

## PREFACE

The completion of an Oral History of the American Council on Consumer Interests fulfills a goal of numerous Boards of Directors over recent years. As the strong voices and rich repositories of knowledge concerning ACCI began to fade away—the Leland Gordon's; the Henry Harap's—time to capture the past of ACCI and its role in the consumer movement was running out. Awareness of the magnitude of the loss if an Oral History was not undertaken served as an impetus for this project.

For several years, Boards of Directors explored oral history methodology and its cost. This early exploration was thwarted by the financial cost of such a project for ACCI's budget. In 1982, the Board voted to allocate a portion of monies it received from the Shell Foundation to an Oral History of ACCI.

It was my privilege to be asked to direct ACCI's Oral History Project. Early investigation of the methodology of Oral Histories clearly indicated the correlation between success of such an undertaking and the skill and competence of the historian. The search to find an appropriate historian for this project was initiated.

Dr. Norman I. Silber was selected as the Oral Historian for ACCI. He brought to the task a background rich in understanding of the consumer movement and the methodology of oral histories. Dr. Silber had served as the historian for a National Endowment for the Humanities Project which established an archive for consumer history, and recently authored *Test and Protest, The Influence of Consumers Union*. His scholarly approach, knowledge of the consumer movement and enthusiasm were significant components in the success of the project. I am indebted to Norman Silber for his patience with me as a novice in the oral history arena, and his willingness to guide me through the steps of the process.

ACCI's Oral History covers three decades of consumer leadership, from 1954 to 1984. The completed project consists of twenty-four interviews which have been given by legal agreement to ACCI. An additional interview was sealed by its grantor to be released after twenty years.

The tremendous task of transcribing interview tapes, typing edited copies, and coordinating the process of accepting final copies was efficiently and conscientiously carried out over a period of more than three years by my secretary, Gertrude Lashway. Her dedication to the project played a vital role in its completion.

I deeply appreciate the confidence ACCI's Board of Directors expressed by asking me to direct this Oral History. It was a task of special importance to me personally as a number of the early leaders were instrumental in my being involved in the consumer movement and in ACCI.

It is hoped that this history of ACCI from 1954 to 1984 will be helpful to scholars of the consumer movement, and a meaningful legacy to the members of the American Council on Consumer Interests.

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