

Rabbi David Aronson
Narrator

Guida Gordon
Interviewer

Fall 1967 - May 1970

David Aronson -DA
Guida Gordon -GG

GG: This is the first interview conducted of Rabbi Aronson by Guida Gordon in the Fall of 1967.

DA: Just leave it. It should be . . . go ahead. Alright. Alright. Now what is that about?

GG: About memories that . . .

DA: I came to Minneapolis in 1924. A few weeks later, I noticed an item in the newspaper that the American Legion was putting up markers, memorial markers on Memorial Drive. There was a picture of the markers, the usual army cross. I thought to myself, there must have been some Jews who died in World War I. And they accepted the precedent of the government in supporting stars, the Star of David, as a Jewish memorial. I went up to see the Commander of the Legion in charge of this particular project. He told me that . . . because nobody raised an issue. That they had so much money, and the money is all gone. That it was perfectly agreeable with them that stars be put on for the Jewish markers, if I can raise the money for that purpose. I told them I would.

I was certain that somehow I would be able to raise the money. The question then came out, where do you get the names of the Jewish soldiers who gave their lives for the country? This was 1924. The war ended in 1918. Only six years after the war, it was difficult to get names of those who died in the war in Hennepin County, a relatively small area.

GG: Why?

DA: I started to look for records. The *American Jewish World* had some records. I do not recall just which particular office, possibly . . . there was no Federation at that time yet, but the Jewish Family Service, some other agencies, various societies, congregations, and so forth. I found, finally, thirteen names in those records. And so we ordered the thirteen memorials, Jewish memorials, and they were put up on Memorial Drive. About a year later, the commander called me and said there is a woman in his office. I think the name was Brown.

GG: Mmmm.

DA: A name that could be any . . . any group.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: Belong to any group. He said that this particular Brown was her son, and they were Christians. Somehow or other, in the course of the records, the newspapers picked up the name that sounded like Jewish, not certain, [unclear] and then got lost for the same reason. And that name was recorded that of one of the soldiers as a Jewish boy. I told him it was perfectly alright, we can understand it, we can sympathize with her. I am sorry it happened. They're perfectly free to change it to a cross. On the other hand, I said, it gives you an idea how our parents feel. Now six years after the war, it was hard to get an accurate record of the number of Jewish boys who were killed in the war [unclear].

GG: Mmmm. Well, that's a purpose of these interviews. One of the first things we really would like to know is your own personal recollections; your personal recollections as a child, where you were brought up, the type of environment you were brought up [in], the languages spoken in your home, and so on. We feel this would be an important addition to our picture of the community, too.

DA: I was born in Vitebsk, Russia [in 1894]. My father came from White Russia, my mother from Latvia. My father came to America about two years before Mother and the children came here. I was about eleven when I came here [in 1906]. I entered a day school, and attended the day school for about three years.

GG: Was it a Hebrew speaking, Yiddish speaking language . . . ?

DA: It was a Yiddish speaking [unclear] was the . . . the old school, which is now the Yeshiva University [located in New York's Lower East Side].

GG: Oh, for heaven's sakes.

DA: At that time it was known as Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan.

GG: Yes.

DA: And one of the colleges still has that name.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: The content of the school consisted of the study of the Talmud, and only the Talmud, from nine until five. And at five o'clock, and then our teacher came in to teach us English or some of the other subjects for about an hour or two. In most cases, it was really self-study. They started as a self-study. When I left that school, I went to work.

GG: You were about fifteen then, I understand.

DA: Yes. For about two or three years, I think, I worked in a factory, and I was first an assistant mailing clerk and then a mail clerk. We worked that day . . . they closed on the *Shabbat*, but we worked Sunday instead; summers, half a day, and winter, the whole day. We worked about forty-five hours a week. Somehow or other, my father assumed—my father was a struggling businessman, never made any money in America—that I would be a rabbi. When somebody asked, you know, what his only son was going to be, he said a rabbi, what he called at Schechter's Seminary, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America was known among the Jews as Schechter's Seminary, after Dr. Solomon Schechter, who was President. Probably knew nothing about the Seminary, and very few on the East Side knew about the Seminary. Incidentally, the first house I remember was 206 Madison Street, on the East Side. That is parallel to East Broadway.

GG: Mmmm.

DA: And two blocks nearer to the East River. Years later . . . at that time, one of the boys my own age, who lived in that building, later became a congressman and then a judge [unclear].

GG: Oh, yes. Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: Years later, I read that a young man died on the electric chair, and his home address was 206 Madison Street. [Arthur "Hutch" Friedman, who lived at 206 Madison Street, was executed on January 27, 1939.] The same street, the same house, there lived a rabbi, a congressman, and a young man who died on the electric chair.

GG: This was not unusual in that period of American history.

DA: The . . .

GG: Rabbi, let me interrupt a minute. What was your father's background? Did he come from a family of rabbis?

DA: No. My mother . . . not my immediate grandfather, but my mother's uncles and further back, were rabbis. My mother was the sixth generation of the famous Elijah of Vilna, world famous scholar known as the *Gaon* of Vilna.

GG: Oh.

DA: I remember my great grandmother, who was married to this third generation.

GG: So it would be a grandson.

DA: Yes. But he was . . . her husband was dead, but as I remember, she must have been in the [unclear]. There were many rabbis in the family in Latvia belonging to my mother's family.

GG: What was your mother's family name, maiden name?

DA: Kudritzin. K-U-D-R-I-T-Z-I-N. Kudritzen. Also, and her mother's name was Doncin, D-O-N-C-I-N. In Hebrew it was spelled in two ways [unclear].

GG: Oh . . .

DA: The famous Spanish family, the [unclear]. In fact, many years before . . . then to now, you lived there and some lived here.

Now, when I worked as a teenager, it was assumed that I would enter college. And I was not the only one on the East Side. The East Side had thousands of immigrant children. And the Boys of Grand Street [Grand Street Boys' Association], an organization to which the [unclear] and so on and so on made up of that kind of people who were born on the East Side and somehow or other meant to break through and find their way and make their contribution into and to American life.

In those days, one did not have to go to high school in order to enter college. We took the state's written examinations. In New York State to the present day, all high school examinations are given by the Board of Regents of the state. Anybody who applied can take the examination. All examinations are given precisely, naturally, at the same hour in high schools for high school students, and in certain designated places for those who are not in high school. There was only this exception: that those who went to high school could pass with sixty percent. And sixty percent was the passing mark. Those who did not go to high school had to make seventy-five. So not going to high school, in order to get credit for a course, I had to make fifteen percent more. That, to me, to the present day as I look back, was quite reasonable in courses which required discussion.

GG: Mmmm.

DA: [Unclear] certain things in the class. And I think it's worth at least fifteen percent. But when it came to such subjects as mathematics and so on, I . . . I was resentful, and still am about that.

GG: [Chuckles]

DA: Where I . . . after a day's work, we lived in those cold flats. The only heat . . .

GG: You had two sisters, right?

DA: I had three sisters. And one was born here.

GG: Oh, yes. I remember . . .

DA: Yes. Minnie.

GG: Minnie. Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: The house was cold. But there were still some fires in the coals . . . in the coal stove in the kitchen. That room was warm.

GG: Mmmm.

DA: I was tired. Used take a nap, fall asleep, get up about one or two in the morning, take a textbook. And the textbooks I did not buy. I couldn't buy, I used to get them from the library on a student's card which gave, I think, for three months I renewed, three more months, six months. Then also I walked from library to the library, miles, to pick up a Latin grammar, or a German grammar, or a French grammar, and studied *without* a teacher. By the time I accumulated the necessary sixty credits, the minimum necessary . . . As a matter of fact, I had some more than sixty. I also memorized the grammars. And to the present day I think I could [unclear] prepositions, [unclear] adjective, and so forth.

The Board of Education adopted a new policy that if one wanted to go to a professional school – in those days it was easier to enter medical school, a professional school, than to enter the academic colleges [unclear] very few [unclear] to the college.

GG: Why?

DA: At NYU [New York University], because the others required there more cultural background. Be that as it may . . .

GG: Oh . . .

DA: They would not accept [unclear] examinations, [unclear] credits for admission. I could enter then a professional school but not an academic department. I had to go to high school. And I went only to high school [unclear]. By that time I had about seventy-four or so credits, and entered college. During my college years . . .

[Pause – recording interruption?]

DA: In the junior department of the Seminary, it was just a service rendered to prospective students with no particular credit given. At that time, the Seminary had a small enrollment. And we were very fortunate to have had for a very few of us, especially in those . . . in that department there were very few attending, see, there was no credit given. The outstanding scholars by the seminary that they had [unclear], they . . . my fellow students were the present chancellor of the seminary, Dr. Louis Finkelstein and the late Rabbi Solomon Goldman.

I also had a job of organizing and teaching a Hebrew school in Astoria, Long Island, which at that time was a very, very small community. The subway had just opened across the bridge, the East River Bridge, the Tri-borough Bridge. To get there, we had to transfer from the subway to a car across the bridge or by ferry from Ninety-Second Street. We lived in Harlem at that time. When I came the first day to the school which I was to organize . . .

GG: And you were how old at this time?

DA: Oh, by that time I was about . . . nineteen, eighteen.

GG: Nineteen.

DA: Nineteen, I think. Then I looked at the address. It didn't look right to me. I looked again. It was a saloon with a pool hall in the back, then to glance around, and I looked at children running around. I discovered that the only place this small community could rent was the back of that saloon. And the saloon wasn't busy during the late afternoon and early evening, the teaching hours, four to six. And the school was a [unclear]. It took me some time to find out the community, the officers. So finally [unclear] it's a long story, very long story, a very interesting story. I was supposed to be there from four to six. Many a time I came home at twelve at night.

GG: Mmmm.

DA: With no decent meal, because there was nowhere to eat in Astoria. And the Seminary didn't have any dormitories. All we had was just a dry sandwich and milk. I organized the community within the . . . we organized a Hanukkah student program which presented you to the Masonic Temple there. And there were five hundred people present. Nobody then knew that there were so many Jews in the neighborhood. The synagogue didn't . . . the only synagogue did not cooperate because the sexton of the synagogue was running a private little school preparing them for bar mitzvahing. I could never get the [unclear] to give [unclear].

We finally raised enough money to buy a tiny, little, old building that had a one room and a kitchenette at the bottom and an attic room on the top. We got another teacher and that was the school. However, we had a building, I found out that the Board of Education was selling discarded desks at fifty cents a desk. We could get them and we got about a hundred desks and [unclear] . . .

[Telephone rings]

[Recording interruption]

GG: [Unclear].

DA: I want to make a correction. This school was a little bit later in my work. It was when I entered the Seminary already there. So I was now in my fourth year at the University. I entered the Seminary because I had only six credits to complete. And so my senior year I entered the Seminary full time and I opened the school. So my first year at the Seminary I had my part of my senior work at the University, the work at the Seminary, and this school. My second year at the Seminary, I had the Seminary and this school, and I got my master's degree at Columbia.

GG: At the same time.

DA: Same time.

GG: In what, Rabbi?

DA: I majored in philosophy.

GG: I expected you to answer history. I don't know why.

DA: My third year at the Seminary, I stayed at school in the Seminary and spent some time attending courses to join what at that time was a form of civilian military service in the camps, because in 1917 we were at war. I graduated New York University in 1916, got my master's degree in 1917, and the end of the year I was at Camp Upton. And the fourth year at the Seminary I did not attend at all because I was in the service. I came back and graduated; I was in uniform.

GG: You were a chaplain in the . . . ?

DA: Yes. At that time it was a civilian chaplain. We had a kind of uniform, which was a JWB, Jewish Welfare Board uniform, the same as the YMCA and the Red Cross people and the war corresponds. We had all the responsibilities of a chaplain with the freedom of organizing our own work; it's an ideal thing. We tried to do the same thing in World War II, but by that time there was a security problem and so on. And the government wanted that group out of it, [unclear] under its jurisdiction, which was necessary, but not as efficient as the others. We had . . . I had about three thousand Jewish boys in charge of Camp Upton.

