

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Youngstown Area Jewish Project

Personal Experiences

O.H. 1122

ERNEST GOTTESMAN

Interviewed on

May 2, 1986 and  
January 30, 1989

By

Irving Ozer

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Interviewer: Irving Ozer  
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IO: This is an interview with Ernie Gottesman on May 2, 1986. Let's talk a little bit. First talk about your vital history: when were you born? Where you were born? And how old are you?

EG: August 4, 1914 that makes me 71 now.

IO: Where?

EG: In Austria-Hungry. And after the First World War when President Wilson divided up Europe, we suddenly found ourselves under Romanian rule. I very well remember the day when they came to occupy the land, the Romanian Army. They were bedraggled. It was rainy. In our village, where my father was the rabbi and cantor, the name of the village was Szalárd. That village, by the way, my brother went to find it and its practically gone. Anyhow, at that time they were marching. There were no paved roads. All muddy roads and some of them didn't have boots or had holes in their boots. They were looting and breaking. The only thing that they were superstitious of was the synagogue. People hid their valuables in the synagogue until the trouble was over.

IO: You say they were looting and pillaging, you mean just the Jewish population?

EG: No, no. All the way.

IO: It wasn't particularly antisemitism.

EG: No, not at that time. Romania was known for its antisemitic feelings, but there it was "catch as catch can." My mother knew the army was coming the next day. She stayed up all night baking biscuits called pogácsé . So that she could pass it to the soldiers as they were going by. You weren't supposed to come into our yard. We had like a courtyard. In fact, our home didn't have wooden floors. It had earthen floors with lye solution to seal it. So my mother was passing out the pogácsé from the big basket. And I was only about six years old then. So later in the afternoon it was starting to get dark. One of the soldiers came into our synagogue yard which he wasn't supposed to do. And my father came to the door, and I always with my father, and standing next to him. The Romanian soldier points to my father's boots. He wanted the boots. My father said "No way." He knew a few words of Romanian because he had been in the army as a Chaplain. "No way." So he held the bayonet to my father's stomach. I was frozen. Very calmly, my father reached down and got a hold of the butt of the bayonet and sprung it at the soldier and sent him sprawling. Just then, the Captain that was leading this Romanian march came in. And he starting beating up on the soldier for coming in. He kept saying "Kirche! Kirche!" That means church. You're not supposed to come in. So, the soldier ran off but before he left my mother filled his pockets with pogácsé. Even though he threatened my father. And she took care of the captain too. When this was all over my father realized that it was no good.

IO: This was what? 1919?

EG: It was about 1919. We didn't leave until 1923- until arrangements were made to find him a synagogue. See a rabbi could come out and get a visa if he had a congregation to come to. That congregation- that my uncle, Martin Gottesman, lived in Warren. He had the Economy Shoe store in Warren. He contacted Andrew Reuben, the attorney who was the President of the Shaarei Torah. They had nobody. So my father filled a bill for rabbi, cantor, *shochet*- the whole bit.

IO: Did he get the *shochet* from somewhere?

EG: Oh yeah. He had the credentials. My father was a great scholar. Very great scholar. In fact, in Israel they called him a **rundin**.

So, arrangements- you know how they take time. It was 1923 before he was able to immigrate to America. He came first. By the way, would you like hear a little bit from my early childhood? When I was two years old... I want to regress a little bit and tell about myself, how I tied into this. When I was two years old, I took sick. I got pneumonia. It developed into double pneumonia. We had no hospital in the village, just one doctor. For two and half years, I never got out of bed. That is God's truth. When I was four and a half years old, I was being taught how to walk again on the long table, that served in the Hebrew school where my father taught the children. A long table and my whole family- I was the seventh child, the youngest. So all the big ones stood around to catch me if I fell. That's how I learned how to walk.

It was interesting how- it was my mother that saved my life actually. In Europe, when the final solution, the sickness, was coming, they call it the *krizis*- the crisis. My mother told me this afterward because I was out. The doctor said that if I made it through the night, I will probably have made it. If not, I'd meet my Lord early. So, it was about midnight- by the way, for two and half years they never had a chance to sleep through the night. They took turns watching over me. They'd put a feather under my nose to see if I was still breathing. That's how they could tell. It's a weird story, but it's true. Sitting there at midnight, the two of them, my mother says "Where has my head been all these months?" She says [to my father], "Go up to the attic. I put away some acacia flowers to dry." It's supposed to have great medicinal properties within it. So he ran up. Got up to the attic. Got the acacia flower. It was all dried out now. Made a powder out of it and made me tea mixed with milk and honey. Made it boiling hot and started forcing it down my throat. After a couple of hours of this forced feeding, I suddenly let go a big sigh and a fistful of phlegm came up that had been clogging me. And by eight o'clock in the morning, I was eating breakfast. My mother saved my life. [*shuts off tape then resumes*]. So, the next morning the doctor comes in to check on his favorite patient to see if I'd passed the crisis- the *krizis*. And I'm sitting up eating soft boiled eggs! See, because they kept feeding me that potion- that milk, honey, and acacia tea. All night long and more came up. I still have the mark on my back that

was left from the double pneumonias. I've had it three times. Got better, have it... I was never able to-

IO: What caused the mark?

EG: From my lung. I don't know. On the outside. It left a black mark. It's faded a lot, in the years gone by, but it's still there. You can tell. So, the doctor walks in and I'm sitting up. He can't believe his eyes. He says, "What happened?" in Hungarian. My mother says, "Nothing, nothing." She was afraid I'd tell on her. He said, "Now Rosie, something went on here last night and this boy has just swum the Danube." He said it in Hungarian of course. "You've made it. Now Mrs. Gottesman, you tell me what happened because maybe I can help someone else. Because my medial knowledge would not have been able to do this. I wanna know what happened." My mother told him about the potion that she created. And until we left for America, he kept telling my mother that he passes that out to everybody. So finally, the day came in 1923 and my father came to America. By the way, I have his passport picture with me. I've carried it around for almost sixty years. I got copies of it at home.

IO: Maybe we can xerox it. Do you think we can get a copy?

EG: I've got copies at home.

IO: How about that!

EG: He looks like Rasputin. See the *payot*? Look on the back. You'll see Solomon Jacob Gottesman. How do you like that?

IO: Okay, so he finally left in 1923...

EG: He left in 1923 and came here. He was met by my uncle Martin Gottesman.

IO: In New York?

EG: Yes, and then he brought him here to Youngstown.

IO: Did he go to Ellis Island to meet him?

EG: No, he waited. You couldn't go to Ellis Island. You had to wait for the little tug boat took you into the port. He took him to Youngstown and he came and took over the duties. He became *shochet* and *hazan* and rabbi of the Shaarei Torah.

You know that there was at time there were two Shaarei Torahs?

IO: Yeah, we'll get to in that in a little while, okay?

EG: You don't want to get in to it yet?

IO: No, I want to get him here and I want to get you here.

EG: Okay, so he worked very hard, saved every dollar.

IO: Was that his only job or did he do anything else?

EG: No, he became *shochet* at one of the butcher shops. I think at Rosenberg's. Later on, it became Miller and Rosenberg's.

IO: Where were they located?

EG: Out on East Federal Street, just passed Watts Street. Between Andrews and Watts Street. At that time, there were four or five butcher shops.

IO: Which ones?

EG: There was Hauffman's, Rosenberg... I just don't remember. I know there was Glickhurst [Glicksteen] selling chickens. I'm trying to remember the names.

IO: Okay, how did he get here, here then?

EG: Nine months later, he borrowed some money from my uncle to bring out everybody but my brother Gene, who is a rabbi, and I. He wanted to leave us in Europe because he said it wasn't firm enough in America. We should stay there and study to be rabbis. Well, I didn't like that at all.

IO: Our mother didn't stay then?

EG: Well, wait. We didn't leave yet. My father came alone first in 1923 and my mother and the kids stayed home.

IO: And then he sent for them?

EG: Then he sent for five kids. Two of us were supposed to stay in Europe until we became rabbis.

IO: With your mother or on your own?

EG: Without my mother. My mother was coming here with the five kids. Well, picture the two of us staying in Europe for another ten years. We'd have been caught in the Holocaust without question. But I didn't want that. My brother Gene didn't say anything, but I wrote my father a letter. "I'm not going to stay here in Europe while my mother goes to America. If you're going to make me stay here," I was nine years old when I wrote this letter, "then I'm going to jump in front of the train that takes my mother away." My father got that letter, and he showed it to my Uncle Martin and said, "What am I doing to do with him?" He said, "Send him a passport!" He says, "Don't wait to find out whether he would or he wouldn't." And sure enough, the five of us

came, but the two oldest, my oldest sister and oldest brother, came on their own visa about thirty or sixty days later. But my mother came with five kids.

IO: How did you travel?

EG: By boat.

IO: How did you get to the ocean?

EG: To the port? Cherbourg, France is where we embarked from. We got there two days and nights of train riding. We went through Switzerland...

IO: You didn't have any troubles?

EG: No, not yet. It was only 1924. Dad came in '23. We arrived in Youngstown- I'll tell you how, but I'll tell you the date. We arrived in Youngstown at the Erie station May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1924 at eleven o'clock in the morning.

IO: Hm. It's an anniversary yesterday.

EG: Yeah, sixty-two years ago we got here. Anyhow, we rode through the countries. The only place we had a little problem was in Germany. We stopped and we had to get some papers okayed to continue. And my mother didn't know how to get to the American consulate. So, we stopped some man to ask him how to get to the American consulate. We talked Yiddish-ized German. And he looked at my mother and he never answered her to tell her how to go. All he said was "Geplagte Juden."

IO: Already in 1924? Geez.



EG: That's right. And I still remember it ringing in my ears. So, we went further and finally got the information. And then we went on. Never realizing that the germ has been planted. "Geplagte Juden." Plagued Jews. That's what it means translated.

