

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Jewish Senior Citizens Project

Jewish Culture

O. H. 297

ARTHUR MORANZ

Interviewed

by

Karlyn Bennehoof

on

February 11, 1984

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: ARTHUR MORANZ

INTERVIEWER: Karlyn Bennehoof

SUBJECT: Jewish culture, depression, Youngstown Businesses

DATE: February 11, 1984

B: This is an interview with Arthur Moranz for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Heritage Manor. This interview is being conducted at Heritage Manor on February 11, 1984, at approximately 1:10 p.m.

Okay, let's start with some basic background, when and where you were born.

M: I was born in Youngstown.

B: What year?

S: 1916.

B: 1916? Was that about the middle of World War I then?

M: About the middle of World War I.

B: Where did you go to school?

M: I went to school at Jackson School and Buck High School and Woodrow Wilson and South High School.

B: What about religious training, were you educated in the synagogue?

M: Yes, I went to Hebrew school.

B: Where was that held?

M: At the Anshe-Emeth.

B: Is that temple still in existence today?

M: They merged with the Temple Emmanuel, now it's called El-Emeth.

B: El-Emeth. What was a typical day like, say when you were around ten years old?

M: I went out and played. We went to school and then we went out and played after school.

B: Did you do religious training every day, or was that . . .

M: No, twice a week.

B: What days would that have been?

M: On Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

B: What did that involve?

M: You went to a classroom, and you had a teacher, and they taught you Hebrew. You went to Sunday school on Sundays. Then, when I was thirteen, I was Bar Mitzvahed.

B: The stock market crashed in the 1920's, and then a Depression followed, what was that like for you?

M: Well, we were lucky because we had an income in the family, so we didn't suffer too much from it.

B: Was that your father?

M: That was my father, and my aunts, and so on.

B: What did they do?

M: My father was a salesman, and my aunts worked in a jewelry habit in Detroit.

B: Those weren't affected much by the market?

M: They happened to have some money saved so we got through everything all right.

B: What were the conditions like then, as opposed to the way they are now?

- M: Everything was cheap and hardly anyone was working. There were soup lines, and bread lines, and everything else. When I was in high school, some of the teachers bought soles for some of the kids, so they wouldn't walk on newspaper. In my last year, last couple of years in high school, we only had high school half a day. I used to walk downtown and work at my uncle's grocery store and Kline's Department Store.
- B: Forgive me for smiling, but when you started telling that story about everything cheap and they had soup lines and bread lines, it sounds like today, except now everything is expensive. Hardly anybody's working, or they weren't a couple of years ago.
- M: I had a heart attack in 1957 and the hospital room cost \$8.
- B: Eight dollars?
- M: In 1957.
- B: That's pretty cheap.
- M: I just was sick now, for three months in the hospital, it cost \$43,000.
- B: Oh my God. That's staggering. I was talking to somebody a couple of months ago about the religious institutions in the area. It seems that there was a conflict between some of them. I think it was between the Russian Jews and the . . .
- M: No. Temple Menia was started by the Russian Jews, and the Children of Israel was started by the Hungarian Jews. Then, they broke away. The Hungarian Jews broke away and started the Anshe-Emeth. The Rodef Sholom were the German Jews. Now, 90 percent of the congregation probably are the children of the old Orthodox Jews.
- B: Is there a specific reason that the Jewish communities from all these different countries each had their own synagogue?
- M: There was no specific reason. It was just that they were all together.
- B: They all spoke the same language and all that?
- M: I say that World War II kind of broke up all religions. In other words, the Catholics got out into the world.

