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**AN ANALYSIS OF DR. JANE EVANS' PROFESSIONAL
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE SISTERHOODS**

ADRIENNE POLLOCK SCOTT

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION**

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DIGEST

Dr. Jane Evans (born in 1907) directed the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS) from 1933 to 1976. Evans, the first executive director of the NFTS, held this position longer than any of her successors, and she played a critical role in the history of the Sisterhood movement.

As executive director, Evans expanded the scope of the organization from a loosely organized, synagogue-based confederation of women's auxiliaries to a unified national organization that encouraged Reform Jewish women to focus on larger issues that concerned American Jews, and the American people as a whole. By encouraging NFTS women to take a more active role in educational and social action programming within their own communities and by leading the organization to involve itself in national and international events, Evans guided NFTS toward assuming a new and expanded role in American Jewish life.

Throughout her tenure as executive director of NFTS, the organization became increasingly more involved in World Jewry through the work of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ). Under her leadership, NFTS also became involved in international organizations, that were highly valued by Evans, including the National Peace Conference of which Evans also served as president. Similarly, she worked to restore and revitalize Jewish life after the Holocaust, specifically within the context of the Commission on Displaced Persons. Evans also worked with the Jewish Braille Institute, thus helping a significant group of disadvantaged citizens.

Under Evans, the NFTS grew in countless ways. The organization directed its efforts toward many new projects, including youth programming, education, and social

action concerns. During this same period, the UAHC moved from Cincinnati to New York, and the NFTS made the decision to contribute to this effort by raising the majority of the funds needed for this project. In addition, NFTS contributed heavily to HUC-JIR by raising funds for student scholarships. Ultimately, NFTS' growth paralleled the overall expansion of women's involvement in American Jewish life throughout the twentieth century.

This thesis analyzes Evans' contributions to the NFTS over the course of the four decades in which she served as executive director. Through the use of primary source documents such as minutes and annual reports, in addition to the author's personal interview with Evans, each chapter details the significant events in which Evans focused her time and energy, thus helping to contribute to the tremendous growth of the NFTS from 1933 to 1976.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I was raised in a very active Reform Jewish household. From an early age, my sister and I observed both of our parents enthusiastically involved in the congregations to which we belonged, both in Syracuse, New York, and in Akron, Ohio. This commitment to Reform Judaism had a profound impact on me. Following confirmation, I decided to become a rabbi. Since I was sixteen years old, I have lived every day with this goal in mind. As one of the most significant chapters of my life is about to close, I am deeply grateful for my parents' strong dedication to the Reform Jewish movement, as well as the support my sister has tirelessly given me.

Writing about the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods afforded me the opportunity to explore and examine a significant constituent of Reform Jewish life. The leadership ability of Dr. Jane Evans is worthy of study and examination, and her ability to inspire so many women to create such a vital and influential organization is truly awesome. I have often taken for granted the abilities I have as a woman living in 2004. It is clear from my research that Sisterhood women did not initially have the opportunities that I, and so many like me, have enjoyed. It is in part because of their efforts that I can be ordained a Reform rabbi.

I am extremely appreciative of the guidance and assistance from my history professors: Dr. Gary Zola, Dr. Fred Krome, Dr. Michael Meyer, and Dr. Jonathan Krasner, both for their inspiring lectures and also for teaching with a passion that I found infectious. The staff of the American Jewish Archives was extremely helpful and always available to me for guidance and assistance. I feel as though I became part of the AJA family through this process. In addition, I wish to extend a heartfelt

appreciation to Dr. Krome for always opening his office to me throughout this process. He shared a great deal of time in helping me create a project of which I am proud. In addition, Dr. Zola was a tremendous mentor and advisor, and I am constantly amazed by his ability to recall dates and facts. His memory and intellect were true aids for me on this endeavor.

Most importantly, I wish to thank my husband, David, who was with me throughout this entire process. He displayed incredible patience as he read through every draft, and he never failed to serve as my perpetual sounding board. I could not have persevered as I did without his help and continual support. I dedicate my thesis to him and to all of the women who have allowed me to live out my dream of becoming a rabbi.

CHAPTER 1

Biography of Dr. Jane Evans

I. Introduction

Jane Evans, a prominent figure in the American Reform movement during much of the twentieth century, once commented that "within our heritage is the message of the prophets of Israel, who interpreted religion in terms of service."¹ Interpreting her life as one devoted to service, Evans' professional endeavors supported this ideal. Her years of service as the executive director of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS) represent a significant contribution to the American Jewish community. The impact her career has had not only on the NFTS, but also on the American Reform Community, in addition to the American Jewish community as a whole, merits critical analysis.

This thesis seeks to integrate the documentary resources that currently exist regarding Evans' life in an attempt to provide a thematic analysis of her career prior to and including her involvement within the NFTS. This introductory chapter provides a biographical sketch, which is intended to serve as an introduction to the details and facts that will follow in subsequent chapters. Evans served as the first executive director of the NFTS. She held this office for over forty years, and she played a critical role in the development of the organization. By examining her career, the reader will gain a greater understanding of how Jane Evans was integral in the expansion of women's involvement

¹ Dr. Jane Evans, interview by author, November 22, 2002, New York, tape recording, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, 18.

in Jewish organizational leadership. It is also necessary to note that, at the time of this writing, Jane Evans is still living in New York, where she was born and raised. She remains active in many communal and Reform Jewish organizations.

II. Childhood to College: The Formative Years

Raised primarily by her father, Evans was born in 1907 to James and Maybelle Holden Evans. During her youth, Evans was involved in many organizations during her youth, and she took a particular interest in sports, reading, and art. Raised as a Reform Jew, Evans developed a strong passion for Judaism, which culminated in her confirmation at Congregation Beth Emeth in New York City. Evans attended Girl's High School in Brooklyn, New York, a public school that was specifically designed for women who were planning on attending college. In addition to her public schooling, she was also educated at home by private tutors, which enabled her to explore some of her extracurricular interests, specifically with regard to art. Evans noted that her father wanted her to have the opportunity to be fulfilled and intellectually challenged in areas besides those taught in her public school courses.²

Evans took many different courses at New York University, including medicine and science. However, on the side, she also continued her studies in interior design. Evans eventually earned a Bachelor of Philosophy degree from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, as she assumed her role as executive director of the NFTS. Throughout her college years, she became extremely active in liberal causes. Norman Thomas (1884-

² Id.

1968), a Socialist leader and presidential candidate, influenced her greatly.³ As an active participant of the Liberal Club, Evans had the opportunity once again to share her passion for issues close to her heart, especially those that focused on the changing role of women in society.

Prior to her completion of that degree, however, she was offered a position in a large department store in St. Louis, Missouri, where she worked as an interior designer in the home furnishings division. In addition, when she was contacted in the early 1930s by the president of the Emerson Electric Manufacturing Company and asked to create a curved electric fan, she subsequently became the inventor of the "Silver Swan," which was one of her earliest accomplishments.

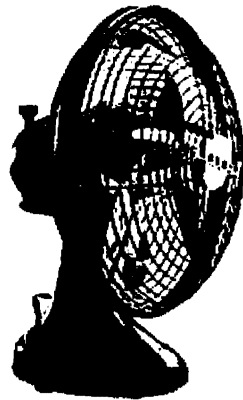


Figure 1-1. *Silver Swan Oscillating Fan, 2003.*

Besides this achievement, she also volunteered to teach a modern art design course at the Young Men's/Young Women's Hebrew Association in St. Louis (YM-YWHA) in the 1930s. Unknown to Evans, one of the students in the class at that time was Martha Steinfeld, the president of NFTS, who later approached Evans about

³ For more information with regard to Norman Thomas, see Harry Fleischman: *Norman Thomas: A Biography*, New York, 1969.

becoming the executive director of the organization. Evans would later describe Steinfeld as a "very warm individual, an organizational leader of the time."⁴

While volunteering at the YM/YWHA, Evans was also designing a rooftop leaf garden for the Chase Hotel in St. Louis that would highlight the natural beauty of the city using a model of a Mississippi riverboat. Her career as a designer flourished during these years, and Evans found great satisfaction in both working and teaching. Through all of her early interests and undertakings, Evans was involved in activities that permitted her to engage others.

III. A Surprise Beginning for the Executive Director

Evans' formal association with NFTS, the organization that she would direct for forty-three years, began with Martha Steinfeld and a modern art class in St. Louis. Steinfeld, who at the time was serving as NFTS' national president, invited Evans to become the executive director of the NFTS, an offer that initially shocked the young professional. Ironically, she was "politely negative"⁵ to the request. Although she certainly identified as a Reform Jewish woman, she had no intention of leaving her career as a designer in St. Louis. However, she subsequently discussed the offer with her close friend and mentor, Rabbi Julius Gordon, who suggested that perhaps she did have an obligation to serve the Reform Jewish community in this capacity, if only on a temporary basis.

⁴ Jane Evans, telephone interview, August 22, 2003.

⁵ Ibid, 5.

In addition to her conversations with Gordon, Evans also learned that the executive secretary of NFTS at that time, Helen Straus whose husband, although having converted to Judaism, remained a "very devoted Christian."⁶ As word of this reached the board of NFTS, Straus felt pressure to resign from her position. In addition, NFTS was also in need of a truly independent and full-time leader, since Straus technically worked under Rabbi George Zepin, secretary of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1917-1941), who was also the head of the NFTS prior to Evans' arrival. With all of these factors, Evans felt obliged to assume this new position. Even after Evans moved to Cincinnati, however, she still had many job contracts to fulfill in St. Louis, resulting in her commuting between the two cities for the first few months in office.

In October 1933, Evans relocated to Cincinnati, Ohio, to become the first full-time executive director of the NFTS. At this time, she resumed her college studies at the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University. Evans also became increasingly focused on outwardly expressing her political views, specifically with regard to social justice. Evans took advantage of every formal learning opportunity at her disposal, including enrolling in summer courses at the Hebrew Union College. Interestingly, in all of the institutions of which she was a part, Evans never felt discouraged because of her gender.

Although Evans had not affiliated with any Jewish organization during her college years, she always felt extremely close to her religion and took great pride in her

⁶ Ibid, 4. In addition, Helen Straus was born in 1895. She was a communal and civic leader in New York City, and she attended Columbia's Teachers College. For additional information, see *The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography Vol. 2*. Edited by Jacob Rader Marcus, Carlson Publishing: Brooklyn, 1994, 633.

Jewish identity. According to Evans, "at no time was I in any sense not aware of being a Jew and aware of Jewish issues."⁷

Even as she commenced her position at the NFTS, Evans did not abandon her interests in other worldly causes. Rather, she encouraged the NFTS to become equally involved in national and international issues. The Jewish Braille Institute of America Inc. (JBI) was one of these causes. Evans is still involved in the JBI, serving as the organization's President for Life. Evans remarks that one of the noted accomplishments of this organization was the development of the Hebrew Braille Alphabet. In addition, the JBI was instrumental in creating Braille textbooks and other resources that would allow Jewish blind children to attend Sunday Schools. Evans was also particularly interested in aiding the blind Jews in Russia, and she thereby helped to create programs and curricula that would help to educate the blind community there.

IV. Jane Evans as Executive Director of the NFTS

Evans' activities were and remain extremely diverse. Never wanting to be a bystander, Evans wanted her professional life to reflect the diversity of her interests as well as her passion for helping others. In commenting on her career interests, Evans observed, "I chose as a model for myself in an age of specialization, to live a life of diversification."⁸ In 1945, Mr. Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., the United States Secretary of State, appointed Evans as a consultant to assist with the drafting of the United Nations

⁷ Ibid, 3.

⁸ Ibid, 18.

Charter. Evans still actively participates as a nongovernmental observer (NGO) with the UN Charter.

Describing herself as a "religious pacifist," Evans felt conflicted with regard to World War II.⁹ She notes that World War II "presented me with a great dilemma. War and the mass murder of civilians do not solve problems."¹⁰ As a committed "religious pacifist," Evans worked to advance the cause of world peace, following the trend of many intellectuals in World War I, [who] "tried to use war to promote causes of interests."¹¹ As a result, Evans became one of three founders of the Jewish Peace Fellowship (JPF), an organization comprised of Jewish religious pacifists.¹² In addition, Evans was elected to serve on the National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors.¹³

Evans also acted as president of the National Peace Conference in World War II and took part in the movement to aid displaced persons. She led delegations to various sessions of the United Nations' Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). As her involvement with numerous organizations illustrates, Evans was very active in the peace movement.

In addition to her participation in these various world causes during World War II, Evans also served as a "para-rabbi," conducting services for the High Holidays in place of rabbis who had entered military service. Specifically, Evans led services for many

⁹ Ibid, 9.

¹⁰ Hirt-Manheimer, Aron & Schnur, Steven, "Jane Evans: A Builder of Reform Judaism." *Reform Judaism*, Fall 1983, 30-31, 36.

¹¹ Schaffer, Ronald, *America In The Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State*, New York, 1991, 127. For more information with regard to liberalism and World War II, see Marc Dollinger, *Quest for Inclusion: Jews and liberalism in modern America*, Princeton, 2000.

¹² Ibid, 30.

¹³ Ibid, 31.

physically and mentally challenged Jews, which gave her the opportunity to explain various parts of the service, with specific emphasis on different rituals and symbols. These additions were generally a departure from the format of a more standard Reform Jewish service. After the war, Evans continued to lead services, typically for small congregations in the South, where she went to establish sisterhood chapters.

Evans' activities have not gone unrecognized. She has been rewarded with numerous citations, including recognition as a "Woman of Achievement" by the Federation of the Jewish Women's Organization in New York City, as well as a citation from the JBI for her efforts and contributions in helping the movement grow. In 1968, Evans was honored at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati for her thirty-five years of service to the NFTS. Nelson Glueck wrote, "Her [Evans'] incisive mind, fine eloquence, deep humanitarian interests and profound devotion to Reform Judaism has stood our entire religious movement in very good stead."¹⁴ Glueck's outward recognition began an important discussion among leaders of HUC, which ultimately resulted in Evans being awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree from HUC in 1975, one year prior to her retiring as the executive director of NFTS.

Evans' professional activities have transcended the boundaries of NFTS and the Reform Jewish movement as a whole. She has served numerous organizations, both as a professional and a volunteer, supporting and defending causes in which she firmly believes. Evans knew from a young age that her "calling" was to become active in organizations that enabled her to express her views and opinions, specifically with regard

¹⁴ Nelson Glueck, "Jane Evans Honored by HUC-JIR," American Jewish Archives, 1968.

to social action and liberal causes. In addition, she has been involved in activities and projects that ultimately embodied the important Jewish principle of *Tikkun Olam*, or repairing the world. These ideologies helped Evans to move an organization that reshaped the roles of women in Jewish organizational work throughout the twentieth century. Research indicates that Jane Evans and her values were followed wherever she went. She put great effort into promoting her vision of what the NFTS could conceivably become, and she did this with remarkable diplomacy, succeeding in preventing obstruction at every turn.

V. The Religious Expansion of the NFTS

During Evans' tenure, NFTS expanded its work from synagogue-based activities to a unified national approach dealing with issues that concerned the American Jewish community. By encouraging the women of NFTS to take a more active role in educational and social action programming within their own communities, and by leading the organization to involve itself in national and international events and causes, such as the JBI of America and the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), Evans encouraged the NFTS to assume a new and expanded role in American Jewish life. From the onset, Evans brought to her position at NFTS a strong commitment to Reform Judaism and its values, with a special emphasis on Jewish education and social justice. As executive director of NFTS, Evans "contributed to the religious transformation of

Reform Judaism, much like [Isaac Mayer] Wise and [Emmanuel] Gamoran, strengthening its ties to Zion and the Jewish people as a whole.”¹⁵

When Evans assumed her duties in 1933, she found that the Sisterhoods were not as “deeply interested in Jewish themes and subjects” as she would have liked.¹⁶ Primarily focused on “housekeeping” tasks within the synagogue, including providing refreshments for dinners, meetings, and after services, Evans’ role dramatically influenced the level of education and Judaism within the Sisterhood chapters. However, it is important to note that during Evans’ tenure as executive director of the NFTS, refreshments were still always provided. But Evans expanded the role of many sisterhood organizations beyond merely planning dinners and staffing gift shops.¹⁷ Most importantly, her work within the organization reflected the milieu of which she lived, as an increasing number of women began working as professionals outside the home.¹⁸

Evans also worked toward positioning the NFTS to assume a leadership role in the reshaping of Reform Judaism in the mid-twentieth century. She worked at bringing international Jewish concerns under the auspices of the NFTS, which became an international organization during her tenure. In this light, NFTS no longer exclusively communal issues; international Jewish issues increasingly became a part of its agenda. Although many of these issues will be explained in subsequent chapters, it is important to note the work of NFTS in three other areas: (1) bringing foreign students to study at

¹⁵ Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, 253.

¹⁶ Unknown written interview with Jane Evans, New York: American Jewish Archives, August 21 1985.

¹⁷ In addition, see Joellyn Wallen Zollman, “Shopping for a Future: A History of the American Synagogue Gift Shop,” unpublished diss., Brandeis University, 2002.

HUC-JIR; (2) having an instrumental role in raising funds so that the UAHC offices could be moved to New York; and (3) supporting and working as a partner with the WUPJ.

Evans encouraged the NFTS to transcend the domestic spheres that its founders envisioned for this women's auxiliary and to assume a role both in the larger Jewish world and in the arena of women and politics.¹⁹ In this way, the causes and activities that became part of the NFTS' agenda were more in line with the issues that concerned Reform Judaism as a whole, veering away from the more traditional female issues.

Evans played an instrumental role in this expansion, and she led the movement at a time when Jewish identity in America was undergoing a transformation. Jews in this country were discovering who they were and how they fit into both American and Jewish cultures. In the years following World War II, Jewish identity teetered between its "concern with Jewish survival" and its "desire to be fully integrated into American life."²⁰ Even Evans envisioned a Reform Judaism focusing more on substantive issues, such as education, involvement with world peace organizations, and social justice, rather than strictly cultural, such as women staffing gift shops and providing refreshments for programs. These included, education on the importance of *Tikkun Olam*, or participating in social action to help repair the world, politics, and support for the state of Israel through cultural Zionism.

¹⁸ In addition, see Sylvia Barack Fishman: *Jewish Life and American Culture*, Albany, N.Y. 2000. Ch. 2. In addition, while women working outside of the home in the twentieth century did become the norm, women continued to be avid volunteers for both religious and social service organizations. See Fishman, Ch. 7.

¹⁹ Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, *Jewish Women in America*, New York, 1997, 981.

²⁰ Charles E. Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today*, Summit Books: New York, 1985, 22.

Evans embarked on a journey within the NFTS that began slowly. When she assumed her position in Cincinnati, Evans was astonished at the rather grim working environment at the UAHC offices, at the time located in downtown Cincinnati. Although the offices were clean, space was extremely cramped. As Evans noted, the offices in Cincinnati were not quite what one would expect of an organization with such importance as the UAHC.²¹ However, even amidst these poor working conditions, Evans approached her new role with determination and enthusiasm "to change many things about the NFTS"²² and to ultimately broaden the horizons of this Reform Jewish women's organization. Eventually, she would help the movement to have a home of its own in New York City, the true center of Jewish American life.

As Evans led the NFTS, the organization increasingly worked to strengthen the spirit of Reform Jewish life both in the United States and abroad. Evans had the strong sense that the roles of women needed to be expanded in Reform Jewish life, in the United States, and ultimately within the world. She believed that women were equal partners with men in creating and shaping a strong and vibrant Reform Judaism. In order to do this, Evans did not remain in one place. Throughout her tenure as executive director, she traveled to many communities, both to help establish sisterhood chapters, as well as to have the opportunity to speak to various synagogues and community organizations about the necessity and the developing work of the NFTS. Through these lectures, Evans

²¹ Dr. Jane Evans, interview by author, November 22, 2002, New York, tape recording, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, 12.

²² Unknown written interview with Jane Evans, New York: American Jewish Archives, August 21, 1985.

demonstrated that Reform Jewish women "had an opinion on both the issues confronting Reform Judaism and the political challenges of the day."²³

Ultimately, Evans contributed to a significant trend in the organizational venue of women's rights and issues, which became, among other ideals, an important backbone to Reform Judaism. These contributions will be further highlighted throughout this thesis.

²³ Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, *Jewish Women in America*, New York, 1997, 981.

CHAPTER 2

1933-1945 – The Early Years of Evans' Work Within the NFTS

I. Introduction

Historian Jacob Rader Marcus noted that in the early twentieth century, women's auxiliary groups were becoming more and more dominant throughout Jewish communities in the United States. As a result, Rabbi Zepin encouraged these groups to create a national organization, which would be supported by the UAHC.¹ In 1913, predominantly under the direction of Carrie Simon, the NFTS became a reality.²

In its early years, the NFTS was occupied with activities such as fund-raising, supplementary education within the synagogue, as well as planning various social events related to holiday celebration. However, the women's involvement did not stop here. The NFTS further supported and helped to offer "to the women of Reform Judaism possibilities for expanding roles within the synagogue."³ In addition, NFTS also began slowly broadening its philanthropic activities both within the U.S. and abroad.

By the year 1933, the NFTS had made great strides. This was specifically seen as these women began entering arenas that were often seen as off limits. Under Jane Evans' leadership, the organization transformed itself into the "largest Jewish women's religious group."⁴ From the moment she assumed directorship of NFTS in 1933, Evans became the "guiding spirit" behind the organization, standing "at the heart of the organized women of

¹ Jacob Rader Marcus. *The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980*, New York: KTAV, 1981, 80.

² Through Carrie Simon's (1872-1961) position with the NFTS, she worked for the advancement of Jewish womanhood. See *The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography Vol.2*, edited by Jacob Rader Marcus, Brooklyn: N.Y., 1994, 600.

³ Pamela S. Nadell and Rita Simon. "Ladies of the Sisterhood: Women in the American Reform Synagogue, 1900-1930," *Active Voices: Women in the Jewish Culture*, edited by Maurie Sacks. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995, 66.

⁴ "Proceedings of the NFTS 1940-1943," Series A, Box 1, File IV, 22.

Reform Judaism.”⁵ Pamela Nadell, history professor at American University, noted the following regarding Evans’ impact on the twentieth century:

In the midst of a Jewish world rocked by the turbulence of the Great Depression, the horrors of World War II, and the emergence of the state of Israel, she [Evans] led this organization, initially limited to philanthropy, Jewish education, Jewish families, and the synagogue, to broaden its political and social vision.⁶

Chapter Two will focus on this watershed era, not only for the NFTS, but for Evans herself. The majority of this chapter will examine the increased scope and expansion of the organization, paying particular attention to membership, education, fund-raising, and the impact of the NFTS Speakers’ Bureau. The balance of the chapter will examine NFTS’ influence on the Jewish Braille Institute, its influence on World War II, as well as on the American Jewish community at large. Evans’ involvement with the National Peace Conference will also be juxtaposed with her leadership of the NFTS with respect to the war effort. Finally, this chapter will explore how the NFTS worked to establish a Jewish feminist movement embodying the ideals of American feminism.

II. Expansion of NFTS

Beginning in 1933, the expansion of the NFTS and its influence as an international organization brought with it renewed interest among the American Reform Jewish community to participate on the world stage. As Evans assumed her position, her major focus in those early years was to expand the NFTS beyond local synagogue involvement. Her focus helped local chapters reach beyond their own needs and expand

⁵ Pamela S. Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1998, 132.

⁶ Ibid.

them into the community. Jacob Rader Marcus noted that chapters began to "[manifest] an interest in art and music; they opened kindergartens for disadvantaged minority children and taught remedial reading in the public schools. The activities these local women's organizations increasingly focused on were matters of social justice and world peace."⁷ To this end, chapters became immersed in philanthropic causes, with Evans behind each effort to provide better education for children and adults alike, as well as to spread the NFTS' mission internationally.

Evans worked to shape the NFTS into something that embodied her ideals, and those of Reform Judaism. As Reform Judaism was taking shape in the U.S., it was highly influenced by the ideologies of European figures. One in particular, Abraham Geiger, preached in Germany in the nineteenth century on the subject of "Prophetic Judaism."⁸ For Geiger, the message of the prophets, such as their "concern for the poor and downtrodden, their contempt for ritual acts unaccompanied by social morality, and their vision of peace for all humanity...made Amos, Isaiah, Micah...timeless and contemporary."⁹ During this period, Prophetic Judaism continued to occupy a significant part of Reform Jewish living and teaching. As historian Michael A. Meyer noted, "Prophetic Judaism continued to loom large in the curriculum."¹⁰

In line with this thinking, Evans also reflected similar sentiments by stating that intrinsic to Jewish living was the prophetic message "of interpreting religion in terms of service."¹¹ Evans even noted that the work of the NFTS was a "modern projection into

⁷ Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980*, 140.

⁸ Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1988, 95.

⁹ Id., 95-96.

¹⁰ Id., 301.

¹¹ "21st Annual Report 1934," Series A, Box 1, File III, 18.

practical deed, of the ideals of our forebears."¹² To this end, Evans worked at carrying out this practical deed through programs and activities that demonstrated an enthusiasm for a Jewish heritage that was built on morality and activism and one that was in constant harmony with the prophetic teachings. She felt strongly that NFTS would not be "keeping with the rapid pace of an ever-changing world" if the organization did not take advantage of projects that were not even anticipated for NFTS as recently as the summer of 1933.¹³ Due to "widened horizons," however, these projects became "a fundamental part of our Federation's program of furthering Jewish and humanitarian causes."¹⁴

Evans felt strongly that by expanding membership, demonstrating leadership, providing educational programming, as well as instituting the NFTS Speakers' Bureau, interfaith programming, coordinating efforts with the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), and trying to find a way to fund all these projects, she was enabling the participants in the mid-twentieth century to carry out the true heart of religion: service to mankind and working toward the improvement of the world.¹⁵

A. Membership

The expansion of NFTS chapters in the 1930s-1940s was Evans' first major undertaking as its director. She worked tirelessly at increasing membership at home and abroad, and by 1943 there were three hundred eighty-two chapters in forty-five states throughout America, as well as Canada, Cuba, Panama, Scotland, and South Africa. In addition, Evans' helped organize twenty-one state and district federations of NFTS,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "26th Annual Report 1939," Series A, Box 1, File III, 22.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ This organization was established in 1926 by Lily Montagu. See Section II E.

which would periodically meet and produce programs for their respective regions. Evans felt strongly that if NFTS was truly to expand its programming, it had to extend beyond the United States. By helping to establish international NFTS chapters, Evans pushed NFTS to become an international association that gave its members a better perspective of both feminine and Reform needs worldwide.

