

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Jewish Senior Citizens Project

Jewish Culture

O. H. 298

LEE SPECTOR

Interviewed

by

Karlyn Bennehoof

on

January 23, 1984

LEE SPECTOR

Lee Spector was 80 years old when she did this interview. She has resided at Heritage Manor since 1983. Born in New York City in 1904, she was one of four children born to Joseph and Lottie Brooks. She met her husband, Al Spector, in New York and they married in 1921. They moved to Youngstown in 1923 and ran the Sunkist Supermarket for 25 years. They had three daughters. The eldest was mentally retarded and lived in a Columbus, Ohio, institution where she died many years ago. Their daughters are Delores, age 54, and Dona, age 49.

Mrs. Spector had been very active in the community, president of the P.T.A., involved in the Red Cross, the JCC's program for older adults, and president of the Horizons program. Her husband died in 1973. In 1980, she moved to Park V apartments. Her serious health problems brought about a need for 24 hour care. She died September 15, 1985 of infirmities. She had many friends at Heritage Manor and considered it her second home.

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INTERVIEWEE: LEE SPECTOR
INTERVIEWER: Karlyn Bennehoof
SUBJECT: Jewish Culture, immigration
DATE: January 23, 1984

B: This is an interview with Lee Spector for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project Heritage Manor. This interview is being conducted at Heritage Manor on January 23, 1984, at approximately 10:45 a.m. This interview is by Karlyn Bennehoof.

I just want to get some basic information first of all. I'd like to know when and where you were born, and what your education was like as a child, and that kind of thing.

S: I was born May 11, 1904, in New York City. I have had public school and high school education, then I got married.

B: Did you stay in New York when you got married?

S: Just for a little while. We were in business there, in the dress business there in Long Island. My husband had a place there. Then when the union came in we had to get out because we couldn't afford the union prices. Our stuff was made piecework. This one made a sleeve, this one made a hem, this one made different things of the dress until it was assembled. Naturally, when the union came in we had to quit. When we had to quit, that was when his people lived here in Youngstown that he came to visit. We were married 51 years, so we had visited that whole time that we had been here. He has been gone now eleven years and I'm still visiting, because my people naturally, are gone. I have nobody to go back to in New York. I had three brothers, two

of them are gone, and I have just one brother that is left, my oldest brother who lives in Florida. I see him whenever I happen to go down. Naturally, when my husband was living, I was able to make trips and I did go down to see him. Now that things are different and no money is coming in except Social Security, you cannot go to Florida on Social Security.

B: Yes, that would be a little difficult.

S: That's right. And I am not the type that would want to go to Florida and live or stay even for a short time with my brother because we haven't seen each other and we really don't know each other. We don't have anything in common with each other. We say, "How are you? How are the children?" That is the extent of our conversation.

B: So you haven't visited him a lot in the past two years?

S: No. He me while I am here, he calls and sees how I am getting along. He was very, very surprised that I was here. here right from the hospital and I didn't have much to say about it. I just said, "Well this is it, you need 24 hours of supervision," because I never know when I am going to take sick. I'm a particular person that I take sick about three or four o'clock in the morning. I lived alone, which was very, very hard. I have two wonderful daughters, but I don't feel that I have to burden them with me for 24 hours that they're not going to sleep for fear that I'm moaning in the next room or for fear that I'm going into sort of a spell or something like that. I don't want that. I have always been a very, very independent person and I hope to stay that way if I possibly can. I drove until I had my operation on my eye; I went where I wanted to go, I did what I wanted to do. If there was traveling, I did it. I liked it because my husband insisted that I do things like that because we were in business and he couldn't get away but I was able to get away. He made it his business that I got away. I went to Hawaii, I went to the Catskills, I went to Canada. I went to each and every place that he thought I should see and enjoy.

B: Was this in the early part of the century?

S: What was that please?

B: Was this towards 1920, 1930? Were you traveling then also?

