. That's all we could afford. I couldn't. . . I mean. . . not. . . in my circle

Ms. (Continued) of friends, maybe in the more affluent Jewish families they could, but my circle of friends were very lucky, and even then we got a state scholarship. Now, for instance, I . . . I got, you know, the one term that I was there . . . half a term, I had . . . tuition was \$350, and I got a state scholarship for \$200. So I had to come up with \$150. That was about all I could manage.

Q. Yea. I . . . I remember. Before we talked a little bit about the United Nations. Have you reacted vehemently to the United Nations in the last six months of . . .?

Ms. Of course. I mean, who. . . Of course. I mean; I'm very disturbed about it. I think Moynihan was trying to do a superb job, but he was just knocked right down.

Mr. Well, sure he got knocked down. And the Arabs locked. . .

Ms. And the Arabs locked. . . they were very, very strong. And it's unfortunate that it's the Arab money that's doing all of that, the Arab oil which is translated into. . . into money. And what upsets me is the. . . is the stand that France and England are taking against it. I mean, we seem to have lost all our friends.

Q. Yea.

Ms. It's really very disturbing I think.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B (Interview 1)

Interview II
Tape I
Side A

Q. Today is July 15. This is Side A of the second tape. My name is Nancy Rosenbloom, and I'm interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Bittker at their home. You were saying that. . . I just want to test the recorder. . .

Mr. Hello.

Q. Well, maybe we'll start out talking a little bit more about the catering business. And one of the questions I wonder is do young people still go into catering today or is it. . .?

Mr. Oh, no.

Ms. I don't think so, not the way we do it anyhow. I think if young people were to go in it today they would look to buy prepared foods and just maybe. . .

Mr. Yea.

Ms. . . . simple, just do a little hors d'oeuvres.

Mr. But, not into the same field. . .

Ms. I know we can't find young people to come in the kitchen to help. We can find plenty of young waitresses.

Mr. Yes, waitresses, but not help.

Ms. Not kitchen help, no.

Mr. No, matter of fact, we can't even find old people.

Ms. Well, you can find some old people.

Mr. Well. . .

Ms. But, we find that most people don't want that kind of work. It's very hard work. The hours are difficult. Sometimes we may not be through till. . . now this past Saturday actually we didn't get through till about two-thirty Sunday morning. So, and. . . so, you know, some people don't. . . don't want those

Ms. (Continued) hours. It's. . . it's. . . it's very hard work, and. . .

Q. You started to tell me last time that your brother, Simon. . . ?

Ms. My brother, Phil, he had Simon's Creamery. . .

Q. Simon's Creamery.

Ms. And when Joseph Avenue really went down, that was probably before your time, Joseph Avenue at one time was a very flourishing community, and people from all over the city used to come there for . . . the Jewish community used to all come there to shop. And then when that died down, and the supermarkets started to carry many of the things that, you know, Jewish housewives could get where they lived, Joseph Avenue really did go down. And then my brother gave up the store and he joined us in our catering. That was a good number of years ago.

Mr. Yea, that was in 1955.

Ms. Yea.

Q. So there's the two of you.

Ms. Right.

Q. Last time you told me that you'd given up. . .

Ms. I've given up my partnership to a young man who came here from Utica who was a partner of Clayton's sister. They, too, were in the catering business in Utica. His sister sold out in Utica, she gave up.

Mr. She gave up, she retired.

Ms. She has retired. And Louis came to Rochester. He moved here and he joined us. And in order for him to do that I gave up my partnership. In other words, I'm just an employee now, which gives me a little bit more freedom to come and go as I please. Not as much as the other girls, but sort of a little bit more. Like if sometimes if I want a few hours off I. . . I will, you know. . .

Q. So . . . but . . . And your brother also. . . ?

Ms. My brother is in it, yes.

Q. And an employee, as you are, not a partner?

Ms. No, no. My brother's a partner also.

Q. Oh.

Ms. Yes.

Q. So is that. . . is that. . .

Ms. It's a third partnership, yes. Three partners, right.

Q. Do you think that even if young people don't want to go into it, is there still a large demand? I mean, do you find. . . ?

Ms. They'll always be a demand for catering. Unfortunately, we find a very sad situation that is coming up, and that is that a lot of the weddings because many of them are mixed marriages, can't be held in a temple. And consequently the food that is served is served in the hotel or in a club that is non-kosher.

Mr. Or a restaurant.

Ms. Or in a restaurant, and it's really very sad. But, of course, the temples can't do anything about this, unless there is conversion they cannot have the ceremony or whatever in their temple. Now, one or two of the temples here in the city, one that I know of, does allow a young couple who are married, as an example, at the University of Rochester's Interfaith Chapel, to use their facilities for the dinner or the reception afterwards. But most temples will not do that.

Q. Which one is that?

Ms. Beth David.

Mr. Temple Beth David has . . . it is once or twice.

Ms. Oh, yea.

Mr. And Light of Israel has a lot of it.

Ms. I think Beth David still does.

Mr. Beth David, I think, still does.

Ms. But Light of Israel. . .

Mr. They found they had. . .

Ms. They had too much objection. . .The other temples I don't believe do.

Q. What kind of objections do they have?

Ms. That I don't know. Probably something to do with the. . .

Mr. Well, the religious aspect of it more than anything.

Ms. Yes. Right, it would be the fact. . .

Mr. The fact that they were not married in the Jewish faith. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. . . . would probably be. . .

Ms. They were married by a justice. . .

Mr. Justice or a judge or a priest or whatever, you know, they don't. . .you know, 'cause there are so many of 'em being married today, and naturally as Ruth said they don't convert, and either a judge will marry them or a minister or a priest or whatever have you.

Ms. But, see, we find that years ago there were very, very few. When we started catering there were very, very few mixed marriages. And if they were a mixed marriage usually they converted to the Jewish faith. And then the last couple years that hasn't been so. If it's a mixed marriage they're married by the. . . we have one in a couple weeks.

Mr. That's right.

Ms. That. . .

Mr. Who are being married by one of the judges. And it's being held in their own home, the girl's home, the girl by the way is a Gentile person. And it's being held at her home. They're setting up a tent outside and so forth.

Mr. (Continued) That will accomodate all the people.

Ms. But we find the reaction from the parents isn't that strong. And I guess as it was years ago. Yes, they seem to. . .

Mr. They don't want to fight it.

Ms. They say they just can't. They seem to accept it more now than they used to years ago. I remember. . . oh, this is maybe about ten years ago a woman was in here making plans for a big reception, like an engagement reception, her son was going to be married. And she said I want to tell you a little history why I'm doing it. She says, the wedding is going to be in a church and I'm heartbroken about it. The girl is Gentile. And she says I am making this reception because I want to do something for my son, and I want my friends to feel welcome. But, she says, a year ago my daughter married out of the Jewish faith, and I told her at that time that if she does marry out of the Jewish faith I never want to see her again. And, she said, I haven't seen her to this day. And, she says, I just can't bear to lose both my children. So that's why she was accepting. So the second time around she was accepting it.

Mr. Because she didn't want to lose, you know. . .

Ms. Because she felt she just can't lose both children.

Mr. And I think that includes a lot of people now.

Q. Do you think that intermarriage poses a serious problem to. . .?

Ms. Yes, I think we're losing our people, you know. Our statistics, and I'm sure you're more aware of this than I am, I heard from someone who makes a point of knowing these things, that there . . . there are less than 2% Jewish people in the world. Now this was like ten years ago, we keep losing our people, where is the Jewish faith going?

Q. Do you ever hear any solutions proposed?

Ms. No, we never do.

Q. I wonder why it is that. . . that it's. . .

Ms. Well, the reason. . . it's very easy to know why, children go away to college. They, in turn, mingle. They . . .

Mr. Well, they have more freedom.

Ms. They have. . .

Mr. They travel a lot more.

Ms. They. . . they. . . and. . . and it isn't a clannish sort of thing where it used to be. You know, where the Jewish youngsters, teenagers and older, would mix just with Jewish people and Gentiles would mix. . . It's all one great big happy family. And, of course, a lot of the colleges have been pushing, you know, this practice very, very strongly.

Q. Oh, the. . . the. . .

Ms. The. . .

Mr. The Jews for Christ or. . .

Ms. Yes.

Mr. Yea .

Ms. And that I'm sure has something to do with it, and when the children, who have become very independent, and you know children for years and years had grown-up that they had to each one do their own thing. If they come from a parents that say, look, I'm in love with Mary Smith and the mother says, well, we're sorry, I mean, that she's not Jewish, but we're not going to tell you you can't marry her, you know.

Q. Yea.

Ms. Because probably they say he can't marry her they'll live together anyhow, you know.

Mr. This has happened many times.

