

ROCHESTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT (Rochester Jewish community 1924-1975)

Interviewee Bessie Zelter

Interviewer Maurice Isserman

Date(s) of interview July 21, 1976

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

I interviewed Mrs. Zelter in a sitting room in the Jewish Home for the Aged. She was friendly, but easily confused and quickly tired. As a result the interview was very short.

Background of interviewee

Mrs. Zelter is 85 years old. She came to Rochester in 1908 from Minsk. She went to work at age 15 as a dressmaker at David's, to earn money to bring her parents over from Russia. She was married twice, had two children, and was a member of the Pioneer Women.

Interview abstract

Mrs. Zelter describes her experiences in immigrating to this country, settling on Baden St., and beginning work as a dressmaker. She returns repeatedly to her disappointment at being unable to attain an education, and her feeling that there has been a decline in the closeness of the Jewish community.

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

Social history

Family

Demographic/residential

Economic

Political/civic

Zionism/Israel

Jewish community

community relations

Religious life

Jewish education

Anti-semitism

Interview loc

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

--see following page(s)--

Bessie Zelter, interviewed by Maurice Isserman, July 21, 1976

Immigrated to America in 1908 at age 12. Elder brothers had already moved to Rochester to evade military service in Russia. Went to work in tailor shop as dressmaker at 15.

Settled on Baden St.

Father's occupation: owned shoe factory in Russia, was peddler in America.

Bitter over her lack of education.

Learned English without difficulty.

Married at age 21 to American-born tailor. Bore two children.

Worked in David's, husband worked at Levi Adler's.

After death of first husband, remarried uncle.

Belonged to Pioneer Women.

Father belonged to Nussbaum shul--she went only on holidays. Daughter belongs to Brith Kodesh.

Sent children to Cheder.

Sees decline in Jewish communal feeling.

Feelings about intermarriage.

Strictly a Democrat.

Feelings about Israel.

Feelings about Jewish Home for the Aged.

Tape 1
Side 1
Interview 1

Q. This is Maurice Isserman speaking with Bessie Zelter on July 21st, 1976, in the Jewish Home.

A. I think it was 1908.

Q. You came . . . you came to this country in 1908?

A. Yeah. I came with my father.

Q. Where did you come from?

A. I come from Minsk, Russia.

Q. Minsk, Russia.

A. Yeah.

Q. And when were you born there?

A. I came here, and I had to pr . . . my two brothers were here already because they were supposed to go to . . . Russia you have to go military when you're twenty-one.

Q. How old were you when you came?

A. How old was I here?

Q. When you first came over?

A. When I came to the United States? Well, I think I must've been about twelve, thirteen years old.

Q. And, you came with your father?

A. I came with my father. See, first my older brothers went here because they had to go to . . . to become soldiers. Military. So, my mother didn't want them to become in the military. She sent them over here to . . . And we had . . . we happen to have (Unknown - longslides?) you know? People from the same city that we knew. So, that's where my brothers . . .

Q. Came . . . they came to Rochester?

A. Yeah, they came to Rochester. And, then, they established themselves pretty good. And then, then they took my father and me. I came after that. My father and I came.

Q. And . . .

A. Then my father and I were here, my two brothers . . . we began to work. I had to go to work in a tailor shop instead of going to school to learn things. I had to go to work in a tailor shop. And, so they could bring over my mother and the re . . . the three children from Russia. And, we brought over the three children and we were all working. And we have to accept a home. And, I had to go to work in a tailor shop because . . .

Q. How old were you when you had to go to work in a tailor shop?

A. Oh my goodness. When I worked in a tailor shop? I was only about fifteen years. . . fourteen years when I worked in a tailor shop.

Q. And you came here because there were other people here from Minsk?

A. Well, I had to come with my father; I came with my father.

Q. That's when your brothers first came here, because . . . was there a large community here who'd come . . .

A. Huh?

Q. Was there a large community here of Jews who had come from Minsk to Rochester?

A. Yeah. Yeah. Well, so then after we were here, my father and brothers, we were working hard until we brought over my mother and the three children. So we were five children.

