

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Ethnic Groups of Youngstown

Personal Experience

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LAWRENCE EHRLICH

Interviewed

by

Nolly McNamara

on

August 8, 1988

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERISTY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Ethnic Groups of Youngstown

INTERVIEWEE: LAWRENCE EHRLICH

INTERVIEWER: Molly McNamara

SUBJECT: Ethnic Groups in Youngstown

DATE: August 8, 1988

M: This is an interview with the Rev. Cantor Lawrence Ehrlich for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Ethnic Groups of Youngstown, by Molly McNamara, at 1530 Fischer Drive, Hubbard, Ohio, on August 8, 1988, at 11:00 a.m..

Cantor Ehrlich, could you give me some background on your family, your parents, your brothers and your sisters?

E: Well, yes, but I would like to say that the name is pronounced "Air-lick", a German-Yiddish derivative.

M: Okay.

E: Well, I am Jewish. My second wife, Cecile is Jewish. She was born in Youngstown. I was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1917. I was the last of six children. My parents came as immigrants from Pinsk and Minsk, which was then called Russia in the early 1900's. Actually you know "Fiddler on the Roof" tells about the Pogroms or the uprisings in Russia where the minorities were oppressed by the rulers, the Czars; For no special reason but because they were Jewish and not Russian-Orthodox, and so few in number, and like the bullies of today they would pick on the little fellows. That is why my father fled from Russia and came to America where there was freedom of religion. Freedom to live anyway he wanted. He had very little money and like many other immigrants he left his wife and his family behind in the old country. He couldn't afford even to

bring his wife and his one child-- to America at that time. Eventually he also brought over five younger brothers and two sisters to America. He worked very hard to accomplish this.

M: Wow.

E: I would bet that many American children, and older people too, would be surprised to learn that their parent's parents had to come over to our country the same way. In those days in Russia, people were known as the "son of so and so," My father was Moses the son of Louis. I was named after my grandfather. I can remember my father telling about how when he came to America, that, He "was first prepared to speak a little English." He studied a little in schools in Russia and he prepared what to say when he came in as an immigrant. When asked his name, after he saw the beautiful Statue of Liberty, and when he came into Ellis Island, he was well prepared to tell his name, to the officials, and how he hoped to make a living. Also, he had to be in good health to come into the country. So, in those days (when Jewish immigrants were known as the son of so and so) if a man was the son of a blacksmith for example, they called him Jack the son of William the Blacksmith. Many immigrants took on the names of the work they did, or what it was they were known for in the "old" country" Well, my name is Ehrlich, so I guess my father was a very "honest" man, because Ehrlich means honest in German, or Yiddish, and that is the name he gave in Ellis Island when he landed. Some in our family spell our surname-Erlick, or Ehrlich.

M: Oh, I see.

E: Anyway, when the immigrants came to Ellis Island in America and were asked, "What is your name?", in rapid English, many people were confused, and became nervous because they were really very anxious to come to America. They couldn't go back home where they had Pogroms and where people were killed often for no reason at all, they were "Scapegoats." Jewish people tell the joke about an immigrant who is very nervous, and when asked by immigration, "What is your name?" and he had forgotten how he was to say his name, he responded in Yiddish, "Ich Hob Shon Fergessen!" (I have already forgotten!) Whereupon the clerk at the in-coming desk wrote down Shawn Ferguson, and that was how his name appeared on the passport! They didn't want to argue with that official, they were afraid. They were happy to be admitted to the wonderful country, which when heard about in Europe, in those days was called the land of "Milk and Honey." Really, to them it was the land where the streets were paved with gold. They were so excited and anxious to come to America. Of course

in later years many changed their names as one would expect them to. But that is what happened then. Am I telling you enough about my family?

M: Yes, that is fine.

E: We had children six in the family by 1917. Jack, the oldest son, was born in Pinsk, Russia. The other children were born in Brooklyn, New York; we were three boys and three girls in all. I am the baby of the family. It is interesting that in those days in New York, times were very difficult and people who came to America had a lot of trouble getting jobs. My father was a construction worker. In new homes he would put up laths, which were strips of wood nailed across the beams, before they were covered with plaster. He made a living in Brooklyn and in time brought his older sons in to do that job too. Later on the two brothers became syrup salesmen and several in the family went to evening college for a while. You knew that you had to be educated, it was necessary if you hoped for a decent job in the future. In America in the early 1900s everybody figured you had to go through high school and if you could afford it you went on to college. Most in our family graduated from high school and a few of us did go college at night but all worked during the day. I can remember that one sister Irene at that time couldn't get a job until, instead of saying that she was Jewish on the job application, wrote that she was Presbyterian, I think. She got a job without any trouble because she was a "Cracker Jack typist-stenographer." In those days Jewish people in order to get jobs, otherwise they couldn't exist. With a mother and father and more children at home, the older children they had to help support the family. One sister, Pauline, took a civil service exam while she was in high school and passed the exam. She came in second to Billy Rose, who was the fastest typist and stenographer in the country, I believe. Because she was afraid she might not get the job she also took a slower test and came out first and got a government job where she worked for many years until she was married. In those days wives were expected to stay at home and usually gave up their jobs when they became pregnant. She was an excellent typist. Well anyway, we all "did our things" well. At eighteen years of age, I wanted to go to the Julliard School of Music to study voice. All Jewish people wanted their children to be doctors, because of their previous experiences, they felt that a doctor could always "Make a living" and it was an important profession. In Europe they did not have the opportunity to become professional people. They were forced into being tradespeople or peddlers, they were not even allowed in guilds. You couldn't use your brains as you might have liked to. My father, who was

against my being a musician, said, "If you become a doctor I will pay for your going to school, but if you don't want to be a doctor and you want to be a singer, better go get a job instead." But that is all I was interested in. During four years in High School I was president of the Glee Club and soloist. At the age of four I was singing melodies from the operas that I heard on phonograph records, and I was playing then on the piano, by ear. If I wanted to be a musician I would have to pay my own way for lessons. So as a consequence I worked during the day after high school and at night I went to different colleges so that I could learn to be a singer. I took private voice lessons. For many years--mostly scholarships, and hoped eventually, to become an opera singer; and that is what I did for several years. Working days, studying nights in colleges (Brooklyn and N.Y.U.) and studying voice and languages, practicing for an operatic career.

M: Yes. Tell me first of all where you were in New York at this time?

