## Edward P. Schwartz Narrator

Rhoda G. Lewin Interviewer

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Edward Schwartz -ES Rhoda Lewin -RL

ES: ...The various facts and figures concerning those years before in Minneapolis. And as you say, I'm Edward P. Schwartz, born in Minneapolis Oct. 15, 1903, at 1705 5th Avenue South, incidentally just where I-94 crosses over and joins 35W. As I go by, or you'll go by yourself, you'll notice a big, tall, brick stone abutment. Every time I reach that point, approximately 17th Street. and 5th Avenue South, I remove my hat and bow my head. After all, I'm passing my birthplace – passing right over it you might say! [Laughing] So Minneapolis naturally is very close to me, because I was born here. In 1903 Minneapolis wasn't too much of a city, yet. St. Paul, actually at the turn of the century, was larger, but people were coming into Minneapolis in droves.

Most of the immigrants that belonged to the Jewish community, or who later joined the Jewish community, were from the south of Europe, and I mean by that Romania, Austria-Hungary, Greece and Italy and Spain. All the people from the Mediterranean countries of Jewish extraction came via New Orleans. Very few of them came through the ports of Boston, New York, New Jersey, or even as far south as Charleston, South Carolina. Most of them, the bulk of them, came through the port of New Orleans, which was, and still is, one of the largest ports in the United States, believe it or not. And they came up the river, either by riverboat or by train, sometimes directly through St. Louis and Kansas City and up to Minneapolis, or to Chicago and then to Minneapolis. And that's the track record you'll find of a lot of the early Jewish families of the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. And after the 1890s you'll find the trend is through the Eastern ports. That's when the big influx of those of Jewish extraction came from Poland, Germany, the other countries, and from Russia, especially, because now that I think of it, because my mother's family came from Kiev, Russia.

Now the background of our family is that our great-great-grandfather was a music publisher in Hamburg, Germany, on the Schwartz side, and my mother's family came from Kiev and one of the other smaller towns near Kiev, Russia. My mother's family came after my father's family; they came in the 1890s, Dad's family came in the 1880s. It

was not recognized, and Rabbi—who was the Rabbi that wrote the book on Minneapolis—Gordon of Adath Jeshurun. And although I was Bar Mitzvahed from that Adath Jeshurun synagogue, with Ernie Fliegel as one of my compatriots, in the old schul—"schul," "schiel," whatever part of Europe you come from, you pronounce it accordingly—we were Bar Mitzvahed in the Adath Jeshurun, and therefore I have *long* ties with the Adath Jeshurun synagogue.

Actually, one of the reasons that I withdrew from Adath Jeshurun and went to Temple was that Rabbi Minda was so open, and so good to people of all faiths and all dimensions as far as their Jewishness was concerned, that I felt I was more at home at Temple Israel than I would be at Adath Jeshurun, and it's proved to be that way, because Number One, I married a non-Jew, and Number Two, she was accepted by Temple. Number Three, our daughter was accepted by Temple. And all those things enter into your life as you go along in years. And I still have a close association with Temple, as well you know; I was on the Board at one period; we've been members for almost forty years, and I belong to several groups there now, including the New Horizons, which means people over sixty-five, and we're having a barrel of fun. We have a monthly dinner meeting, and they go to the concerts and to the Old Log Theatre. But that isn't what we had when we were younger. We didn't have that at all.

There was no Jewish organization at the University of Minnesota until the Menorah Society was started. That was previous to the Hillel. Hillel came after the Menorah. The Menorah Society was a half a dozen fairly wealthy, well-to-do Jewish families, and the boys decided they should have an organization. So the Menorah Society was formed, and it functioned until Hillel came in in the 1930s. When Hillel came in, they even rented, as I remember, the old YMCA rooms on 14th or 15th St. S.E., and Rabbi Milgrom was in charge. I remember quite well because I did all the printing for the organization, and I did it for free, because who had money in the Jewish organizations? [Laughing]

That brings me back to the time when I left West High School to go to the University of Minnesota, and very few of my peers were there. So Ord Ruckman, the current editor of the Minnesota Daily in 1923, hired me at \$2 a night to make up the Minnesota Daily, and don't forget, Rhoda, I was a printer, and had been a printer all of my life, on account of my father . . . which we can go back to later. So I figured that \$2 a night was far more important than spending my money to register at the University of Minnesota, although I had the applications and the forms for the School of Journalism, and came very close to entering the School of Journalism. But for one year I helped make up the Minnesota Daily, so that's my total University of Minnesota experience.

