

December 2006
San Francisco, CA

To Whom it May Concern ;

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to recommend Anita Hecht for any future oral history projects and can state, unequivocally, that she is an absolute delight to work with. Her professionalism, intelligence and ability to respond to my project related requests all contributed to a superb working relationship. I would not hesitate to recommend Ms. Hecht to any potential employer or client.

As the Archivist of Temple Emanu-El, an historic San Francisco congregation founded in 1850, my association with Ms. Hecht began in 2004 when she and I embarked on a project to digitize a series of decade-old oral histories, originally produced by Ms. Hecht at the behest of our Temple's Edith S. Green Oral History Project Committee. These important histories, related by past clergy, board presidents, staff, and members have been technologically revitalized and are now readily accessible in current DVD format for use by researchers interested in our congregation's heritage. Their content ranges from personal accounts of synagogue life in the first quarter of the 20th century to World War II era experiences to an array of congregational programs during the last century. The significance of this project is now even more pronounced given the subsequent demise of a number of the interviewees.

The digitization project that I participated in with Ms. Hecht had its genesis in 1998 when Temple Emanu-El accepted and approved her proposal to engage Life History Services, LLC to conduct and produce twenty oral history interviews with staff, clergy and congregants over a three year period. The total project cost was budgeted at approximately \$80,000. Ms. Hecht worked with a six-person oral history committee selected by the Temple. Together they identified the goals, scope, and format of the project, as well as selected and invited the participation of numerous interviewees representative of diverse experiences, ages, genders, and Temple roles. Ms. Hecht made the initial contacts, conducted pre-interviews, hired videographers and editors, conducted all oral history interviews on broadcast quality video, wrote narrative biographies of each participant, created subject indexes for each interview, and coordinated all aspects of the project, including graphic design, duplication, budgets, scheduling, and final distribution of the materials to two archives and all project participants. She was also hired to create, for public screenings, highlights videos featuring all project interviewees.

As noted above, in 2004, Temple Emanu-El re-engaged Life History Services to digitize the entire collection by transferring, authoring, and creating navigable DVDs from the original betacam videotaped interviews. This endeavor, accomplished in association with me as Temple Archivist, also called upon Ms. Hecht to prepare and manage the project budget and schedule as

well as to design and format the final product and work closely with video editors. The total cost for this project amounted to approximately \$30,000.

In closing, I would like to re-emphasize my respect for Ms. Hecht's professionalism and for the initiative, creativity, and practicality she brought to our project. I think it is also important to comment on her work as an oral historian. As I watched each of the interviews she conducted on behalf of Temple Emanu-El, I was especially struck by the sensitivity with which she guided her subjects. It was readily apparent that her preparation for each interview was extensive and that her ability to gain the trust of each subject and engage him or her in a lively, meaningful conversation was impressive. In addition, the supplementary materials which accompanied each interview could not have been more expertly produced.

Sincerely,

Paula B. Freedman
Archivist
Congregation Emanu-El