GG: Hmmm. Where was Camp Upton?

DA: Camp Upton is in Long Island, the old Yaphank. It is now the . . . Brookhaven.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: That's Camp Upton. They do scientific research.

GG: Yes. Yes, I recognize . . .

DA: When I graduated the Seminary, I was still . . . it was in the middle of the year before I was . . . became a civilian again. I took a part time job; that is, a job for a short time at [unclear] New Hampshire where we opened the first synagogue there. And then I went to Salt Lake City where for two years I was with Gentiles.

GG: [Chuckles]

DA: From there I came to Duluth and then to Minneapolis.

GG: And you came to Minneapolis in . . . ?

DA: 1924.

GG: 1924. What were your first recollections? Your first impressions of the Minneapolis Jewish community as you came into it?

DA: The first impression was—of course, I visited Minneapolis before, from Duluth, where I was in Duluth—was I knew we had an outstanding Talmud Torah, the Hebrew school. And of course I met, as you know, Dr. Gordon. And then the community in Minneapolis met me . . . I think when I came as guest speaker, either to speak at a banquet, a farewell to Rabbi A.M. Heller who was here a short time and then went back to graduate at the Seminary. He was here as an undergraduate. Or to the fiftieth anniversary of Mr. [unclear]. I do not remember just . . . just what it was.

Somehow or other, they thought that they might experiment with somebody who was nearer home than to import—for the Beth El to be organized—somebody else. And one day I received a telegram from [unclear] Berman, at that time the president of the Beth El congregation, which was really a paper organization. “Rabbi, we congratulate ourselves. We had a meeting last night. Have to say that we are unanimous in inviting you to become our spiritual leader.” This was his usual, very gracious way of communication. I wrote back that I might be interested but I couldn’t possibly accept it until I had an opportunity to meet the congregants. We set a date. It was a dinner meeting for the congregation in the old . . . the Emanuel Cohen Center building.

GG: That old house.

DA: At the old house. People will remember the capacity of that. The biggest room that they had, it was enough for the congregation. The men and women [unclear] also came. So it was a very small congregation, possibly maybe a hundred or so on paper, membership on paper because . . . the [unclear] structure was very, very loose and a minimum, in some cases, non-existent. I told them at that time that after meeting a number of people, that I would be interested, however, I want to build . . . I may be . . . and I am observant, perhaps in some ways more observant than some official orthodox rabbis, but I do not want to be identified as an orthodox rabbi. I want to be free to conduct the congregation as I understand traditional Judaism to be in the light of the needs of today, which from my point of view, was always recognized by Jewish tradition.

The congregation voted to give me that freedom. And so I became the rabbi of Beth El Synagogue. I came in 1924, in September. In the spring, Beth El Synagogue owned at that time, that is had title, in other words, was paid for . . .

GG: I’m sure it was [unclear].

DA: To the lot on where the Beth El Synagogue was eventually built on Tenth and Fourteenth Avenue North. There was a small, little building there where [unclear] services was held and the holiday services were held in the auditorium of the old Talmud Torah on Eighth and Fremont.

GG: Oh, yes.

DA: With the income of the tickets, which amounted to possibly fifteen hundred dollars, [it was] to be divided between Beth El Synagogue and the Talmud Torah. In the spring, we broke ground, spring of 1925. And in September, the holidays of 1925 we held services in the shell of the new building. [Unclear].

GG: And I should have . . .

DA: Put up the Temple's floor. We used canvas coverings for the doors and windows.

GG: Yes, that I remember.

DA: [Unclear].

GG: The leadership of Beth El at that time, they all lived on the North Side, correct?

DA: Yes. All the members of Beth El, as far as I know, lived on the North Side.

GG: And the area itself, have you any recollections of . . .?

DA: The area itself, of course, Homewood, was still new. And in fact, many homes were built in Homewood, subsequently. They all lived within walking distance. And the walking distance in those days included a larger territory than now where everyone has one or two cars, every home, because it was nothing for the children to walk from Homewood to Eighth and Fremont up to North High.

GG: Even in a snowstorm.

DA: But even at that time, two or three years later, some of us started to move to Saint Louis Park or to the South Side. One of the problems was that the North Side had no apartment houses for young couples, so young couples had to move, had to settle, and they usually settled in the apartment houses on [unclear] South around [unclear].

GG: But they came back north out of . . . as their needs changed from apartment to . . . very few?

DA: Young couples, very few.

GG: Came back?

DA: Yes.

GG: Now just the area of the North Side by it . . . as it stands, your recollections of it through the years of the 1920s, the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s, there are so many areas that we could go into. But just a general picture of the North Side at the time, and then later where some other specific things.

DA: The Jewish life in the North Side, I mean the second phase . . . That is, the first phase I consider the immigrants first taking root. When I came there, that was the beginning of the second phase, where the Jews moved from what was then Sixth Avenue North and [unclear] Place and Aldrich and all of the areas there, moving northwest, toward Homewood and so on. And so the same year that we built Beth El, Mikro Kodesh [Synagogue] moved up from its old location on Eighth Avenue and Bryant, I think, or somewhere . . . Eighth Avenue. And then the Sharei Zedeck moved. The Sharei Zedeck moved from Bryant up here. And Kenneseth Israel . . .

GG: Wasn't up here.

DA: Was still new and continued there a long time. In fact, it was the same year that I came that Kenneseth Israel at that time was the largest congregation, both numerical from the point of view of quality of worshipers, not membership, but quality of worshipers and structure, because the reformed temple, Temple Israel had this old small building on Fifth Street. I thought for sure it had its small building on Eleventh Avenue South, Eleventh Street . . . Ninth.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: And then . . .

GG: [Unclear].

DA: So then people started to move up this way and then up northwest and that became the center. The Talmud Torah subsequently moved, of course, all through the years, on to the Talmud Torah new building where it was built on Queen [Avenue]. And Beth El was used as a branch of the Talmud Torah, where about two hundred and fifty to three hundred youngsters met regularly, year after year. The whole high school department, the Beth El middles department, and three elementary beginners there.

GG: Do you have any recollections of the particular area with the rise of Hitler and the pressures of that period?

[Pause]

DA: When I came to Minneapolis . . . the Minneapolis general community was made up of a small group of Yankees who controlled the economy of the community—the banks, the paper mill, the economy. I would say—I'm no expert in the field—but that was the group that did not want factories and such to develop in Minneapolis because . . . but the mill, it was the center of [unclear] cultural vast territory, and it is said that around that group . . . that group dominated the political and the economic life of the community. It was only . . . and that was about . . . it must have been 1945 or . . . or it, I beg your pardon, 1925 or thereabouts when Floyd Olson, at that time a city attorney, cracked down on the graft which existed in our city council. Half of them went to jail. Every day there was the news, this one confessed and that one confessed and so forth. And of course it paved the way for his election as governor of Minnesota. This was the first time we had a Scandinavian; that he had broke through into the government because it was controlled by the Yankees.

GG: [Unclear].

DA: So even the Scandinavians . . . the Swedes, Scandinavians, the Norwegians who made up the largest minority group, had no standing. The Jews, strange to say, had no standing in the general community at all in Minneapolis. [Unclear] the influence and the general [unclear] of direct contact and influence was more than any other community probably in the United States. No Jew was admitted to membership in any of the luncheon clubs. We had a strange phenomenon where the state president of the Rotary at one time was a Jew.

GG: Minnesota?

DA: From Duluth. Mr. Silverstein. And yet, in Minneapolis, a Jew could not become a member of the Rotary. I had occasion to make a study of the [unclear]. No Jews were admitted. Because the [unclear] had a golf club or something and so that made it a social organization. It was not an accident that an article appeared in one of the national magazines charging Minneapolis as being the capital of anti-Semitism. At that time, I remember the national B'nai B'rith magazine asked me to write a comment. And I wrote an article—as usual, I never saved any articles or anything that I wrote—on this. And I came to the conclusion that it wasn't conscious anti-Semitism, it was just a lack of communication. That the discrimination was not just against the Jews, but against all those that did not belong to the inner circle.

Of course, the war has reorganized the economic distribution. And with Olson being president and then Peterson and . . . or governor and Peterson and so on, the picture has changed. The fact is, when I discovered that problem with one of the publishers of our newspapers, he said the fact is that the community of Minneapolis was not shaken up by World War I, because even the Scandinavians remained very parochial because their countries were not involved. It was simply a community made up of parochial groups, and the Jews simply constituted another group. There was no contact. And the picture has changed since, of course.

As far as the Jewish community is concerned, it differed from most other communities, even Saint Paul, in that the upper economic class in most communities was made up of Jews from Germany because they came a generation earlier. The department stores were owned by Jews as a rule. Not so in Minneapolis. Minneapolis was one of the very rare exceptions where the department stores were not owned by Jews. And there were very few German Jews; they were mostly Romanian Jews, some Hungarian Jews. And so that gave the Jewish community quite a different character.

Now [unclear] so that while Minneapolis and Saint Paul are so close together, the Twin Cities, the Jewish communities for *many* years emphasized different things. Just one example. Minneapolis had college-trained rabbis. Even in [unclear] synagogue, possibly two decades or three, before Saint Paul had such numbers, in the [unclear].

GG: Why?

DA: The leadership in Saint Paul [unclear] was made up German Jews, it was the reform.

GG: Oh.

DA: And there was that gap between that one group and the other, whereas in Minneapolis the whole community rose, so to speak, at the same time.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: The outstanding individuals, we had no standard at that time when I came to see . . . the people were best known in the community, in the Jewish community was a Mr. Weil.

GG: Jonas.

DA: Jonas Weil, a German Jew. Mr. Weil . . . Mr. Joe [unclear] was the president of the conservative congregation [unclear], and Mr. Berman. And incidentally, Mr. Berman was probably the first college graduate on the North Side. And Mrs. Berman was the first schoolteacher, ex-schoolteacher, on the North Side.

[Pause – recording interruption?]

GG: Rabbi, what was the relationship between Beth El Synagogue and other organizations in the community? For example, the Talmud Torah.

DA: Well, they . . . as I said before, when I came to Minneapolis, the Talmud Torah was a well-established, well-organized institution in Minneapolis receiving the support financially . . . limited to a degree financially, because financial support for Jewish education is still a serious problem, adequate support. But certainly the moral support. To attend the Talmud Torah, for a child on the North Side, was normal. It was the exceptional—especially the boys—the exceptional boy who did not. And if he didn't, if he had nothing to do with himself during those hours, then he went to Talmud Torah, too.

It was also in the Talmud Torah that the idea of organizing Beth El emerged. It emerged because of an incident. A number of people who were more Americanized, who wanted a service with the [unclear], which old immigrant orthodox synagogues did not appreciate or felt the need for . . . That group, many of them, directors of the Talmud Torah and main supporters, wanted to join at the invitation of the late Rabbi [Solomon] Silber of blessed memory, wanted to join the Kenneseth Israel at that time the largest orthodox congregation. Whereupon the board of the Kenneseth Israel, since congregations primarily in those days received their support from the sale of tickets on the holidays and not from membership dues, well, some members of that congregational board felt, why have members when they vote and they even elect different officers, when they can run the congregation without consulting anybody. And they did view it an unpardonable act, they blackballed everyone who applied, against the pleadings of their old rabbi.

Then this group decided that they were going to organize a congregation of their own, which was the beginning of Beth El Synagogue. The services, as I said before, a lot was bought on Tenth

and Fourteenth. And there were services were held in that little house standing on that lot and they . . . for a year or two, the holiday services were held in the Talmud Torah auditorium. There was really a kind of a sub-active membership; the Young People's League, who held services Friday night. And that is when Rabbi Heller—he was not then a Rabbi, a student at the Seminary but was acting as Rabbi here—was invited to take care of the Young People's League services held in the [unclear] area in the library, business library of the Talmud Torah building. And to be the director of the Emanuel Cohen Center, which was part of the Talmud Torah.