E: All of this time I was in Brooklyn, New York, in Brownsville on Christopher Avenue. Mostly Jewish people lived on that street, "on my block" we called it, but there were several Polish, Russian and even an Italian family living there. The Polish and Russian people--especially the boys of our age used Yiddish expressions that they learned on the street. The one Italian family, recognized my musical talent when I was only eight years old and encouraged me to sing. They gave me a free ticket to hear a relative of theirs sing in the opera "Il Trovatore." My first opera. I cried. I wanted to become an opera singer. Five years later I heard "Aida" at the Met. with Martinelli; and cried again.

M: And where were you going to school?

E: I started out at Brooklyn College evenings (no charge for tuition), and my sister contributed \$5.00 a week towards music lessons for me, from her meager salary of \$18.00 a week. I began singing for various local groups, and meanwhile I got a job chipping glass. Once a piece of glass chip hit me in the face and I realized that I could become blind so I gave up that job. Then I got a job as a helper to a plumber and both he and I decided that I had to do something else both jobs paid \$6.00 a week. Then at age eighteen I got a good job at Decca Records. My sister worked there and got a job for me in the office. I worked there for about ten years; later on I was in charge of the office, preparing royalties for artists and publishers from record sales. During the evenings I studied operas, took voice lessons, dramatics coaching, languages, singing

arts songs, popular singing and musicianship. These preparations were necessary. I studied about a dozen operas which I knew almost from the first to the last note. That is how you studied opera in those days. Not just your role in the opera but almost everyone's role. I spent many years doing that and earned enough to pay for lessons, and at the same time appearing in concerts, for various organizations, club dates, and singing at different affairs and functions. On my vacations, I would be a singer in the Catskill Mountains in the Borsht Circuit; but that is not talking about Youngstown.

M: Well, what did your parents think of your career?

E: Not much. My mother thought that I would never be a singer. As a child, she herself appeared on stage as a singer with her parents in Europe. Most of the time, she lived with a relative and at the age of nine earned money by rolling cigars...and testing them, to help to pay expenses. She said that my father thought it was a waste of time. She would say, "You can't sing-you'll never be a singer!" My father didn't want to have anything to do with it. I had to prepare to go out and make a living, which I did as soon as I got out of high school. I made enough money to support myself, and contributed \$8.00 per week at home to help out. At that time in 1935, (kids may be interested--) I was making \$15 a week. I started with \$6 and then \$8 at the glass factory. In those days being a singer or musician or actor was not considered a proper field of work- but that is all I wanted. To do.

M: Go ahead.

E: I am talking mostly about me, I should be talking about other things.

M: No, that is fine. This is what I would like to hear.

E: Have I been giving you your answers?

M: Yes, this is fine. Well, tell me about when you decided to come to Youngstown?

E: Well, you know, the kind of work that I had been doing was free lance singing. I had an exciting few years in opera. I sang with the "Metropolitan Opera Auditions of the Air" where I was a semi-finalist. Robert Merrill came in first, rather than me. Then I went to Columbia University on a scholarship from the Met for two years where I studied dramatics for opera under Dr. Graff. I sang with the San Carlo Opera Company in New York and on tour and I often appeared for several organizations as a guest artist. You see, I took a leave of

absence for a year from Decca Records. I even sang and danced in the Broadway stage show, "Marching with Johnny." Mostly, however, I sang recitals, gave concerts, appeared on radio, t.v., at Carnegie Hall, Madison Square Garden, and even did singing and social directing for summer resorts up in the Catskills until I got married. I gave up Decca Records, so that I could devote full time to opera, but I found that there was nothing steady in show business. It was not good for me thing because after all these years there was no security unless I had someone in the field who could promote me, or somebody in the family to really get behind me financially,, or unless I had a personal representative. While I was struggling along, an Jan Peerce, one of the most famous operatic singers, in America knew me, and liked my work helped guide me. He said that "you ought to become a cantor, because while they at the Metropolitan have heard you, (the conductors Max Rudolph, and Willfred Pelletiere) that, while normally you should be singing at the Met, that since they had twenty-three other baritones at the Met they didn't need any more right now." Robert Merrill had auditioned there once before; he made it, later on. "Next time," Peerce said, "You'll make it!" Meanwhile he encouraged me to get into the Jewish field in order to make a steady living to support wife Pearl and child Harriet, age two. So, I began singing for mostly Jewish organizations, doing more in the Jewish field than I had been, I sang at so many U.J.A. banquets that some called me the "Jewish Lucy Monroe," known for her singing of the national anthem. It is at that time when Peerce again said, that I ought to become a cantor, because while waiting to try for the Met again, I could make a very good living as a cantor."

A friend of mine, Norman Carey the "Irish tenor" on radio in the late 1940's, had a sustaining program, and made \$1000.00 a week! But the program was canceled! (Years ago it was so much money.) He decided to go to a newly created cantorial school, the first cantorial school in America. He too wanted this because he needed to have a steady income. He was out of a job at that time, they had hired him for one year. Since Peerce had suggested that I also become a cantor, and since Norman said he was going for an audition, and asked me to go along with him for the audition, I did. When we arrived he said, "You first." I was always auditioning for a job, and I would sing at the drop of a hat! He was more accustomed to singing on radio and only with a microphone (opera singers didn't use microphones, and television was in its infancy.) So he told me to go first, and so I sang, I auditioned, and they gave me a scholarship right there and then. Perhaps they had learned that I was soloist with the famous choir of Chemjo Vinaver, a world famous Jewish composer, who

taught at the Hebrew Union College-that was in the Spring of 1949.

M: Wow.

E: So I went through the school on scholarship for three years, and free-lanced as a singer, through various agents, to help support my first wife, Pearl and child Harriet.

M: What school was this?

