

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown Area Jewish Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 1117

PHILLIP A. MILLSTONE

Interviewed

by

Harry Alter

on

March 15, 1988

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown Area Jewish Project

INTERVIEWEE: PHILLIP A. MILLSTONE
INTERVIEWER: Harry Alter
SUBJECT: Board of Directors, JCRC, law
DATE: March 15, 1988

A: This is an interview with Philip Millstone for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Youngstown Area Jewish Project, by Harry Alter, on Tuesday, March 15, 1988.

Philip, we were talking about your activity in the Jewish Community, you became active first after you came out of the service, is that right?

M: Well, I had some activity prior to the time I went into the service. During the 1940's I was active with the Jewish Center. I didn't hold any office until I was elected to the Board of Directors. If my memory serves me correctly, it was around the early 1940's, not the late 1930's, that I served on the Board of Directors of the Jewish Center. At that time the Center was located on Bryson Street, as you may recall. I think I served on the Board of Directors until I went into the service in 1943. It may have been during that time that I also served as chairman of the JCRC- Jewish Community Relations Council, I was chairman of the council for a number of years. Then, after I came out of the service I did become more active at the Center, and I think that it was at that time that I was elected to the Board of Directors of the Federation. My recollection is that I served first by appointment, by virtue of being chairman of the JCRC. After that I was elected as director in my own name, not as a representative of another organization. At that time too, I became active in Rodef Sholem Temple. I served on the Board of the

Temple until 1955 when I was elected president of the congregation. I served as president for two years; during which time I was also active in the Federation as a member of the Board of that organization. I continued until the time I became active in Heritage Manor. That was a result of my father-in-law being among the first residents of Heritage Manor, and I became quite interested in the operation of that institution.

A: Who was your father-in-law?

M: George Livingston. I think Heritage Manor opened around 1963 or thereabouts, and he went into the Heritage manor as a resident around 1965. I believe that I became active around that time. Latter I was elected president of Heritage Manor and served from 1980 to 1982. I followed Philip Levy.

A: Philip Levy was...

M: P.M: I think he was the second president. Marvin Itts was the first.

A: Right.

M: Then Philip Levy.

A: And then you followed?

M: Then I followed.

A: Your activities in the general community mostly revolved around the law, but you were also active in some of the municipal and county.

M: Yes I was appointed to the zoning commission of the city of Youngstown by Mayor Flask. I served on that commission for either two or three years, during which time we met quite regularly. The commission was composed of... at that time the Mayor who was Mr. Anthony Flask, and Philip Richly who I think at that time was active in the city administration I don't recall just...

A: Engineering.

M: Yes, I believe it was the engineering department. Following that I was appointed by the Common Pleas Judges to serve on the commission that built the present jail building. I found that to be a very interesting experience. We had some very able people on that commissions. George Bishop who was well known in the city was chairman of the commission, I was secretary, Philip Richly and James Goefftt, the labor leader also

served on the commission, We were the body that supervised hiring the architect for building of the jail, and overseeing the erection of the building. Our success in that respect was that we came in under \$1,000,000. This was an excellent price for the amount of building that we received. Although it has been criticized as not being a practical jail building, yet it has served the community for over twenty years. But that was the extent of my political endeavors.

A: Did you ever have any ambitions to run for office?

M: No. I never ran for office.

A: You entered the law practice in October 1932, do you want to describe the type of practice you had, and then succeeded?

M: Well, as you recall, 1932 was the year that Franklin Roosevelt was elected president, and also it was the very depth of the Depression, it wasn't long after that I began to practice that the banks were closed and the country was virtually at a crisis economically. So my first few years in practice were very difficult years. We didn't do to well economically until several years later when the reconstruction period started around 1936, 1937. So the first two, three years that I practiced were not very lucrative. I can remember that the first month that I practiced law, which was October of 1932, I made the magnificent sum of \$7 for the entire month of October. Of course my expenses at that time was commensurolle with the income. I was able to rent office space from attorney Harry Evans, who you may recall, was a lawyer practicing at that time. For the office, the telephone, and the stenographic service I was required to pay \$50.00 a month. As you can imagine that figure was quite sufficient because it was about in line with what I could earn in those days.

A: At that time were there quite a number of Jewish men practicing law in Youngstown?