So meanwhile we got to Ellis Island and that was the worst experience of my life. It was like being in jail.

IO: Tell us what happened when you got off the ship.

EG: Well, they took us into Ellis Island and we were not allowed to get out into the yard. We had to stay in the building. There were locks and bars on the windows. For a nine-year-old kid to be locked up! It took a week! We were there for a solid week.

IO: Where did you sleep?

EG: Well, they had a place where you slept and you ate. They fed you. It was just that you're locked up. It's a taste of jail. I don't care what anybody tells you. It's a taste of jail. And they were clearing all the papers and everything- being a rabbi... clear the papers... Finally, word came that we were able to go. It was the morning, about 10 or 11 o'clock. My mother had washed some clothes. And she always counted noses to be sure that everyone was there, that we didn't wonder off. And they let us outside. The little tug boat wasn't taking us to New York until the afternoon, so we just ran outside. Ran around getting fresh air. Not only were there bars on the windows, they wouldn't even open the windows. All of a sudden, about 15 or 20 minutes before the tug boat came to take us, and we're looking around. The third oldest child, my sister Bertha, is missing. And we ran around. My mother was almost crazy. She went over to the head guy on Ellis Island she said, "I'm not leaving until I have all my five children. What am I going to tell my husband?" Boy, she got hysterical. She wanted to blame the elevator man. She didn't know who to blame. We're all running around like crazy. Everybody is looking for Bertha. Well, what happened was the fresh air hit her when we got out into the yard. It was a beautiful end-of-April day. (We got here May 1<sup>st</sup>, the next day. In those years, it was an all-night ride. We got on the train at midnight and we got here at eleven o'clock. On the train.) She fell asleep under a beautiful bush! She got dizzy from the wonderful air. And when we found her- oh, that was

good. Meanwhile, in the train, I walked around almost all night. I was in a new country. I was so engrossed with the excitement of it. I saw a person eating a banana. I had never seen a banana. So, as it happened, he spoke some German and I spoke a little Yiddish and we got along. He said “Here take one.” So I bit into the banana. [Laughs.] And I came back to him and said “*Sig me hoot?*”. He started to laugh. He said, “Come here” and he peeled it off. “Oh, das is good.”

Finally, we got to Cherbourg, France. We boarded a boat called the “Pittsburgh.” We could have waited for a week and come on the flagship, the *Majestic*, but my mother wanted to get here. This is going to be interesting. Out of six people, five kids and my mother, I was the only one who didn’t get sea sick. The rest of them, the first day was impossible. They couldn’t stand.

IO: How did you come? Steerage or First class?

EG: Steerage. Who has money for first class? We were down in the hold. Way down deep. So, I was the only one free. I was the “go-for”- go for this, go for that. A nine-year old go-for. I ran for hot milk and hot tea. And I knew how to say two words: “alright” and “thank you.” I thought “alright” meant “thank you” too. One night my brother Gene was ready to kick out the sides of the boat. He was so sick. He just wanted to die. You know, sea sickness can be very debilitating. So, I run upstairs. It was pretty late at night- between nine and ten o’clock at night. But where I could get hot milk and hot tea, I had to go up to first class.

IO: Did you have to buy it?

EG: No. But to get it, they didn’t make it down in steerage. See it was *Pesach* time. We were on the boat most of *Pesach*. We had brought along the big bag of matzas and smoked turkey. We ate kosher so we brought our own food. So, I come upstairs, I tell them “Milk?” and “Té?” So they fix me up a pot of hot milk and a pot of hot tea. And I could serve all of them. I was the only one who wasn’t sick. The whole trip, none of them came up out of steerage. That’s right. Until we saw the Statue of Liberty, I was the only one. So, I come upstairs and I had just asked them for it. I hear doors clanging. They had steel doors that would cut off the first class, second class, and down at the steerage. They had sighted a big iceberg and they didn’t want panic so they locked

everybody in their places. But I was left on deck! And I was up there until about three o'clock in the morning when they opened the doors again. My mother was ready to say *Kaddish* for me. She was sure I'd fell overboard and drowned. Gone. Good bye. She said, "For this I saved him?" On the deck, when I got locked out of going back down to my family, there was a big man standing by the railing holding on, looking. It was a moonlit night. And I saw the iceberg far, far off. The moon was glistening on it. And I found out afterward, that whatever you see with the naked eye, there's ten times that much more ice underwater. And they had a fog horn. See there was no radar. This is 1924. You're talking about 62 years ago. Every time that fog horn would blow, it went to my *kishkas*. And I was scared. I was really frightened. All of a sudden, this big black man comes and stands next to me and starts talking to me. I say "*Hogy vagy?* [Who are you?]" He was the light heavy-weight champion of the world. He was going to New York for a fight. His name was Battling Psyche. I'll never forget it. I found out a few years later when I was going to the yeshiva in New York, the newspaper I saw where he was stabbed to death by a jealous lover. But anyhow, he befriended me. He spoke some German. He was a Nigerian. How he spoke some German, I don't know. So, with my Yiddish and his German, we got to be friends. And he put me up on the table while we were up there and no one was there. He was teaching me how to box. That's what helped me in later years because they do a lot of boxing at the University of Minnesota. But anyhow, we still had about five or six days left of the journey when we finally passed the danger. They open the door and I go down. The next night he came for me and put me up on the table. He happened to have a pair of little gloves that he was taking for his kid. He put them on me and we put on a boxing exhibition! The people just loved it. Of course, it gave me chance to be up on first class. I was up there most of the time. They were sick down there! I couldn't help it. So that's the trip over. But otherwise, here in America, we didn't have any problems.

IO: You didn't have any problems coming across the country? You came by Erie?

EG: No, because there was always somebody. There were a lot of greenhorns, they called them. Immigrants were called greenhorns in those years. There was always somebody there that could speak the language. They kept an eye out. There was a special train for you. So that was no problem.

IO: So, you were met when you came to Youngstown by?

EG: Martin Gottesman and my father. My father and my uncle.

IO: What was your father's first name?

EG: Solomon Jacob. So, we got here to Youngstown. They took us to Fulton Street, to my aunt and uncle- Mr. and Mrs. Isidor Landt. His brother had a tailor shop and ran the tailors. But we stayed there. And Marvin and his folks, Ester and Israel Iscovitz- Israel was still alive then. He died a little bit after we came, soon after- so we spent a few days there until we found a home on Lane Avenue. They enrolled all five of us (age meant nothing) in special class at Madison Avenue School.

IO: The Steamer Class? I remember it.

EG: Yes, the Steamer Class. So, I took to English like a duck takes to water. So, my mother would send me to the store to do the shopping. Because if I didn't know the word for a certain item, I'd go next door to the Klein family and ask Mrs. Klein how to say it. That's how I learned.

IO: Which Klein family was that?

EG: They were in the produce business. Then they moved to Coney Island. I don't know if you remember them.

IO: No.

EG: That was on Prospect Street. We lived on Lane Avenue for a while. But we liked the Prospect Street house better so we moved. And after living on Prospect Street for a while, we moved to Himrod Avenue. Stayed there for a while. Do you know where Shehy Street school is? Well, there's an empty lot going East- there's Shehy school, an empty lot, then a house. We

bought that house. And we lived on Shehy Street until my father and mother moved to California in 1939. He became a *hazan* and *shochet* on Glendale Boulevard. There was a nice synagogue just off Glendale Boulevard. But while he was in Youngstown, he was at the large Shaarei Torah on Himrod Avenue. When we came here, already there were two Shaarei Torah. There was a split off. I guess there was an argument and they didn't agree.

IO: Were they both Romanian?

EG: I don't know denomination. All I know is there was a *Kleyn* Shaarei Torah and a *Drisha* Shaarei Torah.

IO: And where was the *Kleyn* one?

EG: On Hine Street. Right up the street. See the *Drisha* Shaarei Torah was on Prospect and Himrod, right on the corner.

IO: Who were some of the people who were in each?

EG: Well the Eisenstats... There was a Mr. Kohn, who was a fine *ba'al koreh* and *davener*. He sort of conducted services at the Hine Street church. It's hard to remember their names. I'll come back.

IO: What about at yours?

EG: Well, there was Sidney Silverman. You know, he belonged there. Louie Hartzciwicz. Mike Jaffy. You know... when my father as the *hazan* over there, you know the East Side had about 175 Jewish families? And about 150 of them belonged to the big one and about 25 to 30 belonged to the smaller one. They broke away. And I know Andy Rueben was the President. Do you know that Andy used to walk from Dennick Avenue to Himrod and Prospect on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

IO: That apartment building- is that where they lived?

EG: Yeah. He owned that apartment building. He lived on the first floor. I think it's a four-plex.

*Tape cuts off 31:50.*

*Begin new tape from Jan 30, 1989.*

IO: This Irving Ozer and today is January 30, 1989. I'm sitting here with Cantor Ernest Gottesman who's going to share with us some of his recollections coming to Youngstown and in Youngstown. Ernie, where were you born?

EG: I was born in Austria-Hungary in a little village called Szalárd. That became a Romanian possession after President Wilson cut up Europe after World War I. We were doing wonderfully under Franz Joseph the King, but when the Romanians took over... I remember to this day, I was about 6 years old, they came to occupy the land. There was brutality all over.

IO: Franz Joseph was a pretty benevolent king, wasn't he? He was friendly to the Jews...

EG: He was the most wonderful friend the Jews ever had outside their own religious beliefs.

IO: We have in another place, your memories of that all the way to Ellis Island. Tell us now, start talking about what happened when you got to Ellis Island. When you got to Ellis Island and so forth.

EG: Oh good. Did I charge you for that original tape? About coming to America? This is supposed to be a little funny.... [laughs]

IO: [laughs] No, you didn't. I wouldn't pay you anyway!