- S: I traveled all the time. I went to see my mother and dad at least once a year, so I went to New York and stayed. On the children's school vacations I went down there and stayed because mother kept my room and I always had there to go. Going to Hawaii, I had gone after Al had passed away because I would never leave him for six weeks and go. As is, there were six of us. We went together and did everything together. We just traveled together, that's all. We went to Washington if we wanted to. Whatever we wanted to do, we really did. I want to say on the tape that my life was very, very interesting and a very, very good life and the best that anybody could ever have. Really, that is something that I would like the world to know, because when you're married to anybody for 51 years it's a long time and it was a good time.
- B: It must have been to last that long.
- S: Yes, it was. Everybody that knew him comes in and says, "When they made him they threw away the pattern. There's nobody else like Alan." That's the way I feel.
- B: Was he from this country, was he born in this country?
- S: Oh yes, he was born in New York City, too.
- B: Did you live in an apartment when you were a young girl?
- S: Do you mean when I got married?
- B: No, as a young girl in your teens.
- S: Mother had an apartment first, then when we got a little bit bigger we moved out to Long Island into a home. We had our home and that's where all of us children got married from and things like that. When we went to public school we lived in an apartment, one of these big buildings.
- B: The high-rise type?
- S: Yes.
- B: What was school like in New York? Was it the way it would have been for someone going to school now?
- S: I really don't know too much about the children going to school. Although, when my children were small, the two girls, I have two girls, and I was president of the P.T.A., I always tried to do work with the children as much as I possibly could. I have found that the teachers have been very cooperative. I don't know how they are

now because I don't have any little children anymore. Before that I have found that the teachers have been absolutely marvelous. If you were a scholar that learned, you were better. My children are just mediocres; they're not stupid, but they're not geniuses. They never failed in anything. They went to school. In fact, now one of them married Dr. Glass here. I don't know whether you know him or not.

B: No, I don't.

S: When he went to school up in Columbus, she went up there too, but she worked under the athletic department there and helped him go through school. Now he is a very successful dentist here in town. That's one.

The other one, did you want to know about the other one too?

B: Certainly.

S: The other one's name is Dolores Merkin. Her husband, at the beginning, was in the car business. Now, for the past couple of years, he has what they call . . . Do you go to the malls here?

B: Occasionally.

S: He has the Card Cage from here almost as far as California.

B: Wow!

S: They have about 50 or 60 stores. That is his business. His two boys that he has are in business with him. His three brothers have been in business. They always work together and they still work together.

B: That was Dolores you just told me about. What was your other daughter's name?

S: Dona Glass.

B: Do you remember what year it was when you first came to Youngstown?

S: Let's say approximately . . . I came for a visit and then I went home and then I came back. Let's say 1920. That would make me here how long?

B: That would be sixty years.

S: I was married fifty years and then my husband had passed away a little over ten years. This is all approximate.

B: Sure. What were the religious institutions in Youngstown like in the 1920's, synagogues?

S: We did belong to the Temple Immanuel at that time, which is now El-Emeth. They have combined with another temple and they have made a beautiful temple. We had belonged there. I had belonged to the sisterhood when I came here. Do you want to know where I belonged to at that time?

B: Sure.

S: I helped organize the B'nai B'rith. I belonged to the Hadassah. I belonged to the Council of Jewish Women.

B: What did you say before that?

S: Hadassah. We were in business after we came here and naturally being in business the customers who came in would say, "Now you have to belong to this and this organization." I had belonged to every temple sisterhood. I had belonged to all the clubs. After we had sold the business, and Al had passed away, if I feel that I can't do anything for these organizations, just to be a plain member and not go even to a meeting, I feel that I shouldn't feel that way. Maybe the money might have meant something to them, but to me it meant that I was wasting time because I never went to any of their meetings. Now B'nai B'rith, I never missed a meeting. My sisterhood of the temple, I never missed a meeting. I don't miss anything that I could do. In school I was in the P.T.A. business. We had all sorts of different things that we did. I was president for the Jewish Community Center, if you want to mark that down, for four years.

B: What sorts of things did you do as the president of the Jewish Community Center?

S: What did I do?

B: Yes.

S: The first thing we do, naturally, is open the meeting and welcome all the people that are there. If we have new members we try to make them as happy as they possibly can be and introduce them to everybody. We went to little shows. I was the type that I did not believe in going to places where it was going to cost these people a lot

of money. Most of them lived on Social Security and I felt that we cannot go to Carousal, or go to places where it is \$20, \$30 a person. I went where there was \$4, \$5 a person, and with that we even had our meal. That was where I felt that I was doing something for the organization.

B: What, specifically, is the organization for, the Jewish Community Center?

