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(signed) Herman A. Sarach
(date) June 22, 1976

Understood and agreed to

(interviewer) 
(date) June 22, 1976
Interviewee          Herman Sarachan

Interviewer          Dennis B. Klein

Date(s) of interview  June 15, 22, 1976 (3 tapes)

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

Though we met on the kind of hot summer days that brings organic life to a halt, Mr. Sarachan recalled a vivid and varied past. One warning, however: "often Mr. Sarachan corrected himself and, on occasion, contradicted himself. This raises some questions about the authenticity of his chronicle, particularly in the area of Zionism and the 1964 riots, and in connection with the dating of events.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Sarachan was born in Vilna in 1894, moved to America (Rochester) in 1903-1904 and, after gaining an education, worked for Hickey-Freeman clothing and the JY. He lived in the Joseph Av. area from 1921-1973 (?), became involved in local Zionism (1920s), the development of the Leopold St. Schul, and in Freemasonry.

Interview abstract

The interview—through the mind and heart of Mr. Sarachan—embraces many facets of the local community. Through it all, particularly as "lay Rabbi" of the Leopold St. Schul and in the Masonic lodge ("Flower City," almost all Jews), he has performed his life as teacher and organizer. Note: Mr. Sarachan has published on Freemasonry and his vocation as membership director of the JY; he also has manuscript material on Temple Beth Israel (in his possession).

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

| Social history | Jewish community |
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| Family        | Community relations |
| Demographic/residential | Religious life |
| Economic      | Jewish education |
| Political/civic | Anti-semitism |
| Zionism/Israel |                 |

Interview loc—

a) corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and cassette recorder nos.

b) including references to others in the Rochester community

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II. JY (1936-1964)
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III. Clothing/Hickey-Freeman: management

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   B. Conflict: orthodox background in Reform synagogue
   C. Rabbi Bernstein: relation to Beth Israel (reference: record or tape of Bernstein/Sarachan talk on Beth Israel)

Tape 1, Side B

V. Impact of Depression
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   D. Transfer to Black Jewish community--"Christian Saints"
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Herman Sarachan
Tape 2, Side A
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XII. Observations on Anti-Semitism
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   1. Withdrew in 1930s
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E. State of Israel: 1973 (Yom Kippur) war

F. RBI: Americanization of German immigrants

G. Local symphonic activity (amateur)
This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. Herman Sarachan. Today is June 15, 1976. We're talking at Mr. Sarachan's home on an extremely warm day. And this is Tape No. 1, Side A. Suppose we begin, Mr. Sarachan, with an overview of your background and a brief sketch of your life.

Very briefly, I was born in Vilna, so-called capital of Lithuania, and came over with my parents in 1903 when I was very young, of course. At that time I immediately went to School No. 9, from which I graduated in 1913. ... correction in 1909. It was from East High School that I graduated in 1913. Entered the University in the Department of Engineering and graduated with a B.S. in 1917. During World War I I was connected with Lemson Arts Company in Milan. When the war was over in 1919, I came back to Rochester and that fall I became an instructor at Cornell University in the Department of Engineering, was there for two years and then came back to teach at the University of Rochester in the Department of Engineering. In 1923, after two summers spent in the Hickey-Freeman Clothing Company in their production department, I became permanently connected with Hickey-Freeman and was there until 1925. In 1926 the new JY was opened. I hesitate because my dates may be a little off.

It might be a couple years later, that's OK.

Nineteen. ...

'28, '29.

I believe 1926 was the correct year. I became connected with the Jewish Young Men's and Women's Association as Membership and Dormitory Director. The dormitories con. ... consisted of four floors of 168 rooms for men. The rest
A. (Continued) of the building was similar to the usual YMCA. I was connected with the JY until my retirement in 1964. From then on my activities were largely with Masonic work, Masonic organizations, and Masonic activities. During these many years I was also actively connected with Congregation Beth Israel, the so-called Leopold Street Shul. The oldest Orthodox congregation in this city. I became associated with it as a member and a congregant when I was married in 1921 because my father-in-law, Abraham Alderman, had been very active as president and for many years the secretary of Congregation Beth Israel, as well as a very active member of the Jewish community. Since we had a great majority of years no rabbi I served as a lay rabbi, particularly during festivals and high holidays by chanting part of the services, as well as delivering the holyday addresses and various other activities. For a number of years we also had a Sunday school, which was quite active until the Jewish community began to move away, especially when Temple Beth El was organized by members of Beth Israel who had become affluent and also desired to form a Conservative temple. Congregation Beth Israel continued to serve the Jewish community although on a more and more modern scale until 1963 when the last of us actually moved away from the neighborhood and Congregation Beth Israel merged with Temple Beth Hamedresh on East Avenue to form Temple Beth Hamedresh-Beth Israel. In this new temple my activities have continued to the present day.

Q. Let me clarify that. You went to the University of Rochester, you mentioned just University. I wanted to clarify that point.

A. University of Rochester. And a graduate, Masters in Cornell.

Q. OK.

A. While teaching there in the Engineering Department.

Q. Now you mentioned a number of very interesting points and I want to begin to
Q. (Continued) dissect some of these points and ask you some more questions about them. Let's go back to... well, into your Russian origins and ask you some more questions. First of all, when were you born and if you could describe to us how long you were in Vilna and what that was like, what memories you have of this... of this town?

A. I was born in 1894. We did not remain in this big city, Vilna, very long because my father when I was still very young, I believe it was 1899, certainly no later than 1900, that he left for this country. And my mother and the children, I have a brother and a sister, moved to a small village... do you want the name?

Q. Sure.

A. ... called Zadishak. You spell it.

Q. Can you spell it?

A. I'd say z-a-d-i-s-h-a-k, Zadishak. About seven Russian miles from a larger city of Smargon, s-m-a-r-g-o-n. There my memories are much more distinct. I started in a seder, Jewish school, immediately. And we were fortunate to have a teacher, a most capable man, my mother always bore me out on that, who had come to the village on doctor's orders for his health. And mother has often recalled that when we were getting ready to leave for America he expressed great regret that I was going to that unreligious country. I'm not sure just how he called it. In any event, we left in 1903 to join our father here in Rochester.

Q. Your father, what was his name? And could you tell us something about him and why he came to America?

A. His name was Aaron Wolfe. And as near as I can figure out it was because things were in Vilna not very good economically. He was working, I think, as a blacksmith or some related work of that kind because I have a distinct
A. (Continued) recollection, and mother has ratified it, that when I was asked, little fellow, what your father does, I said he beats out pennies. So that his brothers who had preceded him to this country undoubtedly must have written to him that conditions are much better in this country.

Q. I believe... well, certainly a couple years after you came to America there were the Russian pogroms, 1905. Was there any of this going on earlier and could this have played into his decision coming over to America?

A. I don't recollect any reports of pogroms, perhaps I was too young, before he left. But I know that while we were still in that Russian village we heard of pogroms in different places in Russia, but it wasn't until we were in this country in 1904 and 1905 that we began to hear of the dreadful pogroms that broke out in those years.

Q. It was essentially then for economic reasons? Could you tell us something then about your mother? What was her name and where did she come from, if you remember?

A. Her name was Sarah Fagan and I am not sure whether she was originally from Vilna or from Smargon. And I know very little about her background. She did live to a ripe old age, I think she was 84 when she passed away.

Q. May I ask you where the name Sarachan came from?

A. My brother wrote to one of the Jewish weeklies, the Post and Opinion, which has a rabbi that answers that question. And I believe he said that it stems from some local, physical characteristic. In other words, a small river, or something of that sort.

Q. One reason I ask that question is that you said your father's name was Aaron Wolfe and why didn't you assume the name Wolfe?

A. That was his name.

Q. Why didn't you?
A. Oh, no. Aaron Wolfe were his two... two names, surnames.
Q. OK.
A. Sarachan was his last name.
Q. OK. I wanted to...
A. Yea.
Q. ... make that clear.
A. In Hebrew it's Zaiv, is Wolfe, and he was called, as a matter of fact, by his... the diminutive Zelvo, just as we say Jim for James.
Q. Let me ask now where the brothers of your father had settled originally in America and where your father came to originally?
A. They were in Rochester. Whether they came directly to Rochester or not, that I can't say definitely. But they were in Rochester and my father came directly to Rochester. And we joined him directly in Rochester. My uncle, Louie, was a dominant member of this same congregation, Beth Israel, a president for a number of years. And he was also a supervisor for his ward, that was my uncle, Louie. The other brother, Max, was the owner of a grocery store, I believe it was. And for a time they lived in a small village where they had also that kind of a business. But most of the time they lived in Rochester and their descendants are now in Rochester.
Q. What was it about Rochester, do you think, that attracted your family here?
A. I haven't the slightest idea. Except that we've been very, very happy here all these years; I wouldn't live anywhere else.
Q. You mentioned that you were involved in the clothing business after the first war. Was this... was there any relationship between that business, since Rochester was so prominent in clothing, and the attraction of your families to the... to the city itself?
A. I don't know just what the relationship was, but at about that time, about
A. (Continued) 1923 the clothing factories began to put on their staffs engineers or trained industrialists and economists first the labor manager and later the factory manager at Hickey-Freeman. And he brought in several college graduates. I was one of them, and I was put in charge of the production office.

Q. So you got involved in clothing really much after you'd been in... had already settled in Rochester?

A. Oh, yes, yes, many years later.

Q. Where did your family live in Rochester when you first moved here?

A. We lived on... on Joseph Avenue.

Q. How long did you live there?

A. Now my memory's beginning to fail me. We were... it was after father left for Israel, and I should mention that. My father left for Israel and died and buried there because of his health. He was told he should go either to a place like Arizona or Israel, he chose Israel, where a sister of her... his and her husband had settled some years before.

Q. When did your father go to Israel?

A. I would say it was about 1940 'cause he was there a number of years before he passed away, and he passed away about 1948 I would say.

Q. Did he go to Israel only because of his health? One would suspect that there would be other reasons.

A. I would say his health. 'Cause there what time he had he devoted in... in a home for the aged, studying and learning and reading but not... not economically employed.

Q. What... how involved was your father in the Jewish community in Rochester?

A. Well, he was a member of an Orthodox synagogue, he attended services regularly. He did not hold any office.
Q. And your mother?
A. Mother also lived a religious life, but wasn't especially active in the community.

Q. Did your family observe the ritual and customs of the Jewish religion?
A. Very Orthodox.

Q. You mentioned you had...you have a brother and a sister. What are their names and do they live in Rochester?
A. My brother's Goodman was a Federal attorney for many years; he's a lawyer. He was a Federal attorney for a number of years and served as judge for part of a term, and was a member of the so-called State Crime Commission for a number of years until he retired. Had a very, I would say, had a very good career in that field.

Q. And your sister?
A. My sister has been active in Temple Beth El. Her husband, who passed away a number of years ago, was very active, an officer and a great contributor to Beth El. Her husband was co-founder with a man by the name of Germanow, Germanow-Simon Corporation, manufactures watch crystals as one of their products. And his son is now in the business along with the sons of the original Germanow.

Q. I would like to go back now to your life on Joseph Avenue and at the No. 9 School. Tell us something about that.
A. I'm not sure that there is very much to tell. I attended school. I guess I did quite well in my...my studies. And when I graduated I was relatively one of a small number, relatively small number, who went on to high school of our graduating class. Then if...that's as much as I can say, no particular incidents except that grade after grade skipped a couple times. But in high school I had an interesting experience. I... I did I guess quite well in
A. (Continued) my studies in my first year. And at the end of that year I registered for a commercial course rather than a college preparatory course. My homeroom teacher, who was also my algebra teacher, was a woman by the name of Minnie Vinzin, whom everybody called Aunt Minnie. She called me in, asked me to stay after school. I see that you registered for commercial course, why? And I said very quietly that I have a brother coming along a couple years behind me who is a real bright boy so I figured that I'll take a commercial course, I'll go to work and help him go through college. Her answer was that was a very laudible ambition, but you have to consider yourself also. I feel that you should prepare for college, then if you want to go to a commercial work you'll be just as well prepared. And so that's what turned me to college preparatory.

Q. Would you. . .

A. I've always been grateful to Aunt Minnie for that.

Q. You don't regret that piece of advice?

A. Never.

Q. What. . . what would a commercial course have led to?

A. Well, I would have studied bookkeeping, accounting, probably typing. I'm not quite sure just what would be involved with that. Those were the principle subjects, bookkeeping and accounting.

Q. The Joseph Avenue area was heavily Eastern European in composition.

A. In my graduating class I think 95% were Jewish boys and girls and only 5% or less, I would judge, and we must have had 60 in a class, must have been just three non-Jews in that class.

