

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Rabbi Sidney Berkowitz

Personal Experience

O.H. 1540

STEVEN SCHILDCROUT

Interviewed

by

Matthew Butts

on

July 3, 1992

STEVEN SCHILDCROUT

Steven Schildcrout was born on July 18, 1943 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the son of Harry and Lillian Schildcrout. Growing up in the city Chicago, Illinois, Schildcrout attended the Bowen High School, graduating in 1960.

Following high school, Schildcrout attended college at the University of Chicago, earning his Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry in 1964. Following his graduation, Schildcrout married Antonia Herz. He then pursued his doctorate in Physical Chemistry at Northwestern University. After the completion of his doctorate in 1968, Schildcrout worked for two years at Rice University as a research associate. He then joined the faculty of Youngstown State University located in Youngstown, Ohio.

Presently, Dr. Schildcrout is a Professor in the Chemistry Department at Youngstown State University. He resides with his wife at 2201 Goleta Avenue in Youngstown, Ohio. He is a member of Congregation Rodef Sholom. His children are Douglas, born in 1968, and Jordan, born in 1970.

B: This is an interview with Steven Schildcrout for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Rabbi Sidney Berkowitz Project, by Matthew Butts, on July 3, 1992, at 9:30 P.M.

Dr. Schildcrout, can you tell me a little bit about yourself as far as your childhood, and your education?

S: My childhood was primarily in the Chicago area. I moved there with my family at the age of five. I went to a public elementary school on the North side and then on the South side. I went to high school on the South side of Chicago. I went to college at the University of Chicago. When I started college, my family actually moved out of the city for a few years to Wilmington, Delaware. So, I was living away from home, but in a familiar city. I have two younger sisters, Carol, who is four years younger than I am, and Debra, who is eight years younger than I am. So, they were not that close in age to me, yet it was still close enough that I had some time living at home with them.

I graduated from the University of Chicago, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry. Right after graduation I got married to Toni. We then moved to the North side of the city in an apartment. First she went to pharmacy school at the University of Illinois in Chicago at the Medical Center. Then, Toni was working as a pharmacist in downtown Chicago and I was attending Northwestern University's graduate program in Chemistry. So, we both commuted. I went north to school and she went south to work. We kind of lived in between the northern border of the city right between Evanston and Chicago.

My interests had been in sciences and mathematics. I actually decided to major in chemistry in my Junior year of college. I had some research experience in my Senior year which I wanted to pursue further. With that background, I was able to get a research assistantship at Northwestern University working in Physical Chemistry, a field called mass spectrometry, which I still do at Youngstown State University. I was at Northwestern a little over three years. I finished my Ph.D. course work and my thesis. Then, anticipating that I would want to try to get some academic work, I got a postdoctoral appointment. This was required then because pretty much anybody in the sciences who wanted to do academic teaching had to have not just a Ph.D., but also a post-doctorate research experience. So, I acquired about a position at Rice University in Houston, Texas, and went down there right after I finished up my Ph.D. work. That was January of 1968. So, Toni and I moved down there. Very soon after that, our first son Doug was born in May of 1968.

Then a year later, I started looking for academic work. I got a call from Youngstown State University from the Chemistry Department in June of 1969. They had recently acquired a Mass Spectrometer, a fairly complex expensive instrument, and they were looking for somebody to specialize in that area of research. So, Howard Mettee in the Chemistry Department had heard of my research director in Houston, who was a fairly well known mass spectrometrist. Mettee had called his office to see if he had any students who were looking for work at that time. He mentioned me as being a possibility, so I was invited up for an interview. Leon Rand was chairman of the Chemistry

Department at that time. This was right after the University had become a state university, so there was quite a bit of expansion going on. There was a lot of hiring of new faculty. So, it was sort of a baby-boom of faculty members at that point. I was a part of that and came up in the fall of 1969 to begin teaching there. That was my first permanent job.

The postdoctoral appointment at Houston was intended just as a temporary two-year position paid for by grant money. So, we moved up here. We rented an apartment in Austintown the first year because we had not been familiar with Youngstown. It was just a stop along the turnpike as far as we knew before that. I had a bit of family in New York and when we were living in Chicago we would often drive from Chicago to New York and back. Youngstown was a good stopping place half way along the way. We knew it as a dot on the map, but it looked like a good opportunity. There was money available for the instrumentation for starting up the research. The University was growing so we were excited about starting the job here.

