

Albert M. Franco Interview

Transcript

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ALBERT M. FRANCO

interviewed by Howard Droker
June 30, 1982

JEWISH ARCHIVES PROJECT

of the Washington State Jewish Historical Society
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This is an interview with Albert M. Franco. The date is June 30, 1982, and the interviewer is Howard Droker.

DROKER Al, I'd like to begin by asking you to talk about your introduction to Zionism.

FRANCO I believe the first conscious introduction to Zionism was through my uncle, Dr. Isaac Mossafer, a dentist who had emmigrated to the United States with my mother, who was his older sister, and my grandmother, his mother. He had come here as a boy of 10, and he had gone to elementary school when he got to Seattle, the old Pacific School, then went to Broadway High School, where he graduated, I believe, in 1920. He had gone to North Pacific Dental College in Portland, which has since become a part of the University of Oregon. My uncle was an avid reader, and he became tremendously excited reading about Theodore Herzl. I don't exactly know how he got interested in it--by the way my uncle is still alive; he lives in West Seattle--but he was talking about a Jewish nation before anybody else had ever mentioned it.

DROKER Was this within the family?

FRANCO Within the family or with anybody. He would, as a matter of fact, on occasion make reference to it in meetings in the Sephardic community, our synagogue, for example, or the Seattle Progressive Fraternity, which was a lay Sephardic organization with membership from both Sephardic synagogues.

DROKER What was his reception?

FRANCO Some people listened, and some people thought he was nuts. Zionism, of a certain type, was almost an accepted thing among Sephardics. The concept of ^{the} return to Zion, with a rather ill-defined concept of nationhood, was not uncommon among Sephardic Jews.

FRANCO Remember, of course, that the Sephardic Jews who came to Seattle had lived in the Turkish empire. The Turkish empire controlled Palestine, and obviously, there was a reluctance on the part of Sephardic Jews living in the Turkish empire to openly espouse a Jewish state. Because historically, while the Turks did not maltreat the Jews, unlike the life of the Jews in ^{Czarist} Russia, they nonetheless took a very dim view

of nationalistic movements among their minorities, the Greeks, the Armenians, the Arabs, the Jews. Generally speaking, at least in 19th and early 20th centuries, within the limits of the ability of the Turks to be benign, they had a sort of benign dictatorship, and they pretty well left the Greeks and the Armenians and so forth alone, as long as they didn't espouse nationalism. So the Sephardic Jews, coming from the Turkish empire, were culturally and religiously Zionist. They did not articulate the concept of the Jewish state, the Judenstaat that Herzl talked about in his book, but the return to Zion, the concept of Jewish nationalism, was an accepted thing to them. They never got really excited about it; it wasn't a new concept, or one that clashed with other preconceived notions like the assimilationists use.

DROKER Did you uncle join Zionist organizations?

FRANCO Well, there really weren't any here in the early days, in the '20s, that I know of.

DROKER I think in our Saul Esfall papers, he belonged to some ^{Sol Esfall} groups. They may have been national.

FRANCO There were national groups in the '20s. I don't know whether my uncle joined any organizations or not, but he was a Zionist. He was different from most Sephardic Jews, who I indicated were culturally and religiously Zionist, but were not so concerned with political

- Zionism. My uncle believed strongly in political Zionism. He believed and said that the only hope for Jews was their own nation.
- DROKER Were there other Zionists in the Sephardic community that you know of?
- FRANCO None that were articulate. The only other one that I can recall was Mrs. Adatto , who was the mother of Albert Adatto , who is retired from the Bellevue school district. Her daughter Jenny lives in Israel. She (Mrs. Adatto) was an ardent Zionist, and she was not only a cultural and religious Zionist, but she was a complete Zionist and wanted to go and make aliyah in Palestine and did eventually go. She left here and went to Palestine, and if my memory serves me correctly, I think her husband remained. I think she went without her husband. She was so dedicated; she was so fired up by the concept of Zionism. These were the two Sephardics, in my memory, who went beyond the traditional, accepted Sephardic viewpoint.
- DROKER Did anything else set Mrs. Adatto apart from the rest of the Sephardic women?
- FRANCO Yes, she was an extremely articulate person, independent, forward-looking.
- DROKER Was she better educated?
- FRANCO Well-educated, although there were many who had French educations in the school of the Alliance Israelite, where a number of Sephardic women attended. She was a woman of great courage, a remarkable woman. But she was an unusual woman. She was a woman of great courage,
- DROKER Let's move on to another subject, and that is the failure of Ezra Bessaroth and Sephardic Bikur Holim to ever get together, despite many attempts. What do you know about that split?
- FRANCO To say it was a split isn't entirely correct. Let's say it was something that never occurred. Bearing in mind that while the Sephardic Jews from the island of Rhodes and the Sephardic Jews from the mainland of Turkey and other parts of the Turkish empire, Bulgaria,

parts of Greece, which were under the Turkish empire, as well as Rhodes before 1911, while they were culturally the same people, spoke the same language, the Judeo-Spanish, or Judaismo, as we call it, and essentially really were the same people, they did have certain little cultural differences. They weren't very distinct, but they were there. When the first families from Turkey came here they tended to congregate with other families that came from Tekirdag, Marmara, Izmir, ^{Smyrna} Istanbul and the other places in Turkey. Those who came from Rhodes had known each other in Rhodes. Whether it was Nessim Alhadeff or Solomon Alhadeff, or my father, people like that, they'd known each other in the old country, so they tended to congregate together. So each group formed its own little congregation. Among the Rhodesian Jews, there were never any spin-offs; there is only one congregation. But among the Jews from Turkey, there were some split-offs. There was the Avadah Achim, and the Bikur Holim, and I think there was one other congregation. They had some split-offs right within their group, and they were a little bit more numerous, not much.