Q. And they were primarily from the Jewish pail of. . .

A. That's right. Mostly immigrants, children of. . .

Q. So you were in the. . . you were. . . adjustment to America was made easier
Q. (Continued) because of that situation? Was the language spoken... English I assume in the schools...
A. In the schools. At home it was always Yiddish. Until mother passed away I would speak to her in Yiddish.
Q. When did you learn English and how?
A. By just going to school I guess.
Q. Going to school. There was no formal course or anything of that sort? OK. When you went to the University of Rochester was there a quota system at... at that time that selected their candidates on certain non-academic bases?
A. The information that I had, it seemed to be general knowledge, was that the University of Rochester was not friendly to teachers, but when it came to students I doubt there was a quota system. So far as the engineering department was concerned there were, if I remember correctly, about sixteen or eighteen who started the engineering course. By the end of the first year there were four of us left. So that I was the only Jew. So that, I guess, nobody had any feeling that I didn't belong.
Q. There wasn't any quota directed towards Jews then as far as you were aware?
A. Nothing, I never had any feeling. And I've always been very friendly with some of the classmates of the other courses when we met at reunions, that sort of thing.
Q. Now then you went into... into the clothing business after the first war and then became involved in the JY as Membership and Dormitory Director. Was this your full-time job?
A. Full-time job. Not only full-time, sometimes I was called in the middle of the night, something happened and they needed me. Or the night man didn't show up, who was supposed to show up at ten o'clock, and I had to run down and take over the desk, things of that sort. That didn't happen very often,
A. (Continued) but I was available.

Q. And this job you had until 1964?

A. That's right, until I retired.

Q. The major portion of your life was involved in the JY? The JY was significant in the community because if anything it united the various segments within the community. I think the segment of the community involved or responsible for organizing this project were the German Jews?

A. Largely, but they were the wealthier Jews.

Q. They had the money.

A. By... by the time the original JY was organized some of the East European Jews were becoming up and becoming more and more important in the community. But for a time, this I'm going into another field, for a time the German Jews had their charities, they had their orphan asylum, and they had all their own organizations. And the East European Jews had theirs, and it wasn't until later that they came together.

Q. Significantly through the JY and other...

A. I would say yes, through the JY and other organizations.

Q. OK. I believe there was an older JY before the actual building downtown. I think it was at a house or in a home near Hyde Park. Does this sound familiar to you?

A. Well the J... the JY originally was in a home, and they had built a swimming pool and a gymnasium in the back. That's where the JY started. Then in 19... let's see, I think in 1922... in 1924 they began to raise money for a new building, they made the plans. Then the war came and work stopped. And now I may have to correct myself. The new building was organized in 1936, and that's when I went on the staff. 1936 'cause I was at Hickey-Freeman in 1933 to 1935. Yea, so originally they started to raise money
A. (Continued) and to make plans for a new building in 1927 or eight. Then the war... then the great Depression came in '29 and building stopped. They had actually started to build, and it was just a skeleton building. Then in 1935 they had... they had a drive for funds, and I remember I was asked to be a captain in that drive, and they raised sufficient money to complete the building and opened it in the fall of 1936. I had already gone on the staff early that year by way of preparing and getting everything ready and so forth.

Q. So you began affiliation with the JY then in 19... A. '35.

Q. 1935. OK. So you mentioned before it was 1926... you corrected that.
A. Yea, that's why I said, now it comes back.

Q. And you...
A. An old man's memory isn't as good as it should be.

Q. Nah, you're doing fine, much better than what I think I can ever do.
A. Thank you.

Q. What... your... you were then involved with Hickey-Freeman you mentioned in the early 1930's then?
A. Yes, that's so. Until... yea, until 1935.

Q. OK. Then so clothing was really your occupation after the first war through the twenties and up to your involvement in the JY?
A. That's right, yea.

Q. Wasn't the clothing business in Rochester at this point in decline? Wasn't there a number of companies that were leaving Rochester?
A. A number of smaller companies were leaving, but Hickey-Freeman was going very big and so were at least two... at least three others, the large ones. But smaller companies either went out of business or moved away.
Q. Did you feel there was a significant Jewish element to the labor management composition and the relationship between labor and management? Was there any... because there certainly were a number of Eastern European Jews became involved in clothing in Rochester. Did you feel that played a part?

A. My own work didn't bring me directly in contact with the... the union except indirectly. I knew them all and was on the whole friendly with them. My work was membership. I ran the campaigns each year, membership drives. Wait a minute now, I'm getting ahead of myself. That's the JY. But I simply took care of the production office, staff, payrolls, the complaints of workers that they were underpaid, it was a mistake and we chased that down. That was the way I came in contact with the work... workers themselves, the employees.

Q. You were really on the side of management?

A. That's right, yea.

Q. Did you have any... did you have to deal with the union at all then?

A. No.

Q. In negotiations?

A. Except once when I was a witness to an attack by a union man against a foreman. That was my only contact with a union.

Q. You then became involved in the JY in 1935 or 1936.

A. Mmm-hmm.

Q. The actual building of the JY was itself, it seems to me, almost a celebration and a true achievement within... within the Jewish community.

A. Yes.

Q. And the Christian community, there were contributions made by non-Jews as well to the... .

A. General chairman of that 1935 drive was Emmet Finukan, I'm quite sure, a
A. (Continued) banker. Other non-Jews were involved in various activities, vice-chairmen. And the Jew who was most prominent was a man by the name of Sol Heuman, who was the head of a clothing factory. Sol Heuman Thompson.

Q. Why did non-Jews take such an interest in this?
A. The only way I can explain it to you is that there's always been by in large a good relationship between the Jews and the non-Jews in this community. It also was undoubtedly part of... due to the fact that those who were leaders, like Sol Heuman and Simon Stein, who was the head of Stein Block and later Fashion Park, whose contacts with the non-Jews were very close. So it could have been their interest that brought in non-Jews. But I repeat there's been ever since I can recall a good relationship between the communities.

Q. This was perhaps your first... the first time you really had close working relations with the Jew... German Jewish segment of the Jewish community? Did you ever...?
A. Oh, wait a minute.
Q. Yes.
A. I was a Sunday school teacher in B'rith Kodesh.
Q. Good. I wanted to ask you about that. In fact when... when did you begin?
A. In the 1920's.
Q. And how long did you teach at B'rith Kodesh?
A. I wasn't there so long...
Q. OK.
A. Until we organized a Sunday school in my own Leopold Street Shul, and I became the principle and the head and the organizer and everything else.
Q. The B'rith Kodesh was a Reform temple. How did you become involved first, initially, with this... with this group?
A. I'm not so... I believe that I was asked if I would teach there. And since
A. (Continued) it meant a few dollars, and dollars were very precious because my... my father was working for nine dollars a week, 60 hours a week, which didn't give us very much money. So I think the few dollars meant something. On the other hand, I enjoyed the work and when the high school department was organized my brother taught the highest class in comparative religions and I taught the next class, the low, eleventh grade, in the history of Jewish country.

Q. B'rifith Kodesh was both Reform and had a large German Jewish congregation. Did you feel out of place because of your own background in B'rifith Kodesh?

A. Well, I didn't attend services. In so far as my class is concerned I was a teacher.

Q. So that there was... 

A. Oh, you want a little incident? When I was still teaching one of the lower classes, before the high school department was organized, Palestine was then very much on the map. All of this business of trying to bring immigrants there on the British mandate. And many Hebrew words were being bandied about. So I got the brilliant idea that I'd give the children in my class, I think I had the fifth grade, what ten, eleven year olds?... a few Hebrew words. Next thing I knew the principle called me in. The phone has been ringing, the parents are all excited. What's the idea of starting to teach Hebrew? You've gotta cut it out. And that was the first and the last time. Of course years later that became part of their curriculum, Hebrew.

Q. But you did cut it out?

A. Oh, I cut it out then. After all, I didn't want to cause a rumpus with the parents. The children came and said that we learned that "shalom" means "hello." Oh, terrible.

Q. So that was one incident of this contrast?
One incident. And the only incidents that I can recall. Unless it was always... 'course lower class it was Biblical history, Biblical history. High school class, of course, it was the Jewish... and largely, as I say, a lecture course, which I never liked. I never liked to lecture, but it had to be because if I assign them a reading none of them did it. So the only way I could get it across was to talk to them and then ask questions.

Q. I believe that both Rabbi Wolfe and then Rabbi Bernstein were the leaders of the B'rit h Kodesh synagogue. Do you have any recollections of either one of these rabbis?

A. Well, I... I have the highest regard for them. With Rabbi Bernstein I was very close. And, as a matter of fact, for the last years of the life of Congregation Beth Israel, each year Rabbi Bernstein brought his graduating class for a session on Sunday in Beth Israel because he wanted them, first of all, to see what an Orthodox synagogue was like and also to have them have me tell them something of the history of Beth Israel while he, for his part, told them something of the history of the Jewish community. And that became an annual event.

Q. That worked out very well?

A. Very well, yes. As a matter of fact the last year they were supposed to make a television record of it, but we never saw it. So, Rabbi Bernstein tried to follow-up and couldn't get any news, so it was gradually dropped.

Q. What kind of record was this?

A. It was supposed to be a tape of Rabbi Bernstein's talk, my talk, as a record of Beth Israel. But, we never saw it.

Q. So you don't know if it exists today?

A. Probably doesn't for whatever reason, they probably maybe didn't have
A. (Continued) the money to put it in shape. But that shows how close I worked with Rabbi Bernstein, how close he was with me.

Q. And when you became involved in the JY again there was a mixture of Jews within this project, but you felt not outside, apart...?

A. Well, I had to give up... I had to give up my Sunday school work because Sunday was a very busy day at... at the JY. So that that was when I dis-continued teaching at B'rith Kodesh.

Q. You were asked to come join the people at the JY, to help develop that program?

A. I... I was... yea, became a member of the staff.

Q. Right. I mean they asked you to become a part of this, of this staff?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember the impact of the Depression, both on the clothing business and, of course, you mentioned its relationship to the JY, it actually held up the development of that.

A. Well, I know that the clothing industry, the overhead staff was reduced because business was not very good, that I know.

Q. It didn't seem to affect you personally in any significant way?

A. I was one of those that was separated from the work.

Q. That was because of the Depression?

A. Because of the Depression.

Q. And you had to think about getting into something else? Otherwise you might have continued with that line of business?

A. It's possible because I had a very fine relationship with the Hickeys and the Freemans. As a matter of fact, when I first went there the original Freeman, Jacob L. Freeman, whenever he'd see me, he'd say well, how do you enjoy this work as against teaching in college? I did. I was very... very challenging and enjoyable work.
Q. Let me ask you about your experience... 

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (Interview 1)
A. (Continued) Now I can't say anything about what the relationship is now because I am not in any way, shape or manner... manner connected with it except that I am a kind of an honorary member, I guess, get a Jewish card every single year since I retired.

Q. You said that they had a hearing, which is to say that complaints were made?
A. When complaints were made and they came to me I usually did whatever I felt was necessary or if it was a case of going to the executive or to another department head, I would follow through.

Q. Did the... did the war, the second war, affect your membership drives?
A. It did bother some, of course, 'cause many men were away.

Q. I guess I ask this because at this point there were so many Jews coming from... from Europe, the Jews of the Holocaust, and were several settled in Rochester. Did you make any special appeal to these people?
A. They began to come really when I was out so that I had very little contact with them.

Q. Didn't they come in like the late thirties?
A. We did have, I guess they still have, what we call a Friendship Club, a club for oldsters. And that was very successful. And that included very many of these new immigrants.

Q. So there was a specific effort to appeal to these people?
A. Yes.

Q. And how did that work? Did these people accept that? They looked for some kind of community in this...?
A. I would say so. Yes.

Q. So that seemed to go.
A. Yes.
Q. And after the second war, again, there was continual influx of Jews into this area?
A. Yea.

Q. That continued. Let's ask a series of questions now about your involvement in the Orthodox Jewish community. This goes back to your involvement in the Leo... Leopold Street Shul. Was it your family... were... were they involved in the shul as well?
A. My father-in-law. When... as soon as we were married. They, of course... my father had already left. But we were married in 1921. I immediately began attending the Leopold Street Shul with my father-in-law. And he was the one that encouraged me to become active. He was the one that encouraged me to start a Sunday school. And then; since we had no rabbi, he was the one that suggested that I should assume, as a layman, some of the functions. Like delivering the sermons on the high holidays, work of that sort, by participating in the chanting of the services. And so that began it. It kept right on all these decades.

Q. As a child you were not a part of a synagogue?
A. As a child I went with my father to another synagogue.

Q. Which... which was this?
A. That was one called Vavakolel, which means a universal congregation, or a congregation of many groups. And that was on Hanover Street, that's the one of which he was a member.

Q. And this was Orthodox?
A. This was also Orthodox. And Leopold Street was Orthodox. Let me say that as the years went on we gradually became closer to Conservative because during the last eight or ten years the women would sit with the men instead of going upstairs to the balcony. And so that while our service was still Orthodox,
A. (Continued) we made certain, shall I say concessions or modifications?

Our members who lived far away would drive, and instead of parking two blocks away and walking over, they didn't hesitate to part right nearby. I mean, that was the adjustment to modern day living.

Q. Let me pick up on... on a word you mentioned before. You mentioned that there were some concessions made. Were there, in fact, people objecting to the way services were being held, and for that reason some concessions had to be made?