Throughout the 1930s NFTS membership was on the rise. Evans focused on attracting younger women to its ranks, noting that younger women "will join your organization when you have developed a sufficiently diversified program for [them] to feel there is some work [they] can contribute and from which [they] will gain."¹⁶ Evans concentrated on working women who had limited time and would find meaning in becoming a part of the NFTS. She noted:

The Sisterhood should and does offer to the busy woman of today an extremely valuable religious program. It in no way replaces the secular clubs and organizations, which also demand and should receive our cooperation. Rather, by the very nature of a Sisterhood's underlying interpretation of religion, it should prove a source of inspiration from which participation in other activities gain new impetus.

This statement demonstrated how strongly Evans felt regarding the mission of the NFTS, a mission that was deeply focused on the importance and interpretation of the Jewish religion in a modern age, where women were busy and had the opportunity to participate in many types of social service organizations.

¹⁶ "Speakers and Leaders Training Institute, 1940," Series C, Administrative Records-Subseries 2: Institutes and Committees, File 1, 77.

The National Federation of Temple Youth

Another early initiative in the programming of NFTS, under Evans' leadership, was related to the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY), which was founded under the auspices of the UAHC in 1939. "NFTY soon prospered and grew rapidly" and later developed into a "major youth movement."¹⁷ NFTS quickly became a part of this growth, as Evans' strong desire to incorporate younger women into the work of NFTS continued. She suggested that it would be of benefit to invite the highest ranking female officer to attend the biennial conventions of the NFTS, so that this individual would become familiar with its programs, and in turn bring some of the NFTS' ideas back to the board of NFTY.¹⁸ Evans felt that by including the highest female officer at the NFTS biennial conventions, this would emphasize the importance of training "intelligent Jewish adults for tomorrow."¹⁹

B. Leadership

Throughout her tenure, Evans was extremely focused on the importance of building good models for the future of Reform Judaism. Her belief was that "above all, the purpose of the leader is to develop new leaders."²⁰ It can be argued that Evans was a born mentor; however her leadership skills were not something she kept hidden. Rather, by emphasizing the importance of a role model having integrity, she encouraged individual NFTS members to take active roles within the movement on both the local and international level.

¹⁷ Meyer, 307. In addition, Id., 377.

¹⁸ "14th Annual Biennial Assembly Records-1941," Series B, Box 3, File 3, 235.

¹⁹ "13th Annual Biennial Assembly Records-1939," Series B, Box 3, File 2, 59.

•Committees

Evans felt that through organization a great deal could be accomplished. She promoted the creation of specific committees that would give the NFTS members an opportunity to utilize their individual leadership skills. Specific committees included the "Peace Committee" that produced monthly briefs known as "Peace News Flashes." In addition, a "program committee" created timely programs of which individual chapters could take advantage. Committees were also formed to create the annual Sisterhood Art Calendar and to keep track of the amount of funds raised through the sale of Uniongrams.²¹ These committees served as the backbone of the NFTS' programming, and Evans relied heavily on them.

•Personal Visits

Evans encouraged chapters to become more involved on a national level, but she did not do this solely from the Cincinnati office. "Evans was required to travel across the country bringing Sisterhood's message to Reform Jews."²² Evans availed herself out of both obligation as well as a desire to educate and spread NFTS' mission to areas of the country that were perhaps isolated and lacked access to conferences in major cities. She also visited NFTS chapters outside the United States. In 1939, Evans had the opportunity to address the NFTS chapter in Glasgow, Scotland.

She was a firm believer in these personal visits. She felt that face-to-face contact "make[s] the message and the program of the NFTS more meaningful to its members

²⁰ "Speakers and Leaders Training Institute, 1940," 78.

²¹ "21st Annual Report 1934," at 18. In addition, Uniongrams were created in 1913 to send messages to friends and loved ones on occasions of joy or sorrow. Through these sales, Uniongrams raised funds for the Youth, Education, and Special Projects (YES) Fund of the NFTS. See <http://rj.org/wrj/yesunion.html>

²² Nadell, 132-133.

than written communications, no matter how fine the latter may be."²³ Although Evans attempted to visit every NFTS chapter, as World War II loomed in the background, the cost of travel became very expensive, as well as exceedingly challenging due to lack of fuel and other restrictions. Even in the most difficult of times, however, Evans still made every effort to make personal connections to chapters, thus emphasizing her commitment to the NFTS and its programming.

•NFTS Speakers' Bureau

While Evans made as many personal visits as possible to Sisterhood chapters throughout the country, she quickly realized that other women should be trained to deliver NFTS' message. Known as the "Speaker's Bureau," this arm of the NFTS strove to develop a cadre of "trained speakers who were both well-versed and grounded in the projects and the program of their organization."²⁴ Although the Bureau began modestly, it was Evans' hope that it would continue to grow and that NFTS members would attend "Speakers and Leaders Training Institutes" to learn about specific parts of the NFTS to highlight when delivering a speech. The number of participants who attended the institutes in 1940 ranged from one hundred to three hundred women.²⁵

C. Education

In addition to increasing membership and developing leadership within the NFTS, Evans' other major focus in the early 1930s was education. From the onset, Evans stressed the importance of education, not only as one of the major platforms of Judaism, but for each NFTS member as well. Evans recognized that the "entire program of the

²³ "26th Annual Report 1939," 25.

²⁴ "Proceedings of the NFTS 1940-1943," 24.

²⁵ *Id.*, 97.

NFTS was in one form or another a contribution to religious education."²⁶ Through fund-raising and increasing awareness with publications, the NFTS was able to support countless educational programs for both children and adults. Although Evans went to great lengths to encourage NFTS members to take an active role in education, she also felt that there was a need to support a type of education that worked to achieve "the betterment of men, and the intensification of the religious motivation for all individual action."²⁷ Evans took an extremely active role in reorganizing the religious programs of NFTS specifically by helping to create more resources and materials, with which both adults and children could become better versed in Judaic knowledge. In this way, Evans carried out her idea that religion represented the "life blood of Judaism"²⁸ and had to be the major focus of Jewish communities throughout the world.

•Sisterhood Publication Fund

Evans not only emphasized the importance of Jewish education in her speeches, she also developed substantive educational initiatives for NFTS. One such example of this was the "Sisterhood Publication Fund," which helped to publish books and provide them at reduced prices to the NFTS chapters. Topics included History, Hebrew, Days Since the Second Temple, Kings & Prophets, and Medieval History.²⁹ Over the years, the Sisterhood Publication Fund grew tremendously from just three books in the summer of 1934 to twenty-eight books in 1941.³⁰ Evans encouraged Sisterhood presidents to purchase the books for individual temple libraries as both resources and teaching tools.

²⁶ Id., 25.

²⁷ "24th Annual Report 1937- Cincinnati, Ohio," Series A, Box 1, File III, 21.

²⁸ "15th Annual Biennial Assembly Records-1943," Series B, Box 3, File 4, 133.

²⁹ "26th Annual Report 1939- Cincinnati, Ohio," 23.

³⁰ "Proceedings of the NFTS 1940-1943," 96.

As a result, these books served as a tangible expression of NFTS' commitment to education.

•"Topics & Trends"

In addition to the books published through the "Sisterhood Publication Fund," newsletters were also published. With Evans' encouragement, the bimonthly National Federation Bulletin, "Topics and Trends," appeared in 1934.³¹ This newsletter was published and mailed five times per year and had a circulation of over sixty thousand four hundred homes by 1943.³² The advantage of this newsletter was to keep local chapters aware of NFTS activities on both a national and local level. Though Evans may have preferred physical contact with each chapter, this was simply not possible with the number of existing NFTS members. Instead, she created this bulletin as an opportunity to communicate with individual chapters en masse.

•President's Packet

In order to communicate with individual Sisterhood presidents, Evans created in 1940 a "system of releasing a folder once a month to apprise them of matters of special interest as well as to give them copies of communications sent directly by National Chairmen to local Chairmen."³³ These packets provided various programming ideas and detailed discussions of what was occurring at the national office with regard to various committees and functions. Evans personally consulted these packets before they were mailed, and she made sure to include all the necessary information. She felt strongly that this was another important step in keeping individual chapters attentive to the activities occurring in the national office.

³¹ "22nd Annual Report 1935- Cincinnati, Ohio," Series A, Box 1, File III, 19.

³² "Administrative Records: Transcript of the Executive," Series C, Box 14, Folder 1, 11.

•Multimedia Achievements

Evans also worked toward reaching potential NFTS members and educating current members through both film and radio. In 1941 Evans announced that a "motion picture" was being prepared by the National Office that would touch "on the highlights of the organization, and would be shown at the [National] Convention."³⁴ After its showing, the film became available for use in local chapters.

Evans also took steps to reach radio listeners. The NFTS developed various radio programs, including one titled "Songs of Faith," which offered modern interpretations on the Book of Psalms and linked them to current events.³⁵ Evans was a firm believer that these radio broadcasts were important for the Jewish and non-Jewish listener alike, as she stated, "today our radio broadcasts are a basic contribution to Judaism and to inter-faith good will."³⁶ Under the direction of both the NFTS as well as the UAHC, these programs were important in bridging ancient Scriptural readings to modern day joys and sorrows.

In addition to the "Songs of Faith" broadcasts, another significant radio broadcast was produced titled "The Music and Prayers of Israel." The program aired from February 1936 to September 1937. Evans felt that this broadcast was significant because of its ability to explain and lead services via radio for those who were unable to attend services.³⁷

These broadcasts included every significant part of a standard service, notably the Shema and Kaddish, as well as significant prayers and holidays such as the Kol Nidrei

³³ "Proceedings of the NFTS 1940-1943," 25.

³⁴ Id., 98.

³⁵ Id., 28.

³⁶ "26th Annual Report 1939- Cincinnati, Ohio," 22.

³⁷ "Miscellaneous- Radio Project, 1936," Series M, Box 74, File 1.

service.³⁸ Evans was particularly pleased with the Kol Nidrei service and noted that "our broadcast of the Kol Nidrei was the first time...that our ancient melody and service was heard simultaneously around the globe."³⁹ Though this type of nontraditional education was perhaps more difficult to produce than newsletters and programming notes, Evans felt this was an important step in educating those who may have never been exposed to Jewish liturgy, as well as a refresher for those who had perhaps forgotten the reasons behind reciting each prayer.⁴⁰

•Adult Education

Displaying interest in the adult student, Evans hoped to develop a "correspondence school," which would be "a school for the benefit of the religious education of adults, who were living in communities so isolated that they had little, if any Jewish contact, either with a synagogue or with a rabbi or with any organized religious life."⁴¹ Evans felt that this was an extremely worthwhile endeavor, and one that could reach adults wherever they lived throughout the country. Although this was perhaps a smaller and less well-known activity of the NFTS, it helped to bring many isolated adults closer to Jewish history and traditions.

•Programming Packets

Throughout her travels, Evans became well educated in the various programs carried out by local chapters. Frequently she brought these program ideas back to the national office and kept them on record for other chapters to adapt and use. In much of

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "25th Annual Report 1938- Cincinnati, Ohio," Series A, Box 1, File III, 135.

⁴⁰ Unfortunately, no tape or filmstrip has survived this period. It appears from the documents in the AJA that the audio programs were well received as modern contributions to Jewish education.

⁴¹ "Transcript of the Executive Board Meeting May 1944 (New York)," Series C, Administrative Records Box 14, Folder 2 and 3, 305.

her correspondence to individual NFTS chapters, Evans highlighted the importance of sending in program packets to the national office in a timely manner. She also stressed that state districts should not meet without the National office being aware of the meeting.⁴²

Evans stressed the necessity of this correspondence by identifying three major benefits to the NFTS: (1) the national office is better prepared and able to handle problems if a smaller intermediary region, such as a state district, is created; (2) the national office is better able to create useful programming for state districts, with specific concentration on need and desire; and (3) state districts can deal with sectional and regional problems as they arise.⁴³ By outlining these benefits, Evans clearly expressed her vision of how the state and national offices could work in harmony.

D. Interfaith Programming

While radio broadcasts were one small step in reaching out to non-Jews, Evans believed in other opportunities where Jewish women could come in contact with non-Jewish women. One such example was Evans' firm belief that Jewish women, whether members of the NFTS or not, should belong to the "National Conference of Jews and Christians."⁴⁴ She felt that an important step in combating anti-Semitism was to confront those of various religious backgrounds and work with them toward establishing dialogue.⁴⁵ In 1940, Evans noted that a joint committee existed in Cincinnati between the UAHC Commission on Jewish education and the leaders of the United Methodist

⁴² "12th Annual Biennial Assembly Records, 1937," Series B, Box 3, File 1, p. 76.

⁴³ "13th Annual Biennial Assembly Records-1939," 62.

⁴⁴ "Subseries One: Executive Board and Executive," Series C, Box 13, Folder 1, 103. In addition, see Egal Feldman, *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth Century America*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Church.⁴⁶ As a result of their work, "revisions have been made in [Jewish] textbooks as well as revisions in Methodist religious school textbooks."⁴⁷

This notion of interfaith dialogue in an effort to increase awareness of anti-Semitism elucidates a point made by historians Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna. "Rather than concealing their faith from their neighbors, they [Jewish women] became proud exponents of Judaism, skilled in the role of presenting their faith to others."⁴⁸ Evans firmly believed that the women of the NFTS were obligated to associate with their non-Jewish counterparts, and in this way, they made a unique and important contribution to interfaith work. In so doing, these women "proved by example that Jewish women could contribute as faithful Jews not only within the confines of the Jewish world but also far beyond them."⁴⁹

E. The World Union of Progressive Judaism

Attempts had been made as early as 1914 to establish "a permanent [international] union of all Jews."⁵⁰ However, due to World War I, the organization was delayed in coming to fruition. By 1926, with Lily Montagu at the forefront, the organization was established in London. Reform Jewish leaders from England, Germany, India, and the United States attended this first assembly. Montagu felt strongly that this new organization must actively participate in the "fight against Jewish materialism and

⁴⁶ "Subseries 2: Institutes and Committees: Speakers and Leaders Training Institute, 1940," at 73.

⁴⁷ Id., 74. In addition, Rabbi Richard C. Hertz (1916-1999) of Detroit, Michigan, was actively involved in interfaith relations at this time. He worked extensively to prompt in-depth dialogues among those of various faiths regarding issues such as racism and anti-Semitism. For additional information, see Pamela Barr Silk, "A Biographical Analysis of the Life and Career of Rabbi Richard C. Hertz," unpublished rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 2003.

⁴⁸ Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, "Introduction," *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives*, Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001, 5.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Meyer, 335. See also Meyer, endnote 1, 465.

apathy.”⁵¹ In order to do this, leaders from around the globe needed to be aware of the state of Progressive Judaism throughout the world. Motivated by Reform ideals, the early instigators of the WUPJ wanted to create an organization that would help serve liberal Jews in both established and undeveloped communities. One of Montagu’s first major undertakings as the honorary secretary of the WUPJ was to organize its first official conference in 1928 at Berlin. Perhaps one of the major highlights of the conference was Montagu’s opportunity to be the first woman to deliver a sermon from a German pulpit.⁵² As a result of the conference, as well as Montagu’s efforts, the number of WUPJ affiliates increased, and new congregations were soon established in Europe, South America, Israel, South Africa, and Australia.⁵³

With knowledge of the intent of the WUPJ, Evans worked at guiding the NFTS to become full participants in the organization’s activities. Though Evans had the opportunity to address some of these international congregations, with the onset of World War II, funds became increasingly important for their survival. As Evans noted, “since the war the WUPJ has been frightfully handicapped in all of its work.”⁵⁴ However, Evans insisted that the NFTS fully support the WUPJ’s efforts, noting the valuable work that the WUPJ had done to organize a refugee community in South America.⁵⁵

One of the most active ways in which the NFTS supported the WUPJ during the war years was through the “Silver Coin Collection from Mothers to Mothers,” which helped to support supervised after-school and religious school activities for Jewish

⁵¹ Id., 336.

⁵² Ellen Umansky, *Lily Montagu: Sermons, Addresses, Letters, and Prayer*, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985, 177.

⁵³ Id., 178.

⁵⁴ “Transcript of the Executive Board Meeting, May 1944, New York,” Series C, Administrative Records, Box 14, Folders 2 and 3, 136.

⁵⁵ Id., 137.

children in Palestine who would otherwise be engaged in unsafe environments. In a letter dated May 26, 1944, Evans appealed to Sisterhood presidents asking them for their full support in this worthwhile program.⁵⁶

F. Fund-raising for the NFTS

Evans spent a great deal of her time as executive director raising funds for various causes. Although she may have grown tired of appeal letters and speeches, Evans always provided her fellow NFTS members with tangible reasons to support fund-raising. She once noted that there were two ways to view fund-raising, either "as a difficult task, grudgingly fulfilled from a sense of duty, or as an inspiring opportunity for creative effort toward creative ends."⁵⁷

Evans continually emphasized the latter point, noting that fund-raising was a tangible reflection of the power of religion for mankind. As Evans presented various figures at biennial conventions and meetings, she urged NFTS members to view them as more than mere numbers on a page. Rather, Sisterhood members should understand the figures as important contributions to the programming and educational abilities of the Reform Jewish movement.

Perhaps the most significant fund-raising efforts in the early years of Evans' tenure revolved around both the UAHC and the HUC Scholarship Funds. Beginning in the mid-1900s, there were already discussions of the UAHC needing proper working accommodations. Since Evans' office was in the UAHC building in Cincinnati, she saw

⁵⁶ "Monthly Folders-1944," Series F, File 1, Box 46.

⁵⁷ "Proceedings of the NFTS 1940-1943," 152.

first-hand the cramped and insufficient working space at the Union.⁵⁸ The NFTS realized that the UAHC building project would not solely be a Sisterhood project, and Evans helped to emphasize that with a new building for the Union, the NFTS would also receive new office space. This would help to create a major service center that would be able to better handle the increased volume of correspondence and projects during any fiscal year.

Whenever Evans was given the opportunity, she expressed some of the reasons why many felt that it was so important to support the scholarship fund for HUC students. One such reason was to provide men who were finishing their rabbinical studies at the college and entering the work force to not be "loaded down by personal debt."⁵⁹ By 1942, the scholarship was able to fully support forty-eight students, whether or not they were living in the dorms.⁶⁰ This demonstrated the great achievement of the HUC Scholarship Fund, as the NFTS was able to help provide most HUC students with living expenses.

Expanding the scope of the NFTS was an extremely significant part of Evans' first years at the helm. By increasing the awareness of the NFTS through personal visits both at home and abroad, expanding the numbers of programs, placing emphasis on interfaith work, and making fund-raising a top priority, Evans demonstrated the power of NFTS beyond mere words to tangible and numerous actions.

III. The NFTS and the Jewish Braille Institute

As the first decade of Evans' service to the NFTS continued, the movement further expanded its support of global issues. One very significant example of this was the Jewish Braille Institute of America (JBI). NFTS officially became the principal

⁵⁸ "Transcript of the Executive Board Meeting 1941," Series C, Box 13, Folder 3, Administrative Records, Subseries 1, 21.

⁵⁹ "Transcript of the Executive," Series C, Administrative Records, Box 13, Folder 4, 88.

sponsor of the JBI in 1931.⁶¹ As the NFTS continued to support its other endeavors with a specific focus on education and membership, it also "devoted a great deal of time to the blind."⁶²

One of the earliest achievements of the JBI was the adoption of the International Hebrew Braille Code in 1936, which was deemed as an "epochal achievement."⁶³ Following this accomplishment, in 1941 the JBI instituted its annual literary competition for blind participants in the United States, Spanish-American countries, and throughout the English-speaking world. Through this event, the JBI extended its services beyond the United States. In 1944 the Braille edition of the same abridged prayer book that was provided in standard print was published for those serving in the armed forces. Vice president of the JBI, Leopold Dubov, played an instrumental role in editing and sending this project to press.⁶⁴

A final highlight of the organization was setting the Hebrew Bible in Braille. Although when the project began in 1944, the estimated completion was roughly three years with a final bill from ten thousand to twelve thousand dollars, the impact of such a work was thought to be as "spiritually significant an undertaking as were any of the other famous historic Bibles of the past, such as the Septuagint [Greek Translation of the Bible] or the King James Version."⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Id., 80.

⁶¹ Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream 1920-1945*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, 46.

⁶² Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980*, 81.

⁶³ "Monthly Folders 1945," Series F, Box 47, File 1.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The major publication of the JBI, founded in 1931, was the *Jewish Braille Review*. Under Dubov's guidance, it quickly became a "veritable sun to its readers."⁶⁶ Fulfilling the vision of publishing a free, worldwide, Jewish cultural magazine in Braille, the *Review* grew quickly. The magazine included articles on current events, book reviews, poetry, essays, and periodicals. By 1934 a sixteen-page children's supplement was included in the *Review*, and it became the only Braille magazine to have such a feature.⁶⁷

The *Jewish Braille Review* reached a huge audience. Helen Keller was an especially strong supporter of the publication, and frequently donated to its efforts. Keller expressed her appreciation for this magazine in a letter to Dubov in 1941, in which she wrote, "You [the *Review*] give me many reasons to be proud...[your] world-wide spirit, [and] the fine emulation of minds you have kindled among the blind in the art of writing."⁶⁸

Evans' work and efforts in supporting the JBI did not go unnoticed. Rabbi Michael Aaronsohn once praised Evans, as well as the current NFTS president, Helen Straus, "for their almost holy zeal in working out a branch of service to those whom some people call neglected, but whom we believe are God's elected."⁶⁹ Evans was a firm believer that the work of the JBI was an essential part of social justice. To this end, she worked at making it a major focus of the NFTS during her early years within the movement.

⁶⁶ "Transcript of Proceedings-11th Biennial Assembly, 1935," 240.

⁶⁷ "Monthly Folders 1945," Series F, Box 47, File 1.

⁶⁸ "Monthly Folder 1942," Series F, Box 44, File 3.

⁶⁹ "14th Annual Biennial Assembly Records-1941," 119. In addition, Michael Aaronsohn (1896-1976), a chaplain serving in World War I, was blinded in action. For supplemental information, see *The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography*, Vol. 1, 1.

IV. The Impact of World War II on the NFTS

As world events of the twentieth century began to unfold, Evans cautioned the NFTS not to be complacent. Believing that active participation in the organization was an important step in "serving a democratic civilization," Evans guided this women's movement to be strongly tied to war efforts locally as well as nationally.⁷⁰ By World War II, "hundreds of American synagogues of all persuasions maintained women's auxiliaries; in fact, no self-consciously modern and proudly American congregation was without one."⁷¹

Although the NFTS along with other women's organizations participated in various activities to help soldiers in the war, it was often hard to find a unifying voice and sentiment among them. There was often the problem of claiming to be a good American citizen and a good Jew simultaneously. This ideal often left American Jewry on the whole "unable to speak with a single voice."⁷² With anti-Semitism on the rise in the 1930s, both at home and abroad, "Jewish leaders seemed to feel an ever greater need to express their patriotism."⁷³

For Evans, however, expressing patriotism and concern for world Jewry was her sole focus during this time. A special committee of the NFTS, Aid to Refugees, was created. Here, individual NFTS chapters worked at donating time to the Red Cross, the Jewish Welfare Board, setting up temporary dormitories at synagogues, providing home

⁷⁰ "Proceedings of the NFTS 1940-1943," 250.

⁷¹ Jenna Weissman Joselit. "The Jewish Priestess and Ritual," *American Jewish Women's History*, Edited by Pamela S. Nadell, New York: New York University Press, 2003, 155.

⁷² Feingold, 224.

⁷³ Gulie Ne'eman Arad, *America, Its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000, 168-169.

hospitality for meals, and distributing gifts to service men for Chanukah and Purim.⁷⁴ All of these programs helped individual chapters "organize their contributions to the war effort."⁷⁵ However, this was not the norm among Jewish organizations in the United States during the War. It was often the case that a collective response came second to an individual response, which often "weakened the cohesiveness of American Jewry."⁷⁶

Although an extremely discouraging time in the lives of American Jews, Evans felt strongly that the women of NFTS had no choice but to take an active role in war efforts. She noted, "in the name of humanity, we [NFTS] must take the speediest possible action to rescue those Jews who may yet be saved. Let us, the fortunate Jewish women of America act at once."⁷⁷

•The National Peace Conference

On a national level, Evans led the NFTS to become more actively involved in the National Peace Conference (NPC) throughout World War II. Having been a part of the NPC since its inception, Evans spoke of the worthwhile programs that the organization produced and how they could help NFTS members in their local communities. She described the threefold purpose of the organization: including (1) to form a council board where members of the organization had an opportunity to exchange their views on American foreign policy, as well as formulate and clarify policies and issues; (2) to serve as a clearing house to receive, record, and publicize views of its affiliated organizations; and (3) to publish and provide programs to its members of objective, non-partisan

⁷⁴ "Monthly Folders 1943," Series F, File 1, Box 45.

⁷⁵ Karla Goldman. *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, 212.

⁷⁶ Feingold, 145-146.

⁷⁷ "Monthly Folders 1944," Series F, Box 46, File 1.

information on world events.⁷⁸ These three major foci of the organization were things that Evans saw as extremely valuable and worthwhile endeavors.

