Lillian Besler Cohn
Narrator

Rhoda G. Lewin
Interviewer

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Lillian Besler Cohn **-LC**
Rhoda Lewin **-RL**

LC: In those days, you know there was no organized Federation. I remember that a group of men, they were what they called a Penny Society. Did you ever hear of that? They went around and they collected nickels and dimes. Well, you know, the people didn't have very much. We lived on First Street and my father was very sick at one time; I was maybe seven, eight years old. And the German Jews like Mrs. Jacobs, from the Jacobs Jewelry Store, and Mrs. Rothschild, who was one of the original Rothschilds—the Rothschild's that is now Young Quinlan's—they used to come around and see my grandmother. I think they helped out with money, too. My grandmother lived upstairs of our house because in those days, there was no support. My father, as little as he made, we had to see that she was okay. She had a daughter who worked in the cigar factory run by the Pflaums. They're now in the musical world; this was their grandfather. And then I remember later on Ruth Smilow, who's Paul Smilow's mother—he's a lawyer—she would go around and help people. I don't know that she gave them any money, but they did all the things that maybe now you have nurses that come around. They would help you if you had a childbirth, or something like that. And I remember Dr. Gordon, he charged a dollar a visit. He had an automobile, and I was only a little girl and I remember he used to come to this friend from Howard Lake, that I went to Santa Barbara with. Her mother was a very sick woman and he would make a call and then he would take all of us kids and give us a ride. He had the only automobile.

RL: What year was this, about?

LC: This must have been in the early 1900s. I remember so many little things from those old days. I don't know if you remember the years when there were a lot of peddlers, the Jewish men. My father didn't happen to be a peddler. My father came to America sometime in 1885-86. He worked on a farm in New York for $8 a month, he told us. Eggs were five cents a dozen! Before we go any further, can I show you a picture of my father and mother when they were married? My father's father in Europe, my grandfather, they were from a little town called Niomsk that's in Romania. They were millers, so my father

came here to work for Pillsbury Mills. I don't even know what he did. He probably was a laborer. He worked there a number of years, until he got sick. Then he opened up his own little store. We had a little store where he sold second-hand tools, around Eighth Avenue and Washington. It was a tiny little shack of a business. Then, later on, he moved to Ninth and Marquette, and he had a real nice store. My brother Jonas stayed a year out of high school and he took over and the business was quite prosperous. But what I wanted to tell you, the old time peddlers in those days had horses. Most of them lived on the North Side, but we lived on the South Side, on Longfellow Avenue. We were one of the very few people there. My father worked at the World's Fair in Chicago, that was in 1890, I think, and then they came to Minneapolis, as I say, because of the milling situation. And then my father bought some kind of a machine or something and he made groka—that's grits—and so we had contact with a lot of people. At our house—we lived on Third Street and Fourteenth—we had a great big room, what they called the front room, and we had a telephone. The kind you ring, you know. My uncle, Mr. Sutsmuz (?), and the immigrants would come to our house. It was rather a meeting place. Dr. Rosen, while he was learning to be a doctor, was a barber in our house. [Laughter] He rented the front room every Sunday. [Laughter] This was the way we lived. These peddlers, on Sunday, would take their horses and they would have a buggy and they'd go out to Minnehaha Falls with their families, and with their horses. We never had a horse, because my father never peddled or anything like that, but a lot of the families, that's how they started in those days, because they started from scratch. A lot of our Jews, at that time, worked for the Milwaukee Railroad in the yard, in the shops. They worked hard, six days a week. There was no labor law then.

I got married in 1917 and I left with my husband, and I can't tell you a great deal about those times, except I remember when the Foshay was built. My father was a locksmith, he was an expert in locks, and he also did umbrellas. There used to be a man, and they called him Sabley something—I can't remember his last name—and he would go on trips. He was like a missionary, only I don't think he was too religious. You know what I mean. He was a pseudo religious person, at least that's the way I thought. And so he'd come, when he'd go on one of these trips, and my father would make him an umbrella. Then when he came back he always gave my father a picture. He went around all over the world. Eddie Schwartz, I bet, would know his name; he was quite a character and he was very, very well known in Minneapolis at that time. And Eddie Schwartz's mother and father -- his father was a printer, Meyer Schwartz, and the mother's name was Daisy -- they were a delightful couple. The father, I think, at one time had a dancing school as just a side-line. My father also belonged to a lodge. And my mother would give the men their lunch. It was cold, you know, in the wintertime, and they would come in. They would bring maybe a sandwich or something, and my mother would give them a bowl of soup, or some hot coffee. There were quite a few who came.