E: That was the Hebrew Union College, the Jewish Institute of Religion. Since I was now preparing to be a cantor and was living in New York, I thought that I just as well might prepare myself to be a principal, an educator as well. So I took thirty-two additional hours at the School of Education which would enable me to be certified as a Reform Jewish Educator. At that time, I had a very big write up in the newspaper, "The World Telegram," About how I came to the school, after having sung in opera. I was appearing regularly then on t.v., in "Morning Chapel," for the college, for one year as cantor. This helped me get additional work as a performer in the secular field, during "free" time, from school. Just before my second year ended, our advisors at the school asked us with whom we were going to affiliate; Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox, Judaism. Which ever it was, they expected us to live "in that manner" for the rest of our lives, which we agreed to do. During our last year at school, jobs started coming in for the upcoming graduates. They sent three people out to the first full-time job which was available in Youngstown, Ohio. The first job of this, the second graduating class to be of HUC-JIR. Meanwhile, I worked as cantor for one year in Long Island, at Beth Sholom, in Flushing, Long Island. Three people auditioned for Youngstown and I got the job. We had promised that we would work out of town if we were selected. "This was the first job," they said, and that they wanted me. I agreed to stay in Youngstown for at least a year. I came here after graduation, in 1952, with a child of four and a half years of age. I was here for a few months when we learned that my wife had cancer. She died ten months after I arrived, and everyone was very kind to me. The congregation paid all our expenses, and they took care of me like Harriet and I were a true family, and I vowed then that I would stay in Youngstown for at least five years; and when that happened and because everyone was so wonderful to me, I reevaluated my purpose in life and decided that being the cantor, a clergyman, was much more important than being in opera, even though I loved and I wanted opera so much. Before my wife learned of her cancer, John Krueger, in our community, conductor of the Youngstown

Symphony orchestra, had been rehearsing and had scheduled "Ahmal and the Night Visitor," an American opera by Carlo Menotti, he had scheduled it for the Stambaugh Auditorium on Fifth Avenue, and I had the role of King Melchoir, one of the leading parts. One week later, my wife died, and the performance had been advertised. We didn't know then that death could happen so quickly. Without a substitute for my part, and not wanting to disappoint the community, although I was in mourning, I sang the role in "Ahmal" and several Hebrew Selections. It was not necessary to postpone the production. During the year, I promised myself again that the congregation and the people in Youngstown, the Jewish people especially were so wonderful to me, so caring, that I would stay on for five years at the Temple, (even though I had now been offered several other better paying positions). I gave up thoughts about opera all together.

M: Now where were you living at this time?

E: I was living on Cordova Avenue. I had an apartment there in the upstairs duplex.

M: And you belonged to Rodef Sholom then?

E: Well yes, I was hired in 1952 by Rodef Sholom as the cantor/principal, and it was three-quarters of a year later when my wife died.

M: Tell me about what it was like being a cantor, describe that for me could you?

E: Well, in the Jewish Synagogue or Temple, You usually find two clergyman; A rabbi, who reads the service and gives the sermon, and the cantor, who chants the liturgy. In my case, besides serving as the cantor I was directing the religious school. The Cantor leads the prayers of the people in the synagogue in the worship of God through song, and chants the Bible and special holiday melodies. The cantor also trains thirteen year olds for their Barmitzvah service which indicates their acceptance as adults in the Jewish congregation. The Cantor participates in all other life cycles experiences like services at birth, consecration, confirmation, weddings and funerals. As a principal, I chose the curriculum and the teachers and tried to make our one-day-a-week religious school a pleasant learning experience for the students, ages five thru fifteen. For the High School students, we advised and directed the Youth to give service to our Temple, and to our secular community and to prepare them to become contributing members to the Youngstown area, in their adult years.

M: Okay, now when you first came to Youngstown what was

your impression of this area?

E: Well, it was very, very different from New York and thankfully; you know New York is a very, busy, impersonal, (or is it un-personal) kind of a place. We lived next door to people who said, "Hello, how are you?", but you knew very little more about them. After marriage, we lived in a row of twenty or thirty houses, a Jewish neighborhood. These were private homes. The people, three houses away were very religious, the people next door weren't religious at all. They had very little in common. Our friends were mostly from our old neighborhoods in Brownsville, Brooklyn. The people were very private but polite. You didn't know your next door neighbor, really, as one does in Youngstown, Ohio. New Yorkers seem cold and impersonal, Ohioans seem warm and friendly. For example, in New York, I had to travel an hour and five minutes everyday to get to work. I would get on a bus, people would shove, and it was very pushy and a hectic way of life. People would elbow in to get onto a bus, and you packed in because you knew that if you missed that bus you were going to be twenty minutes late, to catch the 7:30 a.m. train to Manhattan; and you then had to walk or take that bus that would get you to your job on time. I too did my share of pushing and shoving-something I unlearned in Ohio. No longer do I talk, walk, or drive or rush as much today, as I did then. Another example, people knew where to stand on the train platform where one of the doors would open. I would always get a seat in one exact spot. That was where one of the less-crowded trains would stop. I would get to my seat and would open up the operatic score I was then studying. Many would feign sleep so as not to have to give up their seats. I would sit there singing softly and beating out the rhythm of the music with my finger, studying the music. Everybody would know me as, "that guy that sings opera all the time!" People avoided and ignored each other and everyone, looked bored. Things move slower in Youngstown and people knew you before you knew them. As a kid, I lived in an area where many spoke different languages, and everyone spoke some Yiddish. My parents would speak Yiddish to each other all the time in America, except when they didn't want the children to understand! Then they spoke Russian or Polish. I spoke Yiddish with my mother and English with my father. My mother could speak some English but preparing food and doing all the chores for eight, everyday, didn't give her much chance to visit or practice English speaking with others. Learnings languages was easy for the children of immigrants in High School, in Brooklyn, I studied three years of German and (it seemed like Yiddish) two years of French. It was required for graduation, if you planned to go on to college which we all hoped to do, unlike our brothers

and sisters who had to go to work immediately after High School. They had no choice. We all contributed weekly to help support the household.

I graduated in 1952 from the Hebrew Union College Institute of Religion in New York, certified as a clergyman with a Cantor-Educators diploma, still needing extra credits to receive a Bachelor of Sacred Music degree. The new school was not yet accredited to give degrees but was impoverished to do so, soon after. Before then, I had also studied Italian for four years in private, (for opera) and could speak Yiddish fluently.

M: That is what I was going to ask.

E: Right. So when I came for extra credits to Youngstown State University, Dr. Garcia, who tested my competency in Italian and German, first handed me a book in German to read aloud. I said, "My this isn't even in the Old Printing" And he said surprised, "You can read the Old Style German?" I could and did- it was like Yiddish and in English. So thanks to Dr. Garcia and others at Youngstown College, I received extra College credits in Reference and later received my Bachelor in Sacred Music from the Hebrew Union College. Anyway, I drove to Youngstown with my wife and baby in 1952. Driving through Pennsylvania all seemed colorless and hilly. Then suddenly we came to beautiful Ohio. I didn't know there was so much flora and fauna! Where I lived in Brooklyn as a teenager, there were mostly tenements, surrounding rows of two story duplexes. Where I lived after marriage, there was a street of private, one family houses, attached and all similar. Cars and trucks rumbling along continually and noisily. I came to Youngstown thinking that this must be what the Garden of Eden might be like. There were hills, there was grass, there were flowers, trees. We had one tree outside our Brooklyn house (I used to think that the author who wrote the book was describing the tree on our street). Ohio is wonderful, my first impression was that Youngstown was a small city. I remember my wife saying, "That is the advantage of a small city, we will be happy here!" You get to know everybody in town and that is a good and wonderful feeling! My wife was raised in BayShore, Long Island, a small town, too.