Ms. So, I mean, it's that. . . that freedom. It has some good points and some bad points. I think for the Jewish religion on the whole it's rather bad. I think we're losing a lot of our people.

Q. It's. . . it's. . . one of things is whether you wonder whether more Judaism in the home will. . .

Ms. Those who observe Judaism, I think, observe it more than they used to years ago. I think more older people are trying to absorb the Hebrew language. I think traveling to Israel has had a lot to do with it. Don't you think so, Clayton?

Mr. Yes. Of course, look at how many people have gone and gone more than once.

Ms. Yea.

Q. But, do you think that that would prevent something like intermarriage or the daily. . .

Ms. No, I think. . . I think . . .

Mr. No, but.

Ms. The other facts are just too strong. The other emphasis. . .

Mr. Yea, but you. . . you were saying that the ones who practice it practice it wholeheartedly are still very much so, . . .

Ms. Yes.

Mr. But. . . but there are some who are on the borderline or on the fence who. . .

Ms. Many.

Mr. . . . and they don't care one way or the other. They haven't been brought up as too much of a Jewish person as far as temple orientations or. . . or even kosher homes and so forth. Some people just don't care.

Ms. Personally I think that there should be more emphasis on back to kashruth. I. . . I do. I mean, I've always felt that way. That I think that's one of the things that. . . you know they. . . they start hem a little bit, you

Ms. (Continued) know, and then they go a little bit more and more and more.

Mr. Well, of course, there's a lot of things that have driven people away from the kashruth, too.

Ms. Yea.

Mr. Prices is one.

Ms. Right.

Mr. Which everyone knows that kosher meat costs more than the. . .

Ms. You probably might have heard that from other people that you've interviewed, if they speak about kosher. And we're frightfully involved in it because we deal in it so. . . so much.

Mr. Right.

Ms. But when we pay 90¢ a pound for turkeys and we hear them advertised in the paper for 49¢ a pound, you wonder why. Now, everyone understands that the . . . the shakup has to be paid, but we know how much he gets for killing a turkey, and we. . . we always wonder why there's such a fantastic difference in price between kosher meat and non-kosher meat.

Q. Where do you get your. . . your meat?

Ms. We get most of it from Chicago.

Mr. Yes.

Q. Through a private. . . ?

Mr. No, from a direct source.

Ms. From a. . .

Mr. From a wholesale slaughterer.

Ms. Wholesale slaughterer. We get a lot of it there. And then. . . then locally we get most of it from Al Lipman.

Mr. Al Lipman, Lipman's Kosher Market. And, of course, we do deal with Goronkin a little bit, very little, but there are. . .

Q. You know Lipman's . . . Al Lipman's is the market on Monroe Avenue?

Ms. Yes.

Mr. Right.

Q. And Goronkin's is. . . ?

Ms. On Ridge Road.

Mr. The one on Ridge Road.

Q. What about other products? Dairy products, anything else you. . . ?

Mr. Well. . . well, dairy products is mostly. . .

Ms. Pine Tree . . . Potree. . .

Mr. Pine Tree Dairy, Potree Dairy. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. . . . which. . .

Ms. Cottage cheese and sour cream.

Mr. Yea, sour cream.

Ms. Our butter we get. . . we . . .

Mr. Well, butter is only used on special. . .

Q. Then do you deal directly. . .

Ms. With Pine Tree, yes.

Mr. With Pine Tree, yes. But a lot of the dairy products that we use we don't use in such great quantity that it's just as well to go up to the store and buy it.

Ms. Well, occasionally. But, . . .

Mr. Right. But . . . but we need large amounts. . . .

Ms. But the idea is any private person, if they need any. . . any, you know, fairly large amounts of dairy products, you can get it at Pine Tree just like we would. It isn't that he's exclusively. . . Or a wholesale trade, he's not. I mean, we can't go in for a pound of cottage cheese.

Q. Now, Pine Tree, is that a local. . . ?

Ms. Potree. . .

Mr. It's Potree Dairy, he changed the name to Pine Tree Dairy.

Ms. Right.

Q. That is a Rochester. . . ?

Mr. That is a Rochester owned. . .

Ms. As a matter of fact I think he was the first one to. . . in this area. . . part of the country, who developed yogurt.

Mr. That's right.

Ms. I mean, he put it on the market when nobody knew what it was, and at first he couldn't. . . he couldn't sell it at all.

Mr. He had problems with it.

Ms. And not it's a very popular item. But, years ago Mr. Potree just. . . it wasn't going anywhere.

Q. Yea. Of course, also do you see that supermarkets have come and given a lot of competition. . . ?

Ms. Oh, yes.

Mr. Oh, very much.

Ms. Yes. That's what killed Joseph Avenue, I think. That's the fact that supermarkets started to carry cottage cheese and sour cream and . . .

Mr. And herring.

Ms. . . . and herring, all the things that made Joseph Avenue unique at that time.

Q. So really Joseph Avenue had started on its decline long before the racial trouble?

Ms. Oh, yea.

Mr. Oh, yes.

Ms. Yes, yes. It started to decline around 1951, '52 in that area. Several years

Ms. (Continued) after the World War, you know, when the products became bountiful, and supermarkets really became super. I mean, I remember the times when the A&P or the Hart Stores, which were the forerunner of the Star Market, were just little corner stores. But, you know, as they became supermarkets people started to shop there. They found that they could buy the things that they wanted from Joseph Avenue there. So, you know, it was more convenient.

Q. One of the things I was going to ask, it's sort of a hard question, but let's say if you have anecdotes. Maybe if I say, were there. . . do you remember real catastrophes in your catering experience?

Mr. Not really.

Ms. Oh, once. . . you know, years ago we used to. . . this was a small house, and we. . . we'd broken it up into three rooms. Where we're sitting now there wasn't any walls over there and there was no wall here, and the kitchen wasn't. . . it was one big house. And we used to accomodate about 80 people. And one day we got ready for a shower, and we had the wrong date. The shower . . . well, the waitresses came and they set the tables, it was a Tuesday and we just waited and waited and waited, they didn't show up. And then I said I can't imagine where everybody is. And my husband says, do you have the right date? I said, yes, Wednesday the 18th or whatever. He says today happens to be Tuesday, not Wednesday.

Q. Oh.

Ms. But, it worked out all right.

Mr. So we just. . . things worked out.

Ms. Right.

Mr. And everybody home, started all over again the next day.

Ms. Right, it wasn't, you know. . .

Mr. Well, actually it wasn't a catastrophe.

Ms. It would have been worse if it had been the other way around, you know.

Mr. Right.

Q. What about any real successes or funny stories about different?

Mr. Well, there probably are a lot of funny ones, but . . .

Ms. I don't know. There are loads of them. Because I remember we had an aunt of ours, who was a darling person, she's dead, and she worked with us from the first day we started catering until she became ill. And she always used to say someday I'm going to write a book, so many things happened. But, after . . . at the moment I can't. . .

Mr. There are things, I'm sure, that we. . .

Ms. I can't. . .

Mr. . . . sometimes laugh about in the kitchen, you know, when it's discussed.

Ms. Right, right.

Mr. But, you know, just as you want them they're always impossible to think up. But, people are funny as they always say.

Ms. I . . . I . . . I . . . well, I don't know, at Beth Joseph Center once we had a wedding, and it was a gay bunch. Years ago the place to have a wedding was at Beth Joseph Center or the old Beth El on Park Avenue. And these people were drinking beer and they were. . . as the waitresses were serving dinner they were rolling the bottles of beer. . . the empty bottles in front of the waitresses. And we ran out and we said, stop, you know, the waitress will trip. Well, that was their point. One of them looked at me and said, can't we even have any fun?

Mr. Always at somebody's expense, you know?

Q. Yea.

Ms. But, there've been a lot of funny things, I just can't. . . can't think of any.

Q. Do you . . . do you recall when Beth El burned down on Park Avenue?

Ms. Yes.

Mr. Yes.

Q. Had . . . did you used to prepare the oned Shabbat. . .?

Mr. You mean the kiddushes?

Q. Kiddushes on. . .?

Mr. Yea, well we did. . .

Ms. We did kiddushes.

Mr. One of the other caterers. . .

Ms. Yea, one of the other caterers. . .

Mr. . . . was in there the night before it burned down, thank goodness.

Ms. Yea.

Mr. We didn't get involved in it. But, it was an accident. Someone might have dropped a cigarette somewhere. . .

Ms. Well, they don't know.

Mr. But, actually what they claimed was someone, it may have been one of the maintenance men or whoever may have, you know, dropped a cigarette or a match or something among the buckets. . .

Ms. Oh, yes, I. . . I remember. . .

Mr. . . . since it was all. . . it was an all wooden building, you know, it didn't take much to get it going.