RL: These were the peddlers?

LC: Yes. Then there was Eastman the baker, whose daughter Pokey married Ben Katz -- her name is Claire—and she drove his wagon.

RL: How old was she when she was driving for him?

LC: Well, she must have been a real young girl. She's a University graduate. I don't know, she must be about your age. Are you in about your forties or fifties?

RL: Forties.

LC: I think she's about your age. She's a college graduate. And she married this Ben Katz who had been very successful in the drug business, and I think they're retired now. And their little daughter works in the office with Paisner now [Dr. Hyman Paisner], and she has that audiograph. She does that kind of work.

RL: Now you said you left Minneapolis when you got married?

LC: Yes. I married, and then we traveled for a few years, and we come back. Victor was actually raised by my mother from the time he was six, until almost the time she got sick. We'd come back and stay a couple of months. Then, after my mother died, he stayed with my brothers. My brothers were both lawyers. When my father had that store on Washington Avenue, and that's when he got over being so terribly sick. He was sick for two years at one time, and we had awfully hard times, we just had terrible hard times. I can't tell you how terrible they were. Then my father got a job putting out the streetlights, lighting them and putting them out. They had gas lights in those days. And my brother would help him. Then my brother broke his leg—he was in a cast—and he was just a kid, maybe nine or ten years old then. Then my father starts to go into business. Any my mother used to drag my brother Jonas, who was about five, six years old, she'd drag him with her every day she went down and helped my father out. This is how hard people worked in those days. It wasn't easy for us. And my brothers, they all became lawyers. My brother Ben was in the student training course at the university, and he got a scholarship to study law at night. Then, because Ben had the books, Phil took 'em and he became a lawyer. Phil became a very good lawyer, and he never cared for money. He could practice in Federal Court. He was in with one of the two Kerry brothers. Was it Archie Kerry that was the one that was well known? They were criminal lawyers, and Archie was the best one. And in that office also was Abbie Ginsberg.

RL: Were those the Ginsbergs that became Gilbert?

LC: No, that's a different Ginsberg. You know Rose Gortson of Sargent Gortson, this was her cousin. Abbie was a brilliant lawyer. I wouldn't want this to come out in any copies, 'cause I could be sued by someone. But Abbie was in this office with my brother Phil, and Abbie always wanted .a little percentage on everything. He was finally

disbarred. He was a brilliant lawyer. He could have been a very rich man if he had stuck to his work, but he liked to talk a little bit all the time. He was convicted of selling stock to priests, and he served in Sandstone prison. He had a sister, Ann Strauss, that lives in St. Paul, and also Kate Brooks, Katie. She was married to Keavey Brooks. In the 1920s and the 1930s, my brother handled many, many Federal cases. He'd go to Fargo. He knew the Sterns very well, from Fargo. They were Benny Harris' friends. Benny Harris had a bar here. But as I said, Phil never cared for money. He would do many, many cases for nothing. He'd go to the City Jail, and he saw a man whose wife is still around here, so I wouldn't tell you his name, and he said to this fellow, "What are you doing here?" And he said, "Well, I've been arrested from the." So he said, "You got an attorney?" He said, "No, I got no money for an attorney." So Phil said, "Well, Joe, I'll be your attorney, I don't want any money from you." He died with a few thousand dollars, because he didn't care for money. My brother Ben, on the other hand, went into the training corps...

RL: What training corps?

LC: Students' training corps—what do they call it—at the university.

RL: The ROTC?

LC: The ROTC, and then got the scholarship when he came out. Then, when he was forty-one years old, he was drafted and joined the Marines! He was a top sergeant in the Marines. And he worked in adjudication at the Veterans Administration. My youngest brother, Jonas, also became a lawyer, but he became interested in the pinball business and never did practice law.

RL: What was that bar you mentioned? Somebody owned a bar, you said.

LC: Benny Harris.

