

Oral History of: Ruth Kahn Broder
Interviewed by: Michael Berke
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Location of Interview: Max M. Fisher Federation Building
Subject Matter: Women's Philanthropy Dept. of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit

Michael Berke: [00:00:00](#) My name is Michael Berke, and today is March 5, 2018. I am interviewing Ruth Kahn Broder at the Max M. Fisher Federation Building in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. This interview is being recorded as part of the Women's in Leadership Oral History Project. The Women's Philanthropy Department of the Jewish Federation has had several names throughout its history, including Women's Division and Woman's Campaign and Education Department. For the purposes of this interview, we will refer to it by its current name, Women's Philanthropy. Ruth, do you give permission to the Leonard N. Simon's Jewish Community Archives to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use this recording for educational purposes and for use as deemed appropriate by the Archives?

Ruth Broder: [00:00:45](#) Yes.

Berke: [00:00:47](#) Welcome. Glad to be here with you.

Broder: [00:00:49](#) Glad to be here with you, Michael.

Berke: [00:00:50](#) Let's start at the beginning.

Broder: [00:00:51](#) Okay.

Berke: [00:00:52](#) When and where were you born?

Broder: [00:00:57](#) 1929. There, I said it. In Detroit, but my first home was in Highland Park, but I was born at Harper Hospital.

Berke: [00:01:05](#) Have you spent your whole life in Michigan?

Broder: [00:01:08](#) Yes.

Berke: [00:01:08](#) In various towns in Michigan?

Broder: [00:01:10](#) Yes.

Berke: [00:01:11](#) Where'd you go to school?

Broder: [00:01:13](#) First school was Brady, Joy Road and Lawton in Detroit. And then we had moved to Highland Park, back to Highland Park. We had moved to Detroit and then back to Highland Park, so I went to Ferris in the 7th grade, and then I went to Highland Park Junior High and Highland Park Senior High.

Berke: [00:01:33](#) Why Highland Park? How come you were in Highland Park?

Broder: [00:01:36](#) My parents both lived in Highland Park. My mother lived there since birth, in Highland Park. No, that's a lie. Fake news. My mother was born in St. Louis, and when they moved to Detroit, they actually went to the city of Highland Park. My father lived in Harrisville, Michigan. That's what I call my ancestral home. His father moved there when he was 14, from Europe, and he came down and they lived in Highland Park, 'cause his father's business was in Highland Park. So that's the Highland Park connection.

Berke: [00:02:14](#) Good, good. How was religion experienced in your household? Did you have a religious practice?

Broder: [00:02:23](#) Not actually practices. We didn't have Friday night supper. I must admit that one year ... Well, first you have to go back. I come from a very Reform German family that came here in the 1850's. I assume they were Orthodox when they were in Germany, 'cause my grandfather was one of fifteen children, my grandmother was one of eighteen children. So they were Orthodox. I don't think there was anything else you could be. But they became very Reform, very liberal Jews. One of them was in at the beginning of Temple Bethel. And so, customs and things like that were really not celebrated in my house. I went to Sunday school. We knew when the holidays were.

Berke: [00:03:12](#) Where'd you go to Sunday school?

Broder: [00:03:18](#) Temple Beth El. But everything centered around my Grandmother Kahn's house. She lived in also Highland Park. My grandfather died when I was three and a half. I don't remember him at all. Every holiday was at her home. She kept a kosher home, and that's where we all gathered. So at our house, no, we didn't observe Friday night. I even remember, and I don't know when it was, how early it was, but I do remember a Christmas tree in our house, and I remember my brother

coming home from Sunday school one day saying, " We will have no more Christmas trees in this house. We are Jewish." And that was the end of that. But in the home with my parents, and I'm not gonna go forward to when I was married, but in my home, we didn't observe any of these things. Every Seder, every Rosh Hashanah, every Yom Kippur, everything was at my grandmother's house. She was the center of our universe.

- Berke: [00:04:26](#) Interesting. What about philanthropy? How was that practiced, was that practiced, in your house? Was it important to your family?
- Broder: [00:04:32](#) I imagine that it was because I don't remember a time when my mother was not active, and at the Jewish Welfare Federation, as it was in those days, I remember my father being active in a campaign. The Women's Division started in '46 I think, and before that time, there was an organization of women. There was Hadassah, my mother was not active there. There was the Council of Jewish Women, which really came out of Temple Beth El, but she wasn't active in that. She was active in whatever the Women's Division of Federation was in those days.
- Berke: [00:05:16](#) She played a leadership in-
- Broder: [00:05:17](#) At one time she played a leadership role. She had been a pre-campaign chair, along with my mother-in-law, who I didn't know at the time.
- Berke: [00:05:27](#) Did they know each other?
- Broder: [00:05:29](#) Through that. They weren't at the same temple synagogue. My first memory of what the women were doing, and it was probably in 1946, but I don't know whether Israel had, Israel had not become a state yet, but the Women's Division had probably been formed. My first memory of all these women was at Golda Krolik's house, and she kind of became very important to me, good friend of my mother's. She lived down the street from us on Chicago Boulevard at that time. I would visit her daughter.
- Broder: [00:06:12](#) One day I went there after school, and there was a meeting going on in the living room, and my friend went up to the bedroom and I sat on the stairs, which was separate from the living room. It was a typical old house on Chicago Boulevard. There was a meeting going on, all the women sitting in the chairs. Up at the front was Dora [Ehrlich 00:06:33]. I remember