EG: We have to have a break. I am now in Ellis Island. It was the closest thing to being in prison for a week as we could get.

IO: What date was this approximately?

EG: What date? Well, we arrived in Youngstown... It was in the year 1924. I would say... We got to Youngstown on May 1<sup>st</sup>, so it would be about the middle of April. Because we were for a week in Ellis Island.

IO: What year was it?

EG: 1924.

IO: Ok. Go ahead. Tell it in your own way.

EG: So, we got to Ellis Island. And my mother, my two sisters, and my brother and I. 5 people. 3 sisters. I'm sorry. I have 5 sisters. The last one was born in America. I always teased her through the years that she robbed me of my station in life as the youngest of all the eight kids.

IO: And that was who?

EG: That was Mrs. Lila Dwaskin- my youngest sister. Anyhow, we got to Ellis Island. All the papers had to be- We weren't allowed to get off the island until all the papers were cleared. We're talking about 1924. And finally, the word came that we're okay. And we start getting ready to leave Ellis Island on a little tug boat. Drive out to take us to New York. And we're short one sister. And we start counting noses and my sister Bertha is nowhere to be found. She's the one that comes on the High Holidays from California to hear me *daven*. And we start running round the island trying to find Bertha. And my mother was sure that she was kidnapped by the elevator operator. And she was raising a tumult. You can visualize it. All of a sudden, she says "Everybody be quiet. I have something to say. I'm going to say it in Hungarian, and Yiddish, and German. I want you all to listen. We are not leaving this island and nobody else is until I take to my husband all the kids that he helped me make!" That's the truth! She said "Now everybody better start looking because nobody's leaving until I have five children and me, number six." We

were running around for an hour or two and it was getting desperate. You know, the boat that wanted to go. And all of a sudden as I'm running, I trip on a bush. I go flying. My sister Bertha fell asleep under a bush. We got fresh air for the first time in a week. They had us locked up behind bars. Ellis Island was a brutal place to stay. Now it's a relic. You know, went with... So anyhow we went to New York. We were met there by a very dear friend of ours that went to America ahead of my father. Did I tell you that my father came nine months ahead of us?

IO: Yes.

EG: So that you've got. We're not that formal that we can't talk back and forth. Overnight, we stayed at this friend of ours from Europe. The next day we got on the train to come to Youngstown, Ohio. Well, how did we get to Youngstown, Ohio? Why did we get to Youngstown is very pertinent. Because you could not get a visa. Europe was starting to get troublesome. You could not get a visa to come out or to bring a family out unless there was a livelihood arranged for by the person. A clergyman, or a doctor- no questions asked. My father became the rabbi and cantor of the Shaarei Torah on Himrod Avenue. And because of the strength of that, he was allowed to bring out his family. But you needed about \$5,000. So, he borrowed that from his youngest brother, Martin Gottesman, who had this shoe store in Warren, Ohio.

IO: Was your father the first rabbi at Shaarei Torah?

EG: I think he was.

IO: Do you know when it was founded? That's very important.

EG: It was only a few years. I don't think it was more than... Well, the little Shaarei Torah was founded ahead of the big one. But I don't remember.

IO: Ok, well come later. Let's go back to the reason you were able to come to the United States is because your father-



EG: Came nine months ahead of us.

IO: And he had a post of a rabbi and cantor. How did he get that job?

EG: Through my uncle Martin and Andy Reuben. Andy Reuben was an attorney in Youngstown, Ohio, living on Dennick Avenue. Andy Reuben said I can bring out your family if you can arrange this kind of funds. So, Andy Rueben was the President of the synagogue Shaarei Torah - the big Shaarei Torah. And it was interesting. It was nothing on the High Holidays- he was so pious and he was President, that he walked from Dennick Avenue to Himrod Avenue. And you know what kind of a walk that was. But he was the President and he felt he was showing the way.

We came out to America and here I am on a train in America on the way to Youngstown. In those years, the train took all night long. So we traveled most of the afternoon and into the night. And my uncle and my father met us at the Erie Railroad station. At 11:00 in the morning on Friday. *Erev Shabbat*. 1924. Did you get the date of arrival?

IO: I'm just writing down things I want to ask you later.

EG: My father was a very pious man but he realized that America was not as pious as he was. And therefore, certain concessions had to be made. And his youngest son, Moshe, (that's me) had *payot*. You know what the payot is? We'll explain it to everybody. Its growing hair locks-side locks. So we stayed the first *Shabbat* at my uncle and aunt Izzy Rand, who worked for the Rand Brothers tailors. And Soricana, his wife, was my father's sister. And it was arranged that we stay there on Shabbat until we moved into our house on Lane Avenue. We'll come to that later. We went home 11:00 the train picked us up.

By the way, I had two funny experiences on the train. One of them was, I had never seen a banana. But I did speak a few words of German, couple words of English. "Alright" and "Thank you." He called me over. I was a pretty cute kid- I was 9 years old. Cubby. Singing all the time, you know? He gave me a banana. I started eating it- with the peel! [laughs] Well, he got hysterical you know. This man, he was laughing so hard. So I knew how to say in German "Was

ist die große Sache?"- you know- "What's the big deal?" So he took the banana from me. Peeled it. He said "Now eat it." See? Then I never saw a raw tomato. We got plenty of tomatoes in Europe but they were always stewed or cooked. And here you were eating it raw. Its funny what a little kid would be impressed with. So, we got to my aunt's house about 2, 3 in the afternoon and had lunch. After lunch my father called me upstairs. He said "Moshe, this is going to hurt me more than its going to hurt you. In America you can't wear payot because they'll throw stones after you. It'll look bad." So, I started to cry. "Take away my payot!" "I told you it would hurt me more than it would hurt you. So, lets try it. If it doesn't hurt you, we'll finish the other one." So he cut off my payot and it felt alright. And he says my brother, who's four and half years older than I and has now been a rabbi for many years, "No one is going to cut off my payot. No sir! No! No! No!" In Hungarian. My father said "Okay. Even if they throw stones? Alright. But when you decide that you do want to have it done, let me know because there's a certain blessing that you make. I won't give it to you unless you deserve it." So we had our payot cut off and Monday morning after the Shabbat activity, we were shipped off to Madison Avenue School. That's where all the greenhorns came to start speaking English.

IO: You had a Steamer Class?

EG: Well, we called 'em Greenhorns. Steamer class. It's all the same. But it was all ages. There was no age barrier- older or younger. Twelve to 9 years old. Then we went to night school. Day school and then night school to learn quicker.

IO: Where did you go to night school?

EG: Same place. They had classes for the adults but young ones could come if they so desired. By the way, an interesting thing- Do you know Chubby Rome? Well Chubby Rome bought the shoe store in Warren from my uncle that made it possible for us to come to America. As a tie in with Chubby Rome. The Economy Shoe Store is what made it all possible. I think that pertinent. So, we were thriving in America. We finally went to our first home in America- Lane Avenue. And it was only two blocks from the school. See now you've got a highway over there where

that school was. How and why the two Shaarei Torah developed, I think it was, they figured that the Himrod Avenue, it was a split off.

IO: Which was first?

EG: I think Tavela Kohn was first, the little Shaarei Torah.

IO: The Little Shaarei Torah. And that was the one on-

EG: I think Prospect Street?

IO: One was on Himrod and one was on... Hines Street?

EG: Hines Street. That's it. That one was first. That was the little Shaarei Torah. Then the big Shaarei Torah started getting a little bit more modern. And Tavela Kohn came upon the scene. It was *ba'al tefilah*. He said that if we stay on Hines Street, the big Shaarei Torah will go their own way. So will you assure me that I'll be able to double for you even if there's a split up? So they said certainly. So that hastened the split up. By the time we came out the big Shaarei Torah was already in existence a few years. I'd say 4 or 5 years. Being a 9-year-old, that wasn't one of my most important things. I was more concerned about studying for my bar mitzvah.

By the way, my singing career started when I was 10 years old. We got here May 1<sup>st</sup>. I was 10 years old in August. May, June, July, August. I turned 10 years old. And for the High Holidays, my two brothers were singing with my father. So at one of the rehearsals, nobody even bothered with me, at one of the rehearsals, my father says to the middle brother, Gene- "Will you go and get Moshe? Maybe we can use him for the holidays." So at 10 o'clock at night, my eyeballs were blinking. He wakes me up "Pop wants to see you." I come downstairs. "Moshe, sing with us." So signing was my forte, my love, but I didn't sound that good at 11 o'clock at night after waking up from a deep sleep, you know? So my brother, the smart aleck says, "You'll never be a singer." So my father says "Yesum Mayer, Moshe will sing much better than you." And he had only heard me do a couple of lines. Well, P.S. I sang with my father that High Holidays and then I came to Temple Emmanuel.

IO: This was in 1924 at Shaarei Torah.

EG: Right.

IO: The big Shaarei Torah? Or the little one?

EG: Yeah. We never went to the little Shaarei Torah.

IO: Can I interrupt your line of thought for a moment? Why did the two Shaarei Torahs pass out of the picture? What happened?

EG: If you would look at the geography of the East Side, when we came to America, I would estimate that the per family capita was I would say 150 to 175 families at least. The Kaufmanns, and the Hydovitz's. They all-

IO: Give me some other names, if you can remember.

EG: Sid Silverman and his dad. And the sign painter- he's always the usher at LMS...

IO: Harskovitz?

EG: Yeah, Lou Harskovitz. His whole family. And Mike Jaffee and the family. Its hard to suddenly- At least 150 to 175 who could well afford to have two congregations. I would say maybe even close to 200 families. Today, you have one family left- Hyquins. Period. See, so the little Shaarei Torah didn't feel that their style of *davening*, style of praying of the big Shaarei Torah was commensurate with their beliefs.

