

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Jewish Senior Citizens

Jewish Culture

O. H. 337

RALPH WALDHORN

Interviewed

by

Karlyn Bennehoof

on

December 14, 1983

February 1, 1984

RALPH WALDHORN

Ralph Waldhorn has lived at Heritage Manor since 1979. He was born in Austria in 1896, the son of Samuel and Anna Waldhorn and the youngest of four children. His father was in the clothing business in New York City and in Detroit. While in high school, Ralph worked as a paper boy and a waiter. He graduated from Central High School in Detroit in 1915. For two years after high school he was employed as a men's furnishing salesman until 1918. When enough money was saved for college he enrolled in the University of Michigan and graduated in 1922. He then moved to Chicago and worked at Marshall Fields Department Store. He met Molly Kline and married her in 1926.

The Waldhorns moved to Youngstown and in 1930 opened a bookstore on Phelps Street. He and his wife soon became established interior decorators and maintained this business until 1971. Mrs. Waldhorn died of cancer in 1972. Mr. Waldhorn moved into Gutknecht Towers and began to withdraw. He then entered Heritage Manor to benefit from the protection and security and to be closer to the Jewish community. He also knew some residents and staff members. He has clearly and realistically assessed his situation and has developed a positive self-concept towards aging. He enjoys reading, walking, and watching TV.

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INTERVIEWEE: RALPH WALDHORN

INTERVIEWER: Karlyn Bennehoof

SUBJECT: Youngstown Businesses, Anti-Semitism

DATE: December 14, 1985

B: This is an interview with Ralph Waldhorn for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Jewish Senior Citizens. This interview is being conducted by Karlyn Bennehoof at Heritage Manor on December 14, 1983, at approximately 1:30 p.m.

Were you born here in Youngstown?

W: No.

B: Where were you born?

W: Austria.

B: What town in Austria?

W: (No Response)

B: You don't remember? How old were you when you came to the United States?

W: I was two years old.

B: Did you marry? What was your wife's name?

W: Mollie Kline.

B: Did you have any children?

W: No.

B: What did you do as an adult? What career were you in?

- W: I went to the University of Michigan, graduated, then I went to Chicago where they had all different connections. For two or three years it wasn't satisfactory. Meanwhile, our father had moved from Detroit, where I was brought up and graduated from high school, to Youngstown. I came here to visit him; I hadn't seen him in years. I was here two weeks and I met my future wife. We decided to get married and I wanted to go back to Chicago, the future there was good, but my wife's family was here and she thought we would both be happy in Youngstown and should stay here. We married in 1926.
- B: So you've been here ever since?
- W: Unfortunately.
- B: You don't like it here?
- W: Things didn't turn out the way I wanted them.
- B: What were your plans when you got here?
- W: I wanted to go back to Chicago; I had several good prospects for good connections, but my wife talked me out of it. Her family was here and at that time she was working for Mr. Frieder who was in charge of the David Joseph Company, scrap people. She had a good position. If it took a year or two to settle down we could take care of it financially. I had several minor jobs, but finally we decided I would open a book shop.
- We opened the shop on Wick Avenue hill, at that time it was a hill, and it was called the Random Book Shop. We did rather well for being beginners and my not knowing anything about the book business. We got a lot of free advertising and people patronized us. Then the city planning commissioner decided to do away with that hill and build a bridge over the railroad tracks, as it is now, and now they are contemplating doing away with the bridge and going back to the hill. Since the city decided to do away with the hill I looked for another location. My wife found a store on Phelps Street, between Federal and Commerce. We were there for a while and then the Depression came. The book business wasn't the ideal business to be in.
- B: Yes, during the Depression people wouldn't have been buying books very much I don't think.
- W: I don't know what made us move, someone talked my wife into . . . She had an artistic flare. They talked her into going into interior decorating, so we decided to combine the two and we moved to Chestnut Street.

B: Is that in the downtown area?

W: Do you know where the Home Savings & Loan Bank is? It's between Commerce and Federal on the east side of Chestnut Street. Slowly but surely, we got out of the book business. It wasn't paying at all. Youngstown isn't book conscious.

That poor girl who had a store on Phelps Street tried it just lately, a book business, but she folded up. Anyway, we did very well as interior decorators for a good many years. We had a good reputation and did work in Akron, Cleveland, Sharon, and several jobs in Detroit.

B: Wow, you were well-known.

W: Things began to slow down a little bit, the so-called Depression came in and then my wife was taken sick, which was all I needed. We were married 46 years.

B: Wonderful. That's a nice, long marriage.

W: Then she passed away and I was absolutely lost. We threw up the business. I couldn't and didn't want to do it by myself. Things didn't go well from then on and then I finally landed in here.