But even taking that into consideration, I've been loyal to the University of Minnesota all these many years through many causes, basically the Variety Club Heart Hospital, which we helped form and organize in the 1940s. The Variety Club had been doing a tremendous amount of work for other charities, like Sister Kenny, the Milk Fund, clothes

for people in torn and destructed countries as a result of war, and they tried every means possible to raise money for these really worthwhile organizations, but as they started adding up the score, \$10,000 here and \$12,000 there, nothing totaled to anything of great importance. They were all small things . . . the Milk Fund, or helping this charity and that charity. The concept of the Variety Club Heart Hospital . . . basically the Jews that belonged to the Variety Club of the Northwest, starting with Dr. Moe Shapiro, who was attached to the staff of the University of Minnesota, and who conceived the idea and discussed it with the Variety guys, fellows like Abe Kaplan, Al Steffes, who wasn't Jewish, but he had the "feel" of Judaism enough to surround himself with Jewish partners, and he had them, too [laughing], and Ben Bilocky (sp?) of Paramount Pictures, and I could go on and on. The bulk of the people involved in the original concept of starting a hospital were the Jewish members of Variety. Benny Berger is a classical example, and myself, too, I was in on that thing, but the actual start of the thing is entirely different from what most people imagine. We were to buy the old East Side High School, and start an ambulatory clinic for those children afflicted with rheumatic heart trouble. That was the beginning. Because they realized then, in the 1920s and 1930s, that rheumatic heart fever was the basis of later heart trouble in older people, and Dr. Moe Shapiro, and Dr. Diehl at the University Medical School, and Ray Amberg, who was to head the University Hospitals in later years, and the Variety Club Heart Hospital as well, had made a study, and medical science had discovered that ordinary aspirin was a palliative for rheumatic heart fever, and they could control rheumatic heart fever, so the child wouldn't get deathly sick. You know, those "blue babies" went like a flash, and that was rheumatic heart trouble in infants. Today they operate, four hours and six hours, and cure them of that blockage, because they know what to do. But in those days—they didn't discover it until later—ordinary aspirin would take care of it, and take a child out of it. But the Heart Hospital came along and the Jewish community had a lot to do with it; as we look over the lists of names, to think that Eddie Ruben was the first president of the Variety Club of the Northwest. Eddie Ruben's parents, of course, were partners in the original motion picture firm in this city, Finkelstein and Ruben. They owned all the motion picture houses in Minneapolis, except for a few independents, and Eddie Ruben, who was a star in football at the University of Minnesota, very active in community things of every degree and every type, whether it was on a community level or a Temple level or a University level, became the first president of Variety. Incidentally, he will be honored in April, on the marking of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Variety Club Heart Hospital, for being the first "chief doctor" of Variety. So all these years you'll find that the Jewish leaders in this town were involved in good things which, today, stand monumental in comparison to what they were those many years ago. Stop to consider, there had been no open heart surgery successfully done at any time, at any hospital, in any country in the world, and in 1946 when the funds were raised, and the building built, and the first operation performed in 1951, the two children—Rhoda, this is amazing—the two children, then fifteen, a boy and a girl, had the first open heart surgery, and they're alive today. Now just imagine, twenty-five years ago they were *dead*, d-e-a-d, period. Dead! So our Jewish community has much to be thankful for, and that's just one important instance. And the only reason I

address it is the fact that I was in on it. I helped raise money, and I went out with Eddie Ruben to solicit money for the campaign when the war ended in 1946, and as a result we raised \$300,000, which was the first amount of money raised.

[Mae Schwartz, Eddie's wife, arrives, and when the interview resumes Eddie returns to talking about his earlier years.]

ES: Let's start at the 1920s. We find Eddie Schwartz wandering around the country, taking jobs on various newspapers, operating his own weekly newspaper called The Nicollet Livewire, which was run successfully for many years, even through some of the Depression years. And the Jewish community then had no hold on me, because I had my own life. I was a very busy guy. I had things to do, and it seemed that my basic friendship was with the Irish community, more so than the Jewish community, to the extent where I'd even go to a Sunday Mass, which struck me as very funny at the time, but they had to have somebody to drive the car to take them out to the golf game after Mass on Sunday morning. But alongside that Irish crowd that I palled around with were stalwarts like Dave Sperling, now gone—we were very close, and he and the Irish kids got along very well. And there were other Jewish boys, too, that I can recall now, the Ruben family in particular, the Nathanson family, Gabriel Nathanson and his family. We used to go out to Boy Scout camp together in the pre-World War I days.

## **RL:** Where was the Boy Scout camp?

ES: The Boy Scout camp was out in Mound, out at Lake Minnetonka, where Temple Israel has its camp today, virtually right next door. And as I say, I was very busy with my little weekly newspaper; it started out as a Boy Scout newspaper with Whittier Troop No. 26, Whittier School, and went into a weekly community newspaper. And then I got associated and friendly with the four or five other people who were putting out community papers, and we had anticipated the operation of the Sun by forty or fifty years. [Laughing] We didn't realize that this could have been a city-wide deal, and we didn't pay too much attention to it. And all during that period, I got involved in our commercial club on Nicollet Ave., which later brought the Minneapolis Auditorium to Grant and Nicollet. And I got involved in 1923 with Allan Wagner, who was a police reporter for the Minneapolis Daily News. After I did my little stint from 1922 to 1923 at the University as night make-up editor for Ward Ruckman, the editor, I got a job on the Minneapolis Daily News as a police reporter. That was something else! Boy, I didn't realize how important it was. Your father would have loved it. (Schwartz is referring to Louis Greene, Rhoda Lewin's father, who began as a sports reporter on the Minneapolis Tribune and then was copy editor from approximately 1939 until he retired in 1969.) I thought the job was very important, especially since they paid the streetcar fare to go on calls! A nickel for streetcar fare. that was something. To get paid for streetcar fare, that was something! You could run up 20 cents a day [laughing]. And I'd go out on assignments, and I covered some dandies. For instance, in the spring of 1923, I was twenty years old at the time—I

said I was born October 15, 1903, in Minneapolis—in the spring of 1923 the Nicollet House was wrecked, and I was still on the Daily News at that time.