like it was yesterday. She had, I couldn't actually see but I knew what it was, she had a stack of pledge cards in her hand and she was reading the names and the women were announcing out loud. It's the first time I ... And that's, I grew up in Women's Division with that being the modus operandi. She'd read a name, and the woman would say what she was gonna pledge that year, and she'd turn it over and read another name, and then someone would make a pledge and she'd say, "Hm." Did you know Dora [Ehrlich 00:07:07]? Do you remember her?

Berke: [00:07:08](#) Sure. I don't remember her, but I remember her picture on the wall.

Broder: [00:07:11](#) Yeah, outspoken. And she'd say, "Oh, well we'll come back to that one," and she'd put it on the bottom of the pile. By the time it came up, of course the pledge had gone up. And that's my very first memory of being at a Women's Division meeting, or whatever it was called.

Berke: [00:07:29](#) Was that an impetus for you to get involved, or was it just-

Broder: [00:07:32](#) I was still in high school, so it wasn't. 'Cause when you go to college, all this stuff falls away.

Berke: [00:07:39](#) What'd you think when you saw all these women sitting there, if you can remember?

Broder: [00:07:41](#) I thought it was pretty neat. And then at one point, my mother handed me five pledge cards and said, "Go out and solicit these women." No training, no nothing. It was on Clairmount Avenue, near either Lawton or Linwood. These were all two story homes of very poor Jews. I would go in. I came back with nothing. I gave one woman some money, whatever I had, 'cause I could see how poor she was. That was my first experience soliciting.

Berke: [00:08:18](#) Were you involved in any other activities in the community beside Federation, or was that your mainstay?

Broder: [00:08:22](#) That was my mainstay.

Berke: [00:08:24](#) But did you get involved in any other-

Broder: [00:08:25](#) No. When I got out of college, the first thing that happened was they called me to go in the Junior Division, and the day after I got married, got back from my honeymoon, they called me to go into the Women's Division. That's when it really began, although I was active in the Jewish Division. But when I got to

the Women's Division, I was sold on Federation. Even though I belonged to Hadassah and I belonged to Council and belonged to Brandeis and those organizations, I wasn't active there.

Berke: [00:08:58](#) So why Federation? Why did that sort of capture your fancy as opposed to Hadassah? What was it about Federation and the Women's Division and the Women's Philanthropy that captured your interest and your fancy?

Broder: [00:09:12](#) I think it was because my mother was there, and I was working alongside her. It was very interesting at the beginning of Women's Division because women in my generation were working alongside their mothers. It was kind of an interesting thing because Women's Division happened at a certain time, and that was the time we were beginning to get active and our mothers were active there. So I really worked alongside those women. My aunt, Bernice Hopp, you remember that name?

Berke: [00:09:12](#) I do.

Broder: [00:09:42](#) She was a Women's Division president. I believe she was a campaign chair.

Berke: [00:09:48](#) Who were your contemporaries when you first got involved? Who were the people who sort of came up the ranks with you?

Broder: [00:09:54](#) Oh, boy. Now you're really stretching me. Shirley Harris was one. She was a couple years younger than I was, but Shirley's mother and my mother worked side by side in lots of things. So she was there. I mean, I remember the women, and this is probably getting on a little bit, but I remember working with Rosalie [Colbert 00:10:20] and working with Dulcie. Dulcie was a Hadassah person. She came over to Federation too. I'm trying to think who was there. Beverly Peterman, who was a close friend of mine. I'm trying to see all the pictures in my mind of the people in my generation. Carolyn Greenberg. I'll think of others. Other names will come up.

Berke: [00:10:47](#) Yeah. How did you insert yourself? Where did you get involved? Was it mostly campaign, or were there other things that you did in the Women's Department and Women's Philanthropy, beside fundraising?

Broder: [00:11:01](#) No. The answer is no. I never even took leadership training. It just all of a sudden, I think I was pushed. I really do. I think the older women, you know, Ann Daniels and Bernice Hopp and my mother and Celia Broder and Shirley Harris' mother, why I'm

blanking on her name I don't know, and people like that, I think they had some favorites, and I have a feeling I may have been one of them, and they kind of pushed us along from general solicitation, doing G-Day, stuff like that.