After final arrangements were made, Pearl flew back to Brooklyn to move our belongings to Ohio. Meanwhile, I got a temporary place to live on Bryson Street with an elderly woman, Mrs. Boheme. I remember her as a very sweet, gentle woman, in her eighties. The first day in Youngstown after I came back from temple, I sat down on the front porch, on a rocker, surrounded by trees and greenery close to the porch. It was relaxing and such a pleasure. A person across the street was watering the

lawn. He waved, so I turned around to see who he was waving at. You know, I didn't believe he was greeting me. By the time I looked back, he was watering the grass again. I learned that in a small town people say "Hello" to each other. So I came out there the next day and I sat there waiting, and sure enough, he waved, and this time, I waved right back at him! I had gotten the message, after I had discussed it with Mrs. Boheme. She said, "Why, he was just being friendly." Such a sweet old woman, yes. My stay at her home was very comfortable and pleasant. She is not alive anymore. Anyway, in my impressions of Youngstown, I can remember my mother-in-law visiting here; she woke us in the middle of the night, and said, "My God, there is a terrible fire going on." She saw the blast furnaces all around the sky lit up with fire. She thought it was a catastrophe. She was very, frightened and shocked. To us, it was a sign that everybody was working, which was a wonderful thing, for all of Youngstown.

When I came to Youngstown there never was a full-time Reform cantor there and I was the first at Rodef-Sholom; Cantor Karl Klein was at Ohevtzedak, Cantor Ernst Gottesmar was at Anshe Emeth. After my retirement in 1983, Rodef Sholom Temple had a cantor for two years, followed by Cantor Merrill Fisher.

M: And you found your work very satisfying?

E: Oh sure, it was satisfying and gratifying to myself and the congregants. The temple was beautiful, I enjoyed enriching the music that Mr. Funkhauser and the professional choir had been using by adding many traditional, new and modern compositions to the repertoire. We introduced yearly New Year services on radio, conducted yearly "Sermons in Song," special Jewish programs, and introduced inter and intra faith religions worship services in the community. In the Religious School I was able to introduce the latest methods and texts that were proven by the National Association of Temple Educators to be more meaningful; and helped upgrade the teaching and learning experiences in the religion school for our children grades kindergarten through ten. I don't believe there is a person in Youngstown whose parents would not have known and heard of Doctor Sidney M. Berkowitz, with whom I worked all of these years. He was very active in many organizations, while carrying on the duties as Rabbi of a the congregation, attending to the sick, and giving counsel. Yes?

M: Okay, can you describe some of the customs that you practice at the temple? Maybe some of the holidays or, for instance, a wedding. Anything that you could describe for me.

E: Well, first of all you know in Judaism, it is easier to tell the differences between our religion than the similarities. In both religions, Christians and Judaism, we basically worship the same God. We look forward to, and we pray too, for the time when the Messiah will come and bring peace for all Mankind. Our practices are different but our aims and ethics are similar. In the Jewish Wedding no one kneels. The wine we sip signifies the sweetness of affection; the blessings, in Hebrew, invoke God's blessing, placing the ring on the finger, is the symbol of uniting the couple, breaking a glass is a symbol of the fragility of human relationships; a canopy is like a small home. Some of these practices vary in Orthodox and Liberal temples, and all encourage holiness in our daily living. We Jews pray in our special worship directly, to the one God, and our hope is that we can all spread peace by doing God's will. And if we live the way God wants us to, and lead good ethical lives according to the Ten Commandments, then we will improve not hurt ourselves, and elevate all society around us. And as the prophet Mica said, "To do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God." And as Hillel and Jesus has said, "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you." It can be stated better in the negative than in the positive. For example, when you say, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," I can hear a youth saying, "I want a new car, I want this and I want that." But to state it in the negative, "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you," means that because you don't want yourself hurt for example, you therefore don't hurt another. You don't want someone to steal from you, so you don't steal from them another, a positive directive! What we try to do is to live according to the Ten Commandments, actively not passively, according to how God wants mankind to live; and that it will be a better world.. For all Mankind, then. In Judaism, salvation comes through righteous living. Probably this is a loose summarization of all Western religion's teachings. We have no sacraments. The ceremonies (circumcison, marriage, etc.) are our guides to lead purer and holier lives.

What are our customs and services? Well, we have three major festivals: Passover, Succot and Shavuot; and the Sabbath, the New Year, (Rosh Hashana) and the Day of Atonement. On the Day of Atonement, (Yom Kippur) we pray to God for forgiveness for having sinned against Him. But we may not ask for His forgiveness for our sins against others until and unless we have first asked forgiveness from those we have sinned against. In Judaism there are three main branches: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. The Orthodox are very strict, perhaps like the nuns and priests in Christianity. They dedicate their lives to living in very religious and

restrictive ways. The Reform or Liberal branches believe that you do not have to interpret the Bible factually as written as much as morally. You have the right to interpret the Bible in the light of today. The Conservatives, between the Orthodox and the Reform movement, observe the religion much as their parents did, but viewing it more in a modern manner than the Orthodox.

M: Okay, now you are Reform, right?

E: I am Reform or Liberal, that is right. And the customs? Well, the customs and holidays are similar but not to the same degree. For example, Orthodox primarily will observe Kosher laws, which means "ritually" clean, whereas this is not a practice in all Conservative or in many Reform homes. Orthodox Jews, mostly all wear skull caps (Yarmelkabs), whereas few rather than all Liberal Jews, do. Again, the Liberal or Reform Jew believes that he can't interpret the Bible, which was inspired by Traditional Jew believes that God dictated the Bible to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In Judaism, one of the main festivals is the Passover, which comes at about the same time as Easter in the Spring. The family will conduct a Seder (order of service) which will relate the story of Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. The message of the Passover is that man should strive for freedom of religion, a God given gift. Another festival is Succoth, or Tabernacles where people remembered the booths or tents where the Jews lived when they fled from Egypt and wandered in the desert. The other festival is Shavuot, where God through Moses delivered the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people. These are the main holidays, in addition to the Sabbath the holiest of all our Holy Days, which is observed every week beginning on Friday at sun down and ending after sundown on Saturday. Note: The Bible says that God created the evening and the morning and that was one day. We are supposed to rest on the Sabbath (beginning Friday night at sundown), the seventh day of creation. The traditional concept is that as God stopped his creating on the Sabbath, you too should not "create" on that day. For example, just lighting a match (according to Orthodoxy) is "creating" fire, so you are not supposed to do that. Primarily one is supposed to pray, to study, to visit the sick and to rest on the Sabbath Day, and not do any manner of work. I hope I am not talking too much - I seem to be rambling, on without direction.