S: It is a Jewish community center, but everybody can belong. It is not especially for Jewish people now. At that time I only had 30 people, and when I left I had a hundred and something. I did work very, very hard.

B: I guess.

S: I enjoyed every minute of it and I hope to be able to do little things for them here, although now my eyes are bad, my heart is bad, I have sugar. I have so much more things than I had at that time. Still, I feel that there will be little things that I will be able to do.

B: Well, you've still got your mind, and that's the most important thing.

S: Yes. If I possibly can, I would like to help them as much as I possibly can. I just had to give up my home, which hurt very, very much.

B: Yes, I understand, it can be very, very traumatic.

S: In fact, I gave it up yesterday or the day before. I didn't even go there because I said, "Now look girl, anything I have is not for sale. Anything that people need they are welcome to have. Don't just give it away to Goodwill or anything like that because they're mostly new things. I've only been there for a little over three years." I had a big house, but when the children got married I had to sell the house because what was I going to do with a big house. I went into this three-room apartment at Park V, if you know where that is.

B: Yes.

S: That's where I lived until yesterday. They did dispose of everything except the little things that I want to remember, like my pictures, my little things that I want to remember. They brought my TV; they brought my desk; they brought little things that I wanted and little things

that I have no room for I had to give away.

I know everybody, everybody that is worth knowing, let's put it that way. I think I know because I've been with them. I gave my time, my life for people. That's all I can say is people to me are my life. If there's anything I can do, I don't care if they're a baby, or whether they're 90 years old, age does not mean anything to me. I just want to do whatever I possibly can for anybody that I can. Here it's going to be hard because they are sick people. After all, let's not fool ourselves. Who comes here? Sick people. Nobody comes here that's well. I didn't even know I was coming here when I came with the ambulance. I stopped here and thought what the heck am I doing here. This is it, because I do not want to have my children tied down now that their children are married and they can go and do whatever they want to do, whether it's go visiting, if they want to go with their husbands out of town. If they want to do anything I don't want them to feel that their mother is holding them back. That's why I am here. It's not because they don't want me, it's just because I don't want to burden them.

B: That's a better way to handle a situation like that, is from that point of view.

S: There are a whole lot of people here that feel differently. They say, "Well I wouldn't feel that way if I were you, Lee. I know what you did for your children when they were small." My girls used to do dancing when they were small. I used to take Dolores six days a week to Fred Kotheimer, if you remember him here in town.

B: Vaguely.

S: Six days a week, either he came to my house when she was nine months old and he stretched her, because she was an acrobatic dancer . . . I did whatever I possibly could for my children, but that has nothing to do with it. I'm their mother and I'm supposed to do things that I want to do for my children, but I don't feel that they should say, "Gee, mother, I'd like to go here and here, do you mind if I would go?" I would say, "No." A couple of times they even brought me a baby-sitter and I was very, very embarrassed. I don't feel that I need a baby-sitter to come and sit with me. When they did that I said, "This is it, if I ever get sick again I am not coming back." Every time I got sick I went two weeks to one girl, two weeks to the other. They both

live in Youngstown so they were able to do it. Now, before I gave up my place, they had their days; on Mondays Dolores took me to the doctor, she took me to little things that I had to do. On Thursday Dona took me shopping, she took me for my medicine. They had their routine of what they knew that they had to do for me. On Sundays I used to go and visit them. Now I have a great-grandchild so I go to visit them or they were even here a couple of times already and made me feel very, very good to think that they came. When I have to leave and they have to leave, then it's bad.

B: They'll be back though, you know they'll be back.

S: Oh yes. Yesterday we had the Superbowl game over at one of the houses and they had about 30 people. We had a marvelous time until I had to go home.

B: Of course, it is difficult. It's not easy to deal with that.

S: It's very, very hard. Don't misunderstand me, this is a marvelous, marvelous place. I never knew really what they do here. They are marvelous. They knew that I was crying yesterday, they came and they sat here for about two hours with me, "Now come on Lee, you know better than that." They've very, very nice.

B: Yes, Mr. Altshuler has a lot of good things to say about it here, too.

S: Yes, I was talking to him yesterday.

B: Can you tell me a little bit about the sisterhood that you belong to?

S: You mean the temple?

B: Yes.