Berke: [00:11:41](#) Tell me about G-Day. Just for the sake of this record, describe G-Day.

Broder: [00:11:47](#) All the women got together. One of them for sure was at the state fairgrounds, I remember that. We all picked up our kits. We were handed kits. And in those days, we went door to door because everybody lived in the same neighborhood. You had names and you had addresses, but you could end up with a street. You could end up with Chicago Boulevard. You could end up with Edison, with Longfellow, all these streets, and you could go almost from door to door and every home was a Jewish home. We were just doing the women. I think probably that's how all of us got started.

Berke: [00:12:28](#) Yeah. What other activities were occurring in the Women's Department at that time? Even though you weren't interested, I'm sure you knew about-

Broder: [00:12:35](#) Yeah. There was, you know, leadership training was very important. Why I never took it, I don't know. I'm not sure. We had, later they called it Coffee and Conversation, we called it something else. There were a few programs. There weren't tons. But my interest basically was in the campaign and in the Institute. There was a Women's Division Institute every winter, which was not a fundraiser, it was an educational thing. I was involved in that, but that's really the only educational program I ever ... Communities, that was the name of it. That was really the only organization that I really got in. Eventually I went on a couple boards, but they were all Federation boards. They were all Federation agencies. I was pretty much a Federation person, and very much just in fundraising.

Berke: [00:13:34](#) What about Federation and its agenda appealed to you and was attractive to you? Was it the local community? Was it the Israel and overseas program? Was it a combination of them both?

Broder: [00:13:46](#) Yeah. I was at college when Israel became a state. We didn't know much about the Holocaust at that point. I mean, there were people who knew, but I didn't know that much about it. We had no television. We had radios. We went to newsreels or to newsreel theaters, where you'd sit for an hour and catch up on news, or you'd got to a movie on a Saturday afternoon and

you'd see a newsreel. I knew there was a war on because my brother was there. He was in the Navy.

- Broder: [00:14:27](#) But the Holocaust, they didn't talk about it at Sunday school. I was at Temple Beth El. My rabbi, Rabbi Franklin, was Council for Judaism, Anti-Zionist at the time. So that was kind of the atmosphere that I grew up in, yet I knew we were raising money for Israel. In fact, when I went out that first time when I was in high school it was for Palestine, so it really goes back. But I think, basically when I think about it, I just kind of worked up the ranks in the Women's Division, from division to division until I went further, which we'll get into.
- Berke: [00:15:23](#) Yeah, we will. What about your husband? Was he involved in the Federation campaign fundraising?
- Broder: [00:15:28](#) Yeah, Brewster was involved-
- Berke: [00:15:28](#) Tell me a little bit about that.
- Broder: [00:15:29](#) In first Junior Division. I didn't meet him then. I didn't know him then. Then he went to the Korean War and I knew him when he got back, and we got married the year he got back actually.
- Berke: [00:15:44](#) How'd you meet?
- Broder: [00:15:45](#) He called me up for a date. I had been in the room with him. I had been in a high school sorority. We had been at the same dances. We didn't know each other. My mother knew his mother. I don't know who told him to call me. He called me when he got back from Korea. Then I went off to Europe for two months, and when I got back, we got engaged. So that was that. He was involved ... His father died in 1945. Can I do water quickly?
- Berke: [00:16:20](#) Sure.
- Broder: [00:16:24](#) And Henry Meyers, name you might remember, prominent man in the community, became his mentor. He always said to Brewster, "I want you to get involved in the Jewish community, but a lot of Jews are doing that, so I want you to get involved in the general community too." So he was involved in USO, he was involved in Traveler's Aid and things like that. And you know, he was eventually a president of the Center, was involved in the Jewish Welfare Board, and we took those missions to Israel too. He was into it. He was a Hadassah orphan, which a lot of people in his generation were. His mother, Helen August, Ethel Frank,

Dolly Wetzman, all these women were Hadassah women, and they always were at meetings, and their children were called Hadassah orphans.

Berke: [00:17:25](#) But many of those women, most of those women got involved in Federation as well.

Broder: [00:17:25](#) Yes, they did.

Berke: [00:17:25](#) They were the leadership of the Federation.

Broder: [00:17:25](#) Yeah.

Berke: [00:17:28](#) Were they influential to you when you were coming through the ranks, all those women?

Broder: [00:17:34](#) They did become influential, but I didn't know them at the beginning. But when I went into the Women's Division, I began to meet all of them. They were my mother's generation. So we got to know them and I got to be very pally with Gertrude Wineman, and I loved her. And Golda of course was just an idol of mine, as was her husband Julian, who was ... I mean, this was just a fantastic experience, to be with them. I met Margie Fisher, Frieda Stollman, Tilly Brandwine a little bit later, and I think Frieda really became my mentor. I mean, I was crazy about Frieda. Margie Fisher brought her into Federation. I don't know where she had been before that. But I think Margie brought her in, and she was a fabulous woman. Really.