M: Yes. There were quite a number of Jewish lawyers practicing in Mahoning County. Some very good lawyers too, Oscar Kaufman for example, and his brother Nathan Kaufman, had a very nice practice. they were good lawyers. Then there was an excellent Jewish lawyer named Dave Nieman. Do you remember him? He was a very good lawyer, Sid Rigelhaupt was practicing in those days and Joe Friedman was an old timer who I think started his practice back around 1912 , 1913. As a matter of fact, he was my father's lawyer, and when my dad went into business he would go to Joe Friedman. As did almost all of the Jewish Merchants. Joe had a very excellent practice and was known as honest Joe Fried-

man. Evan Rummell was with Joe in those days, the firm was known Friedman and Rummell. Then, we gradually got out of the Depression, maybe as a result of the crisis in Europe I was married in 1936 and continued to practice, alone until I went into the service in 1943. I was in the service until January of 1946.

A: You served in the Navy?

M: I served in the Navy as a naval officer. I went in as a Lieutenant JG. I had excellent sea duty. My sea duty consisted of transporting civilian materials to the West Coast of South America. We would go down the Caribbean then through the Panama canal, and then down the West Coast of South America. We would stop at every country on the West Coast going down where we would unload our civilian materials. We would come back to the states with copper, bals wood and other war materials that were needed. We would normally sail into New York. I made five trips like that. Today it is considered the luxury cruise trip of South America.

A: You were discharged in what year?

M: I was discharged in February of 1946, and went back to my law practice, of course I had to start anew, and my first association after I came back from the Navy, was with Judge John Buckley. He was an excellent lawyer. Shortly after I associated with him, he was elected Judge of the Municipal Court. Then he went on, as I recall to the Court of Appeals. When that occurred I had the opportunity to become associated with Schermer and Goldstein. They had been practicing in this area for quite along time. I was associated with them under the firm name of, Schermer Goldstein, and Millstone until they returned and moved to the coast. At this time I took over the office completely.

A: What year was that?

M: That was in 1950.

A: Jimmy Goldstein, if I recall was very active in the Center. He was one of the leaders of the Center.

M: Yes. He was very active I think he may have held the office of president at one time. Both were very good lawyers. Charlie Schermer is now remembered as the person who created the Sherman Trust, although the trusts are in the name of his sister and mother. But he created those trusts.

A: Now to switch back to the previous times, you mentioned your father-in-law George Livingston, was that the Livingston connected with East Federal Street store?

M: Yes. He operated The Grand Leader. The interesting story about my father-in-law is that he was brought over to this country by his uncle Charles Livingston. Though they were almost the same age, actually Charles Livingston was the uncle and my father-in-law was his nephew, interestingly enough. My father-in-law came here, established his own business on East Federal Street, that business was known as The Grand Leader. He was quite successful. His appeal in ladies ready-to-wear was to the ethnic groups of the city; The Slovak's, the Czechoslovakian's, and the Russians. He seemed to have a knack of finding the type clothing that they liked and would wear, particularly in ladies heavy winter coats.

A: Do you recall how East and West Federal Street was at that time?

M: Yes, I recall it very well. My father was Abraham Millstone. Originally he had a clothing store on Poland Avenue in the section known as Hazelton. That was back when I was a child, I was about five or six years old when he operated that store. We lived on Powers Way in Brownlee Woods. He was there until after the steel strike. If you will recall...

A: 1919?

M: The beginning of the Organization of the Steel Labor Unions,

A: 1937 is when the CIO became active here, but this is earlier. Is this strike at the time that the Campbell was burnt down.

M: Right.

A: That was right after World War I.

M: I can remember as a child the fight between the strike breakers who were brought in by the steel companies, I think that they were all members of that famous detective agency.

A: Pinkerton.

M: Pinkertons, and I can recall them shooting up and down the street right in front of by my fathers store. Close to the Center Street Bridge right in the Hazelton area. It was after that in the early 1920's that my father moved to East Federal Street, and operated a mens ready-to-wear store there. I can well recall that East Federal Street had a large number of Jewish merchants. There were for example a delicatessen across the street

from my father operated by a Ostash and another one was operated by Mr. Hoffman. I remember Hoffman, although I think he operated a butcher shop. Then there was a store on the corner of Watt and Federal operated by a man named Mr. Hill. I don't know if you will recall him or not, but he ran a successful business on the southeast corner of Watt and East Federal Street. Also my father had a ready-to-wear store and right next to him was a store operated as a paint hardware store and that was operated by Mr. Abrams. Mr. Abrams operated the store right next to my father. Then down lower on Federal Street closer to Basin Street was a large grocery store, groceries and produce, and that was operated by the Grossman's. I also remember that the Dollar Bank had a branch office right in that area of Federal Street between Watt and Basin Streets. The reason I mentioned the Dollar Bank is that all the Jewish merchants did business there.

