

ESTELLE MARDER

Norwood Avenue

Interviewed by David Schulman

I: Estelle, why don't we start with how you got to Asheville.

EM: Let's go back to 1939, that's when the two Marder families moved to Asheville. David and Frank, who were brothers, worked for Harry Strauss in New York, West 40th Street in New York City. And David came home a year before then and said, we are moving to Asheville, North Carolina. And I said, there's no such place as Asheville, you mean Nashville, Tennessee. He said, no, Asheville. Anyway, there is such a place. I didn't want to come and delighted that we did. We got here that summer, 1939. Frank, Ida, his wife and three children, Julian and Gerard. Julian married Harry Winner who was originally from Savannah, Georgia. He had a store in Canton, a dept. store or something of that order. They met when Julian came and they were married less than a year later. Their three children are Dennis, Robert and Leslie. Dennis is a judge, attorney and now a senator from North Carolina from Buncombe County. Robert is a scientist, has a Ph.D. in something or other. Leslie is an attorney and is senator from Mecklenburg County in Charlotte to the N.C. Senate. David and I had one daughter by the name of Rita who married Allen Barton. Allen is from Selma, Alabama. Rita and Allen were divorced 10 years ago and she is now married to David Hicks and they live in Black Mountain. Rita and Allen have three children, Lane, the oldest who lives in New York. She is a humanistic psychologist, but most of her working in New York is with one of the hospitals where she is part of the Big Apple movement up there where they go into the hospitals and cheer up children. But in addition to that she is a mime and a clown and she does all kinds of very interesting jobs including some of the big theaters in New York. Drew, next child, son, has his Ph.D. in biology and he is now in Lexington, Kentucky and his wife has her's in ornithology. She's originally from Florida. The youngest one is Barry, who is married to Vealey. Barry is a professional dancer but could not perform after she graduated with her Master's degree because she hurt her back and a treatment ruined her for performing. So she's teaching dance in the Buncombe County schools.

I: Tell me a little bit about what it was like when you first got here.

EM: We came, as I said in '39, and we immediately joined the temple. I don't know whether we would have joined the synagogue or not. The synagogue did not have a rabbi so we joined the temple and immediately became involved. The town was very small. The Jewish community was small, both congregations were very friendly. We had the sisterhood of both congregations and the hadassah and a council of Jewish women and B'nai B'rith. And all the men got involved, presidents, treasurers.

I: Do you think maybe 100 families?

EM: No, more. It was over 200 families. It hasn't grown very much because it's a constant turnover here. They come and they go. We found the people most delightful. They were friendly, they embraced us. Not everybody, I understand, has gotten that kind of feeling about it. But we did. I think because we not only got involved in the community, in the Jewish community and the community, that we were interested in card playing. You know we played bridge and we went out and we had the best time, we had the time of our lives. I call Paul, my husband and me really socialites. We loved it, we danced, we ate out. We didn't have any money, but we enjoyed it. My husband and his brother were both working for Acousta Paper Corporation in Pisgah Forest and they traveled every day. And Frank was treasurer and Dave was their cost accountant.

I: Was Mr. Strauss Jewish?

EM: Mr. Strauss was Jewish, so was his wife. However, I must interject this if you don't mind. She wasn't interested in being Jewish. She wanted to join the Biltmore Forest Country Club. So she and her son became Episcopalians and they joined that old church at Biltmore. And then when they applied for membership at the Biltmore Forest Country Club, they couldn't get in because they were Jewish.

I: What families do you remember were here when you got here or your friends you played cards with?

EM: My friends were Ann and Fred Pearlman, Ruth and Lou Rifkin, Irmagard and Alfred Lichtenfeld, Rose and Reuben Grant from Bow Furriers, their store was on Hayward St. Dora and Lee Lackman and they had a jewelry store called Lee's Jewelers also on Hayward St. Joe and Annette Sternberg.

I: And that's Jerry's father.

EM: Yes.

I: And Joe was the son of Siegfried right?

EM: No, he was not the son. Joe was adopted by Siegfried and Annie, that was Siegfried's wife, because he was the son of a sister who was married to a Christian man and they split. And so Joe came to live with Siegfried Sternberg. Joe's name was Lippincott, that was his father's name and then he was brought up by Siegfried. That whole clan of Litchenfelds, also some of my closest friends were Rudolph and Helen Gumford.