Ms. And I remember how kind the churches in the neighborhood were telling Rabbi Karp that he was welcome to have the services. . .

Mr. Utilize their facilities. . .

Ms. . . . use their facilities for the services. And I remember two or three of the churches in the neighborhood came forth with that offer. And, of course, some people rushed in and some saved some Torahs and some saved some prayer

Ms. (Continued) books, you know. But, I know some people rushed in at the . . . you know, they . . . they really took a chance.

Q. Did you think that Beth El had adequate room down there on Park Avenue or . . . were there already plans to move. . . ?

Mr. Well, no. . .

Ms. The temple here was already built.

Mr. It was already built, but the sanctuary here was not built.

Ms. What is. . . what is now the dining hall. . .

Q. Yea.

Ms. . . . and the offices downstairs, that was already there when the fire. . .

Q. When you. . . when you would have parties or something. . .

Ms. We would have them there.

Q. Here at the site of the new building?

Mr. Right.

Ms. Yes, yes.

Q. Then the only thing that was down on Meigs Street. . .

Mr. They. . . they had Friday night services down there. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. . . . Saturday morning. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. . . . services down at the old Park Avenue. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. . . . and they just used this mostly for a school building.

Ms. Yes. And for weddings.

Q. . . . no, weddings were still held at the other place, remember?

Q. . . . the dining room? They were still using. . . ?

Ms. . . . They were still held at the old Park Avenue. Here they used it mostly

Mr. (Continued) for school and also on high holidays they used the auditorium here.

Ms. Well, they used both on the high holidays.

Mr. Right, both. But. . .

Q. So that it wouldn't have been conceivable if there was a wedding that you would prepare down in the kitchen on Park Avenue. . . ?

Ms. Yes.

Mr. Yes. Well, they had their kitchen down in the basement at that time, and everything had to be moved upstairs by a dumb waiter. And it was rather inconvenient 'cause then all the dishes had to go back downstairs and be washed. So it was quite a task, you know, that was one of the hardships.

Ms. But, in those days, you could get help much easier than you can now.

Mr. Yes, much more so.

Ms. I mean, people were willing to do more hand labor than they are now, you know. Everything now if it's not a machine, they won't do it.

Q. I guess one of the things I'm getting at was. . . is would it have been conceivable to stay. . . the sanctuary to stay down there on Park Avenue had there not been a fire?

Ms. Well, that of course I don't know. I'm sure Rabbi Karp and others could tell you much better than we can. But we had always assumed that eventually the whole thing. . . it was planned that eventually we would move the whole temple over there because it just wasn't feasible to have one thing in one area and another in another area.

Q. Yea.

Ms. You know, like. . . like any building, it should be all together. So I imagine even if the fire had not happened, I think the pace of it. . .

Mr. I think. . . I think they would have planned on doing it. . . I think the

Mr. (Continued) plans were that they would move over here gradually. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. . . . but here. . . but here they had a crash program because of the need. So that I remember at that time they. . . after the fire during the high holidays, matter of fact they held one services over on Hillside Avenue, and then they even. . . B'rith Kodesh loaned 'em their temple for some services.

Ms. Right, yea.

Mr. And then they used to rent also the Normandy Hotel, the auditorium in there. Now that may have been even during the time that they had Park Avenue, that they were renting the Normandy for services.

Q: Did your. . . you have the one. . . one son?

Ms. We have one son.

Q. Did he attend Hebrew school.

Ms. He attended Hebrew school at Beth Sholom.

Q. Oh, at Beth Sholom. That's right. . .

Ms. Right. We were members there and that was partly why we joined Beth Sholom originally 'cause he was going to Hebrew school there.

Q. I think actually we talked about that last time 'cause now I remember. . .

Ms. Unfortunately, he's not the . . .

Mr. Religious type.

Ms. Well, he's not. . .

Mr. He's not. . .

Ms. I mean, he knows he's Jewish, but that's about it. He. . . I mean he's a. . . he's a wonderful person, but he's not what I would call a practicing Jew.

Q. His wife doesn't keep a kosher home?

Ms. No, his wife wasn't brought up to keep a kosher home. They were always Reform Jewish people, and Doc doesn't care, so they don't keep a kosher home. And,

Ms. (Continued) I mean they. . .

Q. Do you eat in their home?

Ms. Yes, oh yes.

Q. There isn't a problem.

Ms. No, that doesn't create any problem. They would never have any ham or pork or anything like that in their home, if they did that then I wouldn't. I assume that would create a problem. But, there's never. . . they never would. I mean, Susan just wasn't brought up that way. They buy both kosher and non-kosher meat or and poultry. They only have. . . you know, they have one set of dishes, and they have a good and an everyday set, but it's not milk and plasik. Right. And that's how they keep it.

Q. Has anyone ever approached you, for example, to teach a course on the Hebrew kashruth, because you say, for example, that many young people do not. . . And I was just thinking of people that I would have known, the first thing about how to go about it. I wondered whether or not. . .?

Mr. Well, actually I think it's mostly learned through Sunday school, or you know, Hebrew school, seder or. . .

Ms. Actually there isn't. . . I don't think there. . . that a course would be necessary, it could all be explained in a half hour, an hour at the most.

Mr. Well, there's a little more detailed than that, but I think it's something you have acquired over the bringing up, if your family was quite religious and quite concerned about those things, then you. . . you adopted them and adapted them to your. . . your. . . your individual. . . your life.

Ms. Well, I remember when my older brother was married, and he's been married. . . what? About twenty-four years. And his wife had been working in New York, she comes from a kosher home, but she had been on her own several years in New York, and she never wanted to keep a kosher home, but my brother insisted

Ms. (Continued) on it. And she said that she. . . since he felt so strongly about it. . . I mean it didn't mean that much to her to object to it.

Mr. Well. . .

Q. In. . . in your own home, are you both agree that kashruth is something important?

Ms. To me it is, and to Clayton it definitely is, yes.

Mr. Very much so.

Ms. Yea.

Mr. We keep everything separated, no problem there.

Ms. Yea. To us it was always important.

Q. Well, you both come from the same kind of background.

Mr. Right, exactly.

Ms. Right.

Mr. And that's. . .

Ms. The way we were brought up.

Mr. I mean last night. . . my parents kept kosher and your parents always kept kosher.

Ms. Right. And when it would come Passover all the dishes would go in the basement or up in the attic and all the other dishes. . .

Mr. And we still do it.

Ms. And we still keep it that way.

Mr. Every Passover we. . .

Ms. And so we scrub out and boards put in the sink so it wouldn't touch the sink before and. . .

Q. So that irregardless if you hadn't married each other you each probably still would have. . .?

Ms. Yes, yes. I imagine so, we both. . . we happen to feel rather strongly about it.

Ms. (Continued) Now you see, now we have one son and he doesn't feel strongly about it. So. . .

Mr. Although he was. . . he was brought up. . .

Ms. Always in a kosher home. . .

Mr. But, . . .

Ms. But, again, he . . .

Mr. You know, . . .

Ms. He doesn't have. . .

Q. Actually maybe that's a perfect lead-in to the sort of questions I wanted to ask you about women and. . . do you think the Jewish woman has a special role in the home or. . . had your son been a daughter do you think perhaps there would have been more. . .

Ms. You mean in growing up? Well, of course, any children we would have had would have had a rather awkward childhood because when other parents take their children on picnics, Sundays, or go walking on Saturday nights, we were always working. And I mean, we tried to make it up to him in other ways, we always planned our vacations around, you know, his free time, whether it was during Christmas or summertime. And he would always, you know, be with us during vacations. But, I know, he had a. . . it was rough. And so consequently I don't know, maybe that's one of the reasons he's . . .

Mr. Well, yes. . .

Ms. . . . he's not into Judaism.

Mr. Yea, but. . . remember as soon as he married Sue, remember, Sue definitely didn't. . . her parents never kept a kosher home. . .

Ms. No.

Mr. And since they were getting married and he didn't care one way or the other, so Sue certainly didn't care, so they actually went along with Sue's thoughts.

Q.. I guess. . . I guess what I'm really asking is whether you think it's the woman's responsibility? Whether that's one of her. . . ?

Mr. Well, it always tends. . . it could be. . .

Ms. I don't know. I think that. . .

Mr. . . . how strong a man makes a point of it or what. . .

Ms. That's right. And how strong the woman does.

Mr. Well, you just said a few moments ago about your brother, that your brother wanted to keep a kosher home, and his wife definitely. . .

Ms. She didn't expect to.

Mr. She didn't expect to, but she definitely went along because Bill insisted. And I always say how strong a point you make of it. You know, some people just don't give a darn one way or the other.

