ROCHESTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT (Rochester Jewish community 19^C-1975)

Interviewee  
Mrs. Evelyn Buff-Segal (Mrs. Harry J.)

Interviewer  
Brian Mitchell

Date(s) of interview  
August 10, 1976

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

This interview took place at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Segal and was approached as a lunch meeting. Mrs. Segal was most gracious and spent some time showing me the house and grounds. The interview proper was rather brief as Mrs. Segal approached the interview in opposition to "superficiality" and suggested I review some scrapbooks in the Rochester Arts Council Archives. The second interview was based upon Mrs. Segal's relationship to the Arena and Arts Council groups.

Background of interviewee

Mr. Segal is a Rochester painter who had studied under a variety of noteworthy individuals. She has had her work shown in NYC galleries and was particularly active in Rochester's Arena and Arts council groups in their formative stages.

Interview abstract

see above

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

- Social history
- Family
- Demographic/residential
- Economic
- Political/civic
- Zionism/Israel

-Jewish community
- Jewish education
- Anti-semitism
- Religious life
- Community relations

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

--see following pages--
THE FIRST SEVERAL MINUTES OF THIS INTERVIEW HAVE BEEN LOST DUE TO MECHANICAL FAILURE. THE MAJORITY OF THE INTERVIEW WILL BE CONDUCTED DURING OUR SECOND MEETING. MRS. SEGAL SPOKE OUT AGAINST ANY ATTEMPT TO PRODUCE A SUPERFICIAL INTERVIEW. AS A RESULT, I REVIEWED SOME MATERIAL IN THE ROCHESTER ARTS COUNCIL ARCHIVES. THIS MATERIAL SHOULD PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR OUR SECOND INTERVIEW.

I'LL PICK UP THE LOG WHERE THE TAPE BECOMES AUDIBLE.

I. was originally to have gone to the Parson's school, when she married Dr. Segal, Mrs. Segal continued her education.
   a. teachers suggested that she further her education
   b. there was no academy of painting in Rochester

II. art is a much misused word in this country --- art is "highest point" so that she refers to herself as a painter
   a. went to U of R and matriculated under Carl Hersey and then began to paint in a loft hired from the Columbia Savings and Loan
   b. went to study on Vineyard with Vitlecture (sp)
      1. opened up the whole world of art to her and persuaded her to study at New York in the Arts Students League
      2. stayed in New York for several months

III. enjoys living in Rochester although she has "been highly neglected"
   a. brief discussion ensued on the Arts Council of Rochester
Note: Due to mechanical failure the first several minutes of the interview have been lost. See log pertaining to this interview.

Q. This brought you specifically back on Rochester then?
A. Well, up until that point, which is typical of many, many cities in the United States, the whole socio-economic history of this country and the attitudes. I studied painting with a man named Fritz Traut. First I studied ... you see, I was to have gone to the Parson's School in New York and then go to ... take my last year in Paris. And then I met my Dr. Segal at Key and I'd gone to Geneseo for three years, anyway we became married. And I immediately went and continued my. . . there wasn't any other reason that I couldn't. And my first aim had been to become an architectural historian or a great interior decorator like Elsie De Wolfe or Edith Whorton. And so I used to take classes. I took classes at what was then the old Cannon's Institute, which is a trade school, very typical and much needed. But they did have a school of fine arts, called the Revere School. And there was a
A. (Continued) little old lady, named Minnie Wanlet, whom I shall always be grateful. So I matriculated because the only art history then, that I knew about, stupid I didn't. . . I didn't go to. . . I should have gone right up to the University. And one of the requirements was to take a course in painting, and it was not my intention to be a painter. But as a child I had been reading architectural and art history and the history of furniture. My mother and father, that's all I heard. However, I had to take water color or something with her. And one day she said to me, Evelyn you are talented and creative, I am not. And I was utterly astounded. She said I should like you to study privately with me. Now the old Third Ward downtown, charming, and she had a studio. She was. . . I learned a great deal in terms of craft, but she was utterly uncreative. And she earned extra money or income, one used to be more genteel about it, by painting the illustrations to the Harris Seed catalog, utterly accurately. Then after studying with her a year she said you are creative and I am not, you must go and study with a man named Fritz Traut. Do you really want to know all about that?

