



EUNICE LEVIE

I was on the board of the JCC at the time that Louis Kahn was selected. He made a presentation to the entire board. I wasn't too impressed, he was not a very attractive man; he was pleasant.

There were several members on the board who were far ahead of their time; they were the ones who chose the site out here when it was really farmland, and most people thought they were nuts to want to move that far away.

His sketches and his drawings were fascinating, I thought they were far out. But those with a little more foresight thought they were wonderful.

And it was when it came to dollars that it was apparent we were not going to be able to raise enough money to use his plans for the building, but we could go ahead with the Bath House first. So the pool and the Bath House were built quite a bit before the Center building.

I can't say that I was bowled over by his personality, I was not. He was not an attractive man physically, but once he started speaking you kind of forgot what he looked like.

And the plans were so interesting that he really had the whole board in his hands. It was only when we realized that they would've required more money than we could raise that we just took the Bath House.

I think most people thought it was pretty ugly, including me. It has a very cold feeling; it's concrete with floating roofs. Artistically I thought it was attractive, but

inside I thought it was very cold. Imagine changing your clothes in open rooms made of concrete, not very cuddly. But it was used. So I guess it was accepted by everyone.

As my children were growing, they were very involved, and they would go there to go swimming. My son couldn't wait 'til he was old enough to work at the snack bar. And I used to go occasionally to go swimming with the kids.

Most people who joined loved going. Women used to go out and sit and play cards, mah jong or whatever the game of the day was, and men would go out and snooze, those who could take off during the day. And on weekends it was very crowded because families went out. You could picnic out there, it was very lovely.

You'd hear laughter and splashing and racing in the water. And it was quite attractive early on. It had the happy sounds of an outdoor place that you had very fond memories of.

When I first heard Louis Kahn's name mentioned, I had no idea who he was, but I wasn't too familiar with many architects other than I. M. Pei, you know, a few very famous ones. But when his bio was presented to the board, there were several people who'd heard of him because of being from the University of Pennsylvania.

And a lot of the Trenton people are very Philadelphia-oriented, so some had heard of him. I was very impressed with his credentials, and I'm sure everybody else was.

He was very, very avant-garde for the time. People were building totally different kinds of buildings, and the look that he presented was very attractive.

When the Bath House was completed, I don't think anybody thought it was historic or remarkable in any way. It was not until some years later when his fame had reached its peak that people came to see it.

For the Jewish people what was very interesting, and really worked to a great extent, instead of having all the separate congregations with their little cliques.

now everyone could come together and get to know each other really, as they hadn't before--they all did come and use the Jewish Community Center.