IO: What were they?

EG: It would be almost like if Children of Israel broke away and started Anshe Emeth.

IO: Yeah, I understand. What were they originally? What was the little Shaarei Torah? Was it Hungarian? Lithuanian?

EG: Lithuanian.

IO: Lithuanian. And they were orthodox obviously.

EG: Very orthodox. Shaarei Torah on Himrod Avenue was orthodox but not the most real orthodox. The men and women didn't sit together at either.

IO: Were they also Lithuanian?

EG: It was a mixture. Hungarian. Litvaks. Galitzianers.

IO: Do you have any idea how long each one lasted? Which one had the cemetery? The Cornersburg Cemetery. Which one had that?

EG: The Cornersburg Cemetery was Anshe Emeth.

IO: No, It was originally Shaarei Torah's and then it became Ohev Tzedek.

EG: What, the cemetery? I remember when we bought the land at Anshe Emeth.

IO: Okay, we'll straighten that out later.

EG: Mentioned some names of the cemetery.

IO: No, according to the record, when Ohev Tzedek and Shaarei Torah merged, Ohev Tzedek took over their cemetery. According to what I can find, their cemetery was the one in Austintown, Cornersburg, Canfield, whatever it was. But I don't know which of the two.

EG: Oh, that's Ohev Tzedek.

IO: Which of those two congregations merged with Ohev Tzedek? The Big one or the small one?

EG: It had to be the big one because the little one closed before the big one.

IO: I see.

EG: That's definite.

IO: Okay. I'll get it straightened out then. So now let's back up to your first performance as a singer.

EG: Right, the following year, Cantor Block heard about me. And he came over to the house, wondered if I would be a soloist in his choir.

IO: That's at Emmanuel?

EG: At Emmanuel. They said sure. And we had a big- no women in the choir. We had a big choir of men and boys. I was the alto soloist and I was very little at that time.

IO: How old? About fifteen?

EG: No, eleven.

IO: Oh, Eleven? Oh!

EG: Sure, when I was ten my father had me sing with him. The following year, when I was eleven. By the time I was twelve years old.... Would you like to know what I was paid for the holidays as an alto soloist? It was unbelievable. I got \$125.

IO: You must have been good!

EG: I was very good!

IO: Who else was in the choir at that time?

EG: Reverend Brown ?? – his two sons, Jack and Richard, sang in the choir. Sam Harshman sang in the choir. One of the Brath boys sang in the choir. Maurice Goldman from Cleveland- a fine musician- was the choir director. And then I went to New York from there. The last I sang at Temple Emmanuel was when I was thirteen. Then my father sent me to New York to the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath to study for the... And for the first few months I stayed with a family my folks knew very well and – you know this brings back so many memories. Sometimes it's difficult to continue for a minute or two.

IO: Take your time.

**ABOUT 26:00**

EG: Anyhow, I went to the Torah Vodaath and I stayed with this family in Coney Island. So I was member of the First Day School in that area, in Williamsburg. That's where the Yeshiva was and I had to ride for an hour on the subway each way, each day. So, I decided that that's no good. I'm going to do something better. I looked around to sing in the choir. Cantor Hirschman, Mordechai Hershman, world-renowned, had a great choir director Leo Low. I heard about Leo Low- he was a composer and choir director. There was a big competitive situation there. Two synagogues- one had Cantor Mordechai Hershman, one had Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt. So, they alternated because people wanted to hear them both and they didn't want the two cantors to daven the same Shabbat. Then not enough people would hear it. So, Cantor Leo Low was always on the hunt for good boys voices. And I found out where he lived. I was thirteen years old. This big. And I found out where he lived and I went up there to see him. Talk about hutzpah! His wife answers the door- I did the same thing for Rosenblatt by the way. I sang in both choirs. But I started with Leo Low. Big bushy hair. I still see him conducting the choir like a wild man. But anyhow, we got time yet? I found out he lived in Borrow Park. So did Ethel Rosenberg, but I

wanted to hit Leo Low first. So I came up to their apartment and knocked on the door. A nice lady answered the door, “Yes, *meyn ingele*. What can I do for you?” I said, “I’d like to see Mr. Low the choir director.” She calls out, “Leo, a nice little boy wants to see you here.” So, he comes out. “What can I do for you?”

“I’d like to sing solos in your choir.”

“Well, you would? So would a lot of other boys. What makes you think that you could sing solos in my choir?”

“Because I sing *good*.”

He says, “Let me hear.”

And I still remember I sang this solo for Leo Low and then a few weeks later I sang it for Rosenblatt. ‘Cause I went after him too, just so I wouldn’t have to miss a shabbat. I sang *Retze, Retze. Retze...*

Leo said “stop, stop! You can sing solos in my choir.”

Honest to God. I started with him and they were paying \$5 for a choir member plus \$7.50 for a soloist. That was a lot of money. I held off Rosenblatt because my father studied cantorial chants from Rosenblatt because my father’s father-in-law made Rosenblatt what he was. He wanted to bring him to America. He had one of the great voices of his time. And America was full enough- he couldn’t come. They wanted a sponsor. He was 5 foot tall, but he had the most glorious voice. When we left America, I mean when we left Europe to come to America, he came to see us- my mother’s father. I still hear the ringing of his voice in my ears to this day. God’s truth.

So anyhow it was no problem to get into Rosenblatt’s choir because I got it on my own. I told him afterwards that I was Mandela Kolkar’s *eynikl*. *Eynikl* is grandson. “Mandela Kolkar’s grandson? Why didn’t you tell me?” “I didn’t want you to let me sing because of that.” I was always a proud, cocky little character. No, but I didn’t want anyone to do me favors that I didn’t earn. That’s lasted me through my life.

So, then Rosenblatt went to Israel. Mordechai Hirschman passed on when I was fifteen. And I hooked up with a Cantor Schreider who was the new rage of Burrough Park. I’m giving you some history. By the way, I got to the point already where I was singing at weddings at \$10 a wedding. And the most popular song of that era was for weddings “Oh, promise me that someday you and I will take our love...” That’s all. No more singing. It’s not a singing program, you know.



IO: No, they can't type singing.

EG: I stayed for one *yontiv*. See, when I sang with Low and later on a little bit with Rosenblatt, I used to come home from *yontiv* and sing with Block. 'Cause he had first call to my services, you know. I wouldn't let him down.

[32:00 - start of new tape]

Ok, do we carry on?

IO: Yes, about Block not feeling well.

EG: I told my father that I would look for a job for the High Holidays in Borough Park and I met Cantor Schreider. He had two boys singing with him in his choir. I just fitted in like a hand in a glove. Meanwhile, as soon as I started singing with Leo Low and then with Rosenblatt, I was making enough money from weddings I didn't need any more money from home. I took care of myself real well. By the time I got to Schreider, I was fifteen, my voice was beginning to crack. You know, your voice changes after fifteen or sixteen. I still had one holiday left in me. I got paid very well but by the time *Sukkot* came around, we were just able to finish *Sukkot*. And I stayed at Cantor Schreider's home. I was his guest. He paid me well. But then my voice changed. Either I was going to be a bass or a tenor. Whichever one came first.

So, I came home. I was sixteen years old. "You Moshe, what did you learn in the Yeshiva?" I said, "I learned that I don't want to be a rabbi."

He said, "You don't want to be a rabbi? You've gone to the Yeshiva for so many years."

I said, "Yes, but I would rather... I just don't seem to fit in to the rabbinic mold." "So, what would you like to do?" I said, "Be a cantor." "That's not bad either." He said, "But remember one thing." I'll never forget this, by the way. He did this when I sang with him the first year. I forgot to tell you. But we can correct that. I was singing one of the solos with my father when all of a sudden, he reached across and gently slapped my face. I said, "Pop, what did I do?" He said, "Moshe, if you can't sing God's prayers with all your heart, don't sing them at all!" That has stayed with me all my life. You know, some of the ladies here remember me- well, you remember me singing- you remember that I sing with all my heart. But that came from my father

swiping me- “Don’t sing God’s prayers if you can’t sing with them all your heart.” I never forgot it. He taught me the meaning of the prayers. I mean, without him I would have never been the cantor that I developed into.

Ok, so therefore we’ll go right now back to the last holiday I sang as a boy soloist. Then I came home to stay home for the time being. I graduated high school from East High. My voice was slowly coming back. Very slowly. But the fact remained that when I was 20, not only did I get my voice back, I got it back real nice. It was coming back real nice. As a tenor. And I landed in Minneapolis because my brother went there as a cantor. He was leaving so I decided to come and see if I could make my way there. But before we go into the cantorial profession, I think it a little interesting note. By the way, you can cut out anything you don’t like. When I graduated high school, I was seventeen years old and my voice was not back yet. I still had-

IO: Where did you graduate?

EG: East High. See I was there the last year. I came home when my voice changed. It cracks, you know.

IO: Did you have any trouble with your credits from New York?

EG: No, no. In fact, I didn’t even have to take an entrance exam. In those years, when I entered the University of Minnesota, I did not have to take an entrance exam because they got my records. East High School was a very accredited school at one time.

So, what to do for a couple of years until my voice started to come back? I always had it in my mind. I wish I would have kept- I made out a book of different cantors- Rosenblatt- who were my idols, and so on. I had two years there I was like in limbo. So, I got a job with Miller and Rosenberg butcher shop because I couldn’t work on Shabbat. My father would have been heartbroken.

IO: Where were they?

EG: On East Federal. Miller and Rosenberg. It was an interesting job. Then one day my brother writes to me and he says “Moshe, I’m gonna to leave Minneapolis, but they need a cantor on the North Side.” I said, “But I’m no cantor yet.” He said, “But you know how to *daven*. So, you’ll study music at the University of Minnesota. See what you can do.” Rabbi Aaronson, he was the rabbi. I don’t know if you’ve heard of him. But he was God’s angel walking on this Earth. He just died last Fall at age 95 or 97. He shaped my life. He taught me *darehenst*- it means the dignity of the pulpit. Can you shut that off for a moment?