Q. Oh, positively. Please go on.

A. Fritz Traut then had been trained as an architect at Harvard, and he along with Herbert Stern, who is 95 or 99, G-d knows when he must have graduated from there. And his first job was in Akron, Ohio I think he told me this. And he was so nauseated by the gilded, nouveau riche, robber barons, because there were other aspects of his personality that made him flee. And he gave that up. He couldn't stand it, the taste of the robber barons. The things they wanted him to do and study. Now how he got to Rochester I don't know. However, Fritz goes way, way back Rochester.

Q. You were saying he went way, way back in the history of Rochester?

A. Yes, the days of the. . . but you see I'm rambling. If I were writing this,
A. (Continued) you see, I would have to include all of this. This isn't what you wish; however, there was... no... The Eastman School was really the only school in the medium of music, which is first-rate, one of the great schools. But in terms of painting there was no academy and there was no...

Q. Established center I suppose.

A. Hmm?

Q. There was really no established center in Rochester.

A. No. Oh, there were people... there was this school connected with this tradesman training school called the Cannon's Institute, which were very common all over America. Very... was a... were continued, that's what we need. And this being a city which had established through the Russian... through the German immigration the highly industrialized... not highly industri... highly skilled industries, but no dirt, no smoke, no stenching fumes.

Q. Did that... did you find that aspect of Rochester attractive? The fact that it was a skilled community with a...?

A. I paid no attention to it.

Q. Oh, I wondered whether that entered into your consideration?

A. Not at all. I was interested in my own self-development. I spent two and a half years at Geneseo, which was a State Normal School, which my mother had sent me there because of the Depression. And I came from a family... in my day it was just not particularly... my father would rather not have me educated than work in a summer hotel, such absurdity. So I went there, and she said to me, you're creative and you should... you're talented. And, I'm not creative. Apparently I must have evinced it even when she would set up a still life and I would rearrange it.

Q. Well, I suspect that's highly significant. At least it should have been to her.
A. It was, but I think it's a...

Q. Sure.

A. ... very magnanimous and wonderful lady. I had a wonderful letter when I had my first exhibition, first time my show opened in New York, which I have in my archives. However, so she sent me ... there is only one man who could teach you anything, not creatively but in terms of the craft. And talent must be there; it must be perceived, cosseted and trained. And "art" is a much misused word in this country. Art is the highest point at which any talent has arrived. There are picture-makers; there are painters. There are writers; there are composers. There are performers. Very few ever reach the level of being artists. I don't know where this idea, for instance, that anybody who paints picture... pictures, that was a slip of the tongue, it's called picture-man... is considered an artist. They're not. So if people ask me if I'm an artist, I say I hope so but I'm a painter.

Q. That's an important difference.

A. Very important. In Europe it's never... However, I studied with... so Fritz was coming in from his retreat down in the Bristol Hills and was teaching at the art... and was going to teach in the Art Gallery. And we became very good friends, and I studied with him privately for two years, up on top of the art... Art Gallery. I learned a great deal about color and the craft color, how to mix color. See, people have the impulse to paint and... but in order to paint you have to be masters of craft. This is why there are so many people who are utterly frustrated after a while because nobody's been teaching them how to use the brush, how to mix the colors. It takes a great deal of discipline and also really caring about the learning process and being satisfied. So I took a studio downtown, up over the Columbia Loan and Savings Bank, which is overlooks the Towers Hotel. It was on top of the bank,
A. (Continued) huge loft. There wasn't any... oh, then there wasn't anyplace to go. And I hadn't realized what I needed. So I went up to University and matriculated as a student in architectural history and major in that, under Carl Percy to whom I shall always be grateful. And literature under Kay Kohler, and Greene with a fine English Department, and went into everything in depth and then I... I was graduated. And being married, being married to a professor of medicine, et cetera, et cetera. So I began to paint up there in that studio. And the bank marvelously evinced the status which a painter would have. First floor was all marble, that was the bank. The second floor...

