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Panel Discussion: The Founding of Synagogue Emanu-El

Occasion: Fourth annual meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina held in conjunction with Emanu-El's fiftieth anniversary:

Panelists: William Ackerman
Pearl Baker
Florence Horowitz
Rose Jacobs
Charlot M. Karesh
Stanley Karesh
Frederica ("Freddie") W. Kronsberg
Doris Meddin
Rabbi Lewis A. Weintraub

Moderator: Jenna Weissman Joselit

Emcee: Klyde Robinson

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Begin Tape, Side A

Klyde Robinson: I have to tell you that at two minutes to twelve, there was an election and I was notified that by secret ballot I was the emcee of this program. So if I stumble or mumble, please bear with me. First of all, on behalf of the Jewish Historical Society, let me welcome all of you. It's a great pleasure and we're very proud to be a part of helping Emanu-El celebrate their fiftieth anniversary. The Jewish Historical Society, as I told you, has been in existence for about four years, and Emanu-El sort of set a standard for us in that in the fifty years of Emanu-El's life, they've already become the largest Jewish Conservative synagogue in the state of South Carolina, which gives us the impetus to move forward very quickly. We're catching up with time and we're hoping Emanu-El will very shortly help *us* celebrate *our* fiftieth anniversary.

The main project of the Jewish Historical Society is what we call the Heritage Project. We have a three hundred-year history of Jews in South Carolina. It's not well known; it's never been well documented. So with the cooperation and assistance of the McKissick Museum in Columbia, South Carolina, and the College of Charleston, we have been attempting to not only document the three hundred-year history of Jews in South Carolina, but to assemble whatever information we can obtain and place it all in the library at the College of Charleston so that, in future years, researchers and scholars, or members of various families, can go to the College of Charleston and listen to their forebears on tape.

We're traveling around the state of South Carolina taping interviews. Each interview takes approximately an hour and a half to two hours. We ask the individuals being interviewed to give as much of their genealogy as possible. We ask them to reminisce about growing up in South Carolina. What was it like? What did they do? What obstacles did they face and so forth? How wonderful it would be—very shortly y'all are going to have a panel of remembrances: the early days of Emanu-El, the organization, how it started, and by whom—how wonderful it would have been if we were able to have the voices of Hyman Rephan or Ed Kronsberg or the Steinberg [ed.: sounds like "brothers"], or other members of the Kronsberg family and all the many others who originally started Emanu-El. Well, we can't go back and do that, but we can, as President Kennedy said, "Take our first step forward." That's what we're doing. We have done approximately a hundred and twenty-five interviews of people around the state of South Carolina. Approximately fifty-five or sixty have been of persons in Charleston.

It is our hope, in time to come, that we will have interviewed every single Jewish family in the state of South Carolina. Those records, as I said, would be housed at the College of Charleston for future scholarly research, but more important than that, because every Jewish family has a story to tell. It's amazing, as these interviews are conducted, the things they remember about their childhood and incidents they remember concerning other people, all of which will now be tape recorded. In addition to the tape recorder, we have a professional stenographer transcribing, so we'll have both the tape and the written record. In the days to come, we hope, either with the camcorder or the video, we will be able to do video also.

To give you an idea of the success that we have had, one, we've never gone on a membership drive and we have approximately two hundred and fifty members. Two, we submitted a grant request to the National Endowment for the Humanities, and most of you know today the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts are all being severely cut in funds and having other problems. We requested forty-nine thousand dollars in order to prepare an exhibit. When I say prepare, just to get the ideas of what we wanted in an

exhibit to travel around the state of South Carolina. Of the forty-nine thousand dollars, the national humanity foundation gave us forty thousand dollars.

Let me tell you a few of the things that they said about the program: “It would fill important gaps in public awareness and advance a growing area of scholarship. ‘Historical periods’ needs to be better defined to make the sweeping scope of three hundred years of history accessible to the public. Clearly this program is one of the top four planning programs submitted to us.” That’s what [inaudible].

Now how can you help—and this is not a drive for donations or anything of that nature. Last night at the dinner, several people made a request of how they could join—I’m only making that information known because of that request—thirty-five dollars a year per family. Those who are interested may join, help us; that’s all that would be asked. Those who are more interested and would like to work on various committees, we’d be tickled. A number of people have taken courses, so to speak, on how to conduct interviews, which is led by one of your members, Dale Rosengarten, who is the director of the program and who has done most of the interviews. We now have additional people doing interviews, all of which is administered by Sandra Lee Rosenblum, our state chairman. Those of you who would like to go further and make donations, of course, we’d be very happy to receive them. Those who would like to work for the organization, we would appreciate it.

Now I’d like to ask those individuals who are on the program to reminisce about Emanu-El, I’d like to ask them to come forward, please take a seat at the head table. . . .

[Inaudible] this morning, trying to mind my own business and meditate and pray. Suddenly a most attractive lady came and sat down beside me. Well, what’s all this about? Little did I know it’s our speakers’ moderator. Allow me to mention a few things about Jenna Weissman Joselit. First, she’s a well-known author of numerous books. She has been a consultant as a curator of many exhibits of the Jewish culture. She’s affiliated with New York University and the University of Pennsylvania, and she has graciously allowed herself to be moderator for this program. So I will call on and ask you to join me in welcoming Jenna Weissman Joselit. [Applause].