M: No you are not. This is fine, it is wonderful. Now your parents, were they Orthodox?

E: My parents were Orthodox. When they came to America they let up just a little. For example, my parents would never eat unless it was Kosher food. They observed all laws. You see, My father served as secretary, treasurer, and president of an Orthodox congregation in Brooklyn, New York for about seventy years of age. He lived to about ninety-eight years and was in the synagogue at least once a day. Jewish people of Orthodox tradition pray three times a day: in the morning when they rise, and then before and after sunset. My father prayed three times a day, all those years. When I lived in Brooklyn as a young boy, I went along with him often, to pray and I studied in the "Talmud Torah," A religious school. Here in Youngstown, incidentally, the Jewish temples and Community Center have combined our area commission of education under Abe Harshman, Stanley Engel and representatives of religious schools for the young people, from nursery age through grade six; and separate classes for grades seven through grade ten. I was a member of the board then, Now, we have youth groups for the older students directed by our Jewish Center; and in the temples, classes are held where courses are taught too, from the particular point of view of Reform, Conservative, or Orthodoxy Jewry. Adults have evening classes too.

My parents wanted their six children to keep and observe their Jewish faith and it was important to them that we did so. That is why we always spoke Yiddish at home and observed the festivals and traditions. My father spoke English, always to us but my mother was embarrassed and always spoke in Yiddish. Even after she became a citizen she rarely spoke in English - ashamed of her accent. We all spoke in Yiddish to mother and English to father and English among ourselves. In later years because of knowledge of Yiddish which was similar, I took three years of high school German-I believe I mentioned that.

M: Now your parents were from Russia right?

E: Well, right.

M: Now did they speak any Russian, was it a Russian dialect?

E: They spoke Yiddish. You see in Eastern Europe there were different countries around that area, which at that time was called the "Pale of Settlement", of Jews from different hamlets and villages. The language of German and Hebrew was modified by Slavic and Romance languages into Yiddish.

M: Right.

E: People lived in Poland at that time in a buffer state between Russia and Germany. When Russia would take over Poland people who spoke Polish started speaking Russian, when the Germans took over Poland they then started speaking the Polish-Russian-German-like Yiddish. So my parents spoke Yiddish plus some Russian and Polish and in America, added some "Americanese" to the Yiddish as well. Hebrew is the language we use for prayer. Today in Israel many speak Yiddish, but mostly Hebrew. Of course, all the children learn English too. It is their second language in school. Since the people, where ever they lived in Europe learned Yiddish, that was the common language, so that when they came to America they were all able to communicate. Yiddish became such a widely used language that a dozen newspapers were printed in Yiddish, in America. Jews saw plays produced all in Yiddish and because the Jewish people were always "people of the book", they liked to study and read much. So they would translate English plays into the Yiddish, and poetry and books too. Can you imagine Shakespeare done in Yiddish? They were performed at the Roland Theater in Brooklyn and the Second Avenue Theater in Manhattan. I saw several Yiddish plays in Brooklyn with my family. Today, we have one Yiddish newspaper in America, "The Forward" but we do have many Jewish newspapers which are printed in English. My daughter happens to write for one of them, "The Jewish Press" in Israel and reprinted for the "Jewish Press" in Brooklyn. It is an Orthodox newspaper; she is Orthodox herself. She has written several books in English which were also translated into Hebrew. She has edited several books on Psychology. A graduate of Rayen High School, she attended Miami University of Ohio and then went to Kent for a part English masters and finally took a masters in Stylistcs and Mass Communications at Goddard College, in Vermont. Finally, she went to Israel where she took advanced studies at the Hebrew University for a Doctorate. She loved Israel very much and wanted to settle there. She has been living there now, since 1970, in Jerusalem. She has a daughter age thirteen, and was married to a Rabbi, and is now divorced. She attended Hebrew University in Jerusalem during her junior year in Ohio, on a scholarship awarded by Mr. Oscar Altshuler and the Youngstown Chapter of Z.O.A., for one year.

M: Wow. Okay now....

E: Did I tell you about my parents?

M: Yes.

E: I don't rest too much, you have to stop me.

M: That is fine.

E: Some people talk to much.

M: No, because somethings that I don't cover we go back to and that is fine. That is what I want to hear, it doesn't matter where we run into it. What about when you lived in Youngstown? Did you find that there was a mixture of people here as much as there was in New York or was it more of a homogenous community?

E: It was more homogenous. And more than that, it is... As a cantor and an educator my time was taken up from morning till night. Which took care of my days and many nights. On the Sabbath we had services Friday night and often on Saturdays, so considering all the activity of the life cycle, of weddings, funerals, BAS and bar-mitzvahs, and various other celebrations, we were so busy that I didn't have much time to make many adult friends outside of our congregational family, but I had many young friends and acquaintances.

For I consider my greatest achievement was that I spoke to at least fifteen thousand people over the years in the public schools, at homes, and at meetings of different church groups. I spoke about Judaism, about the different Jewish holidays and music of the holidays. I also gave lectures on Jewish Music through the ages - secular and religions at different colleges, temples and churches. I did meet other clergymen at meetings but my social life, suffered. My wife died in 1953 and my daughter was not quite five years old. Fortunately, an elderly house keeper who had helped raised my wife came to Ohio from Long Island, to help raise my child. So, I didn't get around too much, except with youth and the Jewish people of my own congregation. However, in time my social life expanded to people of other religions as my daughter grew older. I learned that there were many lovely people; sincere, compassionate and kind people who cared about me and my daughter. Through the years people, even strangers seemed to know all about me and my loss. I never knew that when you moved into a new residence that people often visit, offer friendships, bring cakes and really welcome you! Clergymen are highly respected and appreciated in our tri-state area. We were welcomed whole heartedly. So we became friends, and I learned about others and they learned about Judaism and about me. Many Christian adults and school children were interested in learning about other religions and many asked questions about the Jewish people, our religion, about school and Jewish education. This, before Ecumenism!