A. Well, let me be... try to remember how it all started. We had some old women who came for the high holidays and for at least three other days of the year when memorial prayers are said for the deceased. These old women walk up the high steps, it's quite a burden. So, we said... I said, come in and sit in the back rows there. Well, that was a start. And nobody seemed to object to it. And then I don't know how many more years passed, one, two, three. And a woman would come in and maybe sit with her husband somewhere in the rear, nobody objected. And then the last years, last half dozen years, it was quite common for men to come in the front and sit with their wives, and their children: if they had any, and everyone that was a member that came accepted it. You would get for the high holidays, you would get a very good turn out. Perhaps one reason why we got the good turn out was because we, unlike the other Orthodox congregations or any congregation, we did not sell seats, the seats were free. Then how did we exist? On the Day of Atonement, on Yom Kippur, we made an appeal for voluntary contributions. And as we had no great expenses, since we had no rabbi, we had no sextant. My brother-in-law would come every Friday to sweep out the place and get it in good shape, and I would, acting as a rabbi, accept. For the high holidays we brought a... a cantor from New York City, a very fine young rabbi. That was our sole
A. (Continued) expense, outside of course of heat, lights, the ordinary expenses.

Q. Let me go back for a second. You said when the women in the beginning could not climb these stairs that you said you were part of this, one of the people saying, OK, go ahead, sit down in the back. But I can't imagine that the older people, the... the people who were very traditional in their... in their approach then they would not object. It would be difficult for me to imagine there wasn't some kind of expression of...

A. Never had any. Now, I can't say maybe one, two, or three of the old-timers went elsewhere, I can't say. But I was not aware.

Q. So there was a sense of unity on... on the...?

A. Yes. They accepted it, and nobody raised any questions. And as I say, on Yom Kippur we made the appeal for voluntary contributions, we raised a couple of thousand dollars, that carried us through.

Q. Another thing I have a difficult time with that a shul would not have a rabbi, I mean a... a full rabbi. When you... when you became involved in 1921 they asked you to serve as a lay rabbi.

A. Well at that time we had... there was a rabbi in the community by the name of Rabbi Sadowsky that was supposed to be the rabbi for several communities. And we paid a very modest sum as part of his income. Then as the years went on he would come to us only I think on Yom Kippur. And when he passed away we had no rabbi.

Q. When did he pass away? Do you remember? Is it after you became involved?

A. Oh, a long time after. I don't know if I got it marked here or not.

Q. What do you have... Could you describe what you have before you?

A. This is the history of Congregation Beth Israel.

Q. You wrote that?
Q. Was it ever published?
A. No.
Q. Why did you write that history?
A. Because I... I think originally because I wanted to have facts so that I could talk to the group. I told you, those Sunday school children. And then when I began I became interested, so that it is much more complete. And since then I've given this before groups a number of times.
Q. Those are your lecture notes?
A. Yes. I'm just looking to see if I have by chance tells when Rabbi Sadowsky died. I don't think I've got it marked when he died. He's been gone for many, many years.
Q. I think we can find that out actually.
A. Yes, probably Rabbi Rosenberg has that in his book.
Q. I think you're right. Why were you asked to be the lay rabbi? Why not somebody else?
A. I guess it just happened. My father-in-law... father-in-law suggested that I do it, and I did.
Q. How large was the shul at this... at this time?
A. Our membership was never more than 100. Usually under 100. But on the high holidays we'd get the place full, I told you. We'd hold no... no sale of seats, no collections of any kind except for the one appeal, which is entirely voluntary.
Q. There was something in today's paper, I don't know if you saw this, about the Leo... Leopold Street...
A. I was shown this. We visited an aunt of my wife's who had just returned from Florida and she said your shul is again in the news, and so she gave me the
A. (Continued) article. When we were getting ready to leave, we made all
plans for the shul to be torn down, 'cause that's what's supposed to happen
in Orthodox synagogue if it's abandoned. Then along came a group of colored
people, they called up, they said they wanted to see me. And I met them.
They came in, men and women, well-dressed, highly intelligent, made a good
impression on me. And they said that they are Jews, their headquarters are
Arlington, Virginia. New... you might call them converts, I don't know if
they went and converted or not, just became Jews. And they would like to
take over our synagogue.

Q. What year was this, do you know?
A. This was in 1963. Well, as a matter of fact, for the first time in my life
I think I really made enemies because some of our members, one in particular,
felt that we should never have allowed them to do that. But, at any rate,
arrangements were made. In the meantime we had amalgamated with... joined
with this East Avenue temple so that they, or their president, made the
financial arrangements with this group. And they kept up their mortgage
payments regularly, 'cause they inquired only a month or so ago. And this
article states that they are growing concern. Now one of the things that has
bothered, and if you read the article, they have this part... and the
Christian saints, and that they... many of our members feel that we were
turning it over to a Christian group that tries to pass off as Jews in order
to buy the place. But I didn't believe it, and I don't believe it still today.
I feel perfectly content having done what I did, even though, as I say, I
made the first time in my life, I think, some enemies.

Q. Were you... were you responsible for this decision?
A. Well, you see there's a peculiar thing about this. The members vote to
tear it down, matter of fact we got an estimate at what it will cost us to
A. (Continued) tear it down. But when they came along the man who had been president, now I wouldn't accept the presidency, I had enough with what I was doing, but I was the secretary. So, since we had combined with a new temple technically all of our assets were part of that temple, you see? So on that basis, and with my consent if you will 'cause if I had been as strongly opposed as my wife and her brother were and still are... what we'd have done... excuse me... So that was how that came about that... that I, in a certain sense, was the person that approved because of my new connection as a vice-president of the new temple and the fact that our... when we amalgamated all the assets technically became part of it.

Q. What do you make of the fact that they use the name 'Christ' in their...?
A. Because... they explained it that... that they left the name Christian Saints because they wanted to attract the... those who were changing over and yet had... had been Christian, I assume, and had that feeling about Christian Saints and Jesus to them was also a saint and a prophet, but not the Messiah. And... and their talking... and they're talking now of changing the name and omitting that Christian.

Q. So as far as you're concerned, this is a bona fide Jewish group?
A. Exactly. As yet, so far as I know it has not in any way, shape, or manner been amalgamated into the Jewish community.

Q. I know that Rabbi Judea Miller of B'rith Kodesh was quoted in an article...
A. Yes.

Q. ... denying out of completely that they were any part of the Jewish community. So there is definite...

A. As I say, there is no connection. And their spokesman states that he hopes that in time they will allow them, especially, I assume, to start with the change that name and no longer have that Christian overtone.
Q. Have you ever attended any of their services?
A. I haven't. The reason for that is a very good one. Number one, I no longer do much driving. Number two, I don't drive on the Sabbath, it's a matter of principle, but I ride. So that the temple is quite a ways away, and I go to services every Friday evening, every Saturday morning and every Sunday morning. And Sunday morning I do drive. I'm picked up, so that I would have to go on a Sunday. And we have service on Sunday, you see? So that I've never been. One of our members has said any number of times he'll stop down sometime and see what their service is like, but he hasn't done it yet.

Q. I wonder if... I wonder if a white person would feel out of place down there?
A. It's possible.

Q. I'm curious myself to go over there.
A. If you do I hope you'll let me know what your impressions are.

Q. I will.
A. What your reactions were. When I met with them, and I met with them on two occasions, and the second time a number of other members came. I was deeply impressed with them, highly intelligent, cultured, well-dressed group of men and women.

Q. To my knowledge I don't... of course Rabbi Miller mentioned that a large segment of Jewry is black because of the African and Mediterranean population.
A. Yes.

Q. But to my knowledge I don't think there are... are any black American black Jewish communities? I don't know of any outside of Rochester, do you?
A. Oh, yes. The... their headquarters is in Arlington, Virginia of this group. And they have a number... a number of groups or congregations or whatever they have, but I don't know how many.
Q. I wonder why the... or do they insist on being black? Is it... is it a separatist black separatist element to this?

A. I think it probably is just a group of blacks who, for whatever reason, felt that Judaism was what is the faith that appeals to them. And so started, as I say in Arlington, Virginia, which is the headquarters, and it spread to other places. Because our president contacted Arlington, Virginia and sure enough they have headquarters there.

Q. Just to check to see if...

A. Yes.

Q. ... it was.

A. That's right. And these people do buy from a Jewish bookseller and seller of religious articles by the usual paraphernalia that goes with prayers and so forth.

Q. If I started paying dues to the Leopold Street Shul do you think I would be accepted? I'm wondering.

A. There's no... we never... we never... been down if that's what you mean.

Q. Well, I'm curious. But that's an amazing story. I didn't know anything about this group. When you were active as a lay rabbi, how long... first of all, how long did this last then why did this change?

A. Lasted right until we closed the... we closed the congregation. And I've continued the same services here.

Q. No rabbi succeeded Sadowsky?

A. No.

Q. After he passed away, the various shuls...

A. Yea, the shuls, many of them, have their rabbis, but Leopold Street had not had a rabbi and Sadowsky was only a part-time rabbi.

Q. Let me ask you about the amalgamation of the shul with Hamedresh. What...
Q. (Continued) When did that happen? Do you recall?
A. You mean our present...

Q. The amalgamation with the two temples became one and is now Hamedresh? Is that...
A. Beth. . . Beth. . . it's Temple Beth Hamedresh-Beth Israel. That came in 1973 when we moved over here, and that... there was no leadership anymore. So we discontinued the congregation on the Leopold, and as I say, in the meantime they took it over. And the amalgamation occurred in this manner. We wanted the name Beth Israel perpetuated. So we went to two other congregations and said we would like to join with you, if you will attach the name Beth Israel to your present. Well, one group said oh, no can't change our name, but we'll put your name on a youth room that we're gonna have. The other group said well, we'll make you an affiliate, affiliate Beth Israel. But, we will put into the by-laws that you will have, no matter how many of you came over, however I said to them very few will come over and turn out that way, 'cause they were all members of other temples anyways the last years. Only twenty votes, no matter how many of you come over, and also that you will make no changes in the ritual. And it seems to me one other provision. We didn't like that kind of provision, even though I said there'd be only a few that would come over. But we didn't want to be a second class citizen. But we met with the Trustees of Temple Beth Hamedresh, they said sure we'll change our name to Temple Beth Hamedresh-Beth Israel, and whatever assets you may have that you will wish to turn over to us, you know, the prayer books and other religious books, religious articles, **Torahs** and so forth, will become part of the joint project. So, that was the answer.

Q. The... the shul itself closed in 1963 or four you mentioned and this was consolidated with Beth. . .
Interview with Mr. Herman Sarachan

A. Beth Hamedresh.
Q. Beth... 
A. Temple Beth Hamedresh.
Q. ... Hamedresh in 1973 or 1974?
Q. Oh.
A. Yea, sure.
Q. OK.
A. Yea.
Q. Well, there were not many members in the shul at this time, is that right?
A. Yes, we had something like about 85 members. About... I think about 20 or 25 continued their membership here 'cause the dues went up quite a bit. You see, our dues was very modest, $15 a year. Here it went up to $75 I guess, something like that. So, I think about 25 continued their membership here.
Q. Well, two questions then. There was a decline in membership of the Leopold Street Shul over the years and you finally decided that we don't have enough members to continue?
A. I would say this. That the decision was that we had to move, urban renewal had to take over our home, and since we moved we couldn't go from here over there 'cause our natural move would be to Brighton. So that since my brother-in-law... between my brother-in-law and myself we did virtually all the work, there was nobody to do the work. Therefore, it meant that we had to close up.
Q. But urban renewal was... I mean in fact it did not destroy the Leopold Street...
A. No, they... our home...
Q. Well, where was your home?
A. On Gorham Street, which is . . .
Q. Oh, where you were living?
A. Yea, where I was living, our home.
Q. Oh, I see.
A. Yea, and so we had to move. And when we moved away we had to close down.
Q. The temple needed. . .
A. That's right.
Q. They needed your involvement.
A. Yes.
Q. They depended on you.
A. Yes, 'cause there was nobody else. My brother-in-law and I. My brother-in-law, incidentally, was the one that read the Torah. And I usually conducted or assisted in conducting the services, particularly on the high holidays. You see, the cantor takes over, if you're familiar with the service, the cantor takes over the second portion. The first portion is what you might call a cantor number two, and I was usually the cantor number two. And my brother-in-law was the one that started it. So that . . . that was it.
Q. And when you left. . .
A. When we left we had to move out of the shul.
Q. They couldn't find a replacement or they couldn't even find you another home in the area? It seems to me that. . .
A. And the answer is we didn't want it.
Q. You didn't want to stay there? Now where were you living? What was the street you were living on?
A. Gorham Street.
Q. What was the name of the street you were living on?
A. Gorham Street.
Q. This is in the Joseph Avenue area?
A. That's right, yes. Gorham, it runs between St. Paul and Clinton. And it's right opposite, believe it or not, a Catholic church, here, too; right opposite a Catholic church.
Q. I know it, I noticed.
A. Over there we were opposite St. Bridget's.
Q. Life ironies.
A. Yea. Incidentally, we love it here.
Q. It's very pleasant here.
A. Yea.
Q. This is Brighton, yes?
A. Yes.
Q. You didn't want to stay then in the... in the Joseph Avenue area? It was enough.
A. See, it had deteriorated. The Jewish community had virtually disappeared, don't you see? Those that came to our... we had services only Saturday morning and festivals and holidays and the high holydays. So those that came on Saturday morning to make up the minion, except my brother-in-law and I, they... they drove because they were in Irondequoit and some of them were in Brighton.
Q. I believe there are still a couple of synagogues operating down on Joseph Avenue.
A. One of them negotiated with us to amalgamate with us. But, they wanted certain provisions and also meant that we would have to take their rabbi, felt that we should take their rabbi, and we couldn't get together.
Q. Apparently they're able to make it on their own?
A. Able to make it on their own.