The following March, our second son Jordan was born. Just before that, we had moved to where we are now on Goleta Avenue. After spending a year renting, we realized we wanted to stay on the North side of the city to be convenient to the University. We liked the neighborhood. We always liked living in cities. Having come from Chicago, we felt that we preferred living in that type of situation rather than the rural or suburban living which a lot of other people around here do.

So, I have had really one job at the department, just moving up through the ranks. Most of my time and efforts are toward work and the different aspects of it, such as teaching and research. Getting involved to some extent in the University affairs, committees and that sort of thing. I have some involvement in the NEOUCOM program, the medical school program here that the chemistry department is involved in. I have done work on that in terms of teaching the courses. I have been on the admissions committee. I have been involved with other miscellaneous things involving curriculum matters. I have been just enjoying the diversity of the job and the different aspects to it that always allow for variety. It is always changing. I think I enjoy the challenge of the research, the challenge of teaching at all different levels from Freshman level courses to graduate courses as we do have a Masters program in Chemistry. I have been involved in curriculum matters there and teaching a lot of the courses in the graduate program. I have been fortunate enough to have some research professorships, which give me some extra time to do research which I have again pursued with the mass spectrometry aspect. I have been studying chemical reactions and just getting an understanding of what makes molecules do what they do. The theoretical aspects of that sort of interests me.

In the community, we have been involved of course through the Congregation Rodef Sholom. I am not sure this is relevant to the question you asked, but I can give you a little history of our family's involvement there. We joined about the time that our oldest son Doug was getting into school, to be part of the religious school. Primarily for that reason, in the past I had really not been religiously affiliated at all. Growing up in Chicago and even first moving to Youngstown, I had never belonged to a congregation before. My parents were not observant in terms of religion. My father is an atheist. I am

not really sure about my mother because she never really expressed much of a view. I think she was certainly not religiously observant. I kind of border between atheism and agnosticism. It is probably an inherent distrust of organized religion, actually.

My upbringing in Chicago did involve some education in the sense of Judaism from the point of view not of religion, but of history, culture, values, ethics and that sort of thing. I did attend a religious school, again going back to childhood, on the south side of Chicago through my grade school and high school years. I had a confirmation from the school, but it was not associated with the temple or any organized religions. It was really a Jewish secular school. It was called the South Side School of Jewish Studies. It actually met in a Y.M.C.A. They did not have their own building. Toni, my wife, although she had been a member of the congregation, she really had not been extremely observant in terms of rituals or attending services on a regular basis.

We had to make the decision about our own kids and how they should be brought up. We certainly wanted them to have a Jewish identity, to realize what that meant, to have a knowledge of their background and roots and that sort of thing. Youngstown being a much smaller Jewish community than Chicago, it did not have and still does not have the variety of choices in terms of what kind of congregation you go to; whether it is Conservative, Reform or Orthodox.

We have those choices here, but we do not have choices such as secularism and these sort of things that we had in Chicago. That motivated us to join Rodef Sholom as the only Reform congregation in area, actually as a compromise. We felt we would tolerate the religious training even though it was not essential for us. We felt the advantage would be to get the education we wanted the kids to have. So, as I said, we joined the congregation in 1973-74, I am not sure of the exact date when Doug started school. We have been members since then. Both children have gone through the religious school program, both have been Bar Mitzvah, and both have been confirmed. The children are now both off on their own. We still felt that we should maintain the affiliations just as a means of support for the Jewish community because of the friendships that we have made within the temple. Again, my feelings, and I think Toni's as well, are that it is really a part of a community activity, as much as we do with it, rather than a religious fulfillment. I have a certain say in how I do it.

I have been fortunate so far maybe not needing some of the services that a religious organization provides such as in times of grief and that sort of thing. My parents are both still living. I have had nobody in my immediate family pass away yet, other than grandparents a long time ago. When that happens, maybe I will change my views on what kind of religious identification I might need. At this point, I think we see it as really a community activity, but not for spiritual or religious purposes. That is my point of view. I do not consider myself an observant person. I certainly have values that I think are important. Many of them are similar to the values of Reform Jews, and for that reason I associate with the congregation.