Evans' involvement in the NPC grew during 1943-1945, when she served the organization as their part-time director. However, many members of the NFTS hesitated in allowing Evans to do this because they felt that her time would not be split evenly and that the work of the NPC would become her primary focus. However, the national president at the time, Reina Hartmann, assured NFTS that someone would be employed on a part-time basis in Cincinnati to manage and supervise some of the work that Evans would be unable to do from out of town.⁷⁹

Hartmann felt strongly that allowing Evans to do this work on a temporary, part-time basis was extremely important. She felt that by being in New York, Evans would have the opportunity to meet more frequently with eastern Sisterhood chapters. Hartmann also felt that sacrifices would have to be made on behalf of all NFTS members, but that the sacrifices were minimal compared to the amount of work Evans would be able to contribute on behalf of an extremely viable and significant organization.

Because 1943 marked a decade of Evans' involvement with the NFTS, Hartmann felt that the organization was wise to afford her this opportunity. Evans had mentioned getting involved with the government or other organizations that would require her to travel abroad. By allowing her to work for the NPC in New York, Hartmann firmly believed that Evans would remain in close contact with the NFTS. All NFTS members had the opportunity to vote on whether Evans should begin this position, and it was

⁷⁸ "Monthly Folders, 1941," Series F, Box 44, File 2.

⁷⁹ Reina K. G. Hartmann was born in 1880. She was a communal and civic worker in Chicago. For additional information, see *The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography*, Vol. 1, 254.

ultimately accepted.⁸⁰ Through a democratic voting procedure, every individual involved in NFTS had the option to vote either for or against Evans leaving her post in Cincinnati. This demonstrated that the executive board did not decide solely based on its own opinions; rather, each member was encouraged to voice her own feelings regarding this issue.

Although it was intended for Evans to lead the NPC for only a year, in 1944 a letter from the president of the NPC, Dr. John Paul Jones, asked the NFTS for an extension of Evans' time with the movement. Jones noted that Evans had contributed valuable service to the organization, and the NFTS should be pleased with her contributions. He asked that she be permitted to stay with the organization for a small length of time because of the crucial planning needed with regard to the post-war efforts. Jones wrote, "Miss Evans has information and personal qualities that seem to us almost beyond duplication for the immediate future. Therefore, if it be possible, we hope that you will consider in a favorable light this request for further extension of Miss Evans' leave of absence."⁸¹

Under these circumstances, Hartmann and the president of the UAHC, Maurice Eisendrath, agreed that although it would be difficult for the NFTS to be without a full-time director for an extended time, it was important for the NFTS to be flexible and allow Evans to continue her work with the NPC. Ultimately, the NFTS did survive while Evans was in New York. The organization realized what an honor it was that their executive director had been called upon by the NPC. In addition, Hartmann believed that through Evans' involvement with the NPC, she would help the organization become more

⁸⁰ "Executive Board 1942-1952," Series E, Circular File, Box 34, File 2.

⁸¹ Ibid.

educated in world Jewry, and about how many Jews had become victims of countless acts of violence during World War II with specific regard to the Holocaust.

As Hartmann reviewed these principles with the NFTS, she made all the members aware of the true benefits of permitting Evans to resume her position with the NPC. Although there were difficulties with this arrangement, the sacrifices made on behalf of the NFTS were viewed as an extremely important way in which Evans could serve a larger segment of the world population.

Upon the completion of her two years of service with the NPC, Evans noted that she felt extremely privileged to participate in both the NPC and NFTS simultaneously. The two most beneficial aspects of Evans' New York tenure were (1) the opportunity to meet more often with East coast NFTS chapters and (2) to participate more regularly in the affairs of the American Jewish Conference.⁸²

The NFTS became active participants in sending aid and relief overseas to coreligionists affected by the war. Sisterhood members took active roles in helping families and children who were affected by the war. Although, "Jews could not agree on the nature of the Nazi threat, much less on how to respond to it," the NFTS seems to have been a noteworthy exception to this generalization.⁸³

Some effects and of the war were unknown at this time, but the NFTS served as an important unifying organization that brought together women of the American Reform Synagogue and provided them with a mechanism for helping fellow Jews throughout the

⁸² "Proceedings of the NFTS 1940-1943," 151. In addition, the American Jewish Conference was only in existence from 1943-1949. See both Chapter 3, Section II D, as well as Michael N. Dobkowski, "American Jewish Conference," *Jewish Voluntary Organizations*, Westport: Connecticut, 1996, 39.

⁸³ Feingold, 226.

world. Even as Jewish leadership was in the "depths of despair during the 1940s,"⁸⁴ Evans did not let this emotion curtail NFTS' participation in various causes that would both inspire and help the current situation of Jews in the U.S. and abroad.

V. The NFTS and the Feminist Movement

In the early 1930s chapters existed in nearly every Reform temple in the country, spreading a "feminine influence" that was gaining an ever-more notable and significant voice in Reform Judaism.⁸⁵ The shaping of these chapters began to demonstrate their Jewish influence as well.

As the early years of Evans' affiliation with the NFTS drew to a close, feminism was taking shape in the American community at large.⁸⁶ Though Evans declared herself as "something of a feminist,"⁸⁷ she believed that men and women should work together, specifically with regard to religious issues. She was, however, aware of some of the criticisms associated with female leaders, and she felt they were compliments in disguise. She noted, "the fact that women, as leaders, have a tendency to insist upon too great a supervision of those whom they appoint to responsible positions... it implies the attitude of being convinced no one can do the work quite as well as we!"⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Meyer, 334.

⁸⁵ Ellen M. Umansky "Jewish Women's Religious Lives," *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 2nd Ed. Edited by Judith R. Baskin. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998, 344.

⁸⁶ While most scholars generally associate the birth of the modern feminist movement to the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* of 1963, the word "feminism," adapted from the French *feminisme*, was coined in the 1890s. See *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*. Edited by Stuart Berg Flexner. 2nd Ed., unabridged, New York: Random House, 1987, 708. For additional information on the premodern feminist movement see Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, New York: The Free Press, 1989.

⁸⁷ "Transcript of the Executive Board Meeting, May 1944 (New York)," Series C, Administrative Records, Box 14, Folders 2 and 3, 215.

⁸⁸ "Speakers and Leaders Training Institute, 1940," 32.

Evans did not let her gender inhibit her ability to lead the NFTS or her position within the Reform Jewish movement. Rather, Evans worked toward creating chapters that not only "cultivate[d] a spirit of good feeling and hospitality of the synagogue," but also worked at bringing these same ideals to religious issues that became increasingly a part of Reform Jewish life in the United States.⁸⁹

VI. Conclusion

Historian Dr. Jacob Marcus once asked an important question regarding the NFTS chapters of the 1920s:

Did the ladies of the Chapters in the 1920's believe that they were a brave little band arrayed against the world, united by mystical ties that bound them together as women? The answer is no. Did they enjoy a socio-religious feeling of "community" which strengthened the ties that united them as women and Jews? The answer is yes.⁹⁰

Evans began her tenure soon after the 1920s, and she did much to continue the work that had begun by the NFTS in that era. She worked at creating a community that united women as significant Jewish leaders, both behind the scenes and in the forefront of American political and religious life. Pushing the organization to work actively in organizations that the NFTS had previously supported perhaps financially, Evans was a firm believer that "religion and religious institutions, with their remarkable sway over the hearts and minds of men, can create a better world."⁹¹

The first fifteen years of Evans' involvement within the NFTS were busily filled with philanthropic, educational, and global concerns. These trends continued as Evans worked hard to shape and influence those around her.

⁸⁹ Joselit, 161.

⁹⁰ Marcus Jacob Rader, *The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980*, 81.

⁹¹ "Proceedings of the NFTS 1940-1943," 22.

CHAPTER 3

1946-1955 – The Continued Expansion of the NFTS

I. Introduction

In the context of both American and Jewish history, World War II was undoubtedly a significant turning point. As one historian noted, "American Jewry emerged from the struggle [of World War II] convinced that they were no longer an exotic ethnic and religious minority but an integral part of American culture."¹ This impact of the War gave the American Jewish community an identity transcending previous boundaries and, in turn, it had a tremendous impact on the history of American Reform Judaism. American Jews soon realized that there was a growing interest in and a desire to express Judaism in modern and egalitarian terms. As a result, and accompanying this transforming ideology, Reform Judaism grew rapidly in the 1950s, when Jewish communities expanded to the suburbs and new congregations developed there as well.²

Clearly, the entire American Jewish community was undergoing a "reorientation," and American Reform Judaism was affected by these changes. Reform Jews, like the rest of the Jewish community, realized that their brethren abroad had endured terrible atrocities. Simultaneously, "Reform congregations experienced unprecedented growth in membership in school population, in scope of activities, and in size of budgets."³ All of these factors proved to be definite benefits as Reform Jewry was experiencing renewal and change.

¹ Edwards S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, 15.

² Daniel J. Elazar, "The Organization of the American Jewish Community." *Jews in America: A Contemporary Reader*, Edited by Roberta Rosenberg Farber and Chaim I. Waxman. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1999, 112.

³ Leon A. Jick, "The Reform Synagogue." *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, 102.

The ideological and demographic expansion that occurred in post-World War II American Reform Judaism also had a positive effect on the work of NFTS. Evans noted how much the organization had developed and matured since its inception in 1913. In addition to fund-raising and educational projects within the Jewish community, NFTS also participated in national organizations, including the Jewish Braille Institute of America, the National Peace Conference, and local organizations providing aid and education in peace and world affairs. Through this expansion was an early sign of Evans' involvement with the organization, she argued that there was still more work to do. Arguing that the programs of NFTS were of "enduring significance," Evans continued to lead the movement through a decade of change and progress, which included further programming on both the international and national fronts.⁴ Sensitive to the needs of Reform Jews, Evans felt that while certain ideological differences may exist within the movement, the similarities were more significant in that they bound these Jews into a strong movement, ready to meet the needs of the age. As Evans asserted shortly after the end of World War II:

If all the peoples and nations of the world learn, for the sake of common welfare, to emphasize their agreements, respecting at the same time the right to differ, so, too, must we learn to live and work together in harmony as Jews, devoting ourselves to the service of Reform Judaism, the rest of the people of Israel and mankind.⁵

Ultimately, it was this striving toward a 'common welfare' which occupied the work of the NFTS at this time.

⁴ "43rd Annual Report of Executive Director, 1955," Series A, Box 1, File V, 367.

⁵ "Biennial Assembly Records, 1946," Series B, Box 4, File 1, 173-4.

II. Continued Expansion

A. The NFTS Moves Its Headquarters to New York

Perhaps the NFTS' most significant project during this period was its fund-raising efforts on behalf of the UAHC, which was seeking to move its headquarters from Cincinnati to New York and to erect a major facility there: a "House of Living Judaism." While this project had already begun during the early years of Evans' service to the NFTS under the title of the "Book of Living Judaism," in the late 1940s this dream became a tangible reality.⁶ This "House" would become a new and better-equipped home of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations offices, which would house the NFTS offices as well. An exact location of these offices was not officially decided until 1948, however, in the mid-1940s Sisterhoods began campaigning and quickly raised an impressive amount. Ultimately, the funds raised under the "Book of Living Judaism" campaign became the funds for the "House of Living Judaism," which in 1947 stood at over \$22,000.⁷ By 1950, only three years later, the funds totaled \$400,000.⁸

In the aftermath of the utter destruction of European Jewry during World War II, NFTS viewed this initiative as much more than a fund-raising drive to erect a new office building. In fact, the NFTS wanted to build a monument that would be a visible symbol of the important and necessary work of an important national organization, the UAHC. Not only was this new structure required to meet the needs of an expanding UAHC, but

⁶ This "Book" was a collection of funds raised for the two-fold purpose of supporting both the United Nations and the UAHC. By 1943 Evans believed that the "Book of Living Judaism" was a "testimonial to [the Reform Jewish Belief of] the great future of the principles of religion and democracy." See "Proceedings of the NFTS, 1943," Series A, Box 1, File 4, 27. In addition, by 1946 the president of NFTS, Mrs. Reina Hartmann, noted that it was necessary for the Union to be permanently housed in New York. Hartmann believed that this project would become the major enterprise of NFTS during this transitional period from war to peace. See "Biennial Assembly Records- 1946," Series B, Box 4, File 1, 27-8.

⁷ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1947," Series C, Box 15, File 2, 342.

⁸ "Biennial Assembly Records -18th Biennial, 1948," Series B, Box 4, File 3, November 1950.

as one member of the NFTS noted, "the House of Living Judaism will further serve the Liberal Jewish movement through conference facilities, exhibits of Judaica and other tangible tools and symbols of its widespread activities."⁹ All of these aspects would benefit a Reform Jewish movement that was experiencing unprecedented growth in the post-World War II years.

When Maurice Eisendrath gave up his pulpit in Toronto and traveled to Cincinnati to become chief executive of the UAHC in 1943, a major expansion plan was in fact already underway. The NFTS, "which had built the dormitory on the Hebrew Union College campus in the 1930s, was determined now to do its share for the UAHC."¹⁰

As the fund-raising continued, the issue of where the building would be located became ever more pressing. While Evans, as well as other NFTS executives, argued that location was secondary to creating a "major clearing-house of Reform Judaism," by the UAHC biennial, this had become a heated subject. Since the current, arguably inadequate, offices were situated in Cincinnati, the home of the Hebrew Union College, many leaders in that city felt strongly that the offices should remain in Ohio. However, by November of 1948, "opposing camps gradually emerged and verbal missiles were soon fired from both sides."¹¹

Leaders of the UAHC and Evans quickly added their voices to the growing chorus of those offering opinions both on the one side of remaining in Cincinnati, as well as the other position of moving to New York. Positive arguments were offered on behalf of both

⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records, 1948," Series B, Box 4, File 2, 39.

¹⁰ Michael A. Meyer, "From Cincinnati to New York: A Symbolic Move." *The Jewish Condition*, Edited by Aron Hirt-Manheimer, New York, UAHC Press, 1995, 304.

¹¹ *Id.*, 306.

cities, but it was ultimately decided that the new offices of the UAHC would be built in New York.

This decision marked a momentous change in the history of the Reform movement, reflecting the influence of Maurice Eisendrath, the UAHC's president. In an attempt to break the "isolationism" of a Reform movement headquartered in Cincinnati, Eisendrath wanted the new office in New York, the ever growing "capital of world Jewry."¹² He felt that "the move to New York was to be another step in the direction of association with *Klal Yisrael*, the totality of the Jewish people."¹³ While many leaders of both the UAHC and NFTS may not have been immediately pleased with this decision, undoubtedly the move put the UAHC at the heart of the largest Jewish community in the United States. The move from "provincial Cincinnati" to a "cosmopolitan Jewishly intense New York" proved to be a positive change for the Reform movement.¹⁴ As the "impressive" seven-story building arose in the heart of Manhattan in the fall of 1951, few could argue that the sacrifices in New York had not been worth the effort.¹⁵ Joking on the specific location of the NFTS' new offices, Evans stated:

Being your Director and therefore really your servant of the Federation has many amusing, terrifying but in a sense always satisfying results. When you like what the Federation does, I am a good girl. When you do not like what the Federation does, you are quite ready to throw me to the lions. To make it a little easier for you in the future, we built our lovely House of Living Judaism directly opposite the zoo!¹⁶

In addition to individual Sisterhood chapters raising the majority of funds for the House of Living Judaism, an individual gift from Dr. Albert A. Berg also helped the

¹² Id., 307.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ Leon A. Jick, "The Reform Synagogue," 102.

¹⁵ Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 357.

¹⁶ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1951," Series C, Box 16, File 4, 151.

building be completed in a timely and efficient manner.¹⁷ Officially named the "House of Living Judaism-Berg Memorial," Evans noted the grandeur of being in the heart of New York and the stature of such an impressive building. She noted, "life in the "Union House of Living Judaism-Berg Memorial is proving more stimulating than even ardent protagonists of housing our great religious center in New York could have wholly foreseen."¹⁸

Evans also commented on the number of visitors who were now able to tour the impressive center and meet with staff members. On one such occasion, Evans noted, "we [NFTS] were unprepared for the heart-warming influx, within our first twelve month period, of more than ten thousand men, women and young people from every corner of America, as well as from other continents."¹⁹ This number of visitors was not something that the UAHC or NFTS had experienced when they were housed in Cincinnati and was a welcome change for these Reform leaders in their first year.

Although the move was undeniably stressful in the beginning, Evans was confident that the new building stood as a visible monument "to the glory of God and to the service of man."²⁰ The UAHC's new House of Living Judaism was formerly dedicated in the fall of 1951. These dedication ceremonies would not have been possible without the help of the NFTS, which for ten years had been raising funds for this project. The move to New York marked an extremely important step for Reform Judaism in the United States. Located in the center of Jewish life, the movement's leadership was now better able to serve the needs of the Jewish community, both at home and abroad.

¹⁷ "39th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1951," Series A, Box 1, File V, 208.

¹⁸ "40th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1952," Series A, Box 1, File V, 286.

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ "39th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1951," 208.

B. Continued Expansion of the NFTS Speaker's Bureau

Although Sisterhoods were focused on raising funds for the new UAHC offices, other programs were not left by the wayside. Evans hoped to resume the work of the Speaker's Bureau, for example, which had been limited because of World War II. However, she came across several difficulties, namely that of "insufficient funds and lack of trained speakers."²¹ Even amidst these difficulties, Evans held onto the notion that under NFTS' policy each Sisterhood was entitled to a speaker from the bureau once every two years.²²

In order to educate more speakers, Evans helped to initiate the "Leaders Training Institutes," which would help train both Sisterhood executive board members and individual members as well.²³ Evans continued to travel and speak extensively; she had the opportunity to make fifty-eight speeches on behalf of NFTS during the fiscal year 1944-1945.²⁴

The "Leaders Training Institutes" were important not only to train speakers about various aspects of the NFTS, but also to educate individuals about the importance of having a neutral position, specifically regarding Zionism, even if this was not a personal belief.²⁵ This was important to portraying NFTS as having a unified voice regarding all global concerns and domestic issues. Evans felt that these institutes could be included within the program of state and district Federation meetings, and they were an important part of Sisterhood work in recognizing that every member had both the ability and

²¹ "35th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1947," Series A, Box 1, File V, 15.

²² Id.

²³ Id.

²⁴ "33rd Annual Report of Executive Director, 1946," 119.

²⁵ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1947," 272.

opportunity to participate in spreading the mission of NFTS to women throughout the United States and abroad.²⁶ By 1952, seventeen new affiliates had been added to the ever-growing membership list of NFTS, and Evans accredited this to the success and positive influence of the Speaker's Bureau.²⁷

Though Evans certainly encouraged all Sisterhood members, regardless of their local, executive, or national involvement, to participate in becoming trained speakers and representatives of the NFTS, she was personally sought after by many members. As noted by the first vice president of NFTS, Mrs. Helen Dalsheimer, Evans gave a true gift to the communities she visited.²⁸ Through her discourse, intelligence, and experience, Evans was able to encourage her NFTS colleagues to spread the "gift" of the Sisterhood mission.²⁹

C. NFTS' Role with the United Nations

During the period of 1946-1955, in order to continue the work of the NFTS in supporting international causes, Evans specifically emphasized the importance of the work of the United Nations. Stating that the current age was a time of "conflicting forces...the one and only established agency that may yet avert the head-on clashes of those forces" was the United Nations.³⁰ Evans further felt that the United Nations' ability to "implement peace" was something from which the NFTS could learn

²⁶ "37th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1949," Series A, Box 1, File IV, 269.

²⁷ "40th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1952," 290.

²⁸ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1949," Series C, Box 15, File 5, 129. In addition, Helen Dalsheimer (1900-1974), was president of the World Federation of the YM-YMHA and on the board of the Jewish Welfare Board. See *The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography Vol. 2*. Edited by Jacob Rader Marcus, Carlson Publishing: Brooklyn, 1994, 109.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1947," 329.

and help perpetuate.³¹ In addition, by having a Jewish organization support the work of the United Nations, Evans felt that the efforts of NFTS would become better known as well.

D. NFTS' Exposure to the American Jewish Conference

In addition to being an active participant in the work of the United Nations, Evans felt it was of equal necessity for NFTS to be engaged in the general work of American Jewish relations. Through her position on the American Jewish Conference's Executive Committee, beginning in 1943, Evans was aware of the need for Jews to come together and "establish some consensus within the American Jewish community regarding the postwar status on the Jews and the upbuilding of a Jewish Palestine."³²

Although the American Jewish Conference organization was only in existence from 1943 to 1949, it was extremely active in social justice and philanthropic work, with particular interest in the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish commonwealth.³³ While this notion may have appealed to Evans, she spoke of the organization on more general terms. For Evans, the organization, though unable to "represent the entirety of American Jewry," was able to "represent a large majority of it."³⁴ She felt that it was important for Jews, regardless of denomination, to have a central body for both political and educational reasons.³⁵ In this way, she felt that American Jews would have a unified

³¹ "Biennial Assembly Records, 20th Biennial Assembly, 1955," Series B, Box 5, File 3, 180.

³² Michael N. Dobkowski, "American Jewish Conference." *Jewish Voluntary Organizations*, Westport: Connecticut, 1996, 40.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1946," Series C, Subseries 1, Box 14, File 6, 80.

³⁵ "Proceedings of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, 33rd Annual Report of Executive Director, 1946," Series A, Box 1, File IV, 122.

voice from which their opinions and arguments would be articulated in a clear and thoughtful manner.³⁶

However, the goals of this organization quickly unraveled. The Executive Committee of the Conference organized three separate commissions on Rescue, Post-War Reconstruction, and Palestine, but upon the completion of the war these committees were shattered. After 1946 divisions surfaced among members of the conference, specifically among non-Zionist and ultra-Orthodox individuals.³⁷ Although the Conference had hoped to bring together Jews of diverse backgrounds in order to work toward a similar goal, it disbanded in 1949. One year after the establishment of the State of Israel, the ultimate goals of the American Jewish Conference had been met and as a result, the reasons for convening were no longer present. However, the opportunity to bring Jews together of diverse backgrounds and work toward a common goal was something with which Evans identified and one in which she hoped to bring to the NFTS.

E. NFTS' Increased Role in Jewish Education

As the Reform synagogues were rapidly being built and expanding, the NFTS needed to reexamine its primary obligation to the synagogue. Although many members may have been interested in Reform Judaism from a national perspective, Evans reminded individual members that local synagogue work should be a top priority, specifically with regard to Jewish education.³⁸ Although the national office could provide valuable programming ideas, Sisterhood members needed to first focus on their

³⁶ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1946," 80.

³⁷ Michael N. Dobkowski, "American Jewish Conference," 43.

³⁸ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1951," Series C, Box 16, File 4, 332-333.

congregational needs. Evans also encouraged members to participate in activities and organizations, in addition to the NFTS, that resonated with Jewish values, such as social action and equal rights.

Evans not only verbally emphasized the importance of NFTS' educational focus, she also understood the pivotal role that action played. During the 1946 Biennial Assembly the NFTS created a committee on "Child Study and Parent Education," which focused on the integration of the Jewish child into the society at large and the strengthening of Jewish adult education. The intent was to emphasize how this new Committee would in turn support both home and family life.³⁹ Evans felt that by creating this committee, the NFTS would be making an important statement about the importance and necessity of parent and child education. That is, if families were educated about Jewish home rituals, perhaps they would be more inclined to attend services at the synagogue and be involved in further educational programming.⁴⁰

As the Sisterhood Publication Fund continued to expand and create further materials, Evans made an important observation.⁴¹ She noted that not only Liberal congregations used the NFTS' resources, but Conservative and Orthodox also employed them. Although not all books could overlap, a Jew from any denominational background could share texts on a subject such as Jewish history. Evans believed that because the

³⁹ "35th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1947," 12.

⁴⁰ Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Jewish Life And American Culture*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, 64.

⁴¹ The Sisterhood Publication Fund was founded in 1934 to create educational resources for the Reform Jewish community. See "21st Annual Report, 1934," Series A, Box 1, File 3, 19. In addition, by 1955, there were a large amount of resources available for purchase through this Fund. These included filmstrips on the contributions of American Jewish Women, textbooks on Jewish history, and recordings explaining the background of Jewish holidays. See "43rd Annual Report of Executive Director, 1955," Series A, Box 1, File 4, 367-9.

publication fund had created such strong resources from a Reform perspective, in the mid-1940s there was a push within other denominations to do the same.⁴²

In addition to applauding Reform educational resources, Evans also encouraged "cooperative study courses," which she felt would strengthen community relations.⁴³ Evans believed that positive interfaith dialogues and fellowships were important within all communities, and that these could be created through study groups.⁴⁴ Although she realized that these fellowships would not be a feasible project in all communities, she did encourage certain cities to create study classes based on similar interests and curiosities. Through dialogue, Evans felt that interreligious relationships would be created, and it would be of great benefit if Jewish women were educated in the Christian faith, and vice-versa.

Perhaps one of the most significant educational programs created in this period was that of the "School for Leaders." Held for the first time in New York in 1950, this school offered courses to NFTS members who were taught by area rabbis in subjects including "History and Practices of Reform Judaism," "History of the Synagogue," "The Union Prayer Book," and "Techniques of Leadership and Public Speaking." Participants who enrolled in this program were required to do nightly assignments and to pass a final exam. Upon completion of the course, certificates were awarded and plans were made to continue this type of educational programming in other parts of the country.⁴⁵

Through this institute, NFTS members had the opportunity to attend classes and gain education in a variety of fields, which would be tools that could be used in local

⁴² "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1947," Series C, Box 15, File 1, 122-3.

⁴³ "Biennial Assembly Records, 1948," 110.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "38th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1950," Series A, Box 1, File IV, 28.

chapters. In addition, those who attended were perhaps more confident in both their Jewish and leadership ability and take advantage of opportunities to impart this knowledge to others.