## **RL:** What was the Nicollet House?

**ES:** The Nicollet House anticipated the Nicollet Hotel. And they were to wreck it, and I was invited by the management to roam around the building, roam around the hotel and into the kitchen, and to write a story about the last day of the Nicollet House. Which I did, and it's a matter of record in the old Daily News, two and a half columns of type, and I was amazed at my own ability to write, because I still say the only education, outside of reading books constantly all my life, was a high school education. That's not a hell of a lot today, but it was sufficient for me, and ten thousand books later, you might say! That was the first major story I'd covered for a daily newspaper, and I still remember it, and I wish to hell I could find the thing someplace! But the paper will do it for me . . . they'll go back in their files and get me a—what do they call that method they use these days?—they'll get me a microfilm—they have a different name for it, but it's the microfilm method—I'm going to do that one of these days, Rhoda, and we'll have a little fun comparing my rhetoric as I write it today. And you know my style today. When I write my column today, it's entirely different. It's a combination of nostalgia, people . . . there's another word I want to get in there . . . oh, remembrances of the past, which is nostalgia. That's about it; that covers it. I like to talk about people. I don't care too much to go to the upper strata, because there's too many of us down in the lower strata, and I think that's important. Now we're back in the 1920s again, and I got into that newspaper thing, and I traveled around and I worked on various newspapers all over the country, including California and Milwaukee and Detroit—I've got a track record that's amazing—and then I came back to Minneapolis again, and I met Mae, and we got sort of warm for each other, and then I had a chance to get a job on a Philadelphia paper and I talked to Mae about it, and we decided all right, we'd get married and we'd go to Philadelphia. And we did, which was forty-eight years ago. I went to Philadelphia and got the job, and Mae followed. And then from Philadelphia I worked in Atlantic City for a period, and then we went to Chicago and worked.

**RL:** That was the year before the Depression started?

ES: Well before the Depression started. I'm talking now about 1928, 1929. Now in 1929 we were in Chicago, and of course my mother had met Mae, knew Mae, and my sisters had met Mae and liked her, and mother came down to Chicago to welcome us home, which was quite something for an Orthodox Jewish lady, to welcome a Swedish-Norwegian girl into the family. Of course Mae did take advantage of it; she learned all the cooking tricks my mother had, [laughing] so I can say she was very diplomatic, and very smart, and mother didn't mind picking up a few Norwegian dishes, too! So we came home to Minneapolis, because, somehow or other, in the back of my mind, I felt that we'd be better off. And it was probably a smart thing I did, because when the crash hit in

October of 1929, I'd already established my printing business again, I'd already gotten my little weekly, the Nicollet Livewire, going again, and we were at least making a living on it. And although the following two or three years were rough, especially rough on the Jewish community, we got by.

**RL:** Why were they especially rough on the Jewish community?

ES: They were the last to get the jobs, just like the blacks and the Indians today. The Jewish kid never had a chance in a bank. The Jewish boy had no more chance of working on a major railroad than you have of jumping five stories high. The Jewish girl could forget any chance at all of working in any public institution or even for the government in any way, shape or form. The few people that were accepted in the post office, and the state, were so infinitesimal in relation to the population that it isn't even worth counting. Percentage-wise? Who ever heard of percentages? Nobody heard of percentages. If you were lucky and had some stiff that you knew that worked in the City Attorney's office, or worked in the License Department, and he liked you, you got the job. So maybe ten or twelve kids got into city government and county government and state government because of that. Until a man like Floyd Olson came along, and had personal friends, and was willing, actually, to gamble—because it was a gamble on the part of a public official to take in minorities; they never took blacks; they had one token black, usually, in a front office, or shining shoes, or the token Indian had to be a hell of an athlete when he was younger, or something like that. So we saw the pattern; it was very clear, and as time progressed the only way out was to work your way out, and that was what the average Jewish kid did. He fought for his education, he fought for the chance to get a job, he fought for the chance to keep the job, he fought for his kids in school. Don't forget, the University of Minnesota didn't sign up too many Jewish kids in the Medical School, and they didn't sign up too many youngsters in the Dental School, and they didn't sign up too many kids in any of the "closed" schools when you came down to brass tacks. The average Jewish kid, if he had money, could scrounge around. Some of them could get into some of the Eastern schools, New York University, Columbia University, which were free schools anyway, and if he had money he went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology like my cousin, Joe Schwartz of Anaconda, in Montana. Maybe some of them wound up in Harvard, but few and far between. If they were brilliant in the reading of the law, like Sammy Maslon, they became famous and moved on. But how many Sammy Maslons have you got? And how many Joe Schwartzes of Anaconda have you got? So on a percentage basis, we were very much in the minority, and this is one thing that I wouldn't want the Jews of today to forget. We've been lucky so far, and this was one of the worst Jew-hating communities in the world through the 1930s and into the 1940s, and if it wasn't for the finger of publicity from fellows like Eric Sevareid and his remarkable series on the Silver Shirts, no attention would have been called to it. People who ran restaurants in this town, they didn't care whether they had Jewish customers or not. A classic example is the Covered Wagon. The Covered Wagon had partners by the name of Benson and Ryan. Ryan was one of the most delightful guys in the world, Jim