RL: What bar was that?

LC: On Eighth Avenue and Fourth Street. I don't know if he was in the rackets or not. I don't know if you'd like to mention something about Ernie Fleigel. Their name originally was Fleigeltopf. And after the first World War, Ernie was a fighter, he was a lightweight, and the father went to Germany and bought up a lot of razor blades and all kinds of stuff. The poor guy, I guess he lost every cent he made on it. But Ernie became a prizefighter, and then opened up the 620 Club. I don't know if you ever knew that at the 620 they had the Round Table. Did you know about the Round Table?

RL: Tell me about it.

LC: Well, they had a Round Table where a lot of men about town . . . Ernie Schraeder,

Benny Haskel . . . I know all about him, too, because he was my brother's uncle. [Laughter] I don't know if this stuff's going to be any help to you or not.

RL: Yes. Who else belonged to the Round Table?

LC: Well, Benny Haskell, a few judges... I can't remember their names... a few top lawyers, men from around City Hall... You had to be invited to sit at the Round Table. They would come and have their lunch. When my brother Phil died, my brother Ben was invited. And he dropped dead—was it in 1957 or was it 1967? He was sitting there one noon, and he dropped dead at that Round Table.

RL: When did this begin?

LC: Well, it must have started in the 1930s or so. Phil was well known around town, very well known. He belonged to a bridge club at the Radisson. Phil was an expert bridge player, and they used to play in back of a... You never knew Sophie Siegel or Doris Siegel, did you? They had a brother, Ben Siegel—he's out in California, I think—and one of their brothers had a cigar store here, and when we couldn't find Phil, when somebody would call him up—he would often get calls late at night, you know—we'd call this cigar store. I don't know if anybody is running it now, on Seventh Street and Second Avenue North. I don't even know where it is, I never saw it, but I used to call it all the time. Benny Haskell, their family, my uncle Mr. Zuckman, who was married to my father's sister, he was one of the older ones. Benny and his brother Joe and another brother, Sam Zuckman... the name was Zuckman, it was never Haskell... Haskell was his father's name. Benny married Christy Haskell. He went to Canada and met her and she was a very beautiful girl at the time. And many years, I don't remember how many years, later, they opened their liquor store and they prospered very, very much. They have this one daughter who lives in Oklahoma.

RL: That was after prohibition that they opened the liquor store.

Cohn; Yes. That was my father's brother. He was sick... he used to go down to Rochester for many, many years. He knew the Mayos very well. They used to tell a joke about him, that he ate so many salami sandwiches that his stomach was no good. They went down to Rochester and they had a beautiful daughter, a gorgeous girl, and one time they went down there and Christy sat next to a lady from Oklahoma and they started to talk, and she said I have a beautiful daughter, and the other one said, I have a beautiful son, they showed 'em the pictures, and would you believe it, she married a very rich young man from... I think it's Tulsa, Tulsa or Oklahoma City, one of the two. Christy now lives in the Towers. I don't think she socializes much at all...or anything. I really know very little about her. At one time we were very close.

RL: You say you traveled during the 1920s. What business was your husband in?

LC: He sold advertising, cookbooks and various things, and so I would be in and out of Minneapolis and we'd take an apartment, and I also lived in Chicago for a while. We would travel and Victor would stay with my parents.

RL: You'd be gone for months at a time?

LC: Well, every time we got to Chicago we'd have Vic come down and stay with us. But he'd have to go to school here, you know. He went to South High, and he graduated and he started to go with Marcella when he was just seventeen years old. He skipped a couple of grades in school, and he also wrote... I think he was like an editor at that little junior high school on Thirteenth Avenue and Twenty-fourth Street. I don't know the name of it. He was always interested in writing. Victor was editor of the Minnesota Daily at one time. And his very good friend was the one who wrote "Mr. Roberts."

RL: Tom Heggen.

LC: Victor was a pallbearer at his funeral. They were very, very close at that time, with Tom Heggen and also Chuck Roberts who was the Washington correspondent for *Newsweek* for many, many years. Once in a while, I'll see him when I go to Washington. This time we didn't see him. He's working for some private group.

RL: Now, let's back track for a minute. You said you got married when you were twenty-two . . . This was in 1917. Did you work before you were married?

