

SARAH GOLDSTEIN

(With Sid "Buddy" Terapp)

March 4, 1994

Interviewed by David Schulman

SG: ...Asheville was due to the help of a member of our family. When we came to Asheville there were only sixty Jewish families. They were very, very friendly, came to our house, many of them, immediately and offered what help they could. We had two congregations at the time and it was unusual that most families belonged to both congregations. We had a city market on Pack Square and the city gave the Jewish people a store where kosher meat could be sold. That went on for quite some time and then there was a man by the name of Mr. Schwartz and he took over the selling of kosher meat. He kept it for a while and then Mr. Rosen took it over. After Mr. Rosen took it over, when he stopped selling it, Mr. Shandler, in his grocery store, took it over and he sold the meat one day a week on Wednesday. And it was quite a hassle to go over there and all the people trying to grab up that meat. When he gave up, there was no place in Asheville where kosher meat was sold. So then many of us started getting our meat from other cities. We got it from a place in Charlotte and to this day, I think, many people continue to get their meat from out of town. Asheville was a very friendly city and it didn't take long to get to know about everyone. We had a man here by the name of Frank Silverman. He had a young son and he felt like his son wasn't getting enough Jewish association. So he made a contribution which he hoped would go towards the building of a center where the Jewish youth could congregate. He was able to get B'nai B'rith interested in it and B'nai B'rith nominated the offices and I happened to be the secretary they nominated and they called me up and told me I was secretary. I didn't know a thing about it. And Julius Levitch was made president and he was very active and he was so much in favor of it, that he gave his all. And Max Crone and Adele Conn were made vice presidents and Leo Finkelstein was made treasurer. We met to make plans as to how we would go about making this a reality.

I: This was approximately early 40s do you think?

SG: No, it was about '39. We finally decided that we would go to all the Jewish people in town. We met on a Sunday and Max Crone had a flower shop on Patton Ave. and we met in that flower shop. We divided the names of all the people and we went from door to door and solicited the money. We got the money and Julius had already located the site on Charlotte Street and so after we got the money, we bought that house on Charlotte Street. Then we got a mortgage on the house for \$2,000 to do the alterations and remodeling that we thought were necessary. The offices met once a week and we were advised of the progress and as to what was going on. And then after Adele Conn's father donated the money for the reception hall and Dave's Steel Co. gave us the steel and so we were able, it was funny, Ruth and Morris Fox were the first people to get married in the center. And when they did, there was nothing but logs on the floor and we had to go over those logs. And then when the place was remodeled, just about that time, you know, the war broke out. And when the war broke out the Jewish Welfare Board became interested and they furnished funds so that once a week on Saturday night we were able to have a spaghetti supper for the Jewish boys who came up from Camp Croft, South Carolina. And in addition to having that on Saturday night, the people in Asheville, those that were able, gave them lodging for Saturday night and also had them for dinner for Sunday. Now, we had many people, many soldiers in our house for dinner and one thing that occurred, we were having two soldiers come on the Sunday and in the morning my mother was called and said, Mrs. Scheptowitz, are you sure you want those boys and she said yes. And she says why, what's the question? And so this woman said, well it turns out that one of the boys, he was brought up in a Jewish

neighborhood in Brooklyn and he was so used to Jewish people, but he's Italian. And she says, I didn't know whether you would want to have him. And my mother says, certainly.

I: Now your family was...

SG: Scheptowitz. And so we continued that and, of course, many Asheville girls became romantically involved and some of them were married to some of these soldiers that they had met. And all through the years the Asheville community, the Jewish community, they were, well, like one family and it was very good living. And then we had the Brown Shirts.

I: Yeah, I want to ask you some more about them. What can you tell us about William Dudley Pelley?

SG: Well, he came to Asheville and his headquarters were in a house at the corner of Charlotte Street and Macon Avenue. In fact, in last Sunday's paper, Mr. Robinson had a picture of that very place that he said had been a clubhouse.

I: Oh, I read that, that was the Women's Club of Asheville.