I: Now Mrs. Gumford was a Litchenfeld?

EM: Mrs. Gumford was a Litchenfeld. Helen, she was the daughter of...

I: But there were alot of Litchenfelds right?

EM: There were many, many as there were alot of Bloomborgs.

I: Harry Bloomberg's parents.

EM: Yes. They were older than we were, but we were friendly with Shirley and Harry. The Sandmans, Madeline Sandman was a Bloomberg. She used to be S.I. Bloomberg's daughter.

I: One thing that's not been clear to me, maybe you can help clear it up. S.I. Bloomberg and Harry Bloomberg's father were cousins or brothers?

EM: Brothers.

I: And the fellow that had the Leader Store was Jack Bloomberg. Do you remember that name?

EM: Yes. I knew Jack and I knew his wife.

I: Do you know how they were related?

EM: Maybe a cousin. I'm not sure about Jack. But I know S.I. was Harry's father's name.

I: You came in '39. What was Asheville like during the war, did it change any?

EM: Not too much. We did get soldiers every weekend from Camp Croft in Spartanburg. And they would come in by bus and they would come to the Jewish Community Center. By the way I must go back and say that in 1940 the Jewish Community Center was opened. That was the first year.

I: And do you remember who they bought that property from? Was it a home?

EM: That I don't know. It was a home. But I have to tell you this story. Dave and I were in our home, on Colonial Place three days after I got here, he was here before I was. And two men were at the door and the men were Max Crone, who were very close friends of ours, Max and Edith Crone from the Middlemount Florist Shop. Max and Joe Sternberg, and we invited them in and they asked for money to help buy the Jewish Community Center. Remember we're from New York. We didn't know anything called a Jewish Community Center. We had community centers but we assumed, we didn't even think about it, they were Jewish. Well, we gave them money and they left. And I turned to Dave and I said, what's a Jewish community center? He said I guess it's for Jews only. It turned out not to be for Jews only. It's the best thing that happened to us. But I was very involved in the Jewish community center.

I: I think it was Mr. Levitch was involved.

EM: Julius Levitch gave the most amount of money, a very large contribution. I think he was the first president. More of an honorary president cause he didn't come to meetings. Julius was very good for the community center. It was a good name.

I: What other things happened at the community center?

EM: Everything happened at the community center.

I: So it was a unifying force.

EM: Both the temple and the synagogue were in small buildings without any meeting place, without any place for say a barmitzvah. And everything then happened at the Jewish community center. We all used it, including the combined Sunday schools. They were combined and I was a principal of both Sunday schools. And we met at the Jewish community center. We didn't meet there very long because the rabbi came here objected because the children wore yarmulke.

I: Which rabbi was that, do you remember?

EM: Sydney Unger.

I: He didn't want them to wear yamakas.

EM: He didn't them. He didn't want them to be combined. So he separated them. And they didn't have a rabbi again at that time. That was a hard time for us, the day when we didn't consider him our rabbi.

I: From my understanding, Rabbi Unger was either strongly liked or strongly

disliked. It was like one or the other.

EM: And furthermore, I'd rather not discuss it.

I: Tell me a little about the guys coming up from Camp Croft again.

EM: They would come to the Jewish community center and we would feed them. We had a dinner and then they would disperse cause the Jewish people put them up. They would take a soldier or two soldiers and they would stay and go back there for breakfast and then go back to Camp Croft.

I: And that was like every weekend or most weekends?

EM: Whenever they could get away.

I: And were there any marriages out of this?

EM: Yes, many of them. I could say off hand, five. Thelma Pearlman, Fred's sister, was one. I can't remember all of them but there were lots of marriages and most of them were good marriages, nice Jewish boys.

I: And there were dances, I guess.

EM: Yes, dancing.

I: What would the Jewish women do, would they cook?

EM: Honey, they cooked and they sewed and we rolled bandages, we went to the Red Cross. I was very involved in that. There was a meeting of a representative from each religion, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, one more, I don't remember. And I represented the Jewish community.

I: Tell me about the meeting. Was that meeting to see what to do with the soldiers when they came up?

EM: No, not the soldiers. This was a community thing and we were to stress, in other words, don't speak and don't eat no meat and it was community involvement.

I: To get the patriotic support for the war.

EM: That's right. There was another family that was here when we came, Lipinsky.