Q. And where did you first settle in Rochester?

A. Well, we came, we happened to get a home. We were on Bayden Street there. It was Bayden Street years ago, you know.

Q. Bayden Street.

A. And we had a nice home, and I was working, and my brothers were working . . .

Q. Did you own . . .

A. . . . and we fixed up a nice home.

Q. Did you own that home or did you rent it?

A. Huh?

Q. Did you own that home, that first home or did you rent it?

A. We rented. No, we rented. We rented. We were rent most of the time . . . until my brothers got married and I got married, and they lived on rent, my father and mother. They rented that's all.

Q. And, in that neighborhood where you lived, were there very many other people from Russia?

A. Oh! It was a nice neighborhood on Bayden Street. Gee, it was such a nice friendly . . . you weren't afraid to go off, take a walk and stay around the corner. And, my husband, the one I met. I met my husband, and then we lived on (Unknown) Street. They had their own home on (Unknown) Street my husband. So, we got married, you know, then we got a little apartment. And, that's the way is, but I'm a dress maker and I always wanted to work.

Q. So, tell me a little bit more about Bayden Street. What sort of a neighborhood was it?

A. Oh, Bayden Street just a big, beautiful . . . such a nice Jewish family. The majority are gone. Most of them are gone that I know. But, there isn't anybody hardly left. There's only Mrs. Greenhouse that you see. They live . . . she came later than I came to America, see? And instead of settling into school, I went to work. Because we had to take care . . . send . . . save money to get my father away from Russia, you know? Because things weren't so good in Russia. Although, the city that I came from, we never had any pogroms, you know, what they say it then. And we lived in Minsk, and we were living in a very nice neighborhood, you know?

Q. Do you remember much about Russia?

A. Yeah. So, it wasn't bad there. As long as my brothers they . . . here, my mother says she doesn't want to live in Russia. She wants to go to the United States.

Q. Right.

A. So finally, we all got together and then . . . then each one got married, you know, and then another one got married.

Q. What did . . .

A. I happened to get married with my husband was born here.

Q. What did your parents do for a living in Russia.

A. In Russia? My parents? My . . . my father had a factory, manufactured shoes.

Q. Oh. He owned the factory?

A. Yeah. Yeah, he had a factory manufactured shoe, make a living.

Q. And what did he do in the United States?

A. When, the United States? Couldn't do anything. He didn't know what to do with himself. He start to peddle, you know, most of your Jewish people started to peddle, you know, the pushcarts like this here, you know? Made a living. But the children, we were all working. So we didn't want my father to do anything. We were five children. So, we didn't . . .

Q. Yourself and your two brothers?

A. Huh?

Q. Who were the five . . . there was yourself and your two brothers?

A. My mother and my three brothers . . .

Q. Oh, you had three brothers?

A. I had three brothers, yeah.

Q. And a sister?

A. And my sister, my sister was lucky. They sent her to school. And me, they send me to work.

Q. What did your brothers do? What kind of work did they do?

A. Well, my older brother, after being a certain length of here, he decided he wanted he wants to be somebody. He's not gonna work in a . . . in a tailor shop. He went to New York, and he went to "preparington" school.

Q. To what school?

A. To "preparington" school, to prepare himself for something.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. And, he became . . . he became a doctor over . . . what was the doctor . . . some kind of a doctor, he got a degree, he got his thing on that. And he went to Detroit and there he . . . oh he had to go . . . he went to in Detroit a finishing . . . in Detroit he went to a college, too, my older brother. And, then he got married.

Q. How 'bout your other brothers?

A. Hmm?

Q. Your other brothers, what did they do?

A. Yeah, my other brothers . . . my other brother got married and he happened to be a tailor from Europe. So, he worked in the tailor shop. So, but, he passed away after he . . . after he had already a wife and two children and . . . and his wife died so he got married again. Then he died, my brother died.