B: When you came to the city of Youngstown, what was different about it then than it is today? What did it physically look like?

S: I think that physically, it was in much worse shape than now. In 1969, it was still heavily industrialized. Steel, was of course the big industry in town. Steel was a very big employer. A lot of people here were involved with the steel industry. Physically, this meant also that it was dirty from a lot of pollution. I recall the summer when you opened the windows in the house, and every day there would be the black grit on the window sills that needed to be wiped up. There were often odors in the air. It was not a very clean city at all.

It was very little in terms of cultural opportunities. There was not too much to do. We often found ourselves going to Pittsburgh or Cleveland to go to a museum, zoo, or a concert. A part of this was our background coming from Chicago. I should have said before, that even my parents had come from New York and we have gone back to New York to visit there. I am familiar with New York City, Chicago, and we had lived in Houston right before coming here. So, we had spent our whole lives living in big cities. Youngstown was the first small city we had lived in. That was an adjustment to try to make that change.

One reason we wanted to live in the city was to try keep some kind of contact with that. We liked being among other people and near shopping and educational facilities, and cultural activities. So, it was a difficult adjustment at first, but I think we found our time taken up quite a lot by raising of the children. We had very young children when we first arrived. We felt it was very important for their education, too, that we take them out to the zoos and the museums and so on, so that they would get an experience beyond Youngstown because Youngstown itself was really very limited.

We found an attitude here that was a very parochial sort of thing. Again, you asked about comparing with today. I do not think that it is as bad now as it was then. Now, I think people are looking out of the community. There is more leaving and coming of people. I think when we came, outsiders were fairly rare. The fact that we came from outside the city and did not have any family in the city made us very unusual in Youngstown. So many people were here because their families had always been here. I think I was sort of surprised at the depth of the roots that a lot of people had in Youngstown, having come from a larger city myself where people keep their anonymity much more in a city like Chicago. You might know the people in your neighborhood, but people move around. They move even if it is just from one side of the city to the other side, and we do not maintain those roots for many generations. Even living in Chicago, my parents had, themselves, come from New York. My family, as far as I had known, had hardly ever stayed in one city for more than a generation. So, we were sort of the gypsies there. Therefore, I did not think anything of it when I left Chicago to come to Youngstown. I was in a job that required relocating. Toni was a pharmacist which was fairly easy to relocate to, so she eventually began working here as a pharmacist as well. So, moving around and going to new cities was something to me that seemed quite natural and Youngstowners very often saw that as unusual. Again, the people that we met here had been here quite a long time, so I think maybe we were a curiosity. Comparing it to nowadays, I think especially because of the influence of the University and the influence of the hospitals bringing professional people from outside the city, that

there is much more of this mixing.

I think Youngstown has acquired a lot of the amenities of a city now that it did not have in 1969. The improvement of the museums, the Butler Institute, the Symphony has improved quite a bit since then, Mill Creek Park being even more developed, I think in a good sense. Some people think it has gotten bad. The cleaning up of the environment has been a big benefit. I think it is a much cleaner city. I think it is a much nicer looking city in spite of the economic problems. It is unfortunate that there has been a population loss and that there is still poverty in the city.

In terms of our point of view, we are fortunate that I have a job that is moderately secure, at least I think so. Although there are problems around us, I think overall that the city has improved at least from our point of view. It was a very good place to raise children. I think it has many of the advantages of a large city or is at least nearby large cities. We still go to Cleveland or Pittsburgh, Chicago or New York for vacations. We enjoy doing that. I think still what Youngstown does not have is not too far from Youngstown to get these things. The University and how that has changed, I guess, is one aspect of how the city has changed.

I think again, the University has matured quite a bit. The big growth that occurred when I came has finished or has been dropping slightly this past year. There are obviously going to be some cutbacks. It is good to see the development of the University and how that has progressed. At least in Chemistry, I think we certainly have improved the department. A lot of good people have been brought in and good research is beginning. I think that it is frustrating that we cannot go a little further. We were hoping to get a doctoral program in Chemistry. The University is just beginning this now in the school of education. I hope. Since the new president is promising to renew emphasis on academic stuff that the University will progress even further along these lines. It is something that I would like to see and one thing to look forward to.