Despite these various examples of development and expansion in NFTS' educational programming, there were still obstacles faced by the NFTS during the post-World War II years. One specific problem that NFTS faced related to the programming packets that had been so successful in the first decades of Evans' service to the organization. Through her speaking engagements, Evans had the opportunity to see first-hand the lack of knowledge with regard to the activities and mission of the NFTS on the part of many members. In 1947 she noted, "Apparently in too many cases the monthly packets are not being used or are being inadvertently considered the private property of the recipient who does not share its contents or to see to it that suggested projects, when feasible, are integrated into the local Sisterhood program."⁴⁶ This greatly disappointed Evans, who invested a great deal of personal energy in creating these valuable programming packets. However, aside from reminding Sisterhood members that these packets existed and should be used, Evans remained confident that they would be consulted in whatever capacity possible.⁴⁷

F. NFTS' Continued Involvement with WUPJ

During this time, 1946-1955, Evans hoped to strengthen NFTS' ties with the WUPJ. While the relationship between the NFTS and WUPJ had begun in the first years

⁴⁶ "Monthly Folders, 1948-1949," Series F, Box 48, File 1.

⁴⁷ Specifically, in 1947 Evans noted that the packets were not being distributed to NFTS constituents. Rather, they often remained with the executives of the organization. However, Evans wished to continue compiling and mailing the packets, as she viewed them as worthwhile resources. See "Monthly Folders, 1947," Series F, Box 48, File 1.

of Evans' service to the NFTS, it was at this time that she hoped to push the affiliation beyond strictly a philanthropic one. In 1948, she began to advocate for the establishment of Sisterhood chapters in the WUPJ synagogues that would ultimately become part of the growing worldwide membership of the NFTS.⁴⁸

Already in 1948, the NFTS began to strengthen its ties with the WUPJ in order to create a system of communication amongst foreign Sisterhood chapters. One such example occurred through the efforts of Ethel Smith, a representative of Johannesburg, South Africa, who noted at a biennial in 1950 that there were six congregations in six of the largest cities in South Africa.⁴⁹ Smith stated that by finding spiritual homes in the Reform movement, many South Africans strongly identified with a "comprehensible form of Judaism."⁵⁰ Although a modest beginning, the NFTS would continue to help these younger congregations both by visiting them as well as inviting congregational representatives from foreign countries to speak at Biennial and District meetings.

G. NFTS' Limitations

Although the NFTS was able to continue expanding its programming, affiliation with the Reform movement internationally, and create new educational opportunities, Evans still felt that more growth was necessary for the organization. Physically, the NFTS had more office space and was able to do more work following the 1951 move to

⁴⁸ "36th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1948," Series A, Box 1, File V, 115.

⁴⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records, 1948," Series B, Box 4, File 3, 43. This is the only information regarding Ethel Smith that could be ascertained at the AJA, NFTS collection.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

New York, but prior to that Evans specifically noted that having a professional staff of only three was "ridiculous for the volume of work NFTS was undertaking."⁵¹

Although the office did expand after moving to New York, there were still overtones of NFTS being at a crossroad, unable to move any further. Dalsheimer specifically noted in 1953 that NFTS could not merely rest on its past laurels, but rather its program needed to expand, particularly with its involvement with the UAHC and HUC-JIR.⁵² Dalsheimer noted that it was the "the women who set the pace for religion...and many... rabbis say that the Sisterhood is the main organization in a temple structure."⁵³ She told her peers that the time had come for them to donate energy, thought, and influence, as well as finances, in an attempt to continue to stretch the organization to its fullest potential.

III. NFTS' Continued Fund-raising Efforts

A. Small Congregation Specific Fund-raising Efforts

Even if NFTS' leadership women like Evans and Dalsheimer pushed local Sisterhoods to be more than funding sources or philanthropic charities, it is clear that fund-raising continued to be an important part of the agenda of NFTS. As in the previous period, Evans urged members to consider fund-raising as a tangible donation to Jewish religious and cultural life.⁵⁴ One of the new fund-raising efforts in this period was that of the Sisterhood Loan, which was established to support new congregations. Begun with a large donation from the Sisterhood of Temple Israel in New York in 1949, the fund was

⁵¹ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1947," Series C, Box 15, File 3, 548.

⁵² "19th Biennial Assembly, 1953," 226.

⁵³ Id., 230.

⁵⁴ "33rd Annual Report of Executive Director, 1946," 119.

used to support, for a limited time, the organization and establishment of new Sisterhood chapters.⁵⁵

Evans believed that newer and physically smaller congregations should not be at a disadvantage. She hoped that the money would help to provide these fledgling synagogues with some fundamentals, such as a Torah scroll, which a synagogue would otherwise be unable to afford.⁵⁶ Evans applauded the efforts of smaller communities, and she felt that the larger urban Sisterhoods of NFTS were obligated to support the efforts of their colleagues, regardless of their size or ability.

B. NFTY's Expansion

NFTS played a vital role in the development of NFTY. As early as 1927, NFTS felt that the establishment of a youth organization was a necessity in order to ensure the survival of Reform Judaism.⁵⁷ Part of NFTS' fund-raising was set aside to help create not only a National Federation of Youth, but city and district groups as well. However, World War II was a test of NFTY's survival. Since almost half of the organization had enlisted in the military, there was concern that NFTY would not endure.⁵⁸ Yet, with the help of regional conferences, the organization continued and programming remained active. By 1945, there were eighty-two individual NFTY chapters and over three thousand active participants.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ "37th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1949," 270.

⁵⁶ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1949," Series C, Box 16, File 2, 454.

⁵⁷ Robert J. Goldman, "The History of the Reform Jewish Youth Movement: America and Europe Since 1880," HUC-JIR, Small Collection-5979, AJA. New York, unpublished term paper, 1968, 3.

⁵⁸ *Id.*, 15.

⁵⁹ *Id.*, 17.

With the appointment of Rabbi Samuel Cook as NFTY director in 1947, "a new impetus was given to the camp conclave concept." At this time some of NFTS' fund-raising efforts were used in order to begin purchasing land for NFTY-sponsored camps. In the summer of 1951 the first camp opened in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, with "39 high school students and a staff consisting mostly of rabbis."⁶⁰ Following this achievement, NFTY sponsored its first overseas trip to Israel and Europe in 1954.

Noting the achievements of the organization in 1947, Evans spoke of the professionalism with which NFTY's affairs were carried out. Specifically, Evans praised the way the NFTY board managed themselves, as well as the payment and collection of dues.⁶¹ As a result, NFTS continued to raise funds for NFTY programming.⁶²

In addition to monetary assistance, Evans also hoped to establish annual awards to be presented to members of NFTY for outstanding "sermonets, prayers, or original services that were presented as part of their youth services held throughout the country."⁶³ Evans felt that it was important to recognize individual NFTY members' contributions to the youth movement. As a reward, NFTS would help sponsor a NFTY member to a weekend camp conclave, thus "encouraging religious development as well as NFTY activities."⁶⁴ The NFTS' relationship to this rapidly expanding youth organization continued to develop throughout the post-World War II period.

⁶⁰ Edwin Cole Goldberg, "The Beginnings of Educational Camping in the Reform Movement." *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Central Conference of American Rabbis, New York, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4, Fall 1989, 6.

⁶¹ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1947," Series C, Box 15, File 1, 54.

⁶² *Id.*, 55.

⁶³ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1947," 226.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

IV. Reform Education and Rabbinic Leadership

A. HUC Scholarships

HUC scholarships continued to be of great need and importance during this period. As enrollment for the college grew, more scholarships were needed. Especially with the merger of HUC and the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) in 1950, Evans noted that this would throw upon NFTS both new and greater opportunities. In order to meet this growing need, Evans looked to the Scholarship and Religious Education Fund and specifically to an increase in the sales of Uniongrams.⁶⁵ While the NFTS hoped to support each rabbinic student's entire tuition, an HUC student was eligible to apply for a scholarship only after completing one full year of rabbinical studies. On the basis of a student's financial need and circumstance, the faculty of HUC decided whether a student would be eligible to receive a scholarship amount ranging between one hundred and five hundred and fifty dollars.⁶⁶

In addition to supporting American rabbinical students, the NFTS scholarship fund also lent support to students from overseas. These rabbinic students, upon completion of their studies, had an obligation to serve a congregation of the WUPJ for a minimum of two years. After serving in a congregation designated by the WUPJ, the rabbi was then able to serve a congregation wherever he chose.⁶⁷ As the Reform movement continued to grow, the NFTS took an active role in supporting the training of rabbinic leaders, both from the United States as well as abroad.

⁶⁵ "36th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1948," 115; See Michael A. Michael, *Response to Modernity*, 359.

⁶⁶ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1950," Series C, Box 16, File 2, 14.

⁶⁷ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee meetings, 1955," Series C, Subseries 1, Box 18, File 1, 87.

B. Merger of HUC with JIR

With the merging of HUC and JIR (Jewish Institute of Religion) in 1950, further strains were placed on the Scholarship and Religious Education Fund.⁶⁸ The major tension was with regard to which students were applicable for scholarship monies. Since HUC-JIR expanded to include a campus in New York at this time, Evans felt that students in the East should have the same opportunity for scholarships as those in the Midwest. She did not believe that the Scholarship Fund should discriminate against students who were formerly part of JIR or who wished to study in New York. By 1952 Evans saw this as a difficult problem and one that could only be solved by increasing the amount of funds available in the Scholarship Fund.⁶⁹

C. Role of Rabbi, Cantor, and Lay Leader

The role of the professional Jewish leader was of increasing importance in the mid-twentieth century. With the number of Reform synagogues rapidly expanding, NFTS leaders were involved in student recruitment. The growing movement needed men who would ultimately serve congregations not only in the United States but abroad as well. One fellowship of the WUPJ noted that regardless of geography, it was a comforting thought that all liberal Jews "worship the one God freely and with one voice [offering] a spring of hope and an enduring fountain of faith."⁷⁰ There was no denying that by the

⁶⁸ The Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) was founded by Stephen S. Wise in New York City in 1922. Wise had intended for the school to rival HUC. However, JIR was operated and taught almost solely by Wise and, following World War I, he was no longer able to direct the institute any longer. By 1950 HUC and JIR were quite similar in their curricula and objectives. As a result, it seemed rational for the two schools to merge. See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 303 and 359; also see Michael A. Meyer *A Centennial History: 1875-1975*, Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976, 185.

⁶⁹ "40th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1952," 290.

⁷⁰ "19th Biennial Assembly, 1953," 223.

mid-century, the "future of American Jewry rested with the rabbis and the synagogues."⁷¹ One of the programs that the UAHC developed to open interest in the Reform movement was an initiative known as "The American Jewish Cavalcade." This actively provided rabbis with the opportunity to travel to a community and deliver a stimulating discourse on Reform Judaism. As historian Michael A. Meyer noted, these lectures were generally delivered to large crowds and, as a result, Reform Judaism became the denomination of choice for many who sought to participate in a mode of Judaism that was compatible with American culture.⁷²

In addition to the growing need and influence of rabbinic leaders, the cantorate was becoming more common in Reform congregations and, according to Evans, this was especially true in the East.⁷³ Evans felt that it was important for the HUC-JIR Scholarship Fund to also support students who were interested in attending the School of Sacred Music, located on the HUC-JIR campus in New York.⁷⁴ Although Evans realized that it was up to a congregation to choose to employ a cantor, she believed the NFTS should support those cantorial students who wished to seek professional training.

However, even as the UAHC and NFTS worked to strengthen the professional leadership of the Reform movement, strong lay leadership was considered of vital importance as well. This was particularly demonstrated with regard to education, as lay leaders worked actively to increase Judaic knowledge among Reform congregations. NFTS helped to plan programs in the home and the synagogue, which encouraged parents

⁷¹ Edwards S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II*, 162.

⁷² Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 358; also see Edward S. Shapiro *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II*, 193.

⁷³ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1949," at 100-2.

⁷⁴ Ibid. In addition, the School of Sacred Music (SSM) was founded in 1948 to train cantors for the Reform movement. The SSM is committed to sustaining, creating, and augmenting Jewish music. See <http://huc.edu/academics/cantorial>; also see Meyer, *A Centennial History*, 183-5.

and children to become better educated with regard to Jewish history and holiday observance. In addition, lay leaders took an active role in domestic and international policy issues, voicing opinions against abuse, discrimination, and violence.⁷⁵ The NFTS participated equally in these causes, as Evans believed in supporting the welfare and education of Reform American Jews.

V. NFTS and the Establishment of the State of Israel

Historian David Polish noted that after 1947, Zionism "had affected all aspects of life within the Reform community."⁷⁶ Following the Holocaust, Reform Jewry became more committed to Zionism than it had in previous decades. In addition, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 brought "consolation and renewed purpose to the Jewish people."⁷⁷ After 1948 Reform Jews needed to acknowledge the relationship between Jews in the Diaspora and Jews in Israel. For many Reform Jews, a unique opportunity was now available "for Israel to develop its own modern version of Judaism."⁷⁸

Following the Holocaust, Evans believed that support for Jews throughout the world, especially in Israel, was vital for Jewish survival.⁷⁹ This belief was translated into the organization's support of Israel, although initially through financial means. However, by 1953 this support was extended by visiting Israel. It was at this time that the UAHC sponsored its first pilgrimage to Israel of American Reform Leaders.⁸⁰ In addition, in 1955 Evans supported the plan of a further pilgrimage to Israel, jointly sponsored by the

⁷⁵ Arthur A. Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999, 191.

⁷⁶ David Polish, *Renew Our Days: The Zionist Issue in Reform Judaism*, Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1976, 236.

⁷⁷ *Id.*, 237.

⁷⁸ *Id.*, 242.

⁷⁹ "35th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1947," 11.

⁸⁰ "42nd Annual Report of Executive Director, 1954," Series A, Box 1, File V, 325.

UAHC and NFTS. Following the trip, Evans hoped that participants would consider traveling to Paris for a WUPJ conference, thus continuing to strengthen an "indigenous, progressive Jewish religious movement."⁸¹ However, Evans wanted this dual-purpose trip to be more than mere sightseeing. She hoped that prior to departing for Israel, participants would spend time reading and studying materials, to be prepared by the UAHC and NFTS, which would provide the necessary background information. In this way, Israel would be more than a small country full of historical sights. It would instantly become a "classroom" of Jewish culture and living. Through proper preparation, individuals would be both "serious tourists while in Israel," as well as "informed leaders in their home communities upon returning to the United States."⁸²

It was in the early 1950s that Zionism became an important part of the Reform Jewish agenda. Following the establishment of Israel, Evans realized that it was now time for American Jews to understand and study the lives of their brethren in the Jewish state. This was echoed by the UAHC as well, as it became more committed to strengthening nontraditional Judaism abroad. Ultimately, it was Eisendrath who believed that by carrying out God's mission, Jews could be supportive of their religion both at home and abroad.⁸³ This trend of supporting and visiting Israel would continue to flourish in subsequent years of the NFTS and within the Reform movement.

VI. Conclusion

Between the years 1946 and 1955, the American Reform community experienced an exceptional growth spurt. This demographic expansion led the NFTS to review its

⁸¹ Id., 326.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1949," 170-71.

mission and commitment to the work of the synagogue, as well as to adult and child education. It was at this time that NFTS' slogan and major fund-raising campaign, the Y.E.S. (Youth, Education, and Special Projects) Fund, became a significant part of the organization's agenda. By emphasizing the importance of youth, education, and special projects, such as the Union's move to New York and commitment to the United Nations, the NFTS actively participated in fulfilling its mission. Further, they made a renewed commitment to the spiritual meanings, teachings, and values of Judaism and, ultimately, NFTS helped synagogues to expand during this era.⁸⁴

Jane Evans clearly played a leadership role during this transformative period. She continued her dedication and interest at expanding and developing the Sisterhood movement, which she believed provided Jewish women with a meaningful way to contribute to the societies in which they lived.⁸⁵ Her work did not go unrecognized. Mrs. Louis Rosett, the president of the organization in 1948, observed that Evans approached her position with devotion and loyalty, as well as with numerous resources specifically that were of interest during "emergencies."⁸⁶

Even with the many accomplishments achieved by 1955, Evans felt that there was still more work the NFTS could do through its continued partnership with the Reform movement. Evans' service to this organization continued to represent ongoing transcendence of old boundaries and established values, which would radically change the identity of the Reform movement.

⁸⁴ "Biennial Assembly Records, 20th Biennial Assembly, 1955," 195.

⁸⁵ "38th Annual Report of Executive Director, 1950," 31.

⁸⁶ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Meetings, 1949," 20.

CHAPTER 4

1955-1965: Years of Continued Development and Change

I. Introduction

As noted by historian Jack Wertheimer, the 1960s were a time in which religious leaders reevaluated the role of religion in society.¹ American life in the 1960s was “an era of political activism, social reform, and feminist revival.”² However, Judaism in the 1960s, specifically Reform Judaism, was undergoing a major transformation. This change was defined in terms of focusing new energy on social action and civil rights, both ideals that affected society at large and were not limited to the smaller enclaves of Jewish society. Reform Jewish leaders of this era were confident that the prophetic teachings of morality and equality, which were the backbone of Reform Jewish thought, could be of assistance during this rapidly changing and expanding period. Specifically, Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, president of the UAHC during this time, played a central role in moving both Reform congregations and the Religious Action Center (RAC) “to the left on social issues.”³

But this development in the arena of civil rights did have some negative effects as well. Although Jews were occupying more public roles and were able to partake in many mainstream educational opportunities, as one historian noted, “Jews would [soon] discover that the religious revival [of the 1950s] had provided very feeble preparation for

¹ Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America*, Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1993, 26.

² Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984, 493.

³ Wertheimer, 19.

the social and spiritual tumult of the 1960s.”⁴ While this may have been the case in the first half of the decade, the NFTS used this change to its benefit.

In spite of moral, ethical, and spiritual challenges at this time, one NFTS board member noted that “properly interpreted, the philosophy inherent in our precepts might well be the answer to those problems.”⁵ It was with this mission in mind that Evans continued to lead the organization alongside the expansion and growth of Reform Judaism. She did this specifically by emphasizing to the organization that the “task of religion is in part to help find stability when feeling most threatened.”⁶

Translated into practice, Evans continued to direct the NFTS in its continuing efforts to develop the programs of NFTY and to support new WUPJ initiatives. It was during this time that NFTS became involved with what might have set the most defining event for Reform Judaism in this period—female rabbinic ordination. This changing role of women and its impact on the NFTS will be the primary focus of this chapter.

II. NFTS’ Impact on Jewish Feminism

A. The Changing Role of Women

During this period in American history, women were becoming increasingly involved in life outside of the home. As the new feminism of the 1960s took shape, it was soon characterized by “an amalgam of goals, a gamut of grievances, and an extremely diffuse structure.”⁷ NFTS certainly felt the effects of this rapidly evolving gender. Evans soon realized that as a result of more women attending college and entering the work

⁴ Ibid, 18.

⁵ “Administrative Records Transcript of Executive Board meeting, 1961,” Series C, Box 19, File 2, 16.

⁶ “Biennial Assembly Records Transcript of Proceedings, 1965,” Series B, Box 7, File 4, 35.

⁷ Nancy Woloch, 521.

force, attendance at NFTS programs was beginning to decline.⁸ In fact, as emphasized by Sylvia Barack Fishman before the onset of this changing reality, "American-Jewish organizational life was greatly enhanced by untold millions of hours of free labor and organizational ability, especially that donated by American-Jewish women."⁹

Further, these new opportunities for women outside the home also affected the NFTS' National Board. Because involvement with NFTS on the National Board involved a significant time commitment, Evans felt that the organization would need to be sensitive to those women who were taking advantage of new opportunities, specifically with regard to planning meetings during lunch hours or doing a greater deal of work through correspondence. Evans felt that by creating new opportunities for these women, NFTS would become stronger by inviting competent women to join their programming.¹⁰ Evans' focus then was to ensure that NFTS programming remained abreast "of the changing sociology of the day."¹¹ With the opening of many professional and educational opportunities for women, Evans was not blind to the fact that volunteer organizations might suffer. However, she believed that it was the mission of the NFTS to create programming that would be valuable to Reform Jewish women who were becoming increasingly involved in the public sphere.¹²

It was at this time that Evans became committed to adapting NFTS programming to the changing role of women. She was cognizant of the growing opportunities for

⁸ "Biennial Assembly Records & Transcripts, 1959," Series B, Box 6, File 1, 3 (insert).

⁹ Sylvia Barak Fishman, *Jewish Life And American Culture*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2000, 158.

¹⁰ "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1962." Series C, Subseries 1, Box 19, File 4.5.

¹¹ *Id.*, 16.

¹² "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1962," 16.

women in society at large, and Evans ultimately believed that these changes marked an important step in gender equality. Knowing that these realities would require more creativity and imagination with regard to NFTS programming, Evans decided to adapt the organization to the times as best as possible. Through her discussions to NFTS members, it was obvious that Evans believed that the organization would ultimately benefit from women becoming more included in mainstream society. It was this ideology that became Evans' primary focus.¹³

In the process of working to reshape NFTS to become attuned to the needs of the day, Evans also worked at encouraging its members to become more aware of the important political decisions of the day. Specifically, she urged all NFTS members to educate themselves on important legislation, including the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited, among other things, gender discrimination in the work force. Evans emphasized the importance of all NFTS affiliates to support legislation of this type and to be educated on its impact at the grass-roots level.¹⁴ In this way, Evans felt that the women of NFTS were working both as Jewish and American feminists during a rapidly changing age.

As the new feminist movement took shape, many Jewish women, such as those of the NFTS, dealt with the combination of secular and religious feminist ideals. Historian Ellen Umansky noted, "Jewish feminism emerged as a means of asserting both *Jewish* visibility within the feminist movement and *feminist* consciousness within the

¹³ Id., 5 and 16.

¹⁴ "Biennial Assembly Records Transcript of Proceedings, 1963," Series B, Box 7, File 3, 22.

U.S. Jewish community.”¹⁵ Evans was aware of this convergence, and she thus worked to impart this awareness to the organization at any cost.

Although women were slowly making entries into spheres previously dominated by men, change did not occur overnight. Many top positions remained “virtually monopolized by men,” and still many felt that the oppression of women was no more than a marginal issue.¹⁶ Yet many women, including Evans, felt strongly that it was time to broaden traditional gender limitations and no longer become victim to what historian Nancy Woloch called a “popular ideology that limited women’s aspirations [and] deprived them of self-esteem.”¹⁷

This change undoubtedly presented NFTS with the challenge of creating new programming and events that would appeal to women whose time was becoming increasingly valuable and limited. In addition, these new secular feminist thoughts paved the way for many Reform Jewish women to reach beyond their assumed boundaries.

B. Impact on NFTS

Evans, as highlighted above, believed that NFTS needed to stay abreast of an ever-changing society. In the late 1950s, Evans was discouraged by the minor role that women played with regard to congregational positions of leadership. She felt that as women’s roles were expanding in society at large, the same should be occurring within the synagogue. Evans recognized that the number of women in leadership positions within Reform congregations was “disturbingly small.” This fact seemed particularly

¹⁵ Edward S. Shapiro, *The Jewish People In America: A Time For Healing, American Jewry Since World War II*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, 247.

¹⁶ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & The New Left*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979, 112 and 119.

¹⁷ Woloch, 484.

paradoxical because of the "interest, service, and dedication" that women had displayed in service to their congregations.¹⁸ It is interesting that women felt more comfortable in both Sisterhood and communal aspects of Reform Judaism, rather than initially occupying leadership positions in the synagogue. This issue will be explored further in the following pages regarding the ordination of women.

Evans wanted to redefine the work of the NFTS to fit the needs and interests in women who were taking on more responsibilities than ever before. On top of hosting meetings during the daytime, as opposed to evenings, she also saw the need for "Sisterhood Days," or one-day workshops that would take the place of several meetings throughout the month. In this way, women would be able to attend workshops in the morning, midday fellowship, and afternoon brainstorming sessions on creating relative and meaningful programming.¹⁹ Evans also noted the emphasis on cooperative learning, and she suggested that the NFTS could do joint programming with the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods (NFTB).²⁰ Toward this end, Evans worked at creating an NFTS program that would add a level of "personal fulfillment" to women who were possibly already feeling over-extended in many directions.²¹

Evans felt confident that the mission of NFTS was something unique and meaningful in a rapidly developing society. While she realized that there were many other volunteer organizations available to women at this time, Evans believed that the way in which NFTS enabled its participants to translate the imperatives of their faith into

¹⁸ "Biennial Assembly Records, 1957," Series B, Box 5, File 4, 5.

¹⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records And Transcripts, 1959," Series B, Box 6, File 1, 7 (insert).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Id., 5 (insert).

action made it especially meaningful.²² She continued to direct this organization by attempting to bring heightened levels of meaning to its programming. In so doing, Evans felt as though there was still a great deal NFTS could offer to the modern woman.²³

C. Ordination of Women

Evans' influence on NFTS and the role of women in American Reform Judaism reached its zenith during this period, specifically regarding the ordination of women as rabbis. From the beginning of Evans' involvement with NFTS, she guided the organization to support HUC-JIR. As noted in earlier chapters, this was done primarily through the Scholarship Fund, which financially sponsored students throughout their rabbinic studies. However, Evans noted ironically in the late 1950s that the largest women's division of the Reform movement had yet to sponsor a female student for study at HUC-JIR. She noted, "despite the long-held belief of American Reform Judaism that it gave women a new status both within the congregation and within our religious movement, it is still not possible for a woman to consider the rabbinate as a profession."²⁴

This issue was something that Evans felt the NFTS needed to tackle.

NFTS was not the only organization to begin a discussion over the question of female ordination. The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the Reform rabbinic organization, also discussed this issue as early as 1956, noting "to condemn woman to the role of a silent spectator, an auditor, in the synagogue while granting her an

²² Id., 7 (insert).

²³ "Biennial Assembly Records And Transcripts, 1959," 6 (insert). Evans was greatly inspired by Martin Buber's writings, believing that one had to make his or her life meaningful and therefore worthwhile. She said, "we and other members will come in increasing numbers to our meeting and to our meetings and to our projects — that together we may better learn to *hallow this life*." See Martin Buber, *To Hallow This Life: An Anthology*. Edited with an introduction by Jacob Trapp, New York: Harper Publishing, 1958.