[Recording interruption]

[Tape 1 Side B]

DA: ...I came. The Emanuel Cohen Center bought its own small building on Ellwood and Tenth. And eventually, the Talmud Torah turned over the Emanuel Cohen Center to the Federation, to an independent organization. As a matter of fact, when I came, the man who was at that time president of the Kenneseth Israel came to me and offered to become a kind of associate rabbi of Kenneseth Israel, to have the Friday night services there, and they would contribute, they would pay half of my salary at that time. They took me over on a Sabbath afternoon to that place to see it, to meet some of the people.

Of course, Rabbi [Solomon] Silber was . . . would have been very happy with such an arrangement. And he was the first man whom I visited when I came here the first day. And we were rather close to his last day. And [unclear] I may say, is that a few months before he passed away we jointly officiated at a wedding. It was my first and his last year. The wedding was of Mr. and Mrs. Max Shapiro, Sadie Berman. In a way I felt kind of symbolic, that it turned over some of his spirit to me in that way.

I asked the president of Kenneseth Israel at that time, does he want to merge with Beth-El? And we'll use the building on Lyndale, and we'll build a building further up, and it's then one congregation. He said no. That he didn't want. And naturally, I had to turn down that offer, so that meant the [unclear] Beth El Synagogue and accomplishing nothing.

The Talmud Torah, when we made the plans for Beth-El, I would say that the faculty of the Talmud Torah had divided sentiments on the subject. On one thing most of them agreed. I am not referring to Dr. Gordon, who was at that time, he—it was later that he became the executive director—he was still practicing medicine, but the members of the faculty. Because the Talmud Torah was organized in the spirit of secular Zionism. And the teachers . . . while the Talmud Torah, naturally, taught the prayer book and had a very fine service for its students; it did not want to be part of [unclear] Judaism. Many of the teachers were ideologically opposed to it. What they [unclear].

And one of the symbols and perhaps symptoms of that, and it struck me as significant, the very first time I visited the Talmud Torah, was this. That the teachers of the Talmud Torah, most of them, while they could not teach bareheaded—the community would not stand for that, teaching the Torah with uncovered heads—they would not put on a skull cap because that was [unclear]. They wore their hats in the classroom. No matter how hot the afternoon was, and how hot the

room, they would *not* wear a skull cap. The fact that today and for the last ten, fifteen years that they do, they did and do, so they changed, and perhaps the change of the influence of Beth El upon the Talmud Torah.

When we built the synagogue, we could have had larger classrooms for a very nominal additional cost. Anybody familiar with the structure of the synagogue would know what I mean. But there was a direct effort by the same people sometimes who built Beth El, but as members of the Talmud Torah, not to encourage Beth El or a synagogue to have classrooms. The irony of this theory was that the Talmud Torah had to use these inadequate classrooms for about twenty years.

I found that the synagogues, outside the places of worship, and outside of giving expression to its members . . . and retaining home memories because they were organized within all communities around memories of the old world, the old homes. So you had a Romanian synagogue, and a [unclear] synagogue, and [unclear] synagogue. In fact, on the North Side, Beth El was the first Jewish synagogue.

GG: [Chuckles]

DA: Where we had to have on the board members who hailed from many countries. [Unclear] blessed memory was born in Finland. We had [unclear] who lived in Ireland before they came in here, and so on. The . . . a bar mitzvah, the bar mitzvah ceremony was held in the Talmud Torah. [Unclear] synagogue [unclear] for that. And this was the first issue I had to take a stand on. The moment we finished building our new building, I asked what about bar mitzvahs? Is Beth El to serve as a synagogue or as just to have simply worship for the old people? There was considerable opposition. And I have never . . . that even the son of our president and the son of our secretary were bar mitzvahed [unclear] were bar mitzvahed at the Talmud Torah. In one case, the bar mitzvah was duplicated, that is the boy was brought up to the [unclear] Synagogue on the succeeding *Shabbat*, whereupon I offered my resignation.

GG: [Unclear].

DA: They never publicized, because they both realized that there could be enough development in the growth of a synagogue, even such ceremonies as bar mitzvahs [unclear] the synagogue is not for that purpose. Now what's the synagogue for? They . . . nevertheless, both boys were more or less the same, [unclear] active members of the Talmud Torah throughout the years were special members. We encouraged it. When the Depression came, Beth El [unclear] at a great sacrifice because we were bankrupt as . . . as the banks were. Except that Beth El Synagogue paid on its mortgage one hundred percent, eventually, which is more than the bank corporations, all the other great economic organizations did.

And Beth El and the other congregations, especially the rabbis, felt that there should be a closer internal relationship between the synagogue and the Talmud Torah. For example, there was a simple problem. If the synagogue was to have the bar mitzvah ceremony, then the youngster had to be trained. That takes a long time. It would mean that the youngster had what he considered . .

. they were legitimate excuses but inevitable. So missed some of the [unclear] of the Talmud Torah in order to have the man who instructed them for the . . . in the [unclear] and so on.

Incidentally, so secular was the Talmud Torah approach, the inscription, the emphasis was on the spoken Hebrew. The inscription of that whole Talmud Torah was a quote from the [unclear] from the [unclear] that ye shall teach your children [unclear] that they could speak. And the words made up there was in capital, larger type. Before Dr. Gordon passed away, he said, "This was one of my mistakes." He told me this was one of his mistakes. The Talmud Torah had a very fine service for its students, but the Talmud Torah, while teaching music melodies, discarded the age-old melodies known the world over. Namely, the melody for the [unclear]. And a graduate of the Talmud Torah could not chant the [unclear]. Some entered the Seminary, and I remember speaking to some of those students, saying, "You'd better learn how to chant the [unclear]. You will go out to a congregation as a candidate as a rabbi, and you may be honored with reading the [unclear]. And you will be the only one, among those who know Hebrew, who will not know how to do it in that congregation."

Now [unclear]. Not only that, and this is one of the constructive criticisms of the Talmud Torah. Talmud Torah realized the need to have a full time man *in* the Talmud Torah to prepare *all* the children for all the synagogues, something which received the approval of all the rabbis. And this is the setup now, so that the Talmud Torah can set each [unclear] for the particular students. And now we developed records, and this is one of the very creative phases of the Minneapolis Talmud Torah.

It was that when a boy became bar mitzvahed, and fifty percent of the youngsters quit the Talmud Torah after bar mitzvahing, which is a shocking experience, and yet a better situation than anywhere else in the country. Because most of our youngsters attended at least five years, and at that time it was a five day a week school, which is very rare outside of Minneapolis. So they had five years of Hebrew education. Nevertheless, we felt especially in the most critical period of a child's life, the high school, half of them did not attend. And even those who attended, because of their high school work and because of other activities, lost contact with the rabbis. This was the time when the rabbis should be close.

We urged the rabbis [unclear] that one session of the Talmud Torah in its high school department be given to the synagogue. That if they attend four days a week, as the high school department required, one of the four, the youngsters should attend each respective synagogue under the teaching of their rabbis, on a subject agreed upon jointly by the rabbis and the Talmud Torah faculty. An examination could be given by the Talmud Torah at the end of the year, and credit be given for them. We really had not shortened the session, but reorganized one of the four sessions.

There was considerable opposition on the part of the faculty. A survey was made, a study, by a representative of the New York Jewish Education Association. And he reported, he recommended what the rabbis requested. Our idea was that we get the first year, because that's where we lose them, right at . . . right at the fourteenth year. The faculty refused to cooperate and insisted that we get the last years. By that time, more than half were lost, all contacts. Very difficult to get them back.

Then we discovered another problem, which was not the Talmud Torah's problem at all. That with the of thirty-four students, we discovered that about twenty or twenty-one were from Beth El, about five or six from that went, and the others [unclear] belonged with several orthodox synagogues, which means that the orthodox synagogues with the rabbis would not have a class. The youngsters wouldn't come. Well, they simply just wouldn't come. So those rabbis insisted that its sessions be given in the Talmud Torah building and so forth. It was better than nothing, but it fizzled out, unfortunately.

[Unclear] the conservative congregations. And we had no difficulty at all even with [unclear] that one year [unclear] because we standardized our requirements that the conservative congregations satisfied each educational need for its youngsters in cooperation, because [unclear] cooperate and [unclear] the Talmud Torah wanted to please those orthodox. This was somewhere where all through the years I felt that Beth El could have done so much better for its youngsters, and for the synagogue, and for the future of Judaism, if they were not forced in a large area of our educational process to reduce our standards to the lowest common denominator of the least efficient congregation.

GG: Rabbi, would you like to into your relationship with Dr. Gordon?

DA: Well, as you know, Dr. Gordon was one of the rare, outstanding personalities in Jewish life. Endowed with his fine Jewish cultural background, a sense of humor, which means a sense of discrimination—he could laugh at himself as well as somebody else. He made a contribution to Minneapolis and to American Jewry through Minneapolis, for which he's never . . . will ever be blessed. When I came here, for the first *Shabbat* I came here, I stopped downtown. I stayed at the Old West Hotel.

GG: Oh, my.

DA: And I walked up Friday evening to Dr. Gordon's home, which was somewhere on Portland.

GG: Seventeenth.

DA: And we had dinner and spent the evening together. And the next morning I walked . . . walked up north to the little house of Beth El Synagogue, and I spent the day [unclear]. Where he at that time was the guiding spirit of the Talmud Torah. We had an outstanding, able director. [Unclear].

GG: [Unclear].

DA: [Unclear] with his family, who was a very fine organizer, strict at discipline, and really built the structure of the Talmud Torah. Dr. Gordon gave it his spiritual blessing and was an agent for community support and [unclear] was the [unclear] organized the Talmud Torah. Dr. Gordon was a practicing physician, and he took care of Mrs. Aronson when our first son was born, [unclear].

GG: [Unclear].

DA: In fact, he gave . . . Dr. Gordon gave up his practice shortly thereafter. He then became the executive director of the Talmud Torah, which in a way was unfortunate, because members of the faculty wanted [unclear] professional, and professionals in high standing wanted a professional. And Dr. Gordon was not a professional educator. And there was friction as a result. And then, as Dr. Gordon grew, and he was the type of man who grew all his life, new ideas, new needs, realizing the need for changing this and changing that in the techniques and with curriculum and so forth. The faculty was more conservative. And there was friction, a good deal. Both sides were unhappy.

Besides, being tied down to the administration, Dr. Gordon couldn't give his time to the community and so forth. This was one of the serious problems in the Talmud Torah. We were, personally, good friends. He was the man with whom I discussed, academically or otherwise, some of my problems. With Dr. Gordon living on the South Side for the last few years, was not a member of Beth El later on. He was at Beth El for about ten years. And Dr. Gordon spoke to me freely about his problems, his worries, I mean educationally and so forth. We continued to be very close to the very end.

By the way, this is interesting, and may be worthy of study by some future historian, I hope not in the too long distant future. The Talmud Torah was the cornerstone of our Jewish educational process. And without the Talmud Torah it would not have produced as many rabbis who came from Minneapolis, as many able [unclear] was not trained at the Talmud Torah. She lived on the South Side and there was no adequate branch at that time.

But this is interesting to note. That while the children of all the congregations outside of the reform temples, attending the Talmud Torah, it was Beth El Synagogue that year after year and year after year gave students to the Seminary and a number to the Teacher's Institute. Only a few years ago, about four or five years ago, was there the first graduate from Adath Jeshuren. Now, obviously, it was our contact with these students and graduates in the synagogue that supplemented that [unclear] which is vital. Because, after all, one cannot live in the foundation, you have to put up superstructures. Beth El built on the foundation of the Talmud Torah, consciously, deliberately, and as I look over the years, thank God, constructively in that area.