- From their little settlements in New York, some of them never went to another church. As late as ten years ago, if a Catholic wanted to go to a Jewish affair they had to ask the priest.
- B: Oh really?
- M: From the old-timers, yes.
- B: I didn't know that. Why did World War II have such an affect on that?
- M: Because the people got out into the world, and got mixed with other people.
- B: Okay. Did you experience, either as a child or as an adult, did you ever experience any blatant anti-Semitism?
- M: I, myself, never experienced it.
- B: Were you aware of anything that was going on?
- M: I was aware of it, I'd seen incidences of it.
- B: I've heard people talk about certain businesses that wouldn't hire Jews, certain organizations that wouldn't admit them.
- M: There still is.
- B: There still are? I thought that was against the law now, to discriminate that?
- M: It's against the law, but they seem to get away with it. They hire tokens, like they'll hire a token Negro, a token Jew, or a token Catholic, depends what . . .
- B: And, that's all?
- M: That's all.
- B: You've said you've seen incidents. Do you mean incidents on the street?
- M: No. In the Army I've seen incidents. Ostracization, because this guy was Jewish.
- B: The rest of the company would alienate them?
- M: Everyone took me for Greek or Italian so I didn't have any trouble.

- B: (Laughter) Well, was that because you looked Greek or Italian or because of your name?
- M: They didn't recognize it by my name.
- B: What was World War II like in Youngstown? What effects did World War II have on the area?
- M: I really don't know. I went right away.
- B: You were in the Army at the time. Where did you serve?
- M: In the Middle East.
- B: What was going on there?
- M: That's where they took the supplies up to Russia. I was in Tehran most of the time.
- B: It was a link in the line of supply. That brings up another line of questioning then. During World War II, Palestine was still under British rule . . .
- M: I was in Palestine in World War II.
- B: From what I've been able to gather . . .
- M: The British were murdered there.
- B: They were what?
- M: The British were very poor towards the Jews.
- B: That's what I thought. They didn't want to open Palestine for Jewish immigration. What kinds of things did they do to deter the immigration?
- M: They would put people trying to come in in concentration camps and so forth.
- B: The people who were leaving Europe to get away from that sort of oppression under Hitler . . .
- M: The British had a white paper and they only allowed so many Jews in at a time during the year. America was at fault greatly for not letting them in. They let the Puerto Ricans in, they could have saved a lot of lives. If you would have seen some of the people that came out of some of the concentration camps. There are a lot of them in this country that you brought over.

B: They were still facing the oppression when they got to Palestine which was supposed . . .

M: The British had controlled the Middle East. They kept everyone as serfs. That's why everyone rebelled against them after the war. In Iran, the Russians, British, Americans, and Iranians had control of the country. The Shah overthrew his father, that was all go by the Germans. The biggest farce was trying to take the hostages out. I've been in the American Embassy a great many times while I was in Tehran. It was right in the middle of town. It would have taken the whole American Army to get them out. In the meantime, eight people got killed and millions of dollars of equipment got wrecked.

B: Because of the very poor?

M: They blundered the same as they had done in Lebanon. They didn't know what they were doing. Now they just want to give the commanders a slap on the hand.

B: That seems awfully close to the Vietnam thing.

M: It does. There wasn't any problem with the kids who went to World War II, they knew they were fighting something. In Vietnam, they didn't know what they were fighting.

B: While you were in the Middle East during World War II, obviously you knew you were fighting Hitler, did you know what exactly was going on with European Jewry at the time?

M: Yes, we knew. If you talk to Germans now who were kids at that time they don't believe that anything like that happened.

B: Even though they lived . . .

M: Even though they lived there they had to see it.

B: They are still denying it?

M: They are still denying it. They're trying to keep it out of the history books. That's why the Jews are having all these monuments.

B: I had heard of the Revisionist Movement in this country, concerning either total denial of the holocaust or trying to make it seem like it was no worse than anything else was. I didn't know that that had spread to Europe and Germany that much.

M: It has.

B: It seems kind of unbelievable that the Germans can deny it when they've got the remains of Dachau and Treblinka still standing.

M: In Israel they have a whole building with all the pictures and everything, the American soldiers that freed the camps.

B: Did the American population that were still in this country during World War II, were they aware . . .

M: I don't think they were.

B: You don't?

M: I couldn't tell you, but I'd say they were aware of it.

B: You mean they were?