I: From Bon Marche.

EM: Solomon who was the one who started it, his sons, they all lived here, Morris, Whitlock Lees, he changed his name and one other...

I: So Whitlock Lees was really a Lipinsky, he changed his name to Lees.

EM: Yes. He didn't like the Jewish name. Robinsons were here, Samuel Robinson who was an optometrist and his wife, Ester, and his daughter who now is very, very involved, Leah Carpin. She was a Robinson.

I: I didn't realize that. Leah Carpin was a Robinson. Samuel Robinson's daughter. You're coming up with alot of good connections here. So through the 40s, of course there was the war, then the war was over. The actual Jewish

community didn't really grow much you're saying. It hasn't really grown much up until maybe the last few years more. But alot of turnover.

EM: See, I'm not too involved in what I call the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish High Holy Temple. And when there were new people there, I used to know who they were.

I: What was that like? When a new Jewish family came to town, you knew of them because they showed up at the center or through some other way?

EM: Various ways.

I: And would there be any outward, would you call them or go see them?

EM: Yes. Each temple or synagogue had a committee. They welcomed them and we made sure when they came to the services that they were especially welcomed.

I: That's really nice. That's sort of a small town type of thing.

EM: A wonderful kind of thing.

I: Tell me about any of the other, I know we don't want to talk about Rabbi Unger, but do you remember any of the other rabbis?

EM: There was a rabbi here by the name of Robert Jacobs when I came and he was here for 5 years and I am still in touch with him, not him, them, he and his wife.

I: And where do they live now?

EM: St. Louis. And he has been very involved in the Hillel at the college there.

I: Was he the rabbi at the temple?

EM: At the temple.

I: And you said the synagogue at that time.

EM: They had rabbis, yes. But I don't know too much about them. I was involved with the temple and the Federated Charities. That's another organization that was active and we would have drives every year to raise money. I was their first executive secretary. And I formed a woman's committee that raised some extra money and it's an on-going organization. The lady who's the head of the Jewish Community Center is also the executive secretary of the Federation, Marlene Joyce. She's very good. And she lives in the house we lived in for 17 years.

I: Did you and your husband and his brother, did they live nearby too?

EM: Oh yeah in Beaver Lake. And at one time they lived up there at the Rose Garden Place.

I: The Jewish community, from what I understand, or maybe it was before you came, I don't know, but used to be alot on like Montford Avenue and Cumberland Avenue.

EM: They were there when we came. Gus Litchenfeld, that was Ellen Gumford's parents, lived that way and an awful lot of Jewish families lived in Kennelworth. The Whitlock Lees and the Robinsons and the Pearlmans, not Fred and Anne, Hattie and Barney which were Fred's parents, they lived there.

I: Was Kennelworth sort of more the wealthier and new area?

EM: That's right. People who couldn't afford Kennelworth, lived off Merriman Avenue on Austin. Henrietta Street, Coleman Avenue.

I: Where is that off of now, I should know it. Is that behind, Coleman Avenue, I know Coleman. I was just wondering where it was in relation, it's still there though.

EM: It's still there. At one time there was a bakery on that corner.

I: Okay, I remember that, Moore's Bakery.

EM: Right and that's the only way I could tell.

I: I see, and so the Jewish community was there and then gradually it moved toward Beaver Lake.

EM: And at one time I think half the people at the lake was Jewish, but not any more. And a couple of Jewish people are now living at Biltmore Forest.

I: Let's look at it in time brackets. As we get into the 50s, after the war, can you remember any changes. I know that the community didn't change that much, I guess, but any events that happened. I know you said the 40s, the Jewish community center was built and that was a big event. Now was the temple always where it is?

EM: No. I'm trying to think of the name of it. Oak Street was where Shandler used to be. Well behind one way was the synagogue and the other way, this way, was the temple. And it was a little building and I understand it was a church at one time, had no basement and it had no podium actually.

I: And is it still standing do you know? Is that building still standing?

EM: I don't know. The synagogue is completely gone because they put the highway through there.

I: Beth Israel used to be where the Sheraton is now. So do you remember about when the temple moved to the new place? Was that the 50s you think?

EM: Rita was confirmed, was the first confirmation class in the new temple and she is now 49 and she was 15 then.