GG: Do you think we should [unclear]?

DA: [Unclear].

[Static – recording interruption?]

GG: Rabbi, what was your relationship with the student body at the University of Minnesota? First, the Menorah and then ultimately with Hillel.

DA: In my student days, the organization that was concerned with the Jewish student was the Menorah Society. I think it must have been organized possibly 1910 or thereabouts. They have nationalized, and the University of Minnesota had a number of its students interested in this. I came across a report of the first or the second national assembly of the Menorah Society, and I

came across the names of Dr. Moses Barron among the people who sponsored the Menorah Society here and [unclear] among the students.

When I came to Duluth my . . . that was in 1922, I was naturally interested in the teenagers and in the high school students who entered the University of Minnesota. They were close to me, and when they came back, I naturally . . . they reported to me and I met them. The Menorah Society, at that time, was sponsored by the B'nai B'rith, not the Menorah Society, but its symposium presented by the Menorah Society was presented at B'nai B'rith's meetings in the Twin Cities, in Duluth, and possibly on the [Iron] Range, I do not know. The first thing that came out was . . . I think [unclear] . . .

GG: Berman.

DA: Or was it . . .

GG: Bud Berman.

DA: I think . . . possibly Arnold [unclear] was among those who came out. [Unclear] who is now [unclear] became subsequently [unclear] rabbi is now in Seattle, Washington. And the . . .

GG: Both of us were out in Washington.

DA: And [unclear] Berman came out one year. [Unclear] Berman came out another year. In that group there was a young student who tried to pass off as a little bit older than she was, Bertha Friedman, who later became Mrs. David Aronson. And of course, that naturally . . . well, it subsequently prejudiced me against the Menorah Society!

GG: [Chuckles]

DA: However, I was not quite ready quite yet to give it up for the Hillel Foundation idea when it came here. When I came to Minneapolis, the Menorah Society was still functioning, but obviously it required a full time man. I was an informal advisor to Menorah simply because of my personal contacts with so many of the students from Minneapolis, from Beth El, and from Duluth.

And then the question came about organizing a Hillel Foundation. Now this was the second Hillel Foundation nationally to be organized in a university situated *in* a Jewish community. All the others, and that was the original intent, was to organize Hillel Foundations in college towns like Penn State that had only a large group of Jewish students but only two Jewish families, or in the [unclear] Wisconsin, that Madison had a very small Jewish community, and there weren't the rabbis and the congregations to sponsor. This was the second experiment. I think the first was Columbus, Ohio.

GG: Hmmm.

DA: And so it was a new project. And in my mind, there arose the question, what should be relationship of our students to these congregations? While there may be a small percentage of out of town students, the majority is made up of the Twin Cities students. Here we have a large group of the Beth El students with whom we worked through their high school years. Shall they take a four years' vacation from their contact with the synagogue and move their activities on the campus, which is, after all, a passing phase in their lives? Will they come back to a normal Jewish community? And in subsequent years, as I studied some of the problem, I felt more and more, I feel very strongly that Hillel everywhere is not giving sufficient thought to this problem. They live in an artificial world and they are not trained for the normal Jewish community, which can be done at the University of Minnesota, which is situated in the Twin Cities. These students should be *active* in the needs of the community.

Then I thought the question was . . . and may I say this. That the idea of a student building did not originate with B'nai B'rith or the [unclear] taking it over and developing it. It started . . . it was started by the National Women's League of the United Synagogues who had two buildings. One on the campus of Columbia University, in my student days at the Seminary, and one on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where kosher meals were served to the students. But of course the United Synagogue had no funds, and B'nai B'rith had funds, and so naturally . . . it's too bad that the synagogues should have been the sponsors of the students and not a non-synagogue organization. The work would have been [unclear] different. Now . . .

GG: What were the attitudes . . . what were the attitudes of the Jewish faculty members there on the Minnesota campus?

DA: Well, at Minnesota at that time, we had one or two, Dr. Marcus in particular, with a fine Jewish background, and a few others. Of course there was in the medical school like Dr. [Moses] Barron and so on who are quite interested in the Jewishness of the students, and in the future, who sponsored it. And the leaders of the Minneapolis Jewish community, Dr. [unclear], Arthur Brin, I.S. Joseph, and some members of the faculty were interested. The members of the faculty, most of the others, were Jews by the accident of birth only. And that generally skewed through the . . . how to unite the faculty with the community. For that matter, how to make the university a [unclear] factor in the community? Is the character of the community different because it has a university in its midst? If the university's only problem is [unclear].

I remember I discussed that problem with one of the former presidents of the University of Minnesota, when I told him that I thought that the university is made up neutral generals; generals who were neutral in the moral and spiritual struggles of the community. Here and there we have a member of the faculty who goes out in extreme, too, because he is in a small minority, may become an extremist. But the university must be neutral on all these subjects because of politics. Of course, as a Jew, this whole idea is repugnant to me. Because that's what Torah was. A rabbi was a judge and he was not elected by a political party. Of course, these are the people, but the university is neutral. And the Jewish members of the faculty were neutral, so was the Jewish commitment, too, most of them had no Jewish background.

Now when the preliminary meetings were held regarding the formation of a Hillel Foundation here, and as I said before, I was quite active. I was active, simply self-appointed, because I

carried over that interest at the university at the Religious Workers Council of the University, which is made up of ministers of the churches around the University. We had no synagogue, so I was *it*. Well, even at one time the chairman, because the chairmanship rotated. And so I wondered whether Hillel would [unclear] pull them out of the synagogue. Will Hillel set a standard which may be on principle objectionable to our standards for the conservatives or the orthodox synagogues? Who will be the director?

Well, we adopted this principle. I don't know whether it is still enforced or not. It was when the present director was appointed and I was still here. I hope it will continue. But the University of Minnesota entered a partnership with the National Hillel Foundation on one condition: that the director be approved by the local Hillel Council, which is made up by representatives appointed by B'nai B'rith lodges and representatives elected by the Federations of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Duluth.

I personally served all the years I was here on the Hillel Council, but I insisted on being an elected member, Federation Board. Either this Council submits a few nominees, names the nominees to the Hillel National, or they nominate somebody, but the men have to come here and be approved here. It happened once that a man was sent down. It was forced upon us. We had to decide in two hours. We agreed. We discovered something about that man. I talked to some of the people here. I had to be in the middle. In Detroit, at the Rabbinic Convention, I called Dr. Sacher [sp?], he came down and we discussed it. That appointment was recalled.

The first yeoman was Rabbi Abraham Millgram. He graduated the Seminary. I had not known him before. We spent a weekend together, and as a member of the committee of the local Hillel, I recommended him. The second man was Rabbi Freeman [sp?]. A good number of the members possibly the majority, they all were afraid [unclear] was identified with the orthodox. I spent a very pleasant day with him and I had to find for the appointment of an orthodox rabbi, because the majority at the beginning of the meeting were not against him personally, they didn't know him, but they were afraid. I said, "Sure, there may be some theological areas where I may differ with Rabbi Freeman. But if that would become the issue on the campus, we'll be doing wonderful work in that area." When they reach that point of agreement [unclear] there are different interpretations. And I need not [unclear] approved a very attractive director. And this continued, and on the whole we were very fortunate in our directors, and I know that the directors want to do a good deal.

I still feel that some areas could be rectified as one phase of the problem of does Hillel supplement its work with the synagogue? Does it directly or indirectly pull out the active young people trained in the synagogue to do some work on the campus and be lost for four years, and possibly never to return? And I'm afraid that part of this misgiving is verified by experience. I am not convinced that there need be a Friday eve service, even if it's periodically, on the campus. Being situated at the University between two large Jewish communities, I think that once a month or so the students should be invited to a regular service in the synagogue.

As far as the local students, they have no business to have a service on the campus at all. They are home. They have their synagogues. If they want to worship, if emphasis is necessary, that is a continuation of the problem that the rabbis face. It is not solved by an artificial service away

from a natural environment. They're not even being trained for continuation at synagogue. The local students should invite out of town students to their homes and have a Sabbath meal and then go together. Of course, it does not add to the reports of Hillel activities, and some of the women's auxiliaries may not feel that they are doing something wonderful. I question whether this activity as it stands now is creative [unclear]. And if [unclear] way to make it meaningful, and students come from a small community should be given opportunity to worship in a synagogue, and trained, and get the feel of it. And be in a home.

GG: Rabbi, do you have any recollections . . . [unclear]?

[Background noises – unclear conversation and thumps]

[Sound quality changes and the interviewer sounds different – same or different person?]

GG: Rabbi, you mentioned the fact that you and Dr. Barron were the two delegates of Minneapolis to the American Jewish Conference in 1944. Do you want to discuss it for a few moments?

DA: The American Jewish Conference was the effort on the part of American Jewry to get well organized to meet the great challenge and tragedy which came to the knowledge of American Jewry as a result of Nazism, World War II.

GG: [Speaking softly] Go ahead.

DA: American Jewry finally got the reports of the full scope of the tragedy and of the destruction of millions of Jews in Nazi-occupied territories. It was felt, and justly so, that the response and whatever help American Jewry can give, cannot be left to the work of independent organizations. That there must be a united coordinated effort and a responsible Jewish body to deal with the situations. The American Jewish Conference was the result. A call was issued to American Jewry to organize this new organization. If I remember correctly, it was to consist of representatives of the national organizations like the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, the congregational organizations like the United Synagogues of America, the Hebrew . . . the Union of Hebrew Congregations, and so forth. and democratically elected representatives. I believe the setup was that the national organizations would appoint or elect out of their respective bodies one third of the delegates and that two thirds of the delegates were to be elected by the Jewish communities locally. In Minneapolis, Dr. Barron and I were the two delegates elected by the Minneapolis Jewry. We were entitled by a proportion to two delegates.

GG: I think you mentioned that if there had been three, the third one would have been Amos Deinard.

DA: Yes. And both of us felt that Minneapolis, both Dr. Barron and I felt that Minneapolis lost one of the outstanding representatives in the fact that we could have only two and not three. And this is not just a compliment, because I think anybody who knows Amos would agree with this statement. Incidentally, the election was . . . the voting was done representatives of the established Jewish organizations in the community and not directly by individuals, by individual

Jews. So the delegates of all the organizations had to vote for the delegates to the American Jewish Conference.

The Conference met in New York. It was an overwhelming expression of potential American Jewry, quite, quite a new experience. The steering committee, which was made up by representatives of the national organizations, met continuously to draft the details of the agenda for each plenary session. The most important problem, incidentally, a representative of a newly organized refugee group liberated from the concentration camps flew in to the Conference to give the first eyewitness experience of the situation over there. It was a moving scene.

The major debatable controversial, if I may say, question was the question regarding the resolution to be passed by the Conference on Palestine. There were hours and hours and hours of debate. On behalf of the national representatives of American Jewry who were delegates to the Conference, I got on the steering committee by organizing right there and then before the first session the Rabbinical Assembly as an independent . . . it was . . . it had its representatives there, but with no specific instructions. And so I organized the Rabbinical Assembly as an independent unit on the steering committee because the Zionist organization delegates wanted us to merge with them at several such national small organizations merged....

[Recording interruption]

[Tape 2 Side A]

DA: And I remember that Dr. Solomon Goldman and Dr. Israel Goldstein both past presidents of the ZOA pleaded with me just to join with the Zionist organization. While I was with them in spirit and in policy, but I felt that the religious body ought to have its direct representation. The question, interestingly enough, when we considered that we are dealing already with the need . . . in 1945, the question was, did American Jewry dare to demand a Jewish state? While there was the dream of the establishment of a national Jewish home, as the term used both in the Basel Declaration and even in the Basel Zionist program of the World Zionist Organization, the state does not appear. The term 'state'. Do we dare to ask for an independent Jewish state? A suggestion was made that we use the term commonwealth. After all, the state of Massachusetts is called a commonwealth. Somehow it could not have that direct challenge, for which we really were not prepared.