DROKER But in the early days, neither congregation could really afford to be a separate congregation, and that was the reason that some of them were trying to get together. Now, they can afford it; now they're very strong, and I think they're glad that they remained separate, but in the '20s, and especially during the Depression, they really couldn't afford it.

FRANCO It was very difficult. But there were forward-looking men in both congregations, who felt that the congregations should amalgamate. My father felt that there should have been only one congregation, without any question. I think Morris Hanan felt that way. I would say some of the brighter men in our congregation felt that there should be only one.

I won't speak for all of them, but I would say that my father certainly felt that way.

DROKER I interviewed Henry Benezra from Sephardic Bikur Holim, and he was one of the leaders of the time (for amalgamation).

FRANCO There was Henry Benezra, there was Jack Caston, Sam Baruch, , John Calderon, As a matter of fact, as late as 1964-65, we were having meetings; Gordon DeLeon and I were meeting with Sam Baruch and Jack Caston and John Calderon to move forward towards an amalgamation of the synagogues. We felt that we could get enough muscle, influential people from the two synagogues, to effectuate it. Unfortunately Sam Baruch died about that time. John Calderon got sick, and the thing kind of lost its impetus, and it never materialized.

DROKER Looking back, would it be unfair to place blame on one congregation or the other?

FRANCO It depends on who is talking. Quite frankly, I would often hear one person in our congregation say, "Well, it's the group in the Bikur Holim, and the Maimon family that is opposed to any kind of amalgamation." And you talk to someone in the Bikur Holim congregation and they'd say it's the people in the Ezra Bessaroth and the Behar family. I don't think the responsibility lay anywhere. I think that we simply missed the boat. It could have been done before the congregations undertook heavy capital investments, heavy commitments in personnel, things of that kind that irrevocably tied them to a permanent separation.

DROKER I don't know if your memory goes back this far clearly, but at the end of the '20s Henry Benezra was president of Sephardic Bikur Holim. He wrote a couple to letters that we have in the Archives practically begging the Ezra Bessaroth to let the Sephardic Bikur Holim join them as a

congregation, rather than as individuals, as Ezra Bessaroth said they would have to join, before they built their synagogue at 20th and Fir. They didn't want to build that; they wanted to build one that was big enough for both congregations, or he did, at least. The letters in return were not very favorable.

FRANCO I do not have a very clear recollection of that. I was perhaps too young. I know that there was movement in the early days, in the '20s. The direction from which it came I'm not sure of. Not only the congregation, but the mere fact that in 1924 or 1925 the Seattle Progressive Fraternity was formed was an indication that there was a strong desire to unify the community. And in the hiring of Rabbi Kahan, who was intended to be the rabbi for both congregations, which was later. Rabbi Kahan came I think in 1938.

DROKER But the merging of the cemetery, for instance. . .

FRANCO The cemetery, the Seattle Progressive Fraternity, which later became the Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood, which also included two other smaller organizations, Shalom Alechim Society and the Avahat Shalom Society, along with the Seattle Progressive Fraternity, although the Seattle Progressive Fraternity was the major organization. I think there probably was some familial conflict which made it more difficult to amalgamate the synagogues. I don't want to point the finger at anyone; I don't intend to, but I think the fact that the Maimon family, with all of their relatives, who were numerous, and who constituted, certainly from a religious standpoint, the most important element in the Bikur Holim, and the Behar family, which at least from a religious standpoint, and today even from an economic standpoint, probably constitutes the most ^{important} element in my synagogue, the Ezra Bessaroth, had a very strong influence on preventing the amalgamation of the synagogues.

But that really came a little later. In the early days, when the numbers had not asserted themselves, when the 11 Behar children and Lord knows how many Maimons were still infants, it could have been done. But when they grew up and had children and grandchildren, it became more difficult. I don't disparage either, because they are without question the bulwarks of the synagogues today. I'm not sure that without them and their children and grandchildren and youngsters, that either of those synagogues could really stay alive.

DROKER I'm going to skip over a lot of things and ask you very specifically, and not about the whole move to the southend, but about the decision to move to the southend, which happened in the early '50s. I heard one story that you made a very eloquent speech in opposition. Would you just give me your version of the events?

FRANCO There began a movement out of the central area. I was doubtless influenced by my civil rights background. I'm older now, and I don't get as angry as I did 30-35 years ago. I used to become very upset with anything that even possibly smelled of intolerance. I began to see a lot of our Jewish people leaving the area around the synagogue. The movement started towards the Seward Park area. A few people started; a few people moved out there, and pretty soon more moved out. By roughly 30 years ago, 1951 or '52, there was a little bit of a movement. I would say the majority of the Sephardics still lived in the center of the city. About that time Nessim Peha, N.J. Peha--this must have been 1950 or '51+- took an option on his own on some property on Wilson Avenue. He thought it would be a great place to build a synagogue. My father and Morris Hanan would often have disagreements with Mr. Peha, as they had in the past on certain business matters. Mr. Peha was a very enterprising man with a very astute business sense, and he probably saw more than many of the rest of us did. Perhaps