I: So that was 34 years ago. This is '94, so it was 1960. And that used to be, wasn't that a famous Asheville place, like George W. Pack or somebody, the current site of the temple, do you remember if that was a, I forgot, somewhere I heard in Asheville history that at one time, it might have been much earlier, was the site of some famous person.

EM: I really don't know.

I: So, going back just a little bit, Rabbi Jacobs was here when you came.

And was there another rabbi between Jacobs and Unger?

EM: No.

I: So Jacobs stayed for several years?

EM: About 5 years.

I: And then Unger was here for 25 or so years.

EM: Many years. Yeah.

I: And then it was Rabbi Blooming. And then Rabbi _____. So there have been about 4 rabbis?

EM: Maybe 5. Some of them that didn't really register.

I: So one of the events of the 50s and 60s was the building of the temple.

EM: And raising the money. And the same applied to the synagogue.

I: That was built in the 60s too. I was barmitzvahed in 1962 at the old synagogue so I guess the new synagogue must be the late 60s maybe, early 70s, something like that.

EM: I'll never forget, I knew the people that did the architecture, but they did a beautiful job. It's a very nice building. And I love their rabbi. But I also love Rabbi _____.

I: Do you remember any talk of, I've been doing some research on this William Dudley Pelley. He was a Silver Shirt.

EM: I remember the talk. Do you know who would know about it? Kenny Michalove.

I: I just found out the other day that his father, tell me about that?

EM: I don't know much about that. And that's another couple I should have mentioned that Dave and I were very friendly with, that's Mildred and Bill Michalove, Ken Michalove's parents.

I: Wasn't there a divorce in there or something?

EM: Yes, they're divorced. They were divorced a long time ago.

I: And was there another Jewish family that came out of that, I mean somebody remarried.

EM: Bill married a very nice lady but didn't get involved in the community with her. Mildred is now Mickey. Mildred married three times, left Asheville. You know the Lou Pollock cemetery, Mildred was a Pollock.

I: Mildred Michalove was Lou Pollock's daughter?

EM: Right.

I: And Ken Michalove was Mildred Pollock Michalove's son. And Bill

Michalove was involved in this Pelley thing.

EM: Yes, he was. And actually I think that Kenny must know more than he lets on. And I think he should be talked to.

I: I do want to interview him. I was interviewing Ann Kolodkin who was married to a Michalove, Ann from Hendersonville. And she was reading me some article out of the newspaper about the Pearlmans and the Michaloves and then she read me something in the article that said that Ken Michalove's father worked undercover or something like that.f

EM: I'm sorry. I had so many newspaper clippings but I've given them away to the newspaper or to the community center. I've given everything away.

I: Do you remember anything else about the Pelley thing?

EM: All I know is that Bill Michalove was, he wouldn't say much but he would say, he showed us one time where they had their office. It was at Biltmore. The Depot took over the Pelley headquarters. I knew he was involved, that's all.

I: Can you tell me any more about the Michalove family, the connections. Weren't the Michaloves and the Pearlmans intermarried?

EM: Hattie Pearlman was a Michalove.

I: Hattie Pearlman who was Fred's mother was a Michalove.

EM: There is a family in Hendersonville, what's the name of the people who owned a furniture store in Hendersonville?

I: There's the Calin's.

EM: Calin. Mrs. Calin was Hattie Pearlman's sister. She was a Michalove. And the Pearlmans and the Calins still keep in touch with each other. And Hattie Pearlman had a number of brothers, Phil Michalove who's still living and has become very rich and lives in California. The theater on Merriman Avenue right here is owned by Paul Roth. Paul was the son of the original owner, I'm trying to see how that worked out. One of the Michaloves owned that whole business.

I: Somehow the Michaloves were involved.

EM: Bertha Roth, she was a Michalove.

I: Mrs. Roth was a Michalove, probably related to Bill?

EM: Right. Bill's sister and she married a man by the name of Charles Roth. It is the Roth Theater now. How did that get involved, I know it was a big deal that they owned a whole bunch of theaters, movie theaters coming out of New York, one of the well known families. There's some connection with Bertha and Kenney. Kenney could tell you that.

I: Can you tell me anything about, I guess this is another family, the Shulimsons? Now are they related to any other family?

EM: No. There is one sister. I can't think of the name. It was Ben, still

living. There were two brothers in the Shulimsons Scrap Metal. The others have died. Now one of them later in life married Sonya(?). Do you know that name?