SG: Well, that was Pelley's headquarters before. And it seems as if the Anti-defamation League of B'nai B'rith became very much involved and we had a young attorney here, Alvin Cartis, and Alvin was able to get Pelley's records for a weekend and there were three of us, Hilda Finkelstein and my sister Jennette, and I, we went up to Alvin's office on a Saturday night and at 2 o'clock in the morning, we were copying the names of the subscribers to his paper. We found it was very interesting that there were not many people around Asheville that were subscribing. There was one woman in Black Mountain that it seemed like she was contributing a good deal. And then most of his subscribers were from out west.

I: So he just used Asheville for a base of operations?

SG: That's right. And they were finally able to get him to leave the city. So they were able to get rid of him alright.

I: So Alvin Cartis was able to get Pelley's records and you and Hilda Finkelstein, is that Leo's...

SG: Sister and my sister Jennette.

I: And she married who?

SG: She married Cline. Her name was Jennette Cline.

I: So you copied the records over the weekend and then he got the records back?

SG: That's right. This judge here in Asheville, I don't remember his name, but he was the one that got those records. I guess had them released or something so that we could get them.

I: From what I understand I think it was they got him for stock fraud. He had investors in this newspaper and he was really taking the money and so they got him on that.

SG: Yes, they were able to get him out of the city.

I: You don't remember seeing him while you were in Asheville?

SG: No, I don't think so.

I: Did any of the congregation much have any personal involvement or they just knew he was here?

SG: Knew he was here I think. I don't think there was any real personal involvement. And, of course, naturally, there have been alot of changes in the community over that period of time.

I: What are the most dramatic changes? What do you think has changed alot?

BT: The merchants. When I was growing up here most of the stores were owned by Jewish merchants.

I: Can you tell us some of the names of the Jewish merchants?

SG: Well, of course, when we came to Asheville there was no such thing as Haywood Street. I mean that street had no businesses on it. All your businesses were on Biltmore Avenue. And I would say 90% of them were owned by Jewish people, just little stores, one after another. Except there was one, it was the Rapid Store and that was owned by L. Bloomberg. And that was the only, and then there was another store there, it was Palais Royal and the man was Jewish, his wife wasn't Jewish but he was Jewish. That was a department store. But outside of those it was just alot of little stores. Some of the names of the merchants were William Silverman, Goldberg and Goldstein, you know. Well then we came, Patton Avenue started more. Well, Bon Marche was in the old Crest building on Patton Avenue. That was Bon Marche. Then we had a man by the name of Bob Zager and he had a men's shop on Patton Avenue. And the Schochets had a place on Biltmore Ave. There were a couple of places. And Reuben Grand and a fellow by the name of Miller had a little habadashery place. Finkelstein's Pawn Shop was on Biltmore Avenue. Then we had a man by the name of Gross who had a little hotdog stand, but it was very popular. Everybody knew it. It was on Broadway. And in later years the same Gross opened a restaurant right on Pack Square. Then we had Morris _____ who had a men's store on Pack Square. Then we came over to Haywood Street. When we got to Haywood Street, Bon Marche moved over to Haywood Street. Then we had Harry Wenner's, we had Joe Cooper, he had Field's, a men's shop. And then we had a fellow, he's still around, he had a camera shop for many years. I forget his name, Winkel, and he had a camera shop. And Fader's had a little sandwich and soda shop. In the Miles building right on the corner. And across the street on the corner you had Wilkins and he wasn't Jewish but his wife was. Estus Wilkins.

I: So there must have been at least 15 or 20 or more?

SG: Well, _____ Goldberg was on Patton Avenue. He sold newspapers.

BT: And the Adlers, they had an Army/Navy store.

SG: Well, that was some years later. And the place was full of Jewish merchants.

I: What about Jewish boarding houses?

SG: When we came to Asheville, my mother came with a sister who's health we

came for, before we came to Asheville. What happened is, this fellow from Providence was here representing the Jewish Welfare Board. And when he found that my mother and sister had to come to Asheville, he let them know of Mrs. Rosenfeld who had a boarding house. So Mrs. Rosenfeld's family met my mother and sister at the station and took them.

I: Where was this house, do you remember the location?

SG: It was One Merriman Avenue, right at the beginning of Merriman Avenue.

I: And alot of the Jewish people that came to town to vacation or for sickness would stay at her place.