Q. Families are still driving there?
A. Yes. And I guess they're... that's further... further down Joseph so that, I imagine, there's still a number of Jews living there.

Q. You lived then in that area for... for all your life? Practically all your life? The changes, of course, that went on there are incredible over the years.
A. In our house, it was one of the best built houses in the city, and I say it modestly. It was a small home, I don't mean that it was an East Avenue mansion. The man who built it for himself and presumably for his son, double side-by-side, was... was a silent partner of a builder. So that the builder put in the finest materials because... brick facing and stucco. The walls thick, the... he even had small stained glass windows on each side. And people that had to come to do some work, plumbers, and others. Men that cleaned our furnace, gutters, what have you, they marveled at such a good house. And the reason why we got it was because the builder's son, or his wife, daughter-in-law, decided she didn't want to live on Gorham Street. So they had to rent out. And then he, himself, decided to move. So my father-in-law and I bought the house jointly. And we occupied one side and my father-in-law occupied the other. Then after my mother-in-law passed away, her son who was single came to live with us, and he's lived with us there. There's the family history, if you will.

Q. You can almost follow the family history by the neighborhoods that... that you lived in.
A. Sure. And our house was torn down. Received notice from urban renewal that it is going down, but it still stood for a few years. And I let a colored...
A. (Continued) family into our side, the other side were whites. And the kids visit the whites because the children had all grown up living right next to us. And they said, would you like to see what your house looks like? The blacks had moved out. And the walls were ripped. They had put in a kind of a leather paper inside, very expensive they tell me. Everything was ripped down. The piping was torn up. The fixtures... they just made a mess. One look and they didn't want to see any more. Then about a couple months later the house went down. Last house on the street to go down.

Q. Suppose that urban renewal didn't even exist, would you have continued living there?
A. The chances are we'd have lived there because my wife didn't want to move. We wanted to move because the neighborhood was deteriorating.

Q. You did want to move?
A. I and my brother-in-law wanted to move, my wife wouldn't have moved. She'd have stayed there.

Q. And you mentioned that there were some Jewish families still living there in ... in the area. I would assume not many.
A. By the time... by the time we left there was only one family that was living there.

Q. I mean that's a reason enough to move, that your friends and neighbors...
A. Oh, the whole neighborhood, the Jewish people moved out.

Q. Well, why did your wife not feel...?
A. She loved the house so much. And I suppose it was sentiment.

Q. How long were you in this house? The house itself?
A. From there we moved in here.

Q. I mean how long were in the house itself?
Q. I mean on the Gorham Street.
A. Oh, on Gorham Street. We bought the house in 1921, shortly after we were married.

Q. So there was a lot of sentiment there.
A. Sure. My father-in-law had...he was a printer and so he built a little print shop back of the house, and for years he ran the print shop. Incidentally, my wife very often was an assistant, helping with the typing, proofing and everything else. And he passed away, she carried on with the work until my mother passed away. Then they sold out.

Q. Do you have children?
A. I have a son.

Q. And he grew up in this area?
A. Yes, he lives two streets away.

Q. In Brighton?
A. Mmm-hmm. Four grandchildren.

Q. How long...let me think, how old is your son?
A. He's fifty.

Q. So that he lived in the Joseph Avenue area, too, for...for a good portion of his life?
A. Well, he lived in our house.

Q. And when he got married?
A. When he got married for a time he was connected with a firm in Buffalo. He's an electronics engineer, a firm in Buffalo. And then he worked for General Dynamics until this closed down.

Q. Let me ask you about his...his Jewishness. Did he attend the Leopold Street Shul?
A. He is not very religious.
Q. Was there any, if I may ask, conflict or...?
A. Not particularly, just indifferent.
Q. Accepted that there's a difference.
A. What can you do?
Q. So he did not attend the...the shul too often or...?
A. Oh, he comes on the high holidays.
Q. OK.
A. And his sons go to Hebrew school until their Bar Mitzvah, and that's about it.
Q. I want to ask about your impressions of the growing black community in the Joseph Avenue area, which has, I suppose one of the major events were the 1964 riots?
A. Oh, yes.
Q. I suppose you have a few...
A. I remember we walked through that area. You see, it didn't reach us. It was just a block away, two blocks away, Joseph Avenue particularly. Hudson Avenue and on some of the side streets. We walked through, and oh, what that place was like! After...after the riots had been checked.
Q. It must have been a frightening time for you.
A. Oh, when we...when we heard those sirens going all night, and we heard on the radio that there's a riot. We were really worried, how far is it going to extend? What's gonna happen?
Q. Did you ever worry to the extent of moving out at that point?
A. It seemed far away from us. And I'm wondering whether subconsciously we began to think about, you know, we ought to get out of here.
Q. In some of the reports about the riots there were Jewish and kosher shops that were attacked, Jewish proprietors were attacked and I suppose if there's any
Q. (Continued) to be concerned it's because you were Jewish living in the area. Did you feel any of this?

A. When the riots took place our area was still to a large extent Jewish. A... a few Puerto Ricans had moved in, we got along very well with them. Two houses away were Puerto Ricans, and since we had no garage of our own, rented a garage two doors away. And they were very nice. They'd help clean out the snow. They... one of them did have a car after a time, but they'd... we got along very well with them. It was the blacks that we began to have trouble.

Q. When did this begin about? I know that the blacks moved into that area of Rochester immediately after the second war, and there was a constant increase in population so that through the forties and the fifties this was a growing segment of the population. But you still stayed in the area?

A. Yes, very few incidents, very few.

Q. Became a truly mixed area to live in?

A. To a large extent. Couple of colored kids grabbed my wife's pocketbook, ran away, quite a bit of money and all that, that was the end of it. Just across the street from the house, those two colored kids grabbed, ran, that was the end.

Q. And that was really the only incident you can recall?

A. There was one other incident. One day we had come back from shopping and we moved the material out to the front porch, and my wife and brother were taking the stuff in. I went back to the car to put it in the garage, two doors away. Then two big colored fellows sitting in the back seat, take us home. I said, oh no, I can't. You gotta take us home, we gotta get home in a hurry. And while I kept saying, no I can't, I got to put the car away. My wife said why is it taking Herman so long to put the car away? My brother-
A. (Continued) in-law walked back, and he was a big husky fellow, 'cause he was quite an athlete in those days, quite a semi-professional ballplayer. What are you doing here? And they saw two people, and he looks like a husky kid, so they got out. Now, what would have happened if I had decided to take them away, I probably wouldn't have come back, I'd have been brought back on a stretcher. Well, that was...

Q. That was when?
A. That was the only incident.

Q. What about during the riots themselves?
A. The riots themselves all we heard was on the radio. They didn't come anywhere near. I don't think they came anywhere near Clinton... Clinton Avenue. It was a block, one block away on Joseph and over towards Hudson in that area.

Q. Do you think there was any anti-Semitism involved in the '64 riots?
A. I don't have... I would only guess... when you say Jewish... 'cause so many Jewish places there, don't you see? So that there could have been some anti-Semitism there, it may have been just vandalism, regardless of who. But it... it was noticeable that certain non-Jewish stores were not touched in the area.

Q. In the area?
A. In the area.

Q. It seems to me if there was anti-Semitism they certainly would have been...
A. That wouldn't occur.

Q. OK.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B (Interview 1)
Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. Herman Sarachan on June 22, 1976 at his home. I thought, Mr. Sarachan, we would begin where we left off last time. We were talking about your long existence in the Joseph Avenue area in Rochester. We were emphasizing the recent period, especially the 1964 riots. But I find the area to be very interesting in the 1920's, '30's, and '40's. Do you have any overall impressions of the changes within the neighborhood during that period of time through the fifties?

A. Well, in the first place let me say that it was in the twenties largely a Jewish area with many synagogues, some of them representing immigrants, some specific areas of Europe, all flourishing. But gradually... particularly in the forties, the area began to change. In the first place many Jews became quite affluent and moved away. It was in those years that the Conservative temple was organized in the Park Avenue section where Jews had been moving. And at the same time blacks began to move in. Jews not only moved south into the Park Avenue section, but they also moved northward and new congregations were formed there with the result that the Joseph Avenue, Clinton Avenue section became less and less Jewish. When the riots came there were still many Jewish stores there, but there were also a number of others. It seems though the Jewish places of business suffered the most.

Q. These... the composition of the neighborhood was Eastern European?

A. Yes, the composition was Eastern European.

Q. Did you find that because there was a primarily Jewish, Eastern European, nature to the neighborhood that this was comfortable place for you to live for that reason?
A. I would say that it was definitely so. We were all Orthodox and in those early years, 1930's and '40's, when a Sabbath or a festival came and certainly in the high holy days, the place had ceased to function as a business. . . businesses were closed. And Jews by in large enjoyed the Sabbath, the festival, or the holiday.

Q. You mentioned that your home on Gorham Street, you moved into that in 1921 and that your father had a print shop in the back.

A. My father-in-law.

Q. Your father-in-law.

A. Yes. This print shop we built onto the house, and the print shop continued for many years. May I also say that Gorham Street was a locale of the Jewish Children's Home, as well as for well-known Jews in the community such as Rabbi Solomon Sadowsky, Hyman Goldman, and other men of prominence in the Orthodox Jewish community.

Q. Do you recall what was printed in the shop? What kind of material was made there?

A. Well primarily it was such items as the news bulletins and advertising sent out by the Hart Stores, the Hadassah bulletins were printed there, along with general printing such as Bar Mitzvah invitations, wedding invitations and so forth.

Q. Was Hebrew and Yiddish used?

A. Both Hebrew and Yiddish was used, as well as of course. . .

Q. Secular.

A. . . . secular, the English.

Q. We may come. . . come back to that area later on. I wanted to get into your involvement and your contribution to the Masonic Lodge organization in Rochester. Would you begin by telling us some of the history of the local
Q. (Continued) Masonic Lodge here?

A. The earliest lodge in this area was in 1817, and by 1826 there were actually in Rochester and in suburban areas in Monroe County about a dozen lodges and two of the so-called higher bodies. But in 1826 an event occurred which caused all those lodges to give up their charters until 1845 when the first of the present lodges was chartered and came into being and exists to this day.

Q. When did you... when did you become involved?

A. I became a Mason in 18... 1906. . .

Q. 1926?

A. 1926. I'd be pretty old in 1820. . .

Q. Yes.

A. 1926. In 1940 I was Master of my lodge. Incidentally, this lodge, Flower City Lodge, consists almost entirely of brethren who are Jews. In 1942 I was appointed District Deputy Grand Master of the First Monroe District. Monroe District has two districts, one with 15 lodges and one with 16. That was an appointment, and is an appointment, for one year. In 1943 when I completed my year as District Deputy I was appointed to the Grand Lodge Committee, the committee on employment services, by the Grand Master then functioning, and have been on the Grand Lodge Committee right down to the present day. I served on that first committee for a number of years and then was appointed to the committee on library and museums in New York, of which I functioned again for a number of years. And most recently, the past half dozen years, I've been on a committee called Custodians of the Work, which has the responsibility for ritualistic work of Grand Lodge. Would you like some of my other. . .? Because it's a long story.

Q. Go ahead. There is a lot here.
Q. Would you mention what you have before you? What... what is that?
A. Here are the books which I had published. The first one while I was membership
director at the JY, it is called "Campaigning for Members." It was printed
by the press of the national YMCA, called Association Press. This was in 1949.
Q. The members refer to the Masonic Lodge? Campaign for members of the Masonic
Lodge?
A. No, this is campaigning for members...
Q. JY.
A. ... in YMCAs. YMCA.
Q. Oh, for the YMCA.
A. And, of course, Jewish agencies.
Q. And the JY.
A. And it was sold to very many, virtually all probably, of the YMCAs in the
country by Association Press.
Q. Were you responsible for that book? Did you write that?
A. Yes.
Q. So this... I didn't know that you were involved in any YMCA.
A. Well, the YMCAs, the local secretary and I had a very close relationship.
We attended conventions together and so forth. And when I prepared the
manuscript, "Campaigning for Members," I offered it to Jewish Welfare Board,
which is the parent body of the Jewish agencies. They wouldn't accept it.
So my YMCA friend suggested that I send it to the Association Press, and
they published it. And as I said sold it quite... quite well.
Q. Now, let me just ask you some questions about this. It's very interesting.
This book, I haven't taken a look at it, does it appeal to the broad problems
of gaining members in a variety of organizations? Or do you talk specifically
Q. (Continued) about the YMCA?
A. We talked primarily about YMCA as well as our own JY. But, it was used and I know they disposed of many copies to other agencies, schools, and others that had campaigns.

Q. So it had a broad appeal?
A. It had a broad appeal.

Q. Why didn't the Jewish organization accept the book, take responsibility for publishing it? Do you recall the reason for that?
A. They didn't give me any reasons except that they were preparing something themselves.