Ms. Now, when I mentioned this aunt of ours who always used to say she should write a book about all the things that happened, when her daughter was married, Anita wanted to keep a kosher home, but her husband, who was a doctor, said it's ridiculous, he doesn't want it, he can't see any point in it. And she went along with his thinking. I mean, she didn't make too much. . . she would have liked to have kept a kosher home, but since he thought that it wasn't all that necessary and he didn't want to, she didn't argue about it, and they don't have a kosher home.

Q. Do you have any strong convictions one way or another on the topic of women's liberation? Either of you?

Ms. I think it's the most overrated subject in the world, in this country, not in the world, in this country. First of all, I never felt that women had it all that bad to begin with in this country. I mean, I haven't seen any women who were mistreated and I thought the woman, especially the Jewish woman, . . . I've heard so many times Jewish people say "I was raised like a

Ms. (Continued) Jewish princess. And. . .

Mr. It's probably true.

Ms. . . . And I think on the whole the Jewish women are. . . have a. . .

Mr. They have a lot of freedom. They come and go. They have their own. . .

Ms. Right. Right.

Mr. . . . time to. . . for their own things. They have their own vehicles if they want to travel. . .

Ms. I mean, legally maybe this women's lib will, you know, bring in some aspects like . . . I don't know, possibly in DeForrest laws or possibly in inheritance or something like this. But other than that I don't know, I think the women in this country are. . . have. . . have been OK for many, many . . . especially the Jewish women.

Q. Do you think because of something in the Jewish philosophy? Do you think because Jewish women work?

Ms. Yes. . . no, I think it's more the Jewish philosophy. I think that men. . . that Jewish men from way, way back have always treated their wives well. They don't stop asking . . . go on and bring home half their paycheck, which is very true because, you know, we know that from a lot of our waitresses who work because their. . . Their husbands make good money, but they spend half of it on. . . in. . . in the corner saloon, you know, they just don't bring enough home. And you don't find that among Jewish husbands at all. And, you. . . you just. . . I think. . . I don't know how it is now, but up to a couple years ago the divorce rate among Jewish people was very, very low. Now, I imagine . . . like it has changed. But, before that. . . and it's changed for a different reason, not because the husband, you know, the husband doesn't treat his wife well. But, I think that that's something that has come through the ages and through the centuries where a Jewish husband treats his wife well.

Q. Also in terms of being out of the home and even in the home and working because it's supposedly a new thing that a woman is able to work. In . . . in your experience, in thinking back, do you think it's been the case that most Jewish women worked to help their husbands, or worked in shops or . . . ?

Ms. Yes, years ago.

Q. Did they . . .

Mr. Well, I think a lot of times a lot of the women, Jewish women, had to help their husbands in their businesses.

Ms. Yea, like the little Mom and Pop. . . you know, you've heard the expression Momma/Poppa stores, you know.

Q. Sure.

Ms. Little groceries, little hardware stores, little dry goods stores.

Q. Well, do you think those were the rule or the exception?

Ms. Well, the women helping. . .

Mr. It was an accepted fact, I think.

Ms. But on the other hand years and years ago the Jewish women did not go into the factory.

Mr. No, no. But they always helped their husbands in any little businesses that they . . .

Ms. Right. When Bonds first came to the city that was the first time that I know of that Jewish women started to sign up for factory work, when Bonds first came.

Mr. Well, there was probably the only type of work. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. . . . that they could do in a factory.

Ms. That they could. . . that they could do. . .

Mr. . . . 'cause they were accustomed to doing needlework. . .

Ms. Needlework and. . .

Mr. . . . or repairing.

Ms. Right. But, now, of course, you know, these days. . .

Mr. Well, now. . . nowadays they've gone into a lot of different types. They've gone into office work and . . . or investments or even professionals.

Ms. Oh, yes. Possibly women's lib might have a point where through women's lib they . . . there are certain factories or all factories where the men and the women will earn equal salaries for equal work, whereas maybe years ago the women doing the same type of work would have gotten less money.

Q. Have either of you ever participated in unions, 'cause you're speaking of factory. . .

Mr. No.

Ms. No.

Mr. When I was working in one of the factories I had to belong to the union, but that was only for a few years. I never took an active part in it, I just paid my dues and that was it.

Q. Is Abe Chatman a name that. . . that rings a bell?

Ms. Yea, oh yea. We know him. He was the power in the clothing industries here in the city for many, many years. Personally, I think he's. . . as much as I know him, he's a very fine person. We've done work for his children. He always says hello to us when he sees us. Never having worked in a clothing factory, I don't know him as. . . as a union executive, you know.

Q. You really wouldn't call Rochester a union city, would you, because of Kodak.

Mr. No, not a. . .

Ms. No, I think because of Kodak, no. Years ago Rochester was a big clothing center, and then the Jewish people were more involved in clothing than they were in Xerox or Ritters or Taylors or Kodak . . .

Mr. Bausch & Lomb or whatever.

Ms. Right. They were more involved in clothing, the Jewish people. There was a time when very, very few Jewish people who worked for Bausch & Lomb or Kodak. So, a lot of the Jewish people came to know the unions through the clothing union.

Q. Do you think that the Arbeiter. . . the Arbeiter. . . name of a Socialist group, Socialist Party in Rochester?

Ms. Arbeiter Ring?

Q. Arbeiter Ring.

Mr. Oh, oh, yea.

Ms. They, again, were mostly clothing people.

Mr. Yes.

Ms. Who had. . . who were sort of bound together. They organized this little club, and they. . . they tried some cultural things. Like for instance they had a Hebrew and a Jewish school from the Arbeiter ring. I know a couple of my friends went there.

Q. You were a Labor Zionist as you were growing up, 'cause you were a member of Young Judea?

Ms. Yea, but I wasn't an active member. I was a member of Hashomer Hasheair and Young Judea, and all those things. But, I was never. . . that was maybe when I was thirteen, fourteen.

Q. I guess what I was going to ask was whether or not in early years the Labor Zionists and the people from the. . . I can't even ever pronounce it. . . Arbeiter Ring?

Ms. Arbeiter Ring. Arbeiter Ring.

Mr. Arbeiter Ring.

Q. . . had philosophical differences or whether or not they were . . . ?

Mr. There was always. . . wasn't there at one time a feeling that a lot of the Arbeiter Ring was more or less Communistic. . .

Ms. Pink. Slightly pink.

Mr. Slightly pink, they had a little bit of Communistic feeling.

Ms. Yea. But the Hashomer Hasheair, that's only pro-Israel. . . pro. . . you know, let's go to Zion and work. . . work in Israel. That's what their. .

Mr. Yea, but the Arbeiter Ring was mostly. . .

Ms. Right. Right.

Mr. . . . Communistic thought and so forth. And that was. . . that's one reason why there was a lot of objection to that group.

Q. Was Abe Chatman involved in that?

Mr. No, no, no.

Ms. He was the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. I don't think he had anything to do with Arbeiter Ring.

Q. But any friends that you might have had that were members of that group. . .

Ms. A couple of my mother's and father's. . . my mother and father weren't, but a couple of them were card-carrying Communists who belonged to. . .

Mr. They were. . .

Q. This is in the thirties, 1930's?

Ms. Right. Yes, that would be in the 1930's. Right.

Q. That just reminded me of something. Did. . . did McCarthy and that whole era hit Rochester in terms of. . .

Mr. Not too great.

Ms. Not. . . it didn't shake Rochester. I don't know. I think everybody read about it in the paper and it. . . they would get a little bit riled up about it, and. . . but, I didn't know any people. . . I don't know any people.

Ms. (Continued) who were really actively involved in it. Like, for instance, I know some of the stars in Hollywood were actually put on the . . . on the list where they couldn't get any. . .

Q. Yea. . .

Ms. . . . work for years and years after that. I don't know any people who were affected.

Q. By that time do you think the card-carrying Communists in Rochester, those who were slightly pink, had give up their. . . their hopes or. . .?

Mr. Well, they probably did give up their hopes. They, at least, became a lot less active, especially as the conditions in Europe changed and the World War II started, and the problems with Hitler and Germany and so forth. I think they gave up and realized that it just wasn't the right thing.

Q. When I was here before you mentioned you grew up at the Talmud Torah. Both of you took. . .

Mr. No. . .

Ms. No, I was at the Tal. . . well, I didn't spend that many years there. I spent a few years there.

Q. When you grew up, I meant.

Ms. Yes.

Q. Do you recall anything about the type of education you got there? Does the name Mark Hanapolsky. . . was he there at the time you were?

Ms. Now, let's see. . . an optometrist, he was. . . Busch, I think there were two Busches there. There was the older Mr. Busch and the younger Mr. Busch. And then there was Berniker and Bitinsky.

Q. Bitinsky.

Ms. Yea.