M: Did you feel like this was passing on your ethnic traditions though, from maybe handed down from your parents?

E: Oh, well there is no question about it. I didn't live the way my parents lived, but I learned by their example about our religion, our culture, and the Jewish holidays. That they are very important, and to observe them; and that we are to pray to God and to be thankful for our daily blessings. This is what I learned from my parents not to expect only the blessings of life, but to accept misfortune as well - any important lesson. Living the way they did, observing the festivals, we were always together as a family for the Sabbath meal, and when we observed the holiday of Passover, wherever they lived, family members would always come back to our parent's home to celebrate the Passover together. You see, we experienced holidays together, that's the way we learned; and through our learning, we taught others: our own daughter, other children as well and congregants as well.

My wife Cecile (Pinky), born in Youngstown, is very active in many organizations in our community. A graduate nurse (of Youngstown Hospital Association, 1941), she is now retired and does volunteer fund raising for charitable organizations. A second marriage for each of us, we were married by Rabbi Berkowitz in 1976. Pinky serves on many committees and Boards of Directors in our Youngstown area, she was the chairlady of Jewish Federation, Women's Division and the Affiliates, the Sisterhood, Hadassah Board, and was nominated once by the YWCA of Youngstown for Woman of the year in the category "Volunteer/Community Service." She is a member of Brandeis, ORT, National Council of Jewish Women, Pioneer Women, Rodef Sholom Sisterhood Board and other temple sisterhoods.

M: Tell me about some of the organizations that you are involved with in the Jewish Community?

E: Well, I have lectured to and have sung for every Jewish organization in town, and every Jewish temple in Youngstown, Warren, Sharon and New Castle, Pennsylvania as well as at some other temples, schools of colleges, in the tri-state area. Mostly, I presented programs on Judaism and of Jewish music; and more recently, I have added Yiddish songs in the lectures, songs that will live on and are meaningful to Jews in many lands; and on history of Jewish music, and I speak of Jewish composers in America, men like Gershwin, Berlin, Bernstein, Copeland and others who have contributed so much to Tin Pan Alley and Broadway shows.

M: The music that you sing, they have a religious origin to them?

E: Well, the music that is sung in the temple is mostly

music of the Bible, music of the prayer book, and music of the holidays and folk songs. Music of the Bible is chanted according to neumes (Tropes) or cantillation notations in the Holy Scroll (Bible). There are no vowels in the Scroll (Torah) and no punctuation. To the stranger, Hebrew looks like a continuous line of strange markings but after study of the Massoretic text, it can be chanted or read. It is read from right to left, rather than left to right. In the year 444 B.C.E. Ezra, the prophet chanted the Torah in the market place and this same chanting has been carried through generation after generation from father teaching it to son, orally. Today, the Cantor teaches this musical system to people preparing for Barmitzvah. so that they will be able to chant from the Bible, authentically. Today we practice from the Bible and then read the Torah section. My father was able to read the entire Torah without practice and knew the complete prayer book from memory. I never tested him personally, but I know he could! In fact he used to lead in prayers, as a lay-leader. Did I tell you that all of his life, he was in the synagogue daily after putting in a days work. He would always worship mornings at home before going to work, then he would go to the synagogue at night. Yes, the music of the Bible is fixed and it changes like a Wagnerian the leitmotif, for the different holidays. In the prayer services, there are also special modes for different prayer sections. For example, on Sabbath day you sing one melody, and while chanting the same words, on Passover it is the same prayer but a different melody; and so on and on for each festival and prayer service.

M: Why is it different?

E: Because each holiday has its own special history, and songs, and you have to get into the proper mood for the particular holidays, and retain the correct musical tradition that has been handed down to us. There are different songs for every holiday and all the holidays have different modes. Modes, by the way, are special groups of tones in particular order that follow fixed patterns, in music. These modes and Tropes go back to the earliest days in the ancient Temples where antiphonal and responsorial choral and cantorial music was introduced.

M: What instruments did they use?

E: What?

M: What instruments did they use in the temple?

E: The Tof, Magrefa, Chalil, Shofar, Lyre, Kinor, Nevel...Many pipes, bells, drums, etcetera. Today, the

Orthodox use no instruments in services because instruments were banned in the synagogues as a sign of mourning for the loss of the ancient temples that were destroyed in Babalonia, in 539 B.C., and also in the year seventy of the common era, when the Romans destroyed the second temple. Reform Jews utilize the pipe organ, and some do in the Conservative temple. Orthodoxy keeps the old tradition of no instruments in the synagogue.

M: Now do you use the organ then?

E: Yes, we use the organ in the Reform, as well as other instruments, and on the holiday of Rosh Hashana, all temples sound the Shofar -the Ram's horn, perhaps the oldest instrument of the first and second ancient Jewish Temples, which summons the people to prayer because of the piercing blast which, fills them with awe. A good beginning for a New Year.

I retired in 1983 a year after Rabbi Berkowitz, passed away. Because I want to continue singing and doing musical programs, I often conduct services for area clergymen when they are on vacations or have to be away from their pulpits; and I give concerts at the Heritage Manor, the old age home, and the Park Vista. My first memory of giving community concerts, was for the International Institute. I started years ago in 1957, I think it was, I gave one performance year after year at the Stambaugh Auditorium and later at Idora Park. I appeared yearly at the Boy Scout retreats and for the Gold Star Mothers and often as a member of the Z.O.A., B'nai B'rith, and Hadasah Associates.

M: Did you ever want to go back into opera?

E: The answer is yes. For many, many years I wanted to be back, but I had much satisfaction when I sang several times with the Youngstown Symphony Orchestra. I did "Amahl and the Night Visitors" and a program of Hanukkah songs. I later sang the male lead in the American Opera "The Telephone." My greatest satisfaction came when I was "Tevye" in "Fiddler on the Roof," at the Youngstown Playhouse. That really satisfied my operatic aspirations! I used to appear often on T.V. and every Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur we broadcast from the Temple, directly. The tri-stste area heard our broadcasts on radio for at least thirty years (that was with Rabbi Berkowitz, and myself with a choir). I always had missed performing in Opera but I was kept quite busy chanting the service, and singing for others, the regular and secular community. We conducted Seder services at different churches yearly, so that they would learn about their "Pascal Supper," our Passover Seder.

M: That is wonderful.

