

1-18-1993

Interview no. 791

Albert Schwartz

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Albert Schwartz

INTERVIEWER: Becky Craver

PROJECT: El Paso family owned businesses

DATE OF INTERVIEW: January 14 and 18, 1993

TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO: 791

TRANSCRIPT NO: _____

TRANSCRIBER: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

El Paso native born November 28, 1919. Middle child of Hedwig Mathias and Maurice Schwartz. Worked at Popular most of his life except during World War II.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Discusses family background and the circumstances which led to his parents being in El Paso. Discusses how The Popular determines who the President of the family business will be; business philosophy of The Popular; how the store helped people during the depression; childhood memories; college experiences (UT Austin); story of how he was instrumental in the rescue of his cousins (the Preisz sisters) from Germany at the close of the war; his role in the El Paso chapter of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League; stories his father told of the Mexican Revolution and the store; Villa's raid on Columbus, N.M.; reflections on family owned businesses; retail businesses as a whole.

Length of Interview: 1 hour, 45 minutes Length of Transcript: _____

N/o. 791

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

Name of person interviewed Albert J. Schwartz

Name of interviewer Rebecca Craver

Date(s) of interview January 14 and 18, 1993

Length of interview 1 hr 45 min.

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF PERSON INTERVIEWED

over

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

Tape 1: Middle child of Hedwig Mathias Schwartz and Maurice Schwartz, born in 1919; family background; how his father came to America from Hungary; how the succession of presidents of The Popular has been determined by age and passed to the oldest "like monarchy"; business philosophy of The Popular which is "quality and service"; attitude of management toward employees; how the store helped people during the depression; childhood memories; schools attended; experience at UT-Austin; family trips to California, Europe and Cloudcroft; role of Ogar the family governess; father's expectations for his sons to work at the store; comments about discrimination; his attendance at Volunteer Officers' Candidate School; his rescue of his 4 cousins, the Preisz sisters, who had been recently released from a concentration camp. The rescue happened in Germany at the end of World War II.

Tape 2: El Paso's desegregation ordinance, ~~of 1956~~. He was chairman of community committee that was formed because of a suggestion made by a student at Texas Western College to the ADL, the Jewish Anti-Defamation League. Information includes names of committee members. Recounts stories heard from his father about Mexican revolutionaries shopping at The Popular; once they borrowed \$50,000 from The Popular and paid off the loan in silver bullion; tells story of federalistas and Villistas both shopping in the store at the same time; explains reasons for the Columbus, N.M. raid: that Villa was disgruntled customer of a merchant in Columbus who agreed to sell arms to Villa and then renigged on the deal and Villa came after him, townspeople fired first; The Popular expansion to suburban areas first at Bassett Center in the 1950s or 60s; reflections on the retail business, particularly family-owned businesses.

later 50s

chandise managers, with financial vice-presidents added for annual meetings. There are other meetings conducted for other personnel at regular intervals.