Q. Because I. . . I. . . I heard from somewhere that. . . that there were.

Q. (Continued) enlightened. . . enlightened Jewish philosophers.

Ms. I was too young to really know. I. . .

Q. As opposed to a traditional. . .

Ms. Right.

Q. . . . Orthodox . . . more traditional education.

Mr. Well, I think most of the Jewish education at that time was more toward the Orthodox type anyway.

Ms. Well, the Talmud Torah would be . . .

Mr. Yes, there. . .

Ms. But. . .

Mr. . . . wasn't that much activity in the Conservatism or the Reform as far as Judaism goes.

Ms. I left the Talmud Torah when I was nine.

Q. So you really were there a year. . .

Ms. For two years.

Q. Two years.

Ms. For two years. That's all.

Q. OK. Maybe I'll just throw out some questions, and then if you can figure out the questions you can answer them. Do you have any feelings about the organized Jewish community? Do you think there's too much organization in the Rochester Jewish community?

Ms. No.

Q. Sufficient organization? Like the Jewish Federation and. . .

Ms. I think you need the Jewish Federation. I think that anything that binds the Jewish community together I think is rather important. Especially in view of Israel now. I mean, the most beautiful thing that happened was when the . . . when the troops went in and rescued those people, we were all so

Ms. (Continued) excited. We were having a party at Beth El that night, and one of the Jewish Federation young people who happened to be a guest at the party came in the kitchen and told us about it. And I. . . I was so . . . I was just so excited that. . . I really I literally didn't sleep at all that night 'cause we were at the party till maybe three o'clock in the morning. And, but even when I came home I was so excited about it, I turned on the T.V. thinking that maybe there would be, you know, something on about it. There wasn't.

Q. You don't think the Jews . . . that Israel had any other choice?

Ms. I don't think. . . no, I don't think. . . it was a beautiful thing that they did. Naturally, it cost them some lives. But, . . .

Mr. That was the risk they had to take.

Ms. . . . I think they. . . they. . . they earned the respect of many, many countries. At least for the moment, for the time being. . .

Mr. Yes, tomorrow. . . who knows what tomorrow will bring them?

Ms. That's why we need a Federation, you know.

Q. You think that they did. . . they earned a lot of respect? Or do you think that in the end they're gonna get censured?

Ms. I hope not.

Mr. Someone will probably pick on 'em that they. . . they shouldn't have done such a thing, they've done that in the past.

Q. That they should have waited.

Mr. When. . . when during the Yom Kippur War when they were attacked and they drove them back, they were still criticized for what they did. So, it just seems like it's everytime they do something which is good they seem to get balled out or censured in the Security Council.

Ms. But, no matter what the United Nations does as a body, the private people in

Ms. (Continued) the various countries who . . . whose newspapers carried it; are bound to respect them for having done it. They've got to. It's just too bad that that one woman, I think her name was Mrs. Bloch. . .

Q. Flora Bloch.

Ms. Yes. That she was killed. It's. . . it's a tragic thing.

Q. Because the Federation has only been the Federation for, I think, oh, a decade maybe a little bit longer, before it used to be several. . . do you think it was a good. . . good idea that it all came under this umbrella organization, the Federation? Do you recall or. . .?

Ms. I think so. . .

Mr. Well, we're probably a lot more organized now.

Ms. Yea, I think it's more organized now than it was years ago. It's done more in a technical way, probably more scientific, if you like that word.

Mr. Yea, right.

Ms. I think Elmer Louis has done a beautiful job in the city, you know, for many, many years. And I. . . I think what he did was excellent, but it's. . . it started to be organized under his tutelage and then it's continued. But, I think the Federation is doing many things now that they probably would not have done ten, fifteen years ago.

Q. Let me think. Maybe in terms of efficiency and fundraising?

Ms. Possibly efficiency in fundraising or . . . well, even what goes to Israel. Sending various people, you know, committees, into Israel so that they can come back and sort of, you know, give their views of what is going on, keeping in touch.

Q. How about. . . how about their activities here in Rochester? Have you come into contact with Russian Jews at all?

Ms. . . we have a couple that help us in the kitchen occasionally, once in a while

Q. Did they contact you themselves, or did the Jewish Family Service?

Ms. We. . . they. . . they. . . a friend who happened to know them asked us if had some work for them. Now, one of. . . they're from Kiev, and a cousin of ours was visiting Kiev, just came back a few days ago, and when one of these Russian ladies who heard they were . . . that Helen and Dave were going to Kiev she bought a lot of litte child's. . . oh, little shorts. . .

Mr. Clothing. . .

Ms. You know, little clothing.

Mr. Socks and. . .

Ms. And asked Helen to take it. . .

Mr. . . . underwear and. . .

Ms. . . . to her niece who is like a year, year and a half, old. And Helen said she would try, and these relatives of these people don't have a phone, but friends of their did. And she gave them a telephone number, and Helen called from the phone and as soon as the woman heard the voice she hung right up. And Helen tried calling twice from the hotel, you know, thinking maybe the first time she had the wrong number. And it happened. This woman just hung up, she wouldn't talk to her at all. And then they met. . . they were introduced to some American students who were touring Kiev. And these students who were fluent in Russian, and she asked one of them if they would. . . if she would call and speak in Russian to this woman. And this girl pointed out, she says look, you don't want to call from the hotel because the hotel is bugged. Let's go out and call. So they went out and called and this woman called in Russian to this person, and again the same thing happened, she wouldn't talk about it, she just hung up.

Mr. She just listened for a few moments 'cause it was a Russian language that she was hearing and then hung up.

Ms. And Helen tried one more time. . .

Mr. One more time, later on Helen tried again, Helen just called me today to explain it to me. Helen tried again to speak to this woman and. . . in English, of course, and the woman doesn't understand English, and Helen talked quick and fast so that she could get her words in before . . . and the woman listened for a brief moment and then hung up.

Ms. Well, she told us what. . . what she said. Look, I'm from Rochester, I have a message from your friends, and I have some things for your friends'. . .

Mr. Child.

Ms. . . . niece.

Mr. Yea.

Ms. And this woman listened, paused, and then she hung up.

Mr. In other words, they must be afraid.

Ms. Obviously, she'd afraid.

Q. Do. . . do the Russians that work for you, how. . . do they speak English? Do you talk to them in English?

Mr. Oh, yes.

Ms. Well, one speaks English very well, she's been here a little bit over a year. They came in April, a year ago April. And one, the younger one, who's possibly in her late thirties or maybe forty. . .

Mr. Late thirties. . .

Ms. Late thirties. Speaks very well.

Mr. Well, she picked it up since she's been here.

Ms. Yes.

Mr. When she first came to work for us she didn't understand a word of English.

Ms. And the other one understands fairly well, but she cannot speak it.

Mr. She can't speak it.

Ms. She's older, she's sixty years old.

Mr. Yea, but she. . . she can understand quite a bit.

Q. Do they each have families?

Mr. Well, yes. The younger one has a husband and two children. The older one . . . of course, they're mother and daughter. Yea. The old. . . the older one is. . . doesn't have a husband, and she doesn't have a son. . . she lives with the son.

Ms. She lives with her son.

Q. Did they know all the kashruth themselves?

Ms. No, they know nothing about kashruth.

Mr. Nothing whatsoever.

Ms. No.

Mr. It was quite a problem, too, we had to watch and explain.

Ms. Yes. Well, they're catching on now.

Mr. Yes, they're catching on now, but it's been a problem because we had to watch them constantly, and they're not. . . they probably weren't able to keep kosher. . .

Q. That's right.

Ms. And I'm sure that they buy their meat that way at the. . .

Mr. At the Star Market whatever. . .

Ms. Star Market, whatever. Yes.

Mr. I've seen them, you know, shopping there.

Ms. They don't. . .

Q. Where do they live?

Ms. At Bodford's Drive.

Q. Are there. . . are there a whole community of them?

Mr. Yes, there's quite a few Russian families there, yes. I guess the Federation

Mr. (Continued) must have settled them in that particular area for various reasons. Perhaps they got a deal on the rent for a while or. . .

Ms. Well, there are. . .

Mr. Yes, there are points to put 'em all in the same area so that they will have some communication with one another.

Ms. They're lovely people.

Q. I want to put the tape on the other. . .

END OF TAPE I, SIDE A (Interview II)

Interview II
Tape I
Side B

Q. This is Side B. Today is July 15. And I'm interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Bittker.

Ms. The older of our two Russian friends, they're from Kiev, did go to a temple . . . a . . . a little shul there in Kiev. And when any of the Russians objected to her going she would tell them I'm an old lady, I'm a widow, and it's all right for me to go. But the younger one never went into a shul.

Q. Because you are also an immigrant, yourself, . . .

Ms. Right.