LC: Yes, I was a stenographer.

RL: Who did you work for?

LC: I worked for a Minneapolis concern. They're not in business anymore. They were Smith something or other that used to manufacture outside plumbing and things like that, and they were a big concern out southeast. I don't remember their names anymore. That was a long time ago.

RL: Did you have any special training to be a stenographer?

LC: Sure, I went to Minnesota Business College. At first I worked for $3 a week. My parents, as I say, struggled so my brothers all had what they called a melamed. I didn't have any Jewish education, so when I was fourteen years old I wanted to go to high school, and I did go for one year. I wanted to go longer, and my mother said to me, "Lily (she called me Lily), we can't afford to send you, we can send you but we can't buy you any clothes. The boys have to have a good education, they have to get along with the girls," she says, "but we just don't have enough money." So I had a friend, Doris Siegel,

whose sister Sophie worked for the Davis's. They had a great big store, and she was the main person there. I went to work for $3 a week as a cash girl, in Donaldson's. After two, three years they promoted me to $5 a week in patterns. Well, in those days you had to work awfully hard, and they wanted me to do something, and I didn't want to do it, so they fired me. My father had a store at the time, and I said to him, "Papa, this is not for me. To make $5 a week, there is nothing in it. I want to go to business college. Will you loan me the money?" So he loaned me $60. That's what it was for the term. So I went to business college. I still have a typewriter that I bought a few years ago...I've had a couple of them. I went to business school and took up Gregg shorthand and became a steno. I went to Chicago, and that's where I met my husband, and we came back to Minneapolis and I was married here. Then, after a few years, I stopped working, but when we came to Minneapolis, as I say, Lou was still in advertising and it was the beginning of the second World War...

RL: Did you work after you were married?

LC: No, no! Not the first few years. But when we came to Minneapolis and Victor was already grown up, then I needed to work. My husband had no training. He sold advertising, so Vic said to him, "Why don't you go up to the Jewish World? Maybe they can use you." Sure enough, we went up there and Mr. Frisch and we have become very good friends. I got a letter yesterday from Janet. Whenever she comes, she stays with me for a month. She stopped here last summer for a whole month and she writes to me, she calls me on the phone. So Mr. Frisch said to him, "If you get me seventy-five or a hundred names of prospective advertisers..." So we went all over town, we wrote down names, we didn't know who, what or when. But Lou happened to be a very good salesman. He never got rich on it, but we got along pretty good, and when he died in 1971, he was on retirement then, he was doing a little holiday advertising, so I took it over for about two years. I wasn't hardly making anything on it. It started with $1,800 a year and then down to $1,400 a year because I didn't try to get any new ones, and I discovered that my income tax went up, and I thought it isn't worth it to me, so I quit two years ago.

RL: Did you belong to any organizations then?

LC: This Saturday group, the old Aleph Club of Hadassah, has been going many, many, many years. I remember many years ago going to Sadie Shapiro's. I didn't belong at that time. And years ago they had Mr. Herzl . . . he would talk to them. Blanche Goldberg—there's another one you go to interview—she was a Halpern, and she can tell you many, many things. She's a good friend of mine. Blanche Goldberg knows many, many things, she can tell you about the old settlers in North Dakota, if you're interested.

But this Aleph Club, Dorothy Brin belonged, Schuman. I was asked to belong many many years ago. I said no, because my husband was off on Saturday and I wanted to be with

him. But about seven or eight or nine years ago Gert Epstein went to California and Beth Fish said to me, “Lil, why don't you belong?” They won't take in just anybody, it has to be within a certain number, because the apartments now aren't big enough, but at that time . . . And then Esther Rosenbloom, who's our leader, said to me, "Yes, Lil." We discuss different things. It used to be that they’d say the old aliyah, but it isn't any more. It's sort of a private thing. Frances King . . . Dr. Goldberg, Isadore Goldberg, it's his sister . . . belonged for many years . . .

RL: What do you discuss? Current events?

LC: Rosie Sitkin, who died recently, belonged... Lena Green belonged, and her sister Esther Rivkin... They're from the old Hadassah, and they all belonged to the Saturday group. Idelle Silverman, she belongs. She was on the school board in Golden Valley, or Robbinsdale. Her husband is at the University. We meet once a month. This is the book we study. We just got through with it. Now we should have discussions.