I: He just passed away not too long ago.

EM: That's right. He and Ben started the business. Rough people. They were involved but not to go that far back. Johnny come lately.

I: What about the Rockemora family? Do you know anything about them?

EM: Sure, I know everything. The Rockemora family started the Asheville Showcase. And when we came, Fan Rockemora was running the business because her two sons were in the service.

I: And her name was Fan?

EM: Probably Fanny, a very handsome, lovely, gorgeous woman. Zsa Zsa Gabor type.

I: They were here when you came.

EM: Yes.

I: So the Rockemora family was here at least by '39.

EM: And when the boys came back they took over and she retired. One Rockemore, Billy Rockemora is married to Joann Zageir.

I: So Billy Rockemora married Coleman Zageir's daughter.

EM: And the other daughter, Dorothy, was married to Sy Flegel.

I: The Zageir family was here when you came.

EM: Yes.

I: And he was already in the clothing business at that time, men's clothing.

EM: Yes and the name of Helen Zageir's parents was Bremen.

I: And were they here too?

EM: Yes. And the door on the temple was donated by the Bremen family.

I: And that was Coleman Zageir's wife's family. Now there was alot of merchants in town on Broadway but most of them may have been before '39. I know the Palais Royal Dept. Store, there was a big fire or something.

EM: Before we came.

I: And then somebody mentioned like Fader's Juice Stand or something.

EM: Faders had a cigar store, that's exactly what it was. They had a fountain, they had little tables and they served beer. The reason I say that, I was shocked out of my pants to think that the sales people from Winners Dept. Store went to Fader's on their break to drink beer. See I was a ice cream person, not a beer person. And the Grove Park Inn was the most elegant place and we used to go

there for lunch often and we couldn't possibly go there without a hat and white gloves.

I: So it was a real society...

EM: A real society place. And even if you couldn't afford it, you had to have lunch occasionally at the Grove Park Inn.

I: There was never any antisemitism through there or was there?

EM: No, not necessarily, because my granddaughter Lane, the one who's in New York now, used to date a boy who was Mr. Grove's son-in-law, Brent Sealy, Ken Sealy and he wanted to marry her. For 15 years I was with the Asheville Art Museum, that, I've got to get in there because it's part of my life. When my husband died, that's when I took a job. I wasn't about to stay home and twiddle my thumbs. And I had worked, I had worked since I was pregnant and I loved it, had a wonderful time

I: Tell me about what you did there.

EM: I did everything. I was their director, protem, I did anything and everything.

I: And that's when it was in the basement of the Civic Center.

EM: Don't say basement, lower level of the Civic Center. We started at the Northwestern Bank building and they gave us the 12th floor free of charge because we could be a tax writeoff. They couldn't rent it. Then when Anchor wanted the entire floor, we had to move. So we bought a house on Pearson Drive and we stayed there until the Civic Center...

I: I see, on Pearson, over near Montford.

EM: Right, beautiful, beautiful home, five bedroom house. And then we moved to the Civic Center.

I: You're not as active anymore, I guess, but you're still involved in it.

EM: I'm the only honorary member of the Asheville Art Museum.

I: Any other things that you were involved in that you wanted to mention. I know you mentioned the hadassah and other things like that.

EM: I also got involved with Alice Whitsel, do you know that name?

I: No.

EM: At one time she was Dean of Women at UNCA. She and I started the Elderhostel at UNCA.

I: And this was 60s, 70s, it doesn't really make any different, but somewhere in there.

EM: '67, '68.

I: Are there any other events that sort of stand out in your mind, could be funny, could be serious, that sort of happened through the Jewish community? Were

there any stories, anecdotes...

EM: I wish I could think of something because I'm sure that there were many. But I don't recall any. This is the longest I have talked since I got sick.

I: Don't let me wear you out.

EM: No. You don't know how I'm enjoying it, to talk to somebody who's normal. I get all these wonderful people that come in and nurse me and dress me, do my bed, but then they leave and I want to talk to people.

I: I'm trying to think of some other things that I usually try to bring out during these interviews. We've talked about some of the rabbis, we talked about the community center. Let's talk a little bit more about how the Jewish community sort of interacted. You're saying that your experience was that it was very open.

EM: And then it closed a little bit.

I: Why do you think it closed?

EM: Rabbi Unger.