Q. Do you think that the Russian Jews have. . . it's a similar experience as you had?

Ms. No, no not at all, no. Because when we came here we came to relatives. You see, we had cousins, aunts, uncles living here in Rochester. And everyone tried to help. One would try to find a job, one would try to help you set up your home. There was a lot of warmth, and also the Jewish language was spoken a great deal in. . . where we lived anyhow. Communication was no problem because it would be a Jewish neighborhood and we knew Jewish and so did everybody else in the neighborhood. And we had no trouble, you know, until we learned English. There wasn't that awkward period. Now, again, to get back to our mother/daughter friends, the mother knows Jewish, the daughter does not.

Q. They probably still communicate in Russian?

Ms. Oh, definitely.

Mr. As a family, oh yes.

Ms. Yes, they do.

Mr. Even a lot over here sometimes, I mean, they can express themselves a lot

Mr. (Continued) better naturally when it's their . . . their native tongue, you know.

Q. Do they belong to a synagogue?

Ms. Yes, they were given memberships to Beth El when they first came.

Mr. Yes.

Ms. For . . . I don't know if it was for a year or for how long.

Mr. And I think they . . . they do try to go once in a while. . .

Ms. Yes, they go to services. But the older woman especially enjoys it very much. The younger one seems to favor B'rith Kodesh. She's been to B'rith Kodesh a couple times, and she says that is really where she belongs.

Q. So they . . . they make their choices on . . .

Ms. Yes, just like everybody else, they . . . they make their choices.

Mr. Oh, yes, she'll probably be more comfortable since she says she did not have any Hebrew or Jewish background at all.

Ms. Right.

Q. Maybe I'll move on to another topic. And, Mr. Bittker, a question for you. Did you feel that your military experience had any impact on . . . on you as a Jew or did you feel as a Jew different when you were in the military?

Mr. Well, I never felt any different. I did feel once in a while there was a little bit of hard feeling toward the Jewish people, not necessarily anything drastic, but every once in a while a little remark, a snide remark or whatever, you know, came. And I think I got along fairly well with most . . . most of 'em though. There was one other Jewish fellow in the outfit, he was more or less of a bookworm and they used to ride him moreso than usual. And because he was . . . he gave the appearance of . . . I wish I could say the appearance of a Jewish person, but he was . . . he wasn't as worldly as he should have been, and they probably referred to him more as one of the Jewish fellows than

Mr. (Continued) other fellows. There were several other Jewish fellows in our outfit, not many. Maybe three or four in our whole company out of 150 men. But as far as anything else, I never had. . . . I never had any problems or anything, just heard Jewish remarks every once in a while, but that's something you take for granted. . . not granted, but you. . . you've taken 'em for many, many years, you know, even today sometimes you'll hear 'em on the street somebody remark, not often.

Q. Do you still hear that today?

Mr. Not often as it used to be. I say. . . I think we, working with a lot of Gentile people especially in business, I think we get along very, very well. We have a good understanding and feeling between our business, which of course is definitely a kosher type, Jewish type business, and we use an awful lot of Gentile girls. And I think we have an excellent rapport with the people, don't you?

Ms. Yes, I think so. The waitresses are just about. . .

Mr. Yea, yea.

Ms. . . . all Gentiles.

Mr. Yea, they're all Gentiles. Once in a while we have a Jewish girl now, but very seldom.

Ms. And . . . and some of these Gentile girls know more about Kashruth than some of the Jewish people because. . .

Mr. Right.

Ms. . . .like somebody will say to them, you know, we have a meeting or someone will say may we have some butter, and these girls will. . . a lot of them will know enough to say, oh, I'm sorry this is. . . you can't have butter with meat, it's just not done.

Mr. Or somebody comes and say they'll have Roquefort dressing with their salad.

Ms. Yea, they'll ask for Roquefort dressing.

Mr. And we're serving meat, of course, which is out.

Ms. And the girls are able to tell them without even asking us why they can't serve Roquefort dressing.

Mr. Matter of fact, some of our girls have. . . have become so acquainted with prayer over breaking bread so that they know it themselves.

Ms. They know it by heart. Right.

Mr. You know, they always listen and they. . . they can repeat it just as well as almost anybody else. Because they've. . . they've been accustomed to it over the years, you know.

Q. Among your own circle of friends, poeple that you do things with, do you have Gentile friends also or. . .?

Mr. Well, not really Gentile friends, I think it's more. . . some of our. . .

Ms. Mostly Jewish.

Mr. Mostly Jewish. I'd say 99% of them are Jewish. I do have a little contact with some of our waitresses, we've gone out socially with them sometimes, and their husbands.

Ms. Yes, we've gone out socially with them. We've gone on a trip with one of them.

Mr. Yes.

Ms. And Clayton plays golf with another . . .

Mr. Another couple. . .

Ms. . . . once in a while. And they've become our friends, you know, through working so many years with us. But, really our friends are Jewish.

Maybe we'll move on to questions. . . to questions about Rochester itself.

one of the things I wondered is whether you thought the public schools. . .

assume your son went to the public school?

Ms. Yes, he did.

Q. Were . . . were adequate, good schools?

Ms. When he went it was excellent. Now, he went to No. 1 School, and one of the things when we were looking for a house to buy then, one of the things that attracted us to this house was the fact that it was No. 1 School District, and it was a very fine grammar school.

Mr. And when he got through with No. 1 School he went on to Monroe High School. . .

Ms. Monroe High School. In those days Monroe High. . .

Mr. Monroe High School at that time was considered excellent.

Ms. It has changed, unfortunately.

Q. That is another question I was going to ask you, when you did move to this house was there a reason that you stayed inside the city? I mean, did you consider going to Brighton?

Mr. No.

Ms. No, we. . . we were looking for a place where we could do catering. It had to be in a business section.

Q. Oh, that's right.

Ms. See, in other words it had to be zoned commercially.

Mr. And when we bought this house it was zoned commercial. That's why we were allowed to operate here and do business. Just about five years ago they did change the zoning restrictions on this area right now, but they had to permit us to continue working here because we were here before they changed the law.

Q. Did you have any conflicts? Did they try and get you. . .?

Mr. No, no. They didn't try to stop us or anything like that.

Ms. No, it was zoned commercial when we bought it.

Mr. It was zoned commercially when we began. . .

Ms. So there was no problem.

Mr. The only problem we had when they changed it to. . . the residential zoning, when we wanted to put another addition up about four years ago, we had a problem.

Q. Well, how many years have you been here?

Mr. Well, we moved here in 1950. So we've been here in this house. . .

Ms. Twenty-six years.

Mr. . . now.

Q. Did you think that your son . . . well, when your son was growing up in the school, was it more of a mixed class. . . Jewish. . . a lot of Jewish children?

Ms. Yes.

Mr. A lot of Jewish. . .

Ms. A lot of Jewish children. Both No. 1 and in Monroe High.

Mr. Well, he always seemed to have Jewish friends.

Ms. All Jewish friends, yes.

Mr. Yes, he did. Some of them were Reform Jewish and some. . .

Ms. Yes, but they were all Jewish. . .

Mr. Jewish. I don't know. . . only one youngster who said he was a Gentile and who had converted to Judaism, remember that one fellow on Winton Road?

Ms. Yea.

Mr. But, I'd say all of his friends were Jewish.

Q. Because you always hear about the public schools as a leveller, democracy in the public schools. . .

Mr. Yea.

Ms. I wonder whether . . .

Mr. Well, I think it's. . . it became moreso afterwards, don't you, Ruth?

Ms. After. I think this was past his time.

Mr. Yea. Because Don, you remember, graduated from grammar school roughly around 1962 I think it was.

Ms. I don't remember what year it was.

Mr. Well, he graduated from the U. of R. in '66 before he was. . .

Ms. Yes, right.

Q. Should I turn it off? (Note: phone ringing in the background.)

Ms. Yea, might as. . .

Q. Well, OK. You were talking about the public schools. Oh, and then you said your son graduated from the U. of R.

Mr. Yes.

Q. Do you think he ever felt uncomfortable. . . you see, I used to stay out of school for the Jewish holidays and . . .?

Mr. Yes.

Ms. For Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we insisted on it.

Mr. Yes.

Q. And did he always want to also, or was it a case of . . .

Mr. Well, it was just because we asked him to, I think really, don't you?

Ms. I think so. I think he. . . I don't know. I mean, I think when he was an undergraduate student I think he would have done it anyhow, perhaps, because he was in with a group of Jewish people at the U. of R. who . . . some of them who would definitely have done it, so I think he would have gone along. However, once he got into Harvard Law School, it was another story. We tried to get him, and I think one year we did insist that he stay home . . . or come here for the holidays, and he did. But I think the year after that he absolutely refused. So. . .

Mr. That was his choice.

Ms. Right.

Mr. We had no longer control.