²⁴ "Biennial Assembly Records, 1957," 4 (insert).

important voice in the home is illogical and unnatural in an occidental society; is incongruous with the customs, standards, and ideals of our age."²⁵ The NFTS agreed with this statement of the CCAR, specifically that women's roles in the home and in the synagogue were not parallel. As a result, the NFTS committed itself to creating a definitive statement supporting female rabbinic ordination for the Reform Jewish movement.

Because Evans felt strongly that women should have the ability to become rabbis, she spent time during this period addressing this issue at many meetings and NFTS conventions.²⁶ Perhaps most noted was her address in 1957 at the joint UAHC and NFTS Biennial Meeting in Toronto, Canada. Evans openly stated that "women are uniquely suited by temperament, intuition, and spiritual sensitivity to be rabbis."²⁷ Through this statement, she hoped to encourage others to see the necessity of the Reform movement to take a definitive stand on the issue of the ordination of women.

Evans looked to other faiths for support in this effort. In 1957 she noted that many Protestant denominations had accepted the ordination of women into the ministry, and the Harvard School of Divinity accepted women into all of its programs.²⁸ However, by bringing in these facts, Evans realized that there was some weakness in comparing the rabbinate to other non-Jewish professions. She marked this by stating that although

²⁵ Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Annual Yearbook*, 1956. In addition, this statement by Evans is linked to the case of Paula Ackerman who, following the death of her husband, Rabbi William Ackerman, served as the interim "spiritual leader" for Temple Beth Israel in Meridian, Mississippi. However, because she was not formally trained or ordained, there were objections to her filling this role. See Pamela S. Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis*, 120-3.

²⁶ At this point in her life, Evans made the conscious decision not to pursue the rabbinate. See, Dr. Jane Evans, interview by author, November 22, 2002, New York, tape recording, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, 14-5.

²⁷ Pamela S. Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis*, 133.

²⁸ "Biennial Assembly Records, 1957," Series B, Box 5, File 4, 5; Also see Pamela S. Nadell, 129-30.

women were now able to become ministers, the rabbinate differed in that "it included a very particular awareness of the relationship of man to God, as well as to his fellow man."²⁹ Evans relied on other denominations for support of her belief that women could occupy clerical roles, but she also realized that many aspects of the rabbinate, such as counseling, teaching, and preaching, were distinct and unique to Judaism.

As NFTS approached the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in 1961, Evans felt the time had come for the women of NFTS to take a definitive stand on the issue of women's ordination.³⁰ She believed that, if accepted, women would follow the identical course of study as men and, upon completion, be able to serve as a rabbi in the same capacity as males.³¹ Historian Pamela Nadell noted that the women of NFTS were ready to voice their desire for "the equality of women in all the professions," including the Reform rabbinate.³² The changing role of women was on the mind of many NFTS members, and as noted in 1961 by the current president, Mrs. Henry Monsky, "the signs of the times indicate that the emancipation of women is a fact of contemporary life."³³

As Evans led the organization to formulate thoughts on this notion, she observed that women had been fulfilling a rabbinic role in some congregations across the country and abroad. This was especially the case with Lilly Montagu of London, England, who founded the WUPJ movement.³⁴ She had been acting as the spiritual leader of her congregation and, by 1961, she had been doing so for nearly fifty years.³⁵ In addition,

²⁹ "Proceedings, Pre-Convention Meeting of the NFTS Board of Directors Nov. 1961," Series B, Box 6, File 3, 21.

³⁰ *Id.*, 22.

³¹ *Id.*, 55-6.

³² Nadell, 141.

³³ "Proceedings, Pre-Convention Meeting of the NFTS Board of Directors Nov. 1961," 14-5.

³⁴ See chapter two, footnote 53, herein.

³⁵ *Id.*, 57; See also Nadell, 136.

Evans reminded the NFTS that she had served as a type of para-rabbi during World War II, while many rabbis had been called into service.³⁶ Through these examples, proof existed that women possessed the ability to serve as rabbinic leaders.

Perhaps one of the most vocal opinions within the NFTS on this issue came from Rebecca Aaronson Brickner. Her husband, Rabbi Barnett Brickner, attempted to bring this issue to the CCAR for a firm decision on multiple occasions.³⁷ After Rabbi Brickner's death, Mrs. Brickner continued pushing the issue. She argued that the ordination of women could address the lack of rabbis in certain parts of the country, especially in the Southern and Western United States, a problem that concerned many in the movement. Mrs. Brickner also noted that through her opportunity to serve as a "para-rabbi," she had experienced joy and pleasure and felt prepared in "preaching, conducting sermons, and lecturing."³⁸ While she realized that some women may feel inadequate or apprehensive in doing something similar, she noted that through proper training and qualifications, women could serve the Reform Jewish community just as well as men.³⁹

As the fiftieth anniversary of the NFTS rapidly approached in 1963, Evans felt that the issue of the ordination of women needed to be heard--finally. Not only because of the historical import of the NFTS' movement, but also because some women had already completed at least part of the required course of study at Hebrew Union College. The convening of a conference of all the Reform institutions was wholeheartedly approved,

³⁶ Nadell, 136. Also see chapter one, section IV, herein.

³⁷ Rabbi Barnett Brickner was a member of the CCAR Executive Board from 1952-1953 and continued as ex officio until his death in 1958. See Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "Rebecca Aaronson Brickner: Preacher, Teacher, and Rebbetzin in Israel," *The American Jewish Archives Journal*, Volume LIV, Number 1, 2002, 65-83.

³⁸ "Administrative Records & Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1961," Series C, Box 19, File 2, 60.

³⁹ Ibid.; See also, Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "Rebecca Aaronson Brickner: Preacher, Teacher, and Rebbetzin in Israel," *The American Jewish Archives Journal*, Volume LIV, Number 1, 2002, 65-83.

but when the time came for the CCAR, the UAHC, HUC-JIR, and NFTS to actually convene on this matter, not surprisingly, according to Pamela Nadell, "an event unprecedented in Reform history never took place."⁴⁰ Had it taken place, women might have become ordained much earlier than 1972, since they were already rabbinical students as early as 1918.⁴¹ As a result, the issue of female ordination remained in the background for some time until the early 1970s. In 1972 the faculty of HUC-JIR decided to ordain Sally Priesand as the first female rabbi in Jewish history.⁴²

Although NFTS celebrated its fiftieth anniversary without a definitive answer on the question of female ordination, the organization certainly had expressed a commitment to making sure that the issue was not forgotten. Evans continued to keep the ordination of women on the agenda of the NFTS, by encouraging members to become more active in synagogue leadership. Specifically, she urged members to continue to host Sisterhood Sabbaths where women would have the opportunity to lead the congregation in worship. Thus, Evans emphasized to congregations on a national level that women could serve as spiritual leaders.⁴³ By studying and examining this issue, Evans brought the movement closer to the realization that women could no longer assume a secondary position with regard to religious leadership.

⁴⁰ Nadell, 138.

⁴¹ One of the earliest female candidates to complete more than seven and one-half years of the nine required years of rabbinical school in 1925 was Martha Neumark Montor. Following her marriage, Montor moved from Cincinnati to New York. In New York, Montor claimed that Rabbi Stephen Wise offered to ordain her privately on the condition that she complete the remainder of the rabbinic curriculum. However, Montor rejected this offer. See Nadell, 62-72.

⁴² Id., 168-169.

⁴³ "Administrative Records & Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1962," Series C, Subseries 1, Box 19, File 4, 11.

D. Continued Commitment to Education

Education continued to occupy a significant part of NFTS' agenda during this period. Evans felt that Judaica shops should include educational materials such as blessings for affixing a *mezuzah* or Kaddish cards, which could include the history and significance of the prayer. In this way, the stores would "serve a dual purpose of giving information and it would [help] spur the sales of ceremonial material by showing people how they should be used."⁴⁴

Evans also felt that the publications produced under the auspices of NFTS should be placed in community public libraries, which would help bring awareness to the rich history and significance of Reform Judaism, as well as NFTS' commitment to family education and to communities-at-large. Wertheimer echoed this when he noted that the 1960s marked an "increasing level of tolerance, [specifically with regard to heterogeneity] in American society."⁴⁵ Reflecting this idea, Evans believed that communal dialogue would be established between Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, in addition to dialogue among various women's groups.⁴⁶

With regard to the UAHC, NFTS continued its support of the Department of Religion and Education, and provided financial support to HUC-JIR. NFTS emphasized to individual Sisterhood members the importance of continual Jewish study, not only on an individual basis, but within a familial and communal context as well.⁴⁷ Evans encouraged participation in the institutes sponsored by both the UAHC and NFTS,

⁴⁴ "Administrative Records & Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1956," Series C, Box 18, File 4, 272.

⁴⁵ Jack Wertheimer, 27.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "Administrative Records & Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1962," Series C, Subseries 1, Box 19, File 4, 12.

including those related to parental education, religious school teachers and lay leaders.⁴⁸ By attending these conferences, Evans asserted Reform Jews were taking positive steps in assuring Jewish continuity and identity. They were also making a tangible commitment to both Judaic learning and home study.⁴⁹ Support for HUC also continued during this period, and NFTS supplied funds for both tuition and living expenses, dependent on the needs and requests from students.

In the early 1960s, Evans had concluded that Sisterhood members were far more interested in projects, rather than in attending meetings. Naming this period a "do-it-yourself" age, she promoted this transitional era as a time to face the "challenge of change for Sisterhoods."⁵⁰ By creating educational programs, Evans hoped to continue fostering strong interpersonal relationships among the members of NFTS, where both minority and majority viewpoints would be heard and expressed.⁵¹

III. NFTS' Continued Support of Jewish Youth (NFTY)

By 1958 NFTY, in conjunction with the NFTS and UAHC, had established three national training institutes, three affiliated summer camping programs, and fifteen regional conclaves in which nearly twelve to thirteen thousand young adults participated annually.⁵² Rabbi Samuel Cook, NFTY's executive director at the time, and Eleanor

⁴⁸ Ibid. In addition, these "institutes" were organized by Evans as early as 1940 to serve as educational workshops. The function of the institutes was to provide educational resources for lay leaders so that they could become more informed about the NFTS and the principles of the Reform movement. See "Proceedings of the NFTS, 1940," Series A, Box 1, File 4, 24.

⁴⁹ Id., 13.

⁵⁰ "Administrative Records & Transcript of Executive Board meeting, 1963," Series C, Box 19, File 3, 21.

⁵¹ Id., 32.

⁵² "Administrative Records & Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1956," Series C, Box 18, File 3, Page 81. See also Robert J. Goldman, "The History of the Reform Jewish Youth Movement: America and Europe Since 1880," HUC-JIR, Small Collection-5979, AJA, New York, unpublished term paper, 1968, 3. Also, see Edwin Cole Goldberg, "The Beginnings of Educational Camping in the Reform Movement,"

Schwartz, NFTY's assistant director, were thankful for NFTS' support of youth in the Reform movement. Schwartz noted that the camping movement helped to "better equip [Reform Jewish children by making them] more excited to go home and practice this special brand of Judaism along with their parents and their own particular teenage group."⁵³

While Schwartz, and in turn Evans and NFTS, were pleased with these results, they hoped to take the organization to the next level by working to create a Reform college program.⁵⁴ By establishing such a program, Schwartz believed that college students would be able to sustain their involvement in Reform Judaism during their years on campus. Although this was discussed in the mid-1950s, *Kesher*, a Reform college organization, was not established until 1994.⁵⁵

IV. NFTS' Commitment to World Jewry

A. The Middle East and the State of Israel

NFTS' commitment to the Middle East occupied a significant part of its agenda between 1956 and 1965. Specifically, in 1962, during the process of formulating and passing a resolution, NFTS solidified a position with regard to some of the issues in the Middle East. In this resolution, NFTS urged the U.S. to use its leadership within the United Nations to help safeguard the rights of all nations within the Middle East and to take steps toward solving the refugee problem.⁵⁶ NFTS also maintained its desire for the

Journal of Reform Judaism, Central Conference of American Rabbis: New York, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4, Fall 1989, 6.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Id., 83

⁵⁵ Ibid.; also see <http://www.keshernet.com>.

⁵⁶ "Biennial Assembly Records, 1957," 4 (insert).

U.S. to use its "great moral influence to persuade the Arab powers to sit down with Israel to negotiate the basic issues in this conflict and to create the conditions of a permanent, just peace."⁵⁷

Only by understanding the principles and platforms of the United Nations could the NFTS be an educated and unifying force to developing societies and countries in the Middle East. As the need to support Israel continued to rise, members of the NFTS worked hard to support their coreligionists in Israel.

B. World Union of Progressive Judaism (WUPJ)

Support for coreligionists abroad continued as the NFTS sponsored students from foreign countries wishing to pursue rabbinic degrees at HUC-JIR. These foreign students were subsidized for their studies, since the costs involved were often difficult for non-U.S. students to bear. As a result, Evans noted the importance in raising funds to support these types of scholarships, which would ultimately help support the growth of a progressive movement in countries besides the U.S. and Canada.⁵⁸

One of the most tangible expressions of support was to take visits to numerous foreign countries and visit locations where liberal Judaism was taking root. In 1963 NFTS sponsored a trip to London, Amsterdam, and Paris "with special emphasis on places of Jewish interest." Following the visits to these countries, Evans became the co-leader for two weeks as the group continued on an intensive study and travel tour of Israel, "which included the convocation of the new HUC School of Biblical and Archaeological studies in Jerusalem."⁵⁹ As noted by NFTS president at the time, Mrs.

⁵⁷ Id., 4-5 (insert).

⁵⁸ "Administrative Records & Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1956," 139.

⁵⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records, Transcript of Proceedings, 1963," Series B, Box 7, File 3, 11-2.

Irving Hollobow, "the trip had an amazing impact and the WUPJ became more than a mere title of an organization."⁶⁰ Visiting historical sights and meeting with WUPJ representatives throughout Europe and Israel helped the participants to appreciate the need for increasing support of the progressive movement abroad.

Along with this pilgrimage in 1963, Evans also had the opportunity to visit a developing WUPJ chapter in Bombay, India, where she learned that many Indian Jews were leaving their homes to travel to Israel "out of a passionate desire to be identified with their co-religionists..."⁶¹ From this trip she also learned that Bombay's sizeable Jewish community functioned without an ordained rabbi. Sensing that this community needed assistance, Evans felt that NFTS should sponsor a trip to Jewish centers in countries such as Iran, India, and Japan. Through this type of pilgrimage, NFTS and UAHC members would have an opportunity to meet progressive Jews living in remote locales. In addition, these American Reform Jews would help to create stronger liberal centers in both the Near and Far East.⁶²

Evans also hoped to better educate NFTS members in the U.S. about the needs and importance of the work of the WUPJ. Sponsoring trips to foreign countries was one way to promote interest in and increase support for WUPJ chapters abroad. In order to make fund-raising more appealing, Evans suggested the idea of creating correspondence between Sisterhood chapters, at home and abroad, to discuss the specific needs of WUPJ members.⁶³ Ultimately, individual NFTS members needed to educate their individual

⁶⁰ Id., 13.

⁶¹ "Administrative Records & Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1964," Series C, Subseries 1, Box 19, File 4, 10.

⁶² Id., 11.

⁶³ "Administrative Records & Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1963," Series C, Box 19, File 3, 31.

chapters about the WUPJ, specifically relating to education, setting up synagogues, and the purchasing of Torah scrolls.⁶⁴ However, Evans' primary objective was to create a stronger interest in the NFTS among women of the WUPJ, which had up until this point proved to be a challenge.⁶⁵

C. United Nations

Through Evans' personal involvement in the United Nations, she believed that the NFTS and individual Sisterhood members should be educated about the principles of the United Nations.⁶⁶ In addition, she encouraged each NFTS member to be familiar with the organizations the U.N. supported, such as UNICEF, the International Labor Organization, and the World Health Organization. By being educated in the programs of the United Nations, Evans felt that each Sisterhood member would support and ultimately further the aims of the U.N. to achieve a peaceful world.⁶⁷

Through support of the U.N., NFTS members were able to create resolutions, helping to emphasize the important role of being educated about current events. In addition, Evans encouraged the organization to make its voice heard, whether in defense of an action or in opposition to it. In this way, Evans was continuing her commitment to politics and the importance of it being discussed in a Reform Jewish context.

V. NFTS' Impact on the Civil Rights Movement

⁶⁴ Id., 21.

⁶⁵ Id., 32.

⁶⁶ See chapter one, section IV, herein.

⁶⁷ "Administrative Records & Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1962," 13.

Perhaps one of the areas in which Reform Judaism was most vocal at this time was with regard to African Americans and civil rights. As historian Marc Dollinger observed in the 1960s, "most national Jewish organizations backed affirmative action programs and called for a more activist federal government."⁶⁸ This assertion was certainly illustrated by the activities and efforts of the NFTS. Evans believed that religiously oriented organizations had an obligation "to translate ethical principles into practice so that the ideals of justice and brotherhood [would] become truly meaningful terms."⁶⁹ Evans in particular felt that NFTS should support communal organizations that promoted desegregation.⁷⁰

Perhaps the most significant event regarding the issue of civil rights in this period occurred during the planning of a joint UAHC-NFTS banquet in 1963. Evans felt strongly that a speaking invitation should be extended to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. However, this suggestion sparked much opposition. In response to a particular Sisterhood chapter that was in conflict with the invitation, Evans responded by stating that "Dr. King has addressed...virtually every major Jewish [and] Christian Organization in the U.S. whose program is committed in whole or in part to the translation of religious idealism into the practical reality of Civil Rights for all citizens which means equal dignity and opportunity for all men."⁷¹

Ultimately, it was decided that King would be the speaker at the UAHC-NFTS banquet in 1963. While Evans attempted to express the importance of inviting him to

⁶⁸ Marc Dollinger, "The Other War: American Jews, Lyndon Johnson, and The Great Society," *American Jewish Historical Society Quarterly Publication*, Volume 89, Number 4, December 2001, 438.

⁶⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records & Assembly Transcripts, 1959," 3 (insert).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Administrative Records & Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1963," 9.

speaking, Reform Jews from the South were particularly opposed to King. Specifically, as historian Michael A. Meyer noted, the Reform rabbis of Mississippi felt that inviting King was "...unworthy of a Jewish doctrine of responsibility toward Jews."⁷² However, Evans felt that by inviting a pioneer in the Civil Rights Movement to speak, NFTS would underscore the importance of discussing divergent views in a peaceful and safe environment.⁷³ Ultimately, she believed that King's presence at the event would make a positive statement and serve to educate the community on the importance of social justice and civil rights.

VI. NFTS' Fiftieth Anniversary - 1963

As the activities of this period drew to a close, NFTS members became increasingly aware of their accomplishments since the organization's inception in 1913. However, Evans continually reminded the organization of where it had been and the importance of continued expansion and development. With the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, women of the NFTS were reminded that although they were spending more and more time outside the home, ultimately the home represented the roots of growth and nourishment, which women must not neglect. Children continued to need the support and spiritual sustenance of their mothers who needed to continue teaching that intolerance and indifference were unacceptable. Ultimately, NFTS believed that it had the "instruments with which to work toward the fulfillment of this challenge."⁷⁴

⁷² Michael A. Meyer *Response to Modernity*, 365.

⁷³ "Administrative Records & Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1963," at 10-11.

⁷⁴ "Administrative Records & Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1964," Series C, Subseries 1, Box 19, File 4, 3.

For its anniversary celebration, Evans hoped that the NFTS would continue to support "pilgrimages" to not only Israel and other foreign places of interest, but to important North American centers in Cincinnati and New York.⁷⁵ In this way, all Sisterhood members would have an opportunity to visit the places that had become so significant to the development of Reform Judaism and NFTS. In addition, Evans believed that the organization needed to tackle the issue of the ever-changing character of women's organizational life. This was perhaps the single most important and decisive issue of the time, which Evans did not ignore. Through the creation of a Special Membership Committee, she believed that the organization would become better equipped at handling and adapting a membership that was increasingly part of the mainstream workforce.⁷⁶ The results of this committee and other changes within the organization will be the primary focus in the next chapter.

VII. Conclusion

The 1960s was dominated by a rapidly changing society and one which offered more opportunities for women. However, NFTS remained confident that it could handle and meet the challenges of the times.⁷⁷ Prompted by helping to "create a better world for tomorrow," Evans was extremely vocal in her desire for women's equality, particularly with regard to rabbinic ordination. In addition, she felt that more than ever, the time had come to work toward truly understanding Jewish heritage in an attempt to bring new

⁷⁵ "Administrative Records & Executive Board And Executive Committee Minutes, 1962," Series C, Subseries 1, Box 19, File 4, 3.

⁷⁶ "Proceedings, Pre-Convention Meeting of the NFTS Board of Directors Nov. 1961," Series B, Box 6, File 3, 7-8.

⁷⁷ "Administrative Records & Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1964," Series C, Subseries 1, Box 19, File 4, 4.

interpretations and relevancies for the age.⁷⁸ This was an age that proved that the U.S. was becoming more accepting of ethnic minorities but was also still fraught with racial discrimination. Through study and the reinterpretation of Jewish doctrine, as well as working with the Civil Rights Movement, Evans felt much work could be done both within and outside the Jewish community.

Ultimately, Evans insisted that the significance of the Sisterhood "should not be underestimated," and there was still a great amount of work that could be done with regard to social action on behalf of both Jewish and humanitarian causes.⁷⁹ Though this effort required some restructuring of NFTS events and programming, the benefits of this initiative far outweighed the status quo. Evans urged the NFTS to embrace the views of the UAHC President Maurice Eisendrath, who called upon Reform Jewry to translate its "[Jewish] preachment into practice, [its] dogmas and doctrines into deed, [its] creed into conduct, [its] prayers into programs of moral righteousness and social justice."⁸⁰ This mission encouraged Evans to broaden the focus of NFTS, while the organization bridged secular ideals with Reform Jewish values.

⁷⁸ "Biennial Assembly Records & Transcript of Proceedings, 1965," Series B, Box 7, File 4, 32.

⁷⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records & Assembly Transcripts, 1959," 1 (insert).

⁸⁰ Michael E. Staub, *Torn At The Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism In Postwar America*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 49.

CHAPTER 5

1966-1975: NFTS' Final Years with Dr. Jane Evans

I. Introduction

As Evans completed her remaining years with the NFTS, the organization became increasingly involved and concerned with domestic and international issues. Among these issues were violence, crime, hunger, and poverty throughout the United States.¹ The NFTS was particularly concerned with the "grave problem" of hunger, and all Sisterhood chapters were encouraged to develop programs on hunger that included study and action. Jane Evans felt that this would be the only way to help overcome this "ensuing epidemic throughout the world."² In addition, Evans also guided the organization to strengthen its ties with Israel and the Middle East, as well as to take a strong position against the Vietnam War.

Although the NFTS was aware of and involved with these domestic and foreign issues, Evans continued to guide the organization toward strengthening Reform Jewish programming and education. She was able to continue encouraging NFTS members to deepen and intensify their Jewish experience. By redefining their values and increasing observances and education within their homes, Evans felt that the NFTS could reach its goals.³ These included attempts to develop programs intended for both Sisterhood women and their families that would ultimately improve society. Evans believed that the problem of world hunger could be, at a minimum, suppressed by creating unique programming with the joint effort of the NFTS membership, especially with the assistance of the

¹ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1963-1970," Series B, Box 12, File 3, 5, 1969.

² Ibid.

³ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1963-1970," 9, 1969.

younger generation.⁴ This is not to say that Evans did not support synagogue observances, but she felt strongly that the future of Reform Judaism was dependent on the development of a vibrant form of religious observance in the home of Reform Jews.

In addition, Evans maintained her long-standing belief that a well-trained leadership was an absolute necessity for NFTS, and she continued throughout this period to create materials with which individuals could become well-educated role models for the organization. One of Evans' greatest fears was the NFTS suffering due to "uninformed leaders who were speaking before groups" and relaying incorrect information.⁵ During this period, Evans continued to strengthen the leadership training programs that she had first helped to establish in 1934.⁶

Evans kept a keen perspective on issues that affected both the NFTS as well as American society in general. Perhaps the most dominant issue of the time involved Israel. With the Six-Day War in 1967, American Jewish feelings toward Israel underwent a rapid transformation. As a result of the Six-Day War and Israel's remarkable military success, feelings of attachment and solidarity with Israel and the American Jewish community were intensified, and the NFTS helped to emphasize the importance of this relationship. Evans was particularly interested in continuing to educate Sisterhood members about the importance of progressive Judaism in Israel in cooperation with the WUPJ.⁷ In addition, Evans worked to promote the development of tours, visits, and

⁴ Id., 2.

⁵ "Administrative Records: Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1972," Series C, Box 20, File 1, 7.

⁶ Id., 8.

⁷ "Administrative Records: Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1969," Series C, Box 19, File 5, 35.

extended learning experiences in Israel, thus helping to further solidify the connection between Israel and Reform Jews in the Diaspora.⁸

Ultimately, Evans believed that even "amidst strife, adversity, and constant change" the NFTS would be supportive in helping to create a "world of peace, a world of understanding and a world of love."⁹ This chapter will first describe the changing role of women within American society at large and its effect on Reform Judaism during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In addition, this chapter will describe NFTS' growing commitment to Israel and its support of Soviet Jewry. This chapter will conclude with an analysis of the NFTS programming during Evans' final years as executive director of the organization.

II. Role of Women

1. Current Societal Position

As women became increasingly involved in the work force of mainstream American society during the late 1960s, the NFTS was confronted with new challenges regarding the timing of events and meetings. NFTS leadership began to consider whether Sisterhood programming should take into account the relatively limited free time of women who were in school, employed outside of the home, or at home with young children.¹⁰ In addition, the NFTS had to take into account an increasingly diverse population of women that might be interested in Sisterhood programming. These women included those who were married or single, young or old, and ultimately resulting in

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records, Transcript of Proceedings 29th Biennial Assembly, 1973," Series B, Box 9, File 1, 50.