Jenna W. Joselit: Shabbat shalom everyone and good afternoon. Klyde left out one critical element of my biography and that is that I’m a dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker, and as a dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker, I’m not unmindful of what happened—

. . . .

Jenna W. Joselit: —I’m not unmindful of what happened to an earlier New Yorker who attempted to try his hand at Charleston history way back in 1902. Put simply, this predecessor of mine by the name of Mr. [ed.: sounds like “Hooner”] was pilloried; he was run out of town. Said a local Charlestonian about Mr. Hooner’s work, “Mr. Hooner’s article contains about a thousand words”—an article about Charleston Jewry—“This article contains about a thousand words and an equal number of mistakes.” [Laughter.] [Inaudible] Charleston Jewish community about Mr. Hooner’s work, “That Charleston Jewry deserves much better; that Charleston’s history is much too distinguished and glorious to be entrusted into the hands of a raw, amateur, would-be, and northern historian.” [Laughter.] So with all due respect and confession and apologies, I’m going to moderate this session. I’m not going to speak too much. I will attempt to shape and frame the

conversation, but most of the information that you will hear will be from dyed-in-the-wool Charlestonians, as opposed to myself.

So we will begin with the rabbi . . . and I will ask the rabbi to reflect on what it is that attracted so many Jews in this particular neck of the woods to Conservative Judaism fifty years ago.

. . . .

Rabbi Lewis Weintraub: Madam Chairman, Moderator, before I attempt to answer the question, I do want to express a word of sincere and heartfelt appreciation to whoever is responsible for my being here. At the moment I have not yet determined that [laughter], but I appreciate it more than I can say. It's been a kind of revival for me to make renewed acquaintances and friends and to see how those who were children when I left are now grandparents and great-grandparents; and I shepen naches vicariously ever since I arrived yesterday afternoon. So I appreciate it very much.

I'm delighted to be here and I regret that my wife, who was very anxious to join me, could not be here and I bring her greetings to you all. You've all asked me about her. Everyone almost that I spoke to has asked me about Fannie. She is a Charlestonian; she's a dyed-in-the-wool Charlestonian. I am not, but nevertheless, I feel very much a part of this community as you probably knew when I was here and sense the sincerity of what I am saying now.

To answer the question, I can only say that I am not prepared specifically to give *all* the details of what brought Conservative Judaism to Charleston. All I can do is offer the bulletins that I published from number one till the—seven and a half years that I spent here, I published a bulletin here, written by hand and typed for me by Mrs. Lehrer, who was the new secretary in those days. Those of you who go back to the beginning of this congregation know. However, I do recall certain things, which I'm going to add to whatever might be found. I'll be happy to leave these bulletins with whoever—Dale, if you will be happy to look through them. She's working on this information and here will be many of the answers that she has formulated and that will be attempted to be answered by the people who are participating in the program.

As I recall, I came down in August of 1947 to a preliminary meeting that took place on Wednesday night at the Jewish Community Center where I delivered a talk and I was voted in as rabbi. I came down at the beginning of September to take up the position of a synagogue, a congregation without facilities, without anything. Those were the beginnings.

Of course, in the course of my early days here, I learned about what was happening, what had happened at Brith Sholom before the dissidents, if I may call them so, finally broke away. Mention was made of Rabbi Goldfarb, I believe, yesterday. Rabbi Goldfarb was invited to be the rabbi of Brith Sholom as a kind of in-between, a go-between, hopefully that he'd be able to mold Brith Sholom along some Conservative lines so that the congregation might remain united. He spent here something like three or four years. That didn't work out and, as I understand, the central problem was the rights of women, the desire of men and women, some men and some women, to be able to sit together for family worship. This I was impressed, in those days, as being the most crucial question that presented itself at Brith Sholom.

Of course, I'm sure many, perhaps, had other ideas beyond that, but once the break occurred and Synagogue Emanu-El was established, clearly the rights of women, the quality of women's rights in the synagogue became a main issue. Immediately from the beginning, Synagogue Emanu-El set out giving the women equal rights in the administration, the running of the synagogue, and participation. So that very first year that we functioned, we had women

participating in services. They ran their own—the very first bulletin makes mention of the first sisterhood Sabbath; they conducted the services and they spoke from the pulpit and etcetera, and they proceeded from there.

So that my partial answer to the question as to what attracted Charleston or some of the Charleston Jewry to Conservative Judaism was to enable the bigger half of the Jewish community to be an equal partner in the religious life of the community. Much more can be said, but that was one of the important contributing factors, I think, originally, to the attraction of many Jews to the Conservative Movement. In the course of the years, of course, much else happened. I will stop at this point; maybe others want to contribute too.

Jenna W. Joselit: Okay, can we hear from one of the women in that spirit of equal rights?

Pearl Baker: Because the women were not recognized in the Orthodox synagogue was truly, as Rabbi Weintraub said, one of the main reasons why we joined and formed the Conservative synagogue, which is now known as Synagogue Emanu-El.

Charlot Karesh: I think one of the important parts was the fact that women and men could sit together; that was one of the main features of forming the Conservative synagogue.

Jenna W. Joselit: And why was that so important to sit together?