SG: Yeah. And then you had Mrs. Early and she also took people to her house to eat.

I: And so your family, again you said 1921, now I knew of Hy Scheptowitz.

SG: That's my brother.

I: How about the Goldstein family, your husband's family, were they here or did they come later?

SG: My husband's family came to Asheville, his father came to Asheville in 1919. He came from Birmingham, Alabama, and he came for his health. And then the rest of his family came in 1921, just about the time we came. And, of course, his father bought a grocery store from the Pearlmans, not Mr. Pearlman but Mr. Pearlman's father-in-law, a Michalove. That's other merchants I forgot to mention, Pearlman and Michalove. And ____ Argentar. It's easy to forget them. There's so many.

I: So your husband's father bought Mr. Michalove's grocery store?

SG: Yes. And it was on Hill Street which is a colored neighborhood. And he had that store up until the time he died.

I: And your husband, and he had several brothers, what were their names?

SG: Well, my husband and his brother were in business together. They had Blue Ridge Trucking Co.

I: And that was Bernie and Nemia. Were there other brothers?

SG: Well, he had a sister who was executive secretary to Thomas Dewey when he was governor of New York. Lillian Goodrich.

I: And that was Bernie's sister.

SG: He had another brother but he didn't live here then. And he had a younger brother who was in service and he was out in California and two planes collided and he got two broken hips and everything. But he recovered and he's living out there now, Sidney.

I: Tell me a little bit about the Scheptowitz family again. It was yourself and you told me about your sister, Jennette, were there others?

SG: Yes. When we came to Asheville there were six girls and one brother. My oldest sister was Ester, my next oldest sister was Minnie and then there's my sister Dessie who was also here. Then my brother was between us, then came a sister Ray, then me and then Jennette. So we were six girls with a brother between us.

I: And your family did what, your parents here in Asheville?

SG: Well my father was dead when we came to Asheville. So, my sister Dessie and Minnie opened a shop on Patton Avenue and it was called My Lady's Shop. But they opened it with a man who was here for his health from New Orleans. And everything went fine until he got well and decided to leave and they couldn't run the place by themselves so they closed it up. And then my sister Dessie who was here, she was buyer of the children's department at Bon Marche for 30 years. When she worked at Bon Marche she wasn't married and her name was Scheptowitz. Now her name is Litchenfeld. She married a Litchenfeld, Isaac Litchenfeld. Now my sister Jennette and I, we were secretaries. And my brother you knew.

I: Now his wife, what family was she?

SG: She was from the Shotts family.

I: Was that from Asheville too?

SG: Yeah. They had the Hollywood Shop on Patton Avenue. They came to Asheville, I think her folks in the 1890s. Mr. Shotts, he had a brother and they both came, I think, in the 1890s.

I: Can you tell me what you remember about the rabbis that have come through Asheville?

SG: Oh gosh. We have had so many. We really have. We've had alot of rabbis. And, as per usual, some you liked, some you didn't like. And then the rabbi that was here the longest was Rabbi Unger. And he was at the temple. And he really did, to my mind, a terrific job. He had things going all the time you know. And up until he took ill, everything was stirring very well. And of course, back then, we had a Sunday school one year of 149 pupils. But then in later years, so many have gone. Alot of the members went to Florida to live, you know, they retired. And, of course, sad to say, alot of them just went the way we're all going to go.

I: Leo Finkelstein was telling me about a rabbi that had a grocery store because the congregation wasn't large enough, now that might have been before you came to Asheville, but he had a grocery store in addition to being a rabbi. Do you remember anything about him?

SG: I don't remember that.

I: Rabbi Cline, I think, was here.

SG: We had two Clines, one at the schul and one at the temple. And Rabbi Jacobs and Gelberman. And when we came to Asheville, the schul didn't have a rabbi but they had a Reverend Fox. And he was also a _____. And we used to go over, there was a place called Younce on Lexington Avenue and we'd buy chickens and then we'd take them out to his house and he would slaughter them. And, unfortunately, he was killed in an automobile accident.

I: While he was here?

SG: Yeah.

I: You mentioned that families would many times join both congregations.