B: Did you try any other business?

W: No, after that I didn't try to keep a business going.

B: Did you occupy your time a lot by reading? I noticed you have a lot of books around here.

W: I had a good many books, of course. I sold all those good books, the first editions. I wish I could have held on to them because as time goes on they get more valuable, but I didn't.

B: What was Youngstown like when you first came here?

W: A steel town. It was very prosperous. I remember East Federal Street, for example, on a Saturday night you couldn't use the sidewalks they were so crowded. People had to walk in the middle of the street they were so crowded with shoppers.

When the war ended the town started going down. It was a typical, old-fashioned steel town. One industry and all the accessories that went in the steel industry located here, quite a few small plants, and of course, large plants like Youngstown Sheet & Tube, Republic, and Bethlehem; they were all concentrated here.

- B: Were there many cars? Did a lot of people drive?
- W: Average, I suppose. I didn't pay much attention to it. Wick Avenue was a residential street of the upper class. They were customers of mine. They were the only ones who bought books. I don't even know if they read them or not. There was a Mrs. Alice Todd whose house is now part of the University.
- B: Todd Hall? No, Todd Hall is the administration building so that wouldn't be her house.
- W: Where is the administration building?
- B: Near Spring Street which comes off of Wick Avenue and it's off of Spring Street a little bit.
- W: There should be the Christian Church on the corner.
- B: Yes, there is a church on the corner and then the building sets a little further back. Where was the house that you are talking about?
- W: It's an undertakers' establishment now. It's on the east side of the street.
- B: Are you talking about the one just north of the freeway?
- W: Yes.
- B: Okay, I think I know what you're talking about.
- W: A block north was the Pollock House and it's part of the army service, and across the street is the art building.
- B: Bliss Hall.
- W: The Blisses used to live on Fifth Avenue. Mrs. Bliss is still living. I think she must be close to one hundred. She's helpless. Her house, which is on Fifth Avenue, will be given to the University when Mrs. Bliss passes away. I don't know if I'm doing you any good.
- B: This is interesting. This is the kind of thing we want, the history.
- W: The Philip Wicks were customers of mine. They also lived on Wick Avenue. Their house is next to the . . . It's a rooming house now. Between that house is an empty lot which is a parking space for the students and then the freeway. South of the house is the museum I was talking about.
- B: The Arms Museum. Did you know the Arms?

WALDHORN

- W: They were customers of mine. Next door to Bliss Hall is the Alsiser home. Dr. Alsiser practiced and studied in Switzerland and specialized in goiter. His wife-to-be visited him in Switzerland and he talked her into coming to Youngstown and he opened his office here. He was a good man in his line.
- B: Where did you live?
- W: For awhile in a building called the Nelmor House. It was a semi-boarding house; we ate there, and had two rooms. We moved to an apartment on Elm, near Todd Lane. It's still standing there. It's an old-timers building. We moved then to an apartment on Ohio, 1625, Ohio Avenue.
- B: That's out towards Gypsy Lane isn't it?
- W: Yes. The Depression set in and we found a little house off of South Avenue near North Lima.
- B: You went way out, didn't you?
- W: We had a little house and a garage and I don't think we paid more than thirty dollars a month. It was rather unhandy, but we stayed there. Across the street was the old Cockram Farm, that's an interesting point. As time went on, we came back north. Meanwhile, we were in the decorating business and things were humming and going good so we decided to build a house on Madera Avenue, 425 Madera. It was a French provincial home. Are you familiar with that section of Madera on the north side?
- B: I'm not familiar with that part of town.
- W: Our house was the talk of the town for awhile.
- B: French provincial was not very common!
- W: We had a nice stone fence in front and then the real Depression came and we sold the house to a bachelor. I should know his name. He bought the house and some of our antique furniture. We moved into the Parkway Towers.
- B: That's on Fifth Avenue?
- W: No. Park Avenue near Fifth.
- B: Okay.
- W: It was sort of catty-corner from Stambaugh Auditorium.
- B: That's where Wick Park is?
- W: Yes. That's where my wife took sick. She knew she was

ailing but she was the type that never complained, never told me that I was stupid enough and didn't see anything.

B: What was wrong with her?

W: I think it was diabetes, but I never asked the doctor. One day she said, "Ralph, I'm not feeling well, take me to the doctor." I took her to the doctor. She never went to the doctor. She would never go; it was a phobia. I took her to the doctor's office. Dr. Herman Ipp; it was near North Side Hospital. She went into his office and she came out and he was standing up on the steps and he looked at me and shook his head. Then I finally woke up. He had just given up his practice. He was retiring and going to Florida so he recommended a new doctor, who I blame; I know I shouldn't because he wasn't responsible. He should have tried something, but he saw that it was too late.