without really conducting a demographic study, he suspected that this that the congregation would eventually be out there, was where the movement would be. He picked up that land and then turned it over to the synagogue, and said, "Ok, why don't you build the synagogue here." That's how it all started. My father was a traditionalist. He said, "This is where we built the synagogue." He had very strong ties to that building, because he had been the first president of the synagogue when that building was built, in 1916. My father was a very conservative man, and he believed that this is where we are, and this is where we belong. He, himself, lived in the central area. At that time he was living on Lake Washington Blvd., above the floating bridge, and I think that while all this dispute was going on, they sold their house and moved to 17th and E. Union, a couple blocks from the Temple DeHirsch. I was influenced by a basic resentment against our people leaving because of what they perceived to be the black incursion. I was doubtless influenced by that. It was sort of a resentment I felt, the concept of the "white flight," so to speak, that I was conscious of. That bothered me a great deal. So, we argued against it very strongly. I don't remember all the arguments, but I'm sure that must ^{have} been one of them. The traditional argument; we even pointed to Temple DeHirsch at that time. I remember making that a very strong argument. "The Temple DeHirsch hasn't left; why should we leave?" "If it's good enough that the Temple DeHirsch can stay at 15th and E Union, why can't we stay here?" But what had happened was that some of the people had already moved to Seward Park. Some of the more religious people, or traditional people had already moved, or were planning to move to the area, and they were very concerned about what they perceived to be the distance from the synagogue from where they would be living. They eventually won the battle, and we moved and built out there.

DROKER Elazar did say that once the decision was made, that everybody got behind it, and there was no animosity and everything went smoothly.

FRANCO My father rarely went to the synagogue again, His funeral was in the Sephardic synagogue, but my father thereafter went to the Bikur Holim. I attended the Ezra Bessaroth. Morris Hanan I don't think ever went into that synagogue again. He may have, but I don't remember that he did.

DROKER Any other people?

FRANCO No, they were the only two. My father did not resign from the synagogue; he always remained a member, but he attended the Bikur Holim, because he believed, . . . even when the Bikur Holim moved out to Seward Park, he went to Seward Park, but he did not go to the Ezra Bessaroth. My father was a very interesting man, very stubborn. I'm not saying that he never walked into the synagogue, but he attended services at the Bikur Holim, where he was accorded great respect, an honored seat, as a patriarch of the community. My father was a community man. He was not just a Sephardic, or just an Ezra Bessaroth person, he was a community man. Even though he didn't have any formal education, he had a sense of community identity and community participation. He was not parochial in that sense.

DROKER Did he join other organizations?

FRANCO Yes. He was a long-time member of B'Nai B'rith. He was extremely active as a liason man for years and years between the Sephardic community, the whole community and the Jewish Welfare Society, which is now the Jewish Family Service. He was the person to whom the Jewish Welfare Society went on all matters involving assistance to members of the Sephardic community.

DROKER He was also an early member of Temple DeHirsch,

FRANCO He was an early member of Temple DeHirsch; my father joined Temple DeHirsch right about the time of the first World War. He was very conscious of what

we used to call "Americanization," of Americanizing his family, of bringing them into the American scene quickly. He felt that it was important for his children to have contacts with the German-Jewish community, as a means of bringing us out of isolation and bringing us rapidly into modern America. Also, he was a man of considerable means at that time, one of the very few Sephardics who, by the standards of his day, was a well-to-do man. So, economically he had the wherewithal to pay the dues and pay the tuition for the kids, although he didn't attend (DeHirsch) himself. Maybe on a special Thanksgiving service or something of that kind. We went to the religion school.

DROKER How did you feel welcome there?

FRANCO I never felt uncomfortable. I made a lot of lifelong friends, Bernice Stern, Dr. Sheridan, Sandy Bernbaum . . . people that I met, that's where I met them.

DROKER Where were you bar mitzvahed?

FRANCO I was bar mitzvahed in my own synagogue.

DROKER Are you a member of Temple DeHirsch, or have ever been?

FRANCO No, I have never joined the Temple DeHirsch, but I went through religion school there.

(End of side 1)

DROKER Tell me about your connection with B'nai B'rith.

FRANCO I joined B'nai B'rith right at the time that I finished law school, 1939. When I finished law school, I went into the office of Philip Tworoger, and I covered that on the other tape. It was through Philip Tworoger that I got interested in B'nai B'rith. B'nai B'rith at that time--this was about 2½ years before I went into the army-- was the forum of the Jewish community in Seattle.

DROKER Explain that in full, if you can.

FRANCO Well, issues of great importance in Jewish life, matters that really concerned the Jewish community, whether they were local, national or international, were generally thrashed out on the floor of B'nai B'rith. There were frequent debates; there were all sorts of motions that would be made by various people, proposals, and there were certain issues that were debated frequently and discussed frequently on the floor of B'nai B'rith at that time, one of which was whether B'nai B'rith or Seattle Lodge should support Zionism.

DROKER Would that have been within the scope of B'nai B'rith to take an active stand one way or the other on Zionism?

FRANCO Many people felt not, and as a matter of fact, it never did, at that time. But it was discussed, and there were people like Max Silver, Sol Esfeld, others who were Zionists, very active Zionists.

DROKER Who were the powers on the other side?

FRANCO Power on the other side was largely Rabbi Koch, Samuel Koch and certain members of the Jewish community, Leopold Stern, for example, was opposed to Zionism. Yet, when Israel was founded, in 1948, Leopold Stern was one of the big donors to the Federation.

DROKER A lot of things had happened.

FRANCO There were many people who opposed it, but once Israel was created, they said, "Israel is here; we have to support it." It happened with a lot of people. There were people like Bernard Reiter, Ed Starin, the attorney-- I think that Charlie Horowitz was anti-Zionist--there were those people. There were strong philosophical discussions on the issue of Zionism.