Ryan, but the two Benson brothers were bastards with a capital "B," and their buddy was my dear friend, who later turned out to be a pretty good guy, Ray Ewald. Ray and the Benson brothers were ring-leaders in the anti-Semitic tone that was set. Although they had their own particular friends whom they liked and would do business with, and they always said, "My friend, so-and-so, you can ask him, I'm a pretty good guy," they were still bastards with a capital B, as I liked to call them then, and now. And they made it tough in the business world, in the commercial world other than the business world, and in the professional world, and that's where the difficulty came in the '20s and '30s. But after the 1930s, and the Depression, which scared the hell out of everybody, the top strata decided, well, we'd better get some of these people into our business. Maybe we've made a mistake. Look, they went through the Depression without asking for charity. I think the Jews, and you might say some of the others, especially in the strong church-minded Lutherans and Mormon classes, would take care of themselves, and they would take care of their own people. They had their own affairs in the church, and they saw that jobs were obtained for people, and the Jews did the same thing. So in the end, as this pile of facts became monumental, the banks, the railroads, the clubs, came to the conclusion, "We'd better take a few of these guys in." And eventually, one by one they got into the business community, they got into the legal community, they got into any phase of our government and the life of the city and the life of the state, and proved successful, as we know. And I say this was due entirely to a few people that were willing to work and were willing to sacrifice and willing to to do something for the community good. Your Dad (Louis Greene) is a classical example; he'd do any damn thing to help a cause along, whether it was Jewish or otherwise. I remember in his final years how he helped that neighborhood thing. He didn't have the Pilot City; this was the beginning of all these things. And what if there weren't guys like Lou Greene around, and your mother, dear Florence... and name 'em... there's hundreds of them... and they plunged in, and it wasn't necessarily because it was something for the Jewish community; it was for the community as a whole. This is what's made our section of the country so good, and so great, and although times are changing perceptibly now, and we can see it, because the balance is going out of kilter again and no matter how you evaluate it, or how you try to gloss over, if you're going to be honest with yourself, you're going to say, "It's bad; it isn't what it should be." How do you get the answers? Maybe we have to go back to our old system of helping somebody else, but the public isn't too happy with the situation today. They're disenchanted with the political picture. I've even had to defend Humphrey to people when I think in my own mind, "Why am I defending Hubert Humphrey? This seems to be something that's totally irrelevant; they should know what he did." But they don't go according to what he did. I wrote one fellow, and I told him, I said, "Humphrey might have 'passed' this time . . . I'll probably have to agree with you . . . " But all in all, when you look back over the track record, he can't be beat! He's the one that started the ball moving for equality, at least the equality that we understand, this equality of setting up a project for somebody and paying thirty, forty hard-nosed blacks because they said, "Man, you gotta do it for me!" This is what Cecil Newman fought for, tooth and nail, year after year, until they called him an Uncle Tom! I think it helped kill Cecil Newman, in the final analysis. How far can you go

with people? How far can you go without their own self-help? And this is what the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s taught the Jewish community, that if you want to get someplace, you've got to do a little bit of the elbow grease yourself. Now what else can we go into? Those that were willing to work on community projects, be it Jewish or otherwise, were always in a position to advance themselves. Those that insisted on withdrawing into a shell and not doing anything because it wasn't up their "particular alley," stayed just where they were, and didn't move, and it was to be expected. Also you must take into consideration that to be religious is a wonderful thing, and I see nothing wrong with it, but to be religious to the point of hurting yourself, that don't make sense, and when the Jewish community suddenly found out that it was not only popular to help their friends, and their neighbors, and their own people, it would be profitable as well, because they could move up in the community. And I think that was the beginning right there, during the heart of the Depression. That's when it happened, because they were ready to help other people, and not stay within their own little group, where it was almost Orthodox in its belief to the point where they didn't leave the pale . . . they would stay within their own little section . . . and everything else . . . and this was wrong. We may get disagreements on that, Rhoda, but let me tell you, it's an absolute necessity. And some of the other things that happened, that Henry Miller Society you're not too interested in . . . I had one little thing in here...

RL: I'm really interested, but that comes later.

**ES:** About the restaurants?

**RL:** Yes, what went on over at the Round Table over at the 620 Club . . . which was for men only.

**ES:** [Laughing] Well, we didn't bar the strippers! The strippers from the Alvin Theatre were always welcome, in any way, shape, hue, cry, or anything else! They were always welcome! The Round Table was conceived by Ernie Fliegel, Max Winter, who is now president of the Minnesota Vikings . . . Ernie's retired completely, and lives in the winter in Scottsdale and back here in his home in Hopkins in the summer . . . and Henry Winter. Henry was Max's brother. Henry ran the show, actually; Henry was the manager of the 620 Club and ran the whole thing. This Round Table was conceived because we'd have judges and aldermen and sports figures and promoters come in town, and they'd have no place to go, so it was always, "Well, meet me at the 620 Club," and they'd always find kindred souls . . . more judges, more aldermen, more sportsmen, more figures like from the burlesque house around the corner—Harry Hirsch ran the Alvin Theatre around the corner—and those comics, those great comics of yesteryear, Kenny Brennan, Irving Benson—who's living in Las Vegas, and whom I visited with just a few weeks ago when I was in Las Vegas. Irving Benson appears with Johnny Carson many times on *The Tonight* Show; he's the little guy, the inoffensive guy who comes out, pounds a hammer on the stage, he's making something or other, and then Carson comes over and they go into one

of the old tried and true burlesque comedy skits, and let me tell you, it holds water today! Some of the burlesque skits are so good that I think they could be done over again, even though Milton Berle has used most of them on TV over the years.