Charlot Karesh: Well, because we wanted to. We thought that that would be the family sort of religion, for us all to be together, and for our children and wives and husbands to sit together.

On a personal note—I don't know if this is the time to inject it—but when *we* became involved, my husband, I think, was the youngest male charter member. We started going to the meetings that they had—I don't want to get ahead; is this all right?—the reason that *we* joined Emanu-El and became a charter member was Stan's family was Orthodox and my family was Reform, and we thought that this was a happy meeting ground, and so that's how we became involved. As I said, my husband was out of the service, he was just in practice. We didn't have a great deal of—we did financially support them, maybe not to the limits of some of the others, but we did become active and participated.

Stanley Karesh: One of the things that attracted many of the, not the older members of the Orthodox congregation, but some who were middle-aged at that time was that they felt that the Conservative-type service—at that time Rabbi Goldfarb had introduced a Friday night service—we felt that that in itself was a much more decorous service and much better organized than the Orthodox service traditionally was with everybody pretty much going his own way.

A second thing that I recall, family members—my parents, although they were members of the Orthodox synagogue and didn't leave, they were charter members of Synagogue Emanu-El, but for family reasons and other things, they stayed at Brith Sholom.

One of the other things I recall members talking about at that time was the fact that the Orthodox service at Brith Sholom, and at most Orthodox congregations, was sort of a free-flowing service. In other words, people davened, got up and davened when they felt like it and completed their service. It was not what was considered at that time to be a very decorous service, and the Conservative congregations that various members had attended at different places, particularly Baltimore, had a far more dignified atmosphere.

I do recall, at that time also, there were a great many people who rode to synagogue back even then and Orthodoxy did not approve of riding to service, of riding on Shabbos even to go to the synagogue, and that the Conservative Movement, however, did not oppose this. There were other things like that that brought—I hope y'all have been able to hear me—there were other things similar to that. There was also discussion about modernization of services themselves, about eliminating some repetition and some prayers, which, although traditional, had no meaning [inaudible]. Thank you. . . .

Frederica Kronsberg: I was going to say practically the same thing that Stan said, so he covered it, so I think you can go on to someone else.

Jenna W. Joselit: Is there another point you'd like to make?

Frederica Kronsberg: Not about this particular thing, but *later*.

Jenna W. Joselit: There's no sequence—whatever comes to mind.

Frederica Kronsberg: Okay. I thought I would say that my daughter was the first bat mitzvah in . . . South Carolina. At the moment we didn't—Rabbi Weintraub had gone to another place; we had Cantor Renzer. The bat mitzvah was arranged sort of by correspondence with Rabbi Wolpe because he was still a chaplain. There was no precedence, so he set it up. We didn't—Milton, my husband, did *not* want to make anybody feel bad about what a woman would do, so he did not allow her to read from the Torah, but she did chant her Haftorah—Cantor Renzer taught her. So nobody was offended and from then on we did have bat mitzvahs.

. . . .

Milton Schwartz: I'm Milton Schwartz. Although I wasn't a charter member, I claim to be one of the first non-charter members in the synagogue. [Laughter.] This is all I wanted to say until Freddie reminded me of bat mitzvahs. Sally Sharnoff was our second bat mitzvah; my daughter, Linda, was the third.

Doris Meddin: I was just going to say that my situation was pretty much like Stanley's and Charlot's, too, except once we were members here, one of the greatest things we had was Rabbi Weintraub. He really inspired everybody, counseled everybody and, as far as I'm concerned, he made the blessing over our house before we even started building it and thank God it's been great ever since. I just want to tell you that we felt very bad when he left here, but he's done great and I don't know whether any of you knew it, but Rabbi Weintraub was invited to the inauguration of Jack Kennedy for the invocation, and we were proud to even hear of that.

Jenna W. Joselit: I believe that there are some members of the audience who'd like to—

Doris Meddin: Oh, I want to tell them one more thing.

Jenna W. Joselit: Okay, one more thing.

Doris Meddin: The first bar mitzvah here was a cousin of mine, Alan Rubin's.

William Ackerman: As long as we're reminiscing and stating some of the things that happened, I'm sorry to state that Irving Levkoff and myself are the only two members left of the regional board of directors; all the rest of them have passed away. I don't know about Macey Kronsberg. [Responses from audience inaudible.] Well, there are three of us then; out of the whole board of directors, we're the only three living.

When I came to Charleston, I joined Brith Sholom—that was right after the war. I was very much concerned because my wife, although her father was a member of Brith Sholom, she told me that she never attended services. She refused to sit upstairs at Brith Sholom. First of all, she said she didn't understand what was going on. All the women—*she* said, now; I'm not saying that [inaudible] that—but she said all the women did was talk, all during the services. She said she could do that at home.

Coming from an Orthodox family and observing the holidays with my father, I also remember that my mother used to complain about it back in those days. And I wanted more than my wife to sit with me; I wanted my whole family; I wanted my daughter and my sons. Incidentally my daughter was the first child *named* in Synagogue Emanu-El [laughter]—first child. That was in the old Jewish Community Center. It was really great when we started the synagogue and we could sit with our wives and sit with our children. The decorum was wonderful. The services were beautiful. People were really inspired. We had a lot of fun in doing it and we had a lot of fun in growing. I guess more will come out about what the growth was later on. You'll probably hear about it as we go along, but Rabbi Weintraub, of course, was very inspirational, as was Rabbi Goldfarb. I suppose that if you had to point to any one person, though, you'd have to say that Rabbi Weintraub was the one most responsible.