Berke: [00:18:36](#) I agree.

Broder: [00:18:37](#) Yeah, yeah. I really liked working with her. I liked working with Tilly, and as I said, I loved being with Gertrude Wineman. She was real people. I don't think people know that because she was so elegant. She was Gertrude Wineman. She was big stuff. I worked with Philip Marcuse. See, here I go. I'm doing it.

Berke: [00:19:03](#) Barbara.

Broder: [00:19:04](#) Barbara. She was one of my mother's closest friends, and she was a fabulous woman. She was a president, never a campaign chair. And Helen Rice was a cousin of mine. I had a lot of relatives. She was a campaign chair for three years, but never a president. Those kind of things happened. It was a big moment when ... No, I don't wanna go ahead that far maybe yet. I came into the Women's Division in 1954, and I think when Israel became a state, that was a momentous time in my life. That was

previous. I had an interesting experience with that war. I was up at Michigan and my aunt, Bernice Hopp, had been campaign chair, or very active, and there had been people coming from Israel all the time to speak and ask for money.

Broder: [00:20:17](#) She had met these two young men who were soldiers, and she said, "My niece is in Ann Arbor. Why don't you go up and meet her." I think I knew one of them. I think I had lived next door, a young man who made aliyah and another man I'd never met. They were young. They were in their early 20's. I remember we went out to the airport, Willow Run Airport, and you could go up on the, there was like a balcony, and we could go up and watch the planes coming in and out, and the two of them were telling us all about this war they were involved in. This was right before Israel became a state. They told us about the bombing of the King David Hotel, and they told us all kinds of stuff. It was fascinating. So I think I was in, you know, in for good, except I didn't come out of college for three more years.

Berke: [00:21:12](#) What did your family think of your getting involved in the community?

Broder: [00:21:15](#) My children?

Berke: [00:21:16](#) Well, your children, even you know- [crosstalk 00:21:18]

Broder: [00:21:18](#) Well, my mother I think expected-

Berke: [00:21:18](#) Your mother was involved, but-

Broder: [00:21:20](#) I think it was expected. I don't think there was any hesitation that what I was gonna do was get involved in the community, and I chose to do it in the fundraising and not in the other part of it. It took me a long time to really understand, and we didn't have as much education in those days. That's important to know too. We had the leadership training, we had the Institute, and we had these communities. I don't remember a lot of other programs.

Broder: [00:21:56](#) The Women's Division was structured very differently than it is today, and I was made a vice president. I don't remember what year and I don't remember why, because I was young, and I didn't have a portfolio like they did in years after that. I think I was picked because they were looking to the future. I think that's the same reason that I won the Sylvia Simons Greenberg Award, not because of what I had done. I think they were picking women that they thought would be future leaders. I

don't think they were picking women that had done lots of stuff. I really think so.

- Berke: [00:22:45](#) That's a good purpose for those awards-
- Broder: [00:22:47](#) Yeah, yeah.
- Berke: [00:22:48](#) To cultivate and promote.
- Broder: [00:22:49](#) To cultivate. But now when I hear somebody wins the Sylvia Simons Greenberg Award, they've got a list of things they've been involved in, both in the regular community and in the Jewish community. And don't forget, we didn't have television. There was a war on. We didn't have a lot of causes. We weren't thinking, I wasn't thinking about hunger. I was thinking about racial issues and about labor. That came from my family. We were a very labor-oriented family and a very liberal family. Very liberal. And so even though we didn't participate in stuff, I was very much aware of what was going on in the general community, but that's not where I volunteered. I volunteered at the Federation, and I did Jewish causes.
- Berke: [00:23:47](#) What was the relationship back then, and maybe even talk about the evolution between the Women's Department and the general community, the Men's Department? How did they interact? And just your impressions would be I think important to have for this record.
- Broder: [00:24:05](#) Yeah. I think when it came to major gifts, I think that the husband made his pledge to the campaign and probably, because none of these women worked in these days, we've got to remember that, that there were no, unless they had income of their own when they got married, none of them worked, so all their money came from their husband, so whether or not their husbands told them what to give or gave a certain amount and said, "And you can give this," I don't know how it worked in other homes, and I'm not really 100% sure how it worked in my home.
- Broder: [00:24:51](#) I know that when I started giving a gift and wasn't working, we had worker training, the women, the men didn't do this, and we made, call it a rationale, call it whatever you wanna do it, I was given an allowance by my husband, and I made my decision what I was gonna give to the Federation. He had nothing to do with it. Everything was separate. He said to me, "Can I announce our pledge as one?" And I said, "No, you cannot." I got this I think from my mother, who was very independent.