DROKER Do you remember any particular event where there was a clash? I've heard some stories about flags, and stuff like that. Were you an eye-witness?

FRANCO No, but there were debates. There were frequent debates, in which the issue was debated. I know that I, as a young person, was a strong Zionist and often participated in the debates, maybe just making remarks from the floor, but nonetheless did participate. Interestingly, Sol Esfeld, for example, was a very active Zionist at that time, and yet he was a partner of Leopold Stern in American Discount Company. Leopold Stern was not a Zionist, yet they were business partners. There was a lot of acrimony. There were some very hot discussions. But I think even more bitterness was on a more local issue than Zionism, and that was the creation of the Jewish Community Council. There was a very strong move to lessen ^{power and} the influence of the Temple DeHirsch over the entire community.

DROKER And that would be achieved by setting up a community council?

FRANCO I don't think that was the conscious purpose of it, but that was what was perceived to be the effect of it.

DROKER The Temple up to that time was something of a center?

FRANCO Yes, it was a center. Of course the activities were held at the Temple center. Temple DeHirsch leadership had a sort of paternalistic attitude towards the community, that it knew best what was for the community. It was not a malicious attitude by any means, but I think ^{it was} one that was historic, because of the existence of the Temple as the oldest religious institution.

DROKER By the 1930s enough of the Eastern European and Sephardic Jews had risen far enough in the world; they were ready to challenge this.

FRANCO Right. There were a lot of lawyers, physicians and educated people and people beginning to assume some importance in business. Bear in mind that ^{or 60} 50 years ago in Seattle, all the wealth, real wealth, was German

Jewish wealth in this community.

DROKER There was a Jewish federation, an earlier one that fell apart I think at the beginning of the Depression ^{or possibly in the early 20s} and was reinstated in 1936. Is the community council you're talking about different from this one.

FRANCO Yes, it's entirely different. What you're referring to was the Federated Jewish Fund, which existed from that time until 1966. The Jewish Community Council was separate. It was intended to be a council of all the Jewish organizations which would unite the Jewish community. It eventually became the Jewish Federation. It was the concept, in 1939 or 1940, of what we now know as the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. The Federated Fund was something different. It was simply a fund-raising organization to raise money for what was then the United Palestine Appeal, HIAS, and I think the United Service for New Americans and the Joint Distribution Committee.

DROKER Was that organization dominated by Temple DeHirsch?

FRANCO Yes, the Federated Jewish Fund, in the 30s, was largely dominated by members of the Temple DeHirsch, largely because they were the wealthiest people. So it was just a fund-raising organization.

DROKER Community Council was an attempt to democratize the community, then.

FRANCO It was an effort to democratize the community leadership.

DROKER It did not take hold at that time?

FRANCO It did not take hold at that time. There were many, many debates and considerable acrimony, much bitterness on the floor of the B'nai B'rith lodge. I think in the 2½ years before I went into the army there must have been a dozen to 15 real debates on that issue.

DROKER When did it surface again?

FRANCO After the war, shortly after World War II.

DROKER And then it took how long to really bear fruit?

FRANCO That kind of moved right into the Jewish Community Center. The Center and the Council were not intended to be exactly the same thing, but the Council continued to be talked about, but then the efforts of those same people, who favored the Community Council, moved into the establishment of a community center concept.

DROKER Had there been a concept of a community center before the war?

FRANCO There had been discussions of it, but not as much as there had been of the Community Council.

DROKER Were there models elsewhere, like Portland, of community centers?

FRANCO Yes, as a matter of fact, there were frequent references, made by people who were aware of the community center in Portland, where they had had one for many, many years, and in other areas on the Pacific coast.

DROKER Who were the leaders of this group?

FRANCO Before the war there was some leadership--I think Al Youngman had some role in it--there were some of us young guys. I took an active role in it. Philip Tworoger was one who favored it. Allan Rickles I think favored a community council. I'm not sure about Morris Robbins.

DROKER Anybody from the Orthodox community?

FRANCO Yes, but I don't think there was a lot of interest from the Orthodox community. Quite a bit of it came out of Herzl. I think Rabbi Lang, Phillip Lang, favored it. The Maslan brothers, Ben and Aaron, who were very active in B'nai B'rith at that time.

DROKER Tell me how the success of that movement, towards both a ^{Jewish} community center and a Jewish federation, evolved.

FRANCO Another person who favored the community council and the center before the

war was Norman Davis. I forgot to mention his name. He is a brilliant man, a man of great sensitivity, an outstanding person. He had a keen sense of that, and if I were to pick the one man, at the very inception, who had the greatest influence on the whole center program, I would say Norman Davis, with a great boost from Norman Klein, Dr. Norman Klein. Also Harold Poll had a very active role in the Center program in the early years. If you have to pick one man who had the greatest influence on the establishment of the Jewish Community Center ^{program,} I think it would be Norman Davis. When the community center, as such, without a physical facility, was organized-- I think in 1947--it was really through the efforts of Norman Davis. He enlisted me as his young assistant, 35 years ago. I became his vice president. Then he was ^{the} president, but we had no building. This was in the 40s. Norman Davis would call me at the oddest places at the oddest hours. He'd come up with an idea. One time I was having dinner at a place at the north end of Green Lake; it was called Hildegard's. It was a restaurant that had opened during the Second World War--this was maybe 1947, '48--and I get a phone call. I don't know how in the devil Norman found me out there. He was all excited. I said, "What is it, Norman?" He said, "I got a place for the Jewish Community Center." I said, "Really, where is it?" He said, "I've got an option on it." It turned out to be the Casa Italiana. The Casa Italiana was on 18th, a block and a half from the Temple DeHirsch, between Spring and Union, right across the street from the Council House. That narrow, long building was the Casa Italiana, and they wanted to sell it. It later became a telephone company building. But his concept of a community center was to have a place in the city, right in Seattle. That was the most

important thing in the world to him, I thought. He was the kind of a person who, when he decided that something should be done, did it.

