

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Jews in Youngstown, Ohio

Personal Experience

O H 1119

JEAN EINSTEIN

Interviewed

by

Lois Davidow

on

July 8, 1987

D: This is an interview with Jean Einstein for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation, by Lois Davidow, on July 8, 1987

When did your family get here, Jean?

E: I really do not know. I cannot tell you that information. My grandfather came here from Germany, from Aunsbach. He was born in Aunsbach.

D: Your grandfather's name was?

E: Isaac Strauss. He came to Youngstown because his cousin, Mr. Theabald, lived here and peddled in this area until he came back and worked at Theabald's.

D: What was Theabald's?

E: Theabald's was a general store.

D: In Youngstown, downtown?

E: Yes. And then, later on, Mr. Hirsch worked for William Strouss

D: Was your mother here in Youngstown?

E: My father married Lena Felzer from Philadelphia, who was related somehow to Mrs. Theabald. That is how they met. And they moved to Youngstown. And when they were bride and groom, they moved on a street behind Wick Avenue on the East Side. I forget the name of it

D: Scott Street?

E: No, no, Wick Avenue, down by Rayen Avenue, behind the library.

S: Not the Wick Oval?

E: No, just east of Wick Avenue. The first street east of Wick Avenue, off of Rayen. They lived north of Rayen, on the next street, in a double house. Later on, they built their house on Wick Avenue, which was right next to the Masonic Hill. I think Gerald has the receipt of the purchase of the house, how much they paid for it.

D: This was right after they were married?

E: No, they lived on this other street first. I cannot remember the name of it. I will look it

up on the city map for you in a minute

D: So that was Walnut Street?

E: Yes.

D: Your grandfather, then, was working for

E: This is my grandfather, Isaac Strouss. I think by that time he was working for, at the time they were married, I am sure he was working for Theabald's. And by that time, I think he became established in the phone business

D: But he started out by working for his cousin, Theabald. And then, you were born where?

E: Well, my mother was born, either on Wood Street, or I am not sure. I was born when my mother married.

D: Well, let's get to your mother and father

E: My father. Harry Meyer was born in Aurora, Indiana. He was a salesman. He used to come here to sell, I do not know what. And he met Herman Ritter and they went into business together. My father used to play cards with my grandfather and he met my mother when she was fifteen years old and he was sixteen years older than she, but she fell in love with him and they were married in 1900.

D: Did your mother have any brothers or sisters?

E: No, Strouss is my mother's only brother.

D: And no other sisters. There were only the two?

E: Yes, the two.

D: And you have one brother.

E: I have one brother, and that is all.

D: Who was the older, you or your brother?

E: My brother, Jerald Meyer. He is four years older. I was born on Wick Oval.

D: Where did you go to school?

- E First, I went to Elm Street School, and then I went to Yale School I think one year at Carmeli. Then I went away to school
- D So you went to both public and private school? Jerald, too?
- E. Jerald went to Elm Street School, Yale School, graduated from Wick, and then moved on
- D: What was the social life as a youngster, very young? Do you remember?
- E: We lived on Wick Oval and we had a wonderful house. Alfred Liedman and his wife lived there and they had a daughter, Florence, who was just my age. My mother's closest friend, Beth Fickle, she was related to Mr Hamburg. Mrs Hamburg was Mr. Fickle's sister. We had a whole gang that played there together, all the time There were not very many girls just my age, so most of the time I ran with the girls who were older Of course, after I got older, we had a very active life around the Temple.
- D: Where was the Temple then?
- E The Temple? When I was a little child, it was on Lincoln Avenue, but by the time I grew up enough to be socially active, the activities were at the Temple. They used to have wonderful dances there, and basketball games. In fact, your uncle used to put on most of the dances.
- D Oh, really?
- E Yes
- D: I did not know that. Which Uncle?
- E. Henry.
- D: Oh, no, that was not my uncle That was Caroline's. Caroline Crosby's uncle.
- E: Excuse me.
- D: That's okay. Were there Youth Groups and social organizations?
- E. I do not think there were any youth groups. I think that everybody just went there and met. And then we had a social life, we went with many of the boys and girls from our Sunday school class and we used to meet in each other's home.
- D: But this all stemmed from the temple? As opposed to school or any other outside activity?