The Popular is not a small-town operation. It has excellent management.⁷⁶

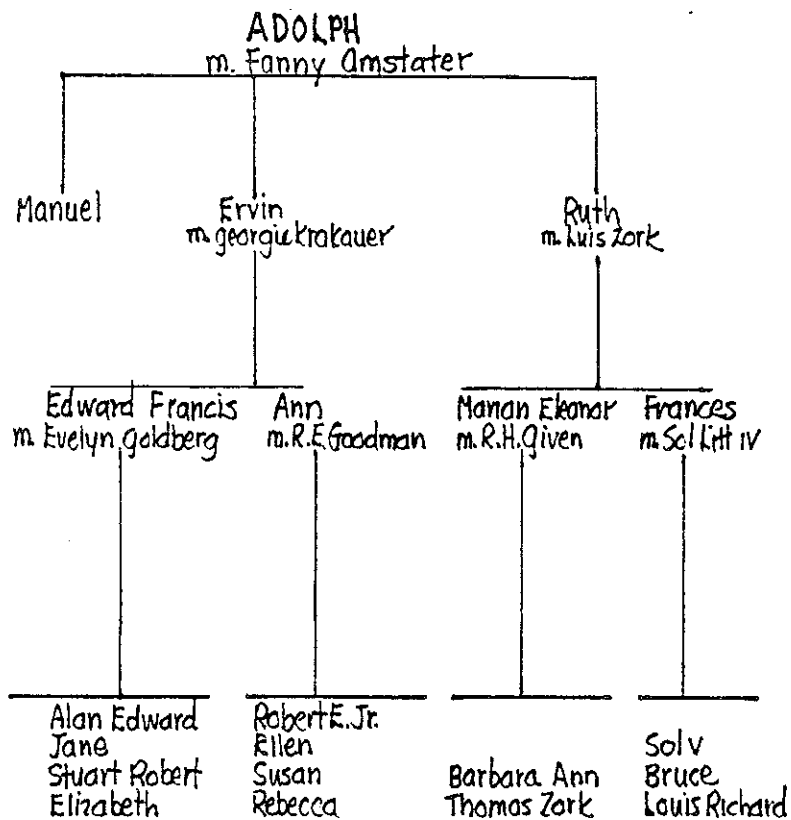
As of 1980, Herbert M. Schwartz and Albert J. Schwartz, grand nephews of Adolph and Fanny Schwartz (sons of Maurice and Hedwig Mathias Schwartz) are respectively president and vice-president/general manager of the firm. Edward F. Schwartz, grandson of Adolph and Fanny Schwartz (son of Ervin and Georgie Schwartz) is vice-president and general merchandise manager of the company. The principal stockholders of this privately-owned company are: Mrs. Luis Schwartz Zork (Ruth) and her children and grandchildren; Mrs. Ervin H. Schwartz (Georgie) and her children and grandchildren, with substantial holdings held by Mrs. Maurice Schwartz, and her children. Edward F. Schwartz is the only Adolph Schwartz descendant who is involved in the direct management of the company.

All three men, Herbert, Albert, and Edward, are devoted watchdogs of national and state legislation, and correspond extensively with state and national representatives. They are keen businessmen, articulate public speakers, and sharp and accurate letter writers. They keep extensive files on business, local, and national matters. They are known in all circles of El Paso life as forthright, totally honest men, and they pride themselves on their family reputation and the good name of the Popular.

The Popular defies the axiom, "Too many relatives in one institution will cause its death." It is not the case of the Popular in El Paso.