For when two years later or three years later, the . . . United Nations took up the question of the partition of Palestine, in 1947, I believe it was, the Jewish representatives agreed to the partition of Palestine. Now why did they agree to the partition of Palestine? For a very simple reason. That without partition, there would have been an independent state in the old Palestine, which would have included, by the way, possibly the West Bank of Jordan, but the Jews would have been a small minority. It had to be a democratic state. So if it were independent with the Jews in the majority as a minority, there never would have . . . well, we could not have developed a Jewish character in that pre-established state. And so we accepted partition. Now that was even two years later, but at this time, finally, the resolution was adopted. And I may suggest that in the record of the *American Jewish World* you may get a copy of the exact resolution, which called for conditions which would lead to the establishment of a Jewish state.

That resolution, which called for conditions which would lead to the establishment of an independent Jewish state, eventually, was adopted by all the delegates with the exception of the representatives of the American Jewish Committee and the Council of Jewish Women. I think they had a total of four votes out of the five hundred. They abstained from voting.

After the Conference, the American Jewish Committee withdrew from further participation. As a result, when I returned to Minneapolis, I suggested that the Minneapolis Jewish community, where we'd had no local branch here, the American Jewish Committee at that time had no local branches, but they had representative Jews as individuals appointed by the national organization to serve as representatives, as the spokesmen in the local community. If I remember correctly, Mr. I.S. Joseph and Arthur Brin were the spokesmen of the American Jewish Committee.

GG: [Unclear].

DA: In Minneapolis. However, I felt since the American Jewish Committee withdrew from the organized overall Jewish community, that Minneapolis should express its disapproval of that withdrawal by withdrawing officially from the American Jewish Committee, so that no one could speak on behalf of the community, while an individual was free to express his own viewpoints. A special meeting I moved up . . . a Federation meeting. And a special day was appointed for the discussion of that problem one Sunday afternoon.

The question came up at a public well-advertised meeting. The American Jewish Committee sent its executive vice president to present its view. We debated for about two hours, and the Minneapolis Jewish community supported me on this stance so that Minneapolis was one of the major cities . . . I don't recall now the name of some other smaller community, the two communities that protested the action of the American Jewish Committee by withdrawing from the American Jewish Committee. Let me add this, however. That in the last ten years or so, there has been a radical change in the makeup and the ideology and the, shall I say, the creative leadership of the American Jewish Committee. Today, I consider the American Jewish Committee far more representative and perhaps far more creative as a spokesman for American Jewry than, let us say, the American Jewish Congress has been the last ten years.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm. Wouldn't you say that thinking also applies to the National Council of Jewish Women and its leadership?

DA: Yes. I would say definitely, too, while the National Council . . . of course, the nature of the problems have changed, and the new facts, for example, that the National Women's Council has its school education in [unclear] and I would say definitely, of course, the Jewish consciousness has been intensified as a result of what's happened in the last years.

There was another, a second session of the American Jewish Conference a year or two later. And while a number of the organizations felt that the Conference should continue, the fact is that the national organizations were not ready, and until very recently, through the formation of the presidents of the national organizations, which is a loosely and not quite as strong an organization as the Conference could have been or should have been, the national organizations

are not ready to give up their own form of organization. And it's the old story that most of our national leaders would rather see the strength of the respective organizations than the strength of the American Jewish community.

GG: Rabbi, what in your opinion led up to or motivated the beginnings of Mount Sinai Hospital?

DA: I primarily would say the fact that at that time Jewish doctors found it difficult to get the facilities of the existing hospitals. There was a time when Jewish doctors could not even get office space in the existing medical buildings. The physicians and surgeons buildings were closed to a good number of Jewish doctors. Until the building of the Medical Arts Building, it was a very, very serious problem.

Now it's so obvious that when a doctor cannot get hospital beds for his patients that he cannot function properly. And there was a great need for a hospital where Jewish doctors would find adequate full facilities to practice their profession. And so there was no question about the great need for a hospital, a Jewish facility at that time. I am not so certain that the question of a kosher kitchen would have created a Jewish hospital, though I want to say this: that this was used a good deal in preparing or conditioning the Jewish community to support such a hospital.

When the hospital was finally organized, the hospital association, they . . . because one family invested a good deal in that hospital, the organization committee felt that to assure that investment, they . . . Mr. Jay Phillips should be assured the power of running the hospital for a minimum of twenty years and have the power to appoint the executive administrative board or the majority of it.

GG: I don't recall the date it was organized. Do you? While that was a . . .

DA: I am not certain just now. I personally felt that Mr. Phillips' contribution was well understood by the community, that he was well respected by the community. And at one time I even made a special appointment with him urging him not to insist on this particular provision, that it would be much better, and I as a father would have wanted my children to know that I am elected freely. And I felt, definitely, and I still feel that he would have served all these years as president. As a matter of fact, even before the expiration of the twenty years, three or four years before, *he* understood it and he waived that thing. But I still, looking backward, I still feel that it would have been better. However, that was his opinion, or [unclear] the opinion of his legal advisors.

GG: Were . . . ?

DA: We all agreed on the need of the hospital. I, for one, felt that the publicity used by the campaign committees stressing the term non-sectarian was offensive both to the Jew, to Jewish tradition, and to the general community. The fact is that because we are Jewish, they had a right to assume that we would build a hospital that would serve the community regardless of race or creed. No prejudice to race or creed. Not because we are non-denominational, but because we are Jews. I felt it very strongly. And where I could not get quite the consent of the campaigners, I did discuss it with my congregation one Yom Kippur day from the pulpit.

I felt that we should [unclear] Mount Sinai Hospital serving the community regardless of race or creed or this term, but not say that we are non . . . Besides, it was insulting to the other hospital . . . every hospital was one of the hospitals that welcomed [unclear] provided ample facilities for Jewish doctors. I am not so sure that was an accident that a year or two later or so, Asbury Hospital changed its name to Asbury Methodist Hospital. And yet they were non-denominational, so [unclear] matters. Saint Mary's was [unclear] liberal to Jews. When the auxiliary was organized of the hospital, people didn't know what to do with . . . because the Federation has rabbis ex-officio, so to speak, the auxiliary of the hospital didn't know what to do with the wives of rabbis.

[Telephone rings]

[Pause]

DA: Whereupon a resolution was passed by the auxiliary that wives of rabbis cannot serve on the executive committee, on the board. I felt this was an insult to the community, to the rabbinate, and to the common sense and decency of the community that ultimately will support and is supporting the hospital. I disclosed that that same Yom Kippur afternoon in the congregation. I remember that sometime later, of course, my full statement never reached Mr. Phillips. And he asked me, "How come you attacked the hospital?" I said, "I did not attack the hospital. I attacked the stupid policy of a few people who do not understand. I believe in the hospital." Well, that restriction was finally lifted, because I certainly would not have remained in a community that would form a community-wide organization and create a ghetto with no rights for wives of rabbis or for any other Jewish person. Well, the hospital finally grew and I think its record is public health.

Incidentally, the tendency to soft pedal the Jewishness, continued for a long time. I do not know what the situation is now. An interesting example, Dr. Moses Barron visited Israel and he brought back with him a number of those signs asking for silence in the hospital. He brought back the pictures of a nurse, a Hadassah nurse with her finger on her lips, and with the inscription underneath in Hebrew [unclear], which means silence. Those pictures were in the hallways of the hospital for some time.

And then one morning I missed them. I asked the office what I assumed that probably somebody was painting then or something. When I still failed to notice them a number of weeks [later], I asked what happened. I was told that after all there are so many non-Jewish patients, and they would not understand the Hebrew. I asked them, suppose you had the picture of the nurse and just as the lips, would you . . . do you think they would have understood what it meant? If it was original Greek, perhaps going back to the Greek medical men, would you have eliminated the Greek? You could have added the word 'silence' if necessary. Not only that, I have faith in the common sense of people. Do you want to go out with me to the corner? I am going to stop the first ten men, show them the picture, and ask them whether they knew what it meant. Of course, I realized that people were afraid to show the Hebrew words.

Another incident. The auxiliary was to provide . . . oh yes, the rabbis had a gentlemen's agreement with the administration before the hospital was opened, and it was opened about mid-winter, around December or so. There would be no Christmas trees in the lobbies. It took some pressure on the part of the rabbis, but there was that agreement. And there was none. However, the auxiliary undertook to provide some kind of recognition of the festival both of Christians and Jews, naturally, you can't have one without the other in . . . not in this hospital. So there would be . . . and I told them, and the rabbis agreed with me, that there is no objection to a little Christmas tree added on the serving table in the room for a Christian patient, especially if relatives bring it in. Of course, it's perfectly alright, just as they would have any other symbol. However, the auxiliary said they would decorate some places mildly both for Christmas and for Hanukkah.

One day I came in and I noticed there were no Hanukkah lamps or anything. I said, "Why?" "Oh," they said, "The women will come around next Sunday or Monday and they will fix up both." "But," I say, "it's already the fifth day of Hanukkah. Christmas happens to come a week later. Shall we just have Hanukkah whenever they observe Christmas?" Of course, that's not the fault of the organization or of the auxiliary, but this leadership.

One day I noticed in the cafeteria a big sign. [Unclear] will be called next Sunday. I think Sunday. Whatever the day was. Easter Sunday, I think it was. But it also happened to be Pesach [Passover]. The sign could have read [unclear] the Second Day of Pesach at the same time. I think these are examples. If there is a kosher kitchen, I do not know what the situation is now, as of May 1970.

GG: I understand that the kosher food is as bad as the non-kosher food.

DA: There is no doubt about it. That probably always was. However, some details in the serving, if, for example, somehow or other, now the hospital has these problems because the meals are served at certain days and so on. But they associated that anybody who asks for kosher wanted candles. But those who did not ask for kosher didn't need any candles, which isn't quite true. There are dozens and dozens of patients, who may not have . . . because they may have eaten kosher in their home, but they go out and eat non-kosher and they have [unclear]. It's not home, but they do have candles. There was no reason why they shouldn't get it. It never occurred to anybody to separate the two.

Not only that, it never occurred to then whoever was in charge to separate the candle lighting from the meal. So when the meal was served at five o'clock in December when the sun . . . it gets dark at four, they bring them the candles at five o'clock where no observant Jewish woman will light the candle, it's too late for all that. So there are the little bumps which had to be straightened out, and probably it required eternal vigilance, which may still be in order for it, I know.

GG: Rabbi, would you tell us something about the beginnings of the Emanuel Cohen Center?

DA: In the . . . after World War I, the Jewish community, grown considerably, probably not much smaller than it is today, because the Jewish community of Minneapolis has grown a very,

very limited extent, the increase. Possibly because the last fifteen, twenty years there were many people who moved from Minneapolis, perhaps retired to the West Coast, and the birth rate was rather small here. The figures . . . I say that, incidentally, regarding the Jewish population almost anywhere are not dependable. In 1920 or thereabouts the American Jewish Yearbook gave the Jewish population from Minneapolis as twenty-two thousand. About in possibly in the early 1930s or thereabouts [unclear] a census was taken here, a Jewish census, and we felt that there were no more than about seventeen or eighteen thousand. Now I think it is back again to the number of maybe twenty-two thousand given officially. The reason why I question the figures is very simple, and I want to say this. I question the figure for the Jewish population in America. I think it's grown quite gradually. It jumped at one time, within just a few years, by almost a million. Somewhere or other, when the big campaign started, the population grew. Though we know normally that when you conduct a campaign, a number of people become invisible.

GG: I understand though that the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds is undertaking a census for the purpose of social planning, primarily.