DROKER Why did that not take hold?

FRANCO I think we decided architecturally that there were too many basic problems. I think we were going to buy it for \$90,000 or something like that. It's almost a laughable figure when you look at the four million dollars we just spent over here. About that time we became a beneficiary of the Federated Jewish Fund, the first time we were ever a beneficiary. I think the next year they gave us an allocation of \$26,000, and that's when we opened the first facility on 4th Avenue. It was the old Washington State Press Club on 4th Avenue, between Stewart and Virginia Street.

DROKER I think I'd like to wait on doing chronology of the Center. Speaking on the evolution of the Jewish Federation now, was there still much opposition to that kind of a concept?

FRANCO Yes, that opposition continued, largely from the Temple DeHirsch, even to the organization of the Jewish Federation in 1966. There were many meetings when the constitution of the Jewish Federation, as we know it today, was being written, with representatives of the Temple DeHirsch to be sure that the Jewish Federation was not a functioning organization, that it was only coordinating, not a functioning organization. All functions would be by the individual constituent organizations.

DROKER Were the congregations included in the constituent organizations?

FRANCO Yes.

DROKER Was it basically the old Temple families that still had objections to it?

FRANCO Those who had been opposed to the community council, whom I mentioned were in the forefront. Those who became the intellectual gurus, shall we say. Ed Starin, for example, was opposed. He was a fine man; he was

a good friend of mine. We differed on a great number of things, on Zionism, on community council, but we were good personal friends, and I always thought he was a fine human being. He was an attorney partner of Charlie Horowitz, but he has now passed away.

DROKER Let's skip now to civil rights. I may want to come back to you another time, but I'd like to spend the rest of our time on civil rights. You were a member of both the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee, and I'd like to begin by asking you to compare those two organizations, both in the kinds of things that they were interested in doing, where they had similar interests and where they diverged, and also talk about their different styles, philosophies, personalities.

FRANCO Today there's virtually no difference in style. Nationally and locally, the styles are substantially the same. At one time the Anti-Defamation League was considered to be more vociferous, more open in its methods, more prone to publicize its efforts ^{support or make} and objections to certain things, and we received a great deal more publicity by reason of that. The American Jewish Committee in the early days, and by that I mean the immediate post- World War II years, say from 1945, when it first became organized here and the Anti-Defamation League became professionalized and ceased to be just a committee of the Seattle Lodge B'nai B'rith, which it had been--the Anti-Defamation League had no office in the true sense of the word before the second World War. We had an Anti-Defamation Committee of the B'nai B'rith. There was an Anti-Defamation League, based in Chicago, with Richard Gutstadt as the national director, but we didn't have a regional board as we know it today. We had an Anti-Defamation Committee with P. Allen Rickles, who was a practicing lawyer, was the chairman of the committee (in the B'nai B'rith), and he was kind of Mr. Anti-Defamation League.

DROKER He wasn't paid?

FRANCO I don't think he was a paid professional. I think he was a volunteer. You may know more about that than I do.

DROKER He did go to San Francisco to work for ADL at one point in the late '40s. I was under the impression that he was paid.

FRANCO In the pre-World War II years, I don't think he was paid. He was a practicing attorney. We used to have committees; I was on that committee. I used to attend meetings, and Pinky (P. Allen Rickels) was the chairman. It was not a highly professionalized organization. We were a bunch of amateurs. We did the best we could.

DROKER Did you have much contact with the national office? Were you getting direction?

FRANCO Yes, we did, sure. Mr. Gutstadt would come out here once in a while. I remember he'd make a speech. He came out two or three times in that period between 1939 and the end of '41.

DROKER I'd like to keep going on your impressions of these two organizations.

FRANCO Let's talk first about the American Jewish Committee. I joined the American Jewish Committee in 1947, about the time it started. Max Block signed one time. Don't ask me how. He saw me somewhere and me up; he said, "Albert, I want you to join the American Jewish Committee."

I think by that time I was already active in the Federated Jewish Fund, I was going through the chairs; I was a vice president of B'nai B'rith, too at that time. And I said fine. I didn't know much about the American Jewish Committee. I had a little vague knowledge of it, but I really didn't know what it did. I thought, "It's another nice little Jewish organization; I'll join." It was interesting, because I'm sure I was the first Sephardic to become a member, and maybe almost the first person who wasn't a member of Temple DeHirsch. I think most of the members at that time--it was very small; they may have had 75 members, 50 perhaps-- in the Seattle chapter but practically all were members of

Temple DeHirsch. I really didn't do anything in the American Jewish Committee in those days. I was simply a member, but I was conscious of the fact that the American Jewish Committee was dealing mostly in the areas of club discrimination, on the higher levels of business, employment discrimination and working even in those days, as I recall, on the Washington Athletic Club, which had adopted a restrictive admissions policy towards our people.

DROKER I know ADL was very involved in black civil rights. Was American Jewish Committee?

