

**Esther Schanfield Rosenbloom
Narrator**

**Rhoda G. Lewin
Interviewer**

**February 26, 1976
Minneapolis, MN**

Esther Rosenbloom **-ER**
Rhoda Lewin **-RL**

ER: The Schanfield family came into the Minneapolis area in the early 1900s and became vitally interested in the Minneapolis Jewish community, working with establishment of a synagogue in south Minneapolis, and which was organized first, as synagogue on Fourth Street and Fifteenth Avenue for a small congregation. And then, with the development of the conservative Jewish movement in the United States, they established another synagogue which included the other one, on Ninth Street and Twelfth Avenue and invited Rabbi David Matt to be the first conservative Rabbi in the Minneapolis community.

They had developed a Sunday School, and that synagogue served quite some years, until a new building was built on Thirty-fourth and Dupont, which continued being the conservative Jewish synagogue. And it's still in operation. Joseph Schanfield, one of the Schanfield family, was brought here following efforts by his brother Noah and his father, who came to this community first. They arrived in Winnipeg and intended to earn money by helping build the Northern Canadian Railroad. However, they both found the work very difficult, and so they walked all the way from Winnipeg to Minneapolis and established themselves here.

Joseph Schanfield entered the insurance business... Chase and Schanfield... after he finished high school, and interested himself in almost every cause which represented the welfare of people in Minneapolis. Help for children whose parents had passed away, help for older people who had no place to live, raising money for Russian refugees and for Jewish refugees and for American causes, helping establish a welfare organization for the city of Minneapolis. And he really contributed generously of his time and effort toward a better city. He had a sister, Sarah, who taught at Clay School in Minneapolis and did a great deal to develop warm feelings between the members of the community around the school. My father was Noah Schanfield, who died at the age of 41. We were four children. My brother Morris Schanfield assumed leadership of the Schanfield Insurance Company upon the passing of Joseph Schanfield. My sister Serene passed away at a very early age, my sister Leah went to New York, married a pediatrician, and she still lives there. And Esther married Eli Rosenbloom.

RL: What year was that?

ER: That was in 1924. Both she and my husband were very much interested on the campus in the Menorah Society which at that time published an outstanding magazine to further Jewish creativity within the whole United States. This feeling of utilizing the arts for development of a people and a community was carried over in about 1940 when it was decided that the Federation would sponsor a Jewish activities group which dedicated itself to encouraging people to relate their inheritance and contribute to the worthwhileness of their life here in America. And to that end, many activities were organized, which continued for quite some years.

A choral group was organized; it was led by Susan Leonard and participated in many, many programs for Hadassah, for the Council of Jewish Women, for the general community. Also, an orchestra was developed. Peter Lesosky[?] became its director and one program was given every year. A Jewish children's art committee was organized and we developed courses for children and presented a program at Schmidt Music Company in the interest of Jewish creativity. The Jewish art committee also sponsored a city-wide program every year, usually at the Women's Club. Participating was the Jewish orchestra, the Zimra Jewish Choir, a folk dance group organized by Shirley Greenberg at the Emanuel Cohen Center and the formal dance group taught by Mrs. Esther Bank. She taught dance at North High School, and I think she was married to the principal. She also taught physical education at North High.

And we developed a little string quartet that presented some arrangements of High Holy Day music for for a quartet that was arranged by Mrs. Esther Rosenbloom and was part of a city-wide program that was offered at Adath Jeshurun Synagogue one year. And then we had some very interesting interpretations of Songs of David as part of one of our programs. Robert Moulton was kind enough to interpret these and Nancy Rigler read the Psalms. During these years many music melodies were adapted for solos for various instruments. These compositions were presented by young people in the community who were majoring in some orchestral instrument. One year we had a program presenting for this country the first performance of a sextet written by Aaron Copland and directed by Maurice Samuel, who was then assistant director of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. It was presented over the air as a public service and was enjoyed by the whole community in recognition of Copland, then the most outstanding Jewish composer on the American scene.

These activities continued for quite some years, stimulating in young people a search for further information about melodies which have lived for many years in Jewish communities on the European scene.

On the University of Minnesota campus, a group of Jewish young women decided to organize a club called Scroll and Key which met regularly and served purposes of helping each other make a better contribution to the University life. This group in its organization

was not interested in the sorority or fraternity problem, it felt that it wanted to be open and interested in serving the university group. Part of the activity of general young people on campus was centered in the Menorah Society which had monthly meetings and was the recipient of the outstanding Menorah Journal published nationally, which dedicated itself to articles of great interest and high quality about Jewish life in America.

RL: Could you talk a little bit about your honeymoon? You mentioned you went to Europe.

ER: The Rosenblooms decided that they were going to tour for their honeymoon. We first went up to the North Woods, because that was Eli's home ground, and we camped for a week on Long Lake and fished and enjoyed ourselves. And then we travelled in a littler flivver which Eli adapted. He built a food compartment which we fastened to the side of the Ford and he cut back the front of the front seat so that it would slide back, so we could sleep in our Ford. We traveled to New York and as we went down Fifth Avenue, upon our arrival, so many people would look out of the high buses, and smile at us. We spent a year in New York, both of us going to graduate school. Esther went to Julliard, then known as the Institute of Musical Art in New York, lead by Leopold Damrosch, and Eli went to Columbia University and majored in Forum Fair International.

We then decided that we would have to see Europe before we settled down, so we traveled steerage to England, where we spent two months traveling around and meeting people, and then we went to France and we spent several months there doing the same thing, joining the American group and other groups. Then, we decided to come home and we came home on the Patria, which was almost overwhelmed by the enormous seas. We had to land in Boston rather than New York! And then we decided we were going to tour the southern states, so we took our little flivver, which we had put in a farmer's barn during our European sojourn, and we travelled the Virginias where we sold brushes to earn money to travel. Then when our first child, Noah, who is now one of five district judges in the southern part of Minnesota, was on the way, we decided to come back to Minneapolis and establish our residence. In New England, by the way, we toured all Fall, because we were married in August and we toured after that, seeing Maine and all of New England during the fall before we went to school and we sold Northrup brushes in order to have money for our trip.

RL: Did you sell them door-to-door or...

ER: We sold them door-to-door and I shall never forget that part of my marriage. My trousseau was corduroy knickers, with a jacket and all to match, and I can remember how people said, "what are you wearing those old knickers for? Can't you wear a skirt?"
[Laughter]

RL: Eli earned his way through college...

ER: Oh yes. Ever since he was twelve years old, he earned all the money for his education. Not that his father couldn't afford it, but he just had a feeling that he just wanted to be an independent person.

RL: And you said Eli was one of those people who wanted to leave his Jewishness, who...

ER: No, he didn't want to leave it. When I was attending college, I taught Sunday School at the Adath Jeshurun. But Eli, who wanted to be near Esther, decided that he would teach also at the Adath Jeshurun so he did...he taught Sunday School there. But he never was interested in Orthodoxy, that's all I said. He has really supported Jewish causes, as you know, and he's vitally interested in his Judaism, but he never felt somehow that religious aspects were of vital importance for him. And many people, of course, who feel that way.

[End of interview]

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