S: Well there I was really not an officer because we had the store and it was hard to take off all the time and go to meetings and things like that. I tried to do . . . I never missed a meeting or luncheon, but I mean to really work with them I've never been too strong, let me put it that way. I've had sugar diabetes now for over 50 years. My time is limited, I can do just certain things and then I've got to stop. I've never been asked a thing that I wouldn't do, or if there's a donation for something I'm able to do, I do it. Right now we are not in any position to do anything because most of our money, I imagine, is put into . . . I don't even know

anything about it because the girls took care of everything. If you wanted to know anything about the money part or anything, I wouldn't know.

B: Is the sisterhood a women's organization?

S: The sisterhood?

B: Yes. What sorts of things do they do?

S: To tell you the truth, the only thing I know is when we go to lunches they have things like that. At Christmas time they have a place where they package Christmas gifts and you charge them so much and they make up whatever it is. They buy something that belongs, that they would like to put into the new temple. When they have their lunches it isn't free, it also is a paid thing. Whatever they make on that goes into what they do. They have a gift shop there that you can buy things like they have one here. Did you see the gift shop?

B: Yes, I've seen it.

S: Well, that's what my sons-in-law put in, because that's their business. He put this in as gratis. Now they can do whatever they want or sell whatever they want because they make a lot of things here.

B: Yes, it's a nice, little shop.

S: Oh yes.

B: It's more or less a community service kind of organization.

S: That's right. Now I heard that they started even to play bingo. When I came to Youngstown you never heard of playing bingo at a temple, but now they do. They pay up their mortgages; they pay up all that stuff, which is wonderful, I have nothing against bingo. I'm not against anything where they can make money. As long as it is done legitimately, that's all that bothers me. No crooked work.

B: What is the Hadassah, I've heard the term Hadassah a number of times and don't know what it is?

S: All of these places do it on the same scale as the B'nai B'rith do. They have different plays; they have different things. I think now they may even have something where they take . . . I don't know because I haven't been

here long enough, the elderly people maybe to a play. Whether they pay for those things or not, I don't know. I am a paid-up member so I don't know too much about these things. I am even a paid-up member at the Jewish Center, which I paid my dues before I even came here. I feel that those who can pay should pay. Those who can't should have the same benefit though; they should be able to go and do this. I really can't tell you too much about it because I never went to a meeting because I didn't have the time.

B: That's one that you hadn't gone to?

S: I was in business for 22 years. I didn't go. I didn't go to the Council of Jewish Women. When we sold the store, when Al took sick we sold the store and I wrote my resignation to most except I won't do that to the B'nai B'rith because I feel I'm a charter member there. I feel that I'm part of that.

B: Didn't you say that you helped to found that organization?

S: Yes, here in town. That's an organization all over the world. I am a charter member here in town. I think there are only two of us that are left. All the rest have passed away. I think there are only two, maybe there is one, I don't know. I'm not all there so I don't know.

B: I was talking with some people some months ago who were telling me that in the early 1900's, up until around 1930 if I'm remembering correctly, there was a division between the factions, the religious institutions here in town where the immigrants from Russia built their own temple and then the immigrants from Hungary built their own temple. Do you know anything about that?

S: I've got to put that into . . . I am not a very, very good temple goer because we didn't have the time. On Friday nights, when we are open until 8:00 at night we cannot run home and get washed and dressed and go to a temple meeting and things like that. We really didn't have the time to do those things. I really don't know too much about them. Personally, me, I hold nothing against religion, whether you are a Jew, whether you are a Protestant, whether you are black, whether you are white. I had a girl with me for 34 years that worked for me until the day that she died. When she died, naturally, I had to get somebody else. To me, she was like my own child because she helped raise my children, she worked for them. I really can't tell you too much

about them. When they had anything doing at the colored church, I'd go, I didn't think anything of it. I feel that they are as good as I am because I had good ones, I didn't have trash. She was a good church goer and I just loved her.

B: Where was your business located?

S: On New York and Elm. Do you know where that is?

B: I know where Elm Street is. Is New York towards town?

S: No, it is up this way. Do you know where Benita is?

B: I know Benita.

S: It's the street before Benita.

B: Okay.

S: In fact, I think, I'm not sure, but I think Arabs have it now.

B: What type of business was it?

S: Sunkist Superette, it's a food business.