Q. I met Mr. Liebschutz from...

A. The second floor were the offices. The third floor were, which was very shabby, was the labor union office. And I knew Judea Luth very well because of his house, and Dr. Segal had... and Blakely Calvey and that group had started the Rochester group for the blacks. Let me tell you, anyone who used to work later or a Democrat was a persona non grata. I went all around. I mean I was everywhere socially, et cetera. And they... they excused Mrs. Segal. Dinner party and there was Tom Taylor who was President of Bausch & Lomb, and the old Corney Club. And contests of each year, that's another part of the social history. However, one summer... the summer of '49 having studied art and architectural history and become passionate about Romanesque, Gothic, and I also had a long background in the history of architecture, furniture, art... I learned that on the Vineyard was a very fine painter, teacher named Vanclive Vitlerutre. I don't know if that means anything to you. And somehow or other at a luncheon party someone who knew him said, we know him he taught at the Art Students League in New York, which is really the finest. And I was introduced to him, and I asked...
A. (Continued) asked, I said my husband and I should be on the Vineyard ten days longer, may I come and be a student of yours? He said, I rarely... I never take private students, but come. So I went there everyday. I don't know what happened, but he opened up. He had been a student Hoffman, way back in the twenties in Munich, Paris. You see, the modern movement hadn't even come to America except... when you think of Stuart, when you think of Curian, Benton and those men studying in Paris and not even know that Picasso and Matisse even existed. It was like my husband, who was a graduate student in Vienna after... and they were marvelous students there who didn't even know that Mr. Sigmund Freud existed. But this is the state of... Q. I see.

A. After nine days, utter silence and I went there everyday, and he just opened the whole world of space and form to me. He said I should like to speak to your husband. And I felt like a schoolgirl, so they sent off my father. And they sat in his atelier, Martha's Vineyard, and he said Dr. Segal I insist your wife come to study with me in New York at the Art Students League and get out of that cow pasture. And my husband has great reverence for learning, and also his values... I mean fortunately we both share the same values, if I wanted to buy a diamond ring, which I couldn't care less about, but if I wanted to go Paris or London or anyplace to study, of course. And I said I don't want to go. He said, yes you're going. And Mr. Vitleture sat down and sent a cable to Stuart Kline, the director of the League, the Art Students League on 57th Street, probably one of the finest academies. And said that he would like if there's one more easel that he would like me to come. And I was shipped off to New York. And you know who was in that atelier that year? Robert Cartwright, several of his works... you must come back. Robert Rauschenberg had the easel to my right. Jenkins. It was also a very great
Interview with Mrs. Evelyn Buff-Segal

A. (Continued) year because the G.I.'s had returned. They were mature. And many of them were very well educated in their undergraduate. It was the first year Betty Parsons, Janice. . . those people were showing at the New York school, Pollack and the whole. . .

Q. These names are ringing distant bells. . .

A. These. . . this was the beginning. And Mondrian, but any rate I went every morning at nine o'clock. Oh, my first place was on top of a Russian tea room, fourth floor, next to Carnegie Hall. I'd roll down, go to the class. And then in the afternoon I studied with a man named Byron Brown, who was a very fine contemporary painter, painter. But I learned drawing at the time, what really drawing was. And who do you suppose he taught us? Angra. Could there have been anyone more Classical than Angra?

Q. I'm consistently by the skill that's required to . . .

A. And the craft. He put me to work, and he said now just forget about creativity. And he put me to work in hue work. I took one hue, hue is a color, and it's complement. You are to explore those two, that one hue and its complement. . .

Q. Sure.

A. . . . until you have mastered all the nuances, its heat and its cold and its. . . and then we get to the next one. All the primary colors. And then he would call Mr. Segal, every three. . . he said after three months, he called Mr. Segal and said I'd like her to stay three more months. And this went on and on and on and on. And finally in June he said you have crossed the threshold. Now would you like to see the first painting which summarizes all my study?