- E Most of it
- D. What kind of transportation? How did you go from Wick Oval to Temple?
- E. Well, by the time the present Temple was built, I did not live on Wick Oval. But when I lived on Wick Oval and went to Lincoln Avenue, how do you think we went? We walked. If we wanted to go, and I went to school, and it was beyond walking distance, I would walk over to Elm Street and take the Elm Street Street Car up to Todd Lane and then walk the rest of the way.
- D. Do you remember many of the merchants at that point?
- E. I forgot to tell you that Kanerski's lived on Wick Oval at that time, too. I could name them for you but as far as personal things, I have no recollection.
- D: You shopped mostly in your own . . . .
- E Oh, what do you think?
- D: What about health care and hospitals?
- E Well, if we went to the hospital, which of course, I could not do because I was too young, we went to the South Side. And, incidentally, David Theabald was on the first Board at that hospital.
- D What do you remember of your grandfather, as far as work?
- E Well, I remember him going down the road in striped pants, a morning coat and a yarmulke, which, I thought, was to keep his bald head warm.
- D: So he kept his head covered at all times?
- E Yes. But I did not know any better. I thought it was for his bald head. I thought that was because it was drafty on top.
- D. Were they involved a lot in the Temple?
- E: Oh, yes.
- D. Everything, again, revolved around the Temple
- E. Oh, yes.

- D Did you remember much anti-Semitism at that point?
- E Well, I remember it when I was in the fourth grade.
- D: This was where? At Yale?
- E Yes. It was very subtle. I cannot remember everything particularly But you get a little shady business after a while. I cannot remember what it was .
- D: But enough to feel uncomfortable.
- E: I remember it was not enough to make me uncomfortable
- D: Were the Jewish people that were in Youngstown segregated?
- E: Yes. Socially. On rare occasions, my mother kept up with many of her high school friends who were not Jewish
- D: Where did your mother go to high school?
- E. Rayen, and so did my uncle But if there was any social interchange, it was once a year or once every two or three years. It was not important. Now, my father used to go with most non-Jewish people when he lived here. When he moved here, he lived at the Todd House and his best friend was a Dr. Blaine.
- D: Did you have anyone when you were growing up who was an idol, that influenced you?
- E: Not really.
- D: You just went your own little way. Did your grandmother's or mother's activities influence you, volunteer-wise or organization-wise?
- E: My grandmother was an old lady at fifty-five I guess she was not very well. She had heart trouble. There was always volunteer work in the home, so I was used to it. That is what I was used to seeing and that is what I did
- D: Do you remember any particular family experiences that were interesting, things that the family did together?
- E Oh, we used to go motoring every summer. And I remember there were no maps. There were just blue books and the blue books used to say you had to go so many miles and you would see a red barn with a weather vane, you turn right, go past two houses and come to a place that raises Holstein cows and turn to the left. That is the way the blue books were

written If they changed to Jersey's, you were lost

D: How far did you go on your trips?

E Oh, we went to New York, up to New England.

D You went all the way to New England?

E Oh, yes And I remember one time, we had a flat tire and we were stuck in a storm.

D And it went?

E Well, I do not remember how far it went, but I remember it happening. And at that time, we were in open cars and we all had our own dusters, for rain

D: Charming looking and dirty.

E Oh, yes.

D: Did you ever stop at hotels? Certainly not motels.

E Yes. We would arrange to stop to take our trip. We would stop at a hotel.

D: This was the whole family?

E Yes. My grandmother and grandfather, uncle, mother and father, and Jerald and myself  
A seven passenger car.

D: And who drove?

E. Mostly Uncle Clarence. Sometimes father drove

D: This was before Clarence was married?