FRANCO American Jewish Committee I think a little less so at that time, although they were involved. They had a role in working on the state law against discrimination. Work on that started in 1947 and culminated in the FEPC* 1949. I used to talk to Stan Golub, once in a while and occasionally with Bud Burnett, I think, the chairman in those days. Stan Golub was the one I talked with most. The most active role, I would say, was done by ADL, largely because we had numbers. We were able to use a lot of B'nai B'rith personnel. We had an executive director, Stan Jacobs.

DROKER How long was it before AJC had an executive director?

FRANCO AJC had a part-time director. He used to come up here every once in a while, Harry Winton.. I think they had him at that time. He would come up from San Francisco, and he was here three days a month or something, and they didn't have an office. They didn't have many members at that time.

(End of Side 2, Tape A)

(Begin Side 1, Tape B)

DROKER Perhaps it would be easier to compare the two organizations if we talked about specific issues. You mentioned the campaign for FEPC. You said ADL was more effective, because they had more people.

FRANCO I think they were a little more active

DROKER At that time. And AJC was really new.

FRANCO AJC was relatively new in the community, and I don't think its membership at that time was that large.

DROKER Let me ask, before we go into specific issues, about a few of the executive directors. Stan Jacobs,

FRANCO Stan Jacobs I think had been a newspaper man, I believe in San Francisco. He came up here right after the end of the second World War and helped to organize and professionalize the ADL. I think that is when they started to organize the regional boards, so that the Anti-Defamation League began to separate from the B'nai B'rith and was moving towards becoming a separate organization, as it really is today with its own fund-raising. At about that time the ADL and the AJC nationally had a joint fund-raising arm called the Joint Defense Appeal, There would be allocated from the fund here, money to the JDA, then it would be divided between the two organizations.

DROKER What kind of a man was Stan Jacobs?

FRANCO I liked him. I thought he was a very able guy. I think he was effective. He was here until 1952.

DROKER Did he have any particular problems while he was here?

FRANCO I worked with him for five or six years, and I got along with him quite well. I'm not aware that he had problems.

DROKER In the ADL records--and I don't mean to ask you about things that are more Len Schroeter so well documented--Jacobs and even really felt constrained by some of the people on the ADL regional board, and even more constrained by the American Jewish Committee and the Civic Unity Committee. He would get very riled up, especially Len about the constraints when they were working on something like the Ohrenstein case at Sandpoint. They just felt they were being sat on, and their hands were tied. They were very angry about that. What do you remember about

that Ohrenstein case?

FRANCO I don't remember very much about it.

DROKER ADL wanted to publicize it and agreed to let the Civic Unity Committee deal with it. It was agreed that if the Civic Unity Committee failed to do it behind the scenes, American Jewish Committee style too, then they would be able to step in. But by that time it was moot, because Ohrenstein decided he couldn't move in.

FRANCO I remember the Ohrenstein case. It was the Sandpoint Country Club case. Now I know what you're talking about. The name escaped me. ADL was more prone in those days to take a very vigorous, well-publicized approach to things. That's the way we operated, because we felt that pussy-footing simply wasn't going to get us anywhere. Remember, it was the post-war era. A lot of us were ex-service men. We had fought in the war. Many of us felt resentful and angry that this situation existed. What the hell had we fought this war for? Why had a lot of us done what we had done during the previous four years? You saw many incidents of this kind, where the body of a black hero in Alabama couldn't be buried in the cemetery. You'd read this, and you'd get riled up. This riled us, not only as Jews, but also as war veterans.

DROKER It seemed to me that the ADL was out front of even the black organizations in civil rights. The NAACP and the Urban League were not nearly as willing to be as militant at that time.

FRANCO No, for one reason they were not as well organized. I think we had able people. We had a lot of young Turks; a lot of us were young lawyers. We not only had our legal experience, but we were practically all war veterans. We had the double barrel of a veteran's resentment coupled with the ability to be articulate, and therefore, we had the capability at that time to take a leadership role, and the willingness to do so.

DROKER Was there any fear once the Cold War heated up, and Truman came out with his loyalty oaths, and then Joe McCarthy came along, for the kind ^{Was there any fear?} of work you were doing, that you were going to be hurt in any way?

FRANCO No, never. It never entered my mind. In the area of civil rights we never associated Cold War issues or alleged accusations of Communist party membership with the civil rights issues. I, for example, had been in the Intelligence service. I had a complete security clearance. I was self-employed, and I never worried about it. I was never concerned, and I don't think any of us were. I don't think any of us were really concerned that somebody would point the finger at us and accuse us of being Communists, which was very common in those days. Even before McCarthy, we had the Subversive Activities Boards, which preceded McCarthy, which came under the Truman administration, which you know. Bud Asia and I, in our office, defended some government employees who were fired for alleged Communist affiliation.

DROKER Jesse Epstein told me that in his security hearings, loyalty oath hearings, he was asked if he had black people over for dinner. That's why I asked.

FRANCO I'm not conscious of ever having any fear or any concern about that. I will tell you this, that I had at least two more top secret security clearances after that, and no questions were ever raised about my civil rights activities.

DROKER What was the working relationship between you and the director of the Urban League? Did you have a good relationship?

FRANCO Lou Watts, yes, we worked quite closely, and we really, as you suggested, were much more activists in the areas of employment and housing. The first big thing we went after was employment. The big thrust between 1946 and 1949 was to get a Fair Employment Practices Act.

DROKER Was there any Jewish content to that desire; were Jews being discriminated against?

FRANCO Yes, of course. ^{did we have} ^{had} Not only Jewish content, we Jewish interest. We had a great deal of Jewish interest. In those days I'm not aware that many people in the Jewish community were resentful of our working in that direction, because they were conscious of the discrimination against Jews in employment. Discrimination was very pronounced. Even Jewish war veterans were denied jobs in many places in the United States. We had a definite interest as Jews, aside from our general concern for justice, we had definite interest as Jews in getting a state law against discrimination. We were the second state in America, after New York, to have one.