M: They thought that that was part of the war.

B: They didn't think that it was as bad as it really was . . .

M: When I was in Tehran we ran a laundry unit. The Russians brought a lot of Pollocks down through Poland, through Russia. We had a couple of Jewish girls who worked in laundry. The Pollocks used to almost kill them. The Polish were the most anti-Semitic of any of them.

B: That's the impression that I had. At the end of World War II did you come back to this country as soon as the war was over?

M: I came back before the war was over, to go to OTS.

B: What's OTS?

M: Officer's Training School.

B: What was the general atmosphere among the Jewish community here, when the war was over?

M: They were very . . . In fact, they made Germany give money to some of the refugees for what they had lost.

B: Did you belong to any organizations?

M: Yes. I belonged to my b'rith, BMD club, which was at that time like a fraternity.

B: What did you call that?

M: BMD.

B: BMD? Is that a Jewish organization?

M: That's a Jewish organization. They had AZA, BMD [Blue Mogen Davids], and Rodans when we were kids, growing up in high school. They were social organizations. The b'rith is in existence to fight all the anti-Semitism.

B: I was familiar with b'rith. I wasn't familiar with BMD though.

M: They went out of existence during the war. There were no kids to belong.

B: Yes, they were all off fighting. What kinds of activities were involved in that?

M: They used to have dances and so forth, entertain at hospitals and so forth.

B: I see, do volunteer work?

M: Do volunteer work and that kind of stuff.

B: B'rith and BMD, were there any more?

M: AZA that was affiliated with b'rith, it was the youthful affiliate.

B: There was an organization called the Jewish National Fund.

M: Yes, that's still in existence.

B: Oh it is, still today? What is that?

M: The Jewish National Fund is national, they take care of people overseas. Here it's the Jewish Federation.

B: Overseas? I'm not sure I follow that.

M: Poor Jewish people overseas.

B: Was the Jewish National Fund . . .

M: It has always been in effect. During World War II they had the Jewish Agency, which took care of refugees. When the war was over they saw that they were resettled with relatives.

My mother-in-law's family, when I was twenty or twenty-one, they were in Romania during the holocaust.

B: That's such a common thing. I think that's why all the publicity is going on now.

M: That's why they made the picture I think.

B: Yes, the movies . . .

M: Well you probably have the same things going on in Vietnam and Lebanon, killing people by the thousands.

B: Do you think it's the same kind of thing?

M: It isn't the same kind of thing, it's just a lot of religions fighting each other.

B: I can't imagine that anything would go on today, but people keep telling me that it could happen again.

M: It could happen again. The Germans were the most intelligent people in the world. In ten years, Hitler turned them around. You take kids and you can do anything with them after a while.

B: When they're impressionable. That was a big part of his regimen was the youth, the Hitler youth.

M: The Hitler Youth Program. People who were boyhood and girlhood friends who lived right next door to each other turned against. They thought it would help them with Hitler.

B: I don't know how much of that was terrorism or brainwashing.

M: It was brainwashing.

B: Do you think it was more that than fear . . .

M: The ones that weren't brainwashed, it became terror in them.

B: The question has been put to me a couple of times, let's take the example you just gave of the next door neighbor. Where would my loyalties lie if I knew that I did something to help my neighbor, that my family would be killed. That kind of terrorism is something a lot of people can't stand up to.

M: They can't answer it. You yourself, if you had a good friend, a Jew, would it mean anything to you? Because they were Jewish?

B: The simple fact that they were Jewish?

M: Yes.

B: No.

M: My theory has always been if I thought a person was loyal and right with me I didn't care what he was, a Negro, Puerto Rican, Italian, or whatever he was. The old-timers still hold, like if a Jewish kid from the old Orthodox marries out of his faith they consider him dead. We had it in our family and who ended up taking care of the mother when she was bedridden? A Gentile woman. The others didn't want anything to do with her. It shows you it's ridiculous.

B: To draw a line like that on the basis of religion or race . . .