And naturally the 620 became a very popular place. Basically, they served good food . . . the turkey—they had a slogan, "Where turkey is king"—and starting in the 1930s it became a congregating place for the sporting crowd. The "sporting crowd" included also the business crowd, and the legal crowd; the men from the bench and bar were *yery* heavy in the attendance. People from the commercial part of the city like Bernie Slater, who was an authority on boxing . . . poor Bernie is gone now, but he *loved* to be there . . . Judge Hall was the ringleader for the men of the bench . . . the bar, Phil Besler, whom you can recall because it's Lil Cohn's brother... Phil and his two brothers would always show up there... George Mikan when he became very popular always showed up... I have a photo showing a whole aggregate of 620 characters that I saved from the wreckage of the place, and I'm keeping it today. Around the table were some great figures, fellows like Mike Supornik, who was in insurance claims . . . Tom Burke in the theatre business . . . You'll notice it wasn't entirely of Jewish extraction; they were of every breed . . . Rev. Thompson of the Minnehaha Lutheran Church was a regular . . . Father Tom Mauer, when he was living, was a regular. This is what makes it all the funnier, because there wasn't a subject they didn't discuss, starting with food—if they had any complaints about the day's special, they could always be sent to Murray's, which I considered better food anyway [laughing]—and they would take in all political . . . oh, members of the FBI were there, members of the Police Department . . . but we could speak frankly . . . and gamblers, and sheet writers. Let me explain what a sheet writer is . . . a fellow would have a crew, and go out into a town, and sell subscriptions to a standard magazine like Saturday Evening Post, Ladies Home Journal, any standard magazine, because a standard magazine in those years needed circulation desperately, and in order to achieve circulation for Audit Bureau of Circulation to set their advertising rates, they would have to have those paid subscribers. The sheet writers would go out, and they'd cover a town in a matter of a week, they'd come away with two or three thousand subscriptions, whatever they got from the people was okay, because all they had to do was send in to the Ladies Home Journal or anyone connected with Saturday Evening Post—Curtis Publishing Co. is a classical example, later Fawcett and some of the others—was a name and 20 cents, and that was all. They'd get on there for maybe six months or nine months, and they'd have that paid circulation that the audit insisted on. Now the sheet writers made a lot of money, because those kids would go out and they'd sell a thousand subscriptions for anywhere from two dollars to twenty dollars, whatever they could get, and the man that headed it would get half of what they took in, and he'd pay the 20 cents or 25 cents or whatever it happened to be. Well, it wasn't unusual for a guy like Bill Barrie, who's out in Las Vegas now, to come in and take away a thousand dollars a week from this town! And he'd join the circle! So the con men and the gamblers and the judges and the FBI were all there, and all friends, because the discussion there would center basically on politics, the life of the city, the little peccadilloes of the top strata, who was in trouble and who was

out of trouble, and of course sex entered into it in various forms. When I brought up that Henry Miller thing in the 1950s, it was very funny; most people didn't understand the meaning of censorship, and it got to be a very important subject as time went on, the question of censorship. And it was interesting to me that they would grab it that fast, and understand it. So the 620 Club could be duplicated by other little places around town, like Kirk's, on 4th St. Kirk's was a very famous eating place for the newspaper people working on the Tribune and the Journal; it was situated between the Tribune and the Journal, right on the South Side of 4th St., and the boys used to hang out because they had a poolroom where they could play pool, and in those days rice pudding was a nickel an order, and a cup of coffee and all the refills you wanted was a nickel, and a ham sandwich with mashed potatoes on the side was probably ten cents. A person could get a pretty fair meal for a quarter! And therefore they became hangouts. In fact, all of Fourth St. in the 1920s and into the 1930s was important for that reason, because it was a hangout. You have to remember that our means of communication have spread to such an extent today that this sort of a thing couldn't happen any more, because they only had the daily newspapers to go to, the weekly magazines or the daily newspapers, and the daily newspaper came out once a day, and the weekly papers came out once a week, and the monthly publications came out every 30 days, and so therefore the news came once a day, once a week, once a month. Today you get it every fifteen minutes on radio and television, and the world is spread before you in pictures; before the event is *completed*, they'll show you! So you see the method of publication has changed the whole concept of the fellow sitting at a table discussing world politics, local politics, and so forth. The need for that kind of a community gathering is gone, it's lost its' value completely. Today the clubs are suffering. Take your Minneapolis Athletic Club, which was hard to get into, and didn't accept Jews years ago, except those that came from the original City Club, which they absorbed in the pre-World War I period. They took in people like Arthur Brin, and Joe Schanfield, and— I'm trying to think—the Brins, and the Weils . . . they were accepted because they were members of this original organization, the City Club. But after that membership closed at the Minneapolis Athletic Club. A Jew couldn't get in there for love or money. It wasn't until the current period, and into the 1960s, that they started accepting Jewish members. I wouldn't join for many years, although I was offered the opportunity to join long before, on account of that past record. But because of other members of our faith going in, and it was a convenient place for me, living downtown, I gave up some of my country club memberships, which were impossible to join in the 1920s and 1930s.