E: We also introduced a model Seder for the Non-Jewish clergymen and repeated it for many years successfully.

M: Well they needed it then.

E: I guess I should be saying more about my activities with our society like the Heart Association, Jewish Chautauqua Society, P.T.A.'s, Easter Seal. Well okay.

M: No, this is wonderful. Now I know that you have been to Israel, right?

E: Oh sure, several times, since my daughter now lives there.

M: What is your impression of Israel?

E: Well, it is a very thriving community. They are people who have been oppressed. It is a small country, a very small country surrounded by thirteen hostile Arab states. They resent the fact that Israel is not an Arab state. The Jewish people claim that the land was originally given to them by God, according to the Bible, and in later years, by the United Nations, after the Balfour Declaration English rule in 1948. Jews lived there always, from early biblical times, but they were over-run by one group, then another, and yet another: the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Persians, the Arabs. In time, they were very few in Palestine, or Israel, but there were always Jews living there, and always, where ever the Jews were, they prayed that Israel could be a homeland for all Jews wherever they were, so that they could worship God in their own ways, in peace and without oppression.

Israel is a wonderful country to be in but I am American, I prefer to live in America. And I enjoy living in America. Because I have a daughter and grandchild living there. I have very special feelings and additional ties to the land. My one hope is that Israel will eventually have peace and not have to be living in fear of hostile, surrounding neighbors.

M: Well, you say living without fear, have you ever had any reason to fear in the United States?

E: I, reason to fear? Well, you know today things have improved. In our area I understand there was the Klu Klux Klan...

M: That wasn't necessary, that was more towards, I know for a fact that the Italians and the Irish too.

E: They went through the same thing. Sure, right, and of course the Blacks too.

M: Sure.

E: In other words when people are working and have what they need they are satisfied, but people when they hunger, need jobs, and can't have them, and have need for life's necessities, well then they start resenting those more fortunate and often create scapegoats. Dislike of the unlike causes prejudice, discrimination and bigotry.

M: That is true.

E: People are always going to "kick out at," and hurt the minority, the underdog. In Israel, the Jew is the minority because the Arab countries are many and Israel is only one, and different. Here in America I have experienced incidents.... For Example, years ago, I traveled with the stage show, "Marching With Johnny," a musical sequel to "Pins and Needles," backed by the C.I.O.-a giant labor organization. One black woman, a star in the show, Rosetta LeNoir, was a talented performer. She would sing her solo and receive great applause. She sang of the four freedoms, of F.D.R.: "Number one freedom of religion, number two freedom from want, number three freedom from fear," and so on. She was a wonderful singer and the audiences always loved her. But I still remember this, so many years ago, that when we rode on a train, a motorman walked through and announced, "Niggers go to the rear of the train!" I heard a thing like that and it hurt! Coming from New York, in our neighborhood, people lived together regardless of race, color or creed, and we all learned to live together in peace. I remember once we went into a Chinese restaurant, the whole cast, right after the matinee. The waiter came over, and started taking the order. There must have been about thirty people in the cast. When he noticed the black performer, Rosetta, he said, "We can't serve her, she is black." I got up and said, "Either you serve all of us or we're all getting up and leaving." They served everybody right there and then! This was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, near the Mosque Theater, in the late 1940's. I have seen it too on buses in New York that were crowded. Getting off the bus, someone would turn back and pass a remark about dirty Jews, or wops, or chinks, and so on. I have come across this many times in my early years. Did you ask if I have seen it here in Youngstown, or in America?

M: Well, in Youngstown?

E: In Youngstown? No, not really. I remember participating

in the first inter-faith meeting, when Bishop Malone, then a priest, came to Rodef Sholom. He was the very first Catholic in our temple before ecumenism became popular. He spoke and worshiped with us at our temple. Then it was a rarity, today it is not unusual! The first week I came to Rodef Sholom, Reverend Burt, a Protestant Bishop, now in Cleveland, addressed our congregation at a religious service. When finished he, added, "in Jesus' name," and then he crossed himself. Later, I said to the Rabbi, "Oh, look, he crossed himself, was that right to do in the temple?" And the Rabbi said, "Well, that was his expression, his sincere prayer to God, a sign of his religiosity." Now, that is where I learned my lesson: that everyone is right and perfectly correct, whatever one does sincerely in worship. Perhaps we all "pre-judge others, even unknowingly." I didn't experience any anti-semitism in Youngstown personally, but I have heard that it exists here. There are some reports of over throwing cemetery stones in Jewish cemeteries, Swastikas, painted here and there and so on. I assume that when someone does something like this it is because he is venting some kind of hatred that is within him, and he can't let it out any other way. Whoever does this, doesn't want me to feel sorry for him, either. When he is in that state of mind he doesn't care what anybody else is thinking or saying. I feel sorry for him who has pent up feelings of hatred, that colors logical thinking. I remember appearing for the International Institute once, and while singing a program of Hebrew songs for the audience, some Palestinians made a commotion, voicing protests against Israel and me. They walked around making loud noises, annoying the audience and shouting remarks, in the Stambaugh Auditorium, and interrupting the performance. I was very upset, but I immediately challenged them right from the stage, "If you can do better than I, come on up here and you sing!" That shut them up fast. I was lucky about that. These annoyances went on then, years ago and still do today, I'm sure. I see that I am slowing down a little now.

M: Well, before we run out of some more tape, let me just ask you a few more questions.

E: Please, I talk to much, I warned you at the beginning.

M: No, that is fine. Now were your parents, did they ever go back to Russia?

E: My mother went back once because someone in her family, was very sick-her mother, I believe. She stayed there for awhile. Infact, she went at a time when she was pregnant and she came back with my sister, Pauline. My father never went back to Europe; it was expensive to

travel and it was never too safe to return to Europe in one's later years. The Russians might hold up your passport and not let you return, since you were once a Russian citizen. Some American tourists have similar experiences today in foreign countries.

M: Now were you ever there at all?

E: In Europe?

M: In Russia I mean?

E: No, it is a communist country. I am not interested in that way of life or anything about it.

M: Well, I thought maybe because your parents were from there you might want to see it.