- A: City Bank had a branch down there.
- M: My recollection too is that Burger had a travel agency down on that end.
- A: Burger's travel agency at that time was in the Dollar Bank and then he moved to the corner of Champion and Boardman Street.
- M: There was a bank down there, a foreign exchange bank.
- A: On the corner of Watt and Federal Street was an Italian family owned bank.
- M: Then there was a Jewish restaurant in the block between Watt and Champion?
- A: Stanley Engle's father had something to do with that restaurant, didn't he?
- M: That's right. There was another restaurant there operated by Ralph Waldorn's family, do you remember that? There was a restaurant at one time right above my father-in-law's store, right above The Grand Leader, that may have been the Waldorn's restaurant. Then latter on it became a ...
- A: Chinese restaurant. You originally lived in Brownlee Woods, there weren't to many Jewish families in Brownlee Woods?
- M: No. We were among the few. The reason we moved to Brownlee Woods was to be close to my father's store on Poland Avenue. There were two or three other Jewish families there, there was the Meritzer family. Tillie Meritzer married Dr. Morris Rosenblum. Then there was a

Diamondstein family that lived there, I think that we were the only three families there.

A: Morantz's family?

M: Yes, the Morantz family! Lived across the street from us.

A: From what I've been told, most of the families that lived there, lived there because their businesses were there above the store or close to the store.

M: I think it was Mrs. Morantz's either mother or aunt, who had a little grocery store right there on the corner.

A: Were you still living there when the Klu Klux Klan became active in the community?

M: They became active in...

A: The early 1920's.

M: 1924, 1925. My family lived on Powers Way until after I was married and then they moved to Roslyn Drive on the north side.

A: The reason that I ask you about the Klu Klux Klan is because Brownlee Woods had the reputation of being the cradle and the heart of the Klu Klux Klan at that time.

M: I have no recollection of any problems with the Klu Klux Klan. I once saw them parade down Federal Street with attorney Clyde Osborne and the Mayor who was a Kluxer. I don't remember the names, but that was around 1924, 1925.

A: Do you recall any antisemitism as you grew up in the neighborhood?

M: Well, when we lived on Powers Way I went to Jackson school, and there was some antisemitism directed toward me only some name calling, I was not aware of any active antisemitism.

A: Not among your neighbors?

M: No. Particularly not among our neighbors. Our neighbors next door to us were very friendly, They were a Miskel family and we were on very good terms with them. My best friend then was a boy named George Schauwaker, we were in the same class both in public school and then latter in South High. We were very friendly. I have no recollection of any active antisemitism.

A: Were you active in any school activities at South High?

M: At South High, I was on a debating team, together with Ruben Segal, who was somewhat ahead of me but we both were on the debating team at the same time.

A: Who was the coach? Was it Mr. Dielm?

M: Yes, Mr. Dielm was our coach... He went on to become a county judge. He was a Justice of the Peace previously.

A: He also had been an ordained minister.

M: Yes, right that was about the extent of my activity. I was in a operetta, sometime during my senior year.

A: Back in those years there wasn't too much in club activity for high school students, did you get into a Jewish club after high school?

M: I think that I was a BMD.

A: Oh, you were in a BMD?

M: Right but that was only during high school because I left for college, right after I graduated from high school I was quite young, only a little over sixteen when I started at Ohio State.

A: That would be about 1926?

M: Yes. I graduated from South High in 1926.

A: Is that when you got into the BMD club?

M: No, I started high school in 1922 and graduated in 1926.

A: You were in the BMD club in between during those years?

M: Right.

A: Where did you meet at that time?

M: We met at Temple Emmanuel.

A: What type of activities did the club engage in?

M: We played basketball, and it was pretty much a social club. I don't recall if we did anything unusual in the community, pretty much a social club for Jewish high school students.

A: Was Philip Levy still active at that time?

M: Jack Levy was active.

A: Jack was active. Philip was one of the organizers.

M: Was it Philip or Jack? Jack was active.

A: Jimmy Goldstein was one of the first, Philip came in a little latter. Jimmy Goldstein was one of the charter members. In your activity in the Jewish Community are there any other recollections that you have; for instance at the time that you were active in the JCRC and were chairman, did you have any particular problems that you had to handle then?