Jenna W. Joselit: Thank you. A member of the audience?

Milton Schwartz: The one thing I wanted to mention—I forgot to—was the fact that what played an important factor in . . . Synagogue Emanu-El being formed was the fact of the introduction of English into the service also.

. . . .

Syd Schraibman [?]: Bill Ackerman is a hard act to follow but I'll do my best. Before you start trying to figure out anybody's age, I got married at seventeen, so [laughter] take it from there. Originally, everybody was a member of Brith Sholom at one time or other, because there was no Conservative. When we moved to the northwest section of Charleston, we were real close to Synagogue Emanu-El, and having two sons, we immediately decided to join Synagogue Emanu-El so they could go to Hebrew school and walk there and didn't have to have transport back and forth.

I immediately became involved. I was the second supervisor of the Sunday school—Ida Rosen was the first—and I sang in Cantor Renzer's choir for nine years, which I enjoyed immensely. When I was supervisor I would go from one class to the other collecting the JNF contributions that the children would bring. My son, at that time, was not quite four years old, so he had to trudge along with me because he wasn't old enough to be a part of the Sunday school.

While I was supervisor, he came down with the chicken pox and even now—I ran into Rabbi Weintraub this Rosh Hashanah in Rockville, Maryland, and I recognized him immediately and I haven't seen him, I think, in almost forty years, and he immediately said, "How is chicken pox?" [Laughter.] So those were wonderful memories. Thank you very much.

Sandra Goldberg Lipton: I have something I want to say. Can you hear me from here? Rabbi Weintraub will laugh at this, but Bobbi Steinberg—

Klyde Robinson: Excuse me, will you identify yourself, please?

Sandra Goldberg Lipton: I'm Sandra Goldberg Lipton. My father was the third president of this congregation and when I grew up, everything that we did in our home was Emanu-El. I mean we got up in the morning and the phone rang and my father had to come to minyan quickly because they needed someone. Lunchtime he came home, and there was another thing we had to discuss, and dinner was more Emanu-El. We just ate, breathed, slept Emanu-El.

I was fortunate enough to have two confirmations. Rabbi, do you remember Bobbi Spitz? Bobbi Steinberg Spitz was the only person in the first confirmation class, and Rabbi and the cantor decided that we were going to have a cantata. Well, you can't have a cantata with one person, so the next confirmation class was drafted to be a part of the confirmation. So the year before my confirmation, I went to confirmation rehearsals, and the year *of* my confirmation, I went to rehearsals. I had two Judith and Ira Eisenstein cantatas, "What is Torah" and "Our Bialik," committed to memory because I had to be confirmed twice, which I think should have been—it only happened to one Jewish girl [laughing] in the world, or maybe my class, and only one group.

.....

Frederica Kronsberg: The first person to be superintendent of the Sunday school was Adele Kronsberg. She established the Sunday school for us and, of course, Mace was the first president, and he was the power behind the throne. He was the one that really pushed having a Conservative synagogue. To give you an idea of what it was like, as Sandra said, our whole social life and religious life was around the synagogue and the seminary was wonderful. They had these men that were outstanding in Judaism and they came—a number of them. Remember—wasn't it Dr. Arzt came down? And remember when Pauline Frederick came down and she talked about the United Nations? It was really a wonderful time because everybody was so cooperative. I think it was very unusual that we *would* get men like this to come down and speak to us.

Unidentified Male #1: Excuse me, we started this discussion with the hiring of Rabbi . . . Weintraub. Are we ever going to talk about how we got to the point of hiring a rabbi?

Jenna W. Joselit: The question is how did you move beyond Rabbi Weintraub and begin to establish a [inaudible]—

Unidentified Male #1: No, *before* that. How we got to the point—

Jenna W. Joselit: Before, excuse me. See, I'm a northerner; I really shouldn't be talking.

Unidentified Female #1: He is, too.

Jenna W. Joselit: You, too!

Unidentified Male #1: —how we got to the point of deciding we are going to form a congregation and the first thing we need to do is hire a rabbi.

Jenna W. Joselit: Okay, the question is how did a kind of communal consciousness take place so that the folks involved in attempting to create this institution realized, "All right, we need a rabbi, we need a charter, we need a building." Can somebody speak to that? Samuel.

Samuel Steinberg: Yeah, I would like, before you go to that subject, I would like—everybody was talking about their child being the first of this and that. It just so happens that—and I think my information is correct—that my late father was the last president of Brith Sholom or was the president of Brith Sholom at the time that Emanu-El broke away from Brith Sholom. And it just so happens that I happened to have been the first president of the Junior Congregation. [Laughter and applause.] I think my sister stuffed the ballot box [laughter] during Sunday school.

I remember—it must have been the first year that we had a Sunday school and a Hebrew school—that we held the Hebrew school—we lived up by The Citadel and had an apartment over a garage—and . . . the Hebrew school was over our garage and part of the Sunday school was over the garage.