Q. Yes, I would.

A. After all. . .
Q. One of the questions, obviously, that's interested in... that occurred to me over the course of the interview, has Rochester changed? Do you enjoy living in Rochester as much as you did say in 1935 when you arrived?

A. I enjoy it in Rochester because I'm very comfortable. I have been highly neglected here as a painter, and... and also as a participant. But that would... I'd have to go into the... I would have to go into it... I was quite unaware of this, but it was much resented when I... I thought I was being magnanimous and helping when I founded the Arts Council, but it was much resented.

Q. Could you go into that Arts Council somewhat today? As much as you can to...

A. I wish you would go over and look at the scrap book, you'll see the record. And then I can tell you more. I'd prefer you to do that. Would you like to call the Arts Council office?

Q. I can. I have the address.

A. I'm not sure. They've moved. And ask to see... it's in the telephone book.

Q. Sure.

A. Please look at those scrap books, and then I will open the archives to you. Now at this point, Gertrude Moore had to retire. I mean she has always been a part and her sister, Anne Wing, and it was their gallery, belonged to Papa, it belonged to them, which I can appreciate. Very difficult to relinquish.

And I think the person you should talk to is Sibley Watson. And then after they retired they selected Harris Prior to be the director. And Harris died last year. I think that the... I would rather not at this point discuss what I think happened, and why it happened because it's taking a long time to understand it. There is also a liaison... you see when... I think when Mrs. Watson gave the gallery and Sibley's father, they also gave it on two
A. (Continued) bases. The University of Rochester and for the people, the community, of Rochester.

Q. So there was a dual purpose behind the gift. It was to the University but open to the public.

A. Yes, but you see there's been also dual control.

Q. Ah. And with all those implications.

A. You said it, I didn't. (Laughter) I would... I really... if it's possible, if you go and after you've seen the archives and those two scrap books and read them, it won't take you long. And then I will go on from there, and I'll be intellectually honest with you. I prefer to...

Q. That's perfectly feasible, sure. OK.

A. Really, I would. First I'd like to see what... what these scrap books, which I kept and did all the work on, what they evince to you and what questions.

Q. OK.

A. Then I'll be intellectually honest with you for your tape.

Q. Well, I...

A. Isn't that fair?

Q. Positively.

A. 'Cause I wouldn't like to be irresponsible or a muckraker or destructive.

Q. What...
Q. It's Stoneham, right?
A. Right. That's a very old name. I looked it up in the dictionary, really has meaning.

Q. This is Brian Mitchell interviewing Mrs. Evelyn Buff-Segal on September the third, 1976 at her home on 30 Stoneham Road...
A. At her house.

Q. At her house, excuse me.
A. I hate that word "home."

Q. 30 Stoneham Road in Brighton, New York. This is our second interview. At the close of our first interview, I refer you to the tape in the archives and the log as well, Mrs. Segal suggested that I go and look up a series of scrap books, actually two scrap books, in the Arts Council at Hutchinson House next to the Eastman House on East Avenue. Well, I did that. They were only able to provide one scrap book. On the basis of that information we'll be concentrating today on the Arts Council and the Arena group in Rochester and the conditions that pertain to those two organizations. We'll be focusing only on those two issues and perhaps a couple of tangentially related ones. Thank you for seeing me again, Mrs. Segal. First of all, could you explain the purpose of the Arena group?
A. When I returned from having been a student of Clive Vitlettere, who had especially invited me to study with him, and Byron Brown, who is now dead, a most distinguished contemporary painter of the period, and Mr. Vitlettere who had been a . . . had studied many years abroad and was a student of the late Hans Hoffman, and had studied with him in Munich and at Paris. And,
A. (Continued) therefore, introduced . . . well, had profoundly understood contemporary concepts of form, space and color. Ultimately Mr. Vitleture and . . . in their respect for Hoffman brought him to the United States at the time of the Nazis and established him in New York where Mr. Hoffman had a school down on Eighth Street, I think perhaps, in the Village. But I heard Mr. Hoffman lecture at Provincetown in 1936.