E Oh, yes. Long before.

D What about Jewish holiday celebrations, family celebrations?

E I guess we celebrated. We always went to temple and I do not remember a Satyr I was a very little girl and Mrs. Kaufmann, Mrs. Otto Kaufmann, moved to town and she used to have elaborated Satyrs and we always went there. But I was very young and I do not remember.

D. The high holy days?

E Oh, we always went to Temple

D. What else would you like to tell me about the Strouss store?

E: I think Jerald can give you much, much more about it than I

D As a volunteer, what do you think was your most important achievement?

E I do not know. So many things have been important. I worked on the line board with one of the original, maybe not the original, but next to the original people on the planned parenthood and worked very hard for that. I worked as a Nurse's Aid, you name it, I worked at it. At the Temple for the Sisterhood and for the council and all the organizations.

D So they all were important to you?

E They were all important to me.

D. Where did you meet Arthur?

E I was in New York and Uncle Clarence called me when he got there and asked me to go out to dinner. I said that I was really busy, and he said, "It is one night." He said, "Well, that is the night of the national racetrack driver's association banquet Would you mind going?" And I said, "No " It was a formal affair, so I met him at the hotel. We were walking through the lounge in the lobby, and in this sea of people in tuxedos, there was one man there not wearing one. Uncle zeroed in on him and said, "Arthur, I would like you to meet my niece." I did not see him until the next year, and by that time he was working in Akron A couple friends called me up one day and said, "I have this nice, young man over here I would like you to come over and entertain." I went over and, evidently I entertained him successfully, because that was about June, and we were married in January.

D. Did he come to Youngstown, then?

E: Oh, every weekend.

D: After you were married, where did you live?

E He lost his job while we were engaged

D: What did he do?



- E. He was with the postal company. After that, he moved to New York
- D. He worked, then, for Strouss?
- E. Yes, after several other jobs.
- D. And then what did he do?
- E. Then he went to teach, which has always been a dream of his, and he went teaching at Penn State University. He taught business, general business, and during that time, he saw on the bulletin board a notice that they were taking applications for full-time teachers and scholars. So he applied and got a position in Norway, in the equivalent to Harvard Business School. We lived there for a year and when we came back, we found out how nice it was to do that, and he got another job lecturing, giving seminars in Japan, and we went around the world that way. We got little pearls and things. The ironic thing was that his main subject in Japan was quality control. Anyhow, after that, he gave different seminars to different places. In one year, he was asked to go on a five week seminar in Israel. Well, they really did not want to have him because, evidently, at that time, they did not like Jewish professors telling them what to do.
- D: Now, you worked for the store for quite a number of years, worked for Strouss'?
- E. Yes, about seventeen years.
- D: Strouss', Strauss-Hirshburg.
- E: Then he went to State college for nine. Then, after he did this traveling and seminars, he came back here and did seminars out of Youngstown for business people that he had known, and paid for surveys and different seminars.
- D: Now, in all this time, you had stopped and had a family?
- E. Yes. We had two children, Arthur Jr., who was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Carol, who lives in Philadelphia.
- D. But they were raised in Youngstown?
- E. They were both raised in Youngstown.
- D. They went to School?
- E. They went to Harding School and then my father was very ill and we moved to they country and they finished at Boardman.

D: You have grandchildren?

E: Yes, I have six grandchildren. Carol had two boys and a girl. Arthur has two boys and a girl.

D: Now, what can you tell me about Mr. Hirschburg?

E: Oh, Mr. Hirschburg was a very sweet gentleman. His department in the store, he was mostly interested in furs. They had a very fine fur department. I do not know how many years he was working there when his brother went to Alaska and became very much interested in mining. They started a gold mine there called the Golden Elsa and Mr. Hirschburg moved to Alaska, just left the store and moved to Alaska. I do not know how many years he stayed there, but the Golden Elsa was not so golden. And he came back and went back into the business again.

D: But, prior to that, he was not in the business?

