

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown Area Jewish Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 746

LEONA ADLER

Interviewed

by

Irving Ozer

on

February 16, 1987

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown Area Jewish Project

INTERVIEWEE: LEONA ADLER

INTERVIEWER: Irving Ozer

SUBJECT: Jewish community, Youngstown history

DATE: February 16, 1987

O: This is an interview for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. This is Irving Ozer here in the apartment of Leona Adler who is going to share with us some of her recollections. The date today is February 16, 1987.

Leona, were you born in Youngstown?

A: No.

O: Where were you born?

A: Peninsula, Ohio.

O: When did you come to Youngstown?

A: About 1918.

O: How old were you then?

A: How old would I have been then?

O: When were you born?

A: 1893. I will be ninety-four on my birthday.

O: Where did your parents come from?

A: They were from out in the country from Peninsula, Ohio.

O: Were they born there? Were they born in America?

A: They were born around in that section.

O: They were born in America?

A: Oh, yes.

O: So you came to Youngstown at the age of roughly . . .

A: I guess I would have been thirteen or fourteen.

O: So you attended school here?

A: I never attended school here. I was married in 1915.

O: So you were about twenty-two or twenty-three then when you came?

A: Yes, about twenty-two or twenty-one years old.

O: How did you meet Abe?

A: Through a relative of his, a cousin of his.

O: What were the circumstances?

A: We were at an ice cream parlor and that is where I met him.

O: Do you remember which ice cream parlor?

A: That was right on the corner of Federal and . . .

O: Holmes Street. Was it Holmes Street?

A: I don't know.

O: I think it was called Holmes Street then.

A: There was a great, big ice cream parlor there.

O: Was that Petracko's?

A: I don't remember. It was down there near Spring Common.

O: Was it Burt's?

A: Well, Burt's wasn't down there yet. I remember Burt's when they were on Phelps Street.

O: Who was this relative who introduced you?

A: Morris Goldman. He is passed on now.

O: So you dated for a while I assume?

A: Yes, about a couple of years.

O: Where did one go in those days to date? What did you do?

A: We went swimming.

O: Where?

A: And we went dancing up at Idora Park.

O: You danced at Idora too?

A: Yes, sure.

O: What else? Where else? What theaters did you attend?

A: I think the Paramount was going then. I'm pretty sure.

O: It was called the Liberty then, wasn't it?

A: Maybe that was it. I can't remember.

O: Was it run by Max Shagrin?

A: Yes, one of the twins. He had that theater.

O: What other ones do you remember?

A: Robins had a theater on Federal Street right next to where the bank is now, the Union Savings and Trust. I think they called that the Bijou Theater. I was the cashier for them, selling tickets there.

O: What about the Dome Theater and the Hippodrome?

A: I remember the Dome Theater, yes.

O: And the Hippodrome?

A: Oh, yes. I remember all of those. We used to go to the Palace Theater then when Friedman's had the confectionery there. Then the father had one over on West Federal Street. It was right there down from the Square. He had a beautiful store.

O: What other stores do you remember downtown from that same period?

A: Well, there was McKelvey's and Strouss'. I worked in Strouss' for a good many years. I remember they had their picnics; I don't remember what year that was. I was still single. They had it out at Southern Park out there. Once they had a picnic out of town. They closed the store. Hirshberg and Strouss were still living, and they closed the store. We took a train. I suppose that was to Cedar Point. I don't remember.

O: You took a train?

A: We took a train and went there. The last one was out at Southern Park.

O: That is very nice. Did you know Clarence J. Strouss, Sr.?

A: Yes.

O: Can you tell us anything about him?

A: He was very friendly and nice with you. I remember he called everybody by their first name.

O: What kind of boss was he?

A: Wonderful. He was friendly. He would stop at everybody's counter and talk to them.

O: When you met Abe and you started to date and got serious, did you experience any difficulty between your family and his family?

A: My family was not living here; I was alone. My sister-in-law, Lillian Adler, she knew me and I knew her. They were very nice to me. My father-in-law was real Orthodox and it was a little hard. She fixed it up and I was converted to a Jewish woman. I went to the mikvah.

O: What rabbi?