M: There's no one that has come back yet to say which is right.

B: (Laughter) That is true. It's a mute point. How has Youngstown changed over the years?

M: I haven't been around enough so I couldn't say. I'd say that it has changed dramatically.

B: In what way?

M: Maybe it's the times. You go downtown and you don't see a store open. I remember when we walked downtown you had to walk on the street half of the time, it was so crowded. You don't see anyone on the bus. We used to go to Idora Park all the time, dancing. Where do you kids go now for recreation? Beer garden, right?

B: Well, I go to a writing workshop for recreation, so I really can't answer.

M: I mean there's no place for the kids to go.

B: No, there really isn't. There are a couple of places around the university where the younger crowd hangs out. Which I don't agree with, because you have a bunch of eighteen, nineteen year olds in there getting drunk a couple of nights a week. I don't think it's healthy.

M: Did you watch that program "Abortion"?

B: No, I didn't.

M: My son did two abortions on that program with Jessica Savich. That was her program. One girl was fifteen years old and she already had one kid. The other woman had four kids and she couldn't afford another one. They had a half hour of the program that was pro and con on abortion. To me I would say it was a personal thing with the woman. They used to go get abortions and half of them would die from . . .

B: When it was illegal. Back alley butchers, it was a very dangerous thing. Now they are talking about making it illegal again.

M: I don't think they will. Do you read in the paper how many single births there are? Do you ever read the birth records?

B: No.

M: Look at them every night and you'll see two or three single births.

B: Single parent?

M: Yes, single parent.

B: I thought you were talking about single as opposed to twin.

M: My son said that out of all the abortions that clinic has done, 65 percent were white Catholics. There were only 5 percent colored because they keep the kids so they can get aid to defend the children.

B: Whereas the Catholics though . . .

M: Forbids it.

B: Excommunicated or something.

M: Yes, it's forbidden.

B: Which is worse.

M: See, you mess around with a guy and that's what happens.

B: (Laughter) I don't know whether they can make it illegal or not. I don't think they will because there is too much opposition to it and there are too many things that are wrong with that . . .

M: The Catholic could stop; anyone could stop. There are enough birth control things today, which they didn't have in our day. If a kid got pregnant in school, my God, that was terrible, or if someone got a divorce; today it means nothing.

B: It's getting to the point now where a lot of women are opting to have children without being married.

M: Yes, they want them.

B: Which is a reflection of how far women have come that they can financially deal with something like that. I can't imagine that in 1920 or 1930.

M: That was uncommon.

B: Were there trolley cars in Youngstown?

M: Sure.

B: That ran on the electric wire up above?

M: Sure.

B: All through downtown and everywhere? Like buses they ran?

M: Yes. We used to have a little Elm Street car and they used to have it for all those cars that went to Idora Park. You got it on the square.

B: You could go just about everywhere you wanted?

M: You went to Poland, the streetcar used to come to Sheridan Road and Byers Way, Poland Avenue. The elephant bridge, the bridge where the garbage dump is?

B: I'm not familiar with that.

M: Well, they called it the elephant bridge at that time. It's the one that goes up Gibson Street. Before they built it we had to change cars there; we had to walk across the bridge because it wasn't strong enough, then there was another streetcar on the other side. Then there were trolleybuses. It was a bus and it ran on the trolley wires, which gave it the power.

B: What was the difference between the trolley and the trolleybus?

M: They were more maneuverable; you could go over the curb and everything else.

B: I see. So, they weren't limited to the track?

M: No. When we were kids I used to take my brother and sister to the show on Sunday. We used to let down the barrier on the windows and let them out and then we wouldn't pay the fare then.

One kid's mother gave him a twenty dollar bill during the Depression and he rode for two years for nothing because the conductor couldn't change the twenty dollar bill.

They used to have a dollar weekly pass. You would pass it out the window after you got in so that someone else could ride.

B: (Laughter) I remember doing that when I was in high school. You would have a bus pass and then when you got on you would pass it to your friend.