IO: You were the moderator and pall bearer at his funeral. Was he related to the Aaronson’s in Akron?

EG: I don’t know. I don’t think so.

IO: You met some relatives of Oscar’s. Who were they?

EG: Here in the hospital, you mean?

IO: No, in Minneapolis.

EG: Well, my son lives in Minneapolis....

IO: No, when you were there. Were you in Minneapolis or Milwaukee? In Milwaukee. I’m sorry.

EG: From 1934 to 1940.

IO: You were working in Minneapolis. You told Oscar that you knew some of his relatives.

EG: Yes, but I can’t place them.

IO: I thought it was the Aaronson’s because they’re related. But I guess I’m wrong.

EG: No. I'll go with the two boys of Rabbi and Mrs. Aaronson had. One was rabbinical.

IO: So you went to his funeral? You were a pallbearer?

EG: I was an honorary pall bearer. Because they took me in. Well, I'll lead up to coming home. Where did I quit?

IO: You said you went to work for Rabbi Aaronson.

EG: I came to Minneapolis. My brother had told me that they had never had a cantor at Beth El. They had a *shamash* who was also a *baltvilla*. So, Gene thought that I would be able to fit in. So anyhow, I left on a morning on the bus. It was a 32-hour ride on the bus to go from Youngstown to Minneapolis. My mother (*Aleha hasholom*, may she rest in peace) said "Moshe, you're going away to make your way in the world. If they don't treat you good, you tell them there's always Shehy Street." I'll never forget that. So I left. I came to Minneapolis.

IO: You were living on Shehy Street then?

EG: Yes. I came to Minneapolis. My brother talked to Rabbi Aaronson. By the way, he was one of the great scholars of the day, of this age. That's not according to my judgement but he was just so humble. When he got his degree, as Dr. Aaronson, he told the congregation that they should please call him Rabbi because that's honorary enough. To be a scholar in the Torah is enough honor for me.

So anyhow, I came to him and he had two boys- Hillel and Rayfield. They took me on as a big brother. And for six years, not once, not any Sabbath or any holiday did they allow me to have dinner anywhere except in his home. For six years! I said, "Rabbi, why are you insisting on that?" "Because you are everybody's pet and they'll want for you to marry their daughters and you'll probably bring somebody from Youngstown." I said, "You're right." "And I don't want you to get into trouble." It was such a... meanwhile, just as an off- I took care of Rabbi Aaronson four years ago. Wait it was more than that. When were we married? Five and half years ago. We were in Los Angeles, and I took her to meet Rabbi Aaronson. He was a frail little man but his eyes were big. He couldn't see well but he came over this close to Carol. "Earnest, I approve." So anyhow, I got there in 1934 in November, after elections. That's how I remember.

And he allowed me to start *davening*, and for the High Holidays to develop a choir. I didn't know anything about developing a choir. But I had guts, like I had guts to go up to those two great giants Leo Low and to Rosenblatt. I had guts. So fortunately, one of the men in the choir, a basso, was in charge of music for the Twin Cities- a brilliant musician. He took me under his wing and said I'll be your choir director for the holidays on one condition because you're a cute little so on and so forth. I like you. And he changed my life. Rabbi Aaronson came to me in May. Don't forget that I got there in November and this is May. By that time, a Cantor Riechman, I don't know if you've ever heard of him? World-renowned. These names in the old-time cantorial circles these were the top people- giants. A Mr. Premak paid for lessons for me. Not only did I come home every summer and learn more cantorial expertise, but also from Cantor Reichman. So from my father I learned the traditional. From Cantor Reichman, the stylist *davening*. That's why I *daven* pretty good! You know?

So he comes to me in May and says, "Earnest, we all love you but unless you do what I ask you to do, you're going to have to go home." I said, "But I don't want to go home." "Well then listen carefully. The Board wants to meet with you and give you a contract. But I told them on one condition." See Aaronson was God- a humble, lovable God. They wouldn't make a step with Aaronson. "I told them if you'll agree to enter the University of Minnesota and study music, become the kind of cantor I know he can become, we'll give him the best contract we can afford. But if he doesn't want to become that kind of a cantor I think he should become, he'll have to go home." I said, "Okay." So, he told that to me. Now it's up to you. We had a pretty good income. It was a 500-family congregation then already. Now it's 2200. You know, so he says- he never called me Ernie. It was always Earnest. Proper. He says, "I hope that you listen to me because I see visions of you being a beautiful cantor. And I hate to see it wasted. But if you go home without going to school, you'll just become another one." I said, "I'll do whatever you want me to do." It was the best advice I ever had in my life.

So Gene left and I remained. And I helped them hire another cantor for the South Side. And I became the cantor at Beth El synagogue at age 35. I mean, sorry- yes age 35. Full time. The last High Holidays was my 54<sup>th</sup> year as a High Holiday cantor. 54<sup>th</sup> year.

So now, how come I came back to Youngstown? Well, there was a lot of illness in my wife's family, I believe you all know Francis. And my father-in-law then, David Sniderman, wanted me to get Francis to come home because she was needed. So reluctantly, I left Beth El synagogue in

Minneapolis and we came home to Youngstown and a year later, 1940, funny thing- to the day. I arrived in Minneapolis on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1934 and left on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1940. Both coming and going on the exact same day. Talk about interesting side notes.

So I came back to Youngstown, and how did I come to land at Anshe Emeth? You'd like to know that? Okay that will be extra. Cantor Paul Discount was almost as much responsible for my any kind of expertise as a cantor as my father or Cantor Reichman. Because Cantor Discount was a great musician. And he an offer to go to California to Warner Brothers to write music. But he needed somebody (and we got back in November) to finish his contract which lasted until July the next year. So it was December, January, February, March, April, May, June, July- eight months. Cantor Discount was getting paid the grand sum of \$1800 a year as cantor. And that's on record and don't let anybody dare to challenge me because they'll get whipped. So Bern Adler was Chairman of the Religious Community President but he couldn't be Chairman of the Religious Community because Sig Yarmy held that post for 90 years. Many years anyhow. He was the religious expression Anshe Emeth. Sig Yarmy was a wonderful soul and very pious. Well, I had no problem. "Would you finish my contract for me?" So, I met with the Board. And I told them. They told me that they wanted to make a deal with Cantor Paul Discount. I said "I'll finish is contract on one condition: they you pay him the eight months' salary that he earned ahead of time so he'd have money enough to take the train to California where he has an opportunity to work at Warner Brothers. While we're at it, I want to tell you that it's a shame what you expected Cantor Discount to live with- \$1500 a year." "Well, the Rabbi only gets \$3800 or \$3600." So, I said, "Pay him more too!" That was Rabbi Kollin.

So came May, they want to talk business. I said, "I'd be happy to be your cantor." "Well let's talk remuneration." I said, "I want \$5,000 a year." In those years that was... well it was pretty good jump from 1800. It hurt me to... a man of Discount's ability. His voice was gone, true, but he was a brilliant musician, composer. I still sing all his music on the holidays, you know. "\$5,000!" That's what he said. The rabbi only gets 3600!" And I said, "Well, all the more you should be ashamed. I want to live in the kind of home that I'm not ashamed to invite any of you to come and see me. And if you can't find that you can to do that, you don't need me. And I sure don't need you." That wasn't cocky. I was hurt for Discount. Can you imagine \$1800 a year? Living on Madison Avenue upstairs in some God-forsaken hole? So, Morris Unger, may he rest in peace, he was the Treasurer for many, many years. He was the Treasurer at that time. They all

looked to Morris Unger. I was at the Board meeting so I know what happened. “Well, what do you say Morris? What should we do with this guy?” He says, “I want to tell you gentleman something. This is the first time I ever heard a *heyilige mentsch* (that means a holy man) talk like a business man. I say pay him if you want him- and I want him!” Yay! [claps] Can you visualize that Board meeting? Of course, Reverend Kollin blessed the ground that I walked on after that. He didn’t know what hit him.

IO: What did they pay him?

EG: They were paying him \$3600 so he went I think to \$5600 or \$5800. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. But anyhow, I finished the contract. I made them pay him the 8-month’s salary in advance. I sang for nothing for 8 months. If there were any weddings or funerals, I gave him the receipts. Not that I want any thanks, but he helped me with giving me every new composition he composed. I was the first one he sent it to. Then he sent it East. So, whatever I did for him was very small compared to what he did for me.

Then in 1951 my father-in-law took very ill- David Sniderman. And my brother-in-law, Lou Sniderman asked me if I’d like to come in to the business which was Steel City Milling. So, I said I never was in business. I don’t know how I would do. He said, anyone who can learn to be a cantor can certainly learn to be a business man. It’s not so difficult. So, in 1951 I became a part-time cantor and a full-time businessman. And this coming Wednesday will be 38 years that I’ve been with Steel City Milling. But I never quit singing God’s prayers. Because I told Lou and Dave that if I had to quit singing my prayers to God, even part-time, then don’t count on me. I wouldn’t quit that because my mother put a blessing on me. “Moshe” she says, “never quit singing God’s prayers.” How could I go against my little mama? By the way the Shul and the Shaarei Torah, even the big one, had women and men sitting separate. They were that orthodox yet.

So I’ve been talking now. You wanna shut it off for a minute and let me catch my breath?

[1:28- recording begins with separate session]

IO: Ok Ernie. We’re going to fill in some of the gaps today from your last session. As soon as I gather a piece of paper here. Some of the things I wanted to ask you. For instance, your father’s

name. You talked about your father. I presume his name was Gottesman, but what was his first name?