RL: "Little Redneck," the Stillman boys This must have started around the 1930's.

LC: Oh, it started many years ago, as I say . . . but it's gotten away from Hadassah. It's private now, and Esther, you know, is quite set in her ways. She just doesn't take in anybody anymore. Ethel Goldman belongs.

RL: Yes. It's an honor to be asked...

LC: I don't know that it's such an honor. Rose Broude belongs, Sophie but you're supposed to do something. Betty Davis belongs . . . she's a newcomer. And so we meet, and last time, Frances King recorded something. I was supposed to give the part of the Sidur on Moses and the Ten Commandments, on Mt. Sinai, and I had it all written out, that I had done once before, a few years ago, and I thought last Saturday was the day, a part of the Pentateuch. I thought, gee, I'll give that, that will be just fine. And I added more to it. Then Frances King called me up, she said, "Lil, would you mind, I listened to Rabbi Zeilengold . . .” I don't know if you've ever listened to him. I never listen to him, never; I forget about it, and he's from the Lubavitcher, very strict. I'm not for him and I'm not against him. Put it that way. I'm just not too interested!

RL: Tell me, were you at all involved in any of the synagogues as a young person?

LC: Years ago. I've been involved with B'nai Abraham since I came back to Minneapolis in 1941.

RL: Then when your family came here, and you lived on the South Side, there was...

LC: Oh, my father, my grandfather were members of B'nai Abraham. My grandfather

never worked. He was a man with a lovely beard, very dignified. Then afterwards, my father broke off from them and we joined a little synagogue called the Seventeenth Avenue Synagogue. Mr. Gottlieb belonged to it, and I can't remember who else belonged to it. My father was president of that for a number of years, and later on we went back, for some reason or other, to the B'nai Abraham, and Victor was Bar Mitzvah at the B'nai Abraham. In those days they didn't have any big Bar Mitzvahs. We just had a little cake, or whatever it was, nothing much. You talked about Harvey, Harry, the Ginsbergs—Gilbert, they changed their name later on—they lived across the street from our house. I remember them as kids. And Harry, I understand he lost his license, but he got it back again. Rose Broude was telling me the other day, he belongs to a congregation now in Burbank. She saw him.

RL: When you think back, can you remember any particular anti-Semitism in Minneapolis in those early years—in the 1930s—that affected you in any way?

LC: Well, we used to be called "sheeney." But on the other hand, we lived next door to a saloon on Fifteenth Avenue and Sixth Street and Mrs. Norris was the owner of the saloon. Every time my mother would have a wash day -- by then we had some sort of machine -- the rollers would fall out and my mother would wait for my brother Jonas to come and put in these rollers. Mrs. Norris would bring my mother a bottle of port wine, every time there was a wash day. Her boys unfortunately met a bad end, but I'm not gonna tell you about them because what good does it do? They were very good to the Jews. The Holtzerman boys grew up with us. The Schanfields -- Noah Schanfield, his brother Joe Schanfield – they were friends. They came from the same town in Europe that my father did. Esther Rosenbloom was a Schanfield and Mollie was a good friend of Morrie, who still lives in Excelsior. I don't know if he is interested in Jewish things or not; I doubt it very much. He's the Schanfield Insurance Company. Does he ever come to any Jewish affairs? I don't think I have ever seen him. He married a girl who was half Swedish and half Jewish. I know he was Jewish because I saw where he had a Jewish burial. But I think his kids have all intermarried. And Joe Schanfield, who was always a very nice man, we knew that family. They had a sister who was a school teacher, and Esther has a sister in New York that comes here all the time. She's from Noah's family.

Then there was I.S. Joseph. My father gave him his first haircut in this country! Would you believe it? He had a father that they called Shirma (?) who was an uncle to the Schanfields and when he came to Minneapolis he lived a block or two away. We all lived in that same vicinity (in South Minneapolis), Fifth Street, Sixth Street, Seventh Street, Fifteenth, Sixteenth, Seventeenth Avenue, all around there. I think the Glicks lived somewhere a little further toward Franklin already, in a little better neighborhood, a little bit more up hill than ours. This I.S. Joseph was a poor boy and he worked for this grain company, and somehow or other he got into the business.