Q. In your home, when you were living with your parents, in Rochester, what language was spoken?

A. Huh?

Q. What language did you speak at home when you first came over here?

A. My brothers?

Q. No, what did . . . did you speak English or Yiddish?

A. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We mostly we speak English, you know, I don't know.

Q. How long did it take you to learn to speak English.

A. Well, I was very good in it. Everytime when my brother used to take a walk with me with his girlfriend, and we were talking English naturally, and I was trying to listen and . . . I don't I learn it. I don't know if I learned my language. And you know, instead of sending me to school, they send me to work. I had to make money to bring over my mother and mine other two brothers and my sister. So, I got very little education. I don't know how I learn it. I was good in Russia.

Q. Did your parents learn English quickly or did it take them longer to learn it?

A. Huh?

Q. How long did it take your parents to learn to speak English?

A. Oh, we had to bring my mother very quick because it was getting very bad in Russia, so we worked hard, we worked . . . I worked in a tailor shop, full-time I worked in a tailor shop. And I met my husband there. My husband happened to be an American born boy. And, we got married and naturally after I got married, I didn't go to work, because he was working. He had a good job.

Q. How old were you when you married?

A. I was twenty-one years.

Q. Twenty-one years.

A. Yeah.

Q. And, how old was your husband?

A. My husband was about the same age.

Q. Same age.

A. Yeah.

Q. And what kind of work did your husband do?

A. Well, he was working at the tailor shop, American boy, and he was working at the tailor shop, because his parents were very Orthodox. His father, and they

A. (Continued) didn't want to send him to work something else, because they might work Sabbaths, see? So, an American boy should get into a tailor shop. You know, but, he got just about make a living, I'm telling you.

Q. Right.

A. I struggled. I struggled here so much coming in. And, after I had my first child, I couldn't work. I couldn't do anything, you know, have . . . so we had a little apartment and he was working. And, the tailor shops closed up. He had to go to Buffalo to get a job. Until they become a union, you know, there was no union those years ago. When they developed the union, they were more certain with the job once they got it. So, they weren't thrown out.

Q. How old were you when you had your first child?

A. My husband was a cutter in the tailor shop. Yeah. He was a cutter. He had to learn how to . . . it was pretty good.

Q. And you were a dressmaker?

A. But I lost my husband very young. After I had already my . . . mine children. I lost my husband.

Q. How many children did you have?

A. Huh?

Q. How many children did you have?

A. I have two.

Q. Two?

A. Yeah.

Q. And how old were you when you had your first child?

A. My first child? Mine daughter. I had my daughter.

Q. How old were you then?

A. How old is she now?

Q. No, how old were you when you had her, were you twenty-two or . . . ?

A. Oh, I think I was maybe, I don't know, about fifty-three or fifty-four.

Yeah. And, one day, you know, my husband wasn't getting no where much.

But, he along and then I had my other child, my son. I have a son. Now

my son is in San Diego. He's a professor of philosophy. Well, he went

through all kinds of colleges. All on his own. All on his own, he worked

very hard. He's doing very well. He's in San Diego.

Q. And your daughter is . . .

A. Well, my daughter here. My daughter got married. And, then after she was married, she lived with us. She had already. She had already here two children, lived in an apartment. And my husband and I lived in an apartment.