¹⁰ "Biennial Assembly Records -Correspondence, Programs, Memos, Circulars, Working Papers - 26th Biennial Assembly, 1967," Series B, Box 8, File 1, 1-2.

NFTS' need to create a women's synagogue organization composed of heterogeneous interests and needs.¹¹

In addition to the growing diversity among women who participated in NFTS, Evans also encouraged women to take more active leadership roles within their synagogue. Historian Dana Kaplan noted that "by the 1970s, women were participating in all aspects of synagogue life...."¹² Although it took some time for women to become congregational presidents, during this period synagogue leadership was no longer a strictly male domain. However, this did not mean that women's assumption of these roles always came with warm acceptance and ease. On the contrary, Kaplan noted that "as women began to move into roles of responsibility traditionally assigned to men, there was a great deal of dissonance."¹³

Ultimately, these changes within the synagogue realm encouraged women to become more active participants in American society at large.¹⁴ Evans did not believe in limiting women to specific arenas, and she helped the NFTS to frame resolutions that encouraged qualified women to be nominated, elected, and ultimately appointed to public offices.¹⁵ Evans noted that in this way, "the interest of the world at large as well as the specific interests of women [would] be better served through substantial enlargement of the number of women in high positions."¹⁶ However, although Evans encouraged women

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dana Evan Kaplan, *American Reform Judaism: An Introduction*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003, 187.

¹³ Id., 190.

¹⁴ Id., 187.

¹⁵ These are some of the resolutions adopted at the 1971 Biennial Conference in Los Angeles, California. Unfortunately, there are no specific examples of women taking more active roles in politics in this document or in others from this period. See "Biennial Assembly Records and Resolutions, 1971," Series B, Box 12, File 3, 13.

¹⁶ Ibid.

to become active in politics and other high-profile fields such as medicine or law, she did not minimize the important domain of child rearing and maintaining the home. Rather, she applauded and honored these positions, and she encouraged those women to become active in the NFTS as well.¹⁷ Ultimately, it was during this period that Evans directed NFTS with a greater emphasis on female empowerment than in previous decades, and she hoped to serve as a model to encourage Sisterhood women to reach their level of self-actualization. There were now few societal and professional barriers for American women, and Evans saw this as a unique and privileged opportunity.

Upon the establishment of the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966 and *Ms. Magazine* in 1972, the impact of the modern feminist movement began to be felt in the synagogue.¹⁸ Historian Jack Wertheimer noted that in the early 1970s, "some knowledgeable Jewish women questioned whether women's sensibilities were given adequate attention and influence in the shaping of liturgy, rituals, and other forms of religious expression."¹⁹ The feminist movement led Jewish women to discover that they too were entitled to a voice in the ceremonial side of Judaism, and they were able to challenge those standards, which had typically been instituted by males.²⁰ This attitudinal change also affected styles of worship in the synagogue.

2. Impact on the Reform Jewish World

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hasia R. Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her*, New York: Basic Books, 2002, 380.

¹⁹ Jack. Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America*, Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1993, 21.

²⁰ Wertheimer notes two particular essays that influenced new religious opportunities for women: Trude Weiss-Rosmarin's "The Unfreedom of Jewish Women," and Rachel Adler's "The Jew Who Wasn't There." See Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America*, 22-3.

Perhaps one of the most monumental events in the history of female lay leadership in the Reform movement occurred when Mrs. Norma Levitt was installed as the first woman vice chairman of the UAHC.²¹ Evans applauded this event, and she hoped that it would begin the trend of many women taking more active roles in the Reform movement. However, at the same time, Evans also concentrated on the importance of women continuing to play a role in volunteerism. Although she realized that free time was becoming less available for women in this period, she did not want to see volunteering fall to the wayside. However, Evans emphasized the importance of volunteering for political causes of the age as described by NOW, as opposed to traditional service positions.²² One example of this new mode of volunteering may be seen in NFTS' rigorous support of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).²³ Evans also encouraged foreign NFTS affiliates to "study the legal restrictions against women in their countries and to seek their abolition."²⁴

Ultimately, Evans believed that volunteerism was still a significant part of the programming of Sisterhoods, but she felt that it was necessary to restructure the type of work with which women could participate. Evans believed that donating one's time was an "opportunity to participate in worthwhile and meaningful activities."²⁵ Evans felt that volunteers of any age accumulated stature in the communities which they served and had

²¹ "Administrative Records: Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1973," Series C, Box 20, File 1, 1. In addition, Levitt served as NFTS' President from 1967-1973.

²² "Biennial Assembly Records, - Transcript of Proceedings, 30th Biennial Assembly, 1975," Series B, Box 9, File 3, 106-7.

²³ Congress passed the ERA in 1972, when it was sent to the states for ratification. The seven-year time limit in the ERA's proposing clause was extended by Congress to June 30, 1982, but at the deadline the ERA had been ratified by thirty-five states, leaving it three states short of the thirty-eight required for ratification. It has been reintroduced into every Congress since then. See www.equalrightsamendment.org.

²⁴ "Biennial Assembly Records - Correspondence, Programs, Memos, Circulars, Working Papers - 29th Biennial Assembly, 1973," Series B, Box 9, File 2, 6.

²⁵ "Biennial Assembly Records - Transcript of Proceedings, 30th Biennial Assembly, 1975," 109.

the opportunity to "consistently study and work to improve [their] efforts."²⁶ Recognizing this as a vital feminine contribution to individual communities and, ultimately, societies at large, Evans worked to emphasize the invaluable significance of volunteer efforts.

III. Developing NFTS Programming and Fund-raising

During this period, NFTS reaffirmed its commitment to NFTY and Reform Judaism's youth movement in general. Evans believed that there was a great deal NFTS could learn from NFTY and vice-versa. She stated that developing "together sound programs to improve society at every level; to intermingle the experience of age with the aspiration of youth toward mutually desired goals" should be the ultimate goal of a partnership between NFTS and NFTY.²⁷ Regardless of formal or informal programming both within the synagogue as well as the community, Evans argued that both youth and adults shared a mutual responsibility of teaching, studying, and transmitting Jewish values and morals.²⁸ To carry out this notion, Evans encouraged the UAHC Commission on Jewish Education to broaden its horizons and develop experimental education for religious schools, camps, and youth. Ultimately, Evans believed that qualified women should serve on this UAHC board, again opening additional opportunities beyond the rabbinate for committed Reform Jewish women.²⁹

Fund-raising remained an ever-important part of the NFTS agenda. By 1970, a new fund titled "Circle of Service" had been created to supplement the Y.E.S. fund in order to further support the youth activities of the UAHC and to support rabbinical

²⁶ Id., 111.

²⁷ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1969," 2.

²⁸ Id., 3.

²⁹ Id., 8.

students at HUC-JIR. As the youth programming and interest in youth work began to expand for both the UAHC and HUC-JIR, NFTS wanted to be able to provide the much-needed supplementary funding.³⁰

In addition to fund-raising, Jewish education remained another vital component of the NFTS. One of the significant educational programs that continued during this period was that of the Institute for Religious School Teachers and Laymen. These institutes had been created specifically to aid Sisterhoods in small Jewish communities that found it difficult to obtain qualified teachers for their religious schools.³¹ In addition, Evans continued to emphasize the importance of interfaith dialogues and encouraged individual Sisterhood chapters to organize ongoing interreligious adult education programs. In this way, Evans felt that individuals could become educated on non-Jewish religious topics and be free of prejudices or resentments. Cooperatively, women of diverse backgrounds could participate in social action programs throughout the communities in which they lived, thus contributing their time and strengthening the bonds of interfaith relations among those of diverse backgrounds.³²

In 1976 The Conference of Church and Synagogue Women sponsored a conference titled "Frontiers of Understanding," which was attended by women from NFTS, Church Women United, the Women's Branch of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.³³ The ultimate goal of this conference was to help foster a "new sense of harmony in diversity, a deeper respect for the religious belief of others, some joint action in the community, [and] a

³⁰ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1970," 5.

³¹ Ibid.

³² "Biennial Assembly Records and Resolutions, 1967." Series B, Box 12, File 3, 8.

³³ "Publications Notes For Now (1970-1976)," Series K, Box 69, File 4, 1975-76.

strengthened set of values and virtues appropriate for living."³⁴ This conference provided diverse women's groups with a venue for coming together and sharing beliefs in a safe and nondiscriminatory environment. Throughout this period, Evans continued to guide the NFTS to support both programs indigenous to Reform Judaism, as well as those that Evans felt were important to the community at large.

IV. Support for Israel

Following the Six-Day War in 1967, support for Israel became a "common denominator of American Jewish life."³⁵ As historian Edward Shapiro noted, Jewish leaders may have been divided on issues such as ordination of women or intermarriage, "...[but] none doubted the legitimacy of Israel and its importance for World Jewry."³⁶ It was at this time that NFTS declared its "deep, fraternal solidarity with fellow Jews in the State of Israel."³⁷ Like many other segments of American Jewry, NFTS recognized the courage and force with which the Israeli army was able to defend itself in the face of powerful opposition from its numerous hostile neighbors.

NFTS also urged the United State government to support Israel by asking for economic aid specifically related to reconstruction, rehabilitation, and recovery.³⁸ In addition, NFTS urged all members of the United Nations to "exert influence" and to persuade the Arab nations of the Middle East to honor Israel's desire to negotiate a fair and permanent peace, which would ultimately result in an enhanced life for all peoples of

³⁴ Id, 1.

³⁵ Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time For Healing: American Jewry Since World War II*, Baltimore: The Johns University Press, 1992, 201.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1967," 8.

³⁸ Ibid.

the region.³⁹ The organization further supported Israel's acquisition of weapons needed to maintain her survival; however, NFTS also completely supported efforts to establish peace with Israel's neighboring Arab nations.⁴⁰

On the local level, Evans encouraged individual Sisterhood chapters to establish committees on Israel in order to create and maintain effective programming and educational materials regarding affairs of the Middle East. In this way, she hoped that all Sisterhood members would become informed on the necessity of supporting Israel. To this end, Evans encouraged NFTS members to visit Israel and to purchase State of Israel bonds, which she believed would be of tremendous financial aid to the developing country.⁴¹

Reform Jewish attitudes toward Israel were undeniably changing and deepening at this time. By the late 1960s, Jewish religious education was undergoing a transformation and it was becoming commonplace for Jewish teenagers to attend summer programs in Israel.⁴² In addition, the CCAR held its first convention in Israel in 1970. It was in Israel that Reform rabbinic figures discussed observing Israeli Independence Day as an official holiday in the Reform movement. These rabbis also discussed strengthening ties to the Israeli *Kibbutz* movement, as the *kibbutz* ideals of social action and holiday observances resonated with the Reform movement.⁴³

³⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1969," 10-11.

⁴⁰ "Biennial Assembly Records- Correspondence, Programs, Memos, Circulars, Working Papers - 29th Biennial Assembly, 1973," 2.

⁴¹ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1971," 1-2.

⁴² Jack Wertheimer, 30.

⁴³ David Polish, *Renew Our Days: The Zionist Issue in Reform Judaism*, Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1976, 245-46.

However, by the mid-1970s it appeared as though Arab states were becoming increasingly uncompromising as world hostility toward Israel began to grow. Nevertheless, the NFTS as well as the Reform Jewish world, continued to support Israel's efforts and pledge its solidarity to this young Jewish state.⁴⁴

Furthermore, in 1974 the WUPJ formally "transferred its international headquarters to Jerusalem."⁴⁵ With this move, the WUPJ and Liberal Judaism deepened its commitment to Israel and *K'lal Yisrael* (World Jewry). Evans believed this was truly an accomplishment worthy of applause.⁴⁶ Yet Evans knew that bringing the WUPJ headquarters to Israel was but a small step, and that much more work needed to be accomplished if Reform Liberal Judaism was to gain a foothold in Israel and in countries around the globe. She noted that the name WUPJ implies "an alternative to Orthodoxy to be developed in every country...in a form that would be indigenous to that country and its people, [and] not to transfer American Reform indigenous to us, to Israel or to any other land..."⁴⁷

Evans felt that it was important for American NFTS members to realize that Reform or progressive Judaism differed ritually across the globe. However, each nontraditional congregation did share some common denominators, such as men and women having the same opportunity to fill leadership positions.⁴⁸ Since the situation was rapidly changing at this time, Evans was primarily concerned with the Israeli counterpart

⁴⁴ Steven T. Rosenthal, *Irreconcilable Differences?: The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair With Israel*, Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2001, xv.

⁴⁵ Id, 247.

⁴⁶ "Administrative Records: Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes, 1971-1972," Series C, Box 20:File 1, 1.

⁴⁷ "Administrative Records: Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1969," Series C, Box 19, File 5, 35.

⁴⁸ Id at 91.

of the WUPJ. Perhaps one of the most exciting projects of the WUPJ at this time was the establishment of the Sisterhood library at the Leo Baeck High School in Haifa.⁴⁹ Evans encouraged domestic and Israeli involvement in this developing educational resource. In this way, she felt that both American as well as Israeli Sisterhoods would be making a necessary contribution to the advancement of progressive Judaism in Israel.⁵⁰

In addition to the library, there was another surprise for Evans. The then-NFTS President Mrs. Norma Levitt announced in 1973 that adjacent to the library, a garden would be created with a plaque stating, "The Jane Evans Garden of Understanding and Peace."⁵¹ With this, the organization recognized the ability of their executive director to work toward bringing a greater understanding of not only the mission of Sisterhood to Israel, but also an understanding of progressive Judaism to Reform Jews in the United States. This created an opportunity for Sisterhood women to become educated on the missions and goals of progressive Judaism.

V. Soviet Union

The Six-Day War also had an effect on political activism for the Jewish community at large. Historian Jack Wertheimer noted that this was best seen in the late 1960s in the work of freeing Soviet Jews.⁵² Throughout this period, the situation of Jews in what was then the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) became "increasingly disturbing."⁵³

⁴⁹ "Biennial Assembly Records- Correspondence, Programs, Memos, Circulars, Working Papers - 29th Biennial Assembly, 1973," 1.

⁵⁰ "Administrative Records: Transcript of Executive Board Meeting, 1969," Series C, Box 19, File 5, 35.

⁵¹ "Biennial Assembly Records, Transcript of Proceedings 29th Biennial Assembly, 1973," Series B, Box 9, File 1, 45.

⁵² Jack Wertheimer, 31.

⁵³ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1963," 1.

As a result, NFTS, and specifically Evans, condemned the treatment of Jews in the USSR and actively spoke out against Soviet governmental policies. In addition, Evans pressed the organization to adopt resolutions that urged the State Department of the United States to "protest through proper channels the denial of equal rights and privileges and to oppose all other forms of persecution inflicted on Jews in the Soviet Union."⁵⁴ Ultimately, Evans believed that the ill treatment of Soviet Jews was more than a Jewish problem, and that "it is intertwined with the hopes of all who believe in religious freedom and human dignity."⁵⁵

NFTS worked on the local level to inform both Jews and non-Jews alike about the prejudices and discrimination facing Soviet Jewry through educational programs and discussion groups.⁵⁶ As the plight of Soviet Jewry deteriorated after 1967, there was a newfound sense of "Jewish responsibility."⁵⁷ NFTS carried out this responsibility both on domestic and foreign levels by making Soviet Jewry a key part of the organization's agenda. Evans firmly believed that the threat of observing religion in freedom demanded the attention of all members of NFTS, and she emphasized this continually during meetings and through correspondence.⁵⁸

VI. Vietnam

The NFTS became politically involved in the Vietnam War (1965-1973) and protest movement. Many American Jewish leaders maintained antiwar sentiments, and historian Michael Staub noted that this was "usually an interpretation of the tradition of

⁵⁴ *Id.*, 2.

⁵⁵ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1971," 3.

⁵⁶ *Id.*, 4.

⁵⁷ Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, 368.

⁵⁸ "Biennial Assembly Records and Resolutions, 1971," 3-4.

prophetic Judaism."⁵⁹ The NFTS agreed with a large number of American Jews who repeatedly stated that the war was inhumane, "causing death and destruction as well as the brutality of the combatant and non-combatant alike."⁶⁰ After America became involved in the war, Evans spoke out against America's military involvement. She asserted her strong belief that the war needed to be limited and, above all, it "should have a swift termination."⁶¹ Evans encouraged NFTS to adopt statements regarding the policies that the U.S. should enforce, including encouraging both sides (North and South Vietnam) to "leave the battlefields and [meet] at the conference table."⁶²

The antiwar movement also provided an opportunity for young Jewish women to add their own voices of protest.⁶³ It was at this time that women came together on university campuses and in open public arenas to express sentiments strongly opposing the war. In addition, these women offered support for the horrific events that had affected many innocent civilians.⁶⁴ The NFTS opposed the war, recognizing that warfare embittered the lives of many Vietnamese, and it also prompted strong division among American allies.⁶⁵

However, even amidst rampant protests throughout the American Jewish community, the war continued until 1973. Once the ceasefire accord was signed in Paris, Evans prayed that it would provide a much "needed opportunity to reconcile the deep

⁵⁹ Michael E. Staub, 121.

⁶⁰ "Biennial Assembly Records & Resolutions, 1967," 6.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Id., 7.

⁶³ Paula E. Hyman, "Jewish Feminism Faces the American Women's Movement: Convergence and Divergence," *American Jewish Women's History: A Reader*, 298.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Biennial Assembly Records and Resolutions, 1971," 8.

domestic divisions which [had] embittered our society."⁶⁶ At the very least, the War brought many religious leaders to the public eye and asked many groups to make definitive statements on behalf of their religion.⁶⁷

VII. Watergate

Two years prior to Evans' retirement from her position with the NFTS, the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon and the Watergate scandal occurred. Evans noted that as a result of these incidents, the public learned that even politicians in high-profile positions could not be trusted. However, Evans was also confident that moral changes could be made within society if there was a "return to religious values, a determination to deal openly and honestly... and an understanding that to struggle for the right is more admirable than to achieve an election victory."⁶⁸ Ultimately, NFTS encouraged Congress to take a closer look at the distribution of funds and to limit campaign expenditures.⁶⁹ Although Watergate provoked a public distrust of America's political leaders, Evans believed that in some ways the incident helped American society return to its fundamental morals and ethics.

VIII. Conclusion (Jane Evans)

Mrs. Betty Benjamin, then-president of NFTS, once noted of Evans that "like a diamond, she is brilliant and sparkling, her inner core is as pure and crystal clear as the

⁶⁶ "Biennial Assembly Records- Correspondence, Programs, Memos, Circulars, Working Papers - 29th Biennial Assembly, 1973," 9.

⁶⁷ Jack Wertheimer, 20.

⁶⁸ "Biennial Assembly Records- Correspondence, Programs, Memos, Circulars, Working Papers - 29th Biennial Assembly, 1973," 3.

⁶⁹ Id., 4.

finest gem stone."⁷⁰ This statement aptly captures the sentiments of the NFTS at the conclusion of Evans' tenure with the organization. By 1975 NFTS had grown tremendously, and the members of the organization recognized that this growth was due, in large part, to the leadership abilities of Jane Evans. Benjamin noted this growth specifically in terms of programming and publications, including but not limited to art calendars, Uniongrams, the JBI of America, as well as study courses and publications. Benjamin noted that "[all] flourished through her [Evans] continuing enthusiasm and effort."⁷¹ In addition, Evans also worked extensively during this period with the WUPJ, specifically with regard to establishing a Sisterhood library at the Leo Baeck High School in Haifa, Israel.

Although Evans' work is marked with revolutionary ideas implemented into practice, it was met with sincerity and attention from the NFTS constituents. She remarked, "Sisterhood and the Reform movement and its institutions had been a source of inspiration, friendship, and many generous gifts of hearts, minds, and souls."⁷² For over forty years, Evans stood at the helm of one of the largest and most vocal of Jewish institutions, leading and guiding its metamorphosis from a small women's group with a limited world view into an historical and expansive, internationally recognized women's organization.

⁷⁰ "Publications - President's Message (1975)," Series K, Box 71, File 4, 23. In addition, Benjamin was President of NFTS from 1973-1977.

⁷¹ "Publications - Jane Evans Correspondence, 1976," Series K, Box 74, File 3, 3.

⁷² "Administrative Records, Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes 1975," Series C, Box 20, File 4, 4.

CONCLUSION

Where No Other Women's Group Had Gone Before....

Over the course of forty-three years, Jane Evans encouraged the NFTS to grow beyond its individual synagogue activities to unite globally. She advocated vigorously for a transformation of a loose association of individual Sisterhood groups or women's auxiliaries that were primarily concerned with local social activities. She led an international federation, tackling issues related to feminism, Reform Judaism, and world peace. As one of the few Reform female leaders of her time, Evans emphasized through her leadership that women could occupy significant roles in the Jewish world by serving on synagogue boards and becoming rabbis.

Each decade afforded Evans with the opportunity to focus on new challenges and missions. Beginning with her belief that the service of Sisterhood was inspired by the prophetic ideals, Evans deeply believed that religion was best interpreted in terms of service. She proved that women could be an important part of the Reform movement, through supporting existing organizations such as the UAHC and HUC-JIR, and by creating new initiatives such as the Jewish Braille Institute and NFTS' involvement with the National Peace Conference.

With Evans' encouragement, the NFTS devoted a significant amount of time to domestic and world issues. Her efforts prompted an increase in the amount of interfaith dialogue around the country and more inventive social action programs, including care packages to soldiers during World War II. The "Speaker's Bureau" and NFTS' commitment to the United Nations also served to unify women from diverse regions to enhance the spirit of community.

Under Evans' direction, NFTS worked to provide scholarships in order to support a large number of American and foreign students to study at HUC-JIR. Evans insisted that no student should be denied this educational opportunity because of insufficient financial means. In addition, Evans directed the NFTS to raise funds to erect a much-needed UAHC office building in New York City, presumed to be the epicenter of American Jewish activity. This building served as a testament to the NFTS' commitment to provide the Reform movement both with an adequate working space, as well as a visible headquarters that would appeal to the movement en masse.

Perhaps the most significant decision reached during Evans' tenure was that of the ordination of women. Although Evans did not wish personally to become a rabbi, she wanted the opportunity to exist for other women. Through the help of active members of the NFTS, the decision was finally reached to admit women to HUC-JIR, and the first woman rabbi of the Reform movement was ordained in 1972. This event, although a long time coming, demonstrated Evans' tenacity toward a crusade in which she deeply believed. Her commitment to the advancement of women was emphasized in the final two decades of her service to the NFTS. She saw a unique opportunity as women were becoming increasingly involved in the public sphere. She also encouraged many NFTS constituents to take advantage of these opportunities, specifically with regard to women becoming more active in synagogue leadership and in politics.

During her tenure, Evans witnessed the effects that World War II and the Vietnam War had upon American Reform Jewry. Her career spanned a period of growth in Reform Judaism, specifically in terms of youth work, synagogue expansion, and its

commitment to Israel and the Zionist movement. As a witness to developing trends in American society at large, Evans had the ability to keep the NFTS abreast of all these new trends and translate them into action and service where applicable. The role of women as active shapers of Reform ideology and practice is the most obvious example.

When Evans retired from the NFTS in 1976, it was with the specific request that it not be marked with a great deal of "public hoopla."¹ Though Evans was certainly recognized for her achievements, she preferred to leave quietly. Despite this low-key departure, Eleanor Schwartz, Evans' successor, observed that Evans fought publicly for what she believed throughout her tenure as executive director.² Although her public work as executive director eventually came to a close, she continued to work behind the scenes, consulting with the UAHC. Evans assumed her leadership position with the desire and motivation to expand the NFTS into areas that it had not previously visited. Evans' commitment and dedication to the mission of NFTS, combined with the fact that she was a single woman, afforded her the time and energy to guide the organization so completely for as long as she did.

Throughout forty-three years of service, Evans expanded modest horizons to achieve more than perhaps any founding member of NFTS could have envisioned. She was known for holding firmly to her views. Indeed Schwartz noted that it was often difficult to argue with her. As a result, when there were eruptions, Evans managed to handle them constructively. Perhaps it was this style of leadership and diplomacy that prevented the author from discovering evidence of disharmony among

¹ Author's conversation with Eleanor Schwartz December 17, 2003.

² Ibid.

the leadership of NFTS during Evans' tenure. If Evans faced disappointments or challenges, none were recorded in the historical records of the NFTS.

Evans, now ninety-seven years old, has had a significant impact on Reform Judaism and the women's movement in America. Her work, spanning more than four decades, has inspired women around the globe to explore their own niche and evolve beyond socially imposed limitations. It is this contribution to the Reform Jewish community that will remain Jane Evans' true legacy.

APPENDIX

Oral History with Dr. Jane Evans

Adrienne Scott: My name is Adrienne Scott interviewing Dr. Jane Evans in New York City, on November 22, 2002. I am a 4th year Rabbinical Student at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, OH, and this interview is going to be used in conjunction with my Rabbinic Thesis.

Adrienne Scott: Would you prefer that I refer to you as Dr. Evans?

Dr. Jane Evans: You can refer to me by my first name, Jane, if you would like.

Adrienne Scott: Thank you. So, if you would, please read through the biographical sheet for me, to make sure that the answers are accurate for each of the questions

Dr. Jane Evans: Numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 are correct- my date of birth, my place of birth, my parent's names. I was never married. Now with regard to question number 7, "where did you attend high school?"¹ -you must understand that I did attend high school but I was educated both in school and by private tutors, so that it isn't quite correct to imply that I ever went high school. Now I did go to a high school that is no longer in existence, and its name was Girl's High School in Brooklyn, New York. It was a public school exclusively for preparation for college. It had no commercial courses at the time I went there. Now, that school no longer exists. With regard to question number 8, "Where did you attend college?" Now, this is a more complicated question because it happens that I did not attend only one college, and in this way I followed the European pattern. It is true that I took a degree that is no longer in existence, the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy, from Xavier University in Cincinnati, because by that time I was already the director of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. At the same time, I was taking courses at the Hebrew Union College, not generally in the regular year, but at that time during the summer months. I don't know if they still have a summer school, but I was taking courses there. However, prior to Xavier University, I had taken many courses at New York University and then, when I went to Cincinnati at the University of Cincinnati, though I finally took my degree from Xavier.