M: Primarily we were involved in the activities of the various schools, there were some problems about teaching religion and prayer and things like that in the schools. Stanley Engle kept a close eye on that. On a number of occasions we would meet with principals of some of the schools who were allowing prayer of some kind in the schools. We would present our thinking to these principals and on almost every occasion they would comply and discontinue either the reading of the bible, or holding a prayer of some kind when school began.

A: Was this before or after the Supreme Court decision outlawing prayers in school?

M: That would be... When was the Supreme Court decision?

A: I don't recall the exact year.

M: My recollection it was after the violation. Interestingly enough we didn't have a great many of problems. We began a meeting with various groups in the city and we would exchange ideas. We would hold meetings with the Negro groups and with Catholic groups. We would exchange ideas and we would have a nice turn out.

A: I remember those years we went to east side to a black church and they came to the center.

M: And I thought that that led to a lot of good will among our groups. It was one of the worthwhile things that I recall that happened during the time I was chairman of the JCRC.

A: That actually preceded the Civil Rights Movement.

M: Yes. We were aware, and Stanley Engel was very good at community relations type of activity. He had good relations with many of the ministers, clergyman, both among the Catholics and among the black people. We would have good turn outs at those panel discussions.

We would get into some very worthwhile exchanges of ideas, particularly with the Catholic community. And it was at that time, as I recall that the Catholics had taken the somewhat more liberal view of the recognition of the Jewish people as not being the enemy. Those exchanges I thought were very helpful in establishing the Jewish Community Belalus Council as a viable force in the city.

A: That would be twenty, twenty-five years ago, at least.

M: Yes, I just started with Schermer and Goldstein at that time so that would be around 1952, 1953. It was almost exactly twenty-five years ago.

A: Shifting gears again, and going back you said that you moved to Roslyn Drive?

M: My family did.

A: Your family moved to Roslyn Drive.

M: I was already married by that time and living in my own apartment.

A: Up on the north side?

M: Yes.

A: Which brings something else now on the Jewish Community, the shift of the Jewish Community do you have anything to discuss on that, where the Jewish Community lived?

M: Well, as I mentioned to you I was brought up in Brownlee Woods so that I was among the few that went to South High. Most of the Jewish children at the time actually went to Rayen.

A: And East.

M: Well, there was no East high school then. So those people that lived there went to Rayen and the people that lived north of the river in the Briar Hill area, there were some Jewish people there, and they all went to Rayen. And everybody south of the river went to South, I went to South. So that my experience as a child and throughout high school was pretty much among non-Jewish people, and non-Jewish children. It wasn't until after I was married that I became more interested and active in the Jewish Community. My folks moved to Roslyn Drive and that was after my father had gone into the insurance business, he gave up the clothing business. My in-laws had always lived in the north side area. They lived on Ohio Avenue. When I was married we

went into an apartment on Cordova Avenue and we lived there until we moved to Selma Avenue. We moved to Selma in 1949. I think we are oldest residents on Selma Avenue. It will be forty years that we lived there.

A: So your association would be while you were in high school you got in the BMD club, that gave you friends among the Jewish....

M: Yes. That was my first association with Jewish children my age. But that was short lived because when I graduated from high school I then went to Ohio State where I did join a Jewish fraternity.

A: When you were growing up your family members went to Temple Emmanuel?

M: Yes, right.

A: Did you go to Hebrew school at Temple Emmanuel?

M: Yes. I went to Hebrew school there, and I was barmitzvah at Temple Emmanuel. Then my folks joined Anshe-Emeth, and I was confirmed at Anshe-Emeth. Then when I got out of the service my wife and her family had belonged, to Rodef Sholem Temple. So I also joined Rodef Sholem. I had the benefit of all three congregations and all three divisions of the Jewish faith. From the orthodox to the conservative to the reform.

A: That was living in Brownlee Woods and go all the way across to Temple Emmanuel to go to Hebrew school. How did you do it, take the bus?

M: Yes, took the bus. I would ride the bus nearly everyday or three times a week.

A: Did you ride the bus downtown and walk up to Rayen Avenue?

M: Right. I don't recall Temple Emmanuel having a Sunday school. It seems to me that I went to Sunday school at Anshe-Emeth. That's when I no longer attended to Hebrew school. I was confirmed at the Anshe-Emeth in 1924.

A: Is there anything else that you may want to add before we finish on this general recollection?

M: I can't think of too much, I think that I told you about of all the activities that I was involved in, and pretty much about my professional career.

A: Okay, thanks Phillip.

END OF INTERVIEW