And, I don't know if it was so good. I said to my daughter, we have to get

a house. We have to have to have our own house, not to live on rent. So,

we went to Bayden Street, and I saw a sign for rent. We couldn't find out

the owner. Couldn't find out. Until finally I got ahold, it was Rubenstein,

a lawyer. He's been dead a long time. He was our lawyer. He found out that

the people that have family in New York from the house. And the house was

not occupied for five years. It was just a mess, I thought it was woods in

the back. It was just a mess. But, when I looked on the house, I said to my

daughter, it's a possibility. We have four rooms upstairs, and there's four

rooms downstairs. And it'll be nice, because we live together. It'll be

just nice. And there was a bathroom upstairs, and there was a bathroom down-

stairs. And, you know, years ago you had a boiler in the kitchen. Well, my

husband says to my daughter, we'll . . . I'll take the house. I had an insur-

ance fellow sale \$500.00. I cashed it in, and we paid it on the house. My

daughter didn't have no money. And that's all I had. I said to my husband

so we didn't have to live in rent. And, I used to go there, and I worked there

in Elena's Dress Shop . . . that time, Davids. And I used to work in David's.

A. (Continued) And, I used to come home from work. The place was so neglected. People haven't lived in there. And, I looked, I says, look at that floor, what is it? So, we had a man that, he was a masoner. And, the ceiling was broke. So, I called him and I said, you come in and you fix the ceiling. (Unintelligible) Look at the floor. I still got, I took it the brush, and I washed a little piece of floor, and I said, that's a good linoleum. And, it's not tore, it's just dirty. People didn't live there. I used to come from work and go in there and take a pail of water and a brush. And, every night I washed a part of the floor. My daughter had little children, she couldn't do it. Until I had the whole floor, when our friends came, and they saw that beautiful linoleum, they says, how did you get it clean? I went every night to work the floor.

Q. So you bought that house?

A. Until we got it. And finally we moved in there, my daughter and I we lived together.

Q. When was that, that you bought it?

A. So many years. See my daughter is . . . my daughter is already sixty-two, so you can imagine how many years ago. But at that time I was young, and strong and very ambitious to do, and then we lived together with my daughter. And, I had to work because my husband . . . my husband took sick. And, he started to go to doctors. And, the doctors said his heart was very bad. He says, he's just hanging on a hair. But, he wanted to work. He used to go in the shop and work a couple days. Then he got so, that he just . . . just couldn't. There was a good neighbor where my daughter lives, she lives on Borman Street. The house is still there. So, a very good neighbor used to take my husband to the shop there, for a couple of hours. Because he felt very depressed that he can't do anything. Well, maybe (unintelligible) is short. He lived and

A. (Continued) and lived and he suffered very much with his heart. Then he got a heart attack and he passed away. He passed away, but I lived with my daughter and I went to work. I had my job. I worked at David's. And I had my job. And I worked.

Q. What was the first place that you worked at in Rochester when you first came over in 1908? Where did you go to work?

A. Where we lived?

Q. No, where did you go to work? You said you went to work very young?

A. Well, I was working in David's.

Q. Right from when you were twelve or thirteen?

A. Yeah. And, believe me . . . we lived, let's see, I told you we bought a house. And, we lived there . . . we lived . . . we had a house on a Borman Street.

Q. When you worked at David's was that a very big factory?

A. Well, David's wasn't a factory, it was a store.

Q. Oh, it's a store.

A. Ladies apparel. See? And I happened to be a dressmaker and a fitter, so I was the fitter there. I worked for there. I worked there for thirty-five years.

Q. Thirty-five years you worked at David's?

A. In David's.

Q. So, it was sort of a custom . . . a custom production?

A. Yeah. Well, I see them. And, I worked there until already I got (unintelligible) and then I started to get my Social Security and things like that. So, I retired. Well, my husband passed away while I was still working (unintelligible).

Q. Where did your husband work?

A. He worked in tailor shop.

Q. Which one?

A. I think in Lanler's (spelling?) Levy Lanler's. Yeah.

Q. And he joined the Amalgamated Clothing Workers'?

A. He was American born. And he worked in a tailor shop because the parents were very Orthodox, and they felt that if he learn something better, he'll have to work Saturday. So they wouldn't allow. Well, anyways, I worked and then he couldn't work anymore.