She was an independent woman when she was 17 years old. She had a very strict German father, and she just broke away somehow. And I think I got that from her, that this is my gift. I will give what I can save up, or I don't know, I didn't have any money of my own. I didn't come from a wealthy family.

Broder: [00:25:58](#) But I just, this is the way we taught women to give. We said, "You are given a certain amount of money to run the house. Therefore, you're the one that is bringing up the children. You're the one that's shopping for the groceries. You tell your husband what you wanna give to the campaign, and you can work it out of your allowance, you can do it any way you wanna do it." We early on had a campaign called the Shoebox Campaign, and actually women did this. We said, "Take a shoebox, put it in your closet, and put a dollar in it every year, and at the end of the year, you will announce that you will be giving \$365 to the campaign." That's how we began moving people up. We made up things and everybody said, "This is easy to do. We can do this." I think if the men didn't appreciate what we were doing ... As a matter of fact, I think they did because we did two things. We gave plus giving and we educated the family.

Berke: [00:27:14](#) I was gonna say that. It seems to me, I mean, I hear what you're saying and I subscribe to that wholeheartedly, but I also believe that women were influential in helping the family decide about what they were gonna give, and it wasn't just the husband saying you can. It would seem to me that the Broder family had consultations like that. Why don't you talk about that a little bit.

Broder: [00:27:41](#) I never talked to my mother-in-law about it. She was widowed very young. She was 47 years old I think when her husband died. She became very active, first in Hadassah, then in the Women's Division. She inherited money, and she had good advice. She had a brother that helped her. She had good lawyers that helped her, and she managed a lot of money because there was a thriving business going, and that was very helpful to her. I never discussed what I was gonna give with my mother-in-law, and I never asked Brewster for advice. I decided what I was gonna give, and I gave it.

Broder: [00:28:34](#) I got in a little bit of trouble when I did it. I had to sell a very valuable painting to pay a pledge at one time, but I did it. I was trying to explain it to somebody once and they said, "Why did you do this?" And I said, "It was here and it was here. I didn't know that I was supposed to do anything else. I was raised somehow or other, I don't know what they said to me, I can't

remember. I was raised to be a philanthropic person. It just happened."

- Berke: [00:29:18](#) So the Women's Department has sort of evolved over the years from back when you just described to what it is currently. What's kind of your impression of the evolution and the pluses, and I don't know if there are any minuses? But why the Women's Department continues to be such an important part of who and what we are and what we do.
- Broder: [00:29:45](#) It is very different. I said to somebody the other day, "This is not my mother's Federation." This is not even my Federation. Everything is so different. It's like night and day. I came to believe in the education part of it. At the beginning, it didn't factor into what I was doing. I began to see how important it was. I think that the way we trained women to ask for money was in a way an education program, and I thank Mildred Grossman for this. What we would do was break into groups of ten women and we would discuss our feelings about giving, and we would discuss the community, and then we would go out and solicit other women face to face, and I think that might have changed too. In fact, I know it has changed. So worker training really became very important to me.
- Broder: [00:30:56](#) When I was campaign chair, Jane Sherman was my workers training person. Instead of having her do a division, I said, "No, you're gonna do worker training." But Mildred Grossman is the one that trained us. She taught us how to solicit and how to evaluate the women we were talking about and how to have a figure in our heads when we went to those women. And somebody said, "You don't know how anybody else lives." And Leah Schneider always said to us, "If it looks like a duck and it walks like a duck and it quacks like a duck, it's a duck." And we all bought into it. We were wrong a lot of times, but it didn't matter 'cause we were right a lot of times. I think that's one thing.
- Broder: [00:31:56](#) The other thing is that I remember when I became the chair of Women's Division Campaign right after Shirley Harris, I had a battle royal with Esther Prussian. She was in charge of pre-campaign. The top was \$500, and she was letting women get away with murder because she worked with their husbands and she knew what their husbands wanted. I sat down with her and we argued and we argued and we argued, and we ended up with a \$2,000 division. That I am proud of, because I think that started women really giving on their own. Now, at the same time there were women who had started to work, but there really were women who had money of their own. So they had to

really go the distance. And now it's, well now you know what it is. But at the that time, \$2,000 was a great deal of money for a woman to be giving.

Berke: [00:33:03](#) Yeah. Just listening to what you said and having a unique perspective, that I sort of worked in the system for a little bit-

Broder: [00:33:03](#) Yes, exactly.

Berke: [00:33:12](#) It's my sense, and I want you to comment on, that the Women's Department back then and its evolution had great impact on the general campaign, the whole educational worker training started in the Women's Division from my perspective, and sort of generated out to others. So speak about the influence that women had on men in the general campaign, in your opinion.