I was accepted, and Lou Gross at the same time, for membership in the Minneapolis Automobile Club, and it was deliberately put up by Arthur Fruen, the Aldermen of the old Fourth Ward, because he insisted at that time, in the '30s, the time had come to cut out this foolishness, and they'd better accept some other members. Lou Gross and I were the first two, and we were accepted, and voted in, and joined. That was in the '30s... Just imagine, that isn't too long ago. Jewish members went into the Minneapolis Club, which was the most sacrosanct of all, about in the '50s... in fact, they accepted blacks in the '60s! Cecil Newman was accepted as a member during the '60s [laughing], which strikes me as

an awfully funny thing now. Now just this week the Minneapolis Athletic Club agreed to accept women as co-members; do you know that up until this very week, they would not allow a wife of a member to come during the regular lunch hour? That she had to go to a separate room to eat her lunch, and she couldn't join the men? Do you realize that *just this week*—imagine, February of 1976—and the thing has changed. So we've seen some great changes, Rhoda, over the years, and we've seen the changes, and the Jewish community accepted, over that period, slowly, surely—I wouldn't say completely!—but slowly and surely, to some extent, accepted by those who were willing to do the work, willing to go to the forefront.

**RL:** Were you active in politics? You mentioned Floyd B. Olson . . .

ES: Oh, yes. I had a hand in politics. And I was one of the first solicitors for the Community Fund. Now, fellows like Borman and all the rest got to be up at the top of the United Fund, but I was one of the very first solicitors at age fifteen [laughing] in the 3rd Ave. and 16th St. area. I went around my whole block, and I turned in my report. I was a vote counter and an election judge at age sixteen, at 16th St. and 3rd Ave. So. And Pudge Heffelfinger got me the job... the County Commissioner. Oh, yes, I got into politics early, and loved it. At one time our company, Ad Art Advertising Co., of which I've retired from and sold out, although I'm still connected with the company indirectly... at one time when we had 13 aldermen, and I printed for 12 of the 13 aldermen. And I printed for a lot of the men that became mayor, starting with General Leach and all the way up... Kline, Anderson, Kunze, Hoyer, Humphrey -- I was in Humphrey's original senatorial campaign. Being in the printing business you get into this sort of thing, and being in the printing business gives you a little added gloss that the average guy that runs a junk shop or a clothing store doesn't have. For some reason or other you're in a higher strata... for what reason I don't know. I imagine it's the printed word being, like Benjamin Franklin said, "a very important point in life." Or rather... how did he put it?.. he said it's something that can hit you on the head, and you'll understand it -- the printed word! [laughing] So I agreed with him wholeheartedly, and we did come up, because we worked hard on these projects. And we still see these fellows today... the Maslons, the Bormans, and all the rest of them... for instance, Robbins, Davis and Lyon, as good a law firm as you could ever get in any city in this country, virtually all Jewish partners, and they all came up the hard way. And we've had good friends among the non-Jewish community... take Judge Barbeau's family, an amazing family. Tom Barbeau fought more for Jews than he fought for Catholics! [laughing] He was one of the most amazing guys on the North Side! He was a shabbos goy, like we said of Floyd Olson; he'd light the fires on Friday night and Saturdays for the Jewish families. This goes back to the pre-World War I period. And look at his son, Judge Donald Barbeau. You can't find a nicer fellow in the world sitting on the District Court bench, and after all, he is now the Chief Judge on the District Court bench. Gene Minenko, a young fellow who has a tremendous background, a good student of the law, who earned his way through University by working at Flour City Trunk Co. owned by Sammy Berman and Motley Berman, and they insisted that he bring his books

to the Flour City Trunk Co., which was then on Washington, which is part of the freeway system today... bring his books so he could get his studies done, when he was attending Law School. When you look at it now, and then wonder why these people are so fair, I can understand it. They got their help and their start from members of the Jewish community. There were times when the Jewish community were called on for other things, too, and they helped. The Blood Bank is a classical example during World War II, when Ernie Fliegel chaired a group to get every ethnic portion of this city involved in the Blood Bank. They had a Jewish Day, a Polish Day, a Swedish Day, a Norwegian Day, you name it, they had a day... a Catholic Day, a Protestant Day... and Tom Hastings, who was then chairman -- Tom was very active in everything, as well you know, and he had a lot of Jewish friends who helped him on a lot of these things, the Texas City disaster, the six-day bike race for the Junior Association -- and he says his best ticket-sellers were the Jewish friends he had around town, fellows like little Judge Benny Meshbesher, who could sell more tickets for a non-Jewish event than you could shake a stick at [laughing]. So this enters into we found a way to get in to help, and this brought about a better picture for the community as a whole. And I think it is better than it was, but the changes are coming, and unless we guard ourselves against these too-fast changes, we're going to have trouble.