Q. I know it well.

A. And it was the time of the Spanish . . .

Q. Civil War.

A. . . . Civil War. And this was also politically a revelation for me, but my husband is exceedingly sophisticated and so was Dr. . . . the late Dr. Shock of Chicago who was also sophisticated in the sense intellectually and a very fine connoisseur of painting and the arts. And both of whom had lived abroad. They'd been graduate students in Vienna and had taken their grand tours, and they were many years older than I, but they understood what was happening. And I was deeply impressed, or they were, and quite comprehended that Hans Hoffman, at that lecture, afterwards expressed his profound distress at the Spanish Civil War and just as Picasso at that period. And asked all his students and the other persons such as ourselves present to contribute to this fund for the Loyalist Spain. Now, I did know in terms of literature Andre Malraux. I had read his book, which I took very seriously, and also was explained. Now, I think I've told you about my evolvement as a painter and . . . or my attempts to study art, architectural history, painting, and drawing locally. And the . . . I'll tell you the resources in those disciplines which were accessible to me, and had not Mr. Vitleture . . . many years later I asked him how he dared suggest that I leave Rochester and come and study with him at the League with Byron Brown. When I returned
A. (Continued) after a year he shook hands with me and said I congratulate you, you have crossed the threshold into the serious world of painting, and with your academic training and now go back to Rochester and spread the word. He didn't say spread the word, he didn't use such a... but, he said make a contribution. I assumed that I would... that I would be, let's say, augmenting and extending in the community the aims of a serious, significant museum and art gallery, such as the museum... Memorial Art Gallery. Gertrude Moore was the director and her sister Isabelle. I was invited to... by a young man named Lerman. ... there was a theatre group that had Lerman and Dorobhy Turner had a repertoire group...

Q. I didn't realize...

A. ... which they were permitted to... this group... they were permitted to present contemporary or... theatre in the round, that's why it was called Arena, at what was then the old Hochstein School, which was a settlement school of music. Now, they've had to move. And the faculty from Eastman School used to on Saturdays teach the children for a very minimal sum, in all medium... media, flute, piano, et cetera. And they had this theatre. And was it... Almar asked me if I would consider forming... or heading a... an art gallery so that... and show paintings for the patrons who could look at contemporary paintings, review it during the intermissions. I could have done it by myself and perhaps I should have. However, I gathered a group of beloved colleagues, so-called friends, who were painters in the community. Hilda Coates, Sylvia Davis who had just arrived, Deana Windholmes... well, if you've seen the records of the first. And I prepared the statement and the brochures, the catalog, for the exhibition. And we established ourselves as the Arena Group of painters and sculptors to introduce or to extend in Rochester the concept of contemporary
A. (Continued) painting... painting. This was at the time the New York school was just established. Betty Parsons, great... Pollack, Motherwell, Roscoe, all that group was just being shown in New York. And I was on the seam, I knew them all and their work. And so we worked very hard and we... I was... I did all the work in the sense that to me it didn't matter who did it, but we shared resources and... but the main thing was that the... it was an opportunity for painters in the area to have their work shown. But we did set up standards and viewed the work of young painters... young painters in the area who... people who were painting or sculpting.

Q. It seems as though it would be an excellent outlet for them to display their work.

A. Yes, but their work had to be viewed and during that period and during the time when the Arena Group... or when the Arena Theatre existed several painters who had never... and potters who had never been shown in Rochester at all, we gave them their first exhibition. Among them, Franz Wildenheim, Alphonse Estargus, who had come from Czechoslovakia originally via Vienna to Rochester, very competent. Wildenheim who is a master potter who had come from Germany, had studied in the Valhaus School. Kurt Foyerherm, boy from Buffalo who had studied, had a scholarship, at Yale, the Yale school. And there are others, but you'd have to go back to the program. And we fetched and carried and I wrote the program, subsidized it all in a very anonymous way. And gave a... and...