SG: Yeah. They'd be active in both. But in the later years, that hasn't been true. It's been more separated.

I: What about the sisterhood and hadassah, I'm sure you were active in that, can you mention a few names that you worked with over the years or any particular projects?

SG: I was also very active in the National Council of Jewish Women. And the sisterhood, I was very active in the sisterhood of the temple. One year we couldn't get a president, so we decided that we would have a precidium, so we involved six women in that and I was one of those six women. We got along very well.

I: Who were some of the other women or families that worked with you in that? Can you mention any names that you remember just throughout the years?

SG: Well, there was really so many women that were active.

I: What about, on another subject, Leo said that Finkelstein's was sort of the place that people went to when they came to town. And he also talked about alot of people that were sort of, maybe, travelling through that needed some help, that there wasn't a UJA or whatever, they would go to Finkelstein's. Do you know anything about that?

SG: No. I do know that people used to go there to Finkelstein's, maybe they'd give them bus fare to get to the next town.

I: A meal and a bus ticket or something.

SG: Yeah, that's what they used to do. Later years when we had a Federated Charities, then they used to I think give them a certain amount of money and they would still go there. Now the first president of Federated Charities was this Bob Zager I mentioned. And I was the first secretary. I remember the first year Federated Charities, we thought we were wonderful. We raised \$3,000. I don't remember the year, but it was pretty far back. And I think in regard to the center, Buddy reminded me of something, Julius was the president and he was very strict about letting people in and all like that. So it was a Sunday and this Fanny Gross was having a reception for her daughter. And the center, the ballroom was not clean, and Julius wouldn't let anybody go in there on Friday and Saturday. So I got in there on Sunday morning and that ballroom, I swept that whole place. And my husband told me, if he heard of me doing that again. And you know the first barmitzvah reception that was held at the center was his. That was the very first reception held at the center.

I: So was the barmitzvah at the center too, or just the reception.

SG: Just the reception. His barmitzvah was at temple.

I: You did one at the temple and one at the schul.

SG: Yeah. For my mother he did it at the schul and his mother had joined the temple.

I: So you were satisfying both factions. Are there any other events that went through the center that you remember, speakers, or you mentioned about the war and they had Saturday night dinners, anything else specifically you might think of?

SG: Well, we were having all sorts of entertainment come in and everything. I mean, I don't remember specifically. I remember one incident that I don't know whether I ought to put it on this or not.

I: It's probably a good one to put on.

SG: See, we didn't charge dues back then and we were raising money in different ways. So then it was decided, we got a bunch of slot machines and we did on Saturday nights and the place was crowded. And people were playing and we were making...

I: Is this during the war?

SG: No. And we were making plenty of money. But the first thing we know, boy, they had to get out of there in a hurry. The city said, get them out of there. So that was that.

I: That was a good fundraising event.

SG: Yeah, very good.

I: Tell me a little more about the foundation of the center. I know you told me about the officers and Mr. Levitch was the first president. Any other ones, was he president for a long time?

SG: Yeah, he was president for a long time.

I: What about his family, the Levitch family, do you know anything about them?

SG: He had two brothers, three brothers and a sister. And one brother was here working for Sternberg Co. and he was married, had two children and he went down to Tennessee on business and they said he got contaminated water and he came back and he died. Then he had a younger brother who died very young. And the pool at the center is named after this youngest brother that died, Leonard. And then the sister and other brother moved to Charleston, SC. I know the sister is gone but I don't know about the brother.

I: So were his parents in Asheville?

SG: They were here when we came to Asheville. And I think they came for his father's health. But then most people came for that reason.

I: And then alot of them married and stayed here.

SG: Yeah.

I: Now the story with Pelley, the names I hear mentioned alot are Alvin Cartis and Julius Levitch and R.R. Williams.

SG: Yes, he was an attorney.

I: Do you remember any others that were involved in sort of catching Pelley, any other people? B'nai B'rith?

SG: Yes, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

BT: It didn't take them long once they had these records to get rid of him.

I: That must have been quite an exciting weekend when you were copying and you didn't have copy machines, you mean you were actually copying?

SG: No, we were actually copying them. Yeah.