EG: Solomon Jacob.

IO: Solomon Jacob. Okay. Another thing that occurred to me after listening to the tapes so far is that your mother called you Moshe but your name is Ernie. How does that happen?

EG: Its very interesting. I asked my father the same thing when we got to America. And he said it is not important. The English name it can be whatever you want it to be. I was named Erno E-R-N-O. Erno Rapée was a great Hungarian conductor, symphonic conductor. Coming through Ellis Island, as you by now know that I came through Ellis Island, the inquisitor is what I called him- KGB, he says to me “Was ist sein Name?” He knew a little German. And I very bravely said “Mein Name ist Erno Gottesman.” He says, “In America, no Erno. Your name is Earnest.” And I’ve been that way for the last 64 years.

IO: Okay fine. Now Ernie. We have a big gap in your history and that is your personal life and I’d like to delve into that a little bit. Tell us about where you met Fran, your first wife- where you courted, how you courted, places you went to, who were your friends...

EG: I can’t tell you everything!

IO: No, we’ll stay out of the bedroom.

EG: You’ll have to sift through this. When we came to America, the first house that we lived in was, I told you, we were renting from Mr. Adler on Lane Avenue. And in the synagogue where I went to *schul* every shabbat once in a while my future father-in-law David Sniderman went would bring a little girl to the services. She was beautiful. That turned out to be Frances. Frances’ older sister-there was Louise Sniderman, Elizabeth Sniderman, and Frances Sniderman - she was shrimpy. We got to be friends as kids do. I used to give her rides on my bicycle. When I was 14 years old my mother, *aleha ha-shalom*, said to me, “Moshe, you’re gonna marry



Frances.” I said, “Come on ma! I’m only 14 years old.” “Remember what I said. You’re gonna marry Frances because she is wonderful.” And I did marry Frances. We were man and wife for 43 years. Got married in 1939. She passed away in 1981- August the 5<sup>th</sup>. Interestingly, on my daughter Debbie’s birthday. You wanna stop it for a minute?

Eventually we landed on Shehy Street. About a block and a half away from where Frances lived on Shehy Street. And my mother-in-law, Tilly- my mother-in-law to-be- hired me to give private lessons to Elizabeth in Hebrew because she was a patient of Dr. Bund for 35 years- Dr. Bund being a heart man. She had rheumatic fever which left her sickly the rest of her life. This is Elizabeth I’m talking about. She passed away at age 45. I believe in 1960. I know. Meanwhile, in 1934 I went away to Minneapolis where I became the cantor.

IO: You were how old then?

EG: I was 20 years old. I was the youngest cantor on position in the country at that time.

IO: Were you going steady with Frances at that time?

EG: Oh yes. How we got to being more than just a little bit by- when the private Hebrew lessons started with Elizabeth, so Tilly my mother-in-law to-be said, “Ernest, why don’t you teach Frances too at the same time? I’d like her to be able to do any *Maftir* in the book.” And I started teaching her. She was 14 or 15 then. I was two and a half years older than her. And before long, she could do any *haftarah* in the book. And beautifully. She happened to be a beautiful pianist. She was my accompanist for about 35 years- as you well recall. So came time for me- I think I told you that I was ready to make my way in the world. I left Youngstown and went to Minneapolis.

IO: What did Francis think of this?

EG: She said you’re giving your spring concert. I’m coming to come and be the accompanist. We’re putting on a Jewish operetta *Shulamis*. She came with Elizabeth as a chaperone. In those

days, you didn't travel alone with your girlfriend. We were very much committed to each other. It was just a matter of time. What happened is [end of tape]

EG: It was my father in law's idea for us to get married, but to go to Cleveland to a private study of a rabbi because there was family sickness.

IO: When was this?

EG: In 1939, early.

IO: After you came back?

EG: Well, I kept coming back every summer while I was a cantor. I didn't get married until I was 25. And we started to talk about marriage to David and to Tilly. Well Francis and Elizabeth came to Minneapolis that Spring for her to be the accompanist for *Shulamis*. So we got through. And I was going to the University of Minnesota majoring in music minor in psychology. It came to Thursday and the operetta was finished. It went successfully. Everything was beautiful. Then I told the two girls that they had to go home because I was studying for finals. It was late Spring. So I don't know if you remember a train called the *Zephyr*? We were going downtown to meet the train, the *Zephyr*, to take them to Chicago Elizabeth and Francis, alone. I was sending them back home to give me a chance to study for finals which I didn't have a chance, working for the *Shulamis*. So we're on our way going down to the railroad station, Francis (may she rest in peace) says, "Honey if we don't get married now, we never will." I said, "Hey, that's pretty strong words." She says "I have that feeling. And the reason I say that is because I don't want to go to Cleveland to get married." I said I don't want too either. I have beautiful pulpit here in Minneapolis. I've been here five years. We can have a wedding right here. If they come to the wedding, fine. If not, people too sick or something, you can't help it. We're on the way to the railroad station to go home to Youngstown when I get this brilliant idea. I turned the car around and I go right up to Rabbi Aaronson's home and I tell him the story that we want to get married Sunday. And that coming Sunday, this was Thursday, that coming Sunday was *Lag B'Omer*. We were only allowed to get married that day between *Shavuot* and *Pesach*. I came in and Rabbi Aaronson was a saint and said "What is troubling you?" And I told him the whole story, Francis

and I want to get married this Sunday. “Oh,” he says. “Don’t you know we preach that you must not hurry into marriages?” I says “Rabbi Aaronson, I’ve been your cantor for five years but also I’ve known Francis since she was nine years old. We’ve been neighbors in Youngstown.” Oh, well then, how can I say no? And he says, “How can we work this? We have five other weddings to go through and officiate.” I was the cantor. He says, “I like you both. Leave the details to me.” He called up the President of the Sisterhood and told them the story. We have to have a 1:30 wedding on Sunday afternoon because the cantor and I have five more weddings to officiate at. And those angels of mercy, those women- see nobody could come from Youngstown or California for our wedding except my brother Gene who partook in the service and two of my sisters. I have five, God bless them, but two of them were able to come with my brother Gene. And Elizabeth was here with Francis. And the sisterhood prepared a beautiful dinner for all the choir members and their wives. And it took us until 10 o’clock at night to finish the other five weddings that we had to officiate at. The President of the Temple was a Mr. Burman. He was the President. He had a summer home. Don’t forget we got married in May. He had a summer home where he had a catered dinner all prepared for us because we didn’t stop to eat. We had all those weddings. The ladies of the sisterhood stayed up all night preparing the dinner and we spent the night until about 1 or 2 in the morning – my honeymoon night- we spent the night singing songs, what else?!

IO: Did you call Youngstown and tell them? Or did they know?

EG: They knew we were getting married. In fact, when Elizabeth called that Thursday to see if anybody could come, she said “The kids want to get married.” And our fathers said “They did?!” “No, they didn’t. They *want* to get married.” By the way, as an aside, I watch my diet very carefully. I used to do some boxing at 136 pounds. So we go out for coffee after rehearsal, I’d have prunes- pour a little sweet cream over it. At the Remington Hotel, where we went for our honeymoon, we came to our bridal suite that was arranged for, and what do you think my choir sent me as a gift for Francis and I?

IO: Prunes?

EG: [*laughing*] a 50-pound box! What do you think we did? We started out the honeymoon by eating the prunes.

IO: Instead of champaign, huh?

EG: That's funny. Okay now we're going to....

IO: Let's back up to when you were teenagers. What did you do for fun? Where did you go? Who did you do it with? How did you get there? You know, all those things.

EG: I wasn't home very much in Youngstown. You see, ..

IO: After you graduated from high school-

EG: After I graduated from high school I went to work for Miller and Rosenberg, the butcher shop- a kosher butcher shop because I didn't have to work on Shabbat then. And Francis and I were dating. I mean there was just no question about the fact that, given the proper time, we were going to get married. We dated and double-dated as kids do.

IO: What did you do when you double-dated?

EG: We'd go to Idora Park, dancing when the big bands would come.

IO: How did you get there?

EG: Do you remember a Fred Siegel? He had a car. So I bought the gasoline and he provided the car. So we had transportation.

IO: Who did he date?

EG: I don't know...

IO: It's not important.

EG: That was his problem.

IO: Idora Park was the main place you went?

EG: Mostly. Then we went to Bombolis' Night Spot, upstairs around the Warner Theater. I don't know the exact address, but the name was Bombolis- ice cream and dancing place. We had small bands to play.

IO: Any other places come out of your memory that you went to?

EG: I think I've done pretty good.

IO: Okay, did you ever travel on dates on streetcars or you always had transportation?

EG: I always managed transportation because I always had spending money. I was teaching private Hebrew lessons, which expanded. I expanded as time went by. In fact, the saying at Squaw Creek is I either sang at their wedding or I made a bar mitzvah.

IO: You know what your major claim to fame is, don't you?

EG: No.

IO: The fact that you married me!

EG: Of course. You were one of my favorite subjects.

IO: Let's jump now to Discount. Tell us more about him. What kind of person he was...

EG: I want to tell you about Cantor Discount. His voice in later years was not so fantastic. It was pleasant enough, but he was a great composer of religious music. Great composer of religious music! And when he was ready to leave Youngstown, he turned over a 60-voice choir, or whatever you want to call it. A choral society.

IO: What was it called? Was it the Youngstown Choral Society? The Jewish-

EG: Youngstown Jewish Choral Society.

IO: It was a Jewish Choral Society?

EG: Oh yeah. There were 60 members of that. See what happened- why was I able to garner and continue it for two more years until the war was over and everybody came home again. There was so much time on the hands of people and this was a beautiful evening out. And they made a club out of it. They had a President.

IO: Tell us about some of the people that were in it.