Noah Schanfield owned a lot of property on the old South Side. So did the Holtzermans.

Remember all those brown buildings? There was a bunch of brown buildings near Cedar and Sixth Street and Seventeenth Avenue, and they were all painted brown. All those houses that were painted brown belonged to the Holtzermans. They say he was a Nazi, but I don't know.

The boys used to call my brother Joiny—his name in Jewish was Jonah—but I don't know that they had any fights over being Jews or anything. And I remember in my class when I graduated from public school we had a couple of colored kids. And I had a colored music teacher. I didn't take lessons long, because I didn't like it, so I don't know anything about music, but she told me that they had trouble, at that time. She complained to me. But we didn't have any prejudice at that time against colored people. We didn't mix with them socially; you know what I mean. I don't to this day; I don't know why. The only one I ever knew I thought was a wonderful man; he was at the First National Bank in north Minneapolis, and he was on the Park Board.

RL: John Warder

LC: Yeah, John Warder, who was the most wonderful man in the world. I once belonged to an organization, through Council (National Council of Jewish Women, Minneapolis Chapter), called the... something about equal opportunity. I was their recording secretary for a long time. And he'd come to our house and bring our stuff. He was the most wonderful man, but... we were separate, let's say... we were separate from them, just like the Jews were separate. We have now integrated a great deal, and every family—in my family, Jeffrey, who's Debbie's husband, is half Jewish—we've gotten together lots more. Sometimes we like it, sometimes we don't, but you have live with it.

RL: Wasn't there a lot of intermarriage, though, even fifty years ago?

LC: Well, now my mother had two sisters, and my mother hadn't seen her sisters for thirty-seven years. They lived in New York. When Victor was about two years old, we went to New York and met my mother's family. And lo and behold, this Julius Kitts, who was my uncle, my mother's sister's husband, he wasn't Jewish! She knew him from the old country, and she married him. I don't know how they were married. They never had children. When the Jewish holidays would come, he'd to the synagogue with her, and she buried him in the Jewish cemetery. My other aunt, Rosie, was married twice, and neither time were they Jewish. So there was some of it, of course. Now that they go to college, there's a lot more of it, but there's always been some. And as far as anti-Semitism goes, I remember there was a Catholic school on Eighth Street and Fourteenth Avenue South, and sometimes our kids would have fights with those kids. They were strict Catholics. They all lived in what they called the Flats, and there were one or two Jewish families that lived there. One is a Salinger girl who belongs to Council, and these were either her husband's great-grandparents or grandparents. But it was mostly the Polish people lived down there. We used to call them Polacks. They were very uneducated, uncultured

people. These flats were way down by the river. They were squatters, and they had these little shacks or houses that they didn't have to pay nothing on. They didn't pay no taxes, no rent, no nothing. There were only one or two Jewish families that lived there. (Remind me to talk to you about Mr. Berman, the baker. I'll tell you some funny things about him.)

But I don't remember we suffered any anti-Semitism. I know that Jews didn't belong to certain things, and all that. But we were not in a position to belong to any of these clubs or anything, so it didn't affect us much. When you worked, you had to write down that you were Jewish. I remember Rose Midanek, when she went to work—and this was much later; it must have been the 1940s or so—she worked for a grain company. She was a stenographer and a bookkeeper. And she brought along a book from the library that was in her sister's name, Molly Goldberg, and left the book there one night. The next week they told her she was through! But now you don't see that. I remember when we first came to Minneapolis, and Lou was selling advertising and he lost his job, and as I told you, we were at loose ends. He worked for a short time for some government project, about six months... this was in the 1940s... and I went to Honeywell to get a job, and you have to write "Jewish." I was refused. They didn't say why, but I am sure that was why.

RL: What were you going to tell me about Berman, the baker?