Q. What was the community's response to it?

A. Well, they liked it very much. And they acquired many paintings. I never showed my own work except once a year when the group showed. And my concept was one of, I hope, magnanimity, receiving talent, sharing and caring. And in 1953 I had to leave Rochester. I had been asked to remain the permanent
A. (Continued) director. If you have read the scrap book, perhaps you realize that something happened.

Q. But I never really got a clear conception of what, so if you could explain.

A. Much to my astonishment during my absence, I had to go to Key West for my husband's convalescing. At that time, it's very interesting 'cause I met Scott Fitzgerald's first wife...

Q. Oh, really?

A. And she startled me because I was reading... Harry was reading Fitzgerald's... not Fitzgerald's... what was the man from Cornell like Scott Fitzgerald? The Lockridges. Who, Frances and Dick Lockridge, who used to write the North stories. In fact, Harry and I are hero and heroine in many of... I asked Hilda Altshul Coates, who was a painter, who preceded me in Rochester however, to look after the exhibitions while I was... Unbeknown to me, we... and since Harry was very sick and she did not wish to distress me, it seems that, much to our astonishment, we had come in conflict with our dear old friend Gertrude Moore and her sister Isabelle at the local gallery, who regarded our having these exhibitions... I should... I rather hesitate to summarize exactly their motivations, but it was a revelation. Instead of, from my point of view and from Mr. Vitleture's, Byron Brown's, I... I felt and they that bringing these painters and viewing their work on as high a level as we could in terms of the aims of contemporary painting and space and et cetera, a contribution. Up to this point Rochester had seen very little contemporary painting.

Q. That's... I can't understand... it seems as though they... the opposition, if you will, is taking entirely a parochial view by not opening up Rochester, which is precisely what you were trying to do.

A. Well, I assumed that... well it was... this is where I become hesitant
A. (Continued) because I've suffered a great deal from this.

Q. I don't mean to pry unnecessarily so if I...

A. Well, I'd be willing to tell it; however, Gertrude became what I would say hysterical. It seems that Almar Lerman asked the Arena Group if they would mind if we permitted them to have one exhibition of utterly unjuried of any painters who attended the Arena Theatre, to have an exhibition, to which we agreed. And during my absence, and Hilda was in charge, Gertrude and Isabelle called Hilda. I would say they were hysterical, but it was a revelation. That by our permitting this exhibition we would be competing with the Finger Lakes Exhibition. The Finger Lakes Exhibition was a local, annual, juried exhibition where people could submit their work and a jury would decide, some questions as to... at this point as to the jury... jurors selections after we left town, completely abided by. That isn't the point. Well, It was a shock and out of our loyalty and friendship, dear Gertrude and Isabelle who we were all a part of a very close social group which met. But this also evolved way back from at the time Waldon Moore, who was a professor of government here, ran for Congress. It was way, way back. I devoted my whole days and nights to running that... assisting in that campaign. So you see, there were multiple...

Q. Intricate social ties.

A. Intricate. Intellectually, 'cause the Rochester group for liberal Hutchinson, which my husband founded and they all met here, and I'll show you the funeral chairs which I used to fetch and carry from Mr. Modif. And really we... it was in the days when we really believed and with courage and conviction and without any reservation, we took our stands on issues locally. If I told you then the word labor union was just de trop...
A. (Continued) now to get back. However, the Arena Group, that was a serious painting group, became acknowledged by the community as a place where, and a group, to which . . . to whom painters with limited education in these terms, not because they didn't choose to have it because . . . but the resource for teaching in any medium are limited. And the desire to draw, for instance, is so much talent. Or the desire to be a pianist, but unless it's cosseted by the finest teaching, it is so you would wish to be a political scientist should find yourself in some well-meaning, third-rate school who perhaps your parents had worked very hard to send. And you assume that any college or any school you went to would just first-rate. And you spent one or two years and then discovered as you developed intellectually in terms of reading that you're in a third-rate school. Perhaps I'm not being very . . . however, this led also . . . I was utterly unaware of this. Of course, the late William Eric who was really the only first-rate sculptor Rochester ever knew, he's studied with Barach in Germany, I'll show you his work. And he taught at the Art Gallery in their classes and at the University, and I was one of his students. I had to study sculpture, which is not my medium, with him, however, in order to get my degree in art history and architecture and fine arts, et cetera, et cetera. He was a member of the group. And he showed his work, and we were also very good friends, colleagues. And . . . could I stop a moment?