EG: Well one of my favorite people was Naomi Hill. She had the most glorious soprano. She and Betty Label. Both were great sopranos that could have sung solos in choirs anywhere in the country. In fact, Naomi was even more powerful, more brilliant. Betty had a great range. Between the two of them I had a soprano section second to none in the whole country. Most of my choirs were in number were 24, 26. I mean, if there's anything I really miss in life, it's that sound ringing in my ears. A beautiful choir.

IO: Who else?

EG: The Golomb boys. Dr. Herald Golomb, he's a podiatrist and Morris Golomb. Can I tell a funny story about him? He was a collector for an insurance company of debts. And Morris worked hard. We were upstairs singing for Friday services, the upstairs loft at Anshe Emeth if you recall. And Morris would rest leaning against the wall upstairs.

IO: He was a bass, wasn't he?

EG: A bass. Even when the choir wasn't singing, he was leaning back against the wall. Pretty soon we'd hear [snoring sounds]. He'd fallen asleep because he was so tired. But they would hear him downstairs. I'd have to give him a *yoche*. [laughs]

IO: Who else?

EG: Jerry Goldman sang for many years. Albert Solomon. Buddy Tamarkin. Sally Miller for many years. In fact, most of these people I've mentioned probably sang with me for about 75 years. I mean, every Holidays Buddy Tamarkin would tell me "That's enough! I'm done learning." I said, "But I gotta have you." You know that he was the best choir bass in the city of Youngstown?

IO: Buddy a bass?

EG: Beautiful bass voice. I mean beautiful. The vibrations were such that they were... Acoustically. Really.

IO: That choral *Minyan* that they sing now...

EG: That was mine.

IO: That was yours? He used to sing that I imagine. That was a good base line.

EG: Oh yeah. He just led the bass section. He was fantastic. Like a Russian basso.

IO: I didn't know that.

EG: Yes. Surprised everyone else. So anyways, I'd come to the house. "Ernie, Its no use. I'm not gonna sing with you these holidays." But I'd say "You got to." "Ernie..." he'd say. "You might as well give in because you know you're gonna have to."

So I've given you most of the ones I can come up with. My daughter Debbie sang in the choir. One time, Joel, my son sang in the choir. Marci, my daughter, the oldest one sang in the choir. I gave you Naomi Hill and Betty Label....

IO: Those people were in both the choir and the Choral Society, right?

EG: Right.

IO: You had a lot more people in the choral society.

EG: Oh yeah. Well it was too unwieldy to have all those people in the choral society. Plus, you sing a different type of music in the choral society in relationship to Friday night service or the High Holidays.

IO: I tried out for the choral society.

EG: And what happened?

IO: I wasn't good enough.

EG: They told you to take a back seat?

IO: Not you. Cantor Discount.

EG: Cantor Discount, he was a genius in putting together choral societies because everything... by the way I've been a cantor 54 years this past Holidays and I still sing some of the prayers, interpretation of some of the prayers, that he gave me to use because I haven't found anything that surpasses them. When Cantor Discount turned the Choral Society over to me, we had a final



concert. Stambaugh Auditorium we filled up the main auditorium and a few seats upstairs. There was a red-headed lady, I forgot her first name, but she was a Myerovich girl- and she played the piano beautifully. And she had been Discount's accompanist for the Choral Society while Francis sang in the chorus at that time. I think even my sister-in-law Elizabeth sang in the choral society for a while. What happened is this: during the war, there wasn't the amount of wonderful living as we have today. So to go to the Temple for a Friday night service, we used to get 200 to 250 people for Friday nights. And Rabbi Morris Gordon as here before he went to the Army. But then as soon as the war was over, people played tennis, golf, went to ball games, I mean there were so many diversions that the choral society just died of its own inertia.

IO: Do you have any programs, newspaper articles about the choral society?

EG: I doubt it but I'll try to find it.

IO: Okay. I'd appreciate it. Go ahead...

EG: So what's next?

IO: I wanted to ask you one question. You've met so many famous people. If you had to pick out the one person who influenced you the most, particularly in Youngstown, who would you say it was?

EG: Well, in Minneapolis, my role model was Rabbi Aaronson, my first rabbi. In fact, he passed away here a couple of months ago and I was invited to come to the funeral. I think I told you that. In Youngstown, and musically, it would have to be Cantor Paul Discount. He helped make me be a little bit of a success, if I did have success. He gave me the music that no one else had. I used to give a concert in Minneapolis with a 32-voice choir. Then of course, every Spring, Francis and I would go to the opera in Cleveland. Or if we were in New York, we had to see the opera house, the Met. As far as cantorial styles, none were greater than Cantor Rosenblatt. Hirschman was a close second. I used to sing duets with Cantor Hirschman.

IO: What kind of impact did Block have on you?

EG: It made me very proud to be able to be the soloist in the choir.

IO: Was he the musician or just a *hazan*?

EG: He was more musician than *hazan*. Just the opposite. He was a very fine musician. Good cantorial style. But his voice became shrill already in later years. But he was very much a good, fine cantor. I'll tell you who also helped me, in watching him direct a choir, was a Maurice Goldman from Cleveland. He directed our all-male choir here. There were no women in it in the choir in those years. Keep asking because this fills my head with so many memories.

IO: Do you remember, were you around when Abe Harshman was growing up at Emmanuel?

EG: I certainly was. And I'll tell you there was no finer *ba'al koreh* than Abe Harshman.

IO: Do you remember when he stood on a chair at the Bema, the little boy?

EG: And read the Torah. Well, you know who taught him to read the Torah?

IO: His grandpa.

EG: Zeda.

IO: I can remember that picture. Sitting there, seeing this little kid get up on a chair and read from the Torah.

EG: You know, he knew the whole five books of Moses by heart. He was an excellent outstanding *ba'al koreh*. You know *ba'al koreh* means "reader of the Torah." I mean he was eight, nine years old he was reading the Torah!

IO: What else do I want to ask? Oh yeah, a little bit about the business. Were they on Pine Street when you joined them?

EG: Oh no, that's Sniderman Brothers.

IO: That's right, I'm mixed up. Were they on...

EG: Erie Terminal building was where Steel City Milling started. We were on the fourth floor. That's where it started until 1967. Well, we were 27 years in the building down on East Federal Street, Andrews Avenue. Steel City Milling was. Then in 1978 we moved into the present headquarters which is glorious gorgeous building. We moved in 10 years ago.

IO: Where is it located?

EG: Austintown Industrial...

IO: That all grew out of the urban development?

EG: Development. Yeah.

IO: Who started the business?

EG: Louis Sniderman. There's a period among the older brothers but I don't think it would serve any purpose to discuss it. But in 1951, I was asked by my brother-in-law because my father-in-law, David Sniderman, turned very ill. He passed away in 1951. Well, Lou came to me and said he wanted me to come and join Steel City Milling- to help him out inside. And I said "But I'm a fulltime cantor." Well, he says, "I need you more than they do." So after thinking it over I decided to join him February 1, 1951. This past week, the first of February, was 38 years that I was with Steel City Milling. It's a long stint. But it's been a happy association.

IO: You were a salesman most of the time?

EG: Well, how that happened is that I came in one morning at 7:00 in the morning and started pulling up the orders. Lou comes to me and says “Max Brenner died of a heart attack.” Remember Max Brenner, Nikki Brenner’s father? So I had been already with Steel City for two years. I knew the product pretty well already but I had never been out selling. The only thing I ever sold in my life was myself. So he says to me “Well, what do you want to do? Do you want to go out?” Max Brenner had the city orders- the city of Girard, Warren, you know just around here. “Do you want to go out and make some calls? Or do you want to stay inside.” So I said, “Well, you tell me. You were here first. You tell me what you want me to do.” He said, “No, no. I’m not going to have my sister Francis telling me that I made you do this or made you do that. Now which do you want? You have your choice.” I said, “I’ll tell you the truth. If I had my druthers, I love people. I’d love to go out and try to sell.” He says, “Fine. That’s it. No arguments” *A Yiddische kop is a Yiddische kop*. Do you understand what that means? A Jewish head is a Jewish head. Before starting out... That same day I became a salesman automatically because there was no one else to go! I took the files and looked over the big time stops. Made notes for every stop. This one you send flowers when you do this. At least I had some inkling what to say or do. I didn’t want to look like a dummy. And a couple months go by and Lou doesn’t say anything about me coming back inside. I thought he was still looking to find the right person to hire. I asked him one day, “When am I going to come back inside?” “Well now if I had my druthers, you’d stay out there. Do you realize what you’ve been doing with these costumers you’ve been calling on?” I said, “Oh, what did I do?” He said, “Well this went up so many percentages and this one went up so much... You don’t know how well you’re doing. You’re a natural born salesman. Stay where you’re at!” And I stayed for 20 more years!

IO: Ok, we’ll finish off unless you have something else. Let’s do Carol first.

EG: What about Carol?

IO: How you met her, when you met her...

EG: Oh, that's very easy. As it happened when Emmanuel and Anshe Emeth merged, I was the part-time cantor at Anshe Emeth. Harry Dibber asked me if I wanted to be a full-time cantor. I told him I cannot leave Steel City Milling. I'll remain a part-time cantor like I always have. So, I left. This was in May 1975. One day I get a call from Mickey Cohen from Warren followed by one from Frank Goodwin also of Warren from Beth Israel. What happened is Mickey, being in the soft foods business, and Abe Aberbach also in the soft food business. He had this little department store in Struthers. He had no college. He says Abe we're having such a tough time finding a cantor for the holidays. We used to have a full-time cantor but by that time they didn't.

[Break]

IO: Continuation of Ernie Gottesman.