B: He didn't try any treatment for her?

W: No, she was at the hospital twice. The last time I saw her I left her about seven or eight o'clock. We were living at Parkway Towers and as soon as I got in the room I got a telephone call from the North Side Hospital. They said, "Mr. Waldhorn, come right back, your wife has passed away." I had sold my car by that time and I had a heck of a time getting back. Finally, a neighbor in the building saw that I was prancing up and down and he said, "Waldhorn, what's wrong?" I said that I needed a car and couldn't get a taxi in a hurry. He said, "Hell, get in my car!" He took me to the hospital and when I got there, of course, she was gone. That was the end.

B: It's too bad when that happens.

W: I didn't talk about it and people were so surprised. We were a so-called "ideal" couple and we worked damn hard, both of us. The only pleasure we had was when we had to go on business. We went to Chicago twice a year, which is a merchandise mart. We loved New York and went there about three or four times a year. When we went there we saw all the shows. My wife was one of the founders of the original playhouse, not the playhouse now. It was over an old barn. Dr. Patrick owned the building and he said they could use it for a playhouse.

B: They put on productions?

W: She accomplished a lot along those lines.

B: Did she ever act in any of the productions?

W: No. I think I might have something you'll be interested

in.

B: It is a thank you letter from Rodef Sholom. It says Congratulations, Rodef Sholom at its annual meeting has extended you a vote of thanks in appreciation of your splendid efforts to entertain and to raise money for temple uses. The congregation takes this means of thanking the members of the Temple Follies for the contribution of seven hundred dollars which will be applied on the mortgage of the temple as requested by your secretary, Mrs. H. F. Grossman, also for the donation to the temple of the black curtain.

Wishing you success in any like venture in the future and assuring you of the congregation's support in any of your future endeavors, I remain very truly yours,
Arthur Crow.

This was found in our files. It certainly needs no explanation. You may not know that the late Mrs. Ralph Waldhorn was the former Miss Mollie Kline, sister of Frank Kline and Mr. Edward Kline. Dated July 13, 1921.

That's interesting. Could I take this and make a copy of it and bring it back to you really soon?

W: Bring it back.

B: I certainly will.

W: They talked about beautifying the downtown.

B: When they built the Federal Plaza?

W: Yes. When we had our store on Chestnut Street what we did was plant a tree downtown. (Laughing)

B: A maple tree?

W: The tree is still standing. It's old and has been mishandled and it's on a bad street now.

B: What a shame. It'll be all right, maples are hearty trees, they'll be okay.

W: The way those negroes hammer away at them, I used to go out and fight and call the police. The shop became very well-known. For several years we made a living. We weren't the saving kind.

B: You wouldn't save the money, you would go spend it, fly off to New York?

- W: Buying the first editions for ourselves. Fortunately, she was a book lover just like I was.
- B: What was the Jewish-Gentile relationship?
- W: My first good customers were Gentiles. I had a few Jewish customers, very few of the more wealthy people who my wife knew and grew up with. When the Hitler thing started we noticed a tremendous drop of the Gentile customers. In other words, the boycott had begun. The Christians, the Gentile, didn't patronize the Jew.
- B: That wasn't limited to Europe, it was also going on in America. This was during the 1930's or towards the 1940's?
- W: Yes. We felt that some of our so-called friends . . . I don't think they did it consciously, it was in the air even at that time. Strouss Hirschberg felt it too. We, in our small way, felt it more than anyone else.
- B: The smaller businesses . . .
- W: It was a limited business. Outside of the books we had a good collection of etchings that we would pick up in New York and sell here.
- B: You say there was a drop off in business, was there outright anti-Semitism as well?
- W: There definitely was anti-Semitism.
- B: What other ways did you feel or see it then the business thing?
- W: Outside of the business, the few Gentile friends we had, those personal daily or weekly friends, there was no drop off. Dorothy Dennison was a good friend or ours; Dorothy was Joe Butler's wife. You know who Joe Butler is?
- B: Of the Butler Art Institute?
- W: Yes. Dorothy is still living in Poland now.
- B: The business dropped off when Hitler was coming to power, but your friends, the people that you saw every day or every few days, were still hanging around and they didn't change?
- W: What friends do you mean?
- B: Your Gentile friends. They were okay?

W: No.

B: No, they weren't? Were there any instances of violence in Youngstown against the Jews?

B: No, not that I know of.

W: This is something I've run into with other interviews; with all the violence going on in Europe that kind of thing happening here. All of the anti-Semitism here was under the table, like we won't patronize the Jewish businesses or we won't employ Jewish people in our businesses and that kind of thing.

B: That was really noticeable and couldn't be passed, but violence in Youngstown, no.

This was way before, but I wanted to mention the Ku Klux Klan. They were strong before the war. My wife was born and brought up in Niles, and she used to tell me that just before the war the KKK grew and then the Italians who worked in the mills got together and marched from Niles to Youngstown. It was a semi-war between the Italians and the KKK.

B: This was in the 1920's?

W: Must have been in the 1920's.

B: Do you know what that was about?

W: It was just a buildup on both sides of the hatred towards the other.

B: My goodness.

W: There was a Clarence Strouss, he was the president of Strouss Hirs
Hirs There was Strouss and
over control of the store. Clarence Strouss' daughter, who was married to a doctor, sold a beautiful home just within the last year and moved south; they retired. There was a Myers family who owned the Ritter & Myers Store. Mrs. Myers was a Strouss girl. She gave the first money, I think \$25,000, for this institution.

B: Yes, I saw the plaque out in the lobby.

W: Yes, that's her, a lovely person. She had a son, Gerald, who lived way out on Market Street near North Lima, who is not a Jew or anything; his family is intermarried.

B: With Gentiles?

- W: No, with peasant. We had a celebration last Sunday here and he wasn't there, but he wasn't expected. He gives his yearly donation, but has nothing to do . . .
- B: Is that wholly by his choice, or is there a little bit of the fact that people don't like that he married a Gentile?
- W: I don't think that people even think of it. No, that doesn't have anything to do with it.
- B: So it's just his choice. Your wife was born and raised in Niles, right?
- W: Yes.
- B: She was here all of her life. You said earlier that you came from Austria when you were two, is that right?
- W: Yes.
- B: Do you know what prompted your family to leave Austria, why they wanted to come to the United States?
- W: Financial circumstances, I suppose.
- B: They felt that there was more opportunity here?
- W: They were in New York for several years, then moved to Detroit, where I graduated from Detroit High School; then I went to Ann Arbor.
- B: You got your Bachelor's Degree at Ann Arbor?
- W: I went to Ann Arbor for a year and then the war started; I wasn't accepted, physically, so I quit school for two or three years and worked in one of the auto factories in Detroit in order to accumulate enough money.
- B: Didn't they shut down most of the automobile production and convert to making war materials?
- W: To a certain extent. Automobiles were still being made. Cadillacs were going. Studebaker sunk down almost completely, I think. I was working on the press at the Studebaker and it helped when I got back to Ann Arbor.
- B: The economy was booming then, wasn't it? The economy was pretty much on its feet because everybody was employed for the war.
- W: That's when we had an influx of the colored people of the south to Chicago.

- B: Do you recall anything from World War II about the immigration? Do you remember what the policies were or how people felt about the immigration at the time?
- W: I don't think there was any antagonism to it, because after all, it was a need for those thousands who scattered all over the country. They went to Toledo, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Detroit. A good percentage of it were the Jews coming to New York; that was the focal point.
- B: That was the point of entry for an awful lot of immigrants.
- W: Statue of Liberty and Liberty Island is where the Statue of Liberty sits on. Ellis Island was the port of entry.
- B: Was the Jewish community aware of what was happening in Europe during World War II?
- W: That's when they started gathering money together, and in every city the Jews bought guns and ammunition and in one way or another got it to Europe.
- B: Was that an organization doing that?
- W: The community, as a whole, was trying to get this together.
- B: What was the reaction of the Jewish community when they learned of not only the persecution going on in Europe, but of the concentration camps? Do you remember that?
- W: Horrible. They wanted to go and fight the Germans. There were no Jews that I knew of, but there must have been, who hid behind their mother's skirts so they weren't accepted in the Army. Naturally, there must have been a good many of them; the majority of Jews joined the Army and went to fight.
- Talking about Isreal, my mother's father, I was told, went to Isreal in the early 1900's. It must have been 1902 or 1903. It was an inaccessible place at that time, but somehow or another--I remember him talking about it--he went from Austria to Romania to Turkey, but then we lost track of him. From what I understand one of the family in Austria got a letter from him a time later from Palestine.
- B: He had made it?
- W: He had made it. I would like to follow how he got there. He had the means; he happened to be one of the wealthy Jews in Austria.

- B: That helps. Do you think he did most of the trip on foot?
- W: He must have had rides. I think where he really made his connections was when he got to Romania. There was sort of an underground way at that time, in the early 1900's.
- B: I had heard that Romania was sympathetic to the immigration to Palestine. Weren't the British very much against the immigration to Palestine? They tried to stop it . . .
- W: Ben Gurion was one of the first leaders. He fought the British, and he was the one that, if you know a little about it, got a gang together and blew up that hotel in Jerusalem that killed a good many people. There were no Jews, they were all Christians, the English soldiers. He was the beginning of the fighters. Before him there was Herzl, and then Rothchilds in France who gave money, and Montifiore who wanted to give a tremendous future for the Jews in Argentina instead of Israel.
- B: Why Argentina?
- W: He had large land holdings there.
- B: He thought he could sell his land?
- W: No, he was willing to give it. He also would furnish them with money to begin, but there was no reaction there.
- B: Well, Argentina has nothing to do with anything; Isreal is the hol land.
- W: That was Ben Gurion's argument; it's our home. The British were anti-Jewish. Britain controlled Egypt, Palestine, and that whole section.
- B: And they didn't want to give up their colony?
- W: No.
- B: Was your father Zionist? Were your mother and father Zionist?
- W: My father was, yes. I lost my mother when I was a young child. My father remarried and that's when I left and went on my own. I went through Circle High in Detroit. All the money I made working afternoons and nights. I wasn't a rich Jew.
- B: You had to work for that money. I think an awful lot of people had to work for everything they got.

- W: At that time they did. Right now things are bad, but for awhile things were pretty rosy in the United States. People lived well, the wars came, between wars . . .
- B: Is there anything else that you remember about the war that you think you would like to talk about? We talked about the influence it had on your business, a lot of war industry was going on; is there anything else, any changes that took place at that time?
- W: World War II helped cohere, get the Jews together from throughout the world. The Jews, until World War II, were sort of a nasty, independent lot. They didn't care for one another. There were small societies that did charitable work, no doubt; you've heard of B'nai B'rith. Until World War II the Jews were not a cohesive group.
- B: They're pretty unified now?
- W: Yes. They loan a lot of money every year to Palestine. Institutes like this are results of Hitler.
- B: This is a result of Hitler?
- W: Yes, it brought the Jews . . . It made them self-conscious that they had to be brothers to each other and not fight with one another. When I came to Youngstown, I'm guessing now, there must have been six congregations. They were separate, and they were nagging at each other.
- B: I heard someone say the Russian Jews had their own synagogue and then the Hungarian Jews had another . . .
- W: At one time, when they first came here, for example, when the Hungarian Jews came here all they could do was talk Hungarian or semi-Yiddish so he had to stay with group. On Summit Street, right across from the library, it's a Negro church, that used to be a Hungarian school, a Jewish schul.
- B: Can you explain the difference between Orthodox, conservative, and reform? Is it a big difference?
- W: To a certain extent it's big; from the religious angle of reform, the Rodef Sholom, their prayers are different. An Orthodox Jew is a so-called very religious Jew, says his prayers every day, especially Friday night and Saturday morning. They have their own teachers and rabbis.
- B: Do the Orthodox Jews still adhere to the side locks on the beard and the attire?

W: Tallises they call that.

B: That's the prayer shawl?

W: Yes. The Orthodox Jew and the semi-Orthodox have a new temple on the north side, across from Youngstown Country Club.

Rodef Sholom had some very fine rabbis or leaders. When I came in here, I prayed immediately with Rabbi Filo. He was an old-timer. He was quite a leader. In Gentile society they accepted him. They used him as a speaker on a lot of occasions. I have a story, I don't know whether or not you can use it or how much truth there is to it, but there must be a certain amount of truth to it.

There were the Block brothers of Chicago who had a steel mill. They were interested in buying Sheet & Tube. I'm going back now thirty years. They were taken to the Youngstown Country Club for the evening, and they had a bedroom for them. Somebody said that they didn't accept Jews in the Youngstown Country Club and this Mr. Block³ asked if he would repeat what he said, he didn't hear it. He repeated it. He said, "Will you please get me a cab to take me downtown and the deal is off."

B: I don't blame him at all.

W: He was in power, and of course, the men who said that got plenty of hell, I understand. Well, Youngstown Country Club still doesn't accept Jews.

B: Now! How can they get away with that, there are laws now.

W: We've got our own Squaw Creek Country Club.

B: I know that, but I still don't see how they can get away with that.

W: The Youngstown Club, in the Union National Bank Building, is a good dining room and until five or six years ago they didn't accept Jews. They began to feel the financial crunch; the Gentiles weren't as liberal with their money even to their own institutions. They were beginning to be a little more conservative. Then a movement started where they approached the Jews to see if they would join their club. The Jews didn't have any place downtown. Sidney Moyer was a good person, my age, very intellectual moneywise. He was approached by someone from the Youngstown Club, if Jews would be interested in joining. He said that he couldn't speak for all of us, that he would talk to us, but as far as he was concerned he wasn't interested. He did talk to about a dozen men and they said that they would be interested

with one stipulation; if a Jew, outside of this original group, putting in an application, were turned down the whole group would pull out.

B: This is a continuation of the interview with Mr. Ralph Waldhorn for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Jewish Senior Citizens. This continuation is being conducted at Heritage Manor on February 1, 1984, at approximately 1:30 p.m.

You wanted to talk about Mr. Levy this time. Did you know him personally?

W: Yes. I think he was one of the most outstanding Jews in Youngstown. He practically gave his life for the Jewish cause. He was president of Heritage Manor, and while he was president nothing else would enter his mind; Heritage Manor was paramount. When we lost him we lost a real person. There were no two sides of him, you knew where you stood with him when it came to Jewish cause. He contributed, moneywise, more than anyone will ever know of find out. Of course, he contributed publicly, but what I'm emphasizing is the private handouts that no one will ever know.

B: He would contribute to causes but then also help individuals?

W: To individuals that were really in need, and he never questioned it. As a rule, he knew about them before they came to him. He anticipated them coming to him.

B: People felt free to go to him and tell him they needed help?

W: Definitely. Whatever you told him no one else knew. As far as Heritage Manor was concerned, his closest contact was Stanley Engle who was the man in charge of Heritage Manor. I happen to know that they used to meet Friday nights at Mr. Levy's house, privately, and they would go over the week's happenings.

B: In those meetings would they discuss the needs of the residents?

W: I don't know. Very few people knew about these meetings. I was in his office one day, I used to go there a lot, first he was a friend and second my accountant, and it sort of slipped out. Then he told me about these meetings. He had a brother, Jack Levy, who was an attorney and went to the University of Michigan, but I can't remember where Philip Levy went.

B: Did he have a law degree?

W: No, he was an accountant. Jacob Levy, his brother, had the law degree.

B: What sorts of organizations was he involved in?

W: I don't know, but a good guess would be B'nai B'rith and all those Jewish organizations. He was a member of the Temple Rodef Sholom, and I think he was president for a year or two.

B: Was he born in this country?

W: I don't know. Rough guess would be yes, but I don't know.

B: Can you tell me anything about his personal life, where he lived and if he was married, whether or not he had children, that sort of thing?

W: He had four sons. His wife is living in the house where they lived for years on Gypsy Lane. His father had a grocery store in Brier Hill. How they got through school, I don't know. I know the attorney, Jack, worked in one of the sorority houses in Ann Arbor in the kitchen for his meals. I suppose the father must have helped because Jack couldn't have made it through school without the extra help, the same thing with Philip.

Philip was held in high esteem by banks in Youngstown. His word was holy. If he said he would do something, you knew it would be done. He wasn't a social butterfly, that's definite. Whether he belonged to Squaw Creek Country Club, I'm not sure.

B: Was Squaw Creek established in reaction to anti-Semitism?

W: I'd say definitely yes.

B: I heard stories that Jewish people weren't allowed in the other country clubs around here.

W: Definitely not.

B: What did you know about Philip Levy's personal life? Do you have any stories that you can tell me about him?

W: No. He didn't play around; he was very peaceful to his wife.

B: I'm thinking of a good question.

W: I suppose you've interviewed someone that talked about

Clarence Strouss?

- B: No, I haven't heard that name, Clarence Strouss. Can you tell me anything about him?
- W: No, we were on the same social plane at that time, but we weren't very close. Strouss Hirschberg was his life. His wife came from a town in Missouri, how they met I don't know. He had a sister, Mrs. I. Harry Myers. This is important, her husband was one of the owners of Ritter & Myers, a men's furnishing store on Federal Street and Phelps. Mrs. Myers was instrumental in Heritage Manor coming to life. When one of her close friends was very ill, Mrs. Myers tried to get her into a home in Illinois, an old folks home, but she couldn't get her in there and she tried other places, so she said it's about time we do something for ourselves.
- B: Do you mean the Gentile old folks' homes were discriminating against the Jewish people, like the country clubs?
- W: Mrs. Myers decided to get a group together and get the ball rolling. She must have given the first contribution of \$25,000. When you go out into the hall you will see the plaque of the person I'm talking about.

Her brother, Clarence Strouss, became interested in it. I think he was one of the first officers of Heritage Manor. Mrs. Myers left a son, Gerald Myers. He was head of Strouss Hirschberg after Clarence Strouss passed away. She had a daughter, Jean Myers, who married a man named Einstein, who passed away three or four years ago. Jean Myers Einstein was in here about ten days ago, she came to see me. She hasn't gotten over her husband passing away; she's still a fine person. I think she had two children, but I don't know where they live. Her mother, Mrs. Myers, was the instrument that started this institution. Some wouldn't accept this woman and she was a very fine person, but things have changed.

- B: You said things have changed now; do you think the Gentile institutions have given up their discrimination?
- W: No, on the surface yes.
- B: Do they still have the same administration at the Youngstown Club that they had at the time the Jews were allowed to join?
- W: It has been changed.
- B: Do you think the attitude is still there or the new administrators are a little more . . .

W: I doubt it.

B: Do you think that kind of attitude is very widespread in Youngstown now?

W: Anti-Jew, yes, it hasn't changed.

There was a Mrs. Smith, her husband was one of the steel men, but her father, Kennedy, was president of the Commercial Bank. During the Bank Holiday it went downhill and the Union National Bank took it over. Mr. and Mrs. Smith took a trip to Palestine twenty-five years ago. Whether she liked Jews or not, I don't know.

B: She wasn't Jewish?

W: No.

B: She went to Isreal though. That's interesting.

W: We were in contact from the business angle. She called us in once to do some work for her and we became very friendly over a period of years. She lived down on Fifth Avenue, second house from Crandall Park. A widow lives in the corner house. She's in her nineties. When she passes away that house goes to the University. It's in his will. It's another house that the University will get, and I don't know what they'll do with it.

B: Hopefully, they'll take care of it. I think that it's getting to the point now where they feel they can use buildings as they are for good purposes rather than putting up some modern stuff.

W: Rather than putting up a stadium.

B: (Laughing) I like your attitude.

W: I think that was terrible. I'm a sports fan and I used to go to games. Now they are talking about the other side of Wick Avenue as the location. That was an ideal spot there and they could have gotten it for a . . .

B: And that's where they should have done it.

W: What is the name of the art building? It's right in back of that.

B: Bliss. I know exactly where you are talking about. Now, they are going to put baseball diamonds and softball fields down there.

W: In back of Bliss there is an oval with houses still standing, that was an ideal place to build a dormitory.

- B: Now, they are talking about building university housing on the oval.
- W: That stadium . . .
- B: It is right up there on the freeway. They couldn't do very much with that property so they built the stadium kind of cockeyed on the lot. They could only build one side. It's just a fiasco; the whole thing is a fiasco.
- W: The Beeghly building is across the street where the gym is. There was a family, Beeghly, that put it up, very prominent. His son is the president of one of the steel mills in Pittsburgh. Another prominent living man is Pollock. He sold his mill. It was on East Federal Street and Andrews. He's retired now. Across the street from the Bliss building is the Pollock home, that's where his folks lived.
- B: The Pollock house is pretty, nice architecture.
- W: I was afraid that someday they'll tear it down. I wouldn't be surprised.
- B: I wouldn't be surprised either, they are still kicking that idea around.
- W: You know that the president's home out in Liberty was given to the University. I don't remember the name of the man who gave it; he was a Jewish man.
- B: Well, I'm sure Dr. Karfeld isn't complaining.
- W: John Tod, I don't know what he gave to the University, but he did give a lot to the hospitals.
- B: Tod's Baby and Children's Hospital, it must have been?
- W: I don't know whether that was John or Fred Tod. It must have been part of John Tod's doing. The beginning of the hospital itself was John Tod. Then there was Mrs. Hitchcock, who was also a good friend and customer of ours. She lived over on Wick Avenue for years. It's where the Arms Museum is. When Mrs. Arms died, Mrs. Hitchcock turned it into a museum. There was an old Dr. Gibson, who very few people know about. There was a ladies' home that was next to the Christian Science Church, I don't know what they call it now, that was given by two sisters who were old maids of a Dr. Beesley. He had his office on East Federal Street and the street across from the YMCA. He was very prominent. He left his money to the sisters, and I don't think it's property of the University. I think it's still property of the so-called Beesley Estates.

B: I think the University owns it. Aren't they using that for student housing?

W: Yes, maybe it was given.

B: I don't think the University owns that building, but I think they have been given the use of it.

W: There was an Arial Crandell. Crandall Park is named after the family. She was an old maid. They lived on Broadway near Fifth Avenue, about four houses from Fifth. All those families were grouped on the north side. The south side didn't need anything at that time.

There was a Mrs. Frank Hitchcock, nicest person I ever met. I don't know what she did for the town. She must have left something. She moved from Wick Avenue to Market Street in Boardman across from . . . Her house was on the southwest corner by a gas station. It was a beautiful old colonial home. I understand it was pushed back and used as a rooming house. There was a Bonnell family, two brothers. One was a bachelor and the other was a high binder.

B: What's a high binder?

W: A thief.

B: I've never heard that expression before.

W: He lived on the Fifth Avenue across the street from the park next to the church. Wait, I think they put an old folks' home on part of his land. Fernway's brother had a farm across the street from Mrs. Hitchcock. He moved his farm and barn out of Warner Road, can you imagine that?