To change the subject, being that I'm sitting behind the rabbi from the other congregation [laughter], my mother's family was very active in the temple and my father being—his father was the first president of Beth Israel. Then they left because it wasn't shomer Shabbos or whatever. My mother and father's marriage was almost considered an intermarriage. [Laughter.]

Jenna W. Joselit: Mr. Ackerman, do you want to answer that question about how you decided that you needed to hire a rabbi and [inaudible]?

William Ackerman: Well, as I recall, before we actually got to that point, there was considerable discussion taking place between some of our people and Brith Sholom members. They attempted at first to try to come to some compromise. I don't know what they wanted—how they expected to get it because it always revolved around, "Will women get to sit together or won't they?" Brith Sholom said, "No," and Emanu-El said, "Well, then, we're going to leave." We formed committees and we talked with them for a long time and I don't think they ever thought we really would leave. I don't think they thought we would.

Finally, when all the chips were down and we found out there wasn't any sense in talking any longer—as I recall, we met at Mosie Mendelsohn's house on Sullivan's Island. All of the so-called heavy hitters in those days were there, the Rephans, the Steinbergs, the Kronsbergs and so forth, and they decided that was a propitious time to start. They decided that they would start synagogue, hire a rabbi, and they would hold services wherever they had to hold them at the beginning, which actually was the Jewish Community Center. So at that particular time, I think we passed a resolution to form a congregation. There were some of us appointed to the legal

committee to start to get a charter and so forth. Other committees were formed to look for a rabbi and that's the way we proceeded from there.

Unidentified Female #2: [Inaudible], do you remember when we tried to find a *name* [inaudible]?

William Ackerman: Oh, you women did that. The women had the trouble finding a name. We just wanted a congregation.

Pearl Baker: I remember when Anita and Leon Steinberg went to Canada to visit Rabbi Weintraub and to interview him before we got him to Charleston.

Charlot Karesh: Well, there was a big discussion about the name, and I won't go through all the names, but the final end of it was that we decided on Emanu-El. *Now* the problem came how to spell it [laughter], and that was another discussion whether we should have at the end a dash, capital E-L, or whether it should be all Emanuel and all the same type letters.

Jenna W. Joselit: Do you remember if there was a lot of controversy about the establishment of the synagogue?

Charlot Karesh: I would have to admit—okay, let him.

Stanley Karesh: Talk about controversy at the time of the synagogue, I can think of a heck of a lot of controversy, to put it mildly. My father was a moderate. He really favored Conservatism. His older brother Louie was a very, very shomer Shabbos, radical right. I think he never voted anything but the Republican ticket, I mean back then [laughs], and his brother-in-law also. There were a lot of other people, for one reason or another—and these were people who were not observant—who still had a strong feeling about Brith Sholom remaining a traditional, strictly Orthodox synagogue. Even Judge Klyde—I remember his father, who was a very moderate man, still felt very, very strongly, and he expressed himself strongly, that he did not want to see Brith Sholom change from Orthodoxy. Am I correct, Klyde?

Klyde Robinson: Yes.

Stanley Karesh: My uncle, of course, I think, and several other older people, for whom I had a great deal of respect, who were really very sincere, obviously couldn't be swayed or changed, and we felt it wouldn't be fair, at that time, to go ahead and try to compromise anymore, but to split off and make our own congregation.

Pearl Baker: I just want to add to what Charlot said. The person who came up with the name Emanu-El was Hattie Kronsberg, of blessed memory.

Unidentified Female #3: Why did you come up with Emanu-El? Why was that name chosen?

Unidentified Female #4: I don't know.

. . . .

Jenna W. Joselit: Anybody know how the name was chosen?

Charlot Karesh: Well, I liked it because that's where I belonged in Greensboro, Emanu-El, so I wanted that name.

. . . .

Frederica Kronsberg: I know we had a lot of [inaudible] meetings and . . . movies were shown at the Lesser's home and we had dinners out at the beach and that's how they—there was a lot of discussion before we decided that we could have Emanu-El. Then I understand that . . . Irving Steinberg, I think, picked the spot on Gordon Street and then they wrote off to the war—assets?

. . . .

Unidentified Male #2: The war service administration here in Charleston.

Frederica Kronsberg: —and they gave us—Mattie Steinberg, I think, bought it, didn't he?

Unidentified Female #5: Right, right.

Unidentified Male #3: [Inaudible] chapel.

Freddie Kronsberg: Yeah, and then [inaudible] started the first—

. . . .

Milton Schwartz: I'd like to explain the affinity that my family has for this wonderful man sitting behind me. He bar or bat mitzvahed my grandchildren; he married my grandchildren; he officiated at the bris of my grandson; and he also officiated at the bris of my grandson's two sons. Thank you.

Rabbi Lewis Weintraub: Thank you very much but, really, this is the program for the Jewish Historical Society and I appreciate all the kudos. I do want to add, however, a word on the name because I think it's crucial. The name Emanu-El was selected, but the word synagogue—usually Emanu-El is associated with Temple Emanu-El, and that was an issue, too. Originally, naturally, Temple Emanu-El is a well-known congregational name; New York Temple Emanu-El is the leading congregation. In most communities Temple Emanu-El's generally Reform—in *those days*, not today any longer. So calling ourselves Temple Emanu-El would have given the impression that we were a Reform congregation; at least that's superficial. So the compromise was arrived at that we would be called *Synagogue* Emanu-El, retaining the name Emanu-El, but indicating that we are not Reform in that sense.