WESTERN STUDIES

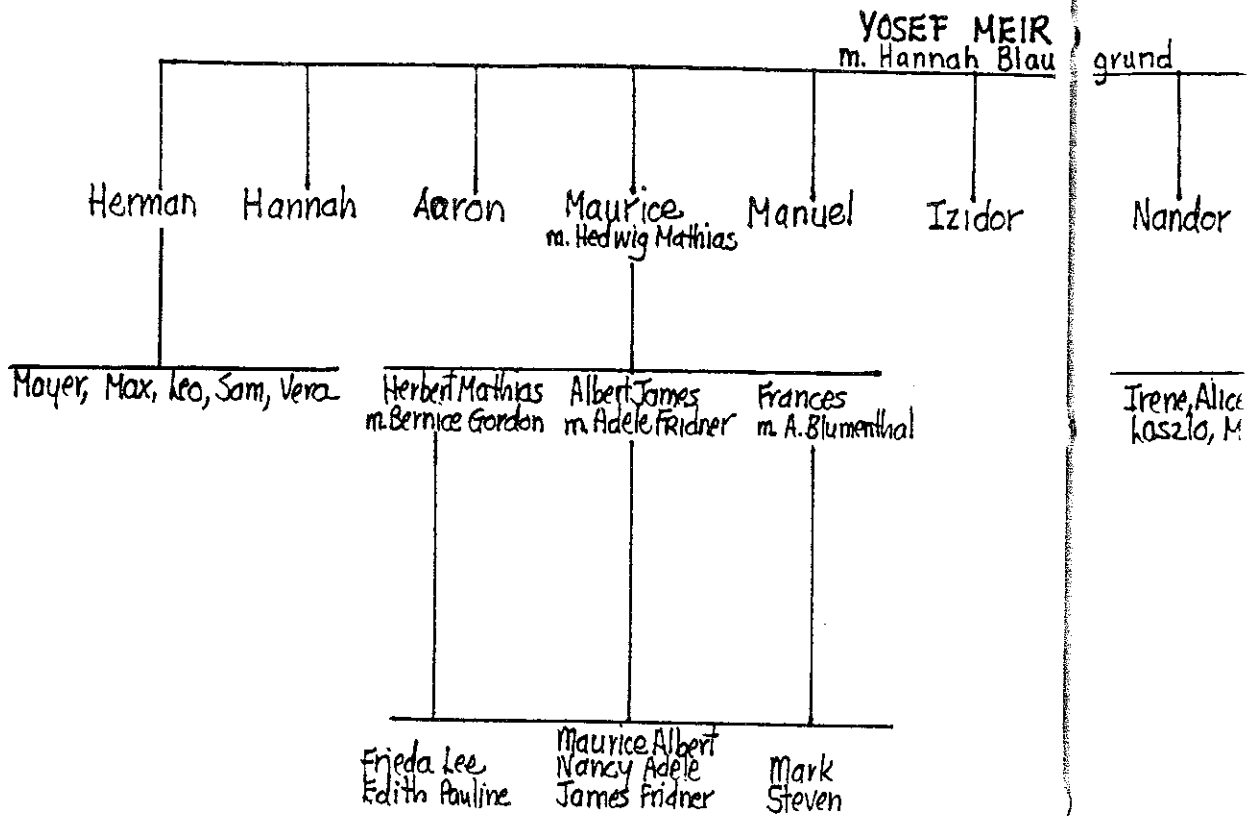
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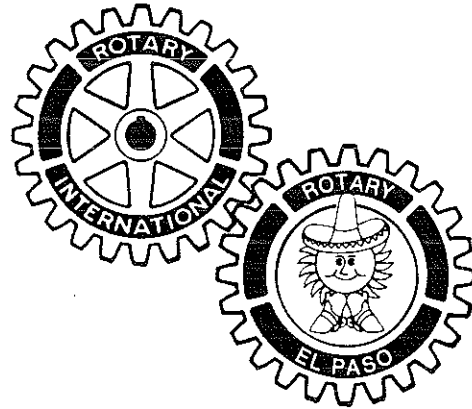
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JANUARY 12, 1984



"With great admiration and affection."

THE ROTARY CLUB OF EL PASO
PRESENTS ITS 1984
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD
to
ALBERT J. SCHWARTZ



Object of Rotary

The object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

- 1 The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;
- 2 High ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying by each Rotarian of his occupation as an opportunity to serve society;
- 3 The application of the ideal of service by every Rotarian to his personal, business and community life;
- 4 The advancement of international understanding, good will, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional men united in the ideal of service.



ALBERT JAMES SCHWARTZ

ALBERT JAMES SCHWARTZ was born in El Paso, Texas on November 28, 1919. He attended El Paso Public Schools and graduated in 1936 from El Paso High School, where he was President of the Student Body.

He received a BBA (1940) from the University of Texas, Austin, where, for three years, he was Student Manager of the University Basketball Team, President of his fraternity, Sigma Alpha Mu, and a member of Cowboys, an honorary service organization.

Immediately after graduation, he was employed by The Popular, a family department store where he had worked from time to time since childhood. In 1942 he enlisted in the Army, where he attained the rank of Captain. He was awarded the Bronze Star while serving in Germany with the 104th Infantry (Timberwolf) Division.

In 1941 he married Adele Fridner of Galveston, Texas, who died in 1979. They had three children, Maurice, Nancy, and James, and five grandchildren, Aaron, Shala, and Alisa Schwartz of Stinson Beach, California, and Jerami and Adam Shecter of Dallas, Texas.