DROKER One writer suggested that participation in civil rights was an attempt by Jews to fill a void that had been left by the evaporation of positive Jewish content within the Jewish community.

FRANCO Not true at all. I disagree with that. I disagree because a lot of us who were active in the civil rights movement were also active in Jewish life, and in furthering matters of particular Jewish interest. Those of us in ADL, for example, Solie Ringold, myself, Mel Oseran, Merle Cohn, others who were active in ADL at that time were also very active in the Jewish community. We were active in B'nai B'rith. Part of our activity in ADL was related to our B'nai B'rith activity. They went together. It was a phase, shall we say, of B'nai B'rith at that time; it was part of being a B'nai B'rith, like serving on the Hillel. We didn't find it at all inconsistent, nor did we feel that we were just filling a void in Jewish life. I just don't buy that.

DROKER Where was the opposition coming from in the FEPC fight, in the state of Washington?

FRANCO It came from the American Legion, interestingly. It came from some employers.

DROKER What about labor?

FRANCO Labor I don't think was vociferous. They may have been. You made a study of it, Howard, and I read your book. I don't remember labor opposition, but I do know there was employer opposition. I don't know if there was official Chamber of Commerce opposition, so I won't say there was, but there was some employer opposition. There certainly was some veteran opposition, of the conservative veterans organizations. There were certainly state legislators who were opposed. There were certainly people who had an interest in preserving the status quo in restricted residential areas, restricted organizations and saw this as an opening wedge towards broadening equality. Those people opposed it. But I was surprised that we got it through the legislature, and I must say that Senator Al Westberg had a tremendous role. I don't think we could have been successful had it not been for Al Westberg, being in that influential position and being sympathetic.

DROKER Let me give you another issue that might allow you to compare the two groups again. How about discrimination in clubs, like the Washington Athletic Club, the Laurelhurst Beach Club and then leading up to the fight against the Class H licenses?

FRANCO There had always been discrimination in Seattle as there was in most cities in private clubs. Golf clubs, Seattle Tennis Club and other clubs of that kind had traditionally either excluded Jews or maybe had the occasional house Jew. To all intents and purposes, Jews were excluded fairly traditionally. The Washington Athletic Club had, at the time of its inception, solicited a number of Jewish members. There were quite

a number of Jewish members before the second World War. At the end of the second World War Jewish veterans , who sought to join or who had dropped out and wanted to rejoin, found that their applications were not being processed. Upon inquiring to some friend, let's say, who was a member, they would learn eventually that their application wasn't going to be accepted. That's when we began aware of it. The American Jewish Committee was more conscious of it than the Anti-Defamation League. We in the ADL were a little less concerned then with club discrimination than we were with employment and housing. That was a little more of an elite issue. The AJC was very concerned about the club discrimination and rightly so. As you doubtless know, the AJC through Ed Stern, largely through his influence, worked for a number of years, and finally after 10-12 years, the early '60s or late '50s, I guess, that was eliminated at the Washington Athletic Club.

DROKER The key issue I think was Class H license, which could eliminate or attack discrimination in every club.

FRANCO Right. That came a little later with the Coalition against Discrimination. Where we attacked the Laurelhurst Beach Club, which I think was in 1950, '51 Laurelhurst Beach Club didn't have a liquor license, as I recall, but they were incorporated, and they had a state charter as a non-profit corporation. So we young lawyers devised the concept of having the Attorney General bring an action to revoke their charter.

DROKER The key element was that if you bought a house in Laurelhurst you were eligible for membership.

FRANCO That's right. I don't remember all the aspects, but I think it had something to do with the revocation of their state charter. Then, of course, when we got into attacking the organizations that had liquor

licenses, the Class H licenses, then we had a little stronger hammer, shall we say, to attack them. That was largely used a little later on, in the '60s, when we were dealing through the Coalition against Discrimination, when we were dealing with the Elks Clubs,

DROKER Who was more active in that, the ADL or AJC?

FRANCO The Coalition against Discrimination was mostly AJC leadership. That was about 20 years ago.

DROKER Which other groups?

FRANCO A great deal with Filipino groups, Native Americans. Blacks didn't have much interest in club discrimination. They had a very minor role in the whole issue, because it's secondary; it's not a basic issue. Japanese Americans, Asians had a great deal of interest. We had some nice church people who were active in it.

DROKER One issue that came up that I found interesting--I think the women may have asked you about it in your previous interview--was something of a clash between Tamud Torah students, or day school students, and Horace Mann students across the street, when the Tamud Torah school was on 25th and Columbia. The Orthodox kids and their parents were criticizing ADL for taking the side of the black kids. Do you remember anything about that?

FRANCO I remember the incident. I'm not too clear on what the outcome was. I do know that it existed; I do know that some of the parents of the youngsters going to the day school--this was about '52 or '53, after the day school was started, which I think was about that time--that there was a complaint, that the ADL was not vigorous enough in protecting the Jewish children. I think we were trying to take a neutralist position. We recognized that we were a community relations agency, and there was a concern about the relationship of the Jewish community towards the

black community. I don't know too many of the facts; I'm only guessing and trying to piece together the shreds of information that came back to me. I did not have an active role in that issue, except that my recollection is that there was concern by ADL that harmonious community relations be preserved.

DROKER Let's finish up with something of your recollections on the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation. That has also something to do with the beginning of the Jewish Federation.