I: Other things from throughout your life in Asheville, any other things that, we talking about during the war and that sort of thing, any other events, was the temple always where it was at? I mean, did they build that building, was it in another building before that?

SG: Yes. It was in a little building and the funny thing, the building it was in had been a church before.

I: Do you remember where that was?

SG: I don't remember. I think Leo was president when the new temple was opened. The new temple is at Liberty. The old temple was on Spruce Street across the street from Thomas Wolfe's home. I'm trying to think, you know so many things do happen.

BT: ...avid baseball fans. These two here, in fact they introduced us to baseball. So one time during the World Series we got out of temple, I guess it was a temple break at that time, so we all went over to this drugstore and listened to the ball game to see who was going to win.

I: So you all lived within walking distance obviously, or was it a pretty long walk?

BT: Pretty long walk. We walked from Coleman Avenue at that time. We used to walk to schul and drop grandma off and my uncle and then we'd walk on to temple.

I: So it was quite a big family, how many were they of you at one time at the highest point maybe, the Scheptowitzs and Goldsteins and other, Clines?

SG: We had two sisters that died before he was born.

BT: Seven in our house.

SG: My sister, Jennette Cline, her husband had the Charlotte Street Pharmacy for many years. Twenty seven years he had that drug store.

I: So that was your sister's husband.

SG: Yeah.

I: So your family, your dad did what in town?

BT:

I: I don't think I've mentioned on the tape your name, so for tape purposes...

BT: My name is Sid Terapp, everybody calls me Buddy.

I: So Buddy Terapp, and your mother is a sister of Sarah's. Let's see if we can gather some thoughts here and then come back to this tape. (PAUSE) Ms. Goldstein, we've been talking just a little bit while the tape recorder has been off about how socially the community, society has changed. Buddy was talking about how there's so few Jewish merchants in comparison to what they were and then we started talking about how back then most of the Jewish wives did not work in their husband's businesses and you were talking about some of the social activities and the card games. So from the number of Jewish merchants that were in town, we were saying that probably at least in the downtown area or just in the business community, I guess at that time it was only downtown, a majority were Jewish merchants?

SG: Yes. But, of course, now we have two. We have Schochet's, we have Sidney Schochet and we have Alan Levey and _____.

I: Mentioning the Schochets, were they a long-time family too?

SG: Yes, they're a very long-time family. They were here way before we came.

I: So they came before 1921?

SG: Yeah.

I: That was Sid Schochet and I think his brother passed away.

SG: He had a brother Eugene Schochet and he had a sister, Lillian Levy.

I: And were they related to the Bloomborgs?

SG: Yes. Mrs. Schochet, I think, and S.I. Bloomberg were sister and brother. So they were to some of the Bloomborgs.

I: Harry Bloomberg's father, what was his name?

SG: He was L. Bloomberg that I mentioned that had the Racquet Store on Biltmore Avenue. That was Harry's father. Then there was Jack Bloomberg who in later years had a department store on Pack Square.

I: Now was that L.I.'s brother?

SG: No. He was just a relative. I don't know how they were related.

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SG: Socially, the city was very active. The sisterhood was running, we had New Year's Eve dances and we had all sorts of affairs and the women were naturally playing cards and in later years, majong, and we were very active I would say. And all organizations, naturally, were having fund drives and we kept very busy, we women. We had an organization here which was called _____. There were six girls that started it, but it went on over a period of years and once a year they would run a large dance and that money would go to the Charities. Then they called it the Ladies Aid and it would go to those charities. When we'd run these affairs, we would put out an ad program and we'd go around the city collecting ads and it was a very successful.

I: Tagama, is that Greek?

SG: Yeah, it means the girls, I think or something.

I: Do you remember the six names?

SG: Yes, I think I do. The one that started it was named Charlotte Victor, later she became Charlotte Weiss, Rosa Finkelstein - Leo's sister, Tessie Levitch - Julius' sister, and there was a family here by the name of Taub and there were two girls in that family and those two girls. And they started it. But then each, I don't know what period they allowed to elapse, but they would vote new members in.

I: So this is pre-40s or after the 40s?

SG: It was after the 40s. And it was a very active organization as I say and was very successful when they had these affairs. But, like everything else, as the years went on, more or less the necessity wasn't there because we had the Federated Charities which was raising the money and all. It lasted a good many years.