I: So he tended to divide the community?

EM: I don't know if he said, I will now divide the community. All I know is that he was not interested in doing anything that smelled of orthodoxy, a yarmulke and a tallis was taboo in his temple. My father-in-law couldn't come to Dennis' barmitzvah, Dennis is Julius' son, because he was told that my father-in-law wouldn't go into the temple unless he wore a yamaka and the rabbi said, no.

I: So he was really a devout reformist or whatever.

EM: He was brought up as a devout orthodox Jew.

I: Unger was?

EM: Yes.

I: Where was he from, New York?

EM: Yes.

I: So he was rebelling against orthodox?

EM: Rebelling against his parents, his religion, I don't know what.

I: So he became very independent and in effect, somewhat divisive.

EM: I must mention a name now, Lee Feldman. Have you come across that name?

I: Dr. Feldman's wife?

EM: No, Dr. Feldman. His wife was Ruth. And Lee was very, very active in the community. He was Dr. Feldman who died about 10 years ago. Leon Feldman, very strong man.

I: I did one of my columns on him, about his involvement in the community. And he was involved in a lot of things from the B'nai B'rith to the wrestling commission. And what were you going to say about Lee Feldman?

EM: I didn't know whether you knew about him cause I used to work with Lee on certain things.

I: I talked to his wife and she said that he was one of those doctors that, in many cases, not all cases, could sort of diagnose you by looking at you sometimes.

EM: He was okay. Mildred Jacobs, that's the wife of the rabbi who was here when we came, and I went to Washington to speak to our senator. And I can't remember his name. Could be Reynolds. And we wanted to talk to him about recognizing Israel and we got to speak to him. And then Mildred and I were marooned because there was a strike of the trains. So we stayed in Washington in a hotel. I had a brother-in-law, my husband's brother, who was the head of the United Press in Washington and we got on the first train leaving Washington.

I: I'm trying to see all of the family connections. We've talked about the Michaloves, the Rockemoras, we talked about the Pearlmans, Bloombergs.

EM: You're not related to any of those people are you?

I: No, there were several Schulmans, there was Jack Schulman in Hendersonville, that's my uncle. Sol Schulman in Silva, that's my father.

EM: I knew Jack and his wife, we always called her Mary _____ because she had a lot of curls on her head.

I: You were saying that you used to write skits.

EM: They called me the skitsophrenia for organizations.

I: For meetings you mean.

EM: Yeah, we'd have big meetings and I would produce. I didn't want to be on the stage. I don't like to talk, I like to write.

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EM: We went from 40 to over 100 members.

I: So you sought out the temple women.

EM: That's right.

I: Because it was just sort of unofficially thought of as a...

EM: I didn't even know what hadassah was when I came here. I was introduced to it and I was interested.

I: And so you actually opened it up more or less.

EM: That's right. And it became a very, very active and important organization in Asheville.

I: And you would meet monthly.

EM: Once a month. Until the Jewish community center was opened, we would meet at the women's club which is on Charlotte Street.

I: And that actually was Pelley's place before that, did you know that?

EM: That I didn't know.

I: That was Pelley's original printing company before he moved to Biltmore. And then evidently the women's clubs took it over, all the various ones and they would meet there. But originally that was Pelley's sort of base of operations.

EM: Where'd you find that out?

I: Well, I've done alot of study on Pelley, I'm trying to do a documentary on him for PBS because he's such an interesting kook, you know. Do you realize why he came here? He came here, well, two reasons. He was a very intelligent and sort of a semi-normal type of guy until in 1929 he said that he went to heaven and talked to God and then God gave him this mission to come back to earth and get rid of Jews and all the minorities. After that, he sort of went off the deep end on this thing. And then he thought, he was sort of a metaphysical type of person and he felt there was going to be a major cataclysmic physical event in the United States that was going to destroy most of the United States by earthquake or storm, except Asheville in this area. So he came here because he thought that geographically Asheville would survive this cataclysmic event. I didn't realize it either until I went into it. We don't have to do too much more, I don't want to tire you out. But anyway that's how Pelley came to Asheville and sort of got here. Because I couldn't figure out what brought him here.

EM: What happened to him?

I: Well, he ended up, he was tried and convicted for sedition by the government and he was sent to prison from the 40s to the 50s, early 50s, in Wisconsin. And then he got out, lived in Wisconsin, started some more hate literature and died in the 60s. But he did serve about nine years in jail.