Q. Did he belong to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers'?

A. Huh?

Q. Was that the union he belonged to, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers'?

A. Well, he was very sick. See? I bought a house with my last \$500.00 what I had in an insurance policy. And, I said, at least we have a home. So, later on after I lived there for quite . . . what was it? I think five years. And, I went to work every day. And, tried . . . and my daughter. And then it happened that I had an uncle of mine that my father brought here to the United States. My father's a younger brother. And, his wife passed away. And then my husband passed away. So, he had his own home, and he still have two young boys that are gone working. One was going to school, and one was working. And, he was very fond of me. He says, Bessie he says, you're alone and I'm alone, why don't you marry me? And you'll come in the home . . . he had his own home. He had his own home. But, I wasn't very fond of his children. They were brought up very badly. She was a lovely woman, my aunt, but very poor in bringing up children. They were just miserable children. Of course, the daughter was married and another son was married, but . . . He still had two sons that were going to school. One was going to school and one was working. So, I got married to my uncle. We were living there, and I still have my job. I used to go to work just the same. Because I was

A. (Continued) a very independent person that I never wanted to go to get anything for anybody from nothin' 'cause . . . and I worked. And, I worked very, very hard because taking care of a house and doing cooking . . . I used to cook my food at night, so when I come home . . . Finally, his boys got married. Once his boys was married I was glad I got . . . got . . . got rid of them, you know. So my husband and I we got along very nice. We were . . . we couldn't get along any better, because (unintelligible) he was my father's younger brother, see? And, at the time that when my father brought him from the United States . . . from Russia to the United States, and he came in and everybody told him about me in Russia. So when he found me that I was already married and I had a child, he was very disappointed. And, he was very fond of me all the time. He got married to a wife that he was engaged in Europe. And, when he came here, he had to bring her to the United States. So, he brought her. But, she was the type of woman, she was a nice woman. But very backwards. Like a hundred years back. She didn't want to have no company in the house. She didn't want to invite anybody. She didn't want to belong to organizations. They was Jewish organizations he belonged. And different affairs. They liked to go, he was the type, he liked to leave. He had a very bad life when he was a young boy in Russia. My husband. His mother . . . his father died, and he had to have a stepmother, and he had a very bad life. So, when he came to the United States, he wanted to leave. He wanted to belong to organizations, he wanted to active all over. And that's the type he was, you know, my husband. And his wife didn't want to go. You want to go, go take Bessie, my neighbor. They . . . should take me. Many times I didn't want to go, I said people would talk for heaven's sakes. He says, I have a wife, what am I going to do with her, she doesn't want to go out? And he was very active. He belonged to all these Jewish organizations.

Q. What organizations did he belong to?

A. What did he do?

Q. What did he belong to?

A. He belonged to Jewish Rochesterlies. And another Jewish organization and he was very active in these.

Q. Did you belong to any organizations?

A. Huh?

Q. Did you belong to any Jewish organizations?

A. Well, I don't know. But, I belonged to the Pioneer . . . I'm a Pioneer Woman, you know we have the Rochester Pioneer. My daughter is . . . my daughter was the president of the Rochelle Chapter, see? Because I'm (unintelligible) Jewish, and that's all. I had a very smart father. My father was very well learned. He used to go to the synagogue and he sit down and read for all the people.

Q. What synagogue did he belong to?

A. Huh?

Q. What synagogue did you belong to?

A. Well, Nusbaum Shul. They used to call it Nusbaum's. They still have it, I think, way down . . . way down Monroe Avenue right corner . . . well it was Nusbaum's Shul. I know that was Nusbaum's Shul way down there. People are all gone naturally. And my father was . . . a brilliant man. A very, very well read. Mostly in Jewish Hebrew and all that. He was very well read.