E: No, if any place, I wanted to see Israel. Not Russia. And too, after Hitler, we never heard from any of our relatives in Pinsk or Minsk. I have no interest in Russia. My parents always spoke of going to visit Israel, but couldn't afford it. I went to Israel because my daughter a student then, was to return to Ohio. We toured Israel and on our return we visited different places in Europe, I always wanted to see. I didn't want to set foot in Germany, because of Hitler and what he had done but being a singer, and having sung lyrics to the "Blue Danube," in a choir, and loving the music so, I simply had to see the Blue Danube. So we went to Austria to see the Blue Danube, but it was dirty and muddy and gray, phooey! We traveled to Greece, Italy, Switzerland, and France, and went to London, England, and Stradford-on Avon where Shakespeare lived and wrote, and we enjoyed our Summer of travel very much that lasted several months.

M: Well, I think that that is about all that I have to ask. Is there anything that I haven't mentioned that you would like to talk about?

E: You know when a person is seventy years old there are so many things to talk about, God knows. Somethings are so interesting, In Youngstown, in 1970, there were about 150,000 people according to the census they had taken at that time, and since less than two percent are Jewish in our community, that means that now there are fewer than three thousand Jewish people in Youngstown.

M: That is small.

E: Sure. I started the first TYG in Youngstown, our Temple youth group, in 1952. Today, our temple youth get together, all of them and meet regularly at the Jewish Center. These youths are the nucleus of future leaders

in our community and are our hopes for better Jews and better Americans. Justice Brandeis made a very important statement. He said, "the test of a true American is the strength of that individual in his own ethnic group." Incidentally, the Z.O.A. has just presented my wife and me the Brandeis Award. That is a great honor for us.

M: Yes, that is.

E: The Jewish Center was on Bryson Street, in a small-house in its early years. People were taking various programs in education, in order to enrich themselves in their heritage, as much as they do today. I was teaching Jewish songs to some groups but because I once taught ballroom dancing, I also gave a dancing class, the same nights. Combining songs and dancing worked very well, I remember fondly the success we all had. There were many "firsts" for me in Youngstown. Like the first picnics we had at Firestone Park. We combined students and parents in games. The older kids playing baseball, we gave out gifts and we had a lot of fun. This was the beginning of many wonderful Purim Carnivals at Rodef Sholom given by our brotherhood. Our youth group, for fifteen thru eighteen year olds, affiliated regionally and nationally with the National Federation of Temple Youth. We were awarded the "Best Youth Group of the Year," nationally. I organized and was the advisor of the group for ten years. By the way, did I tell you about my affiliation with the United Nations? In our religious school at Temple, we collected about \$3,000 for the Unicef drive our first year. The UNA organization wasn't organized as yet officially, and they had collected less money for UNICEF than we did. So they put me in charge of the Youngstown drive the next year, when we trippled the contributions! The year following, I became president and Youngstown affiliated with the National United Nations officially and all because of our Temple youth group's original project to collect for UNICEF. That was a rewarding program for many years. I would like to tell you about another experience, if I may.

M: Okay.

E: About eight years ago I think, when Vice President George Bush was in the community to speak for Lyle Williams, our Congressman was in office, I sang the Star Spangled Banner at the affair. I had been singing the Star Spangled Banner at many Democratic functions and I did so too, this evening for Lyle Williams. When I got through singing, Vice President George Bush said, "Well, I see Youngstown has its own Pavoratti!" I am a pretty heavy person, you know, and I said, into the mike; "Yes, and he is just as fat too." That broke him

up as well, his wife and all the dignitaries present.

He may be our next president. I remember an odd situation. Many people of other faiths knew me and have heard me speak or sing. Once, after I had lost a hundred pounds I was standing at the entrance to the Stambaugh Auditorium waiting for a friend. Youngstown people were coming by, and I knew many of them whom I had seen again, and again. Every year for example, several teachers would bring their secular and church groups to the temple where I would speak about Judaism. Well, these same boys and girls never recognize me! This is terrible, I thought; and we used to be so friendly! (Only my congregants recognized me.) What a disappointment. Well that is not why I gained the weight again.

Once I was invited to speak to the Wolves Club in town. The Wolves Club is a wonderful Italian organization which provides scholarships to the University for the needy. It is made up mostly of professional people, but I didn't know it at the time. I was invited to speak to them on Judaism. When I arrived, there must have been about seventy-five people in the room. They were kibbitzing, and calling out across the room and joking. The men were there for lunch, their voices resounded in the small meeting room. There was a low ceiling and it sounded very loud. I remember asking myself how I was going to talk about religion to this noisy group. Would they be interested? Could I hold their attention? They just wanted to eat and socialize and probably leave. I said to the chairman, "Gee, I don't know why you want me here to speak on religion." He said, "Aw, we have to talk on something, it doesn't matter!" I thought, "Oh my God, why me? and to talk about religion?" Really, I was a little scared. Then the M.C. (master of ceremonies) said, "All right now, if you shut up the cantor is going to get up and do an invocation," I hadn't expected to give the invocation, but I did-and I noticed that they hardly listened. When I sat down I said to the chairman, "Gee, I don't know if they'll like my talk about religion." He said, "Say anything, just joke with them for fifteen minutes and that will be good enough." He got up and he started joking, and he was a terrific M.C.; his jokes were great. Then he said, "Now we will hear a few words from the cantor, about religion." I got up while noises were still going on, trying to decide how to begin. I figured that since most people like music, I'll sing something in Italian. I did, singing a fast recitative from opera. They immediately quieted down to listen. I cut it short and because they were all Italian, I addressed them in Italian -well, just a half dozen sentences. When they seemed surprised, I said to the chairman in Italian, "They don't speak Italian?" I never heard a place get

so quiet in my life. continued in Italian, "I am talking Italian to them but they don't understand me!" Someone called out, "Sure we understand, we understand it!" Okay, I had their attention now, I sang one Italian favorite song and then went into my talk on religion. They enjoyed it very much. In the end they said that I was one of the most special people that ever spoke to them. I was very pleased because I had not expected it to go well; nor did I expect such accolades in writing from such a worthy group- as I learned later on. They contributed many scholarships for the needy that afternoon to attend Youngstown University.

I would like to add my favorite memory. The memory of having performed "Tevye" in "Fiddler On The Roof," at the Youngstown Playhouse, for about fifty performances. The ovation I received again and again satisfied the great longing I always had to return to the operatic stage. Finally, I was satisfied that I had given much pleasure to others and myself because of my God given talent and voice and my background in Judaism. Oops, my wife is here, she says that I talk too much.

M: That is fine though and that is what I want to hear. That is what I am here for.

E: I seem to have summarized my thirty-five years in Ohio, but it is hard to talk about what a cantor is. Is there anything else that you would want to ask?

M: I think that that is about it. It was great.

END OF INTERVIEW