EG: So Mickey says, "Please tell me who is this?" "It's cantor Gottesman Anshe Emeth and El Emmanuel just merged and he dropped himself off the roster because he just couldn't take on a full-time cantorial job." So, they call me, and thank goodness fifteen years ago I was in my prime. After the first year, Dr. Shultz who was the chairman of the Religious Committee he says, "We don't have to negotiate every year now do we?" I said, "Do you want me every year?" "You *know* we want you." It's been already 15 years that I've been there. The second year I didn't tell it to the rabbi. I didn't tell nobody. I was ready to spring my daughter Debbie loose. She's got a voice of an angel. Unbelievable. Thrilling. She vibrates when she sings. She weighs 98 pounds. She's four foot eleven. God bless her. You've heard her. You just wonder where that voice comes from. The only one of my kids that has a voice like that. Now Marci is a fantastic, beautiful entertainer. She can put on a program of Vince Brady songs. You oughta bring her here one weekend. We'll talk about it. So that was the second High Holidays. I gave Debbie some of the music. Some of the songs to learn. Just enough to get started. See right now, she probably takes half the service off me, which I give her. I had her sing the *Kol Nidrei* twice this past year and there wasn't a dry eye. So anyhow, I noticed in the congregation... After all, Frances was living. There was no need to look for any female company, but there was a lady there. I knew Harold and Mr. Pianin. But not too well. I thought they were in the jewelry business with Sam Levy, the best jeweler in town. But I see a lady who is always smiling up at us. She does have a beautiful smile, Carol. So I didn't think anything of it. I thought she was smiling at Debbie. Later I found out later, not only at Debbie but also smiling at me. Frances passed away the fifth of

August and a couple months later at home alone... like I talked to Lucy Stein yesterday. She said "Ernie, its murder." Its lonesome, you know? I suddenly I felt the walls closing in. So, I always talked to my Lord. My father, may he rest in peace, *alav ha-shalom*, taught me when you have a problem, talk to your Lord. But don't just talk, request an audience. I said, "Lord, what are you going to do with me?" In my imagination I felt the statement: *Don't worry. Time will take care.* Well, that year on October 14<sup>th</sup>, Carol and I went out on our first date and we've never been separated since. I gotta tell you though how we met. That year, do you remember Rabbi Wolf Calvin?

IO: I can't place him.

EG: Well he's in seminary. Rabbinical placement for rabbis. We had no rabbi that year. David Steinhardt came the following year. I come in to the temple *Kol Nidrei* night with Rabbi Wolf Calvin. By the way, he was very kind to me in his praise of my *davening*, which I learned from my father. He told the congregation, if you ever want to hear in all your life cantoring in the style of Cantor Gottesman who was taught by his father, just listen to him. I thought that was very nice. **Mossock**. So anyhow, Carol is standing there alone in the hallway, five minutes away from *Kol Nidrei*. I found out here name. I didn't even know her name at that time when Francis passed away. But I asked Dr. Shultz what her name was. He gave me the whole history: She was divorced 10 years. She's got a son. I said, "I just wanna know her name. You don't have to give me her whole history. Just give me her name." "Her name is Carol." "Oh, that's good. Thanks!" So anyhow, I walk up to her. I don't know what prompted me to do that. Sometimes you do things subconsciously and it shapes your life for many years. I walked up to her and I said "Carol." And she said, "Oh, you know my name." I said "Yes I do. I just wanted to say Good Yuntif and how do you like the guest rabbi?" She said, "Oh, he's wonderful. Could you ask him if he knows of any young, eligible rabbis?" So she's was pretty tricky with that. Pretty cute and sneaky. With that, she let me know she was available and that she was looking for a young rabbi. Well that's me, a young cantor. So I say, "I don't want to ask him if he knows any young eligible rabbis or if he's the judge of them. I have other plans for you." She said, "Oh, yeah?" I said, "How about we go out to dinner and I tell you about those plans?" She says, "Id' be honored." So I said, "Okay. What's your phone number?" She was living in the outskirts of Warren at that

time. She was living in the outskirts of Warren at that time, up in Howland. She said, “You won’t remember my phone number.” I said, “Try me.” She gave me her phone number. And I said, “I’ll see you after the services. I gotta go find Debbie.” Debbie was a few minutes late walking in. When I did that, I snuck into the rabbi’s study and I wrote down the telephone number. I’m no dummy. And I wanna tell you something. She has helped to shape my life the last few years. She taught psychiatric nursing for fifteen years. And she had me to teach about geriatric psychiatric is her specialty. And it’s been a blessing for me. Like she always says “Nothing is good if it’s one sided.” She says “You mean as much to me as I to you.” And that’s why we get along so beautifully. And the Lord answered my prayers. You know, I wonder what brought us together. I told you that, but in reality, the thing that’s been holding us together is the study of *kabbalah*. Right off the bat, I remember my father, again *alav ha-shalom*, teaching me to be careful in the study of *kabbalah* because if you study it too long or too hard (that’s Jewish mysticism), you’ll go *meshuge* he said. And I really believe that the study of *kabbalah* together has been, will be, and is the rule that binds us together.

Now, when I left Anshe Emeth in 1951 to join Lou at Steel City Milling, I became all of a sudden a part-time cantor at Ohev Tzedek Temple and a full-time sales representative for Steel City Milling. I’ll speak of the cantorial department you would say. In the years from 1951 to 1967, Anshe Emeth went through 11 cantors. They came and went. If you doubt what I tell you, check the records, the archives of Anshe Emeth. And the reason for that was not that I was a greater cantor than some of them that were here, there were some good cantors, but Francis and I as a combination in the cantorial department were unbeatable. She was fantastic. She directed the choir. She accompanied on the organ. And I was the cantor. We were a combination of cantor and associate cantor, whatever you want to call it. But it was quite like poetic justice that so many cantors came and went. Unbelievable in fourteen years, eleven cantors. That isn’t very many. Youngstown, in reality, has always been able to garner a good orient of cantorial styles. For instance, right from Youngstown, did I tell you about the cantorial positions that have been offered to me in my lifetime? From Youngstown, I gotta tell you this incident to talk about cantorial style. I also was the executive director for a while and during the war, I was put in charge of the services for Shenango. In 1951, I was asked to come and be the cantor at the temple of Rabbi Lehrman in Florida. I was offered four of the top positions in the country from Youngstown. And I will name them for you so that there’s no mistaking. How did that happen

that they would come to Youngstown to look for a cantor? A cantor for Rabbi Silverman's temple. Rabbi Silverman who wrote the prayer book that you use. Rabbi Lehrman from Florida. From Rodfei Zedek in Chicago. And Rabbi Silverman's in Hartford, Connecticut. Would you want four greater pulpits than that? How did that happen? How did I suddenly become a so called genius, which I'm not. I'm only teasing. What happened is I was sent, I was the representative- I was acting rabbi during the war and cantor and executive director. I was everything. I was sent as a delegate to Atlantic City for a rabbinical assembly convention. Saturday night was the big banquet. I had gone on Wednesday. There was about 800 rabbis and Presidents of congregations at the Saturday night dinner. Who do I sit down next to? I was all alone, Rabbi Kollin and Rabbi Silverman from Hartford, Connecticut with his President Mr. Rappaport. So all of a sudden, the new President of the rabbinical assembly, a big shot attorney from New York, comes over and says, "Cantor, we know you've been here since Wednesday. You haven't sung for us and we haven't asked you to, and much to our loss. We've hired these two cantors from New York and we wanted them to make Havdalah. And both of them said it was against the dignity of a cantor to make Havdalah. So would you make Havdalah for us?" I said, "I certainly will- on one condition. You go tell those other two cantors they are a shame to the cantorial profession. And my father taught me that any prayer to God was holy. And if you tell them that, then I'll be honored to make Havdalah." "Oh great!" He went and I hear him yelling down there. I got up and naturally, I'm a show off, you know. I can't help it. When you've singing all your life for people, you want to do your best. I really... I did Zavo Zilbert's Havdalah which is- the end of Havdalah. I mean I really put on a Havdalah. Rabbi Levinthal was five feet tall was the guest speaker. He's from Brooklyn Jewish center, one of the big congregations in the country. I got through with the Havdalah. I was just getting ready to ask someone to sing with me **Alio Boneveh** when he stands up to his full height. I was still a half a head taller than him and I ain't very big. He says, "What city did you say you come from cantor?" "From Youngstown, Ohio." And this is all going out over the mic to some 800 Presidents and rabbis. "In Youngstown they have such a cantor? Ah! I don't believe it!" I made my name right there. Then I said, when I turned around to everybody started laughing. They got a big kick out of it. I said, "Folks, I've been here since Wednesday and we haven't sung one Yiddish folk song. L'zmiros, nothing. Do you want to sing L'zmiros?" Well, L'zmiros turned out to be 45 minutes. We had a great time.



I came back and I set down. Rabbi Kollin was very proud as a peacock. The President of Silverman's Temple says to me, "Cantor, are you happy in Youngstown?" I said "Yeah, relatively so." "Do you want to be happier?" *[laughs]* I said, "What does that mean?" He said, "I'll take you to Hartford and I'll let you know what that means." I was hired in Hartford Connecticut without Frances knowing about it yet. I stayed over Monday night. I told her I was going to stay over. But Sunday afternoon, a chauffeur-driven car took us to Hartford, Connecticut. Sunday night I gave a big concert at the temple. Fifteen months later they hired me. In 1951 they wanted me at Rabbi Lehrman's Temple. Rodfei Zedek in Chicago, is one of the big conservative congregations in the country, wanted me when I first came back from Minneapolis in 1940.

So that's one of the proud things in my life. Two careers I've had: one in selling for Steel City Milling and one being a pretty good carntor.

IO: You know have another record Ernie. You have been the best interviewee I've ever had for an oral history. You've been the longest and you've told us more information than any other two people put together. Thank you very much.

EG: I hope you can use that and if you're stuck you can have a little more.

**End at 2:26:27**