Broder: [00:33:38](#) What happened with me in particular, and happened with Shirley at exactly the same time, it's interesting, I had come through the ranks of the Women's Division. I had gone from general solicitation into, we had \$100 division, we had \$150, you know, we had all these divisions within, and I was just moving up and I moved up to be chairman of pace setters, and then pre-campaign, and always kind of following behind Shirley. When she was the campaign chairman, she made me her associate campaign chairman.

Broder: [00:34:22](#) At some point, when I finished being campaign chair, they asked me to be president of the Women's Division, and I turned it down. They asked me why, and I said, one, I was tired. I had been chairman of pre-campaign, I'd been chairman of pace setters pre-campaign, associate chairman, chairman of Women's Division, eight years of that. I had four children at home. This was enough, and I turned it down. They even sent Ben Jones over to the house to try to talk me into it, but I couldn't. I just didn't wanna do it. I'll tell you, one of my achievements, you're gonna laugh at this, one of my achievements was that I was able to chair a meeting without taking a Valium ahead of time.

Berke: [00:35:19](#) You're right, I laughed.

Broder: [00:35:19](#) Huh?

Berke: [00:35:19](#) I laughed.

Broder: [00:35:23](#) I hated getting up in front of people. I hated being the center of attention. I was a very shy person growing up, and I just, I didn't

like it. I thought, if I'm president, I'm gonna have to do this and this and this and this, and I don't wanna do that. And being campaign chairman was the best job I would ever have in the community. I loved it. It was a fortuitous move on my part, because six months later, Carl Levin asked me to work for him. And had I been chairman of the Women's Division, I wouldn't have been able to do that. Shirley Harris went into the insurance business about at the same time that I went to work for Carl. A few years later, all of a sudden, Shirley Harris and I became vice chairs of the campaign under Irving [Seligman 00:36:16], which I think was really very funny, 'cause I always thought he was a sexist, so somebody talked him into it. I'm being very honest.

Berke: [00:36:25](#)

It's okay.

Broder: [00:36:25](#)

But my days of leadership in the Women's Division really ended in 1978. I stayed on the board, I went into the advisory service council, but I never took a leadership job in the Women's Division again. I think Shirley and I were invited to work with the men because we were both working, and I think they had respect for us. I liked working with them, but I couldn't work with the women anymore because I was working. The men's meetings were at 7:30 in the morning or at night, so that worked out fine for me. I really enjoyed working with the men, I really did. I solicited some of them. One year, Michael Feldman and I together put the men through a workers training program. It was surreal. I have to tell you, it was surreal. We are teaching these men who have solicited a certain way for how many years?

Berke: [00:37:38](#)

Forever.

Broder: [00:37:39](#)

Forever. I was in the room when they did the pledge, how they took pledge cards. I was in the room when they solicited each other. We thought, Michael, who was younger than I was, our birthdays are on the same day by the way, which is strange, the two of us, he was still down with the younger kids, and the two of us go into a room of these guys who have been soliciting a certain way for 20 or 30 years, and we're teaching them how to solicit. It was a surreal event. Never happened again. Only happened once.

Berke: [00:38:21](#)

But that started in Women's Division. That's the way women used-

Broder: [00:38:23](#)

That's the way women did it.

Berke: [00:38:25](#) That's what we just talked about earlier.

Broder: [00:38:27](#) Yeah, yeah.

Berke: [00:38:30](#) You talked earlier about raising, with Esther Prussian, the gift level to \$2,000. The whole worker training thing I think evolved under your guidance. Were there any other things that you were proud of when you were involved in the Women's Division that you felt were driven by the Broder [inaudible 00:38:52].

Broder: [00:38:54](#) I don't know. Honestly, it's a long way back. It's really a long way back. I can't remember. But one thing that I do remember is that whenever I chaired a campaign meeting, and I had never seen this done before, I always spoke about the leadership that came ahead of me and how proud we were that these women were still with us, even though they had all been leaders. And I remember I did that at every meeting I ever went to, is that I always recognized the leaders that came in ahead of me. So that's one thing that I'm kind of proud that I did.

Broder: [00:39:42](#) And other than that, the campaign ran very smoothly. I remember that. And I wasn't the reason for that. It was the caliber of women that I worked with, and I think that's what's so important. When I think back about those women who were so impactful and what they taught ... I mean, what Golda Krolik taught me, she was a great influence on my life. What Frieda Stollman taught me, what Tilly Brandwine taught me. I mean, these women, who nobody today knows anything about in this Federation.