Adrienne Scott: Thank you

Dr. Jane Evans: With regard to number 10, this is correct that the Honorary Degree I have is the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.

Adrienne Scott: And your highest degree earned is the Bachelor of Philosophy from Xavier University?

¹ See Exhibit A.

Dr. Jane Evans: Yes, actually, I had more than enough credits for a Masters and most of the credits for an earned Doctorate of Philosophy, but I have never had the time to finish it.

Adrienne Scott: You've done many other wonderful things, though.

Dr. Jane Evans: Not necessarily, but I did the best I could at the things I attempted to accomplish.

Adrienne Scott: Well, I can certainly understand and see that. I've done a fair amount of research on many aspects of your life, and I've read some of your involvement in many different fields, including interior design and medicine.

Dr. Jane Evans: I presume you know, then, that am the designer of one of the first, in fact, the first curved electric fan, did you know that?

Adrienne Scott: No, I did not know that.

Dr. Jane Evans: Well, you see I was a designer in St. Louis, Missouri, and it happens that I did work in a home for a gentleman who, at that time, was the president of Emerson Electric Manufacturing Company. Does this interest you?

Adrienne Scott: Very much so.

Dr. Jane Evans: And he said to me, one day, remember I had already been a designer in his home, as in many other places in St. Louis, he said to me, "Have you ever thought of the fact that the electric fan is pretty ugly, and no one has ever changed it? You know, straight blades, etc." I said, "no I haven't thought of it." And he said, "Well, I wish you would and if you wish, come up with something and bring it to me." This is electric manufacturing. Well, I have always been interested, always is a big word, but I mean since early childhood I was, through my father, who at one time was an officer in the Navy, Merchant Marine Navy, very interested in the water and in boats because we always had boats, and it occurred to me, that just as the propeller of a boat is curved when going through water, why not think of the possibility of using a curved blade for air? Then it might be more efficient. But then I also thought that, remember this goes way back before you were born, this is in the 1930s, and I said to myself, "Fans are horribly noisy." And that's because the motors tended to vibrate through the face of the fan onto whatever it was standing, so I designed a fan with curved blades and with a different type of frame and with a motor on a different position so that the vibration was carried off and the air, rather than always down into the base. And Emerson bought it! But, I made the greatest mistake of my life being what I thought was highly intelligent, and I asked how many fans they made. They made the fan, the Silver Swan, and I also asked how many fans they expected to sell in the first year or two, and they thought 5,000, and then I discussed what royalties would be, and I decided that a lump sum was to my advantage and they paid me the lump sum that I asked for, and the truth of the matter is the fan was a huge success and sold 25,000 its first year and went on for years. I probably would be a wealthy person, which I am not, had I taken a royalty, but that's an amusing aside.

Adrienne Scott: Definitely.

Dr. Jane Evans: I know this is not important.

Adrienne Scott: So I understand that you studied some designs, and you studied philosophy. Are there other areas that interest you?

Dr. Jane Evans: Medicine.

Adrienne Scott: Medicine?

Dr. Jane Evans: I originally firmly believed that I was going to be a doctor of medicine and that I was going to do research, even though I wasn't sure I wanted to practice medicine, but I wanted the medical degree. I believed that from the time I was 5 years old and strangely enough I never have achieved it. And I don't for a moment mean to imply that there's any tragedy in that, there isn't. I've had a very full life, obviously, as you know I'm 95. I haven't much to complain about. I mean I've lived to be 95, although I am a bit physically handicapped it has nothing to do with age. I had a very severe accident, a stupid accident, more than 5 years ago, and that's why I'm handicapped, but it has nothing to do with age. Now, what else would you like?

Adrienne Scott: Were you involved in any Jewish organizations in college? I'm not sure that Hillel was very popular during your college years, and I don't know what the student life was like when you were on campus. But, I am interested to know if you remember anything about your student days.

Dr. Jane Evans: I was very involved when I was in college. But I have to tell you, surprisingly enough, I am not aware, I am really not aware that there were Jewish organizations, there probably were, but I just wasn't aware of them. I was very involved in liberal causes in college. Norman Thomas who, was you know, was a great Socialist leader, was very much an influence, I think, in my collegiate passions, and I belonged to the Liberal Club. I was even the president at one time of the Liberal Club. While I was not involved, in college, in Jewish Affairs, at no time was I in any sense not aware of being a Jew and aware of Jewish issues. I considered myself at a fairly young age, in my teens, a Zionist, but, but, now let me draw this quick distinction; I was quite opposed to what I considered Political Zionism. You must realize that in my teens I did not foresee the creation in my lifetime of the State of Israel, and thank God, it has happened in my lifetime. I was technically a Zionist in every way, very much a cultural Zionist, and I rather spurned, to be honest about it in retrospect, the very ardent, many extreme political Zionists. But at no time was I not deeply involved in Zionist thought, the cultural Zionist.

Adrienne Scott: Thank you. We'll move, now, into your professional venue. Do you remember the specific moment or time when you specifically became involved in the NFTS?

Dr. Jane Evans: That's a very long story- I hope you don't mind.

Adrienne Scott: Not at all.

Dr. Jane Evans: While I was in St. Louis, and I don't like to use this word, "successful," but at least others considered me a very successful designer, I had always been pretty much interested in volunteering and I volunteered to teach a course at the YM/YWHA in Modern Art, because I was very interested in contemporary art, and we called it Modern Art, and it was, it happened unbeknownst to me, one of the persons in my class was the president, the very president of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. That was more than apparent, she tremendously enjoyed the class. Now, I had been doing at that time, although I was a very busy designer, because one of my huge projects was to redesign the leaf garden of the Chase Hotel in St. Louis, which was a very big job, and I was redesigning it with a theme of a Mississippi riverboat. Obviously, I was invited in St. Louis, and now I was very young, remember I was probably your age; I don't know your age.

Adrienne Scott: Twenty-six.

Dr. Jane Evans: Well, no, I was younger than you. I was in my fairly early twenties. I was constantly invited to give a lecture here or there, and in addition to this I was teaching Modern Art for the Y. It happened that in June of 1933 the very person in the office, it was in Cincinnati, of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, she did not have the title of executive secretary or executive director, because oddly enough in the early years it was Rabbi Zepin, Z-e-p-i-n, who was not only the head of the Union, that is the professional head, not the lay head, of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, but he was also the head of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. Mrs. Steinfeld was her name, who was the president, and in June of that year, the reason I'm hesitating because I am not sure if it was June of '33 or June of '32, to be honest.

Adrienne Scott: Okay.

Dr. Jane Evans: It was either '32 or '33, the person who under Zepin, and her name was Strauss, Helen Strauss I think was her first name. I cannot guarantee that mentally, but her last name was Strauss, and she married a man who was converted to Judaism, but his conversion to Judaism that year was by no means, to Reform Judaism, was by no means as rigorous as it is today. And although he converted to Judaism, his children, who were going to live with them, he remained a very devoted Christian, and the board apparently, or at least I don't know for sure whether it was the whole board or just the officers of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, were not happy about this one executive and that there were no other employees of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. There was Rabbi Zepin and one person, Ms. Strauss, who was a lovely person, by the way. I think her name was Helen, but you can look that up.

Adrienne Scott: That I can check easily.

Dr. Jane Evans: Either the officers or somebody was not happy that her home, although the man had been converted, that is her husband, that the home was not going to be a Jewish home, because the children were definitely remaining Christians and continuing to be Christians, and they would probably, well I don't know many of the details. There's no reason why I was brought into too much of it, however, Mrs. Steinfeld was aware that Ms. Strauss was resigning. I

think she was asked to resign. I don't know whether she volunteered to resign or what, I simply don't know. I never did know, or was asked to resign. You must understand that I knew none of this at the time, that this was one woman among, oh, I must have had 40 or 50 in the class. I knew her name, but I had no realization that she was the president of the National Federation. Now, in St. Louis, I belonged to Temple Sha'arei Emet and Mrs. Steinfeld belonged to Temple Israel. None of this did I know during my first time in the class. To my utter astonishment, one day Mrs. Steinfeld asked to see me out of the class, and she described the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and that she would like me to become the executive of it. I was stunned, and absolutely politely negative. I hadn't the slightest idea in the world of entering Jewish professional life. I was extremely close to the rabbi and his wife of Temple Sha'arei Emet, to which I belonged, and that was a bit unusual, because you must know that 20-odd-year-olds mostly didn't join temples, but I guess I have to say something I think my life is always far more mature than was my years. I'm embarrassed to say that, but it's true, because I have been self-supported totally from the time I was 17, and I had a very different childhood than most people and a very different adulthood than most of my contemporaries. Well, I was totally negative, totally. I said, "Under no circumstance." After all, I was established in my career and had no intention at that time of giving it up, plus I was convinced then that in another year or two I would give up what I was doing and go back to medical school. This must have been early 1933, because I was acutely aware of Hitler coming to power. I was acutely concerned with Jewish affairs, despite the fact that I, at no time, was involved, as you asked me earlier. I really had no regard to the Jewish activity on my college campuses. If there was any, I just didn't know about it. But I was very active in a number of clubs and I was an excellent athlete, thanks to my father, who had insisted from childhood on that I be an athlete. And, you know, I was very involved but if there were Jewish organizations, I didn't know them. I did know every liberal activity and was heavily, heavily involved. I had a very strong sense of social justice, even at a very young age. Well, Mrs. Steinfeld appealed to my Rabbi, who was, by the way, very important to me because he and his wife were very dear friends, despite this great change in age. But I was not the average 22-23-24-year-old. And he suggested to me, and then he got a woman who I was really close to, much more mature than I, to also talk to me, but he pointed out to me, and I took it pretty seriously, that look, at this time Hitler was coming to power, at this time a young Jewish person of, shall we say, ability. He said, oh, more than that, has a strong Jewish identity, because I told you I was a Zionist, and that at no time was I not involved in the state of being very dedicated as a Jew; that I should think seriously about it, and at this time, I owed an obligation as a Jew. Well, to make a very long story short, water will wear away rock, and all summer long, all summer long, and it was 1933, I was under great pressure over and over again, and I kept saying, "Look I know a lot of very competent Jewish people I will help you find the person you want." But finally, it came toward the fall and I said, "I can't, I'm under contract. I must finish my contracts." And we worked out what, in retrospect, seems to me both amusing and incredible. I pointed out, I told you I was designing the Leaf Garden, but I had many other obligations. I was also still working on the fan, which was not completed until the fall. Well it was brought out in the fall of '33, but I had a plethora of contracts. I was designing modern furniture. I finally said, "The only thing I can offer, I will temporarily, I will temporarily go to Cincinnati with the clear understanding that it's temporary, and that you must pay my expenses back to Cincinnati for two to three days every month for I cannot be there more than four or five months, and I will help you find my successor." He accepted. On October 15, 1933, which was a Sunday, was my first day in Cincinnati, and I was greeted by Mrs. Lois I. Egelson, E-g-e-l-s-o-n, whose husband,

Rabbi Egelson, was second in command under Zepin of the UAHC...Interestingly enough, he was a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Zepin was a graduate of one of the very earliest classes of the HUC. However, falling in love with Mrs. Egelson, who was from the South and a Reform Jewess, resulted in him becoming a Reform Jew and one of the great builders with Zepin of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Although some people, I have to confess, have added my name to one of the early builders, because of the date I guess- because of the date, 1933.

Adrienne Scott: May I just interrupt you for a second?

Dr. Jane Evans: Sure.

Adrienne Scott: I just want to make sure I understand a few things. Mrs. Strauss, was she in it?

Dr. Jane Evans: Miss.

Adrienne Scott: Miss, excuse me. Was she a student in your class?

Dr. Jane Evans: No.

Adrienne Scott: No. Right she was at the union. You didn't know very much about her. Mrs. Steinfeld was in your class and she was the one who approached you?

Dr. Jane Evans: Yes.

Adrienne Scott: Okay.

Dr. Jane Evans: And it was Mrs. Steinfeld who was the president of the National Federation.

Adrienne Scott: After Miss Strauss?

Dr. Jane Evans: Miss Strauss was never the president.

Adrienne Scott: She was never the president?

Dr. Jane Evans: She was a paid employee under Rabbi Zepin

Adrienne Scott: Oh, I see, so she was part of the professional staff?

Dr. Jane Evans: Yes.

Adrienne Scott: Okay, thank you.

Dr. Jane Evans: And the only person.

Adrienne Scott: So that was it, just the two of them?

Dr. Jane Evans: Well, she may have had a secretary, by the way. Yes, she did, she had a secretary because that secretary became mine.

Adrienne Scott: Thank you for the clarification. I just have one other question. The rabbi with whom you were very close in St. Louis, what was his name?

Dr. Jane Evans: I'm trying to think of his first name now. Joshua, was it Joshua? Gordon, G-o-r-d-o-n.

Adrienne Scott: Great, thank you.

Dr. Jane Evans: He was a contemporary of Lieberman. Do you remember having come across the name of Lieberman of Boston? Who wrote a rather famous book on, I don't know if you're following me, I have it at home in my vast library.

Adrienne Scott: I think I know Gordon's name. Was it Julius?

Dr. Jane Evans: Yes, Julius.

Adrienne Scott: Okay, I've seen his name quite frequently in documents.

Dr. Jane Evans: And Dave Lieberman, who you can easily track. Lieberman of Boston, he was a contemporary and very, very well known.

Adrienne Scott: So he came to St. Louis?

Dr. Jane Evans: No, no.

Adrienne Scott: Oh, he was just in Boston?

Dr. Jane Evans: No, but he was a contemporary of Julius Gordon.

Adrienne Scott: Okay, thank you. I didn't mean to interrupt you but I wanted to get that very clear, and I wanted to make sure I understood that. I've read the story of Mrs. Steinfeld approaching you and I think I thought somewhere that you were appalled. You were 'absolutely appalled, there was no other word for it.' I remember seeing that.

Dr. Jane Evans: I couldn't have been more shocked! You know, would you expect, when you're teaching a class of Contemporary Art, that somebody would ask you to totally change.

Adrienne Scott: So then, when you moved to Cincinnati, you were only in Cincinnati a few days a month?

Dr. Jane Evans: While I was there, all of the month except two to three days.

Adrienne Scott: That's when you went back to St. Louis- to finish your project?

Dr. Jane Evans: To finish my contract, which I had turned over, but to make sure that they were being properly handled.

Adrienne Scott: And how long did you do that commute?

Dr. Jane Evans: Several months.

Adrienne Scott: I see, for several months.

Dr. Jane Evans: Then, what happened, this is really very significant, unfortunately Mrs. Steinfeld early in 1934 became ill with cancer, and unfortunately she died. By that time, I was pretty heavily involved being the...I think the title at first was executive secretary.

Adrienne Scott: I've seen that title in the documentation.

Dr. Jane Evans: And then it became the executive director. There is another tidbit to all of this that is interesting. Mrs. Steinfeld had Rabbi Zepin come to St. Louis to an interview and the interview was in Mrs. Steinfeld's home, which was an apartment,-she did not own a house. Rabbi Zepin, I later learned, strongly advised against employing me, on the grounds that I was much too- what is the right word? I suppose "advanced" might be the right word. I don't think he used that word, but I'm trying to use it. On the grounds that he thought, oh look, I'm quibbling, but I have never liked praising myself, I loathe it. I really loathe it, and at every interview, I find this kind of thing very difficult. He felt that I was too frank. He used a different word. And that I would supercede the lay leadership and in a way he was right, I want to be honest, because I will explain that later. I never superceded them, but I was in disagreement with them slightly, over the fact that when I finally got to Cincinnati, with very few exceptions, I found that the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods could have been a non-Jewish organization from their activities at the local levels, even at the national level. You see, I had a very strong Jewish sense and I really felt that if a man from Mars came, he might not have found much difference between going to a Sisterhood meeting and going to a meeting of the women of the Council of Churches or whatever. He was right. However, they insisted on me and I finally agreed on the terms I've told you and Rabbi Zepin and I became the closest of friends. Now it happens that I'm, I don't know if you know this but I guess you do, I am a pacifist, and I do go out of my way to believe that one can make a difference. And that one can respect points of view utterly different from one's own without meaning that one can't develop a real relationship, and actually, we developed a wonderful relationship. I don't mean, please don't misunderstand me, I mean...

Adrienne Scott: Professional?

Dr. Jane Evans: Professional relationship.

Adrienne Scott: I understand.

Dr. Jane Evans: And proving this, I was close to his wife as well as to him. Anyway, by the time, regrettably, that Mrs. Steinfeld died, I felt a) under the obligation that at that moment I couldn't leave when I normally might have, and b) by then I was acutely aware- remember that Hitler came to power in the fall of '33- I was acutely aware of what, now this is hard to explain, I don't mean to imply that I, more than other people, or more than other professionals, saw the Holocaust, but in a way I did. In a way I did. And by then, I truly felt this is not the time I can leave Jewish life. And so, what was to be a temporary thing became a lifetime.

Adrienne Scott: Definitely, I understand. Let me ask you now, we're going to come back to N.F.T.S., but there are so many organizations that you were involved with and it is so hard to ask you all of the questions I have, but I found the Jewish Braille Institute of America particularly interesting. So I wondered if you could tell me a little bit about that.

Dr. Jane Evans: Certainly. In 1931, which was two years before I entered as the professional head of what was then the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, at a biennial convention of the Union of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods in Philadelphia in 1931, a blind rabbi graduate of the Hebrew Union College who lost his sight within six hours after he entered the trenches of World War One, appealed to the women of the biennial, that although the non-Jewish world had any number of services, religious and cultural for the blind, there was no agency, no agency exclusively for the cultural religious help to the Jewish blind. And the women at that convention- remember that this is two years before I'm on the scene- voted what seems today nothing, but it was a big sum in those days- a thousand dollars to establish the Jewish Braille Institute of America, Inc. The actual person who first dreamed of the Jewish Braille Institute of America, Inc. incorporated, was himself a blind man by the name of Leopold Dubov, and he involved the rabbi from HUC, if you remember. I don't know how much you know about this. In WWI, which this was, all seminarians, whether Jewish or Christian, were exempt from the draft. However, some of the HUC students volunteered anyway, and unfortunately, this one young man from HUC volunteered and tragically lost his sight within six hours after being in the trenches. He returned after what was in those days far more limited rehabilitation than what we give today to the HUC. And his sister accompanied him too, his sister was not blind, of course accompanied him to every class and he was eventually ordained.

Adrienne Scott: Is that Leopold Dubov who was ordained?

Dr. Jane Evans: Yes, but I am forgetting the name of the rabbi who was involved with this from HUC.

Adrienne Scott: I could probably find that out.

Dr. Jane Evans: You can find it, and I know it well and it'll come back to me because I knew him well.

Adrienne Scott: Okay.

Dr. Jane Evans: You can find it. One call to the CCAR and they'll give it to you. But the college has it. he is an alumnus in the college. Zola knows the name as well as I do, which has escaped

me at this minute, because I can even see him standing in my memory. I knew him intimately. However, by the time I arrived two years later, the Jewish Braille Institute existed on paper, but it really hadn't gotten anywhere. So I became very active, because I felt that this was a magnificent project of the N.F.T.S. and during the first eight years of the Jewish Braille Institute, I incorporated totally in the budget of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. And although Leopold Dubov, a layman, was the man who first conceived it and the title of executive director of the JBI, I was very involved in furthering the Jewish Braille Institute. Now, that goes back to that early stage, from 1933 on, I served over the years as an officer in many capacities. I became the president of the JBI for, I think, fourteen years or more, and I am now, I mean the honorary president for life, and that's my current title.

Adrienne Scott: So you're still involved with the organization?

Dr. Jane Evans: Oh, heavily. I'm on many committees and at every board meeting, and I'm heavily involved.

Adrienne Scott: If you had to name one particular program or event that the JBI of America Inc. sponsored or did, could you do it?

Dr. Jane Evans: Oh, not one, not one. There are so many. It is a magnificent organization. It is today, by the way, today, let me answer your question and then I'll tell you some other things about it. I can't give you one, we recognize and I say we. It is true I was involved, but it is true and you must recognize this, and I think people don't recognize it to the degree that they should. Any person, whether considered a minor leader or a great leader, has achieved his position not solely by himself, but through the cooperation of many other people. I've never for a moment thought that whatever I have accomplished, and there are those who think I've accomplished a great deal, by no means have I ever believed that it is solely my ability, my intelligence, my knowledge. You must recognize that it is true, yes, I have done certain things, but I've done them in a sense with the help, the cooperation, and perhaps even influence that I have helped to create of many other persons, so that many achievements should never be "I did it," but it should always be "we did it," even if we can't name every single person that is involved. But I do think that this is a very important point and I don't want you to interpret this as I have a certain humility, which I do have. It isn't humility, it is reality. People should not constantly be given credit for what they do as if only they did it. And I believe that applies even to an Albert Einstein, who I've had the pleasure in my lifetime of having personally met and been with and spoken to. Or, Leo Baeck, whom I had a very, I'm sure you know who Leo Baeck was, close relationship with and maybe today I'll tell you a very interesting thing about one of my meetings with him in which I was stunned at something he said. It's a very interesting thing. I'll tell you later.

Adrienne Scott: So, the most significant event or program of the JBI was?

Dr. Jane Evans: (pause) All right, here are some of the things. Surprisingly enough, although Louis Braille, the Frenchman, had developed the Braille Code and although that code had been adapted to many of the languages of the world, it had never been adapted for the Hebrew language-that is, for the Hebrew alphabet. One of the things that the Jewish Braille Institute did,

and of course these things happened in my lifetime, but under no circumstances is it as if I did them, please understand that.

Adrienne Scott: Yes, I understand.

Dr. Jane Evans: I will not allow it. We brought together Hebraists of the world, and others did cooperate. It wasn't the JBI alone, though we had some very brilliant ideas that this had gotten to be overcome and the Hebraists of the world were brought together and we developed Braille for the Hebrew alphabet. Now you must understand what that meant. That meant that in Europe every Yiddishist, and after all we had, although the Holocaust had killed them unfortunately, we still had people who could only speak Yiddish and therefore needed the Hebrew Braille alphabet, whether having survived the Holocaust, they were Yiddishists in this country or anywhere else in the world. Wherever they went, some of them in Israel, they were still Yiddishists before they really learned Hebrew, but there had been no way for a blind Jew to learn the Hebrew alphabet. That's one achievement. But then we realized that blind Jewish children were not being accepted in religious schools of Reform Judaism, Orthodoxy, or Conservatism. Why? You see the attitude over the years, which the Jewish Braille Institute has fought very hard and at times, thank God, successfully with other agencies for the blind. And so it's again "we." The reason that schools were not accepting Jewish children was, on the one hand, they were afraid they would be hurt and that would hurt their insurance or that their insurance wouldn't cover it or they had the concept, which has still been the concept, I regret to say, of the sighted that if you're blind you are in some way not capable, which is utterly, utterly untrue. So we made a very special effort in the Jewish Braille Institute, and this really was *the* Jewish Braille Institute, to develop the ability on the one hand to convince religious schools to accept blind children, that we created in Braille at first. And now today we don't use as much Braille as we use modern technology. All of the literature that a child needed to keep up with his classes in religious school. They were called in the early days "Sunday School" in Reform, as you well know.

Adrienne Scott: Some of them still are.

Dr. Jane Evans: I hope not. All right, then I can give you hundreds of achievements in the Jewish Braille Institute, but I'm skipping.

Adrienne Scott: How about one more?

Dr. Jane Evans: Oh, after WWII and the Holocaust, I became extremely interested in, after the downfall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (I go back now too early), to the Jewish education of Jews who remained in Russia. And we developed a very vast program, which is still tremendously in existence, of Jewish education through the Jewish Braille Institute, of any blind Jews in Russia. So is that enough?

Adrienne Scott: That's wonderful, thank you. And I understand that's only a small taste of it, but I wasn't sure if you were still involved.

Dr. Jane Evans: Oh heavily, very heavily.

Adrienne Scott: Let's move on to a little bit about Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. I know that you were in Cincinnati and I know that an HUC campus is in Cincinnati. So I wonder if you could tell me about how you first became involved with the school?

Dr. Jane Evans: I will tell you the first day I was there. Not quite, but yes, I became very involved with the school because the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, in its very constitution, refers to service to the Hebrew Union College, and Mrs. Eggelson and Rabbi Eggelson, who entertained me the very first day I arrived, which was a Sunday because the next day was the first day, October 16, 1933, then I was in the office. You never saw that office, it was on East 7th, pardon me, it was on 7th Street in downtown Cincinnati in what was called the Merchant's Building, and it was one and a half floors of the Merchant's Building, named the Merchant's Building because a diamond company and many other companies were in that building. The furniture, by the way, was as I'm remembering that I had come out of a design background, a tremendous shock to me, because it was of a synthetic oak material- but don't misunderstand. The offices were clean, I'm not telling you they weren't, but they were anything but what you would expect offices of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation to be and the office of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. It was one room, about, oh I would say a third of the size of this room, only big enough for a desk. It was a very, tiny, little place outside the door for the secretary to sit. However, remembering that Mrs. Eggelson's husband was Rabbi Eggelson within that first week, I went to the Hebrew Union College and was introduced to a number of the rabbis. Excuse me one minute, will you please excuse me?

Adrienne Scott: Of course.

Dr. Jane Evans: Now, where were we?

Adrienne Scott: We were discussing a little bit about the first time you came to HUC.

Dr. Jane Evans: Now, actually I lived originally, the very first years that I was in Cincinnati, I lived on Forest Avenue- practically next door to a name you may not know, Mrs. Jay Walter Fireburg.

Adrienne Scott: No, I'm not familiar with that name.