Q. And did you continue to go to that same synagogue all the time you were married?

A. Oh, no. My husband happened to be that he wasn't care for much for . . . for religion. So, the Jewish Holidays we used to go. The Jewish Holiday. And now, my daughter is a member in the Beth Kodesh Temple. So when it come Jewish Holiday, I go to her house and stay overnight so I can go to the temple. I

A. (Continued) can't understand what . . . here they're very Orthodox. They're very strictly Orthodox. So, I enjoy it when I go to the Temple Beth Kodesh.

Q. Did you ever have anything to do with the Bayden Street Settlement?

A. With Bayden Street?

Q. The settlement. The settlement house there?

A. Well, no.

Q. No, not really.

A. No. No. Not much. I was out already of Bayden Street at so many years, don't forget I'm eighty-five years. That's a long, long, long . . . And, my daughter's already sixty . . . sixty-two years old. And my son, my son got an education all by himself. He went to Buffalo. So I could send him, and I went to work, and I used to send him \$10.00 a week, he should have enough money to take care of himself. And Saturday he used to work in a store until he got his education. So he went to finish college in Buffalo.

Q. Did you give your children a formal Jewish education?

A. And now, in San Diego he lives. In San Diego he lives there. He has a nice home. And I had been there, since I was here, I was there already. He has a very nice home. A beautiful home. Of course, he has a sick wife.

Q. Did you give your . . . did you give your children a formal Jewish education? Did they go to Hebrew School?

A. Who? My son?

Q. Your son and daughter.

A. Oh, I send them to (Unknown). That's as far as they went.

Q. Was he Bar Mitvahed?

A. He went to Fader, (spelling?). My daughter went to Fader. I send them to Fader. And he was Bar Mitvah and then after that, he started to go . . . he had to start to go to high school.

Q. Do they give their children a formal Jewish education?

A. Who, my son?

Q. Does he have children, your son?

A. Yeah. My son has children.

Q. And does he give them a formal . . .

A. Well, they give them a Jewish education, but they don't keep it.

Q. They don't?

A. No. My son's daughter didn't get married to a Jewish fellow, you know?

Q. Do you see a . . . ?

A. We're living in a time . . . in a very funny time. It wasn't what it used to be.

Q. How do you mean?

A. Oh, I don't know. The people, the Jewish people were more close together. And, they . . . everybody's for themselves, you know. I have . . . I have friends and I used to belong to the Pioneer Women. You think anybody comes to see me? Nobody. Nobody comes to see me. Everybody . . . this one don't feel good. And this one hasn't got no time. I'm still a member of the Pioneer, because my daughter still pays for me should I be a member. We had a big affair here just about last month. So, they pick me up and I went to the affair they had, and a dinner from the donations. And I paid in so much money for the dinner and I went so I could see the people, so people can see me because nobody comes to see me here. I have two grandsons here. God bless them. Well, one of them belongs to one of the temples way down St. Paul Street, I don't know . . . a foreign temple. I don't know, one of the temples he belongs to. My younger grandson. And, unfortunately, he has been quite sick. A spinal operation just about four, five, six ago . . . six weeks ago. And he has a very high position. My daughter give him . . . Fulton . . . went to college. They

- A. (Continued) both went to Rochester University and they graduated. See? So they both He has a job . . . he's a . . . I don't know what they call him. He's charge of all the business where they build contractors. Yes. He has a very high position. Now that he had the operation, they bring all the papers to him in the house. So you take . . . He has a nice home, and he's got three little children. All the boys go to (Unknown) and he's a remarkable ten-year old boy. He has a brain like a . . . Like a twenty year old fellow. And I said to him, Bradly what are you gonna be when you get older? Grandma, he says, I'm too young to tell you what I'm gonna be.
- Q. I see.
- A. Oh, he has a brilliant mind. My older grandson happened to marry to a Gentile (Unknown) girl.
- Q. How do you feel about intermarriage?
- A. But, he has a big position with the telephone company.
- Q. How do you feel about intermarriage?
- A. Well, they were both going to college. The Rochester University. He was going out with a lovely Jewish girl, and this Jewish girl was friends with his wife. They were two girlfriends. So, this one here was clever. She says, by heck you're not gonna get David. I'm going to get David. And she's very brilliant, she's has a brilliant mind. She really got him. Well, they didn't married like in a church and things like that. No. They got married by . . . with her parents in the house. And they had a (unintelligible) marry them. He has two children. Very successful. He's very successful my . . . mine older grandson. He's a brilliant mind. He's got a very high position with the Rochester Telephone Company.
- Q. Good. Tell me, were either you or your husband ever politically active?
- A. Ever what?
- Q. Politically active, did you belong to . . . ?