B: You were doing dresses in New York and then you came here and you went into food?

S: That's right.

B: So you had a little market type thing?

S: Yes. It was a nice market. We had quite a few of the best clientele in Youngstown. We would deliver. You mentioned the doctors that bought them, and we've had them. We haven't had many people that lived around there unless they ran out of bread, but to me that is not a customer.

B: No.

S: I know that when we sold the business, we had books that we used to keep because we had an accountant that kept all that stuff for us, and there were a nice couple of thousand dollars that were out and we did not lose one red cent. Everybody paid everything to the penny. They said, "Lee, any time that Al feels, I don't care what part of town he goes, if he's going to go into business again we will start to buy it." We had the president of Strouss, we really had lovely people.

B: It sounds like it.

S: They were all very, very nice.

B: How long did you have that business there?

S: Twenty-two years.

B: It was into the 1960's when you sold it?

S: Al has been dead eleven years and a week. I can tell you how many hours which merely wouldn't mean anything to you, but we'll say eleven years that Al is gone. When we sold the business we went to California for about six weeks. About twenty-three years, let's put it down roughly. Outside of that he has been working all of his life. That should be about thirty years.

B: Was the market kosher?

S: My market? Yes.

B: What other kinds of businesses were there around you?

S: On Benita there was a drugstore, and on my corner there was our store. Down on Logan I think there was a kosher butcher shop, I'm not sure. I used to keep it kosher though when my mother-in-law was living. After she passed away and we had bought this store, Al said, "It doesn't make any difference to you honey whatever we have, and we have the best of everything, why should we go ahead and buy tough stuff?" Are you Jewish?

B: No, I'm not.

S: When you buy some Jewish meat, really, they're tough. We didn't have that, we had the best, otherwise Al wouldn't buy it.

B: When you came to Youngstown did they still have trolley cars?

S: Yes.

B: What were those like? Did they run on the electrical thing above?

S: There was one on Market Street, but I know they used to push the handle of the door down, but I don't remember about the trolleys at all.

B: They weren't horse drawn?

S: No. We had a Hippodrome Theater at that time in the Hip Arcade.

B: Where were those located?

S: The Hip Arcade? Where McKelvey's was, you go in through there. There was Lee's Jewelry Store there. There were a lot of stores going in there. They had this theater at that time and you bought a season ticket or any way that you wanted it. You saw some pretty good shows.

B: That's not Powers Auditorium is it?

S: No. That's up further. This is right where McKelvey's is because McKelvey's had an entrance that you could go right straight into McKelvey's right from the theater. Don't you remember that?

B: No, I don't. I was wondering how long ago that was?

S: It was a long time. That was one of the things that my family in New York and I couldn't see living here, it was real wilderness. Where my mother-in-law lived was on Kyle Street, that was where all the Jewish people lived. When I went to the window to look out I saw a horse in the yard, I almost died. (Laughter) I let out such a yell they all came running, "What's the matter?" I said, "My God, there is a horse there. Now whoever leaves a horse outside?" I wouldn't go there for the love of money. He would take me for a ride and show me the beautiful country and there were chickens running around and ducks running around and cows running around. It smelled to high heaven. When you're not used to that it was very, very bad.

B: I can imagine coming from New York City into something like that.

S: The theaters that we have in New York and places like that and the restaurants even, here there was really nothing, nothing but these dirty, filthy animals running around.

B: (Laughter)

S: I never saw a mouse in my life until I looked out there. "Now what do you call that thing?" Al said, "They won't hurt you honey. Don't be afraid of them, don't touch anything." I said, "Don't worry, I won't even go out in the yard let alone touch anything." That first horse

that I saw there, I'll never, never forget it. Then Al went out and he bought me a car. I think it was a Ford, one of these real old-fashioned Fords. He had a man come and teach me how to drive and he said, "See, it's not bad. You have nothing to keep you in the house." I stayed with my mother-in-law because I said I wasn't going to live in Youngstown for the love of money, even if I had to divorce that wonderful man I think I would, and I wouldn't stay here. After he got the car and he got little things, he never said no to me and things like that, I said, "Let me try it for a couple of years." So here I am.

B: Where did your mother-in-law live?

S: On Kyle Street.

B: Where is that?

S: That was . . . I really don't know if they have Kyle Street now. I think they put a bridge on the south side.