LC: When we lived on Fifteenth Avenue and Sixth Street, next to this saloon, Mr. Berman had a Jewish bakery on Fifth Street. He had two sons. Do you know who Joe Rosenthal is? He was a druggist, and their oldest girl, Marie, was married to Berman's son. He had a horse and buggy and he'd go around and deliver bread. And Mr. Berman used to go down to the flats all the time. Always a lot of drinking down there. And his horse was blind, but the horse used to know his way home! And when Victor was growing up and we lived around the corner, Victor used to go there and get bread. They have a daughter here, Sarah Haskell, she lives in Edina. She married a druggist who was very well off and she is a widow. She adopted a nephew; she never had children. But Mr. Berman, this horse would lead him home! Mrs. Berman was one of the nicest ladies you could ever find in your life. She was related to the Frieds on the North Side. And she would give every child who came in a doughnut. Every child who came in would get a doughnut from her! But he was a character, and he was well-known in his day. They belonged to the Adath Israel when the Adath was on Ninth Street. The Adath must have come there in the 1920s or 1930s. But he always stayed with the other synagogue.

RL: Do you remember anything about World War I particularly?

LC: Well, that's when I was married, in 1917, and my husband was exempt for some reason. My brother Phil was in the Navy for four years. He went overseas for three years. And Ben was in the ROTC, I remember. I remember when Phil came out of the Navy. You had to buy bonds, and I remember at that time, Lou was doing pretty good, so we bought a couple thousand dollars' worth of bonds. We disposed of them a few years later.

I don't remember if we lost or gained anything. Mr. Nathanson, from Canada, who became a magnate in the movies, I think they were related to Maxine Nathanson's family, they were cousins... I remember the bond drives. I remember in Milwaukee, one time, I sold doughnuts for the Salvation Army. We traveled a lot in those days...and did we travel by car? No. I remember more about the people in that period then I remember about the events that happened.

RL: You said Mrs. Norris was such a good person. What did she do? Did she live in the neighborhood, too?

LC: They lived right above the saloon. She has a niece who is still living, that Frances Litwin knows.

RL: But she was a good neighbor?

LC: Oh, she was a marvelous neighbor. She would do anything for anyone. She was just such a sweet person. He was a drinker, but she was everything that was nice. And my mother and her became very dear friends. When we went to Chicago...and her oldest son had open (?) or what they called a boarding house in those days, for her... and I met her and the daughter in Chicago. None of them are living any more. John Norris had a bar on the North Side, on Broadway, for many years. His widow is still living. He's the only one who really out-lived them all. But he died. He had what they called the Crystal Bar, but I don't remember it. I never was there.

RL: What did the neighbors do.....?

LC: Well, neighbors would come together. There were an awful lot of people that would come to the house, bearded men. They were always collecting for something. So what did you give them? You gave them a quarter. You gave them fifty cents. We had neighbors—I won't tell you their names, `cause some of their relatives might still be living—and one of the sons was slightly retarded. The father worked in the Milwaukee Railroad shop. He was a real tall fellow, and they lived right in back of our house, on Thirteenth Avenue. He'd lost his job, and he wouldn't talk to his parents after that. There was a Franklin Theatre, and my mother gave him a dollar every week so he'd have money to go to the show. The neighbors took care of one another. We had a neighbor, Harold Davis. He and Bud (?) owned some apartments on. Leo Davis, they lived on Clinton, and they have a daughter, Barbara Davis, who is married to a man from Baltimore. She lives in St. Paul. She's a school teacher. And their father owned the Davis Furniture Company. They made living room, or dining room, furniture; I don't remember which. They were very good, good friends. People would gather on Saturday night, sang and danced, and we would go to different people's houses. I don't think there was a lot of drinking -- there might have been -- but I was just a young girl. And when I was sixteen or seventeen years old, Davis was in the upholstering business, and I tutored English to a couple of his people -- I didn't

know much English, but I knew more that they did -- so they would know how to read and write English.

My father never had an English education when he came to this country, and my mother couldn't read or write. But she was very shrewd and very bright. She could do more without reading and writing, than most people do... and I'm not bragging. My father, he had a repair shop for locks, and made keys, and he worked for Mr. Foshay, made keys for his office in the Foshay building. People would come in and he would give `em a claim check and he would write it in Jewish. He went to night school here but he never conquered how to read and write good. He *could* read and write English, though, because we took the newspapers. When I was about six, seven years old, my father took me to the library and we both got library cards. My father was an avid reader, he loved to read. So he really did educate himself, but he never mastered the writing, so these little claim checks were in Jewish.