HE IS A MEMBER OF:

Since 1946, he has been active in Community Affairs, as evidenced by the following roster of organizations in which he served as an officer and/or member of the Board of Directors. He was and, in many cases, continues active in:

ADL of B'nai B'rith-El Paso Chairman/Co-Chairman since 1948; now Honorary Chairman
ADL of B'nai B'rith-SW Regional and National Commissioner-1968-1970
American Cancer Society-1st Chairman, El Paso Unit-1949-53; State Board 1957
American Jewish Committee-National Board of Delegates 1959-66
Armed Forces Committee of the Chamber of Commerce-Chairman-1968-69
Association of the U.S. Army-President 1970-71
Better Business Bureau-Treasurer, 1959
Chamber of Commerce-Director-1961
Citizens' Committee on Human Relations-Chairman-1961
Community Chest-Board of Directors, 1955; Publicity Chairman-5 years
Downtown Development Association-1st President,-1956-60.
El Paso Jewish Federation and El Paso Jewish Community Center-President-1952-54; 65-66
El Paso Jewish Federation Housing-Vice President; Chairman-Building Fund 1983
El Paso Jewish Relief Society-Chairman-1962-68
El Paso Kiwanis Club-Board of Directors-1956-57
El Paso Lighthouse for the Blind-Honorary Chairman (1st Fundraising 1981); Board 1982-83
El Paso Social Service Exchange-President-1958
El Paso Symphony Association-Board of Directors 1978-1981
Family Welfare Association-Board of Directors 1951-52
Goodwill Industries-President 1972-74; Chairman, Building Fund 1973-74
Jewish Welfare Board-National Council 1956-58
Joint Distribution Committee, United Jewish Appeal-National Board 1959-68

National Conference of Christians and Jews (El Paso)-Co-Chairman 1975-76
Providence Hospital Building Fund-Captain-1949
Temple Mt. Sinai-Board of Trustees-1968-75
20-30 Club-Board of Directors-1948
University of Texas, M.D. Anderson Cancer Foundation-Associate Board of Visitors-1983
YMCA Building Fund Campaign-Team Co-Chairman 1954-56

AWARDS AND CITATIONS

1949-Distinguished Service Award ("Young Man of the Year")-Jr. Chamber of Commerce-1949
1956-Award for Outstanding Work in Human Relations field, Joint Defense Appeal-1956
Distinguished Alumnus Award-Sigma Alpha Mu-1951
"Outstanding Citizen"-Kiwanis Club-1957
"E" Award of Merit-El Paso High School-1962
"Abba" Award-Hadassah, El Paso Chapter 2-1970
Hannah Solomon Award-El Paso Council of Jewish Women-1976
Americanism Award-National Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith-1978

PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS

1981

Abraham Chavez

Conductor, El Paso Symphony Orchestra

1982

Marian Z. Given

Director, El Paso Child Guidance Center

1983

Christiaan Petrus Fox

Civic Leader

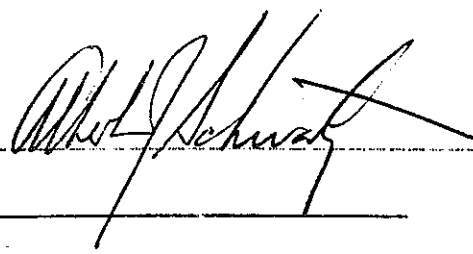
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INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

RELEASE AGREEMENT

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Name of person interviewed Albert J. Schwartz
Name of interviewer Rebecca Cramer
Date(s) of interview January 14, 1993 and January 18, 1993
Subject of interview _____
Approximate time length of interview _____ Number of tapes _____

SIGNATURE OF PERSON INTERVIEWED 
Date _____
Address _____
Phone _____

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWER Rebecca Cramer
Date 1-14-93
Address UTEP
Institute of Oral History
Phone 747-7052