B: Physically, what did the University look like when you first arrived?

S: It was pretty much a mix of buildings. The geographic area was a bit smaller than it is now. Some of the buildings are still there. I remember Jones Hall and Ward Beecher, where I do all my work, were there when I arrived pretty much in their present form. They have undergone some renovations and some expansion during the time I have been there. Kilcawley Center had been built fairly recently, I think that it had been rebuilt just a couple of years before I had arrived. A lot of the buildings were the old mansions. I remember the president had a house near where Ward Beecher is now, I think where the current library is standing. There was Ford Hall, I believe it was, which had offices where the present library is. The library was in what is now Tod Hall. I guess Ward Beecher and the library were probably the two most important things to me. The campus core is of course a big change. Bryson Street used to run right along side Ward Beecher Hall, just to the west of the building. I remember teaching classes in Ward Beecher and having the street just outside. We had the traffic noises coming into the building. In the warm weather, the motorcyclists would race their motors up and down

Bryson Street. Sometimes we had to lecture very loudly to get over the sound of the motorcycles. Now the street has been closed off. Now it is much more pleasant there.

Again, you asked about the physical appearances of the city, I think the campus is a very good example of the improvement in the environment. It was strictly an urban campus before. There were city streets; there were houses mixed in with campus buildings; there was traffic. It was really a congested sort of campus. I think now getting the traffic out of the campus core and the landscaping are beautiful. Everybody says this and I agree, too, that it is like working in a park. You have lawns, hills, and flowers. Some may be cut back now with the budget crunch, but still, it is a beautiful place to work in terms of physical surroundings. It is very pleasant to eat a lunch outside, sitting on a bench in the nice weather, or just walking around campus. I enjoy riding a bicycle through campus. This is one reason why we live here on the North side, because we are just two miles from campus. Since 1970, when we first moved to Goleta, I have had the same bicycle still running. It is not quite as good as it was, but I guess neither am I. Still, I can get to and from campus on a bike, so I enjoy it for the exercise.

It is one of the things I enjoy to keep physically active because of an academic job. It is not itself physically demanding except for standing on your feet and talking for a couple of hours. So, I try to keep active by biking. It avoids parking problems. I like to avoid stress. Again, maybe that is an aspect of my personality. I can avoid stress by riding a bike because it is peaceful and quiet and I do not have to worry about fighting for a parking place. I always know that I can park it right in front of the door to Ward Beecher. I can come and go whenever I want. I do not have to worry about a bus schedule or about coordinating with my wife, who takes the car. When we had the kids, who takes the car when they were driving? It was good exercise besides that.

Another aspect of the facilities that brings to mind is Beeghly Center. I cannot remember whether it was there when I first started. I know the pool was not open in 1969. I think that came few years later. Since they opened the swimming pool, I have been a regular swimmer down there at least twice week; going in and doing a thousand yards is my aerobic exercise, that and the bicycling. So, I certainly enjoy that. It is wonderful to have a job where you can take off in the middle of the day, go swimming, come back and continue working. It is a nice way to relax, to get away from things, and to be alone. I like solitude, maybe because teaching, you are with a class and a lot of people and communicating with students, which I enjoy. When I am not doing that, I like the loneliness of swimming and bicycling.

- B: When you arrived at Youngstown State, I did a little research with the anti-war movement, was there much of an anti-war movement at the University?
- S: Not very much, certainly compared to what was going on in the rest of the country. It used to be the joke, and it still may be the case, they used to say that Youngstown was always ten years behind the country in whatever it was, whether it was economics, styles, culture, even politics perhaps. I had been involved with the movement myself as a student at the University of Chicago. I had been a member of a peace organization. Not

so much anti-war, this was in the early 60's really before the Vietnam War had become very well known. I was just opposing the whole move toward militarism and spending so much of the federal budget on the buildup of the arms race. We were concerned about the nuclear weapon buildup.