I might also add, perhaps, since we're talking about the origins of the congregation and the attractiveness of Conservative Judaism for some people in the United States, we must also bear in mind the background, fifty years ago, immediately after the Second World War. Young

men were coming back from the war in 1946—and this [inaudible] we're talking about 1947—where they had experienced services which were, generally speaking, of a Conservative nature. They had also come in contact with Conservative rabbis, which heretofore [inaudible] there was no such experience. All that background contributed to the establishment and the quick growth of Synagogue Emanu-El in this community. I, therefore, appreciate the kind compliments I'm receiving, but it was the circumstances that made my success so easy at that time. Thank you very much. By the way, if you get to the firsts, I can give you a list of all the firsts in the congregation. [Laughter.] . . .

End Side A
Begin Side B

Rabbi Lewis Weintraub: —July. By September not only was the name chosen, but the rabbi was here already, in place. No congregation, no building, no land, nothing definite, but the rabbi was here. So all that happened very quickly and [inaudible]. Now I mentioned also Dr. Arthur Hertzberg, a well-known, noted Conservative rabbi; Professor Max Arzt was mentioned already; Professor Robert Gordis we had the privilege of having; Dr. Albert Gordon; Dr. Max Routtenberg; Rabbi Hillel Silverman, and so on. I have a long list. These are distinguished American rabbinic leaders and professors at the seminary who blessed us with their presence and their intellectual stimulation.

About the firsts—I [inaudible] so I don't have to bother again the microphone and you as well—the first bar mitzvah I have recorded was, of course, already mentioned—Alan Rubin. Now we did not have bat mitzvahs in the beginning, and I have a blank for bat mitzvah because it happened after I left, but I might explain why. In light of the circumstances that I mentioned and the issue was women's rights, how come we didn't have any bat mitzvahs? The reason is two-fold: one of them is the fact that we did not have candidates in the early year or two or three because the Hebrew school was not producing—the girls were going only to Sunday school and I wasn't going to bat mitzvah anybody who did not have a Hebrew education.

Now, secondly, we wanted to delay bar and bat mitzvah. We couldn't do it with bar mitzvahs, but since we didn't have any bat mitzvahs, we utilized confirmation for that purpose. Our confirmations, at that time, were in the tenth grade and, thereby, we were able to hold the children in religious school beyond bar mitzvah age, two or three years beyond that. So, probably, an explanation would be in order. However, the first confirmation was held that very first year and Bobbi Steinberg was the first one.

I might mention, not because it was something special, but what was special was the *kind* of confirmation we arranged for that one girl. I wish I had a copy of the program; it would have been worthy of a Ph.D. convocation that we arranged, and reference was made to it. A tremendous program, big size, because I wanted to make it as attractive as I possibly could for other candidates to follow suit, and they did. That was our leading and closing educational exercise; it always took place at Shavuot, the appropriate time for those exercises.

The Junior Congregation was organized in 1948, immediately after the New Year. The [inaudible] of the Junior Congregation, the first president, already stood up, and thank God he's here to acknowledge that.

The first Adult Education Institute was established January of '48, adult education. We were in full operation, though, as I said, and the dedication of our chapel took place Chanukah,

the first Chanukah. That December already we were in business with a building, with a lot, a congregation—all of these programs taking place.

I can go on. Our Sunday school was established. . . . The Hebrew School was established—I believe it was on November 3rd of 1947. Notice, I arrived in July and we had a Hebrew school, functioning Hebrew school already then. Adult education program, as I mentioned, January 19th, 1948. Sisterhood Sabbath [inaudible]—May 19th, 1948, we had our first Sisterhood Sabbath and first year's bulletins; Sisterhood thrift shop even [laughter] that very first year.

First annual Thanksgiving service—we had the regular annual Thanksgiving services every year beginning with November of 1947, that very November. We had just, I think, gotten into the chapel; at that location we had a special Thanksgiving service, which we retained every year.

Our music festival began; we had music concerts. Cantor Renzer was mentioned already; he was an unusually gifted cantor and it was a great loss, I'm sure, to the congregation when he left. Thank God I left him behind so I can't be blamed for that. [Laughter.]

I might also mention, by the way—talk about controversy, talk about controversies—the controversy that took place in Brith Sholom took place for a *long, long* time after the congregation was established. I had to use every ounce of my diplomacy, if I can call it such, to try to keep the controversy down. After all, families were broken apart. If one congregation did something, the other one did another.

I remember one incident, which perhaps I shouldn't mention because it only opens up wounds. I remember we went down to Florida; I think it was the first southeastern region conference of the Conservative congregations in Florida. Many people from the congregation went down and were kind enough and gracious enough [inaudible] to invite me to go down to Florida for that first convocation. So I had to ask someone to substitute for me in Synagogue Emanu-El. Well, I turned to a colleague—a colleague with whom I shared a room [inaudible] across the way at the yeshiva, because I attended the yeshiva before I went to the Jewish Theological Seminary—and got Rabbi Samuel Rubenstein to come over here. If you remember, he was the rabbi at Beth Israel here in town for some time, and he agreed to serve as my substitute for that Shabbat because Friday night services were not being held in either one of the Conservative [ed.: Orthodox] congregations, [inaudible] Friday night service.