DA: It is undertaking . . . just what and how accurate it will be, we do not know. Let's remember that even now, and even after the Six Days' War, in the large communities like Los Angeles and so on, possibly half of the people have given nothing. Or maybe someone out of that has . . . some gave a dollar somewhere without giving the name, but a dollar, something like . . . Why is that? It's very difficult to get other people. Now when you organize a campaign, a national campaigner comes in, they give the community the benefit of the doubt that it has more. The usual test, how many children stayed out on Yom Kippur in a Jewish neighborhood, so many . . . that is the average of absentees. This has grown on this date, therefore so many Jewish students. You multiply the population. But when there is something wrong in the basic figures, the multiplication results in a greater and greater error. When a campaigner comes say to Minneapolis and says this should be [unclear], but they [unclear] but look at that city, it is even smaller than yours. And that city, they come and say the same thing about Minneapolis. I am . . . I have an idea that the Jewish population in America may be millions smaller than what is normally assumed. We know that our proportion to the general American population is getting smaller and smaller year by year. That we do know.

Now there were synagogues, Adath Jeshuren, the temples had small synagogues. There was no organized youth work. Several attempts were made now and then but there was no organized youth work. Certainly not for the teenagers, practically no organized Jewish youth work, outside perhaps of the Menorah on the campus. The synagogues were not equipped. There were [unclear] groups for working. Adath Jeshuren, for all practical purposes, same way with the temple, for the North Side had only the orthodox synagogues and they were not equipped at all, not interested in it.

Mr. Emanuel Cohen and his wife felt the need that the community felt, and so when they passed away, they left in their will a . . . they left their estate for work for Jewish youth, with the Minneapolis Jewish Federation as the trustee of that estate—with the Minneapolis Talmud Torah, I beg your pardon, the Talmud Torah of Minneapolis. The Talmud Torah thereupon organized. A special committee was appointed, a special committee, an Emanuel Cohen committee to administer that trust. The Talmud Torah then built on Fremont and Eighth, was

therefore equipped to do a good deal of the youth work. They built a swimming pool, and the swimming pool was still open in 1924 when I came. And then they had a youth director, a youth director with the office in the Talmud Torah. The Talmud Torah had the Emanuel Cohen Center and it was the responsible, legal trustee of the Emanuel Cohen Center.

Then they bought a small building on Ellwood and Eighth . . . Ellwood and Tenth. Yes. Ellwood and Eighth. On Ellwood and Eighth a tiny, little private residence, and opened it for the Emanuel Cohen Center. Our young people had no cars, because their parents had no cars in those days, even in the early 1920s. That's just when our people started to buy cars, really. And of course the youngsters didn't have them available and there was really nowhere to go. Nowhere to go except downtown and our young people didn't go downtown, didn't hang around downtown.

That place was a beehive; literally, no standing room for a number of years. The need was different and the administration was different. It was a question of keeping our children off the streets, providing some kind of place where they could gather. Of course, when one provided a dance for the teenagers, opportunity, it was a supervised dance, which meant exactly what the term means. You danced until eleven, whatever, eleven thirty, and the children were home by . . . walked home and they were there by twelve o'clock. The idea of a community running a dance where . . . which ends at one and then they couple up in private cars and come home at three, of course, such a situation tells the story that there might as well be a dance downtown or anywhere else. It has no meaning. And therefore the need, the original need for centers rendering that kind of service, has disappeared completely all over the country. But the terminology is used and there is the mythical idea that there is still a need. We do something for our young people in this area. There is no supervision of the young people, no matter who sponsored the thing, after midnight, just when life begins.

But there was a great need for that then. There were great needs for decades afterwards. Then the Talmud Torah felt that it was . . . they needed greater than having that little building, and the Talmud Torah turned over its trusteeship to a newly formed board of directors, an independent organization, and the Emanuel Cohen Center became independent of the Talmud Torah. They built that building on the North Side, which functioned until the war years, where all young people were involved in something else. And the rest, of course, is the story of the movement from the North Side to the Park.

GG: Well, the current center evolved over a period of years, and it was preceded by many operating committees and these committees were preceded by a survey in the center as to the need for this kind of a facility. Would you comment upon that particular survey, Rabbi?

DA: Yes. You have [unclear] with the survey that was taking place in the Park and the movement from the North Side to the Park, regarding the question of building a facility in the Park or somewhere in another area away from the North Side. Yet I remember when the question came up at a Federation meeting, because the Federation was sponsored through that survey. The report made was that there are many, many Jewish children in the Park—I do not remember the exact figure given. It was an estimated figure, of course, a guessed figure—but who have no Jewish contacts; and secondly, the need to provide for the leisure time of Jewish children.

It was admitted that at the time that for youngsters, for teenagers there were plenty of facilities in the community. I mean to say, to be more correct, perhaps, that the teenagers were well organized in Minneapolis; as well organized as one could hope for. For example, Beth El Synagogue alone had twenty-two organized Jewish youth groups, and temples, Adath Jeshuren, or the orthodox congregations, [unclear] and so forth, there was no question of needing to organize the teenagers. Whether there was need for housing or whether there was a need for a new facility like the center in the Park, that could have been the purpose of the survey, and a legitimate purpose.

But when the question was raised that there were so many hundreds of Jewish children who have no Jewish contacts, and the questions of leisure time, I raised to these two questions. One, what do you mean by Jewish contact? Let us assume it's admitted then that the teenagers are well organized in Jewish groups, so they have Jewish contacts. Then the question of contact applies to children under thirteen or under twelve, because at thirteen they are usually being prepared for bar mitzvah or confirmation or something. But there may be many who are not. Alright. That means that children between five and twelve, say, or thirteen, so many children, let's say five hundred, have no Jewish contact. Which means what? They never see other children? Of course they do. They go to the same public school. You mean they don't meet with other children as Jews? That's what Jewish contacts means.

Now if the communities . . . why don't they go to some . . . to the Talmud Torah or to a Sunday School? So many parents not interested. If the Federation and the community is to spend community money to interest people in Jewish survival and Jewish values, why not spend the money to interest so many of those parents to send their children to the Talmud Torah or Sunday School no matter what congregation, whether it's conservative or reform? I suspect that what this statement means is because it [unclear] that the children may go, let's say, to a Temple Israel Sunday School for two hours, had no Jewish contacts. And a child who goes to Temple Israel Sunday School or to any Sunday School even—I'm not talking about Talmud Torah—comes to that building more than twice a week or more than two hours a week because their activities [unclear] morning services, this or that. You mean to say that you determine Jewish contact only for a club Monday afternoon or Tuesday afternoon and attending a religious school is not Jewish contact? I want to protest again the misuse of that term. When you study in the survey, I want to know the number of those who are not contacted at all. And if they are not contacted, the community money should be spent to get them contacted in activities which have positive Jewish values and not merely pulling together as Jews.

Secondly, what do we mean by leisure time? Suppose a child graduated the Talmud Torah, and we may persuade him to go to the high school department. His buddy drops out. For his buddy, you organize a basketball team. He cannot attend it because he goes to Talmud Torah, so he drops out. And I know actual such cases. What is leisure, Jewish leisure time, or what is leisure time for a Jewish child? Suppose most of the children will decide they don't want to go four days. We go three days a week. You immediately create a counter activity that means you . . . you put your stamp of approval upon dropouts. Can we agree on some kind of definition of leisure time, well-studied? I also said that I saw the need for a survey, but we should also have an evaluation. In other words, let us study, say, one hundred children who are exposed to the Emanuel Cohen Center, one hundred children who were not exposed but attended a Talmud

Torah, one hundred children . . . what is an evaluation of how well we're doing or if we did not serve well, how we can improve it, some other type of a survey. It was all agreed.

Shortly . . . about a year before I moved from Minneapolis, the final report came in at the Federation meeting. And I raised the question, "Where is the evaluation? I didn't see it. Did anybody see it?" And no one spoke up. Then the chairman at that time, who was the chairman of the survey committee [unclear], said, "Rabbi, there was a survey." Just as you are certain that he did not see it, I am certain that I saw it. Nobody else was there to speak up. I felt that he did not know what the term evaluation meant. But with all our aggressiveness, there is a limit. Don't want to embarrass an individual whose intentions are good but whose understanding definitely is not to be a leader in the community. You know it, I mention no names.

GG: Another agency that existed in Minneapolis, Rabbi, when you came here in 1924 was the Children Sheltering Home. Can you tell us of some of its development?

DA: Yes. For a number of years before, when there was a need for children to find a home somewhere else, either because of a broken home, death of parents, the old . . . age-old traditional practice of having some relatives, somebody [unclear] take care of the children. As the community grew, a number of such cases developed and there wasn't always a family to take care. There was an organization in Belfair, Ohio, the B'nai B'rith Regional Institution that took care of the Jewish communities in the district, B'nai B'rith district. Minneapolis sent its children who needed longtime care to that institution.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm. Well, what agency would have been responsible for sending them?

DA: Possibly the Jewish Family service or the B'nai B'rith Committee. Possibly there was one or the other or a merger of a special committee, I do not know the exact details. I think the guardian angel was Joe [unclear] of blessed memory. He really was a saintly man. Yes, he was the Minneapolis representative, representing for Belfair. Because when we formed the Federation, he used to come and always ask for allocation for Belfair and fight for the cause, and a good cause at that. Belfair was a very well managed institution, and rendered at that time a distinct service in this particular area of caring for longtime . . . care of children who needed a long time. For normal children, later on, the institution changed to a specialized care for children who were emotional . . . who had some emotional problems.

In the communities, there gradually developed an understanding the need and the supply of home care. And so the Jewish Family Welfare became the agency for home care children, and the building was built to take care of children who needed longtime care, and that was the Jewish Children's Home. [Unclear]. I recall now that when the new building was built, the name was changed, shortly thereafter the name was changed to the Oak Park Home because they felt that if the children were sent there many years, they should not get the feeling that they were in a place that sounded like an institutional child institution. The Oak Park Home is a private residence, the name much more appropriate psychologically for the children. The Jewish Federal Welfare, I think that was the name of the organization, with the children there....

[Recording interruption]

[Tape 2 Side B]

DA: ...and there was a special organization and auxiliary that raised funds for the maintenance of some of those children. Of course, in many cases, there was a parent . . . parents who paid for the keep of the children. And they stayed there anywhere from a year to ten years.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm. And Minneapolis Federation for Jewish Service then subsidized part of this.

DA: That . . . that came considerably later.

GG: Oh, I see.

DA: That came later. It was the Jewish Family Welfare. The superintendent was a good, wide awake, intelligent Jewish mother who had no professional training whatsoever. The institution, not having had too many children, was just one big, large home, and it was managed . . . managed more or less in that spirit. Perhaps a number of problems might have required professional special attention and were or were not met, but on the whole, it functioned fairly well.

As the home care movement developed more and more, the tendency on the part . . . or the policy on the part of the Welfare Association was to place children even for longer care in private homes, and the number of the children in the Oak Park Home diminished. Then the question was raised really whether the community should maintain this kind of institution. The supervision or the will to offer supervision on the part of the executive director of the Jewish Family Welfare Organization grew. The resistance on the part of the old timers on the board of the Oak Park Home also grew, which is the most natural situation. And the Family Welfare threatened that they would not place any children there unless there will be more supervision.

And I remember one particular meeting, and by that time the question came up, meeting after meeting after meeting, with more heat than light. I made up my mind not to extend the meeting because I have served on those boards for many, many years. Only if there's something special, and I told them to call me only in a crisis. And I remember one *very* hot night about eleven, eleven thirty at night, I was asked would I come in. And I found a confrontation between the leadership of the two agencies. And I felt, after I heard both sides, that it wasn't . . . of course it was organization versus organization, and organizations cannot reason—only people reason, individuals reason. That it was the way it's presented.

And I think it must have been by one o'clock in the morning I made a motion, which was adopted unanimously. That the Oak Park Home has a right to call upon the upon the Jewish Welfare Home for guidance and for expert advice. And with that right, of course, must have the sensitivity of seeing that . . . to prevent, call regularly. And that it is responsibility on the part of the executive director and the staff of the Jewish Family Welfare to provide such expert information and knowledge and, when necessary, checkups, which was exactly what the other organization wanted, but instead of coming in and imposing it, it came from the children, from

the Oak Park Home. And they had the right and the others must be there to serve them. Right here and now this was passed.