So, that was my first real involvement in politics. I guess I sort of developed the feelings in high school and I continued fairly actively in college. I was involved in the organizations, the anti-nuclear weapon demonstrations in downtown Chicago and that sort of thing. We did picketing, the whole thing. When the Vietnam War began, at that time I was at Northwestern. There was quite a bit of activity there, teach-ins, protesting, anti-draft protesting.

It really was not planning, I think it was just fortune that I was married at the time. I got married in 1964 right before the really big buildup of the war. At that time married men were deferred from the draft. So, I personally did not have to make the choice if I am going to go or not. That deferment kept me off of the prime list. Then, by the time they started calling the married men, Toni was already pregnant at that point, and that got me a deferment then, too, because then fathers or fathers to be were deferred. There were all different kinds of classifications. In fact there was a student deferment that also came in, too, and people who were working toward a degree especially in the areas that were considered to be important to the defense of the country and science were low for the draft priority. So, that got me a deferment.

Although I registered for the draft as legally required, I did not really have to worry too much about that, although just before we left Chicago, I did get a call up notice to come downtown in Chicago for a physical. With quite a bit of fear in mind, again thinking, I always have a choice. Even if I am accepted I do not have to go, I can always go to jail. For a while, I was seriously thinking of it. I felt very strongly about war in general. I thought that this one was especially wrong. In fact, I still believe so. As it turned out, I did not pass the physical anyway. So, again, the great moral decision was put off beyond my own control, since I had hypertension, high blood pressure, and high heart rate, which is why I keep exercising. Doctors advise me it is really not a problem as long as I stay physically active. I have lived so far without any heart problems, so I guess it is all right. Doctors tell me I am fine. Conveniently, it avoided the draft problem for me I suppose.

Getting back to your question, coming to Youngstown I again found the city being fairly conservative politically. Maybe there was not a lot of awareness of what was going on. Although I am sure the individuals who were involved, those who were drafted or the family members, were certainly aware of it. I do not think there was a lot of anti-war protest until the Kent State shootings in 1970. I think that really triggered everything in this area because it was so close to Youngstown geographically that I think people finally saw that this was a pretty important issue.

Obviously, Kent State was much more involved in protest than Youngstown was. I do not think we ever had anything like what was going on there. A lot of the faculty members I think were anti-war. I was myself, although not excessively vocal about it. I certainly would talk to anyone who wanted hear my views, not in any organized way

necessarily. There were quite a few other faculty I think who were very much opposed to the war as well. Again, many of them from out town perhaps. Maybe that is why they had this viewpoint.

I think in the big cities, obviously Berkeley, California, was famous for what was going on there. The larger more mature campuses where there are residential students who I think tend to be more politically active; that is where you saw a lot of the protests. Here the students were, and to a large extent still are, commuter students. They work at a job. Being a student is just a part-time thing for them. They live with their family whether it is parents or their own spouses and children. So, they have real lives besides just being students. I think to that extent, it limits how politically involved they can get because they do not have the reinforcement from their peers. They are concerned with getting on with their own lives and with making a living.

That unfortunately, I think, limits political activity. I think people who get too tied up with their own lives miss out on an important aspect of life. That is being concerned about issues and doing something about and expressing views on politics. So, I think it was only after the Kent shootings that we started to really see rallies or organized protest on campus. As I recall, I do not think that it ever really got to the point of any violence. Certainly not like Berkeley or Kent. We did our little bit here.

- B: The reason I brought up the anti-war movement was because I did a research paper on it at Youngstown State, and do you remember Rabbi Berkowitz being on campus after the Kent shootings trying to calm the student population?
- S: I cannot specifically recall that, no. That was before we had joined the temple, probably before I really knew him at all. So, I cannot recall specifically what happened. I do know he was very much involved with community activities, with political issues, but I cannot recall that specifically.
- B: Do you remember some of the political activities that he was very involved in?
- S: A lot of this was not from my direct knowledge, just what I heard people saying about him or what I remember reading about in the *Vindicator*. I think a big part of what he was interested in was Jewish-Christian relations, by trying to represent the Jewish community in the community at large. He wanted it to be understood and accepted. This is really, I think, a big part of the Reform Jewish movement that goes back probably a hundred years or so. Reform Jews, I think, are different from the other branches of Judaism and that they feel that it is very important to participate in the surrounding community. Not to isolate themselves from it, but to be an active part of it. I think Rabbi Berkowitz did take that point of view very seriously in his own life. I seem to remember just that he was on various commissions and community relations committees. I could not quote you the facts. I do not suppose you need the facts. I am sure they are well documented. I did get the impression that when there were city wide committees or committees among the city clergy that he quite often would be involved in those.