M: So you were the same?

B: Yes, all kids were the same.

M: No different. You take the angles at times when they are young.

B: Where did you go to school?

M: Chaney High School. It was a good school when I was there. I have my doubts about it now.

Do you think maybe the reason downtown is so desolate now is because of the super malls?

M: The trouble with the downtown is all the buildings were owned by estates and people that were dead and never put any money back in the buildings. They drained it. The malls had free parking. Take a town like Pittsburgh, they revitalized that town because there was money there. There were underground garages. Los Angeles, no matter where you go there is parking. They can't built a store unless there is parking.

B: Free parking?

M: Free parking. They build it underneath and then they would punch your ticket when you dealt there.

B: Do you think it's possible to revitalize Youngstown that way, if we got the money in?

M: If you got the money in, but it would take a long time.

B: By a long time do you mean ten years, twenty years . . .

M: It would take ten. I'd say the only way they are going to revitalize the town is to build condominiums that people can live down there. Now they have nothing but old people and people with no money living down there now, with no place to shop.

B: That's true, there is really nothing down there.

M: Except for the Dollar Bank, Mahoning Bank, and Strouss there is nothing downtown.

B: Yes, everything else has closed up. Did you marry?

M: Yes.

B: What was your wife's name?

M: Rose.

B: Rose. What's her maiden name?

M: Rose Gross.

B: Did you have children?

M: Yes, I have a son and daughter.

B: What are their names?

M: Joel and Lisa.

B: How old are they now?

M: Lisa will be 34 in July and Joel will be 38 on the sixteenth of February.

B: What do they do?

M: Joel is a OBGYN and Lisa is the director of hospital development at Mt. Sinai in Cleveland.

B: That's a pretty nice job. Your son must be a pretty well known OBGYN if he got on that program . . .

M: His wife is a lawyer.

B: What hospital does he work at?

M: In Chester, Pennsylvania. He lives in Swarthmore, it is the next town. Lisa lives in Shaker Heights, Cleveland.

B: Do you still belong to El-Emeth?

M: Yes.

B: Is that a reform?

M: No, that's a conservative.

B: Was Anshe-Emeth an Orthodox?

M: No, that was conservative.

B: That was conservative too. What is the difference between Orthodox and reform . . .

M: They shorten up the services and a few of the customs have changed. Conservative is not as strict as Orthodox.

B: Then reform is even less strict. Do the conservatives still wear the yarmulkes and the prayer shawl?

M: Yes.

B: And the reform doesn't?

M: Reform doesn't. Some of them do, some of them have gone back to it.

B: It's personal, it doesn't matter?

M: It doesn't matter. The rabbis that come here for services wear the yarmulkes and the prayer shawl. In other words, they use the conservative.

B: Do the rabbis in Youngstown take turns coming to Heritage Manor?

M: Yes, they take turns.

B: You could possibly still have a reform service one week and then an Orthodox . . .

M: The reforms still do the conservative service. Whoever comes here still does the conservative. They have laymen do some of the service.

B: What do you mean by laymen?

M: People who know how they conduct the service. In the Jewish religion you don't have a priest or rabbi to conduct the service, as long as you have ten men you can conduct the service.

B: I see, ten men. It has to be male?

M: Women they didn't consider . . . The old Orthodox you don't see the women; you see them separated. You can't look at them.

B: What was the reason for that? (Laughter)

M: I don't know.

B: Is it still that way? With the Orthodox services . . .

M: I imagine in New York or somewhere, but around here it isn't.

B: Just the very strict, keep to tradition types. Women are now getting religious education. How long has that been going on?

M: That has been going on a long time. In my day, my sisters got their religious education the same as we did.

B: I was talking to someone who had immigrated from Eastern Europe. The women were not permitted to have the religious training because everything was concentrated on the male.

M: In the old days because they had so many kids, the men never used to work. They used to read the Torah and then come home and have the kid, you know.

B: (Laughter) I think you're exaggerating.