Q. Sure.

A. See the scrap book of the history of the Arts Council of Rochester. Having been a member of the, and still am, of the Rochester Historical Society, I called a meeting as a member of the Board, was asked to, to save a Greek Revival house, Federal house, across the street from the Historical Society.
Q. That would be Prince and East Avenue?
A. Mmm-hmm. Prince and East Avenue. And . . .
Q. This would be the house. . .
A. Right. And . . . oh, previous to that I was attempting to talk to city planners and bankers, I and others, about preserving . . . for them to invest in the old Third Ward. I have opinions about America and preservation and people who . . . anyhow, thus at that meeting I called members from the professions, the Memorial Art Gallery, the Historical Society, the Landmark Society, to support the effort to save that house. And my aim had been that we acquire it and establish it as an academy of the arts, that we needed that in Rochester. An academy of . . . we would begin with the plastic arts and architectural arts, ultimately over the years, the performing arts. But, that all members should be professionals, not lay people, because we needed an academy, a learned society. And . . .
Q. What was the response initially?
A. Well, fine but I was the little girl carrying the flag. And we . . . I hadn't realized that many of the so-called special institutions the idea, which I assume would be a delight to them and professionally something that. . . that . . . that they needed and wanted and should want, where were first-rate sculptors, painters, architects, architectural historians. Having an academy . . .
Q. Would give them a proper meeting ground.
A. A meeting. . . and we could bring distinguished people here.
Q. Exactly.
A. I can't tell you all the events, but a man named Morrie Forman from the Forman . . .
Q. Clothing Company...

A. Clothing Company or department store. These people I all assumed were my friends, were all behind me, et cetera. And they very flamboyantly decided to buy the house. They didn't subsidize it. And then turned it over to the Boy Scouts, not with subsidy.

Q. Not with a subsidy?

A. The old trick. Not trick, it's... however, so that was the end of my hope of... well, I went on... I went on and continued to try to find another place to continue. And we established the Arts Council of Rochester. I remain its President, and I subsidized it myself with a share and care. And we tried... so I suggest... then there's the old Charles house, Jonathan Charles house. So I thought we could try to preserve that for the same purpose. Well, at any rate my leadership, as it were, was resented by all the other institutions.

Q. Who... what other groups were an intricate part of the Arts Council? The Arena group and so on.

A. The Arena Group, the Memorial Art Gallery faculty, professional staff, not the lay people. Landmark Society. I can't remember all of them. They're all listed.

Q. But the idea is it's a cross-section of the community groups?

A. In those areas, on the highest level. And I stayed with it until it was incorporated because... and I corresponded... you should see the file. I corresponded with... there were only three Arts Councils in the United States at the time. And then I was invited to the first Council of Canadian Arts Councils. At that point in 1960 the Canadian government, and the first in the North America... I can't remember how many millions of dollars that the government granted to the arts, which on the highest level, under
A. (Continued) the highest professionals not regional, folksy-wolksy or anything like that. And I was invited, and I was one of two Americans, among them Knotts from Buffalo, to be at that first meeting of the Canadian Arts Council. Then I had to go abroad, but I arranged for the President of the Arts Council of Canada to come and lecture us here. I brought the first showing of Picasso, the film by Emmer of Picasso, just did it on my own in the name of the Arena Group. And I'll never forget when that was shown at Eastman House, Gertrude Moore came stomping up afterwards in utter fury, said... you'll have to read my journals. The agony I've been through. However, I don't know if you saw in that Arts Council the interview that Gene Walrath had with Stanley Witmeyer in which I resigned. And he said, I know the heartaches... they absolutely. See, what happened was it not only evoked jealousy and envy... there's a very great essay called "Gratitude and Envy" by a British psychoanalyst which you must read, psychodramatics of envy and gratitude, characterological disease. They... they just couldn't stand it. And I stayed with it and finally decided to resign because the lay people in the community wanted to get in on it, this is what's happened, it happens in everything. I think there's much too much gown and town. But you see to me, I lived on Olympus. I... I felt that... that lay people... that the job and responsibility of professionals was to bring their talent and knowledge to a community which would evoke in them not only an appreciation, which is an overused cliche, but evoke intellectual curiosity.