BT: It became more of a social thing there at the end.

SG: Yeah, it became a real social thing because we didn't attempt to raise money anymore.

I: Can you talk a little bit about the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community in general? Did they, most of the time, get along well and respected each other or did they not socialize as much?

SG: I don't think they socialized much. I really don't. I don't know of any animosity or anything between them but it was just separate. There's no doubt that alot of the Jewish women had some gentile friends, but I mean I don't think it was a real close association.

I: Buddy, do you want to say anything about like going to school and anything like that?

BT: Like we discussed before, growing up, we had a Jewish group here, there were about six of us or seven of us at the same age.

I: Who were they?

BT: _____, Herbie Schandler, Sherry Adler, Miriam Crone, and myself. And we had a young Judea and then we had brothers and sisters who were two or three years younger than us. And they were involved too. But going to school, like I

belonged to the Southern American Legion and belonged to a rifle team, drill team, I don't recall really any incident where there was any even hint of anti-semitism. It really didn't exist. We didn't even think about it. In fact I was on a square dance team, remember, with _____ and Betty Feldman, it just didn't exist. And later on, I guess it was probably because of the war, maybe because of the influence, in school there was only one incident that happened. But by and large, it just didn't exist.

I: Would you say Sarah, too, the situation again mentioning Pelley was sort of an aberration, I mean Pelley ended up in Asheville and he ran his base of operations from here, but the community of Asheville, you say, didn't necessarily support him really?

SG: No.

I: He was just here and operated.

SG: That's right. I wouldn't say they supported him.

I: And so the social life in the 40s and 50s was very active. You mentioned about some of the marriages that came out of the dinners you had at the Jewish community center for the people that were at Camp Croft, do you remember specifically any specific names of anybody that was married?

SG: I know that Margey Brenner, she was a niece of Sadie, Hy's wife, and she met a fellow and she married him and they went up to, I think it was Liberty, New York, to live. That I specifically remember.

I: Camp Croft was in Spartanburg?

SG: Yes.

I: So they would come up on the weekend from Spartanburg?

SG: Yes. They would bus them up here.

BT: Those weekends were really fantastic. There was just so much camaraderie and so much warmth.

I: It was probably something that people in Asheville looked forward to all week?

SG: Yeah.

I: And also the cooking, did you cook in the center?

SG: In the center. The women made the spaghetti.

BT: And then Sunday mornings they had breakfast at the house, different houses. And my mother was quite active in that.

I: And the soldiers would, as you mentioned, stay at some of the homes.

BT: Every soldier that came up was in a home.

I: And then they would bus them back on Sunday.

SG: Yeah, on Sunday afternoon they would bus them back.

I: So that was something you all looked forward to alot.

SG: Yes.

BT: Aunt Sarah had a beautiful voice, used to sing. And one of the fellows that was from Camp Croft would come up and he sang too.

I: Do you remember his name by any chance?

SG: We had a fellow, he wasn't stationed at Camp Croft, he was stationed in Asheville. We had a couple of them here. And he had the most beautiful baritone voice. And he got into our temple choir and some years later I was in New York and there he was in Damn Yankees on Broadway.

I: Do you remember his name?

SG: Nathan Vichtenbaum. That was his name here. But when he was on the stage it was different.

I: I just noticed last night on TV, they're having a revival of Damn Yankees.

SG: He had a part in Damn Yankees.

I: So you used to sing on this weekend?

BT: In the temple choir.

I: It's nice to hear of those weekends, it seems like people, they haven't mentioned this particular weekend, but it seems like during those time periods there was an intense camaraderie like you mentioned that maybe doesn't quite exist or doesn't exist as often now. I don't know.

BT: Patriotism and nationalism, you know, what you could do for the soldiers. It worked out well for us too because, you know, it made it exciting.

I: Anything else that you can think of that we haven't talked about? We've covered alot of ground.

SG: Yeah, I think we did too

I: Thank you very much. Again, this is March 4, 1994 and I've been speaking with Sarah Goldstein of Asheville and Sid "Buddy" Terapp of Asheville and thank you very much.