For a while, it functioned, and then, of course, the need for the Home disappeared. And it became . . . it was turned over to the county or some such agencies for disturbed children. For a while, the auxiliary of the home continued to function as usual. The public, of course, didn't know that there was a change, that it was no longer a Jewish children's home or the Oak Park Home.

GG: And I understand the intake was done by Jewish Family and Children Service.

DA: Yes.

[Recording interruption]

GG: [Unclear] was . . .

DA: Preceded.

GG: *Preceded*, yes. And was organized . . .

DA: Preceded what?

GG: Preceded the Jewish Family and Children's Service agency, which is the social welfare agency in the Jewish community. Do you recall the history of the Associated Jewish charities and its development?

DA: Well, that was before my day. When I came here, there was already the Jewish Family Welfare. I came here in 1924 and I think it must have been in 1925 before I was elected a member of the board. And I served on that board over twenty-five years. I believe that [unclear] was the first . . . head worker was the old name for the executive directors. A name taken over from the YMCA from the newly organized JWB when it was organized to provide services at World War I when nobody knew how to . . . what to do in war days, because the United States of America was very limited in its own experience regarding major wars. I always objected to the term head worker because my view was that a who doesn't use his head should not be in the office.

GG: [Chuckles]

DA: And if there is only one person who uses his head in an organization, the organization is in very poor shape. It took a long, long time, where the term was finally changed to the executive director. I believe [unclear] was the first professional trained executive director. Now when . . . the major problem at that time was, of course, new immigrants, which was the major problem. Actual relief for poor people, for there was a minor relief organization. The Hebrew Free Loan Association.

GG: Oh, yes.

DA: Which in this community, as in all other communities, lent money up to a certain amount to anyone without charging any interest, the loan to be repaid at certain periodic . . . with certain periodic installments. The requirement was an endorsement by one or two businessmen depending on the amount involved. And that organization is probably still in existence and has a small capital with a considerable turnover. One of the unique organizations in America. In New York, for example, they lend money up to five hundred dollars, and on the window of the offices, and it has many offices in New York, the Hebrew Free Loan Association, money lent up to five hundred dollars, without any discrimination to race or creed. And many a non-Jew passing by looks at it and says, "Some other Jewish trick. Impossible." I believe the Jewish community is still the only organization in America that has such a service.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm. Wait, you were [unclear].

DA: And no questions may be asked why the borrower needs the money. It is not in the larger community.

GG: And you recall they used to give their annual report.

DA: Yes. And Mr. [unclear] . . .

GG: Right.

DA: Mr. [unclear] used to give the annual report and even at the Federation when the Federation . . .

GG: I don't know what the Jewish Fare means . . .

DA: At the Jewish Family Welfare.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: And [unclear], I believe he started it this way, "I never went to college, but . . ." It invariably became a slogan. The Jewish Family Welfare then dealt primarily in the considerable number of cases of actual poverty where financial relief was necessary, finding jobs here and there, and actual interpreting to people who needed the government agencies who could speak only Yiddish and they were the interpreters for them, interpreting the community to those people.

Later on, they took over more and more the placement of children who needed care; the organization and supervision of the home care and the placement of children in the Oak Park Home for long care. The personnel, Jewish professional service workers were few. And most of them had limited backgrounds. Interestingly enough, that neither at the Emanuel Cohen Center nor at the Jewish Family Service, and possibly at Federations at a later date did the forms to be filled out by applicants for jobs have space for the applicant stating his Jewish background and training. And it became a standing joke that whenever an application was read at a meeting, one

of the other organizations, for me to add, "Is he or is she Jewish?" This, I am happy note, has improved since, that is, some forms are equipped for some Jewish background.

However, the character of the service has changed, and most of the [unclear] we do not have the immigrants except some of the refugees, which is an entirely different group of people with different problems. And the Jewish background and interpretation has disappeared, and of course the Jewish Family Service, which later was changed, Jewish Family Welfare is the name to which it changed, to the Jewish Family and Children Service. This has employed when necessary and sometimes more and more non-Jewish staff simply because of the shortage of Jewish staff, personnel, and because the nature of the work has changed. Whether this has created a state of affairs where we should have only one family and children service in the community and have experts, individual desks for the ethnic groups, is a serious question worth considering. My personal opinion is that it would be good for the community and the expert at the ethnic desk would probably know more than the hit and miss experts that we get today.

GG: But the divisions aren't only ethnic in the agencies. There are also religious.

DA: We . . . these organizations are hardly in a position, [unclear] position. Let me tell you, years back, I remember a case. At one time we got an idea that we ought to study the effectiveness of the organization. In other words, pull out a number of files and study them. Files that were two or three years old that perhaps had a worker for a number of years. I remember we had a subcommittee, I was one of them. I don't recall who the two or three others were.

I remember one file, the question was that a couple didn't agree and the caseworker came in, and they came in, and came in. And a child was born and the child needed a bris, and the caseworker couldn't quite know what to decide it. A few weeks later we come to the next entry in the file that the bris was arranged by some neighbors who were, incidentally, non-synagogue people. The caseworker wasn't conscious of the fact that it had to be done on the eighth day, which reminded me of an old joke about the old czarist regime where a family engaged a wet nurse for the baby and the wet nurse broke the contract whereupon they sued the nurse and twenty years later the decision came that you must complete nursing.

GG: [Laughs]

DA: As I said, the nature of the work, of course, has changed considerably. And it is the type of organization where the content of the centers and, for that matter, the rabbis do it by force and of their own volition, where they consider their own functions and their own needs, that these organizations are now already [unclear] our changing world, should be reviewed every ten years. Not as a criticism, but to find new areas of activity and to have the courage to discontinue other areas.

I want to say while I think of it, the Council of Jewish Women deserves credit for having the courage for consciously having a policy that they sometimes trigger or experiment with an activity, and if it works out and if they need it proven, they turn it over to another agency and take up something else. Pioneering. All our work is pioneering in a changing world. And there should be definitely a principle in every community to go over very carefully all the phases of an

agency, of an institution, and see whether the old needs are still there, whether it can be converted to meet new needs, whether it should be discontinued, which will not be easy with vested interests, but that, I think, is a must. I came to Minnesota in 1922 to Duluth.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: In 1924 to Minneapolis. I had occasion during those two, three years or so, my first years in Minnesota to visit the state institutions, the state penal institutions. I think we had about nine or ten young people in the . . . where is it?

GG: [Unclear] Lake?

DA: Young people. We had about ten or so in Stillwater. We had nine or ten, I think, in . . .

GG: In Saint Cloud?

DA: In Saint Cloud. And we might have had half a dozen . . .

GG: At Red Wing?

DA: At Red Wing. Now the interesting thing is that about twelve years ago I think we had only six or so or seven in Stillwater. We had for a number of years *no one* and then only one in . . .

GG: Saint Cloud?

DA: In Saint Cloud, and possibly one in Red Wing. Of course, the immigrant parents . . .

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: And then there was . . . and then the Depression years created a number of problems. But somehow or other, our community has outgrown that. On the other hand, I do not know whether we know just now the number of Jewish patients in the [mental] health institutions, but we had a large percentage.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm. You mean at Willmar and Anoka and . . .

DA: Yes. They had their large percentage.

GG: Mmmm-hmmm. We're at the point of about in time where the Federation was organized and the Jewish Family Welfare at that time played a part in the organization, but it was only one of the agencies, as I recall, Rabbi.

DA: Yes. Of course, the agencies were the congregations. The rabbis were ex-officio members of the Federation. After all, there aren't so many rabbis. It couldn't be done in New York or Los Angeles, but ex-officio members, and I think that was good for the Federation and good for the

rabbis to fill the needs of the community outside of the Federation. The B'nai B'rith organizations, the congregations . . .

GG: The Talmud Torah.

DA: Talmud Torah, the Jewish Family Service. The Federation took in the Talmud Torah as one of its beneficiaries, and in this respect, like the history of the Minneapolis Talmud Torah in general, the community was ahead of most communities, where the Jewish education is barely being recognized, to date, or receiving a minor, minor part of what it should receive from the overall Jewish community funds. The Federation at the Talmud Torah used to have its annual money raising banquet. By agreement with the Federation, the Talmud Torah gave up its independent campaign, except for capital needs, and that of course with the approval of the Federation. The Talmud Torah then was supported, continued to be supported by tuition, by what the auxiliary carries, and by funds from the Federation. Where outside of the Minneapolis Talmud Torah, the Federation limited itself to Jewish cultural and rehabilitation work on a national and international scale. That is, sending its funds to national and international agencies for that kind of work.

GG: What was the reason for the needs? Where did they feel the need to organize a Federation?

DA: In the first place, there was the long felt need that just as an individual has needs of various types, so a community has needs of various types, but they are interrelated. Like the human body, the body of an individual, what happens to the hand that breaks the heart, what happens to the heart affects the organs, so in a community. The family needs, may have many needs, and no one agency can solve the problem.

Then there were the growing needs of the larger community, the American Jewish community. There was, after World War I, there was the Jewish . . . the joint distribution committee. Now the Joint Distribution Committee had to come in and receive funds from the community, there was no agency to . . . not a functioning organization locally, but there has to be some organized community to respond to the need which is national, and need abroad with the many communities destroyed by World War I. And so there was an ongoing need for cooperative effort.

And the community of Minneapolis [unclear] as a Federation, as Federations were formed in many other communities. Incidentally, I recall a little discussion where I lost in that discussion regarding the name of the newborn agency. It was [unclear] who came with names from New York or somewhere else and proposed the name the Federation for Jewish Service. Now I maintained that it was a misnomer, and I have not changed my mind. I maintain that a synagogue is also engaged in Jewish service, that charity is not the only form of Jewish service. Education is Jewish service. Many other needs. Therefore the term Jewish Service should not be restricted to an organization which primarily sponsoring with the [unclear] as most of the funds go. Even in those days, not to speak of today with the problem of the post-Nazi war and the problem of Israel is concerned, I suggested that it be . . . so it should be called Minneapolis Jewish Federation, but not for Jewish service. I lost, because at that time it was a period where people had faith in professionals. Just as today we are [unclear] against [unclear] and [unclear].

GG: [Chuckles]

[Rustling noises]

[Sound quality changes]

GG: You know, rabbi, our emphasis for many years was in the area of campaigning. And it was interesting to learn a short time ago that one of the original stated goals in 1930 in the bylaws included the area of social planning.

DA: Well, unfortunately, the art of social planning is still there to be developed, as far as I can see it. In the first place, it has to be done by people, or at least by a committee that can organize or should assume the responsibility. I think we have individuals who have the ability, and have the background of actually working on blueprints and frames of reference for the social planning. Perhaps an illustration comes to my mind. When we speak of a survey and so on, this need and that need, it is a survey *after* something has happened. It isn't planning in advance. Now I believe that even the movement of the settlement of Jewish families can be planned.

Many years back, I had an idea that as the North Side Jewish community was moving from Lyndale and Olson Memorial, at that time it was called Sixth Avenue, further north and west, where the Homewood district and so on started to have the Homewood district. But Jews were not welcome in Robbinsdale. When a family moved in, they found themselves in an unfriendly environment and after a while moved out. I said, "Why not help ten or fifteen families to build houses together in Golden Valley, kitty-corner of Nineteenth."

GG: Mmmm-hmmm.

DA: There were a number of people, including Moishe Berman and a few others who quite ready to buy their homes there or build. I said at that time one could build a house for ten thousand dollars or something.

GG: Oh! That's [unclear]. [Chuckles]

DA: Boy, it wasn't . . . it wasn't in 1924, it was in the late 1930s or thereabout.