A: Davidson. We were married in his house. He taught me Hebrew. What I learned about it wasn't too much, but I did learn and took lessons from him.

O: How long did you take lessons?

A: It was a few months. I got to say the brochos and stuff like that. I kept a kosher house for a while.

O: Was Abe conscientious about keeping kosher or did he just do it for his family's sake?

A: He said it was up to me, whatever I wanted to do. My father-in-law was a very nice man, very religious.

O: Did you get married in the temple or in a house?

A: In the rabbi's house.

O: Did you find it difficult, the social aspects of new friends and so on?

- A: No, when you worked in Strouss', you made a lot of friends. You knew everybody. But we were pretty much to ourselves though. We would go to their home on Friday night for our dinner.
- O: Where did you live when you first came to Youngstown?
- A: I lived on Oberlin Avenue. Then I left there and went to live with one of the girls who worked at Strouss' in the millinery department. I lived with her for a long time. I also lived at the Y.
- O: Where was that?
- A: On Delaware Avenue.
- O: How did you get downtown?
- A: We took the streetcar.
- O: Why did you come to Youngstown?
- A: I had a sister and she was living here. I came down here to visit her and I met Max Shagrin and we were good friends. Then I decided to stay because I got work here. I liked it at Strouss' and I just stayed on.
- O: Where did you and Abe set up housekeeping first?
- A: That was out on Overland Avenue.
- O: You've been active in Jewish life for some time. How did you get started in that?
- A: From the Anshe Emeth Temple and El Emeth Temple. I was on the rummage sale there, in charge of that.
- O: Do you remember when you got your first car?
- A: The first one was a Hudson. It was all open.
- O: A touring car?
- A: Yes.
- O: Did you learn to drive right off the bat?
- A: Yes, I learned to drive right away. Abe bought a truck one time and I felt I could drive anything. It was brand new and I wanted to drive it. I got down as far as Basin Street and the car stalled on me. Lester Adler, Abe's nephew, saw me and started the car for me.

I got to know people through the temple. I used to go there and they would have dinners on Sunday nights and I was always working up there on Sunday nights. My husband was angry about that and I had to stop.

O: Who was rabbi at that time?

A: I can't remember at that time.

O: Who were some families who were active at that time in the temple?

A: Rose Friedman and her family, Tamarkin's, Greenfield's.

O: When did you start to get involved in Women's Division of the Federation?

A: Since I've been here.

O: Can you think back to the time before the Second World War when Hitler started to come into power? Do you remember what went on in Youngstown?

A: I remember the Second World War. I remember reading in the paper about Hitler, but that's about it.

O: What were your feelings when the war ended?

A: I was happy it was over with and they could all come home, those who could come home.

O: What happened in Youngstown when they announced the war was over?

A: I know there was excitement around. Everybody was talking about it.

O: Let's go back to the Depression. What do you remember about the Depression, how it affected you, how it affected Youngstown?

A: I don't know what year that was in.

O: 1929, 1930, 1931.

A: I remember the banks were closed. Abe was in business with a brother of his, Oscar Adler.

O: What kind of business?

A: A furniture business. They were sort of in the trucking business too; they were hauling steel at the time. That was the big cry about everything, Steel! Steel! Steel! I guess that was because of the war. They had a lot of big trucks. They had

a garage on Boardman Street. Oscar always had the controlling interest. The upkeep of the trucks was terrible so they went into the furniture business instead. They opened a store in Warren, Ohio.

O: When you first got married, what did Abe do?

A: He worked with his father in the feedstore. The first contract Abe got was with H. J. Heinz in Pittsburgh. He got to do their hauling and delivery. He had to have a truck and it started from that.

O: How did the Depression affect your business?

A: It didn't affect it too much.

O: You always had enough to eat?

A: Yes. Things were a little rough when we were on Portland Avenue.

O: If I were to ask you to name a few people who influenced you or who you admired in Youngstown over these many years, who would you pick out?

A: Jack Roth was good friends with Abe. He worked at Seigle's on Federal Street; it was a ladies' ready-to-wear store. Jack Roth was assistant buyer.

O: What were your favorite charities?

A: Pioneer Women.

O: Thank you very much, Leona.

END OF INTERVIEW