B: Do you remember the first time you met Rabbi Berkowitz?

S: Of course, I had probably met him in a not too meaningful way, just being a member of the temple, going to the temple, greeting him after services perhaps once in a while. We were not very active in temple activities. We did not go to services regularly. For the more important holidays we would go. So, I met him just to say hello or wish him a good Sabbath or whatever it might be.

I think we probably got to know him a little better when Toni's father died. Toni's parents were still living in Chicago and he [Toni's father] died in Chicago in December of 1975. Rabbi Berkowitz made a house call here. He came to the house to offer condolences to the family. That was the first time he had been in the house or we had really met him I think outside of the temple and we had more of a chance to talk with him. I do not remember too much of what went on there. Of course, we were upset about the death, but I do recall that he was a very gracious person. He was comforting. He did the things that Rabbis are supposed to do under such occasions. He offered his sympathy and sat and talked for a while, visited. I cannot recall what he talked about. He was mainly talking to Toni since it was her father who died. I never really got to know him on a personal basis. I think probably because our paths did not really cross too much because we were not extremely active in the congregation. Probably our children knew him better being in the religious school there and having more contact with him. As I said, I was impressed with his community involvement. I think that was his strong point. I think more so than a lot of other clergy I have seen and other Rabbis. I think he did that very well in terms of showing the best of Judaism in terms of how it can help and improve the community.

B: Do you remember anything about the way he ran services at the temple?

S: Again, only to a slight extent since we were not avid temple goers. Again, as I said, probably being an anti-establishment person myself whether it was anti-war, anti-religion. I think it was a type of thing where I respected him as a person more so than the job he was doing as a Rabbi. I am suspicious about any Rabbi. They sometimes put themselves in the position of telling other people what they should believe or what they should think. I do not mean he was doing that, I said some clergy do that. I think he set a good example, which I think is what clergy should do. His religious services, the religious part of the services, as I said, to me really did not mean much. I tolerated them, but I enjoyed the sermons the most.

The best part about going to hear any Rabbi or any clergyman if he is not Jewish (and I have gone to other services as well, Catholic, Protestant whatever) in that I enjoy sermons. Maybe because I like University lectures. Being a teacher myself, I can respect the clergyman as a teacher. I think Rabbi Berkowitz did do that. As I recall, again, I cannot quote specifics or even recall a particular sermon, but I do seem to recall that at least the sermons were thought provoking whatever the topic might be and even though I might disagree with him. I often did, especially on issues relating to Judaism or Zionism.

I am not a Zionist, unlike most Jews in this city which puts me at odds with them. Maybe that is a part of my anti-establishment.

Again, I think all the support for Israel is much overdone and sometimes misdirected. So, even if he would give a sermon I would disagree with, I found it stimulating and I think that is good. As a chemist, I like to hear controversial points of view, something I can argue with. Now, in a sermon you do not argue directly with the Rabbi, but at least you can go home and I can talk with my wife and kids. One of the benefits of going to services, I found, is that then talking with the family later, I found that it was educational to the kids. I would say to them, "What do you think of the sermon? Do you agree, disagree?" They would often disagree too. I would find that I could teach my children my views by having them stimulated by the Rabbi's views whether we agreed or not. At least it brought up a topic. It brought up something of interest. I think that was very helpful.

B: Was Rabbi Berkowitz a staunch Zionist?

S: Not as much as some other Rabbis, I think. Again, this is supposed to be history, but I am sure as a historian you know that what people tell you is their own impressions. I am certainly not the historian, so I cannot back up with facts what I might say. He was a Zionist as I recall. I do not think as staunch though as many others. I think Judaism in general has become much more conservative in recent years since even Rabbi Berkowitz's time. I think the Jews in the community have become much more Zionist than they used to be. It is sort of falling back to more of the tradition.