Dr. Jane Evans: Well, her husband and she were great leaders of the Cincinnati Reform Jewish Community, and she was a great, great leader of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and she financed many of the gifted persons in the musical world. Later I moved into an apartment in Clifton within walking distance of the college. Over the years I was in Cincinnati, I ate many a meal at the college. I regret to say that in the early years I was always sitting with the professors, rather than as I would prefer now. I can't honestly say that I realized this at the time, with the students. But I spent hours over meals and discussing the very distinguished faculty, many of whom became friends of mine, and teachers during the summer courses. But, from the standpoint of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, we were involved in very great issues for the benefit of the college. One was the dormitory, and another was the scholarship fund. And of course, that continues to this day, the scholarship fund.

Adrienne Scott: I was very interested to see that the first person, if I'm not mistaken, that you brought to HUC with the scholarship program was Dr. Jerusalmi, who is now one of the greatest professors on the Cincinnati campus. He is a wonderful linguist.

Dr. Jane Evans: But let me tell you something more interesting. Following the Holocaust and the closing of the academies for higher Jewish education in Germany, the college and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods got together. They decided that, as you know, I think, I hope you know this and if you don't you should research it, because it's very important, they decided to open the campus to the young students that had been at Hecshule. You know about it?

Adrienne Scott: Yes.

Dr. Jane Evans: And the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, and this was under me, again. But, again, we.

Adrienne Scott: We?

Dr. Jane Evans: We, because you know it's not my money and whatever I proposed had to be accepted by the board in the offices, so it is "we" and we had to raise the money from Sisterhoods. It was agreed that we, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, would pay the transportation and the college would admit them, and who was in that first group? One of the greatest names that we had in our very first group, there was Rabbi Plaut, and you know as well as I, of course, the commentary.

Adrienne Scott: Yes, I often thought I heard that if you ask children, or even young adults sometimes, "who wrote the Bible?" They'll say "Gunther Plaut wrote the Bible."

Dr. Jane Evans: I didn't know that.

Adrienne Scott: That's a little joke we have in the Reform world.

Dr. Jane Evans: Yes, and Heschel was also in that group. And, (pause) there were four of five in that group, and you can find that out- They became very distinguished. Later, we helped to also bring over Heinz's brother. Unfortunately, he died fairly young. Plaut would tell you quickly if you got a hold of him in Toronto, who was in that original group.

Adrienne Scott: Thank you. I know that you took classes at HUC. Did you ever have the opportunity to teach at HUC?

Dr. Jane Evans: No.

Adrienne Scott: At HUC?

Dr. Jane Evans: Oh, yes, I have taught. Why did I say no? I've taught both there and here. They have been voluntary classes for students who needed to know a little more about what to expect when they're congregational rabbis.

Adrienne Scott: And did you, yourself, ever consider becoming a rabbi?

Dr. Jane Evans: Well, what you don't know is that I functioned as a rabbi during World War II. (pause) As it happens, you must realize that my lifetime was long before a woman was ordained a rabbi by the HUC-JIR, therefore, I obviously did not consider becoming a rabbi because it wasn't possible. I think you know that during the war, World War II, a great many of our rabbis were in the service and we did not have enough people to service in their absence. But after World War II we had come to New York, well wait a minute, I'll go back to Cincinnati. I'll go back to Cincinnati. There was a period when we were very short of rabbis because they were in the service. I was asked to conduct services, and did, for the high holy days for a very large-and you may know it because I have by now forgotten its exact name, it is the very big institution for the mentally ill, it's out in the counties, I can't remember its name right now. Strangely enough, I guess I had conducted more services for institutionalized Jews than almost anyone else and I've learned a great deal and have taught a number of rabbis what they should know and don't, know about particularly the Yom Kippur service. One must be very careful in dealing with the mentally ill that one does not use too much, only things that involve a sense of guilt because it aggravates their illness. Therefore, I often adapted the ritual more than you would have to or I, if I were dealing with a normal congregation.

Adrienne Scott: That's interesting. I didn't know that.

Dr. Jane Evans: After WWII, every now and then, there was a small congregation somewhere, where I was asked to conduct in the South and there was, however, if you go back to Cincinnati in the early years, a lot of interesting aspects that I have never really recorded and you might find it interesting. Remember these are still early days of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, early in the sense of Reform Judaism. It wasn't the Reform that it is today, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations had rabbis, one of them was a Rabbi Cohen, who traveled to isolated communities where there was no congregation to see if we could establish a congregation. We didn't, in those years, have airplanes as much as today, if at all, and never to these smaller areas, so you went by train, and I remember him saying that by train a traveling salesman always recognized someone else traveling on business, and they would say to him, "What is your business?" and his answer used to be, "Oh, I deal in ideals and ideas and I'm selling ideas and ideals." That puzzled them, "But what's the name of your company?" "Oh, I don't want to give you the name of my company." But from that came the idea, well, now this is a period of Reform I doubt that you know much about, forgive me if you do. There were these many smaller areas, no congregations, and if there was any Jewish education of the children, it was in a private home and we had the concept, we and NFTS, that maybe we could organize Sisterhoods and ultimately, if we could organize Sisterhoods, they might organize a congregation, and literally we did, and this is not a well-known aspect of Reform Judaism that in the early days we, and I was the one who was sent out, at the expense of NFTS. I traveled across the United States to isolated communities and would hold a religious service on a weekend, Friday night or Saturday, very often where they had not had any religious service at all. I'd go

into a community, walk around it, and look for Jewish names on stores and then go in and introduce myself-never as a rabbi. I wasn't a rabbi, but would say that I'm some group. Oh, God, some of those hotels were incredible! And would you come, could we be together as a Jewish community Friday night? And I always had enough of the, there is it, the old UPB prayer book. Not that Union Prayer Book that is used today.

Adrienne Scott: Of course.

Dr. Jane Evans: The very old ones (prayer books). And they would come, and we would have a service, maybe a minyan, but I wasn't severe about whether there was minyan or not, and of course there was no Torah, and then low and behold, I would get them organized if only 9, 10, 12, 13, 14 women enter the Sisterhood, and in many instances, they later formed a congregation.

Adrienne Scott: That's a wonderful achievement, a wonderful achievement. So it's not that much different- what you did and what I do as a student rabbi today. Going to smaller isolated communities and leading services for often there's not a minyan, but some of these places. I serve Natchez, Mississippi, which has 12 members, and the synagogue is beautiful.

Dr. Jane Evans: Where, in Mississippi?

Adrienne Scott: Natchez.

Dr. Jane Evans: Let me tell you, in my day, Natchez was a large one.

Adrienne Scott: It was huge.

Dr. Jane Evans: It was huge, because I spoke there repeatedly. Not repeatedly but several times.

Adrienne Scott: It's a beautiful, beautiful sanctuary.

Dr. Jane Evans: I know it well.

Adrienne Scott: Yes, it's pretty incredible.

Dr. Jane Evans: Do you mean to tell me it's down to 12? I can't believe that.

Adrienne Scott: No children, no children. The youngest person is probably in their 60s.

Dr. Jane Evans: Oh, no.

Adrienne Scott: It's tiny.

Dr. Jane Evans: You see, that is the demographic changes that we're living through.

Adrienne Scott: Yes, and this is what is happening all over Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee.

Dr. Jane Evans: Well, you see, we had Sisterhoods, tiny Sisterhoods in almost every part of those states, and I know they don't have them today, they're gone.

Adrienne Scott: Yes, many of them are gone. One last question, with regard to-well actually two last things-with regard to HUC. The first of which, during your tenure as executive director, women were approved to be ordained as rabbis?

Dr. Jane Evans: I had a very slight role in encouraging that. I proposed to the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods that they study the question, and we did. And then at the next meeting we passed a resolution asking for the ordination of women and we did it.

Adrienne Scott: Wonderful achievement. Then the last question. Did you know Martha Neumark? Would you know that name at all?

Dr. Jane Evans: I know the name. Did I personally know her? No.

Adrienne Scott: Okay, because she was someone who went through all the way and then...

Dr. Jane Evans: I know, I know the whole story.

Adrienne Scott: You know the whole story, okay. What I'd like to do now actually, if it's okay with you, is for you to read through an actual transcript. I have a copy here if you don't have it, of your, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods Executive Board Meeting in 1939. It is one of the things I found as I was looking through the collection at the American Jewish Archives.

Dr. Jane Evans: And I have here if you would be interested in my, I have an excerpt, not the whole thing, an excerpt of my very first 1934 address to the board.

Adrienne Scott: I would love to hear that. I would love to hear that, if you would read that for me. That would be wonderful.

Dr. Jane Evans: I have it. I think I have it, I know I have it. Just a moment. Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. Let me tell you how I happen to have this. My own temple here is Temple Israel in New Rochelle, New York, and on October 25th, 2002, they were kind enough to surprise me with an entire service dedicated to my forthcoming next week, 95th birthday.

Adrienne Scott: Right, on the 31st right? October 31st?

Dr. Jane Evans: They had 3 speakers; I knew nothing about what they were planning. I knew that they, that I was on the bimah that night, and I knew that they were having me on the bimah because my birthday was coming up. At no time did they tell me they were having 3 speakers giving, to be honest, tributes to me. One from the Jewish Braille Institute, one from the Jewish Peace Fellowship and one Ellen Rosenberg, the current director, executive director of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, pardon me, the Women of Reform Judaism, that's its

current name. And to my astonishment in her speech, and I have a copy of it in my hand, she read this: "Jane," I'm embarrassed. "Jane was the sculptress of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods from 1933 until 1977." (I think it was 1976.) "Leading into shape the ingredients that were vital for the success of a religious woman's organization. I do believe the only one to have served the Women of Reform Judaism and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations longer is God. Her very first report, this is what I said "her very first report" this embarrasses me, "clearly shows what a visionary leader she was. She opened her remarks with the following, and this is a direct quote from the records of May 15th, 1934, "it is with pleasure that I present my first report to you as your executive secretary. In so doing it is appropriate that I attempt to crystallize my conception of an organization. It is imperative that we view the pattern as a whole without neglecting to appreciate the texture and quality of the individual threads. The pattern of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods has reflected in the activities of its various committees is a modern projection into practical deed of the ideas of our forbearers. We are faced with the challenge and responsibility of creating a program that will express an intelligent enthusiasm for Judaism. Such an enthusiasm contends itself only when translated into positive action. We must remember that within our heritage is the message of the prophets of Israel, who interpreted religion in terms of service."

Adrienne Scott: That's wonderful. Thank you for sharing that.

Dr. Jane Evans: How old are you?

Adrienne Scott: Twenty-six.

Dr. Jane Evans: I think I was 26 when I wrote that.

Adrienne Scott: May I make a copy of that before I leave?

Dr. Jane Evans: You may.

Adrienne Scott: Thank you, thank you. We've been talking for a long time and I'm very appreciative for everything.

Dr. Jane Evans: Do you want to stop?

Adrienne Scott: I just want to conclude with one last question if that's okay. I know that you don't like accolades and you don't always like to give yourself an inflated ego, but you have done, with many other people, tremendous things for the women's movement and Reform Judaism. And in the interview I read in the *Reform Judaism Magazine* from I think the fall of 1983, there was a quote at the beginning of it that said, "Alexander Shindler head of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations referred to you as the first lady of Reform Judaism."

Dr. Jane Evans: Well, he also has referred to me as well as others as a renaissance woman, because I have been interested in many fields. I don't know if you realize that as a very young person, and most people who have interviewed me have stressed this. I chose as a model for

myself in an age of specialization to live a life of diversification. I've really tried to do that. You see, I try to keep a little balance between whatever it is I do and achieve and hope to achieve professionally, and having at the same time not a concentration in one field only. I presume you know that I was appointed by the secretary of state as a consultant for the drafting of the United Nations, a charter. I have been and still am an active NGO, non-governmental observer, at the UN. I have a grounds pass, as does every NGO. I am there once a week for briefings and for participation. I try to have a bit, a bit (of involvement) because I don't have as much time as I would like. I'd like more than 24 hours in a day my passion is to lead and to think and to find time to think. I thank my father, of blessed memory, for the fact that I had an upbringing that every woman was shocked at, because only my father raised me after the age of 9 months. He said no healthy animal ever died from lack of sleep, so therefore he ruled that no one could tell me to go to bed and no one could tell me to get up. So, then I actually have had, from childhood on, thank God and thanks to him, a very short sleep pattern. He (my father) said it was criminal. If I was interested in doing something at night he would never tell me it's 8:00, 9:00, go to bed. I never had to go to bed until I, myself, decided I wanted to go to bed, which was generally at midnight. And it still is, I go to bed between 12:00 and 1:00 and I get up around 5:00 and I'm very grateful because it gives me time to read, to think, to plan. But I don't know if you know, my great passion for recreation in the summer is that I own a boat and when I have a free weekend I'm on Long Island. I'm a pretty good navigator and I, alone, pilot my boat. And I still do at 95, although the boat is now out of the water for the winter.

Adrienne Scott: That's good. Is there anything else that, oh, I noted you mentioned before something about Leo Baeck?

Dr. Jane Evans: He was in the United States and we, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, as you know, owned the building at 838 5th Avenue. You know that don't you?

Adrienne Scott: Yes.

Dr. Jane Evans: I hope you know that the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods played a very, very great role in making that building possible, and actually, although I don't have it hanging anywhere here, the Union gave me a very beautiful resolution. I've had more resolutions than anyone should ever have, thanking me for the fact that I was the one who conceived, and I was. This is the one thing I will admit. I was the one who, having been shocked by the City Office on 7th Street (in Cincinnati), I was adamant that the Union had to have a building of its own and that the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods should raise the money for it. Now, I conceived, please understand this, I never thought that the building would be in New York. I thought the building would be either on the campus of the Hebrew Union College, or right next to it. On one side of the campus now, as you know, there used to be the Catholic Hospital, on the other side of the campus, which I think the college now owns, was the building that I conceived that we would either enlarge or destroy and rebuild. More recently, at the best of memory, was the one who strongly felt the union should move to New York. Therefore, this is a bit of history which maybe you should know, therefore there was a huge battle over whether the union could leave Cincinnati and move to New York. It was one of the great battles in the history of Reform Judaism. I think you know that. Well, he (Maurice Eisendrath) won the battle and then the committee was formed and I was put on the committee for very obvious reasons, because I had

proposed to the then-president of the National Federation of Temple Sisters, which was Mrs. Leon L. Waters of blessed memory, and that we raise the money for a building, and we raised over half a million dollars. Then that committee, I don't know that this is important to you, but it's sort of interesting, so Maurice and I and the other members of the committee, many of whom were New Yorkers, real estate people and others, met secretly because we were looking all over New York for the building to buy. We could not find any building we could agree on. For our trips to New York Temple Emmanuel loaned us the building they own next to them on East 6th, on the north side of East 65th Street, a building they have since sold, and we were sitting in our and Maurice's office. I had an office too in that building, but his faced 65th Street- mine was in the back. And a real estate man on the committee a little annoyed said, "What do you want that building to be?" And I, looking out the window, looked at the corner, the side corner of 5th Avenue and 65th Street, which had a very beautiful, private mansion, and I said, "Right there," joking please, because as far as I knew and everybody else knew, a family lived in that building. That building had no sign on it for sale and they all laughed. And the man, the real estate man, his name was Mr. Newman, said, "Well, you never know. I'll look into it." And we thought he was nuts. It was a private family living there, we thought. We were wrong. He did look into it, and within two weeks I turned over, again it's we, but I had to do the mechanics, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to buy the southeast corner of 5th Avenue and 65th Street. And that's where we destroyed that building, built a new building... and came here.

Adrienne Scott: So you moved here in the late 80s? 1988?

Dr. Jane Evans: No.

Adrienne Scott: Earlier?

Dr. Jane Evans: No, no, later.

Adrienne Scott: Oh.

Dr. Jane Evans: We opened 838 5th Avenue, which was the building, in the fall of 1951. We started building it at the very beginning of 1950.

Adrienne Scott: Oh, okay.

Dr. Jane Evans: We lived there until when, yes, will you excuse me?

Adrienne Scott: Yes.

Dr. Jane Evans: Remember? I know, you know who Dr. Baeck was, the great leader? And you know that he was in Theresienstadt and you know that he became the president, that he was the president at one time of the World Union of Progressive Judaism? When he was in this country, and we were at 838 5th Avenue and whenever we had a guest from overseas, we put them up in a hotel around the corner, which in those days was called the Oleway Hotel on 64th Street, and has been since taken over and has a new name. It is not an extraordinarily expensive hotel. Maurice Eisendrath, I was extremely close to Maurice. Maurice was supposed to be over there one day at

a certain hour and he couldn't go, and he said, "Jane, you know Mr. Baeck. Please go over and keep him comfortable until I can get there." So I went over and I said, and we chatted, and I said, "Doctor, I am troubled about something I'd like to take up with you." and he said, "Jane, what do you want?" I said, "You know we're writing, I'm writing a new directory for sisterhoods, and I really need a sort of a draft of what their constitution or bylaws should be, and the question is troubling me very much, that there are a number of non-Jewish women today that are in sisterhoods and, after all, we don't feel that's right, and we don't feel, particularly, that if they're in the sisterhood they should never become the president or an officer, or be on the board of the sisterhood. After all, we're the ones in the synagogue, and their members of Catholic or Protestant or whatever, non-Jewish religions and have no intention of ever becoming Jews. But they may be married to a Jew and I don't even know if their home is Jewish. It probably isn't. But they do support various activities like our work for the blind." And he said, "I'm surprised at your narrow-mindedness." And I balked and I said, "Say, what do you mean?" And he said, "What is written over most of your synagogue arks?" And he quoted the Hebrew of course, and you know what he was referring to, he was referring to "My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples." And he said, "What do you think that means?" I firmly, firmly believe in that. You cannot say my house shall be a house of prayer for all people and distinguish among people. You either believe in all people, or you don't. He said, "I would have no objection to a non-Jew participating, I would have no objection to a non-Jewish woman dedicated to the work you do, if she wishes to be in the leadership of your Sisterhood." We respectfully disagreed, but I was shocked. But I thought you might find that interesting.

Adrienne Scott: Very interesting, thank you.

Dr. Jane Evans: Now you know, of course, we never talked about it. I am a pacifist, you know I am one of the founders of the Jewish Braille, pardon me of the Jewish Peace Fellowship, JPF, and with Yehudi Menuhin. I was awarded the Joshua Heschel Prize. I won the Jewish Peace Scholarship. They broke tradition, by the way, in awarding me this, because the tradition is that we never would give the Joshua Heschel award to an officer or a member of the Jewish Peace Fellowship, but they insisted on breaking their own tradition, and I am very honored.

Adrienne Scott: Wonderful.

Dr. Jane Evans: And I guess you know that I've been very active in the World Union for Progressive Judaism. And that I was awarded their international humanitarian award in September of 2000, I think, or 2001, whatever, 2000. Have we had enough?

Adrienne Scott: I think so. Thank you for all of your thoughts and thank you for everything. I realize that this is only a very small part of things that you have done. But there does come a time where we grow tired.

Dr. Jane Evans: Tell me, what is the title of your thesis?

Adrienne Scott: I have it right here, the title of my thesis, which has been accepted by the committee, is An Analysis of Dr. Jane Evans' Professional Contributions to the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.

Dr. Jane Evans: Thank you.

Adrienne Scott: My intent is to span the years of your tenure as the executive Director, but I also understand that I will have to look at a little bit before and a bit after your years as executive director.

Dr. Jane Evans: Now, let me tell you something, the yearbooks of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods do you have those in Cincinnati?

Adrienne Scott: In the archives?

Dr. Jane Evans: In the archives, and that will tell you a great deal.

Adrienne Scott: Yes. It's a very extensive collection- an extremely extensive collection.

Dr. Jane Evans: They know that I have been really very conscientious in getting a lot of material from the union, as well as my own material to the archives, and I'm sorry, that's all I have. I hate to exaggerate, but I have a great deal that I have....Very charming... what's this? What is it?

Adrienne Scott: It's a Sony, it's a type of dictaphone. They're convenient for traveling.

Dr. Jane Evans: It's very good.

Adrienne Scott: Well, I really truly enjoyed speaking with you.

Dr. Jane Evans: Let me say something that may surprise you. To my great regret, and I dearly loved him and knew him and we were dear friends, Jacob Marcus's book is shockingly erroneous. I don't know if you've ever looked at that book.

Adrienne Scott: Which book?

Dr. Jane Evans: The one, I forgot the title now, in which he really, totally misuses the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods and is far more interested in the National Council of Jewish Women.

Adrienne Scott: I'll take that into consideration as I'm doing my research.

Dr. Jane Evans: It's up to God how long I'll be around at 95 years of age. But look, you can always reach me on email, you can reach me on the telephone. I don't know if I gave you my home telephone.

Adrienne Scott: You gave me both of your phone numbers, but I don't have your email address.

Dr. Jane Evans: Now wait a minute, wait a minute, do you want this one or my home?

Adrienne Scott: Whichever one you check more frequently.

Dr. Jane Evans: Then let me just give you a card. Let's eat.

Adrienne Scott: That sounds great. Thank you again very much for your time and it was wonderful meeting with you.

Dr. Jane Evans: I was delighted to be of service. Thank you.

Adrienne Scott: Thank you.

Biographical Sketch – “Exhibit A”

Please write answers on space provided:

Part One: Biographical Information - Background & Biographical Sketch:

1. Please write your full name: Dr. Jane Evans
2. Date of birth: October 31, 1907
3. Place of birth: New York City
4. What were your parents' names: James and Maybelle Holden Evans
5. Were you ever married? _____
6. If the answer to question #5 was yes, please write your spouse's name.

7. Where did you attend high school? Brooklyn, New York
8. Where did you attend college? Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio
9. List your highest degree earned. _____
10. List any honorary degrees awarded to you. Honorary Doctorate of Humane
Letters from HUC-JIR, 1975.

Part Two: Interview Questions to be Recorded on Personal Visit - 11/22/02

1. College attended:
 - a. What was your major in college?
 - b. Were you involved in Jewish organizations in college?
2. Professional Life
 - a. National Federation Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS) Background
 1. How did you become involved in the NFTS?
 2. Were there any individual who helped you get involved?
 - b. Jewish Braille Institute of America (JBI) Background
 1. How did you become involved with the JBI?
 2. Are you still involved with this organization?
 3. What do you think was the greatest event or program in which

you participated within the JBI?

c. Hebrew Union College (HUC) Background

1. When did you first become involved with HUC? Please describe the extent of this involvement.
2. Did you have any professional relationships with the president or professors of HUC?
3. Did you ever have the opportunity to teach at HUC?
4. Did you ever consider becoming a rabbi?
5. One of the controversies during your tenure as Executive Director was the rabbinic ordination of women. Were you involved in this controversy? If so, please explain.
6. Did you know Martha Neumark?

3. Executive Secretary of NFTS

- a. When were you officially named the Executive Secretary of NFTS?
- b. Was your appointment as Executive Secretary controversial? If so, please explain.
- c. Was it a role to which you aspired?

4. The Synagogue Air Program

- a. Please read the attached document.
- b. What was the motivation of this program and was it successful?

5. Leadership of NFTS

- a. As Executive Secretary, you developed a more intense emphasis upon education than your predecessors. Was this controversial? Describe the steps you took to accomplish this goal.
- b. What was the extent of NFTS' involvement in the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ)?
- c. You served as president of the National Peace Conference and Vice-Chairman of the Conference Group of the US National Organization on the UN. How did you become involved with these groups? What was your experience?

A final question to end with if we have time....

You were described as the "First Lady of Reform Judaism" by the late Alexander Schindler. How would you respond to this?

EPILOGUE

On March 24, 2004 - three weeks after this thesis had been completed - Jane Evans died. She was eulogized as a "woman of great intellect, integrity, and energy, who devoted herself to Jewish and philanthropic causes throughout her long and active life." There can be little doubt that Jane Evans's life and career will interest scholars who are interested in analyzing the history of the American Jewish woman during the course of the twentieth century.

During the early stages of my research on this thesis, I had the opportunity to conduct an oral interview with Jane Evans. It is likely that this interview was the last one she gave. A transcript of the interview has been appended to the end of this thesis, and we hope that future researchers will benefit from it. The opportunity to meet Jane Evans personally and ask her to respond to questions that had arisen during the course of my research up to that point in time was a highpoint in my work on this project. Dr. Evans impressed me with the strength and determination that were evident in her character. It was clear that she knew what she wanted to accomplish in life, and she also knew how to achieve those goals. At the time that I met Jane Evans, she was in her mid-nineties. Despite her advanced age, she was still going to her office at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now the Union for Reform Judaism) where she continued to devote herself to an array of women's causes, Jewish concerns, and social welfare organizations.

As she had done for most of her professional career, Jane Evans was still raising money, inspiring change, helping the blind, and so forth. Even at the end of her days, she was still trying to fulfill her commitment to the Jewish notion of Tikkun Olam - making

the world a better place in which to live. A folk expression reminds us that it is impossible to fully understand the motives of an individual without walking in his or her shoes. Although I cannot say that I have walked in Jane Evans' shoes, my research on Jane Evans' career and, particularly, the oral history I conducted with her shortly before her death, has given me a perspective on her life and her professional endeavors. Reflection on her professional accomplishments and her contributions to so many social welfare causes will inevitably lead to admiration for this remarkable woman whose long and productive career will merit closer scrutiny by future researchers in the years that lie ahead.

As I prepare to receive my rabbinic ordination, I hope that I am always guided by Dr. Evans' motivation, dedication, and love for the Jewish people. I know that my research, particularly my oral history project, will serve as a reminder of a "woman of valor" such as Dr. Jane Evans. May her memory continue on as a blessing, a charge, and an important reminder to always forge ahead, albeit through obstacles and challenges. Zichrona L'vracha, may her memory be always for a beautiful and sweet blessing.

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Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

This collection comprises thirty linear feet dating from 1913 to 2000.

The collection includes:

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Biennial Assembly Records

Administrative Records

Circular Files containing Scholarship Records, Youth Activities, Miscellaneous
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