Q. I see.
A. I never saw anything though that would be in the shape of a book, so maybe they just didn't want to undertake anything like that.

Q. You must have been disappointed with that reaction.
A. Yes, my YMCA friend couldn't understand it. But they picked it up. The other book, published in 1970, is titled "The History of Masonry in Monroe County." The first part of it appeared earlier in a mimeographed booklet which covered the history of those early lodges from 1817 on... from 1817 on through 1826. It was also published or a digest of it was published in the annual transactions of the American Lodge of Research, of which I am an active member. This is a Lodge of Research under the Grand Lodge of New York, devoted entirely to research and writing of papers and so forth.

Q. Now this is located, I believe, in Utica; New York? The research...
A. Well...

Q. The research...
A. Located in New York City.

Q. Oh, in New York City. In the 'Primer of Free Masonry,' which you also wrote,
Q. (Continued) which I have before me, it mentions that there are a number of...

Voice. Herman, telephone.

Q. I was referring to this Research Laboratory on the grounds of Utica.

A. Oh, that's something else.

Q. That's something else.

A. Yea. The American Lodge of Research consists of men who are devoted to doing research and preparing papers on Masonic subjects. The Research Laboratory is something entirely different. A number of years ago Grand Lodge decided that it wanted some humanitarian project. They chose rheumatic fever and appointed research at various universities on rheumatic fever, with the result that rheumatic fever was virtually wiped out through these projects. And then when this appeared to have been virtually completed, or other bodies took over whatever needed to be continued in research on rheumatic fever, Grand Lodge decided to build their own research laboratory. And they chose the subject of geriatrics and gerontology, the aging process and the diseases of the aging. Now in Utica is the Masonic Home, which is a beautiful place. I was there last weekend. There are some four hundred or five hundred guests there, largely adults because children these days are placed in foster homes rather than in an institution. And on these grounds was built a research laboratory equipped for the study of the aging process and the diseases of old age, and was staffed with some of the outstanding men in this country in that field. Very quickly it has secured such a reputation that the Mayo Clinic constantly has one of their young men on the staff spend time there studying and aiding under the staff at the research laboratory. Also the government has, from the Department of Health and Welfare, constantly has one or more of their men there studying under our laboratory staff. Nothing
A. (Continued) sensational has yet come out, but they've made great progress in their... their studies and we hope that a great deal of... of humanitarian advantages will come out of this laboratory, which as I say in a short few years has attained such high rank.

Q. Very interesting. You mentioned... you mentioned the term humanitarian. This is a major theme of the Masonic organization?

A. This is their major charitable, yes.

Q. As far as a creed or the values are concerned, there is a mention here in the book brotherhood, human... humanity and...

A. Well, let me say this...

Q. If you would tell us about that.

A. Number one, Free Masonry is purely a fraternal order whose principle creeds are: to follow the order of G-d and the brotherhood of man. And this is manifested not only in the close brotherly feeling among Masons, not only of the particular lodge, not only of the particular state or Grand Lodge, but also wherever Masons are. In addition to that, Masons have their philanthropic projects. For example, when a catastrophe occurs anywhere in the world, Grand Lodge is usually ready to help with their funds. In addition to that, every lodge when a member of his family are in need, they're ready to help, and Grand Lodge has a committee on benevolence which assists the lodge as necessary. Grand Lodge also has a committee which works with veterans. This committee visits Veterans Hospitals, brings them goodies, as well as the brotherly feeling, that they're not alone, that there are others.

Q. Where... where do the various lodges get the money to work these programs?

A. Every lodge has its dues, which presumably cover their expenses as well as
A. (Continued) leaving such monies as are necessary for charitable work. Grand Lodge receives on a per capita basis from each lodge a certain sum, right now it's $6.25 per member, which permits it to carry on its work as a Grand Lodge in New York, to support the Utica Home and also to have funds available for whatever charitable work they may wish to do.

Q. If I can get back to your involvement with the New York City research. . . there's a research. . .

A. American Lodge of Research.

Q. And you have been involved with this organization?

A. I. . . I've written. . . I'm an active member. They have two types of members, active members, relatively. . . not a large group, and honorary members. And any Master Mason in New York State or anywhere in the world they become a. . . an honorary member. Those get the transactions, but they're not expected to do any individual work. The active members are expected to be involved in study and research and in presenting papers.

Q. This book that you mentioned before comes out of this activity?

A. To a large extent, yes. But, this book in particular, being confined to this area, came about because the earlier mimeographed booklet, pamphlet was so well received that requests came for a history down to date. Now if I may say a few words about the book itself. It's not only a history of Masonry in Monroe County, but it starts off with the background of Masonry, the early history. It covers the history, general history, of our own Grand Lodge. And you may recall that I mentioned that every Grand Lodge is an independent body, sole and sovereign within its own jurisdiction. It also ties in with the general history of the state because Masonry doesn't work in a vacuum. And finally after having brought. . . brought the stories on this areas down to 1970, there is a chapter for each one of the 31 lodges, for each of the
A. (Continued) concordant bodies and for the associated bodies, like the women's organization, like the shrine that I mentioned, like the grotto which is similar to the shrine only any Master Mason may be a member and so forth.

Q. Well, when... when did this book come out? When did you write this book?
A. It was published in 1970.
Q. That must have been a big project.
A. Yes, it took... it took... actually from its inception until it was produced and delivered by the printer ten years elapsed.
Q. I know I'm working on a dissertation myself and it's taking at least that long.
A. I can understand.
Q. Did you ever see the opera by Mozart called "The Magic Flute?"
A. Yes.
Q. There are many reactions that I had to that and several people do have to that. One of them is that Mozart, the librettist who work with the opera, were related to Free Masonry.
A. That's true.
Q. In their... in their era.
A. That's true.
Q. Do you think that that opera reflects Free Masonry?
A. Well, yes it... Mozart was a Mason. He wrote Masonic music. And he also when he wrote "The Magic Flute" he introduced in the libretto, or whoever wrote the libretto, Masonic references and Masonic connotations. But, when I listen to the music I couldn't associate it with any Masonic activity or function.
Q. Well, there's nothing specifically.
A. Nothing specifically Masonic about it.
Q. When I watch that opera it's enchanting. I mean it's a marvelous piece of music and the work itself as a whole. But the impression that I get, and many people get, is all this mystery that is surrounded with the opera, and then from there we go to Free Masonry in general. It gives a sense of mystery, secrecy. And we talked a little bit about this. Why has this happened? Why do people react that way? And then is it secret? Is it mysterious? Is that part of the function of the society?

A. Let me answer. . . answer it in this way. When I became a Mason in 18. . . in 1926, I still get that "18" in. . . When I became a Mason in 1926 everything was hush, hush, hush. One of the members showed me a bulletin that was distributed to the members which showed my name as a candidate, and he said I really shouldn't show you this. That's how secret these men believed everything should be. And it was a general attitude. But since then we have modified it greatly because we began to realize, for example, that cleaning women come into the Masonic Lodge and they can see an altar in the center, therefore it's no secret if a woman can see it. Some of the ritual, we call it the esoteric work, the non-secret work, is printed in a monitor. Now a monitor that's in the house anybody can pick up. Or anything that's printed anybody can pick up. So that today we say that the only secrets are certain modes of recognition, certain passwords, and the ritual and conformity agreements. Those are secrets.

Q. How did you react in 1926 to the larger attempt at secrecy when you first joined?

A. I rather accepted it because I had been a member of a college fraternity and everything there was secret. So, I just accepted it. But, as time went on I began to preach and Grand Lodge was entirely continent with it, that most of what. . . most of what Masonry is and what it teaches has been printed in
A. (Continued) many books; and, therefore, is not secret because anything that's printed in a book that anybody can buy or that anybody can get in a library, because the library has a number of Masonic books, or that is in private libraries, cannot be said to be hush, hush, secret.

Q. The fact that you wrote one yourself puts you as one of the exponents of breaking down of the secrecy that that happened many years ago?

A. Perhaps, though I don't want to claim credit for too much, although I've had my share of honors. I've had my share of recognition, not only locally but on a state level. Just a month ago at the Grand Lodge convention, I was one of three men who were awarded the Chancellor Livingston Medal for what they said represented outstanding service for Masonry.

Q. A great honor.

A. I think so. And I'm, of course, thrilled with that honor. Now that came after a number of honors in this area. When this book... after this book was published there was a dinner in my honor and at that dinner I was informed and given a plaque which stated that I had been made an honorary member of every one of the 31 lodges. Some of these lodges had either never had an honorary member or had had one outstanding Mason as an honorary member. I felt highly honored.

Q. Marvelous. You joined in 1926. Was this the Flower City... was it called the Flower City Lodge?

A. Yes, Flower City Lodge was organized in 1914 by a group of Jews who were brethren of other lodges. And has continued to this day being largely composed of Jews.

Q. We'll get into that 'cause that's very interesting.

A. Now, may I also add this? That there are as many Jews in other lodges, 'cause
A. (Continued) there are thirty other lodges in Monroe County, as there are in our lodge. In other words, the great majority of lodges have some Jews as...

Q. I want to pursue that at one point, but before we do so there's still some questions about history that still fascinate me. For example, do you recall how you first learned about Masonry in your own life? And why you finally decided to join in 1926?

A. I had been hearing about Masonry and in 1925 the Master was one whom I knew very well, who had grown up in the same area, who incidentally had been Treasurer for 50 years, he was Master that year. And the Secretary was a fraternal brother of mine from my college fraternity. So that having heard of the Masonic fraternity, as they... a worthwhile fraternal order, and having these men in prominent positions, Master and Secretary, the two important... most important offices in the lodge. There were several men at Hickey-Freeman, and I was then at Hickey-Freeman, who were members of the lodge. And one of them was a past Master. And so when I casually, as I thought, enquired of them what about this Flower City Lodge? They told me and they said... and I said how does one become a member? They said, well ask the Secretary, you say you know him, for a petition and you fill it out, and one of us will be glad to be your sponsor, your proposer, and that is the way it started. Now, having been always one who was interested in history. In my high school days and college days a voracious reader of historical romances, for example, when I was in high school. When I became a Mason I secured from the Grand Lodge library histories, general histories, of Masonry in the State of New York. And that started me on that tact. And during all those years, of course, gradually I acquired more and more information and more and more knowledge.
Q. Do you recall if it was... or if it were the principles of Masonic lodge that interested you, or the idea of sociability? What specifically finally sold you into this organization?

A. Well, frankly it was purely, as I say, what I thought was the prestige of the fraternity, the Masons. When I went in and learned of the principles I think one of the first addresses that I made, I gave it a number of times, not only in Rochester but in Buffalo and other towns...

Q. To other lodges?

A. Yes. Was a talk on Masonic symbolism and its teachings. To this day I think somewhere I have my... my early notes on symbolism. So that it was then the ideas and ideals which held me and made me interested and made me active in this.

Q. Even more would you say than the idea of a social group or a place?

A. While I, in those early days, attended social affairs, we have an annual ladies night party; we have a picnic; we have children's parties, Chanukkah party. And I attended those. But my principal interest was in the idealism, the teaching, and the history.

Q. OK. In the primer it says that Free Masonry is not a religion but it is religious. And there is some reference to... to the belief in G-d as an important principle, as well as references to ritual within the organization. It seems to me that there are many religious elements to Masonry.

A. Well, that is why we say that Masonry is religious. No lodge can open without the Bible on the altar, and without opening in a prayer and closing with a prayer.

Q. So there is this religious element to it?

A. Yes, it's religious but it's not a religion. And it's non-sectarian.

Q. Was this religious element one of those principles that had and still...
Q. (Continued) attracts you today?
A. I would say so largely.
Q. Well, let's get into this. The aspect of the Jewish attraction generally and perhaps your own. I mean, what's... is there a Jewish, even though it is non-sectarian, you mentioned that there were many Jews inside the organization and that there are some religious aspects to this. Of course, you have mentioned that at the same time you were involved in the Leopold Street Shul and you've had constant attachments to Judaism.
A. The ritual is the three degrees. It's based entirely as a framework on King Solomon and the building of the first temple in Jerusalem. That is the general motif. Now in the higher bodies, so-called, there are some degrees which in one or two cases use Jesus as the exemplar, not from the Christian religious point, but from the brotherly viewpoint. On the other hand, there's one Masonic body into which very few Jews, I would venture to say, make application called the Commandery Knight's Templar. They're the men that march and have uniforms, and they trace their ancestry or say they do to the period of the Crusades. That is definitely Christian. And that is the one body of which I'm not a member.
Q. Is that in Rochester? This one...
A. That's all through the United States.
Q. Oh, I see. This is an order throughout the United States.
A. Yea.
Q. But within the Masonic Lodge organization?
A. It... it's recognized as a Masonic body by our Grand Lodge.
Q. In principle it is non-sectarian, in practice does it break down into...?
A. In principle as well as in practice it is definitely Christian.
Q. Definitely Christian?
A. Yes. Knight's Templar are definitely Christian.