B: The Market Street Bridge?

S: No, the South Avenue Bridge or something. Isn't there a South Avenue Bridge?

B: Yes.

S: It was something like that. I think now, I'm not sure.

B: Before they built the bridges the streets would go into that valley and then you would have to go up the hill. Is that the area you're talking about?

S: No, this Jewish area was a straight area and there was a Jewish grocery store there, there was a Jewish butcher store there. It was all Jews. I don't think there was a Gentile person that lived there. That's how I know most of these Jewish people.

B: That's interesting, because now most people identify the north side and the Liberty area as the Jewish community.

S: It's moving. When we moved up here to the north side it was up to Gypsy Lane, and then you had the rich ones. Now nobody is on Gypsy Lane except the poorer people. They're beautiful homes, but they've gone up to Liberty. They've gone up to Colonial Drive. They've gone way out, like my two girls. They wouldn't live down here. They live way out in Liberty.

B: You're saying that you can see the progression of money?

S: Yes. The homes are just absolutely gorgeous out there. Do you live in Liberty?

B: No, I live on the west side, but I've been driving around in Liberty a few times.

S: There are gorgeous, gorgeous homes there. I lived right off of the North Side Hospital, where they made that new driveway to go in. I lived right on the corner there. I lived there for ten years and then the girls thought maybe there was too much of daddy around, maybe it's best that you just get out. I did live there for about seven years without him. It was very, very hard. Then as I told you, when I came here I didn't even know where I was going. They had this place just exactly the way it is now. The television was here and my desk was here. My poor, little animals that I made were here. Whatever I have here, it's like a home away from home.

B: It's nice that you have some of these things around, especially such beautiful things. I was looking at this on the wall behind you, that is a beautiful piece back there.

S: That's my own. I haven't seen any of the other rooms, so I really don't know too much about what their rooms are like. Were you in Mr. Altshuler's place?

B: I've been in a few, yes.

S: He must have a lot of pictures there.

B: He has paraphernalia around everywhere, memorabilia, photographs, and papers. He has got a lot of stuff around there.

S: I didn't want to have too much around. They brought all the clothes in too. When they brought the clothes in Goldie said, "Where are you going to hang all these things?" I said, "I don't know, do you think I should take two rooms?" She laughed about it. I have a girlfriend that can where the same size as I do, so she came over and I said, "Adeline, take everything and anything you want because I have absolutely no place to put it." She said, "Okay, now when you want to move from here I'll give you everything back." I said, "You don't have to bother, you just take everything." The same with my furniture, I didn't take two cents for any of my furniture. Whatever was given was given to people whom I felt needed it. I had my dining room suite that we'd never eaten on because I was alone. Who's going to bother fixing and making up a dining room when

I had my small kitchen there, or sitting in the living room. I sat on the sofa more than the chairs. When you open them, they're brand new there. Really, whoever got them, and I said, "Please don't tell me who got them, I don't want to know." Maybe I shouldn't be that way, but that's the way I am.

B: I have to admire you for that. I think that's a very nice way to handle that. What else can you tell me about early Youngstown? Were there differences during the 1920's and 1930's as compared to now?

S: I really don't think there is too much. The people are the same. Most of the people that I knew when I first came here are gone. The new ones are my girlfriends that are my daughter's friends because I bowled with them, I golfed with them. People my age don't do those things. With them, they did. They took me and they like it and I went. I really didn't know too much about the older people until I became president of the Jewish Center. As I told you, then I only looked for what they could do. I went to the playhouse a lot with them. I felt that that's what they could do. It only cost \$2 or \$3 and another dollar or something to eat. They have a beautiful evening. Now, when they want to go to Carousel, they asked me if I wanted to go, it was twenty some dollars for one person. Who can afford that? If you're husband and wife it will cost you \$40 or \$50. That's too much money. I couldn't see it. I always got up and I opened my mouth about it because I didn't think it was fair. Now they have it quiet there because nobody opens their mouth.

B: You mentioned earlier that you knew a lot of people, that you knew everybody who was anybody. What kind of people did you know?

S: I knew everybody. I knew Dr. Shengren and his wife and when their children got married they invited us to their tea and to their wedding. I knew Dr. Firestone and Dr. Yarmi.