Ms. No.

Q. Do you remember what. . . well. . . let me finish the first question first. Because now I know for example in Brighton they close the schools.

Ms. Right.

Mr. Because of the Jewish population. . .

Ms. But that's something comparatively new.

Q. New.

Ms. Yes.

Q. And I just wondered whether you recall ever hearing any complaints about, you know, I missed such and such. . . ?

Mr. No, they. . . they'd probably make it up. . .

Ms. They still have the same number of days, you know.

Mr. It's just that they're closing for the holidays. . .

Ms. Right.

Mr. Because there would be so few people, probably, that came. . . attended school.

Ms. Yea, probably fifty percent of the students wouldn't be there.

Q. But when you son was at, for example, No. 1 School there was never. . . never came home and said, oh, other kids are singing Christmas carols or. . .

Mr. No, no.

Ms. No, I don't think so. I think that. . . I think even from years and years back I think the. . . in the Rochester community, you know the ones I'd come across that would sing Christmas carols and Hanukkah songs, too.

Mr. Well, I remember the Christmas carols when I was a kid, but it would never be singing Hanukkah songs. . .

Q. Do you ever remember feeling different because everyone was singing Christmas

Q. (Continued) carols?

Mr. No, no I didn't feel different.

Ms. I would sing right along with them, I thought they were very pretty songs. I mean what you sing, a Christmas carol, and what you feel in your heart is two different things. It's just a pretty melody, you just sing it.

Q. How about the prayer in school ruling? That they didn't abolish saying a prayer in school until. . .

Mr. Well, we. . .

Ms. We never had. . . we had. . .

Mr. We had Pledge of Allegiance, that's all.

Ms. Pledge of Allegiance.

Q. That was all?

Ms. When we went to school we had Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. We go way back.

Q. I seem to recall when I was in school we had a prayer to say in school.

Mr. No, no. I don't think that. I never remember saying a prayer.

Q. How about the encyclical. . . when the Vatican absolved the Jews of killing Christ? In 1965 I think it was. Do you recall that?

Ms. I do recall it, yes. I don't remember it making any impact on the Jewish community one way or another. And I don't even remember too many people discussing it.

Mr. No, because Ruth this is. . .

Ms. Because we know in our hearts all the time that we didn't kill Christ.

Mr. No.

Ms. And I mean my. . . my Judaism is, and I've always said this to many people, that Judaism, the beauty of the Jewish religion is you take as much of it as you want and make it your own, you know?

Q. Yea.

Ms. And, my feeling was that there probably was a man like Christ, living, that he was a very intelligent person, but he certainly was no G-d.

Q. Yea.

Ms. I mean that. . . that's my own personal feeling.

Q. So when. . . when the Vatican came through with this lovely, gracious gesture. . .

Mr. We didn't. . .

Ms. I don't think it made that much impact. And I. . . I didn't hear any of the Gentile waitresses talking about it.

Mr. No, I had never heard them.

Ms. I mean, we had a lot of Gentile girls and we discuss a lot of things with them, but they didn't make anything of it.

Q. When your son went to the U. of R. already that. . . in your own family that's a major change because when you started at the U. of R. you were well aware of it, the quota system?

Ms. Yes, that's right.

Q. Now when he was there. . .

Ms. I don't think. . . there were a lot of Jews, not as many as now, but there were a lot of. . .

Mr. Not as many as now, but there were. . . remember we heard the percentages that time and we were amazed even then.

Ms. Right. Now it's even more.

Mr. Now it's even more so.

Ms. Right.

Q. Was there an active Hillel group there during his years?

Ms. There was a Hillel group, it was not very active.

Mr. It was not very active.

Ms. And Don never participated. One of his very closest friends was really very extremely active, Seymour Rosenbloom, but I don't think he's any relation of yours.

Q. No.

Ms. He and Don were very, very close all through high school and through college. Through undergraduate school. And Seymour was very active in Hillel and Don was not.

Q. Maybe we'll move on to some changes in Rochester. Because you've witnessed quite a few, let's say, Midtown and urban renewal. Do you feel just as comfortable living in Rochester now as say. . . .

Ms. I don't think anybody does. I mean, there was a time when you could walk anywhere in the city. When I was 14 years old I worked on Joseph Avenue, and we used to keep the grocery store open till midnight Saturdays. On Saturday it was till midnight, during the week it was ten o'clock. And I would walk home. And even though it was maybe a two blocks. Now today I don't think anybody would let a fourteen year old girl walk two blocks at . . . at twelve o'clock at night.

Mr. No.

Ms. And I felt very comfortable and very safe.

Q. Do you still do most of your shopping downtown, or do you go out to. . . ?

Ms. I haven't gone downtown. I mean we still shop. . . we shop at plazas, Pittsford Plaza. But I still like to go to Forman's and Sibley's. I was there this morning shopping for a couple of hours. They had a sale on bathing suits and I went down. . .

Mr. Naturally.

Ms. There were a lot of Jewish people there looking, women that I know were looking

Ms. (Continued) suits.

Q. Do you think downtown is going to survive?

Ms. I hope so. I certainly hope so. Because I think as downtown goes, so goes the city. If the heart of the city is gone, what is left of the city, you know, it's just a shell.

Q. Yea.

Ms. I think it's very important to have a strong downtown.

Q. Yea. So. . .

Ms. And a safe downtown.

Q. Beyond the fact that. . . that you. . . that you're here because it's commercially zoned, you like living in the city? It. . . it sort of sounds like. . .?

Mr. Well, I don't know. . . we only stay here because. . .

Ms. Our business is here. . .

Mr. . . . our business is here, we have a tremendous investment in the building here.

Ms. Yea.

Mr. We have. . . we have . . . we had to put up two different additions at various times. Our kitchen is loaded with equipment. Our storeroom is loaded. So we have to more or less stay here whether we want to or not. We probably would like to have a nice . . .

Ms. You know, a small house on a. . . on a side street.

Mr. Instead of right on the main street, but it's business.

Q. But a lot of people say, you know, they don't care about downtown, they don't care about the city. They feel no responsibility, if that's the right word, towards . . . towards the city. And they'd just as soon move out as far into the suburbs as they can get, and you know. . .

Ms. Well, I might have liked to have been in the suburbs all these years, but I . . . I knew we couldn't and this was what we. . .

Q. But still the fact that you still go downtown shopping. . .

Ms. Yes, that I do. . .

Q. Like you still. . .

Ms. But, I do feel certainly that the downtown. . . that the downtown, I'm glad it's being rejuvenated. I'm glad they. . . they've strengthened the, you know, the options that they have in getting people down there. I'm glad they're doing all these new gimmicks to get us down. Now, you probably read about the Third Ward District. . .

Q. Yea.

Ms. . . . and the . . . that area that has. . .

Q. Do you. . . do you think that'll survive?

Mr. Oh, I think it's gonna be a hard place. . .

Ms. It's gonna be a hard place, but I think they have some very bright people behind it. . .

Mr. Yea, but it's gonna be rough. . .

Ms. And I think even some of our Jewish young people have gotten involved in it.

Mr. But, it's gonna be rough on 'em, very, very hard.

Ms. It might be hard. It's going to be expensive. I hope it survives. I hope it grows.

Q. Do you think it should use little. . . little grocery stores and that type of thing? Do you think they could survive. . .?

Mr. The little grocery stores almost is in the past. . .

Ms. Gone.

Mr. There's too much competition from the chains, from the supermarkets.

Ms. Maybe they could use other type of food stores, but I don't think groceries. . .

Q. I see.

Ms. Yea, right. Crafts and arts. . .

Mr. But not in stores there. . .

Ms. . . . little novelty shops, little import shops like the Hong Kong Shop or the Hawaiian Shop, you know, that sort of thing.

Q. Yea. If they made that neighborhood safe enough, would you go down there, do you think?

Ms. Oh, sure. If I'd been free that Saturday when they'd had that tour of homes, I would have been there.

Q. Yea.

Ms. I would have loved to have gone down. Years ago one of our. . . our first waitress had a big home down there.

Q. White?

Mr. Yes.

Ms. Oh, she was white, yes. One of those great big homes that are probably restored now. Yea.

Q. Yea. Do you have any recollections of the Jewish Mayor Samuel Dicker? Did you ever see him?

Mr. Well, we used to see him around fairly often. He was never a buddy-buddy.

Ms. I don't think he was a strong mayor.

Mr. No, he wasn't a strong. . .

Ms. I think he was more of a figurehead.

Mr. Yea.

Q. But, did everyone know he was Jewish? I guess that's what I. . .

Mr. I think so.