Q. Why do you think so many Jews are attracted to this?

A. I would say that very few Jews.

Q. Well, we're talking now about specific.

A. Yea, Knight's Templar.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. But the others. For example, talking again. I told you about the basic three degrees, blue lines as we call them, and there are 31 lodges in Monroe County. That's based upon King Solomon, the building of the temple. Now in Scottish rite, you may remember that I mentioned to you that from the fourth to the thirty-second degree is called Scottish rite even though Scotland never had anything to do with it. Some of those degrees have a Christian overtone, not definitely Christian, but using Jesus as the exemplar. On the other hand one of those degrees is based upon the story of Joseph and his brethren. It happens that I have taken the part in the drama... every degree has a drama to dramatize the lesson, that I took the part of Jacob. And at least one of the men that work with me calls me Dad every time he sees me, so that by in large every one of them is non-sectarian except for certain of them, as I say, using the exemplar. In others it's the Middle Ages, King Richard the Lionhearted defies the Pope and degrees of that... of that type.

Q. So the specific ritual varies from one lodge to the next?

A. Well, in the... in blue lodge there are nearly a thousand lodges in this state, every one of them has the same rituals compared and supervised by Grand Lodge. There's a grand lecturer that goes from one area to another to see the ritual. He also now... and there wasn't twenty years ago, there also is now an official standard work with the secret work in code; but, in this state every lodge uses the same ritual as we do. In most states they
A. (Continued) have a standard ritual. Some states do not. Some states have either several or they're rather loose about it. But as I said, every single grand lodge is sole and sovereign, decides its own ritual and its own laws, although the basic laws are usually the same.

Q. The fact that you dramatize the Joseph and Jacob stories from the Bible and use the image of King Solomon and temple, is that unique to Flower City or is that a general . . . ?
A. No, this is . . . this is Scottish rite in fourteen states.
Q. OK.
A. And every one of them uses the same.
Q. The same reference to the Bible?
A. Now I'm talking about the fourth to the thirty-second degree.
Q. OK.
A. Yea.
Q. OK. Fine.
A. Yea, they . . . their ritual is almost entirely printed, except for a very little secret work like the password and stuff like that.
Q. I see. We won't get into the passwords here, will we?
A. No. My own feeling is those are not terribly important.
Q. They're not important anyway. But, it gives a sense perhaps of . . . of a close-knit group.
A. Yes, yes.
Q. In that sense it is important.
A. In that sense it is important.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (Interview II)
Q. This is Dennis Klein. We are talking with Mr. Herman Sarachan. This is Tape No. 2, Side B. I wanted to ask specifically why there are a large number of Jews within the Flower City Lodge and how large that group is?
A. Our membership now is about 450.
Q. Within the Flower City Lodge?
A. Yes. And as I said in the other thirty lodges there probably are somewhere about the same number scattered through the lodges.
Q. So Flower City is not outstanding that way?
A. In a certain sense, yes. because while there's no such thing as a Jewish lodge, yet it is recognized as being almost entirely composed of Jews.
Q. Was this the case in 1926 when you first joined?
A. Yes, this is... this was chartered by a dozen Jews who were members of other lodges because only members can petition for a charter. And it was started as a lodge to which more Jews were attracted than the non.
Q. Was that one reason why you joined Flower City?
A. It's the only lodge that I knew anything about. If I had known another Mason close to me and he said why don't you don't Corinthian Temple? I probably would have said, oh, I'd be happy to. Because at that time I wasn't aware that Flower City consisted entirely of Jews. I knew, of course, that the Master and the Secretary were Jews. I knew that these three men at Hickey, who one noon were talking to me and I started to ask questions, were Jews. But I hadn't any idea that Flower City Lodge was a lodge consisting at that time of, I think, all but about four or five who were Jews.
Q. As time has elapsed, do you feel the fact that there are primarily Jews still in Flower City Lodge has made a difference for you in your own attachment to Masonic Lodge Free Masonry?

A. The chances are that if I had become a member of any other lodge, as just a member, I would have taken the path of just being on the sidelines, attending the meetings every so often, and it's doubtful if I would have become active. The reason why I became active was because I knew many of the men and the Master in 1931, five years after I joined, and incidentally I had given a talk on Free Masonry prior to that for my own lodge, and this Master said to me, Herman I'd like you to go in line. Now in . . . in most Masonic lodges, perhaps all of them, before a man becomes Master he works, as it's called, through the chairs. He goes through either ten or nine or eight stages. One year at a time, progressing until he becomes Master. This Master, whom I had known fairly well, of course, asked me to go in line. I went into line, and finally reached Master.

Q. OK.

A. May I digress a moment?

Q. Sure.

A. Just by way of information to state that while I was at Hickey-Freeman I organized a symphony orchestra, which I conducted, which gave concerts for a number of years. I have the actual number of years. . . . And in those years also, I became a Scout Commissioner, a District Scout Commissioner. The area is divided into, I think, half a dozen districts. My memory is getting a little short on that. And I was a District Scout Commissioner.

Q. For what. . . for what organization?

A. Scouting.

Q. For the Boy Scouts?
A. Yes. So, what I'm trying to say is my interests were also in other directions. And I worked on Community Chest as captain and as a district chairman, and the United Jewish Welfare Fund, just by way of indicating my interests weren't thoroughly the synagogue and Masons.

Q. OK.

A. Now you go on with your questions.

Q. Now wanted to come back a little later to your activity in this symphony. I think that's an interesting aspect. We'll talk about that in a second. It intrigues me, I can't help but make comparisons in my own mind, as you talk about the Masonic Lodge, to my own studies of the B'nai B'rith, with the obvious difference that the B'nai B'rith is avowedly Jewish, whereas Free Masonry is avowedly non-sectarian. With that one major exception, I can't help but notice the parallels in nomenclature, use of the term "grand lodge" for example, in principles, in its, you know, quasi-secrecy. Really, I mean it's... it's remarkable how close I think these two organizations are.

A. I can understand that.

Q. Have you ever...

A. I was a member of B'nai B'rith for some years.

Q. You were as well? In Rochester?

A. In Rochester.

Q. Do you think that parallel exists, are they very close?

A. I would say there's... there is some resemblance, yes.

Q. That explains your activity both in B'nai B'rith and... When did you join the B'nai B'rith?

A. A good many years ago. I really shouldn't tell you this, but I will and you can erase it from the tape. B'nai B'rith has a junior group, AZA?

Q. A...AZA. AZA, right.
A. (Continued) And my son was approached to become a member. He came to me and said, oh, B'nai B'rith is a fine organization and the youth group is a fine organization, you go ahead and... and join it. So, he put in his petition and was blackballed. That soured me on B'nai B'rith and I dropped out.

Q. Well, ...

A. Now why was he blackballed? Because one of the members of that chapter rose and said that his parents, this applicant's parents, were responsible for my father divorcing my mother. So that was the reason he gave 'em for blackballing the boy. The truth of the matter was that we had nothing to do with it. The... the father was an uncle of my wife's, but so far as their relationship to one another, we had not the slightest involvement. We didn't even know about it until we heard that they had been divorced. But, even if it were true, to take it out on an innocent youngster, that embittered me. I dropped out of B'nai B'rith.

Q. How long were you a member of B'nai B'rith?

A. Oh, for a half a dozen years.

Q. It really was then nothing to do with the principles or...

A. No.

Q. ... the purposes of B'nai B'rith? It was over this personality problem. Did you find your affiliation with B'nai B'rith to be useful during that period though?

A. I was not a very active member. I paid my dues, I attended a few meetings and that was about all.

Q. Masonry really was your...

A. Masonry was my...

Q. ... activity.
A. Yea.

Q. Was . . . was the Masonic lodge, or wherever you had met, the Flower City Lodge located in the Joseph Avenue area?

A. All lodges in this city meet at the Masonic Temple. Originally the Masonic Temple was on Clinton Avenue North, not far from Main Street. Then in 1930, it wasn't very many years after I became a member, the building . . . the present building, one of the outstanding Masonic buildings in the state, was erected and all lodges meet in that building.

Q. Where is this located?

A. On East Main Street near . . . corner of Prince. It's just opposite the blood bank, the Red Cross.

Q. OK.

A. 875, that's some distance south.

Q. I . . . I read here in the primer that a number of social and recreational activities are sponsored. You mentioned some. It struck me as I read through this that among those that are celebrated are Christmas, the holiday of Christmas. Would there be any conflict in your own mind or in other minds of Jews belonging to Masonry between the sponsoring of these kind of activities and your Jewish . . . ?

A. Every one of the 30 lodges have a Christmas party for their kids, Flower City Lodge has a Chanukkah party for their kids. So the same. . . . it's the same period, of course. 'Cause Chanukkah and Christmas fall close to one another.

Q. I see.

A. Yea, but ours is a Chanukkah party, not a Christmas party.

Q. So there was no conflict then?

A. No.

Q. In . . . in fact, there's an advantage then to have a group of like-minded . . .
Interview with Herman Sarachan

A. I would say so.

Q. ... like-minded men, so that the conflicts do not arise. Within the Jewish tradition there is prophecy and a strong emphasis on human brotherhood and many of the ideals and principles that are fostered by Masonry. Do you find that the ideals and principles consistent with the principles of the Jewish religion, which you are attached to, or is there no comparison at all between the two?

A. They are very much in harmony. Very much in harmony.

Q. And you sense that harmony?

A. Yes.

Q. That's very interesting. I'll tell you why I find that interesting because this seems to be a way that many Jews, this is my own hypothesis, my own work, to express themselves and their feelings about life, the conception of life, and humanity through organizations such as the Masonic lodge. And it is an important relationship as far as I've been able to ... to ... to understand.

A. Well, let me give you one for instance, there are others. For some sixteen years or so, we have been publishing in Monroe County a Masonic monthly called "Monroe Masonic News." From the first issue ... well, in the first issue they republished this pamphlet. Starting with the second issue I have been a columnist, under the title "Dear Brother Herman," in which I answer questions on Masonic history, symbolism, or anything relating to Masonry. I received a question. ... well, let me put it this way. In one of the degrees which I stated has perhaps a Christian overtone, because Jesus is used as the exemplar, at the request of the head of the Scottish Rite, who's called Commander-in-Chief, of that year I prepared a talk to give before this particular degree in which I stated that just as the use of Solomon and the building of the temple was not intended as a presentation or a dissertation of Judaism, either
A. (Continued) is the use of Jesus intended as a presentation of Christianity. That few...many of them, we had a group of candidates, to many of you Jesus is of the essence of G-d, to some of us he's a great personality, a great teacher who lived and taught and died during the turbulent years under Rome. So, I've been giving that talk now for a number of years. One of the men who heard it two years ago wrote me and said, you say he's a great personality, why don't you accept him as a Messiah? He said so in the New Testament, why don't Jews accept him? And I didn't answer that in my column, by the way. In the meantime, he must have talked to a couple of others, and a couple of others wrote to me, we'd be interested to hear what you have to say. So I...about a year later, again at Easter season, I wrote a...in my column an answer in which I pointed out that for nearly two thousand years Jews had been put to all kinds of suffering, persecution, in the name of Jesus. And consequently, Jews cannot accept him as a Messiah, no matter what their...their feeling was. And then I went ahead and catalogued a number of cases, right down to the present day. And a number of men told me afterwards that they learned a great deal out of the cataloguing, out of stating pogroms, the persecutions under the Pope and the yellow badge and things of that sort. They learned something.

Q. Go ahead.

A. Well, I was going to say I have only one reaction from a...an anonymous writer who said that maybe those Jews deserved it as much as these Jews. And then he catalogued twenty-five people in this country, like the Rosenbergs and other people, who had been jailed because of crime. That was the only negative reaction that I got, and that was anonymous. I could never answer it. That I didn't touch.

Q. When you think about that though, his reaction, that reaction. What do you
Q. (Continued) think about that?
A. Oh, I think that even some Masons are bigoted. That's all I can say. It was a. . . I think that. . . now he. . . I guess that he may be a lawyer, 'cause we have a number of lawyers, 'cause he was able to know of all of these cases, unless he did an awful lot of research. But, who he is, maybe somebody that I meet.

Q. If you could give me some additional materials on this. . . in other words, what point were you making when you catalogued pogroms, the yellow badges, what was the point?
A. The point was that Jews couldn't even consider him as the Messiah in whose name all of those atrocities were. . . that was my point. And I also mentioned that there are Jews who don't recognize him at all. But I think many of us do consider him objectively as a great personality. And I said that in my talk too before various groups.

Q. There was, I know, in the Nineteenth Century, apparently from the way you're talking it's alive in the Twentieth Century, that. . . have been made between the historical and the Biblical Christ.
A. Yea.

Q. You would make that distinction then, the Biblical Christ who preaches an messianism is something you do not accept, but historical Christ, the figure and what he represented in ancient time is something for all of us to understand and appreciate.
A. Yes. I. . . I honestly believe that. May I also mention that the. . . the Masons in our area and in other areas of New York know that I'm not only a Jew, an observant Jew active in my synagogue, they accept it. And I have a great many friends, devoted friends. I don't drive at night, and I don't drive much during the day either, but I don't drive at night. Tomorrow night there's
A. (Continued) a meeting called. All I have to do is call up one man, who has to come quite a distance, to pick me up. He's gonna pick me up and take me to... no problem at all. And I went a week ago for Senior Week to Lake Placid. I had ride, they treated me royally and I was there. That was a Masonic... This weekend, the past weekend, was the investiture of the new officers of Grand Lodge. Again, I had a ride up and back, and people who treated me royally. Devoted friends. You don't need to put that on the tape.