I didn't grow up here. My brothers were born right in New York City with me. Mother and dad came here on their honeymoon and they stayed here. I'm not too good a Jew because by the time I was born, the last child, mother was Americanized already. She kept a kosher home, but still it wasn't like I thought. We never lived in a real Jewish neighborhood in New York; we always lived in a mixed neighborhood.

B: What country was your mother from?

- S: Russia. Dad was too. They came here, I guess, to see the golden New York, where you pick up money from the street, which they didn't pick up.
- B: They figured that one out pretty quick.
- S: Dad had always done very, very good. He was an interior decorator and he did very, very well. That's why I say we really didn't live in a set neighborhood.
- B: Did your parents every tell you why they left Russia?
- S: No, because they got married and everybody goes on a honeymoon, I don't know why but they do. They said, "Let's go to New York." That's where they went and that's where they stayed. Nobody brought them over here. They really had to start from scratch, and they did.
- B: I remember that during the latter part of the 1800's Russia was not a good place to be Jewish. I was wondering if that had anything to do with it.
- S: Mother never said anything about it. Mother tried to speak Jewish to us and we had a very, very hard time. My dad took up English very, very fast. He was out amongst people and he did that, while mother was right at home and her next door neighbor must have been Jewish and so on and so forth. I understood everything my mother told me and then I would talk to her in English and she would understand what I said. When my brother went to college he took German because he figured that that was the easiest language to talk to mother. That's the one that is living down in Florida.
- I can't think of another thing that has happened to me, except what has happened to me now, which to me is not the best thing in the world.
- B: What were you doing during World War II, what was that like?
- S: World War II, I was a little girl at that time. My brother Lou, that is the one that's down in Florida, he had been in the service. My husband was too young to be in II and too old to be in III so he hasn't been in the service at all.
- S: You mean I and II.

B: Yes. He hasn't been in the service at all. I did belong to the Jewish War Veterans because of him. We had nothing new that happened. All I could remember was that my mother was dark haired like you. When my brother came to say goodbye that he was going overseas mother didn't go to bed that day, and she sat on the rocker and when we got up in the morning my mother was as gray as I am. Overnight she turned gray.

B: Wow!

S: That's what I did.

B: Overnight?

S: This is the color that my hair has always been.

B: My mother went gray very early too. So your brother went to the service during World War I?

S: My brother did.

B: Following World War I into the end of the 1920's there was the Great Depression, what was that like?

S: I can't say that we ever felt the Depression because Stan had always worked, always had plenty of food to give us, plenty of clothes to give to us. I don't remember one day . . . The only thing I can remember was my mother would say if we didn't finish what was on the plate, "Why don't you think of the poor children in Europe who have nothing to eat and you want me to throw this away." Sometimes we would gag and we would eat it because we didn't want to hurt her feelings. That was the only thing. We used to say, "Mother, don't put big portions on, then you won't feel that we are wasting it." That's the only thing that I could ever hear my mother say was think of the people who don't have enough to eat. That was my mother.

In New York in those years, to live in an elevator house and have a doorman, that was a big thing. That's where we lived. I've always had a marvelous childhood.

B: You say you don't go to synagogue regularly and that sort of thing, but aside from that are you in favor of Zionism?

S: I'm not a very good Zionist to tell you the truth. I never went into, really, the listening and knowing what it was all about. I do have some bonds someplace, when they used to sell them, but not because I am a good

Zionist; it's just because my neighbors did it or something like that. I don't remember mother and dad ever talking about things like that so I really don't know. Since I've started to come here, the first time that I can remember that I went to the temple Friday night and I lit the candles, on Saturday morning somebody came here and called for me, "Come on, it's time to go to the temple Lee. You got started, don't stop." How long this will last I don't know. We have to get up at six o'clock in the morning.

B: Six o'clock in the morning?

S: Today I fell off the bed at six o'clock. They give me an insulin shot, then they have to give me another shot, and then they give me a urine test. It takes time. At eight o'clock we've got to be in the kitchen to eat.

B: For breakfast?

S: Yes. For breakfast you can go in a robe. I don't think people have time to put a dress on. Right from there they took me for my roll call. I had that and I came home there and got my clothes on.

B: Is there anything you would like to add?

S: This is the end of my life. I am here and am trying to make the best of everything. That's about all I can do.

B: Thank you very much for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW