YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Rabbi Sidney Berkowitz

Personal Experience

O.H. 1510

PAULINE A. BERKOWITZ

Interviewed

by

Matthew T. Butts

on

July 22, 1992

MRS. PAULINE BERKOWITZ

Mrs. Pauline Berkowitz was born on January 1, 1919 in London, England, the daughter of Rex and Hilda Anderson. They soon moved to Belgium where she attended secondary school at the Convent March-Les Dames.

The Anderson's soon returned to Great Britain due to the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany, and the sudden rise in Anti-Semitism which followed. Sadly, Mrs. Berkowitz's mother died shortly after their return. It was at this point she met Dr. Sidney Berkowitz, who was serving as Rabbi at the Anderson's congregation while attending Cambridge University in England.

They were soon married, but had their lives interrupted by the entry of the United States into World War II. Rabbi Berkowitz volunteered for service in the United States Army, and eventually was stationed in the Pacific, serving as Chaplain with the 7th Air Force, in Saipan and Okinawa.

Shortly after the conclusion of the war, Dr. Berkowitz received an offer from Temple Rodef Sholom, located in Youngstown, Ohio, to become Rabbi of the congregation. Dr. and Mrs. Berkowitz arrived in Youngstown soon after. Mrs. Berkowitz continued to study both French and Spanish while here in Youngstown. She received her Master of Arts Degree from the University of Middlebury in Vermont. Mrs. Berkowitz soon found employment at Kent State University's Trumbull Campus, where she taught both French and Spanish.

Presently, Mrs. Berkowitz enjoys semi-retired life. She resides at 4000 Logangate Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio. Mrs. Berkowitz spends much of her free time reading, traveling, cooking, and golfing.

O.H. 1510

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Rabbi Sidney Berkowitz

INTERVIEWEE: PAULINE A. BERKOWITZ

INTERVIEWER: Matthew T. Butts

SUBJECT: Rabbi Berkowitz, impact on the development of the local Jewish community, the Korean War, religion, Rodef Sholom

DATE: July 22, 1992

MB: This is an interview with Pauline Berkowitz, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Rabbi Sidney Berkowitz project, regarding the Youngstown community and the Youngstown Jewish community, at her residence at 4000 Logangate Road, Youngstown, Ohio, on July 22, 1992, at 11:06 a.m.

Normally, we start off with biographical questions about the interviewee. Okay, could you tell us something about your childhood: where you grew up, where you were born?

PB: I was born in London, England, and I grew up in that small town. When I was 10 years old, I was sent to a school in Belgium, in order to learn French. [I was] at Convent Marche Les Dames School, where I stayed until I was 16 years old. So, I learned French. I got to know the Belgians very well. They're incredibly wonderful people, and all I can remember of my childhood among the Belgians was kindness and fun.

They treated children beautifully, not like the English who. . . . Children weren't even spoken to until they were almost college age. They were basically

ignored in England, whereas the Belgian families were much more open and happier, and just had a different attitude.

My mother became very ill [while] we were in London, and in those days, doctors didn't know too much; so they said that she should get some sea air. So, we moved down to a seaside town, a little way up from Brighton. Most people know where Brighton is, but we lived in Hove. My mother was there for a year and died of, what we now know to be, leukemia. In those days, they couldn't quite--they called it Pernicious Anemia, I think. Well of course, my father wanted to go to services and had some sort of religious closure after his wife's funeral, so we went down to what was the only Reform Temple that was in the area. Everything else was Orthodox. The Reform Temple was very small. They didn't have a building; they just met in someone's home.

At that time, they were looking for a Rabbi because theirs had left, and they called Lady Lily Montague in London and asked her whether she knew of any young Reform rabbi who could come there and lead the congregation. She said, "Yes. There's a young student who just arrived from America, a graduate of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, and he's young working on his Ph.D. I'm sure that for the summer, he would like to come to our resort area and minister to the congregation and make a little money if he could." Like all students, he was broke. He already had his degree. He'd already graduated as a rabbi, and what was interesting to me was that in order to get to England, to get to Cambridge, he had to go by train from where he lived in Terre Haute, Indiana. The train took him straight to--he had to make a change somewhere--either New York or Chicago. I don't know, but then he went on to Quebec, all by train. When he got to Quebec, he took a boat. There were no commercial planes, so he took a boat down to Portsmouth, and from there, he took a train to Cambridge. He was such a young man [that] it was quite a big step to do all this. When he got to Cambridge, he lived in what they called digs. You rented rooms from people who had been approved by the college.

He went to the gates of Cambridge and asked the gatekeeper, "I'm here to see my tutor, Mr. Boyd Smith." They said, "Oh, I'm very sorry, sir, but Mr. Smith isn't up yet." He said, "Oh, well, I'll come back later." So, he went back an hour later, and they said, "I'm sorry, sir, but he isn't up." He said, "Oh, all right, maybe the man has problems sleeping at night, and he sleeps during the day." Well, it wasn't until the second day, that he found out that "not being up"

meant he was not in Cambridge. If you went to Cambridge, you were in a higher seat of learning. Any place else was "down." Even Scotland, which was higher up than Cambridge, was still "down." So, he had a whole new language to learn.

So, he was very happy to accept his post in Hove. He saw me sitting in the front row, with my brothers and sister and my father, and I was crying. So after the service, he called me into the study and he said, "What's the matter?" I told him that my mother was dying, and so, he sort of took me under his wing, right away. He took long walks with me along, what we called the "front," along the ocean, the Atlantic ocean. He talked to me about life and death, and what God's meaning was. Years later, he said, "I was so confident when I was telling you everything, but now that I'm older and wiser, I'm not so sure that some of the answers I gave you were really the answers," because he was new at it. Well, he consoled me and married me. That's what happened.

So, when we came here to the United States, we had to come by boat, one of the last boats to sail out of England because of the war. What do you call the personnel on ships?

MB: Stewards? Crew members?

PB: Every crew member was a German. It turned out that there were some of the German spies in England from 1933 on, while Hitler. . . . They were working as aupair girls. They [were] working as nannies. They were working anywhere they could infiltrate. What was happening was a sort of fifth column that they were building up. And it was the same with the boat. Most of them were trying to get--the crew members were mostly people trying to get away for some reason or other, or maybe they were trying to get into the States. It was a very strange ship.

Where do you want me to go from here?

MB: Where did you arrive in the United States?

PB: We arrived in New York, and the World's Fair was on. My father and mother-in-law met us at the boat, and they said they had tickets to go to the World's Fair. It was 1939. The most significant thing for me at the World's Fair was that, at the Russian Pavilion, they pushed a button and, for the first time in the history of Russia, they had electricity all over Russia, in 1939.

MB: Wow!

PB: This is how backward they were, and it wasn't--what, 10 years later, they were the most feared enemy we had. You wonder how a country that didn't even have electricity, all over the country, that is in every home, how all this happened. Of course, we know now that a lot of it was window dressing. At the time, it became the most feared enemy.

MB: How about Dr. Berkowitz's dissertation? Do remember what that was dealing with?

PB: Yes. It was a critique, biblical commentary, of Kimche on Amos in the Old Testament. In order to do the research of the literature and materials that he had to use, he had to learn two dead languages: Aramaic and Syriac, which he did. I just gave away his Syriac dictionary, and he had to master these two dead languages until he could decipher all this material. Now, his dissertation is at the Bodleian Library in Cambridge, another copy is at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and I have the other copy.

MB: Where did you go after arriving in New York?

PB: We went to his parents' home in Terre Haute, Indiana, because he had to look for a job. What happened was, he was promised a job at the Hebrew Union College to teach. He was to teach grammar. But, whatever the subject was, he was definitely promised a post there, so he went to Cincinnati, where he taught for a year. After teaching for one year, the president of H.U.C., Dr. Morganstern, called him in and said, "I just want you to know that we have all these great scholars, coming over as refugees from Germany, and they're all looking for asylum here, because they've been persecuted by Hitler. They're all coming over here." And he said, "We're supporting them. We're feeding them. We're housing them, so we feel that as long as we're doing that, we should be giving them jobs--as soon as they learn English." Some of them did already, speak English. So they said, "Whereas someone like you--you're an American boy, and you're young--won't have any trouble finding a pulpit anywhere, so you have to give up your job to a German refugee," which he did. So he was called to the pulpit in Mobile, Alabama. If you can imagine, Mobile, Alabama, before the shipyards, before the war, was the most delightful--it was a sort of Tennessee Williams play. I found myself in this incredible atmosphere of Azalea bushes, Japonica bushes, Camellias, and gracious living. [There were] fans going back and forth over the dining room table. People still had chauffeurs. Everyone said, "How could you go to that decadent South?" I told them, "It was so much like England. I don't think I could have taken

New York or Chicago, where everything was go, go, go town." This was perfect for me. I was startled when they didn't have tea in the afternoons, but they lived very, very quietly, [in] a very quiet pace, and I liked that.

The name of the temple was the Government Street Temple, and it was a magnificent building, quite old. Then, of course. . . . (Interruption)

It was my first experience at being a rabbi's wife, and I thought, "Goodness knows what they'd expect of me," but they didn't expect anything of me. They were just delighted to have a nice little English girl as a novelty in their lives, just. . . . They spoiled me tremendously, and they couldn't have been better to me. Everyone was just wonderful to me. They would invite us to go up to their summer homes for the weekends and go fishing on their boats, and it was just a delightful life until suddenly it was cut short by the war. My husband was not drafted--all ministers were exempt from the draft. The only way they could go would be if they applied, presented themselves, and said they would wave the . . . law. So, Sidney went to the draft board and said that he wanted to be a part of the war effort. They didn't have to pass any rigorous physicals like most people. I mean, it didn't matter if you had flat feet because they figured you weren't going to be in actual combat, although some of them were. From there, he was drafted, inducted, but he was taken into the service as a lieutenant. He was made a lieutenant and sent to Lowry Field in Colorado. He had nothing to pack up. He didn't have any possessions in those days. So, we just got in the car and drove out to Denver, and I got to see America for the first time. Although, when we went through Kansas, you never saw a dog or a tree or anything. It was just flat, and you never saw a soul. It was really just a strange feeling for me, because in England, if you go from here to there--everything is just so close. The experience of driving through all those states--and it was all empty--was remarkable. Occasionally, you'd see a few cars.

But, we got to Lowry Field, and he reported for duty. He was in the Seventh Air Force, and we were in Denver where he did, again, really remarkable work. He shared a chapel with the chaplains of all denominations, and they all became very friendly. The whole group of us were very friendly, to the point where they even came and visited us after the war, and we've kept in touch. They, for the most part, had never met a rabbi ever. They were just so thrilled with it. It was easy to like him, but it made them feel better knowing the rabbi; because normally, most ministers are only busy

with their own congregation. They don't have time for anybody else's area. So, the fact that we used to go to the officer's club for dinner, and we'd take trips together--we'd go on trips that were very brief ones, because we were rationed on gasoline, as well. You couldn't go up to the mountains, or go skiing or anything like that, because that was all closed, and they'd taken over all the ski slopes; they were training the ski troops. Later on, the prisoner's of war were put up there in Colorado, on the top of the mountains. We visited them. My husband went up there, because there were some Jewish boys who were guards. [When] we got there, there were no restrictions. There wasn't even a gate. There wasn't even a wall around the place. I said, "This is strange. I mean, can't they run away?" He said, "Where are they going to go?" It's not like Europe, where you can get to the border in an hour. He said, "They could walk forever, and they'd be just picked up." There was no place for them to go. I said to a Jewish boy, "Doesn't it bother you to be guarding German prisoners?" He said, "Oh, they don't give me any trouble. If they look at me wrong, I just shove a bayonet and just say `das ist verboten,' get moving."

So, he [Rabbi Berkowitz] held a service there. It was so isolated. It was unbelievable. We were up on this mountain, and it was just. . . . You look out and there [was] just nothing but the other side of the mountain. You wonder how they got the supplies up there [and] how they managed. And of course, he went from one field to the other. There were several air bases, and he would go to Buckley Field and--I can't remember all of them. He had made special gasoline rations to go around for services in all these various places, and I remember his remark. He said, "When people tell me that all the Jews are smart, (Laughter), I have proof positive that we have our share of morons. I have young men that come from all over the country now," that come to his chapel on Friday night, "and the questions they ask and they're all so homesick. They-'re crying for their mothers. Some of them, they're only good to push a broom. You know the Army, if you're a lawyer, they'll make you drive a truck, and if you're a truck driver, they'll make you into a lawyer." That is the way it was in the Army. "We have our share of every type in the world."

One boy, who came to talk to him--a ballet dancer. Another one--his father owned a delicatessen. Most were ordinary people. There was one boy who said that he was a big shot in Hollywood, and he (Rabbi Berkowitz) said, "Oh sure. Everyone is a big shot when they're from out of town," and it turned that even today, we'll see his name on the screen, of all of the

television screens. Hal Kaplan, he was a very famous Hollywood writer. He was at Lowry Field, and we didn't realize how important he was until Cecil B. DeMille sent a special plane for him once, to fly him back to Hollywood from some special assignment.

MB: Yeah? Wow!

PB: While he was a corporal in the Army, that was a very, very interesting time.

Our son, Roger, was born in Mercy Hospital while we were in Denver. Right after Roger was born, his father was sent overseas. He went to Okinawa, [Japan] and Saipan, [Pacific Island]. It was pretty bad, I guess. It was very primitive and very rough.

MB: What rank did he obtain?

PB: He went overseas as a captain and came back as a major. So, he ended up as a major.

MB: After he was mustered out--when was that, in 1945 or 1946?

PB: Around that time, yes.

MB: Is that when you arrived in Youngstown?

PB: No. We went back to Mobile, and he said that, after having been in Saipan and Okinawa, in that terrible climate, he couldn't stand the southern climate anymore. It just upset him too much. I know he was offered a pulpit in New Orleans, and he couldn't go for the same reason, because he didn't want to be in the, what he called, "Jungle Rot." But of course, we didn't know that air conditioning was going to happen then. Had we known there was going to be air conditioning, we never would have moved. We would have stayed where we were. But, he wanted to come north, and this was considered a very young congregation, all young people, and a very energetic congregation.

He liked the idea, and I liked the idea of being in Ohio, because I was closer to England. In those days, traveling was such an enormous thing to do. It would take me as long to go from Mobile to New York on a boat or plane, as it would to go across the Atlantic and get home. So, I always felt that I wanted to be in Ohio to be closer to England that way. My whole family was there, and I wanted to see them as often as I could.

MB: How about a little bit about the procedure that it took? Did he have to come for a series of interviews up at Youngstown, or were you referred here by Hebrew. . . ?

PB: No. What happened was they--yes, the H.U.C. has a placement director. In fact, the one who is the placement rabbi right now, is a Youngstown boy, Stanley Dreyfus. He's a rabbi, also. What happened was, we were asked to come here. A series of rabbis came here. They would pay your expenses to come up, and they'd put you up at the Ohio Hotel. (Laughter) You would give them a sample sermon, and then, after you left, they'd get together and decide which man they liked best and which one they wanted to hire.

Well, I guess my husband's credentials were went over like a blockbuster compared with most. Some of them who had come had not served in the forces, and they took a dim view of that; and others didn't have their Ph.Ds. A lot of them weren't married, and they wanted a married man. It was all these reasons. Anyway, whatever it was, they offered him this pulpit. We came up on the train, and we were met by Mr. Harold Klivans, who was president of the congregation at the time. As soon as we met him and met his wife, we knew we were going to like Youngstown. They're just lovely people.

MB: What struck you about the city when you first arrived here?

PB: I think I was still very, very homesick for England and didn't realize it. After having lived in Mobile, Alabama with all the beautiful floral, formal, and gracious living, and then going. . . . Then, I was on an army base where there was a lot of young people where there was lots of activity, and my child was born there. I remember coming here and not quite relating to it all. I had difficulty adjusting, and I didn't know why. Although this was a bustling steel town with a big social life--as soon as we got here, we were invited to just about everything that went on in town. It was a new place, and they wanted to get to know us. I think I was still a little lonesome for my family. As a town, it was like nothing else I've ever lived in. It wasn't like London. It wasn't like Mobile, and it wasn't like Colorado; but of course, I realized the immensity of this country and how it was a different personality to every area. I can't say that I had any really vivid recollections. They took me out to Mill Creek Park, and I remember thinking, "Now, this is wonderful." We'd have picnics out there, and I enjoyed taking Roger to the park. But, I think Mill Creek Park was my best recollection of the town itself.

MB: How about the area where Rodef Sholom is located, now? What did it look like when you arrived? Was it a lot more residential?

PB: Yes. It was a nice, quiet neighborhood, and gentle people lived around there. A lot of people were starting to move out north, to the suburbs. The old houses were beautifully kept up, and there was an apartment building, a big apartment building, right there on Wick Park, and upper class people were living there. It was a very orderly sort of existence. You didn't have to be afraid to go into any areas unless it was maybe--even around the mills. The people who worked in the mills were hard working, decent people. They kept their houses up. They're very house-proud. Those little wooden houses that they had were just kept immaculate, and their gardens were kept so nice. I mean, people really had a different attitude, I guess. Now, everything is trashed, and no one seems to understand why.

MB: If you could, how about Elm Street area, right around Rodef Sholom? What was there? Were there other churches, business. . . ?

PB: Well, Elm Street, of course--right off Elm Street was Rayen School, so if you went up the little path to Bissel and Elm Street, it was all these hordes of children going to and from school. There was a corner drugstore, and they'd all go in there and have their ice cream and malteds after school. In the 1960s, I remember they had stores with waterbeds. They were starting to sell [waterbeds], and there were stores where they were making handmade jewelry. These were interesting, different sort of shops, and the penny pinchers who worked for--Planned Parenthood, I guess they were, had their second-hand shop near the post office. People would take things in there, so they could sell them for charity. But, it was a more affluent look. The people who lived along Elm Street were people on fixed incomes, were people who didn't have [or] couldn't afford to live in a more affluent neighborhood, but lived very quietly and decently and nicely. You had a sense of order. There was an orderliness to it that you don't see much of now. Now, they say you can't even drive down Elm Street [because] its so full of drugs. Where we lived on Madera, on the end of the street is a dead end. The municipal swimming pool was there. That's been closed now, too. That used to be a wonderful pool. You could hear the kids yelling all over the neighborhood. It was a wonderful sound. You'd hear the ice cream carts going by. It was just sort of a lovely thing to have in the city. Then, they started selling drugs, and the people that

had the Dairy Queen were complaining about the pushers that they could see in plain daylight and what was hap pening to the kids. So, they just closed the whole place down. It hasn't been open for several years.

MB: Along with Rodef Sholom, there was also another Jewish congregation when you arrived, right next to it?

PB: Yes. Anshe Emeth was just about a block away, and they were the Conservative--it was a Conservative congregation.

MB: What was the religious climate like here?

PB: You mean among the three Jewish factions?

MB: Both the other religions and the three Jewish factions.

PB: Well, I would say by climate that there was a very nice understanding, and I know that whenever there was any kind of a function where you could involve the Black ministers, the Baptist ministers, the Catholic priest, anything they could be involved [in], my husband always saw to it that they were included. I think everyone was familiar with that. When the priests and nuns were given permission for the first time in their history to attend a church service other than their own, the nuns chose Redef Sholom Temple as their first experience. It was thrilling. There was "standing room only" in our Temple that seats 700 people. The goodwill and love that was expressed that night is something that all participants will always remember. The pictures were covered on the front page of the Vindicator.

Dr. Berkowitz's father died in Terre Haute, Judians, the day before this service, and my husband had to decide whether or not to go to Terre Haute immediately and cancel the service for the Catholic community. Knowing how much the nuns and priest were looking forward to this historic event, he stayed on the extra day and even though his heart was heavy with grief, he put on a splendid service and gave fully of himself to his audience. This was very much appreciated. The next day, Beckett Aviation put a private plane at his disposal to fly him and his family to the funeral. Mr. Beckett had heard of my husband's sacrifice and did this wonderful deed as a thank you.

I don't think there was a denomination in town who had not visited our temple and been welcomed and probably served a little refreshment, and made to feel completely at home. All the symbols were explained to them. They would be able to tie in the Old Testament with the New [Testament] and how it all evolved.

Everybody felt comfortable; it wasn't a feeling like "here's the cathedral, and here is the Presbyterian church, and there was the rest of them." Because in those days, I think, it was a big social thing, too. If you belong to a certain church, you were in; if you weren't, you were out. I think all that was much diminished. I think it was much more of a democracy, shall we say, among the churches.

MB: How about, when Dr. Berkowitz arrived here, when you both arrived here, was there a transition from Rabbi Feinberg before he passed away, between him and Rabbi Philo? How did he become really involved in the temple? Was it just all of a sudden, or. . . ?

PB: Well, Dr. Philo was sort of an elitist. The temple membership was very small, and he only wanted really pure, Reformed people who wanted very little Hebrew, and of course, certainly, no dietary laws. My husband made it possible for--I think what he did, he put the temple into the 20th century is what he did. People who would have loved to have been reformed, they were too intimidated by the type of people they had at Rodef Sholom. It would be like, I guess they had the same thing at First Presbyterian. Maybe some of them who worked with their hands would be a little intimidated about joining--the city fathers. But, he made it possible for anybody who had reform leanings, who wanted that type of service and religion, to just join. He invited them to just join. When the word got around that they were all welcome, as long as they went along with the rules and regulations that he made clear to them, it was like the Gold Rush. There was a tremendous upsurge in membership. I think it went from a handful, maybe 100 people, to, I think the peak was 700 families. A lot of people who no longer had any use for religion came back, because they said, "This is the kind we can accept."

And, some of the Jewish people were in great conflict over their religion. It's very hard to reconcile what happened to the Jewish people in Germany and being able to go to a temple and ask God why he allowed it to happen. And a lot of people were in conflict, terrible conflict, after that. By just going to an Orthodox temple and repeating the same, familiar prayers in Hebrew wasn't enough. They wanted to go to a temple where the rabbi was truly enlightened and that, if something came up in the headlines of the newspaper that alarmed them or made them uneasy, that they could go to the temple, he would talk to them, and they'd all feel better. And he did this all the time. If there was some crisis, say, between Russia and the United States, and it looked as if we were coming out poorly, he would say something. He would always say, "This is

the way it looks now, but a little way up the road, it's going to be the Russians who are going to be in trouble, because. . . ," and people would say, "Hey, maybe it isn't so bad." No matter how bad it was, he could always make you feel as if there were two sides to it and other people had their problems, too. And, [he led you] just to have faith in the United States, and you'd know that everything was going to be okay. I was so sorry that he wasn't around when we saw the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., but he gave the type of sermons that were always timely. Something that happened--most ministers, they have these sort of set speeches and set talks, if something, like if a president had been assassinated that same day, they'd have a tough time talking about it, because he'd have the sermon all prepared. But, he was always prepared at the last minute to speak on anything that had happened that was upsetting people.

I remember the day that Kennedy was shot. People didn't know what to do, and they just all ran down to the temple, and had my husband talk to them. He was in shock himself, but he was able to calm everybody down and tell them it wasn't the end of the world and [that] they'd sleep safely in their houses. I mean, people were absolutely petrified when things like that happened. It's very difficult, an he always helped them through such difficult times. I think, you know by now that his work was not just limited to his own congregation. People came--if they were unemployed, they came to see him to see if he could call this one or call that one. If they had a falling out with their own minister and couldn't talk to him, they'd come to see him.

I remember to the extent that two girls came to see him, and they wanted to get married. He said, "How long have the two of you been going together?" They said, "Oh, seven years." He said, "Well, why do you want to get married now?" They said, "Because [we] want to adopt a child." So he asked them their denomination, and they told him. And he said to one of them, "Well, what did your priest say." They said, "The priest threw us out. He wouldn't talk to us." He asked the other one, "Well, what happened with yours?" She said, "Mine said he was going to call our parents and. . . ." So, they said, "You're the only one who has listened to us." He said, "According to law, I can't marry you in this state. But, I advise you to go to California where you'll find someone who will marry you, and you will also be treated much more kindly by the community; and you'll have a much better chance of adopting a child. In Ohio, it will never fly." They couldn't get over that he would just discuss it like any other problem.

MB: If you could--I have a whole list of things I have not asked. I want to get these two that are a little bit shorter questions. Could you describe what Rodef Sholom looks like for me, physically, the physical appearance of both sanctuary and the building itself?

PB: Well, the building itself was built the way St. Peters was built, really. The purpose [of] St. Peters, with the blue dome, of course, was to have heaven and earth meet. Of course, we couldn't do anything quite that impressive, but I think they wanted to give a solid feeling about it. We're here, and we're staying here and work for the ages. They could only do that by putting up heavy brick and concrete. By making it large enough and impressive enough, so that it would be a landmark, so it would be known to people, and so it would give a feeling of permanence, I think, is what they mostly wanted. It wasn't to impress anybody so much as to have permanence, [to] give a permanent feeling. And it's not the same as meeting in a church basement, the way some of the synagogues do in California. They'd rent the church basement for the day. This is how they meet when they can't afford a temple. They wanted to show that the people here were solid businessmen. They were serious people, and they wanted something with beauty. Of course, everybody has their own ideas as to what architectural beauty is, but I think most people liked the dome. They're impressed by the dome, which is sort of a Byzantine look, actually. It was probably fashionable then, to do it that way. The meaning of Rodef Sholom is "Pursuers of Peace".

MB: How about the pulpit? What would your husband wear to a service on Friday night?

PB: He wore his clerical robe. He wore a silk one in the summer time--it was very, very lightweight--and a heavier gown in the winter. It had almost a taffeta feel to it. He had these Ph.D. stripes, the Ph.D. velvet stripes on the robe. He had his Cambridge stole. He also had a stole that he wore when he was a chaplain that had the Ten Commandments on it. But, he didn't wear those at the temple, he just wore the robe. Of course, he did not wear a hat of any kind.

MB: Okay. Could you physically describe your husband for me?

PB: He was short, dark, and dynamic. You could not be as close to him, say as we are sitting here, without feeling this enormous energy. Energy that just sort of, it was like a ray of light, really. His enormous energy is the first impression you have of him. He had very soft, dark brown eyes. He was an extremely compassionate man. When you were talking to him, you

could see his changing expression as he immediately grasped what you were telling him. He never looked at you with a vacant look as if to say, "Now, run that past me again," or, "What did you say?" (Laughter). He was with it all the time, right on top of things.

MB: All the community activities he got involved with within the Youngstown area, was this a gradual assumption of duties, or--let me rephrase it. He didn't immediately delve into everything when he arrived into Youngstown? It was just once he became involved, he stayed involved?

PB: Well, you have to understand, he had this incredible energy. When he would be asked to be on a board--apparently, he was so valuable to them, because I know on several occasions when his term of office was finished, they wouldn't let him go. They would make him an honorary position to keep him on that board, because apparently he was able to solve problems so easily. He would go right to the point so easily, and he could see things so clearly. He had such a lucid mind, that they just didn't want him to leave. And I think what happened was, if there was a group of people around a table and they heard him speak or make a decision or help solve a problem, they'd say, "Hey, this is the kind of man I want on my board." And so, he was just invited to join all these various organizations to the point where there wasn't anything that he wasn't involved in. I think his highest honor probably was when he was on the National Board of the [American] Red Cross, because there were people like Roland Harriman, who was President at the time. I went to Washington with him for this meeting of the National Board of the Red Cross, and we went into the F-Club. The F-Club is a very modest looking building, and you've got some very modest steps. And when you walk in, you sink in up to your knees in the carpeting. Then there were men servants walking around with platters of hors d'oeuvres, and it was the most incredible experience. Averell Harriman was there with his wife, Pamela Churchill, now our ambassador to Paris, France. I cannot remember all their names, but there were various people that were all, I would say, the upper 5 percent of America. They were all CEOs, and they owned America, the people there I met that night at this dinner. I remember one man said that his son went on a hiking tour around Europe, and he was laughing. He said, "Anytime he runs out of money, he'll call me. I'll just call a bank, and they'll give him a job." (Laughter) He said, "Wherever he is, they'll just give him a job in the bank." Those were the people who had homes everywhere but were giving their time to the Red Cross. Being on the board--this board was a very useful thing, too, for my husband, because I remember there were

families that were trying to get their boys' bodies back from Vietnam, who had been killed. No one could get them back, and these families were in a state of suspension. They wanted to have a service. They wanted some sort of closure with this grief, this horrible grief that they had. So, they would call Dr. Berkowitz, and he made a call to the International Red Cross; and those bodies were back in 48 hours from Vietnam. So then, he was able--he never used his clout for himself. He only used it always for other people. He was always raising money, but it was never for himself. It was always for causes. It was just amazing what this energetic person could accomplish in a day.

MB: Let's talk about [that]. What would he do in a day? You have some schedules here, I see. Could you describe what a day would be like [and] what time he'd get up?

PB: Well, he was usually up between 5 and 6 o'clock. He was at the office between 7:30 and 8:00, depending on the schedule. I think his secretaries could probably tell you more about it because I never followed him around all day. But, I know that when I wanted to see him about something really important, I had to make an appointment, because his day was just jammed. People would come to see him during the morning. Of course, he had sermons to write. He had speeches to prepare. He didn't write them out, but he had to prepare speeches. He had an enormous correspondence, huge, always dictating to the secretary. There were two secretaries.

Lunch would always be a business lunch. It would always be a meeting lunch. All the phone calls that came in were just crushing, so the secretaries had to screen them. They'd give him a list, and he would tell them which ones were emergencies that he would talk to right away.

He usually came home around 5 o'clock or 5:30, because he wanted to have his dinner, and he had to leave immediately for a meeting. So, I always tried to arrange my schedule, so that I could be home at that time, so that I could have his dinner ready. Then, I'd say about four evenings a week, he would have meetings to go to. Then, [he'd have] condolence calls to make or call people in their homes for various reasons, pastoral calls.

He would devote one afternoon a week to the hospital visitations, maybe sometimes two, depending on the

number of patients in the hospital. He had arrangements with the hospital that, when he would walk in, they'd hand him the list of people. (Interruption)

But, everyone knew him. If he'd go to a parking lot, they'd say, "Got your space right here." Everyone would cooperate with him, because they knew how busy he was. They knew how good he was doing for everybody, and so, they sort of paved the way for him wherever he went. Then the rest of the evenings, when he wasn't going to a meeting, we usually had to go to a wedding or a banquet. I would say four nights he would go to a meeting, and three nights we would go to dinners of some kind. And occasionally, we would go out for social occasions. He just worked all the time.

MB: Prior to this project, I had done some research, and his name came up with a couple of things, with the civil rights movement, [for instance]. I was doing some research on that. Was he very involved within the local community or nationally with the civil rights movement?

PB: That time, for some reason, is a little bit vague in my mind. I know when we lived in Mobile, Alabama, he had tremendous sympathy for the plight of the good Black people down there. I don't recall any one thing that he said to me about it. I think it was a sort of passive simple agreement that he had, that he would help them as much as he could.

MB: How about--I see he did some work with the Vietnam War era. Him, Bishop Malone, and Reverend Spiker all attended an anti-war rally. Was he in any way involved within that movement?

PB: Well, I don't think people understood that war and what it was all about.

MB: Right.

PB: I know the Vietnam veterans must feel, "We fought and went through such terrible things." They must feel very upset about that. I think, at the time it was like--it was the Catholics against the communists is what that war was all about wasn't it?

MB: Yes.

PB: The Catholic south against the communist north.

MB: Right.

PB: It was a religious war. And I don't think any of us quite understood why we were throwing so much money and so much man-power and making them go through these horrors in a jungle, these young boys. I remember L.B.J. making a statement, "Well, there were less fellows killed over there than in automobile accidents on our roads," and how horrified we were when we heard that. They shouldn't be killed on the roads, and they shouldn't be killed out there either. I think it was just this general antipathy towards wars and sending innocent boys out for causes that they don't even know why they're there. He felt that World War II was more justified, in view of the fact that we had a maniac taking over all of Europe, which then, of course, would have upset the whole balance of power of the world. But, I don't think too many people understood what Vietnam was all about.

MB: How about his relationship with Bishop Malone and Reverend Spiker with the ecumenical development within the community?

PB: I think he respected Reverend Spiker very much, but he really loved James Malone. He said he had such a fine mind, wonderful mind, [and was] such a gentle person. I remember Bishop Malone said, "When I was a priest, I really was not interested in the Jewish people. I had enough with my own parish. Then, I met Sidney Berkowitz. And after I talked to him, these people interested me. I was never with him where I didn't learn something about my own religion and his." I think he was able to see his own religion from a different point of view. I think the fact that Sidney was so honest in his responses about everything--I mean, he would never say, "Mine's the right way." He respected Bishop's position and what his role was in the community, and I think he--of course Bishop Burt (John) from the Protestants. . . .

MB: Burt and Contrell.

PB: John Burt from St. John's. They used to call them the big three. There was Berkowitz, there was Malone, and there was Burt on the team. It was that wonderful feeling that, if the three of them worked together, they could solve anything. They had a wonderful effect on the community. They only had worked the good, and I think they broke down a lot of old taboos. Really, I think, they just sort of led the way for a lot of people and told them how they should think about others and how they should act towards others, because they weren't going to learn it in their own homes. They followed the same old prejudice and same old patterns, and I think, when they saw these three ministers working together, it had a profound impact on people.

I remember one day, it was after Saturday service and my husband said, "I think we'll go to a place in Lowellville." I said, "Lowellville?" He said, "Yes. I hear there's a place there that has some good spaghetti. I was told about it, and I want to find it." So, we get in the car and we're driving and driving in the pouring rain. We finally get to this place and he said, "I just had a feeling. I just felt like getting out of town. I want to go somewhere where no one will know me, and the phone won't ring. I just want a little bit of peace and quiet." He was just in that kind of a mood. And we walk in, and there's a whole bunch of fellows sitting at a bar. One man turns around and stares at him. After a while, he looks at Sidney and says, "Hey, haven't I seen you on television with my bishop?" He [Dr. Berkowitz] says, "Even here!" (Laughter) "I couldn't get away from it."

MB: There's a couple of other things, and I'm going to have to get going here. How about the labor movement in Youngstown? The steel, I know he was very instrumental in trying to keep the steel mills open after the [fall of the steel industry].

PB: Yes. They had formed what was called "Save the Valley." Maybe somewhere I've still got some of the arm bands and things, bumper stickers that people had. Of course, it [keeping the steel mills open] was impossible. Once those steel mills--they were obsolete. They hadn't replaced any machinery, and once the union boys packed their bags and left town, there was nothing they could do. They were powerless really, but they did try. They felt that the union men should've stayed here to retrain the steel workers to do something else so that they could find jobs. But that was never done.

MB: We need to finish up. You were talking about--before we started--his sense of humor. Could you reiterate some of those points? What was it like? Any specific occasions, things that really made you laugh, anything that he did or said?

PB: It's hard to explain, but it was like. . . . He was that way all the time. From the time he woke up until he went to bed at night, he had this constant energy. He would say something funny, and I would say something funny back; and then, he would say something funny. It was like a tennis match. And we would be laughing constantly about so many things going on. His humor was original. He didn't quote anyone else. There was never anything that got you down or made you depressed that he couldn't find some humorous side to it. I think, he had the same quality as Johnny Carson in that respect. You would hear all these terrible things that

happened in Washington, and he'd get on and say a few words, and we'd all start laughing about it. Then, it wasn't quite so bad, and I could say Sidney had the same quality, except that Johnny Carson had $10,000 gag writers writing for him. Every word he said was $10,000 worth of gag writing. Sidney manufactured his own humor, and it was his own intelligence that made him see everything from a different point of view.

MB: Well, I'll let you go here. Thank you very much.

PB: Thank you Mr. Butts.

END OF INTERVIEW