B: Warner Road is way out past Liberty. No, I can't imagine that.

W: Across from that place lived Foster. Foster was the president of General Fireproofing. Truscon was founded by a man named Julius Kahn who lived on the northeast corner of Fifth and Tod Lane. His brother was Albert Kahn and was one of the outstanding architects of his days.

B: Did he design any of the buildings in Detroit?

W: No, in Liberty. There was Julius, Gustav, and Albert. Albert was the architect. Albert has a son who is my age. He was in my class. I don't know whether he's still living or not. He was a doctor. I think you've pumped me dry.

- B: I've been fascinated by all these people you knew.
- W: Rabbi Filo was one of the early rabbis of Temple Rodef Sholom. He passed away several years ago and a young man named Birkowitz took his place. He was here for quite a few years. He passed away a few years ago, also. I'm trying to think who the architect of Rodef Sholom was, could it have been . . . There was a Jewish architect who was the architect of the bank building on Federal. I don't know what it's called now. I think he was the architect of the Rodef Sholom temple also.
- B: Is Rodef Sholom the temple on Elm Street right across from the little park?
- W: Next to the Unitarian Church.
- B: Is it still a Jewish synagogue?
- W: Definitely. Reformed. They are thinking about going out to Liberty, but there is a lot of opposition. They won't do it for a long time, too much opposition and sentiment attached to that building. It's a beautiful building.
- B: It has been around a long time, hasn't it?
- W: It's beautiful inside. We decorated the inside.
- B: Did you? I'm going to have to make a point to see it. I've only driven past it and my eye is always drawn to it.
- W: I was acquainted with the preacher at the Unitarian Church. I can't think of his name. He left after quite a few years here. He left for the East, some church. Lithever was the minister of the Unitarian Church for a good many years. He was very prominent and knowledgeable and a respected man. I think you've pumped me dry.
- B: There's nothing else that you want to add?
- W: I feel sorry for what's happening on the north side here. There used to be some beautiful houses and nice families; of course, they are being taken over by colored people. The white Christians and the Jews are running away from Liberty. Liberty will be taken over by colored people. They are in Liberty already. It's unfortunate what is going to be happening to the surroundings of the University.
- B: They have come up with a plan to expand the University, which is meeting an awful lot of opposition. Some of the ideas are good, some are very bad, some of it they are just going about the wrong way.

- W: They use the money uselessly.
- B: The University needs to expand; I think it's important that they do that.
- W: You know that plaza out in Boardman, DeBartolo's . . .
- B: The Southern Park Mall?
- W: That killed downtown. There was no reason for it, just a chance to make money.
- B: Well, he certainly is getting rich and continuing to get rich on it. The thing is that nobody is making that connection. Everyone is all fired up that downtown is dying and businesses won't come in, et cetera. Nobody ever connects the fact that it is a direct result of that mall. People can drive another ten or fifteen minutes and get to the mall.
- W: DeBartolo put up little homes when he first started. He had subcontractors that he never paid. Those poor people would come to me--we were doing some of those houses--and say, "Waldhorn, haven't you any pull with that man? He hasn't paid us and we can't pay our men. They won't come to work for us next week and we have jobs." It's the old story; the rich get richer. DeBartolo was a . . .
- B: Took advantage?
- W: And now he is spread all over the country. He said that he would help downtown but he won't do anything because downtown would hurt his plazas.
- B: What could he really do for downtown though? He could tear down his mall. (Laughing)
- W: What Federal Street will eventually have is small shops. I haven't given up hope. They were going to do away with that saloon on the corner that caters to colored people.
- B: What corner is that?
- W: Hazel and Federal Streets across the street from the Home Savings & Loan. That saloon there caters to colored people, and white people are afraid to go there. That is going to effect the opera house if that saloon is not done away with. Two weeks ago council voted to do away with it but the next week the colored councilman objected to it because his colored clientele wouldn't have a place to hang around. I see where the Junior League is finally waking up; they have influence and can do things. That opera house would go under Powers, but I

don't think that would happen.

B: No, I can't imagine that happening.

W: I understand that the Home Savings & Loan has been trying for several years to do away with the saloon because it has affected their business. Their women clientele are afraid to walk there. Our decorating shop was right around the corner; some of our customers who would go to McKelvey's and walk to our store said, "We are afraid to walk on that street."

I have one relative, Frank Kline, who is on the board that's trying to do things downtown. He's a good man, but he says whatever he says he gets jumped on. Frank was one of the officers of the Lustig Shoe Stores. When they sold out he got his share and then retired.

B: Well, Mr. Waldhorn, thank you very much. I appreciate you talking to me again.

END OF INTERVIEW