Did you mention something about restaurants? Were we going to talk about them? I wrote a column in the Skyway News... and you know well I write it; your Dad used to say it was pretty good, and somebody said it was the "downtown edition" of Louie Greene's column in the Jewish World, when Louie was writing, and I thought that was a compliment to me, and a compliment to Lou, and I did a column in 1974 in the Skyway News, "Down Memory Lane," about a quartet of my favorite loop restaurants, and why I mentioned them so much in the Skyway News. Now here's the places -- and just for the hell of it... I bet the Jewish community will get a bang out of it -- long gone but not forgotten spots such as McCormicks... that was on 5th Street... that was a fine restaurant, one of the finest we had. Frank McCormick ran it, and he was called the "burgomeister;" this was the Number One restaurant in Minneapolis for years... Shieks, Kaiserhof, Curly's, Mike's, 620 Club, Christensen's, Alexander's, Andy Leonard, Club Hanpoh, Captain Grill, Coffee Dan's, Starkey's, Shanghai Loh, Congress, Soju, Ivy's, McBride's, Broiler, Wrigley's, Merchant's, Ramona's, St. Charles, Courtney's, Lally's, Brackett's, Mandarin, Charlie Hall, Coconut Grove, Cromby's, Baltimore Lunch, Rotisserie, Bird Sings -- a fine fish place, one of the finest fish places we had -- and Dutros, as well, Richard's Treat, one of the best of all the self-serve restaurants we ever had, a cafeteria that was beyond comparison, Reusses -- Doug Reusse's mother ran this, at 9th and Marquette... Doug was a 350-pound center for the University of Minnesota, and he also played at West High School, and a character, non-Jewish but a great guy, and he had lots of Jewish friends, including myself, The Gopher, Miller Cafeteria, Golden Pheasant, John's -- that was run by the Wong and Wu family, on 6th Street, on the 2nd floor. Howard Wu and myself went to West High School together, and we still have affiliation together, 50 years later, in the Ampersand Club, which deals with books and people who publish books, and

people who sell books... it's a local club, maybe 50 members or so, and imagine, from our days in West High School in 1917 or thereabouts, until now... so John's was part of Child's Restaurant, which I love to refer to every once in a while... this was the gentile "Lincoln Del" of my youth, on Nicollet Avenue... and I'm talking about the World War I period... they made the pancakes in the window. This was a superb place, and everybody went there before the night was finished, including F. Scott Fitzgerald, whom I met at Child's back before World War I. And he was with a chap by the name of LeVon West, who became one of the great photographers under the name Dimitri... he was one of the world's great photographers, and his brother was a commercial artist who worked for the local papers. There was Oejikus (sp?), Columbia, Freddie's, Lee's Broiler, the Tick-Tock, Mayflower, Doyle's, Meyer's, Bowery, Old Sam's, Smith and Schuster's, Sam Tresus... imagine... those were all in the loop, in the immediate area from Washington to 7th or 8th street, from 1st Avenue North to Marquette. Why, we haven't got that many in the town, today! These were all fine eating places right in the heart of Minneapolis. We haven't got it any more; franchised foods have taken the place of many of those. And I also mentioned hotels, with their eating and drinking facilities, and that includes the Rogers, the Vendome, West, the Golden West, Russell, National, Majestic, Elgin, Ritz, the Minnesotan... that was Jewish-owned, incidentally, by the Weisman family; they opened it up as the Ritz; one of the Weisman boys, the grandson of the original Weisman family, is now a Superior Court Judge in California, and so that family went far... the Anglesey, the Stone, the McCormick, the Nicollet House, and so many more. And I said, the four I picked out -- and I think they deserve a little comment -- was Art Murray when he came here 40 years ago and started a restaurant at Penn and Broadway, Murray's restaurant, and I printed the first menu, 40 years ago... it's probably 42 years ago now. It was a marvelous restaurant; he sold paper boxes to the breweries, and Marie was a waitress, and they loved good food, and they opened this restaurant, and boy, everybody liked it. And then they moved downtown, to where they opened the Red Feather in the old Russell Hotel on 4th Street. Then 25 years ago they moved to Sixth Street... and that's where they are today, and I consider them one of the finest eating places we have. When Erskine Caldwell and his wife come to Minneapolis, Mae and I take them to Murray's; they don't want to go anywhere else; he's refused everywhere else. Then we go on to Charlie Saunders, and when I wrote this column I told about how he and a guy by the name of Charlie Herlan owned a speakeasy on 3rd Ave. between 6th and 7th St., on the second floor, back of the Minneapolis Athletic Club, and they catered to the sporting crowd. Not so much the booze, because Herlan was always fooling around trying to manufacture a new drink -- in fact, the Presidente Cocktail came from Charlie Herlan when he worked for McCormick, and he brought it to this speakeasy when liquor went out... you know, when we had Prohibition... and they were forced to put in good food as Harry Doust was forced to put in good food in his original place on 10th and Chicago. They could sell the booze, but they had to have food, too. And those two places were superior, no question about it. So when Charlie decided he'd better have a restaurant, and he opened up in that old house on 4th Avenue South, that was quite the place. That was the "watering place" of the town, as I called it. That's where the boys went; this was the top eating place in Minneapolis. And