I went down, assured that I had a substitute. I think it was Irving Steinberg that came down Saturday night—one of the Steinbergs came down to the convocation Saturday morning and he told me that the city was in an uproar. [Laughter.] The city was in an uproar. What happened? Rabbi Rubenstein didn't come to the service. He wasn't sure why. There was another rabbi; he was the rabbi—again, good friends of mine, Gil Klaperman, [inaudible]; he was a good friend of mine—he was the rabbi of Brith Sholom. He contacted Rabbi Rubenstein and Rabbi Rubenstein said, “No, I'm going.” He said, “You better not.” He threatened him, all kinds of threats, to the point of going to the yeshiva, having the placement director of the yeshiva call Rabbi Rubenstein and said, “If you do go, you're placing the future”—

So he called me—but anyway— [Laughter.] That continued. When I came back, I preached a sermon that Friday night in which I appealed to the people . . . for understanding, circumstances, etcetera, etcetera, and tried to calm the waters as much as I could.

I mention this incident because this wasn't—this was already [inaudible] close to a year after the break. This continued. This continued for a long time, but thank God, when I arrived here, I did ask somebody—I think it was—who said it? Someone, I don't remember who. Sam,

did I ask you that question as to what are the relationship—the rabbi, the rabbi I think I asked. Yes. I asked Rabbi Friedman. I said, “What is the relationship in the community now between the congregation, members of the congregation?” He said, “[Inaudible], everything’s gorgeous.” So I’m glad. Maybe it’s because I left. [Laughter.]

Sandra Goldberg Lipton: Excuse me, I have to tell you the [inaudible] story. There’s a part of the story—excuse me, but I *have* to interrupt—there’s a part that you don’t know. I was thinking about this very story and debating whether to tell it or not. My parents sent me to the Rubenstein’s house. I went to a Citadel dress parade and I was to be there no later than four-thirty or quarter to five before Shabbat. They were going to eat dinner in our home and walk around the corner to Emanu-El with my parents. I came to the house—it was across the street from the lake, I remember—and I rang the doorbell. The rabbi’s wife came down and she was so disturbed. She said, “Sandra, just go home. We can’t come. Your parents will explain.” I went home and my parents told me what happened and that was what the other part of the story the rabbi just told. I was the person who was supposed to bring them to the area near the synagogue [inaudible] and I was caught in that little bit of history unwittingly.

Sally Sharnoff Fischbein: I wanted to correct a little bit of misinformation. First bat mitzvah, your daughter; second bat mitzvah, your daughter; your daughter was third, and I was fourth. [Laughter.] I wasn’t second. Okay.

Also being very young when the synagogue was formed—I was almost four—I have memories and I don’t know if I’m meshuga or what, but did we rent a church on Sullivan’s Island and have services there?

Unidentified Female #6: No.

Sally Sharnoff Fischbein: Did we have summer services on Sullivan’s Island?

Unidentified Female #7: Yes.

Rabbi Lewis Weintraub: I wasn’t here; I used to go away for the summer.

....

Sally Sharnoff Fischbein: —for the summer and we had services? We had services on Sullivan’s Island in a church. It was in a church, I believe.

Sandra Goldberg Lipton: Sally, it was in a chapel, the [inaudible] chapel on Sullivan’s Island on the fort, on Fort Moultrie.

Sally Sharnoff Fischbein: Okay, it was at the other end of the island. Okay.

Arthur Schoenberg: My name is Arthur Schoenberg. This is going to be very brief. There have been a number of mentions of firsts and I just wanted to say that I was a sophomore at The Citadel when Emanu-El was established, and I think I was among one of the very first to attend services during the time it was established. [Laughter.]

Klyde Robinson: There was a little bit of talk about the feeling between the synagogues. I wouldn't say things were bad except to tell you this: if we had a Bond for Israel drive and we had it at, let's say, Brith Sholom Beth Israel because they had the facilities, Emanu-El didn't want to go, and they didn't go, some of them, a *lot* of them. The next year then we'd have it at Emanu-El, and the Brith Sholom people didn't come. [Laughter.] I'm serious about that. It wasn't until we got the Jewish Community Center built that we had a kosher kitchen there that we always had at the center, so nobody could complain about where they had it. So we've been good friends since then.

Incidentally, as a first, I don't know if I'm the first, but I stayed a member of Brith Sholom and I still am. I think I'm the only one.

....

Klyde Robinson: Are there more of you who still stayed?

Unidentified Male #4: There are several members of both congregations.

Klyde Robinson: I'm talking of the original people. Of the original people who left, I think I'm the only one who remained a member of Brith Sholom. But we're good friends now.

Pearl Baker: I don't want to talk about the controversies that went on between Brith Sholom and Emanu-El because there was plenty of that, but what I do want to say—that our first Sunday school, we had it in different peoples' homes on Parkwood Avenue, and Anita Steinberg had a kindergarten, I think—Samuel, wasn't it downstairs?

Unidentified Female #8: Upstairs.