FRANCO That's right. The Jewish Federation was created in 1966. The Federated Jewish Fund was changed; the character of it was changed from a purely fund-raising agency into a federation and council, which comprised about 90 Jewish organizations, which included the synagogues and Temples. This was the culmination of the early struggle for a Jewish Community Council, which would unite the Jewish community. Of course there was a recognition, increasingly that there would be matters of broad Jewish interest that transcended the activities of individual organizations, ADL, AJC, the Temple Brotherhood, the synagogues, and so forth, where there had to be a single community voice. In addition, there had to be community planning. There was a recognition that the community was getting older; we had to provide for the aged. There were many community needs on a community basis. that had to be met. The formation of the Jewish Federation wasn't just for community relations purposes; that was one facet of it.

DROKER How did you iron out the problems of writing the by-laws of the constitution with the opposition of Temple DeHirsch? Were they able to impose their will in any way?

FRANCO In the writing of the constitution the language had to be carefully framed, so that the Federation would be a coordinating organization. It was not originally intended to be a

functioning organization, but it has moved in that direction over the past 16 years. It evolved into more of a functioning organization, as more people have become active in it. It has become more and more important, so that the Jewish Federation today controls the newspaper and has control of the important purse strings in the community. I was asked to be chairman of the community relations department; at that time it was divided into departments. There was community planning, budget department, planning department, community relations department. The intent was--I don't think there was any question about it--that it would just be a coordinating agency, that the synagogues would function individually, Council of Jewish Women, Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Committee, and all the constituencies would do their own thing. The idea of the Federation was to avoid duplication, and to act as a coordinating body, where there were matters of broad community interest that had to be met. It's obvious that the area in which there was going to be the biggest problem, was going to be in community relations, because we were the most visible; it's in the front line, so to speak. Whether it's a war in the Middle East or a riot in the central area, we were where the action is. Obviously we were always in the newspapers, always in the media, so we were the most visible. I became chairman in 1966, and basically, I think it was intended that the community relations department be a clearing house, to make sure that ADL and AJC didn't have functions on the same day, and that if there were important issues, one of them would take care of them. It just simply didn't turn out that way.

(End of Side 1, Tape B)

(Begin Side 2, Tape B)

FRANCO Now almost immediately we had our first crisis. George Lincoln Rockwell came to town to speak at the University of Washington. Immediately the ADL and the AJC both girded for action. I got word that the Jewish war veterans were going to go down and heckle him down in Westlake Square. This type of problem cried for total community action, not just the ADL or the AJC or Jewish veterans, but for the Jewish community to adopt some kind of a stance. So, I met with Sol Liebman, who was then the AJC director, and Sy Kaplan and we planned a course of action. The first thing we had to do was together quiet down the Jewish war veterans, and not have them even go near this guy. So we adopted a course of action that no one would ever say a word; we weren't going to heckle him; we weren't going to be anywhere. The only thing we would do was maybe send a few observers out to hear his speech out at the Commons, at the University, which we did. I went out myself and listened to it. I always remember when the girl asked about the kosher anti-freeze. I thought it was the funniest thing in the world. Anyhow, that was the first instance, and then, in 1967, came the Six Day War, which cried for community action. It was not just an ADL ^{or AJC problem} ~~issue~~; this was something with tremendous community relations issues and making speeches all over the community. We were besieged with requests from churches and Kiwanas Clubs and Rotary Clubs for speakers. It was not just an ADL ^{or AJC} ~~issue~~. Then the next year, 1968, came the ^{long} hot summer, with the damage in the central area and the shooting of the black kid by a Jewish merchant. The community started to realize, even the ADL and AJC realized, that there were certain problems that were not just ADL problems or AJC problems. They concern all Jews, so that was the beginning of a more activist role for the

Community Relations Committee, It is still in existence, still meets and it has the same role. It's probably not quite as much so as it was, but it has developed a good modus vivendi with the AJC and the ADL. The AJC and the ADL still perform most of the functioning work.

DROKER Are they complementary, or do they cross. . .?

FRANCO They cross in some ways, but generally speaking, ADL takes a little more active role in dealing with educational institutions. AJC takes a little more active role in inter-religious work. Obviously, on working on areas of Soviet Jewry, the Middle East, foreign affairs, matters of foreign interest, they both do that, as do most Jewish organizations anyhow.

DROKER Is there rivalry?

FRANCO Of course there is. I'd be naive if I said there wasn't. Of course there is. I'm a member of the regional board of the ADL, and I'm a past president of the American Jewish Committee. I'm more active in the American Jewish Committee, than I am in the ADL today. The last 15 years I've drifted more into activity with the American Jewish Committee, probably because I became better acquainted when I was on the national executive committee of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, which is the national umbrella organization covering all community relations committees and departments of all the federations in America, as well as ADL, AJC, Council of Jewish Women and other organizations which were also members. I was a member of the National Executive Committee for about four years, and during that period I became quite well-acquainted with some of the AJC national people. I became quite impressed with their staff and their program. So, I became

active when I finished my work as CRC chairman here. They are both good organizations; Lord knows we need them both. Look at what is happening today. Just read the letters to the editor on the crisis in Lebanon. We have a big community relations problem. We can't have too many organizations interpreting matters of Jewish concern and interest to the American people. The battle for Jewish survival is being fought not only in the synagogues and Temples, but it is being fought in the press and media of the United States, and in the halls of Congress particularly.

DROKER I've got a million questions, but I'm going to let you go now. I may call you back..

FRANCO Fine.

(End of interview)