Broder: [00:40:26](#) When I work in the archives, as you know I do, I'm really stunned at who they don't know about, including Fred [Butzel 00:40:39] by the way, and I think that you will hear such different things from the people, from the most recent presidents and the most recent campaign chairs. One of the things that was so different than it is now, is now there's an expectation among the women who take leadership roles. I'm not knocking them, but I don't think it's exactly right, and I'll tell you why. I think when women are asked to be campaign chair today, they are told at the time that then they will become president. We didn't do it that way. You know. What I think is so wrong about it is the fact that there are four other vice presidents today, and they each have a portfolio, and the portfolio is important. It used to be mostly education programs. It's other things now. I mean, I looked at a chart before I knew I was doing this interview, I looked at a chart and I didn't understand it. It's so different. And now education is totally out of this building. It's over at the Center.

- Broder: [00:42:03](#) I have to tell you this, that reminds me that I would sit at meetings and I would say to the women, "I have a feeling we're doing a little bit more than we should do," and they said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "There are programs that we do that should be done at the Jewish Community Center and it should be done at the temples, and I don't know why Federation is doing them, because we're supposed to be raising money." That's how I always felt about my job at Federation. We were supposed to be raising money because there are needs. But when we talked to people, we didn't talk as much about the needs in the community as we talked about Israel, and that's what has changed.
- Berke: [00:43:02](#) Is that a good thing in your opinion?
- Broder: [00:43:04](#) Yes, I do think it's a good thing. I do think it's a good thing, because I think our community, times are not good with everybody. When we were raising money for Israel, that's all we thought about, that Israel needed our money, that Israel had all these people coming in, that Israel had a social gap. We talked about the social gap all the time in the campaign, and we felt that it was our duty to make these things better in Israel, so we didn't say, "JVS has this problem and the home has this problem," and whatever, whatever, whatever, and I think that has changed tremendously.
- Broder: [00:43:52](#) The other thing that has changed even further though is not just our own institutions within the Federation, is now you have hunger and now you have women's issues and now you have civil rights issues, and now you have all these other issues, and homelessness. And I begin to wonder, and I don't know how the younger women are gonna feel about this, and it's gonna be interesting if they talk about it, is whether they think that Federation is gonna be able to keep its importance. To us, it was the only thing that mattered, was the money we raised, basically for Israel, in my day. That was number one.
- Broder: [00:44:50](#) And I don't know anymore. One, because we have so many issues in the United States and in our Jewish community here. And two, because I think, but I don't know this for sure, but I think Israel is developing a class of people who have a lot of money because of the industry, because of the technology, because I think there's more wealth in Israel than there was when we were doing all this. And so I don't know what the future is. Who knows.

Berke: [00:45:35](#) It remains to be seen. But from my perspective, and I don't wanna put words into your mouth, the Women's Department continues to be a vibrant, vital-

Broder: [00:45:43](#) Yes.

Berke: [00:45:44](#) Part of who and what we are.

Broder: [00:45:45](#) Yeah.

Berke: [00:45:46](#) And very instrumental in kind of the fabric of the entire Federation, even more so than when you were. But it started with you guys.

Broder: [00:45:58](#) Yeah.

Berke: [00:45:58](#) I mean, that's where it started.

Broder: [00:45:59](#) It has the same cache that it had in our day.

Berke: [00:46:02](#) Tell me about your relationship with the professional staff. Who were the ones that, as you came up through the ranks, had the greatest influence on you and the interaction? What was your sense of what the professional relationship was and is, should be?

Broder: [00:46:24](#) I'm trying to think. [inaudible 00:46:27] Weinberg, remember her?

Berke: [00:46:28](#) I remember the name, I never met her.

Broder: [00:46:30](#) Barbara [Satinsky 00:46:31] and Lois Brown. Those were the professionals I worked with when I was campaign chair and campaigning. I loved Sol Drachler. There was something so wonderful about him. I've gotten along nicely with most professionals. I was always very honest with the professionals. I told them how I felt about things. I felt it was my right, because as a contributor, I had that right. It became a little different when I worked on the missions. I became a staff person. I had to watch what I said.

Broder: [00:47:22](#) Women's Division is I think very different. I think it's much more, oh, I'm not gonna come up with the word for it. We won't even go there. I think the women today are not as strong as they are about Federation, and I think they love working for Federation, and my feeling is that they will continue to like working for Federation, but I think they are so much more

aware of the world than we were. There's all kinds of reasons. I mean, just the logical reasons. In my day, if we had a television set at the beginning, it was a big thing. Now everything is social media and that sort of thing, and they know so much. They know so much more than we knew, I think.