Pearl Baker: Oh, upstairs there, and then Louis Lesser's home and Irving Steinberg there on Moultrie Street. Everybody was giving their home and it was just wonderful. It was a real *warm* feeling there. And the first thrift shop the rabbi happened to mention was—Anita Steinberg, alav ha shalom, was the first and only chairman that we had and Lillian Lehrer was her vice-chairman. We did a fantastic job and we rented a store on King Street and we had it going; we had no problems getting people to volunteer to come.

Unidentified Female #9: Do you remember Rita and Edna Banov? The problem I had with the thrift shop was that someone would come in and they would say something in Yiddish—not the people that came in, but Edna—and I couldn't understand what they were saying. [Laughter.] So it didn't do me much good as a sales person. [Laughter.]

William Ackerman: Talking about split up of congregations, I wonder how many of you remember that when I was president of the synagogue, we voted on whether or not we would have an organ. When they came to me I said, "Well, we'll take a vote." The vote was something like ninety-seven to ninety-nine, and they said, "We won." I said, "Not during my administration you didn't. Let the next president do that." It's come back up again. So we didn't have an organ and we didn't have a split.

Jenna W. Joselit: Are there any questions from the audience that you'd like to level at the panel?
Yes, sir.

Rabbi William Rosenthal: I have a comment if I may. I'm the emeritus of the Reform congregation. I wanted to, first of all, as a representative of Beth Elohim, to convey to this group the sincere—

Crowd: We can't hear you.

Rabbi William Rosenthal: You ask for trouble when you give a mike to a rabbi. [Laughter.] I wanted to convey the warm greetings, as I'm sure they've been in given in other ways, to the congregation on its fiftieth anniversary. We were founded a mere two hundred years before, but we look upon you as sisters and brothers, not only as children [laughter], wayward, which allows me to make the comment, if I may, that the unspoken, almost unmentioned influence of the Reform Movement is very much evident in these discussions and in these controversies because they are the basic reasons of the existence of Reform. If I may say to the members of the historical society that the Conservative Movement, as I'm sure you all know, is *not* a break off from Orthodoxy, but of Reform. It dates from about 1886 with a very memorable, but not too popular dinner, where there was a shrimp cocktail and [laughter]—oh, it's very true [laughs]—there was kind of a breakup at the establishment of JTS. I think Rabbi Friedman will back me up on that. But I did want to say I find this all very interesting and I'm really surprised that there are any controversies in the movement because we in Reform have none at all. [Laughter] So my kindest greetings to you all and particularly, Rabbi, I was delighted to have the pleasure of seeing you again.

William Ackerman: Somebody asked me—when I heard I was going to be on the panel—asked me if I could remember what was the most impressive thing that happened during these years that I've been a member of the congregation. I said, "Yes. When I was president of the synagogue, I was in my law office one day, very blue because I'd just lost a case that I thought I'd won; the heating wasn't working in the office and the girls wanted to go home; I'd just found my wife had overdrawn my bank account, and so I was feeling pretty blue. [Laughter.] When I got this telephone conversation, the secretary said—I said, "Hold my calls"—and the secretary said, "No, there's a woman who's very irate on the phone and she insists on talking to you." "What's her name?" Well, she told me and I recognized her as one of our congregation, and I said, "Yes ma'am, what can I do for you?" And *furiously* she said, "I want you to know that my son went to the restroom in the synagogue and there was no toilet paper. [Laughter.] What are you going to do about it?" [Laughter.] I said, "I'm going to send down ten dollars with a messenger and you go buy the toilet paper." [Laughter.]

Rose Jacobs: I'm Rose Jacobs, Melvin's wife, and Charlot twisted his arm to let me come up here [laughter]. . . . When I came here—we were married June 1st, 1947 and, at that time, there was a *huge* argument going on and Melvin was on one side, his father was on the other side, and I was caught in the middle. "What do you think of your husband leaving the shul that his great-grandfather formed?" Well, what did I think? I said, "Just leave me out of it." But he finally became a member. He also was a member of Emanu-El, still kept his membership there, but

finally after quite a few years later, he finally decided this is ridiculous, I belong to Brith Sholom. He finally gave up his membership here.

Unidentified Female #13: He was a charter member.

Rose Jacobs: He was a charter member; he was one of the members. But Charlot is the one who twisted his arm because he wouldn't let me speak. [Laughter.]

Jenna W. Joselit: On that note I [inaudible] to me whether I'm a New Yorker or my heart is now in Charleston that history is alive and well here and we'll continue this evening and this afternoon. Thank you very much and [inaudible]. [Applause.]

KR: Jenna, we very much thank you for moderating the program and thank all the panelists and all the speakers. In a moment, I'm going to give you the very last first of the day, but first let me ask you this. Did you find this to be an interesting program?

Crowd: Yes. [Applause.]

Klyde Robinson: Well, this is what the Jewish Historical Society is trying to do on an individual basis as well as a group basis—to record these events in terms of future children and grandchildren and their children being able to listen to the voices of their forebears. Rabbi Weintraub, we particularly thank you for giving our society your bulletins. They will be a valuable asset to our archives. The last first of the day: I'm the only speaker, insofar as I know, that belongs both and currently belongs both to Brith Sholom and Beth Elohim. So I'm entirely neutral. [Laughter.] These remembrances are great for all of us and we thank you for coming. [Applause.]

END OF TAPE