Q. No, that's fine. That's very interesting. In fact, it speaks perhaps that these are your closest friends, those within the Masonic Lodge?

A. And any number of men will meet me and offer their congratulations upon my having been honored. Just as sincere as they can possibly be.

Q. That's very nice. You said that at one point that Masonry does not work in a vacuum. Let me ask a very specific question about this. Has there ever been incidences of events in the past fifty years, that's approximately the number of years you've belonged to the Masonic lodge, where the Flower City Lodge has responded to... now, I'm talking specifically because it is a primarily Jewish lodge, was there any specifically Jewish function that the Masonic lodge, Flower City Lodge, has sponsored or has contributed to the City of Rochester?

A. Let me answer it this way. Number one, some of our members occasionally refer to it as the Jewish lodge, but there's no such thing. There can't be. And there are lodges comprised almost entirely of Jews. But our lodge for many years made a contribution, an annual contribution to the United Jewish Welfare Fund. This year so far we haven't because we're running in the red, so we don't know how we're gonna come out. But up until this year every single year we've made our contribution to the United Jewish Welfare Fund.

Q. What about the Community Chest? Do you also give to the Community Chest?
A. For a time we were giving to that, but when things a few years ago began to be tight, we were giving a modest sum, we finally discontinued.

Q. Very strong sense of support for the Jewish Welfare Fund?
A. Yes, and individual members are very active. Our Treasurer, Mister Silverstein, is one of the most active men in the Welfare Fund, as well as the Jewish Home, as well as in other Jewish activities.

Q. When you refer to the Flower City Lodge as the Jewish lodge. . .
A. I don't.

Q. But there are some people that do?
A. Occasionally, yea.

Q. In the Masonic organization?
A. No, within our own members.

Q. Within your own members?
A. Yea.

Q. I was gonna ask. . .
A. One or two. . .

Q. I was gonna ask, but I think the answer is "No," that there was some sense of derogatory implication, a Jewish lodge, you know.
A. Yea.

Q. But there. . .
A. They don't call it. . . but I will say this, that two or three times during recent. . . during the past years, and I've been Secretary for 33 years, the Secretary of another lodge would call me up and say, Herman, there's a man here who wants to petition our lodge, but I really think he would he happier in your lodge. He doesn't understand the nature of lodges. Of course, my answer is that I'll be glad to send him a petition. That happened either twice or three times during all these years. And those men I know wouldn't
A. (Continued) reject the applicant because he's Jewish and send him to us. Because they were men whom I honored and trusted.

Q. Are there any non-Jews in the Flower City Lodge?
A. We have three, I think, now.

Q. Are they recent members?
A. No, been some time... recently membership has been very scarce. The present younger generation have so many other interests and desires and values and country club appeals to them more than a fraternal order.

Q. So membership is decreasing?
A. Yes.

Q. This is one reason for the problems with the money?
A. That's right. At our peak membership, which was probably a dozen years ago, we were just under 600. You see we've lost 25%, down to 450.

Q. Is that continuing to decline?
A. It looks as though this year we will hold our own. You mustn't forget that the older men are getting older, and we have ten, twelve, fifteen deaths a year. You see? So we have to have a lot of members to replace them. Don't get that.

Q. What about the median age in Flower City Lodge? What would you put it at approximately?
A. We've had some younger men come in. I would say the median age would be between fifty and fifty-five, the median. And many of our men are in their seventies and even eighties.

Q. OK. When... when... when lectures are presented to the lodge, two questions. One: are they ever printed? Are they ever published in any form these lectures?
A. It depends on who and what. For example, when I gave that talk on the early
A. (Continued) history that was published in the American Lodge of Research. I wrote it out and I sent them a copy. And incidentally it was after that that I was elected an active member.

Q. So they liked it?

A. Apparently. This book has had some very fine reviews. It's in a number of libraries, including Toronto, Canada. And I've had some mighty fine comments about it. And people have read it because women have said to me, oh, I enjoyed that book very much.

Q. Interesting.

A. And they learned something about Masonry.

Q. Within or without the Masonic lodge? Have people outside Masonic lodge also responded with. . .?

A. That I wouldn't know. 'Cause those people wouldn't be apt to. . . none of them have ever come. . .

Q. I mean for example, I've studied again very closely the B'nai B'rith, but yet I'm not a member of B'nai B'rith. So, it wouldn't suprise me that someone would pick that up and. . .

A. This book is in the local library.

Q. The local library.

A. Yea. They, I think. . . I think they bought. . . I think I presented them one copy and they bought another one, if I remember correctly. But I. . .

Q. Go ahead.

A. There was no royalty on this.

Q. No royalties.

A. I wouldn't accept it, and I said if there's any profits beyond the cost of printing, and the committee that handled the printing put the price as low as they possibly could to cover the printing and a little over; if anything
A. (Continued) would be left over it should go to the Masonic Service Bureau, the Masonic Brotherhood Fund. The Brotherhood Fund supports the Research Laboratory as well as the Home in Utica.

Q. The second question I had about the lectures, do they ever deal with... on Jewish subjects?

A. Oh, we have lecturers on... on Jewish subjects?

Q. On Jewish subjects.

A. I think we've had a speaker on the Welfare Fund some years ago, but specifically I would say no, it would be very unusual. We've had it on, what, secular subjects like a police captain talking about... about crime and that sort of thing. We've had my brother, who is not a Mason incidentally, but who was for many years the... on the State Crime Commission, so-called, to tell about his experiences. So we've had non-Masons, as well as Masonic subjects.

Q. I have one more question about this. It... it's really on a hunch, a hypothesis, that you can talk about this or discredit it. It occurred to me that with the organization thrived in the 1920's and the 1930's, large membership, and that at least within the Flower City Lodge there was a majority or almost a unanimity of Jews within the organization. At the same period... at the same time there was at least in the country, perhaps not so much in Rochester, some sentiment of anti-Semitism. Do you think there was a relationship between the organization of this lodge and its large Jewish composition in reaction to the sense of anti-Semitism in this country? Or in the city if there was anything specific.

A. Let me answer it in this way. That Rochester by in large has been as free from anti-Semitism as few cities. Undoubtedly there are anti-Semites in Rochester, and there have been, but in relationship between the non-Jews and the Jews of this community has been very good. I mention the fact that when
A. (Continued) the JY had its membership drive to raise funds to open the building, the chairman was a banker, non-Jew, and the Treasurer was also a non-Jew. And that... and there were... and the non-Jews as team workers and captains and so forth. And that's just another indication, and I think a good indication, of a good relationship that has always existed. In Masonry, I would say there is very little because I believe that I would have sensed it if there was. I'm thinking, for example, and this was before this book was printed, the lodge up in Webster... I think I was there maybe once to give a talk sometime previously, matter of fact I had... during all these years I've spoken in probably every one of the 30 lodges. At any rate, all of a sudden the... he was a judge, he still is a judge, who had preceded me as District Deputy and whom I knew very well, said to me Herman I understand you're going to be with the group to put on a degree in my lodge. We have a suprise for you. Suprise, what kind of suprise? Well, you'll see. When I... when we had that meeting after the degree they... they announced that I had been elected an honorary member by the lodge upon the recommendation of all their past masters. Why? I was never very close to them. But whatever the reason, here at the lodge, I don't think that there... maybe they had one Jew, maybe no Jews as members, and here is their lodge up in Webster electing me an honorary member. And at that time that was the only lodge... a few years later another lodge, and then as I said when this was published all the lodges elected me, I have a nice plaque they presented me with. They all elected me honorary member.

Q. So there's a strong...

A. What I'm saying is knowing that I'm Jewish, knowing that I'm actively and so forth, yet this lodge and all the other lodges honored me with that. So, by in large, certainly with the leadership, with the active members, those
A. (Continued) that attend meetings, those that are officers, there's very little anti-Semitism that I've ever been able to see at all.

Q. During the 1930's is when the JY was organized, did the Flower City Lodge have any relation to the organization and construction of that project?

A. Not as a lodge as I remember it, but the individuals, of course, were all active, individual members, officers all were active.

Q. But not as a lodge, because you mentioned that as a lodge you'd given to the Jewish Welfare Fund.

A. Yea.

Q. But not as a lodge you'd given to the. . .?

A. Yea, but this was given to the Welfare Fund as part of our charitable projects, you see? Our philanthropy. But when it comes to Jewish activity, the lodge has been invited to send representatives to the Federation, and we've always discounted that because once again I say that legally and traditionally we're not a Jewish lodge. We're a lodge consisting of men who are Jews by religion.

Q. But you give to other organizations that are not Jewish? I mean. . .

A. No, I say that as a lodge we do not participate in any Jewish activities like the Jewish Community Center or the Jewish Community Federation or the Jewish Welfare Fund, as a lodge. Only as individuals. . . as individuals. . .

Q. Right.

A. . . . who are Jewish oriented or community minded do we serve Jewish community.

Q. My point was that there are a lot of organizations that support secular organizations, the Community Chest, I believe that you support. . . help support that? So that. . .

A. That's from our philanthropic fund.

Q. Right. Have you ever been to Israel?

A. Yes.
Q. How... how many times?
A. I was there once.
Q. When was this?
Q. Why did you go that year?
A. It's a good question. The Jewish... JY then, now it's the Jewish
Community Center, gave me a fund which they said was for travel upon my
retirement. Well, my wife wouldn't go so I went myself. Where would I go?
To Israel.
Q. It wasn't specifically designed for you to go to Israel? You decided to...
A. No, I could go wherever I wanted, but they wanted to give me money to
travel, enjoy my retirement.
Q. So why did you go to Israel?
A. 'Cause I've always been interested. It has had and has our support to this
day. I would venture to say that my wife plants more trees, Hadassah, JNF,
our bill at the end of the year puts the Community Chest... We ourselves
are suprised at the amount that it mounts up during the year. We gladly do
it.
Q. Your wife belongs to Hadassah?
A. She's been a member of Hadassah since its organization I guess in Rochester.
Q. Have you belonged to any Zionist organizations?
A. I was very active in Zionist district. As a matter of fact I was the
Secretary. I was instrumental in reorganizing at a time when there were
practically no Zionists in the city.
Q. When was this?
A. This was in the 1920's. Yea, we brought down any number of men, some of the
leading Zionists here to speak at meetings. And I was quite active.
Q. So that you were very much then pro-Palestine?
A. Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, the Reform group were largely anti-Palestine. They didn't want a Jewish state. One of our members, who is also a past Master, was a member of B'rith Kodesh Temple. And he was well-known as a speaker, and he was invited to speak against this idea of a Jewish state in Palestine. And whenever he'd finish his talk he'd say, now I suggest that you invite Herman Sarachan to give you the other side of the picture. And we had a long series where, in suburban towns as well as local churches and so forth.

Q. This was a series sponsored by any group?
A. I don't know how he received the invitations, whether it was through the... through B'rith Kodesh Temple or how. But, everytime he spoke he would say well now you invite Herman Sarachan to give you the other side of the picture.

Q. You were teaching at B'rith Kodesh in the 1920's, did that ever become a conflict for you?
A. No.

Q. Your feelings about the State of Israel and...?
A. No, because that was part of my own life. The teaching I taught Bible history, that's really what we taught.

Q. When did you first take an interest in the State of Israel?
A. Well, I was a Zionist from the earliest days. And I say, I was responsible for reorganizing the Zionist district as there were almost the number on... on the fingers of one hand of Zionists that were members of the Zionist Organization of America. And then we built it up so that we had, as I recall it, nearly a thousand members in Rochester.

Q. Here in Rochester.
A. Yes.
Q. So you were responsible for its organization?
A. I would say probably.
Q. That's very interesting.
A. Well, let me tell you something, now that you mention it. It seems that I've been responsible for organizing a number of bodies, particularly the Masonic bodies. For example, in 1940 I organized the Bureau of Masonic Education which conducted classes for new members in the principles and history of Masonry. And I was its first president, of the organization, and also was one of the speakers. Then that was 1940. In 1945 or something like that the Bureau of Masonic Education organized another school, a school to teach ritual. I told you that the ritual is standard. And the man who teaches it in the state is a Grand Lodge officer called the Grand Lecturer. And the Grand Lecturer prevailed upon me to take over as instructor of this new school that we organized, the second school. I said I'll take it for one year and it lasted until. . . that was 1945, and I was teacher until 1969 when I turned it over to one whom . . . my graduates whom I had brought in as an assistant. In 1958 I believe it was I organized, this time I was responsible. . . I organized a third school, school for officers of the Masonic lodge called the School of Lodge Administration. And I'm an instructor of that down to today. And now I'm preparing notes so that I can turn it over to another man whom I'm grooming for that job. OK? So that I'm an organizer. We have in Masonry another research organization, and I organized a chapter here in Rochester. We also have a . . . I'm afraid I'm talking too much about. . . about myself.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B (Interview II)
This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. Herman Sarachan. We are now on Tape 3, Side A. You can continue with your story.