A. No, not much. No. Not politically active, no.

Q. Did you belong the democratic or the socialist party?

A. I was . . . I was active in the organizations, that's by me . . . the Pioneer Women, that was the main that I was active. I'm still . . . I'm still active in the Pioneer, I'm still a member and all that.

Q. Did you, say, vote for Roosevelt in the '30s or . . . ?

A. Huh?

Q. Did you vote for Roosevelt in the '30s?

A. I'm strictly democratic.

Q. Strictly a democrat?

A. I'm strictly a democrat. They had once here a couple of years ago, I think it was, election. And they got me on the floor and said, Mrs. Zelter, what are you? I said, strictly a democrat. And they snapped my picture. There I was in the paper. And, I said I'm sorry, I'm a strict democrat.

Q. Why are you a strict democrat.

A. Because I believe the democrat party is a little for the working class of people a little bit. They have a feeling for the working class people a little bit. Not all, a hundred percent. Nobody's a hundred percent. Especially when they got in in politics. There's a lot of crooked were going out.

Q. Right. Were you ever . . .

A. When you start to dig it out from the smallest one to the biggest one, there's crooked work. When I read the paper, I read the Times Union. I read the Jewish paper. You don't get in the Times Union what I get in the Jewish paper what's going on in the world. In the Jewish world. And see? Then I know what's going on. I read it two papers.

Q. Did you ever read the Daily Foreward?

A. Who?

Q. The Daily Foreward, the Socialist paper, the . . .

A. No. No.

Q. No. You never did. Did you ever have anything to do with the socialist party when you . . . came over here?

A. No. No. No. I'm strictly belong to the Pioneer Women, and it's a Jewish organization, and that's what I am strictly for.

Q. Did you ever belong to a union?

A. Where?

Q. A union? Amalgamated Clothing Workers'? Or some other union?

A. No. No. No.

Q. Did your husband?

A. No, my husband didn't belong to anywhere.

Q. To no union?

A. He only belonged to the Rochester Jewish Relief.

Q. I see.

A. See? We lived in Rochester (unintelligible) they come, they used to come here and give bingo's and different things. And, my husband was the president for the Rochester Jewish Relief. See? But my husband . . . my second husband, he . . . his children weren't brought up right either. Very badly brought up. And, I mean, they don't . . . don't come even to see me. No.

Q. Tell me, have you ever been to Israel?

A. I wished I could've. I wished I'd had brains enough when I was able to. I should've go, but now, it's already . . .

Q. How do feel about Israel?

A. I feel about Israel, they do the best they can do. Under circumstances. Because everybody's around there, they don't like them, and they do a lot of trouble. It's going on plenty trouble, but what can we do? If it'd be Israel, it'll be Israel regardless what it's gonna be.