Q. Did you feel as if you had a Jewish representative?

Mr. Well, I don't think he had any power to do anything or to say too much. Like

Mr. (Continued) Ruth said a moment ago, he was just a figurehead. He was just there by someone's appointment, you know, someone appointed him so he's the mayor of the city. And, he was there for quite a few years. He may have been a very nice fellow to everyone, never heard too many bad things about him.

Ms. No.

Mr. But. . .

Ms. We. . . we. . . over a period of years we've had several Jewish strong political people like Jay Kaminsky. Do you remember him?

Mr. Oh, that was. . .

Ms. Back in the old days.

Mr. The old, old days.

Ms. Yea.

Q. Who was he?

Ms. Jay Kaminsky.

Mr. He was a political. . .

Ms. He was Supervisor of the Eighth Ward, but he was a very strong. . . Like Sam Popick, even to this day he carries a lot of weight, and he's been. . . I don't know what ward he's with. . .

Mr. I think he's in the Fifth Ward. Fifth Ward.

Ms. But, he's been. . . what, I would say at least twenty years now that. . .

Mr. Yea.

Ms. . . . he's been Supervisor. And he carries a lot of . . .

Q. When you say a lot of weight. . .

Ms. Lot of weight.

Q. . . . what like. . .

Mr. Political weight.

Ms. Well, in decision-making he speaks up. He. . . he tells his viewpoints. He. . . he isn't just a weak member of the. . . of the group. He's a strong personality in the group.

Q. What were some of the issues in the Eighth Ward that Kaminsky addressed?

Ms. Well, first of all, it was during the Depression.

Mr. Yes. Right.

Ms. And a lot of the issues were economic, you know, to try to get jobs for people in those days, it was a big thing.

Mr. I think he did get some of the Jewish people some small political jobs.

Ms. Right, yea.

Mr. He was very, very active. Very strong personality.

Ms. You know, it's. . . and I think you'll find it all through the ages, that the first thing people have to do is satisfy hunger and then they look for shelter and then they look for clothing. And during the. . . I mean if. . . if people hadn't lived through the Depression they just don't know. I was only maybe eight, nine years old but it left a terrible impact on. . . on me because my family were very. . . we really had a very hard time then. And Jay Kaminsky tried to, you know, get a job for my father. But, not only for my father, he tried for many, many people. And but not only that, but when they put through the WPA, and you know, all those letter things they came along with, President Roosevelt. And it. . . it finally siphoned down on a local level, you know. It starts out national and then gradually it goes down. And he was very active in those things.

Q. Who were some of the other political figures that you remember as having. . . Was Hy Freeman ever a representative, your Councilman?

Mr. Hy Freeman? Oh, I know who he. . .

Ms. He was a Councilman around here, but I never knew him. I don't know. . .

Q. Well, eventually became vice-mayor under Jalap.

Mr. Right.

Ms. Right.

Mr. I . . . I don't remember too. . . I know who he is. . .

Ms. Yea, I had no contact with him at all. . .

Mr. None whatsoever.

Q. The ward leaders do you think were powerful?

Mr. Well, in their own ward they were quite powerful. That's what Jay Kaminsky was, a ward leader, Supervisor of the Eighth Ward.

Q. But then eventually just up until Sam Dicker and then Joe Silverstein. . .

Mr. Joe Silverstein. . .

Ms. Joe Silverstein was someone who . . .

Mr. Yea, and he still is quite a power.

Ms. Now. . .

Mr. Now Hy Mandell is quite a power, too.

Ms. Yea, with the Republican committeemen.

Mr. With the Republican party.

Ms. Yea.

Ms. Right.

Mr. Right. There's. . . there was one other one. . .

Ms. Well, Bill Cozell used to be. . .

Mr. Well, that was a long way back. He's gotta have some problems. . .

Q. Yea.

Ms. And. . .

Mr. Too bad.

Ms. Well, what's his name, that my brother Maynard's friend, that baldheaded fellow who's now at the State.

Mr. Oh, Dick Rosenbaum.

Ms. Rosenbaum, yea.

Mr. Well, he was the Monroe County Chairman here.

Ms. Right. For a while.

Mr. He was a . . . he was a . . .

Ms. He was. . .

Mr. A judge.

Ms. Right.

Mr. And now. . .now he's in Albany.

Ms. Yea.

Q. Well, maybe I'll just end by asking you one of those broad, overall questions. What do you think the future of the Rochester Jewish community is? Does it have a future? Are you optimistic?

Ms. I am. I'm hopeful. I think I'm optimistic. Yes, aren't you, Clay?

Mr. Yea, we hope that things will continue, that they don't deteriorate. . .

Ms. I. . .

Mr. They've deteriorated enough over the years, you know, that people have lost the interest in a lot of Judaism that they don't follow it through. Like we spoke of before. So you're always hopeful that they don't lose their . . . their insight into the religion.

Q. Yea.

Mr. And they're not going to just bypass and say, well, the devil with it, you know?

Q. Yea. Do you think Rochester was as good a place as any to have been a Jew?

Mr. I think so. I never really ran into any problems of. . .

Ms. Well, I might have told you before that when I was very young, when one came to this country, I was seven. And we lived in an Italian neighborhood, and I

Ms. (Continued) never had any problems. And these were strictly Italian people, you know?

Q. Yea.

Mr. Well, I don't. . . I don't think I've ever had a problem. . .

Ms. No, we. . . I've never. . . I think there's some anti-Semitism. . .

Mr. Oh, there always is in every city, everywhere you go, there probably is, but it's not as predominant as in other places.

Q. Would you ever have wanted to leave Rochester and go someplace else?

Ms. Well, I'll tell you, if they don't do something about the tax structure and stuff like that I think everybody will leave Rochester. (Laughter by all.)

Mr. Yea.

Ms. I mean industry. You. . . you probably read things too where New York State and Rochester have lost very, very many jobs.

Q. Yea.

Ms. And naturally as. . . as the jobs leave, people either have to leave or else they're unemployed, one or the other, and unemployment brings a . . . higher taxes. . .

Q. Yea.

Ms. One way or another that vacuum has to be made up.

Q. Culturally there's been enough in the city?

Ms. Yes, culturally I think Rochester is still surviving. I. . . I think other cities have advanced further than Rochester, like San Diego for instance or even some of these Florida cities have come a long way. Rochester I don't think has made the advancement that others have. . .

Mr. No, but they. . . they've been pretty good.

Ms. But, they've been cultural from way back.

Q. Yea.

Mr. From a long time.

Ms. Rochester was considered a cultural city when some of those other cities were barbarians.

Q. Did you know that Rochester has the highest, oldest median age other than St. Petersburg, Miami?

Mr. St. Petersburg?

Ms. No, I didn't.

Mr. No.

Q. It's an old city.

Mr. Really, they're elderly.

Ms. Now, you take Rochester. . .

Q. I don't know whether the age is 40 or whether it's. . .

Mr. Yea, but. . . but. . .

Q. It's a higher. . .

Ms. When you say Rochester do you mean the surrounding towns, too, or just the City of Rochester? Which?

Q. I don't know. . .

Ms. 'Cause maybe the young people move out to the suburbs.

Q. I think it refers to the whole area though.

Ms. Really?

Q. I think so.

Ms. Now what do you attribute that to?

Q. I don't know. I don't know. But I feel it.

Mr. Well, Ruth it could be if that. . . if that is true, as probably the figures show that, it could be that people are satisfied and they're staying.

Q. Yea, and that younger people move away. For example, your own. . . look at your own son.

Mr. Yea, well the younger people are looking for a different. . . their work is different than the people of our time. They're. . . they're. . . they're traveling more. Their work and businesses carry them all over the country, all over the world.

Ms. But. . . but by the same token Rochester industry has brought many, many young people. And, for instance, we do. . .

Q. That's true.

Ms. . . . we cater a great deal with people who have come here because of Xerox, because of Kodak.

Q. But maybe they come. . . maybe they come. . . I don't know, but maybe they come at an older age. Come in already as executive, or you know. . .

Ms. Right. Right.

Q. They come at. . . at 30 and then they stay.

Mr. They stay.

Ms. Oh, yea, at least 30 maybe a little older.

Q. But, maybe that age. . .

Ms. Remember the people that we see are. . . have like children that are going to be Bar Mitzvah. . .

Mr. Right.

Ms. Which, would be what they're like 35. . .

Q. 40. . .

Ms. 38, you know, in that area.

Mr. Yea.

Q. But that. . . that's. . .

Ms. I didn't know that.

Q. The young people leave, I guess.

Ms. I understand that Atlanta, Georgia has become a young, swinging city.

Q. Yea. I've heard that also, that that's a good cultural place. . .

Ms. For young people.

Q. Can we think of anything else to say on Rochester before I turn off the tape?

Ms. I really don't know.

Mr. I hope we've answered most of your questions.

Q. Yes.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B (Interview II)