EM: Did he have followers in Asheville?

I: From what I understand, he was more known nationally than he was locally. Asheville was his base of operations. I think there were some people, I understand that he did have meetings. I talked to somebody that said their parents when to a meeting in west Asheville, but most of the people said they never saw him. Most of the people said that he didn't march but they would read his hate literature. And his following was supposed to be anywhere from 15,000 to a million. It was sort of like, who knows.

EM: Like the Jones thing.

I: Yeah, he sort of had a devote, he was sort of a cultish type of person. He did have a base of operations in Oklahoma and San Diego. But he became a pretty nationally prominent, he was supposed to be the first person in America that came out for Hitler. The day Hitler came into power, he came out and said that America should follow this guy.

EM: Why were they called the Silver Shirts?

I: Because of their uniform. They had their own sort of a gray uniform. I don't want to tire you out.

EM: No, no, this is okay.

I: Anything else? Let's sort of review here. We talked about the rabbis, we talked about the families, the Jewish community center. Let's talk a little bit about, I'm interested in how did the Jewish community relate with the non-Jewish community. Was it sort of formal, was it open? I'm not talking so much non-Jewish to Jews, but Jewish to non-Jewish.

EM: The cliché was, they were very friendly during the day, but not socially at night.

I: That's non-Jewish to Jewish?

EM: Right. In other words, let's say we worked together at the Red Cross, became very friendly, but not socially. Socially not accepted really.

I: So the socialization had to come from inside the Jewish community among themselves. Any type of dinners or dances or whatever came from...

EM: Now the Jewish community did cooperate when they had their annual fundraiser around Christmas time or New Year's or something like that. I don't remember just what it was. We would go to the ball and buy tickets. But not as Jews but as part of the community. But we knew that the thing was run by _____. There was a time there when, I'm trying to think what they called it, the junior league would not allow any Jewish members. And it was broken by my daughter and a friend of hers who was black. They got together and they called a number of people to a meeting and I don't know just what they did. But I didn't want to get involved in it because this was their project. And I was afraid that if I interfered that it would be partly my project which I didn't want. And it worked. They broke the barrier.

I: So any type of feeling of anti-Jewish was more subtle though, right?

EM: Very subtle.

I: No one ran into many overt acts.

EM: No. They were turned down when they wanted to become members of the country club. Not only in Biltmore but in Asheville too. There were some Jewish people that were at the beginning when the Asheville Country Club was formed and included the Zageirs, the Cronos and I think one more family, I don't remember, cause they needed the money in those days. But then it was closed to all Jewish applicants. There was a family here by the name of Haber. Good friends of mine, Jane and Dick Haber. They're not here anymore. Jane died and Dick closed the business, but lovely, lovely people. They couldn't get into the country club. They were considered high society of the Jewish community, they couldn't get into the country club.

I: So there was definitely a social barrier?

EM: Yes.

I: I think we'll probably end the interview. Is there anything that you would like to say?

EM: I'll just say that I enjoyed talking to you.

I: I enjoyed talking to you too. This is what I really like doing. A lot of people say, well, I don't know the facts or I don't know the dates. And I say, I don't care. What I want to know is how it felt like to be Jewish in Asheville at whatever time the person was there.

EM: I'll tell you something. Having lived in New York amongst Jewish people, I never felt _____ like Jews. We were not synagogue goers but that didn't matter, we were Jews. We knew the language, I knew my mother kept kosher. When I came here, I, again, never thought of the fact that I was Jewish. I was part of Asheville, part of the community. So I never really felt antisemitism. There may have been some that happened, I don't know.

I: But it wasn't anything that was really a problem.

EM: We didn't know. It became a problem later on. B'nai B'rith has an anti-defamation league, they became active. There was a man that came here from the anti-defamation league that met with me and Lee Feldman and for the life of me I can't tell you who he was or what we did. But I know it was very hush-hush. I was involved in hush-hush things.

I: Well, you certainly played an important part in the community and still do. I know when I talk to people, they say, I don't know, but ask Estelle Marder. So that's why I'm here.

EM: If you need to ask me, come back.

I: We'll just end the interview here. Again, this is March 30, 1994 and I've been in the home of Estelle Marder, interviewing her experiences about living in Asheville.