GG: Oh.

DA: And I said . . . and then they will move. You will develop – which happened. But with a gap in between.

GG: Mmmm.

DA: Or as they moved to the Park with five, ten miles in between. Now if we had done that, we would have saved our institutions. Beth El Synagogue, the new Talmud Torah, and so on, would gradually move, using these institutions. There would have been a normal process of evolution

instead of a gap, a physical, geographic gap. Well, we were even negotiating. Then the original owners backed out, but the Federation was organized already. People could not see it at all, that kind of planning in advance before you develop.

You cannot tell people where to move, but you can create the conditions which would help them to move. A Catholic Church got the idea. They build the church, they have the [unclear] school and they will not tell Jews to [unclear] and they are right because how they built is not a ghetto. They built a cultural center and the culture is like a university. View the fraternity houses surrounding the university. They're not ten miles away. It's as simple . . . that's what I call by community planning. Now, frankly speaking, the area of successful community planning in this country, to the best of my knowledge, does not exist yet.

GG: I think you . . .

DA: Unfortunately. Unfortunately, because the whole problem is the . . . it brings up another thought. There is a resolution in the minutes of the Federation going back about twenty-five years or so, that the community maintain, the Federation maintain a bureau, a file for vital . . . Jewish vital statistics. It never got off the ground. We ought to have . . . Call Rabbi Minda, I think he was the first chairman.

GG: Of that committee?

DA: Yes. I don't think the committee ever met. Now you can see the need. The reason I say the need, when I came and I mentioned that before, in the previous discussion, when the first thing I discovered when I came here was the putting up of the crosses at a . . . as a memorial.

GG: On Victory Memorial Drive.

DA: On Victory Memorial. Now this was in 1924. World War I ended in 1918; that was only six years after the war. And we are dealing with people who were killed, the young people, and we no longer had proper names regarding the Jewish boys or who were Jewish or not, six years after the war. And I discovered that one name was carried on a Jewish list and were put up [unclear]. A year later the mother came, lived somewhere out of town, and they called me. And I said it was perfectly proper. It was a mistake, the name was something like Brown. You know, like something, Samuel Brown or something, I didn't know. They changed it back. I am sorry it happened, but in a way I'm glad it happened. It gave the committee a challenge to know how the other mothers would have felt with the crosses on them.

Now I think we should begin the formation and the maintaining of a bureau, a file for Jewish statistics. The committee will have to work out . . . there will be many, many problems regarding the questionnaire. For example, regarding a marriage, if there is an intermarriage, that must be recorded in the vital statistics. Otherwise, you don't have any more a Jewish list. Without passing judgment on individuals involved, the religion of the man and the woman who are married is important in vital statistics. Especially vital statistics for a Jewish community [unclear] of the Federation.

GG: In the early years of the Federation, were there any controversial issues that were strongly debated?

DA: Yes, of course. The relative budget to be assigned to this or that national organization . . . for example, the B'nai B'rith people wanted more and more for anti-defamation. Keeping in mind that we had two and afterward four anti-defamation organizations, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Worker . . .

GG: Labor.

DA: Jewish Labor. Each one, of course, wanted more and more. And each one had its particular zealot. And that was an annual problem. Then again, the question of how much should be given to the Zionist movement. Before Israel became a state there were some who were enthusiastic Zionists. There were some who were neutral. And there were a few old timers who were quite, quite indifferent, to put it mildly.

GG: Wasn't there a question, too, of [unclear]?

DA: Now [unclear] the [unclear] as you will recall was the promise of the Soviet hierarchy, the Soviet dictatorship to establish in [unclear] in far Siberia a Jewish territory where the culture would be Yiddish, and of course the way of life Communistic. Because of the geographic problems and many other problems, which we need not discuss here, the Jews did not move to [unclear].

In fact, in 1934 or 1935, when I visited . . . I spent over a month in Russia, and when I visited the [unclear] that is the Jewish Communist Office, since liquidated by Stalin in his purge, I asked them the purpose of [unclear] because I knew about [unclear] than the half a million Jews who lived in Moscow at that time. It was not a vital issue. The Revolution was still young, only about . . . I bet it was about fifteen years old. The Jews were the middle men. The Jews were still all literate. Many of the elders of the older generation of non-Jews were illiterate still from the czarist days. And the Jew was needed in Russia, in European Russia. Why should any Jew give up a job in Moscow or Leningrad or Odessa and move to [unclear] where the form of transportation was by an occasional tractor? Where there was really nothing Jewish except—and I checked on that when I visited the [unclear] and the other Yiddish offices, Yiddish Culture in Odessa—that Yiddish literature, they knew that literature was primarily communist propaganda translated in Yiddish. Communist statistics broadcast in Yiddish. What incentive was there for a Jew to leave their relatively comfortable European Russia for residence in [unclear]?

When I asked the [unclear] leader, what about [unclear] what does it mean, this proclamation to establish a Jewish republic, he said, "Because we believe that the Jews will be the best cement." And the word 'cement' I remember, the one he used. "To cement the various ethnic groups that we hope to attract to that unpopulated vast area of Russia." I say, "And suppose they will not come? What about the proclamation?" Then he said, "The proclamation is no proclamation." Well, of course, at that time there were Jews here who believed in [unclear] the secular nationalists perhaps. And they wanted an allocation. I opposed it, as did a few others, but some allocation was given to them. That was another controversial method.

The anti-defamation, the Zionism, I mean the support, how far it should go, they . . . these, I believe, were the major three areas where every year the budget committee and then afterwards the board had to fight about. The proportion to be given to Jewish education was another problem. And also a problem even in Minneapolis. I remember a very prominent mentor of the community objected to an allocation to the Talmud Torah and wanted to withdraw from the Federation. I was happy to see that same man making a substantial contribution about ten years later or so when they built the new Talmud Torah building on Queen Avenue.

GG: Rabbi, there was controversy, was there not, about the Jewish Welfare Board?

DA: Yes. The controversy came up almost every year regarding the budget, the allocation from Minneapolis. The Jewish Welfare Board was organized during World War I to provide services for the Jewish men in the Army/Navy. When the war ended, the Jewish Welfare Board remained. Approximately we were at the end of a campaign with a million dollars. Whereupon the administration of the board decided, and wisely at that time, to organize that which was needed on the American Jewish scene and hardly existed, namely effective centers for youth, like the [unclear]. And then they organized the movement of building and developing Jewish centers.

Between the wars, the Army/Navy work receded and the center movement continued, and there was a great need for that. It was perfectly justified. During World War II, there was a tremendous new need for the expanded Army and Navy. And American Jewry became quite liberal, and justly so, in contributing to the National Jewish Welfare Board. However, the National Jewish Welfare Board by that time then had two departments in one. Namely, Army and Navy work and the Jewish chaplaincy, and center work. Now who . . . the American Jewish community that gave primarily for Army and Navy work [unclear] had no say as to how the dollars should be divided over the two departments. After World War II, the big contributions continued but the appeal was for the . . . the emotional appeal. And the response was on the emotional appeal for the men in the services where the money, a greater and greater budget was spent for the centers.

But by that time the need of the centers changed in America, and in many communities there were and there are serious questions whether centers should be built. However, the big organization, which had national momentum come into a community what do you know about it, look at here and look at that, and centers are built where there are congregations, synagogues and temples that can do better work perhaps, certainly more intensive work, and more expert work than the centers. And there's a question whether the content of the center is justified. However, the money was there, money raised, and money given by the momentum of Army/Navy work. Now the Minneapolis Jewish community understood it, and so the Federation board decided several times to send two checks to the National Jewish Welfare Board. One for the Army/Navy work and one for the center work. However, we knew that we were kidding ourselves, because no matter what we do, they put it in the same [unclear] and they would decide how to distribute the money and not ours.

A similar situation developed regarding the wider scope of B'nai B'rith. Now B'nai B'rith insofar as it's an organization with the lodges and members, that's their own business. The business of the membership. The wider scope includes the Hillel Foundation, and B'nai B'rith

youth work. Now the Hillel Foundation is really a different problem. In Minnesota, for example, we helped the [unclear] foundation [unclear] supporters. By the three major communities, federations of the state [unclear]. And then something supplemented perhaps from the national. The AZA or B'nai B'rith youth work is just another form of youth work. The synagogues have their own youth work, local and national. Why should the Federation of Minneapolis contribute to the AZA and not contribute to the United Synagogue youth or to the Temple youth? Just because they have a building and do more intensive work on [unclear] responsibility. AZA is a B'nai B'rith [unclear] let B'nai B'rith lodges support them. Why should the Federation support them?

Now so what would we do? The Federation sent two checks to the wider scope; two different checks. This we give for the Hillel Foundation, but for the other thing, that with the B'nai B'rith, we don't want or we gave a nominal thing, but again, we . . . that we were fooling ourselves. We are powerless. And it is absolutely immoral to penalize the religious institutions and to give a premium to the non-religious institutions. If non-religion or disinterest . . . which isn't true, because the same people, the B'nai B'rith members are also members of the synagogue. But if you get the secular group to be secular [unclear] denomination. Let them build their own institutions then.

[Background noises – recording interruption?]

GG: Alright, Rabbi. We've talked about the Federation's background and image. How do you project the image of the Federation for the goals of the future?

DA: Well, the Federation, after all, is an instrument. An instrument of the . . . of an American Jewish community. The question therefore is: what is the image . . . what image can be conceived for the future American Jewish community? Now whether the Federation is the instrument to crystallize that image, the Federation is constituted today. Or whether we need a different kind of council, perhaps, committee to study this problem; a committee made up of the Federation, of others in the community, I am not certain at this time. The question is, what can be, what can we make of the future of the American Jewish community? That is, if we want to shape it instead of letting outside forces to shape it.

And if you can meet the outside forces to shape it as the function today, as they operate today, a large percentage, they have the largest percentage of American Jewry will assimilate and disappear as Jews. I want to say this, that that happened before. Way back [unclear] it was the saving remnant and the remnant may be superior because it will be voluntary and it will have a greater opportunity to make a contribution. However, the problem then, the immediate problem is, and a growing problem is what should that contribution be? We do have to be members of the Jewish people. We are members also of the American people, and that is the uniqueness of contemporary history. All through the centuries, the Jew was a member of the Jewish people only. He might have lived in this country or that, because there were no democratic countries....

[Recording interruption]

[Tape 3 Side A]

DA: Why? Because they are beginning to feel that the whole process was a fake. The faculty wasn't concerned. I remember years back, I told the former president of the University of Minnesota, he didn't like it. He asked me how come there were certain things about some of the lecturers invited for the convocations. Said, "Rabbi Aronson, what . . . why all these differences?" I said, "Because we have too many people in high positions who are neutral on the problems of the community." Neutral. He says, "You mean me?" I say, "You occupy a high position. And I mean just that there are too many neutral generals." But now therefore we need some group to think through the values of Jewish history, and how we can make those values living forces in the life of our community. It isn't a question of preserving another people. There are too many peoples. Question whether we can preserve a people that's worthwhile. Through the centuries, we were not only people. And it's not a prejudiced statement when I say it; we were cultural, morally and ethically above our neighbors. Now we must become thus today. And then in the values in which we have more experience, we will share with our neighbor. That will be our contribution.

The purpose of an education. I remember that my father, blessed memory, and he was typical of all the Jewish fathers, used to talk to me, and we talked Yiddish. I was probably eight years old where then the [unclear] when will you become human. It's time to be [unclear]. Where do you have an ethical college education which stresses the children to become human? Not merely to become a good mechanic or just a good scholar, but to become human. And by human he meant precisely to emphasize those areas of our lives which raises above the mere animal level. Eating and drinking and meeting our material needs, we share with animals. But it was a daily emphasis on the old biblical dictum, man lives not by bread alone. Interestingly enough, that is precisely what the children of the affluent homes have discovered, which our good fathers taught us from the very beginning.

[End of interview]