then of course Charlie had guys like Captain Billy Fawcett, of Fawcett Publications -- and incidentally, the Fawcett boys, whenever they're in Minneapolis, always go to Charlie's as a reminder of their uncle and their father. He had good stuff; he had an affinity towards fine food, earthy stuff like choice steak and chops and fresh-caught fish and wild game, which his aviation- and sports-minded pals relished. And when he opened his new place he came up with that appetizer tray which was so terrific. And of course the remarkable thing is the fact that his second wife, Louise Saunders... his first wife married Charlie Ward, if you recall, in a very headline-making case, but Charlie didn't care too much, one way or another. Louise was a lawyer... had built a career... she was a championship ice skater, originally, and then she went to law school... and incidentally, she was in the same class with Minenko, and Judges like LaBelle and Baldwin and the others liked her very much, and they got her into one of the better law firms, I think Lindquist and Vennum, one of the big law firms, and she represented Charlie's Cafe, and naturally Charlie sort of liked her, and they got married, and now she's running the restaurant and doing a remarkable job. She's a story in herself. She's a book in herself. And she has Jewish friends beyond compare. What's the gal whose husband... Red Goldstein's wife... owned the Flowers, Inc... Irene Goldstein and Louise Saunders are buddy-buddy, and it's nice to know that these things happen. Now the Nankin was in a class by itself. That was started by Walter James in 1919, when I was in West High School. It was handy to the Orpheum -- all vaudeville -- next door, and prices at both places were not out of line. So this pimply kid... and I'm not quoting from my column now... could feast on genuine chow mein, attend a theatre matinee, including streetcar fare and two Hershey bars, for under a single dollar bill! Now across the street, in what was once the Minneapolis Gas Co. office, the Nankin is operated by Carl Chalfen... and of course the late Sam Golden was with him there... but Walter James said, if you want to buy my place, you take my two cousins. And of course that was Harry Lee and Howard Chin, who are still there. They're great guys. And in the same column I mentioned about Harry's Cafe... but of course that has new ownership now. It was an interesting day and age to see these restaurants come along, and to remember that Mae and I never missed any of it. I remember we used to go to the original Charlie's -- (shouting) What was it, Mae, a buck and a quarter a meal? (Mae responds, "That many years ago, I can't remember." and Eddie laughs.) We used to go to Harry's for a buck and a quarter, and if you'd tip the waiter a quarter, boy, that was terrific! But now, you tip the waiter a buck and a quarter for this stinking meal. They were interesting periods, and our cafe society in Minneapolis never had to face what cafe society was in some of the other towns, where the Jewish community was sometimes given the back table, or they pushed them out. Not so in Minneapolis. The Minneapolis restaurant owners were a breed apart, and they loved their Jewish customers. They did from the day they opened their doors. And Arthur Murray, is a possible example, and Saunders is a possible example, and all the rest of them. Of all the restaurant people who might have had a little touch to 'em of what you might call negativism would be Harry Doust, but he eventually developed Jewish partners, so there wasn't much he could do [laughing], and he turned out to be all right. I think that just about covers it.

Let's take those Depression days, when people were worried about jobs. Mae and myself had to struggle, and everybody tried to help everybody else, but it was almost impossible. You had to go out and scratch for it. Mae was a comptometer operator, and a good one, and she worked for L.S. Donaldson Co. (a department store) before we were married, and still is friendly with many of the Donaldson girls who are still living... there's three or four left. But Betty came along -- our daughter -- and when she was old enough so Mae could go out and get another job, she went to Montgomery Ward. They wanted comptometer operators. Today a simple adding machine does better than a comptometer... that was a highly detailed, very, very -- I was going to say "typical" machine to maneuver. And unless you were absolutely skilled in it, with the fractions and the percentages, you'd get thrown out of gear on it, so Montgomery Ward offered Mae a job for \$11 a week, and she told the employment manager, "I can't afford it. I can't afford to work for \$11 a week." Imagine... in the Depression... they were pretty good to her, because they were cutting everybody down... the person that had gotten \$20 was getting \$15... the person that got \$15 got \$11... But she said she couldn't afford it, and she came back and went back to work for Donaldson's. And in the meantime she developed this putting on fashion shows, and she did pretty good in that particular field. So although it was a struggle, you always find your way out. Some way or another, between friends helping, and you helping other friends who later moved up... I remember the day of "scrip," when Rev. Mecklenburg of Wesley Church on Grant and First Ave. So. issued scrip, so people could eat! Those Depression years were brutal, absolutely brutal.

## **RL:** What kind of scrip?

**ES:** He issued scrip to get groceries. He would go out and solicit groceries from people, from his parishioners who had a little money, or had a job, and then they'd give the scrip to people who didn't have jobs and were willing to work for it. In other words, they got jobs for those people, like sweeping floors or washing dishes, and doing laundry, and then they'd get scrip, and with the scrip they could go to the church and pick up groceries for it. It was a barter system, purely and simply, during the years when the Depression really hit hard... we'll say 1931 and 1932, until Roosevelt was elected and a little hope came again... and believe me, it was down as low as you could get until '32. And beer came back, which helped a little bit... but barter was the means for most people getting their food. And Mae and myself have always discussed this... we never had a bit of charity, in any way, shape or form... we never had to use scrip, although I did exchange, many a time, my advertising space for groceries, and meals, and clothes, and everything else... so it was a barter system no matter what you say to the contrary. I'd compose letters for my garage man, who couldn't write too well, and he gave me free storage for my car [laughing]. This went on all the time. Those were the days when it wasn't a question of what ethnic group you don't belong to, but whether you'd eat that night [laughing]. And that to me is the most important of all - we all ate!

[End of interview]