E: I guess.

D: What relationship was Mr. Hirschburg?

E: Friends.

D: Just friends.

E: And it is very funny. I was at the bank a couple of years ago and the trust officer said to me, "I just came back from Alaska." I said, "What on earth were you doing in Alaska?" He said, "Well, we have an estate that we are settling which has a number of shares in the Golden Elsa and I went up there to research it." So, people still have shares in the Golden Elsa.

D: So, it is still mining?

E: No.

D: It never mined too well?

E: No.

D: Are there any Hirschburg's left here?

E: There were no Hirschburg's here.

- D There were no offspring of any Hirschburg?
- E: No, Elsa Hartzel. Elsa Hirschburg married Sol Hartzel and I am sure you have the history of the Hartzel family.
- D Where does Hurtzug come in? There is a Hurtzug family Is that originally Hartzel?
- E. I do not know. Florence Liedman had a pass to escort people across the lines in the Civil War, because when I was doing research on the same subject for the council, I wrote to Florence Liedman Fells, who lives in Kansas City, and she told me this.
- D: Tell me about Jonnas Fell.
- E. Well, I really do not know very much
- D. Who are the people you think we should have names that even you do not know about?
- E. Well, I think you should have something about the Wiles here Of course, Grandma Wile used to go around with a long mourning veil down to her hips for as long as I can remember And her daughter, Clara, was born deaf, or became deaf early in life, and she was an outstanding woman. She read lips and could communicate with everyone. It was through her that the Hearing and Speech Center was started. I think my mother had to start that because she and Clara were very good friends. Clara's sister married in Altoona, and I think she married a Wile, but not related. Her daughter moved, married, and lives in New London and her new name is Elsenbine, which might help you to clear some of it. One of the Wiles, a relative of the Wiles, married Kathy Ritter, who was a member of the very prominent Ritter family She married Aleo wile and moved to Pittsburgh. He became a very prominent lawyer there. One of the other Ritter's, Carrie, was married to Mr. Theabald.
- D David Theabald?
- E: David Theabald. I could not forget the Duckling Family. And the only person that I know who might have some records of the Duckling Family is Clarisse Gusman Dolle, and I could give you her address, if you want it. Who would have it? I do not know who else.
- D: And what about Jonases?
- E Jonases? I have no idea. Because the only ones that I know that were living, lived in Louisville Texas and I cannot remember their married name.
- D When did your father move out to the country?

- E. Oh, I was about six or seven years old when they got the farm. I was born in 1906. They must have bought it in 1912.
- D. You lived out there, then?
- E. Only in the summers.
- D. Oh, it was more of a summer home?
- E. It was a summer home until the war. Maybe they moved in before that, because they used to rent places.
- D: What was the name of the farm?
- E. Jerold G's.
- D: Did the Strouss Family live in that direction at that time?
- E. They lived on Maplethought, which was on an extension of southern Boulevard, just beyond Western Reserve Road. Until they moved North and, at that time, it was that they went there in 1931, too.
- D. Do you want to talk about Clarence or any of their family?
- E. Well, I really do not have much to say that their children could not tell you better. Except that he was a wonderful man. He was like another father to me.
- D. Was he a warm person?
- E. Oh, my, yes he was. He had a heart as big as all outdoors. And he used to, every Christmas, go to a Children's home on Christmas Eve and take toys for all of the children. And when I was old enough, he would let me go with him. He did that as long as there was a children's home on Glenwood Avenue. And many, many other charity people do not even know it.
- D: What about his wife, Annie?
- E: When she came to town, she looked like a princess. She was so beautiful and she had a personality that was so magnetic. And she was so stylish, when she would walk down the street, they would make kind of an isle for her. And when she would walk in the room, you did not notice anybody else. And the saddest thing was, she became ill early in life and deteriorated. When she was young, she was radiant.

' D I had good memories when she was young.

E: And it is a pity that the people who knew here in later life did not have a chance to know her when she was young.

End of Interview