M: I'm not exaggerating. They used to have eight, nine, ten kids.

- B: Why? Did they plan on having that many children?
- M: They didn't plan on it, it just happened.
- B: It was a religious kind of thing?
- M: Yes, it was.
- B: Like the Catholics?
- M: Catholics. They will have ten or twelve kids and they can't keep one.
- B: They can't keep one?
- M: I mean, they don't have enough money to support one.
- B: But, they go ahead and have all those kids anyway. I can see farmers would need large families in order to run the farm.
- M: The old time Jews were mostly grocers, small grocers in town. They educated the kids as doctors and lawyers because they didn't want them to be grocers. With the Jewish people education is the biggest thing. You see mostly doctors and lawyers are Jewish.
- B: Is that simply because the grocery business was a tough business?
- M: Any business they were in. They didn't want their children to be in a business or work as hard as they did.
- B: They wanted them to be in a profession. I don't think doctors have to work as hard.
- M: They probably work harder.
- B: But at least they get some compensation for their work.
- M: Do you know how much it costs to have a baby now?
- B: The last I heard, a few years ago, it was something like \$10,000, just to go to the doctor and deliver the kid. That was \$10,000.
- M: My son gets \$800 a delivery. They get \$1,400 for a hysterectomy. He had his first Medicare patient, an 80 year old lady had a hysterectomy. He accepted the payment; he said she got along better than any of the young ones. He's in with two other doctors.

- M: I used to take care of them. They bought from Tamarkin. There are no groceries in Tamarkin now, it's all shipped out of Pittsburgh. All that's there are vegetables, frozen foods, and drugs. They have Phar-Mor drug stores.
- B: I haven't heard the Tamarkin name?
- M: They are out in Austintown.
- B: There's a store out in Austintown?
- M: No, it's a warehouse. It's on Victoria Road, right next to Strouss.
- B: Okay. They used to supply groceries?
- M: Yes, a 400,000 square foot warehouse.
- B: What do they do now?
- M: They take the orders and the orders are shipped in from Pittsburgh. They redeliver it with the frozen foods and produce.
- B: So they are more or less a link between the source and the final destination.
- M: The same thing is happening in Pittsburgh. Kroger is selling their stores out. Forty-one stores are up for sale.
- B: Kroger is going right down the tubes. Kroger used to be in this area.
- M: Kroger is close to number one today. They built these big stores.
- B: I remember when Kroger had stores here.
- M: The union started to monkey around with them so they just pulled the whole thing out.
- B: I see. It wasn't because they were in financial trouble?
- M: No. They closed up a whole . . . like A&P pulled out of here.
- B: Yes, I thought A&P was in trouble. I thought that was why they pulled out.
- M: No, they don't want those kinds of stores anymore.

- B: That's interesting.
- M: Valu King just built a new 44,000 square foot store in Howland.
- B: Valu King is getting gigantic. Somebody is making an awful lot of money there.
- M: You'd be surprised how little money is made in big stores. It costs a lot of money to run it.
- B: Sure there is a lot of overhead, but they wouldn't be expanding as much as they are . . .
- M: You have to keep expanding.
- B: In order to keep making that kind of money.
- M: Keep pace.
- B: Is there anything else that you want to tell me about?
- M: Not much else.
- B: Not much? Nothing at all?
- M: I worked 43 years. That's all.
- B: At Tamarkin.
- M: Yes. Then I got sick.
- B: With your heart attack?
- M: No, with my legs. I was operated on at Cleveland Clinic and the University of Pennsylvania.
- B: So that was the end of your career?
- M: Yes, that was the end of my career and I've been here two years.
- B: What do you think of Heritage Manor? How do you like it?
- M: I like it. I'm in the frame business; I make all this stuff. I take a lot of physical therapy. I had to buy a shirt two sizes bigger.
- B: Two sizes bigger, why?
- M: My chest got so big and my neck . . .

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B: From working out?

M: Yes. I do push ups, lift weights.

B: That's good.

END OF INTERVIEW