I remember when the Foshay Building went up, some salesmen came to my father and wanted him to buy stock. He wouldn't do it. I remember we were married at this time, and Lou and I, and my mother and father, we went to the Franklin Bridge and they had all kinds of fireworks and everything, and we could see it there. And my father said, "I wonder how many people are gonna lose money." I never forgot that... and they did, you know! [Ed. note: The Foshay Tower was dedicated in 1929, and Wilbur Foshay went bankrupt soon after.]

RL: You were talking about Saturday night, when you had parties...

LC: Yes, we would have these parties. There's a Mrs. Sisler that lived somewhere around where your mother lived (on Ninth Street South). Her husband, Jake, was an upholsterer. And people would just meet that way.

If anybody needed any assistance, they'd all get together and help. Then I think the Children's Home opened up on the North Side. I remember my mother belonging to several organizations, but she never went to any meetings. She would give a dollar here and dollar there. And I think maybe the yearly dues were a dollar or two dollars. She belonged to the Penny Society... there's a Mrs. Chiat who now is in the Sholom Residence who knows many, many things, and she told me about this. Years ago, I used to be the representative to the Women's Division of Federation. ? Moses was president and then that Mrs. Litman... she belongs to the Adath. Rose Amdur was a vice president and she told about this society. I think it was the same Penny Society, and she ran that. I don't know when they started to organize. I think there was a home for the sick... Rose Smiler, as I said, would go around to different people's houses and help them. I don't remember who else.

And we went to a lot of Jewish shows. There was the Schubert, and we used to have

traveling Jewish shows that would come here, very, very good shows, and all the Jewish people go. They would go to Minnehaha Falls in their buggies, for excitement, or to Lake Harriet.

RL: Did you do amateur theatricals, and put on little programs and things like that at your parties?

LC: No, no. You know what we used to do? Sit around the table and make the table go up, you know, like the Ouija board. We had a big dining room table, and we'd all get around the table, and they'd talk Jewish, and the table would actually rise. I never could figure it out. It was like a board.

RL: The spirits came to you?

LC: Yeah. That was one of the things that we'd do on Saturday night. And these two men who were of Russian descent would dance the . . . you know, the knee deal [the kazatzke]. They would do the dance and they would sing.

RL: And somebody, I suppose, played the piano...

LC: We had a piano, but I don't remember that anybody played it. One of the men would play the violin. The men folks from Europe had played violin and they would play. My father played the accordion. He had a little accordion he used to be able to play.

RL: Oh, that's marvelous. Now were these family parties, the parents and the children, or was this just a young . . .

LC: No, went, and I was just fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old, and I would go to these parties. It was the young and the old, we all would participate. Harold Davis would remember, because that was way after his time. They had moved…I don't think he would remember. But I remember because I'm older. Who else was at these parties? I can't remember anymore. I don't know if anybody has ever talked to you of what they called the "veld" on the North Side. That was the section that was later on [unclear]. The Greensteins lived there. They had a bunch of kids... Evelyn, and Babe... my sister-in-law, Marge. Her brother was married…Harry Solle is Babe's husband. And Evelyn's husband was Harry Rosen. There was my sister-in-law's brothers. They were early settlers. The only one here now is Babe, but she wouldn't remember any of these things. Evelyn would remember, but Evelyn now lives in Los Angeles, in one of these residential senior homes or something or other. And the old B'nai Abraham... first they were in the house, and then they bought a building between Third and Fourth Street. Of course this is going way back, and maybe you don't want to go that far back.

RL: No, that's OK.

LC: We had a shammes that they called Mr. Shapiro, whose daughter, Kay, is married to a Weisman in St. Paul. Sarah. She's active in the Jewish War Veterans. You know Sarah Eisenberg? She's related to them. There's a Mrs. Weinstein, lived across the street; did you know her? She was related then. Who else was related then, that looks just like them? I can't remember who. He was the shammes; he ran the whole thing. He ran the synagogue and he did everything. And when they would have Simcath Torah, he would sing and he would dance. In the 30s and the 40s—I don't remember if old man Begin was living then, he belonged to the synagogue—I remember we had a dining room table, a round table, and my mother…they came to our house after Simcath Torah, and they'd drink wine. Some of them got a little bit high.

[End of interview]