Q. What role do you think Israel plays for Jewish people who don't live in Israel?

A. Well, I wanted to go to Israel. I wanted to go to Israel, but by the time I was really able to go there, by (unintelligible) was already dead with a heart condition. I had already my heart condition ten years ago when I got my first heart condition. Betty rushed me to hospital, they didn't know what to do whether they give a heart operation or put a pace-maker. That time they were starting on pace-makers. They weren't sure. And, the doctor said she has no chance either way, we'll have to try a pace-maker. And I have already four pace-maker put in. But, thank God, we got a nice Jewish home. There isn't another home in the State like this here. They open up a new room in Florida. I had a sister there . . . one sister. And she had money, she gets a thousand for the home, because her husband died and she didn't have any children. And, she wanted to get in home. My sister . . . every time she get sick, my daughter had to go out there. She didn't have no children. She said, mamma, I wished you see the home Aunt Elenore was. She says, you got a palace here. She says, a little cubby hole, she had one drawer to put her clothes in and a little cubby hole. And she paid in a thousand dollars, she has to get in, she paid in. So, I can tell you one thing that I think this is the nicest home and the way they take care of you, there isn't another place I think anywheres. I know, I been sick many times that I was ready on the end. That the nurse had to come in every ten minutes when we had an epidemic of flu. When they had it last year. My daughter was in Florida taking care of my sister, and I was very sick. My grandson came in, I says, Robert, I says, I don't think I'm gonna live long enough 'till I see your mother. And the nurse used to come in every ten minutes and check on me, and check on me. And then I used to a pitcher of juice. I want you to drink all you can, just drink. Never mind the foods you're not eating, but drink. And they got me out of it.

A. (Continued) And, I'm still alive.

Q. That's good. That's wonderful.

A. They thought . . . my son . . . my grandson came in and said, should I call ma? I said, no don't call her. She'll only get scared. And, my sister was very sick. And I'm alive.

Q. That's wonderful.

A. Thanks to them. There isn't another nursing home like Rochester. It's immaculate clean. And they do anything, anything is something wrong. You go and complain, and they give you if you think . . . they give food, of course, I'm a very small eater. And, if you don't like it, they'll give you something else. And a very pleasant, everyone. Even Mr. Roberdein (spelling?) you had one, you know? He's wonderful. So, I don't think there's another home you can write it anywheres, that there isn't another home like Rochester. That's mine opinion. And, I'm sure a lot of them will tell you the same thing. And, I'm very happy here. I'm very happy.

Q. Thank you very much.

A. Yeah.

Q. I'm gonna be speaking with Mrs. Greenhouse tomorrow. Did you know her from the . . .

A. Oh, yeah. Well, I know her from years we lived. I know her from years ago.

Q. You lived in the same neighborhood?

A. Her husband . . . her husband and . . . not mine first husband, and my brothers they went to (Unknown - Fader?) together in Russia, Minsk. See we were (Unknown - longslide?) here (unintelligible) Minsk. So, we're . . . her husband and my brother they were very good friends. See, my brothers are all moved out of here, and I haven't got my brothers here.

Q. Tell me, was . . . was there some sort of organization that people from Minsk

Q. (Continued) who came over . . .when they came over here, did they see each other or have a hall or anything?

A. Well, it happened that my brother . . . my brother is a Zionist. My oldest brother was Zionist. Naturally, he got me to belong, they started in a small group. The Jewish Home had an organization, so I used to go and belong. I was always very active. I'm not a type, I'm eighty-five years old, and I'm not a type just to sit and just think about myself. So, there's nothing to think of whenever I'll die, I'll die; what difference does it make? When the day will come, I'll die. But, as long as . . . give me strength, I have the strength to walk around. Of course, I'm on a lot of, a lot of medication. An awful lot of medication in the morning, they "cartigram." They have to take every Friday morning a "cartigram"-on my heart. And, very awful lot of medication. But . . . I'm alive.

Q. Well, tell me about your brother's Zionism.

A. Yeah. Well . . .

Q. What did he do?

A. Many time I'm getting tired already. Actually, already, I live long enough. I'm eighty-five years . . . is long enough. But, you can't die when you want. And you can't live when you want.

Q. Right. Okay.

A. If something . . . whenever it'll happen, it'll happen, that's all.

Q. Well, thank you very much.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1, INTERVIEW 1