I think this idea of the assimilation that I mentioned before, that traditionally Reform Jews have tried to assimilate in the community. I think that is going back now the other way. I think what is now a Reform congregation, maybe twenty years ago we would have called that a Conservative congregation. More Hebrew, for example, is brought into the services. In those days, there was much more English and very little Hebrew. I never studied Hebrew. So, to me the Hebrew did not mean much.

In fact, again, it was just a stumbling block and something to tolerate to get to the better stuff. I think now you see much more of that. More Hebrew being used and more Zionism. By Zionism I mean almost like a nationalistic support of Israel and Israeli policies which I found especially disturbing considering the Palestinian movement in the occupied territories opposing Israeli occupation. I sympathize with them to a large extent.

I think the Jews traditionally have been the underdog and I think they do much better to support those who need help, the oppressed people. Here I see the Palestinians as the oppressed and the Israelis as the oppressors. I think that is very unfortunate and sad to see Jews in the capacity as the oppressors. I do not necessarily follow the Palestinian hard line. I think that is over stated, too. I am perhaps somewhere in between. I do not think the Palestinians are completely correct either. I certainly think supporting any government without questioning it, whether it is Israeli or United States government, is a mistake.

I think too many Jews these days are doing that in the case of Israel. They will support Israel no matter what. They see it as a matter of survival. To me I do not. I do not associate Judaism with Israel so much. My ancestors did not come from Israel. My grandparents came from Eastern Europe, from Russia or Poland or whatever and not from Israel, so I do not feel that bond that a lot of Jews do. I do not think Rabbi Berkowitz did either to the extent that they do nowadays. I think he supported Israel and he felt it was important that Israel exist. It was certainly important as a homeland after World War II. It was a place for the Holocaust survivors to go and a lot of them came here, too, and everywhere else in the world. I think there is the feeling that if something like the Holocaust should ever happen again, which we certainly hope it will not, and we should all be making sure that it does not. If something like that should happen, I think there is a feeling that there should be a place that Jews can go to and find safety. I think that might be what a lot of Jews are fearing these days.

I do not have that fear myself. I think it is being overly paranoid. I think the world is very different now; we have countries like the United States. There are countries where you ought to be safe and hopefully Judaism should not have to depend on Israel as a refuge. If it gets to that point, it is probably the end of the world anyway and nothing much is going to matter. Again, to summarize the answer to your question. I think yes, I would say my impression of him was he was a Zionist, but I think maybe a little more balanced in view and not quite so extreme. That was before the Palestinian issue really came up. I do not think that had come up during his lifetime. You had the Intafada, you know where Israel got to the point where it is now where it has the military power that it does now.

B: Is there anything we have not touched on that you think we should add?

S: I do not think that there is too much else that I could really add about the Rabbi. One other thing I could mention though, when he was preparing to retire, he chose Rabbi David Powers as his successor whom we like very much as well. I have a lot of respect for Rabbi Powers again contrary to some other members of the congregation who do not like him that much. He was of course subsequently replaced. I knew Rabbi Powers a lot better than Rabbi Berkowitz, but in a way, maybe Rabbi Powers is a reflection of Rabbi Berkowitz because Berkowitz essentially hand picked him. I think again, he chose a man who was a very intellectual person and he was intellectually challenging.

I think this to some extent was what Rabbi Berkowitz was, too. He did not talk down to the congregation. He raised tough questions. He made them think about themselves, you know, "What are you doing?" "What is wrong about what you are doing?" "What might be wrong about your views?" "Look at different view points." I think a clergyman should challenge his congregation and not let them get too complacent. Again, that is a part of my own political views as a scientist, as somebody who feels politically that there should always be challenges to the establishments, just to keep it on its toes, let us say, and have different views be expressed. I think a good Rabbi should do that, too. Any clergyman should. I certainly recall Rabbi Powers much better because

we had much more dealing with him. He was much more involved with our children, but I think he was similar in many ways to Rabbi Berkowitz.

B: Thank you very much for your time.

End of Interview