I became... we have in Monroe County the Masonic Service Bureau, which is a service organization not only for Masons but for people in general. It endeavors to help people who are in need of jobs, although that is a very difficult job at the present time. But it has a considerable quantity of hospital supplies, like walkers, like hospital beds and so forth, which are available without charge to anybody that is in need. And they're constantly being used. Masons, non-Masons, white, black or whatever. That is one of its big functions. It also keeps certain records, Masonic records and does a very elaborate job. 1952 I became a member of the Board of Directors. In 1959 I was President for two years. While I was President we established a Distinguished Community Service Award which had been awarded each year from that time on annually to an outstanding citizen of the community. Some Masons, but mostly non-Masons, Catholics as well as Protestants, ministers. And we even were ready to give it to a rabbi but he wasn't able to be present. He was living away, so that no rabbi's ever had it. So that was one of my... what I consider one of my accomplishments. Then, I spoke of another service, research group, Allied Masonic Degrees, which is a national organization and also international. There are chapters in England as well as Canada. And I organized the local chapter in 1951 or thereabouts, and also served as the... they call it Sovereign Master of that body. And maybe finally just about five years ago I organized a new group which is still just marking time. I mentioned the Knights Templar, which is Christian. I also
A. (Continued) mentioned the previous time that in the York Rite, remember there is the Scottish Rite and then the York Rite, there are three independent bodies. The . . . Royal Arch Masons, Royal and Select Masters, and Commandering Knights Templar. But just as Scottish Rites is always unified right up to the thirty-second, and then honorary thirty-third, maybe I ought to mention something about that afterwards. The head of the Commandery, which is called the Grand Encampment, wanted or spoke about or tried to unify these three bodies. And when a person makes a . . . presents a petition it should be for the three bodies, in the same way as the Scottish Rite, which has four bodies, one petition and up you go. And then the problem arose. Royal Arch Masonry, non-sectarian; Royal and Select Masters, non-sectarian; but Commandering Knights Templar is Christian. How can you have one body? So, a suggestion came up to organize a parallel body to the Commandery, which would be non-sectarian. We had a meeting of this Allied Masonic Degrees about five years ago in summer, we had one meeting in the summer. And at this particular meeting.they had a representative of Scottish Rites, and a representative of York Rites to tell us some of the problems of the bodies. The representative of the York Rite mentioned the fact, among other things, that there's a strong desire on the part of many to unify the York Rite bodies, but there is a problem in the Commandery, it's Christian. And so, as he put it, the suggestion has been made that perhaps we could organize a parallel body, might be the Order of David you might call it, something like that, which . . . which non-Christians, Jews, could belong and, therefore, this whole business could be unified. And then for whatever reason I don't know, he looked in my direction and said and I know the man that could do something about it. And he looked at me, so I laughed. But, when I came home I began to think about it, with the result that I prepared
A. (Continued) a ritual, including dramas, for the Order of Judas Maccabees, which had two degrees, we call them orders. The Order of David, the drama of which is based upon the story of David and Jonathan to teach love, brotherhood, love, et cetera. And the Order of Judas Maccabees to teach religious freedom based upon the Maccabean story. And I sent it to this man who sent me... two years later he became the Grand Commander of the State Grand Commandery, he was all excited about it. With the result as time went on that we organized the first body in Rochester. And it's interesting, here is something that was intended for non-Christians. There are very few Jews in either the Royal Arch or the Royal and Select Masters, not many 'cause most of them go to Scottish Rite. I think one of the principal reasons is that then they can go into the shrine, the other way they can't go to Commandery, so they don't... In any event, after I presented my story at a meeting of Royal Arch, my own chapter, of which later incidentally I became the High Priest, I presented the story. I said, well I don't know whether anybody's interested but I'm putting down the paper on the altar, and if anybody's interested sign their name. I found twenty names. One Jew, nineteen non-Jews. Most of them members of the Commandery who also wanted to become members of this, and they're members to this day. So we organized Assemblage Number One we call it, Genesee Valley Assemblage Number One. Then we did decide to do some missionary work at a state convention and a number of others from other parts of the state signed up. And in a course of time we organized Solomon Assemblage Number Two, in that Assemblage I think there are two Jews and the rest non-Jews. Now that's as far as they've gone. And maybe we'll go out of business, but there's something else if you will finally that I organized.

Q. Would you make the point about the Jews and non-Jews, one point there when
Q. (Continued) you mention. . .?
A. You see, Christians take the Commandery, Jews don't so that this order of Judas Maccabeas was intended primarily for Jews, Mohammedans or non-Christians in general, maybe atheists. But, to date in our own assemblage, there are two Jews, myself and another, and the rest are all non-Jews.

Q. Do you find that strange that that happened that way?
A. Perhaps. And perhaps also they feel that here is a lesson or two lessons that are worthy, they're worthwhile. At least that's the way I find it.

Q. Yea. There are so many. . . as you talked, there are so many terms and there are so many categories, degrees, stages, it's a very highly structured organization.
A. Yes.

Q. Which is confusing for those who are not familiar with the organization.
A. Well, I think I've talked quite a bit about myself haven't I?

Q. Well, that's fine. I, you know, I do want to ask you if you don't mind, about your involvement in the Zionist organization here in Rochester because I mean after all Zionism has become a critical segment of Jewish history in the Twentieth Century and in Rochester you played a fairly prominent role in organizing.
A. Until the 1930's and then I gradually dropped out and let others do the work, and for a number of years I was a dues paying member, but the past few years I've had to do some reducing after all, I'm retired now for a number of years, and so that I discontinued paying dues I think two years ago.

Q. Do you feel that your background coming from Eastern Europe had anything to do with your interest in Zionism?
A. I would say yes. Because my mother infused into me a . . . a strong respect, admiration, and a feeling of strong kinship with Theodore Herzl. She talked
A. (Continued) about it. She looked upon him almost as the messiah. And that, even when I was a little fellow, she was talking about Dr. Theodore Herzl and what he was doing. So, that became implanted, and I'm sure that's one of the things that made me retain my interest all through those years.

Q. Let me react to that. It's very interesting. Those who were leaders in Zionist movement in Europe were, of course, Herzl but also Hyman Weitzman and Pinskners and the Eastern European part of . . . of Europe. It strikes me as unusual that Herzl was so important in your family for your mother and for yourself, he being from the Western European segment of Jewry.

A. But, in some ways he seems to have lit the fire of enthusiasm in the mind. Now understand in Europe I was too young to know anything about it. But in the early years here that mother . . . and I recall how she shed tears when word came that he had died, I shall never forget.

Q. Very . . .

A. I think I joined her in . . . in the weeping.

Q. Now Herzl died in 1904.

A. 1904, that's right.

Q. So that you were in America for three or four years by that time?

A. A couple of years, yes.

Q. And you have a distinct memory of his death?

A. Yes, oh yes. And prior to his death mother kept talking about all that he was trying to do, and his vivid audiences with kings and the Pope and how he was ill-treated, and how finally died with a broken heart I would judge.

Q. And at a young age.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you recall any Zionist activity in Rochester before the first war?

A. Yea, yea.
Q. Were you involved at all in that?

A. Well, they had a Young Judean Club that changed later to the JY. And there was a girls' group, called the Emma Lazarus Club, which were strongly Zionist. I didn't have too much to do with them. And also during '17 and '18 I was out of the city. The years '17, '18, '19 and '20 I was out of the city. And I came back in '21. And it was after that that I became active.

Q. Now you mentioned that you were close with Philip Bernstein, and he was very active as a Young Judean.

A. Yea, that was before my time.

Q. Before.

A. I was out of... I was out of town then.

Q. So that you were not at all involved with this club?

A. But when I became a teacher in the Sunday school, and later when they organized the high school department, I taught American Jewish history in the high school department, then I became closer to him, especially after Horace Wolfe passed away.

Q. So your relation with Rabbi Bernstein really has nothing to do with the Zionist...?

A. Not directly, no. Mine was in a different grouping entirely.

Q. Now, how did you set up this Zionist group? I mean, what was the... the mechanics of this? How did you appeal to people in Rochester?

A. Oh, oh I don't know. I just started it; began to talk and write; gradually did more members. We had a membership drive. You see you had to have membership drives in those early years. And we brought speakers, some of the outstanding men of those days. And just kept on going.

Q. I think that David Ben Gurion came to Rochester in 1931. Do you recall his visit at all?
A. Very little.

Q. But there were a number of Zionists who came to Rochester?...
A. Oh, yes.

Q. ... and organization that you were involved in as well. And your feeling for the State of Israel has been vigorous throughout the years?
A. Oh, yes.

Q. To the present day.
A. Yes, right down to the present day. But, during recent years it has not been an inactive type, just interest and in our limited means contributions and so forth. But I have not been active in the Zionist movement for a time. I was President of the ... there was a Zionist body which included all the Zionist groups, the radical Zionist groups as well as the Conservative and the Orthodox, general Zionists, something or other. I forget the name. And I was President for a couple years and worked with them for a couple years. And then I became so involved in my temple ... in my synagogue, in Masonry, that I gradually discontinued that.

Q. Should I infer from this that your interest in Israel generally has declined recently?...
A. No, interest in Israel is one of prime importance, but it hasn't been an active interest. Like going out and selling bonds or anything of that sort, that I haven't done.

Q. Had you done that before, selling bonds?
A. No, bonds came out, shall I say, when I became an inactive person. We have a few bonds, but just by purchase.

Q. What is your reaction to the 1973 war, the Yom Kippur War and the State of Israel today?
A. Well, I would say the same as most Jews. We regretted that war and we're
A. (Continued) happy that it turned out as it finally did. And we would like to see peace finally established, and all we can do is hope.

Q. I have just one more series of questions to ask. I'm sure you'll be glad to hear that. This concerns your activity with the RBI, Rochester Business Institute in... in the area. And I understand that you had taught English there to immigrants. Should I assume that these were immigrant Jews?

A. No.

Q. Immigrants generally.

A. German immigrants.

Q. German.

A. What happened was that an uncle of my wife's was an agent for a steamship company. And many Germans were coming in those years, and he came to me one day and said how would you like to teach English to Germans? He said I've arranged at RBI for such a class if I can get a teacher. So, I said yes, sure. I always enjoyed teaching. I'd been teaching all my life, right to the present day. So these Germans came, big husky fellows. I had studied quite a bit of German, and I don't mean Yiddish German as some of my classmates in the German classes used. I had German in high school, and I had advanced German in college. And I... I read scientific German, so I knew enough German so that I could give them German words but also teach them English. And I carried on for a number of years. Now that's... that's the story.

Q. So you were teaching German language?

A. I was teaching English, but I was explaining to them in German so that they would understand the English.

Q. Yea.

A. No, I wasn't teaching German, I was teaching English to German immigrants.

Q. The question that is tucked in here is your contribution to the Americanization
Q. (Continued) of German immigrants in the local community. Would you say that there were very large and vigorous immigrant community in Rochester, as there has been throughout the Eastern seaboard? And the process of aculturating them to the environment is an interesting one if you felt that was important. Which is to say if you felt that the Germans not only had to learn the language of English, but had to assume some of the . . . or at least understand some of the customs and values of the American environment.

A. I'm afraid I can't...

Q. You weren't involved in that kind of...

A. I was merely teaching them English, that was my whole involvement. But let me say this I taught some individual: Jews, Jewish immigrants, but on an . . . on an individual basis. I taught Ger. . . English, yea. There I had...

Q. That was a tutorial...

A. Yea...

Q. . . arrangement.

A. That's right, yea. May I also mention that I . . . I did mention that I was director of a symphony orchestra.

Q. Right.

A. I studied the violin. I played the violin. In fact, I played in the orchestra. I also was a trap drummer, and that's how I earned my . . . my way through college. But I also taught the violin that's what I'm trying to say. I think all my life I've been teaching something or other, just love to teach.

Q. Right. And it comes through your work in the Masonic lodge as well.

A. Yes, definitely. I've been teaching there for years and years. And I enjoy teaching.

Q. What symphony orchestra did you play in?
A. Oh, I played in Rochester Symphony Orchestra that was conducted by a man by the name of Ludwig Shank, who was a very fine musician. And his was... these were not professional orchestras. I also played when I was in Ithaca, I played in that orchestra. And for several years there was an orchestra in the high school of high school students as well as adults. And I played in that orchestra, and I also took a summer course at Eastman School in conducting. That was after I had started to conduct the orchestra. Then I... then I actually took that summer course.

Q. When you organized that... Mr. Freeman or Mr...

A. What was it? 'Cause this man that wrote this face sheet did a lot of investigating.

Q. Did you read the flap to your book?

A. Yea.

Q. We should also have a flap.

A. 1925 to 1930, five years it extended. We organized first in 1925. We had a number of Eastman School students come to play in this orchestra. The... one of the conductors of the then Eastman Orchestra, I think it was called Eastman Symphony Orchestra then, played each week, man by the name of Harrison, took an interest. He came down a couple of times to our rehearsals and took the baton. So that was another little episode.

Q. What about this Rochester Symphony Orchestra? This was not... that was not a professional...?

A. That was non-professional, it was adult.

Q. In the area.

A. Ludwig Shank conducted.

Q. OK. Well, I have nothing more. I want to thank you very much.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A (Interview II)