Q. Exactly.

A. And a reverence for talent and to make them understand that talent has to be cosseted and... first it has to be perceived, then it has to be cosseted and guided.
Q. So that it should be kept strictly on a professional basis?
A. Basis. And that lay people should feel it's a privilege to acquire work, to commission work, and to support professionals. That the professionals should guide the community in terms of architecture, planning, acquisition of work, and education for a community.

Q. I have a couple of questions that come to mind that I'd like to ask. First of all, I'm gonna ask a very basic question and probably will evoke a comment, I'm sure. Is there much in Rochester to save?
A. Unfortunately not much any longer. It could have been saved, but you have to go back into the deep roots of psychology of the American people. Now social architectural historians bring this out. You see the people who had the houses, most of the houses... first Amer... United States is very old, Rochester is not very old, it's nineteenth century. However, what was there and the affluent, middle class... I hate those words, but...

Q. No, it's...
A. ... they were middle class, flower, affluent people. Had lovely houses in eclectic style, but it was an idea of grandeur.

Q. It represented a period.
A. It represented a period and also a striving, not only striving, but an awareness of the reflections of European architecture. And East Avenue, those houses, were built by... after the... see the people abandoned the Third Ward, unlike Europeans they didn't stay in their houses.

Q. Beacon Hill in Boston.
A. Yes, Beacon Hill, the same thing. They should have... like in England or in France or in Germany, you... they wouldn't give up a house that belonged. That's why the old Centre Ville in these cities with those great beautiful houses, they are generation after generation. They moved in and the next
A. (Continued) generation, they'd add on to it. So, therefore, whatever was there evolved. First they abandoned, sold them for a better price, and then built themselves new houses, East Avenue. And most of that was built when George... when they all made money.

Q. Kodak.

A. Kodak. So, then they all moved... they left. They abandoned those houses, except for a few families like the Watsons. They moved out to Pittsford and Brighton and other places. And then sold their properties, they didn't preserve it. They sold it at good profit, and then it... then those houses fell into the hands of realtors who subdivide them into offices, beautiful gardens are ripped up and...

Q. It's a problem with...

A. That's right. I went into my dentist the other day, it just kills me when I go in there, beautiful house that was and the great garden. Now, you ask if there was much to preserve. Whatever was here could have been preserved if these people had really cared about their houses, and cared about the fact. They didn't really have a profound respect for even its construction. Now none of them were the great Georgian houses, as old as English... England, but they were charming, well-constructed, gracious houses, solidly constructed, et cetera, et cetera.

Q. And in good periodocity if nothing else.

A. Yea. But also that... so just because... so there are multiple reasons. But, then... see I... I'm really not being chronologically accurate here because it would take me days...

Q. But we are just...

A. But I'd say this. That these people, these lay people, who say are on the Board of the Art Gallery, on the Board of the Landmark Society, whose families
Interview with Mrs. Evelyn Buff-Segal

A. (Continued) originally had lived in some of these houses, now expect the community to preserve... preserve it or whatever's left.

Q. Is there a strong organization to do that? Is there the equipment, say, for the Historical Society to...?

A. Well, Newport is older, whatever we can say about the families there, they could well afford to stay and maintain grandeur, and they liked it. They were Edwardians, gilded age. And they still can afford it.

Q. Really can...

A. Yes, well... right. There was never anything grander. This was a very... ah... you know, Rochester is really quite a German city. Did I show you that article that Harry wrote, that lecture? I'll give it to you.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (Interview II)