- Broder: [00:48:21](#) It's interesting, but I've kind of grown up with the times, I find it very fascinating what goes on. I've got a granddaughter who's an organic farmer, and she has taught me so much, and I'm ready to absorb, you see. If my doctor's right and I live to be 120 years old, which he's an Orthodox Jew by the way and that's why he picked that age, I've just got so much more to do and to read about, I feel. And I'm kind of, I'm still very loyal to Federation, but I'm not here as much as I used to be, and I'm not as active in the Women's Division as, I'm thinking that women like Frieda Stolman and women like Tilly Brandwine were active in Federation their whole lives, from the time they started. It's not that it's not important to me, but there's so much more that I wanna be involved in.
- Berke: [00:49:31](#) But you're an observer. I've known you for [inaudible 00:49:34].
- Broder: [00:49:34](#) Yeah, yeah.
- Berke: [00:49:35](#) Are you pleased with the evolution of the Women's Department?
- Broder: [00:49:39](#) Yeah.
- Berke: [00:49:39](#) Who they are and what they're doing?
- Broder: [00:49:42](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm not pleased at, the one thing that upsets me a lot is the fact that they have this now rise to the leadership, and they're promising too much to the women. There are women who are left out. They become vice presidents, and then I don't know where they go, and they're very talented women, and I don't quite know where they go after they've done that.
- Berke: [00:50:17](#) Yeah, but it's interesting to me that way back in the day there used to be Detroit Service Group-
- Broder: [00:50:22](#) Right.
- Berke: [00:50:22](#) Which was the general community campaign, and there was a Women's Department. There's no Detroit Service Group anymore.

Broder: [00:50:29](#) No, no.

Berke: [00:50:29](#) But there is a strong and vibrant and vital Women's Department. What do you attribute that to, Ruth?

Broder: [00:50:37](#) I'm not 100% sure, but I think that the professional staff is more involved in the fundraising than they were when I was involved.

Berke: [00:50:50](#) In the general campaign or-

Broder: [00:50:53](#) In practically everything. And certainly in the top gifts. And I think that all those people that we solicited, person to person, door to door, are now thrown into phone-a-thons and are solicited a different way, that the workforce is a little bit different than it used to be. I think the women are still there, and I certainly hope the men are still there. Somebody, well professional again, getting these million dollar gifts for the centennial fund. This is all professional now.

Berke: [00:51:40](#) Yeah.

Broder: [00:51:40](#) It's a different ballgame.

Berke: [00:51:41](#) Yeah.

Broder: [00:51:42](#) It's not a strictly volunteer ... And now that they've taken education out of this building, it's almost back to just raising money.

Berke: [00:51:53](#) Is that true in the Women's Department too? Do the women still solicit women for their gifts, or has it now shifted to professionals, or is it a combination of-

Broder: [00:52:03](#) You know something? I don't even know. I don't even know. I think the wealthy women are probably solicited by professionals. That's my guess. That's my guess. And phone-a-thons take care of a lot of people. I mean, we didn't call in my day. At general solicitations, we weren't picking pledges of \$1,000. Of course, \$1,000 today was probably our \$100. Who knows.

Berke: [00:52:43](#) Is it important for women to still have their own identity and their own fundraising activity?

Broder: [00:52:45](#) Oh, yes. Yes. More and more so. You see the whole Women's Movement. It's all part of it. The women are becoming very strong. The women in my family were always very independent

and did their own thing. They didn't work. Lois was the first one that went to work, and then I was the second one that went to work. And now everybody works, or most everybody.

- Berke: [00:53:16](#) Does philanthropy continue to be important to you-
- Broder: [00:53:16](#) Yes.
- Berke: [00:53:19](#) In terms of who and what you are and what you do?
- Broder: [00:53:22](#) Yeah, because I think there's a lot that wouldn't get done in this world if it weren't for philanthropy and our beautiful, as Donald Trump would say, beautiful, beautiful tax laws, that we can still deduct this. Because when you look at people like Michael Bloomberg for instance and people like that, that the money that they give to good things, I'm not talking about politics now, I'm talking about how this world is surviving is on the money of these very, very generous people. And you've got the people that started, it's going on in the Jewish world too, like the PJ Library, things like that came out of that family, I think they live in Oklahoma. There's a family that lives in Oklahoma, gives a lot of money to things like education.
- Broder: [00:54:17](#) Two things flash through my mind. I was at a meeting of the Women's Division at 163 Madison Avenue, and we were assigning pledge cards to different women when John Kennedy was shot. I can remember it so distinctly, that somebody walked in the room and said, "The president has just been murdered." That happened at a campaign meeting. There was another thing that went through my mind last night. There was a campaign closing. Do they still have campaign closings? I don't know.
- Broder: [00:55:03](#) They had a big campaign closing meeting at Temple Beth El I think it was, and Frank Lautenberg was the general chairman of UJA and I was the women's chair, and I had to speak. I had just gotten a permanent. I had had very straight hair all my life and had just gotten a permanent and my hair was just not like it is now, but just full of curls, and I stood up there in this whole big Temple Beth El thing, and I said, "I have loved being chairman of the Women's Division. It's an electrifying job. You can tell because the way my hair looks." Lautenberg got up after me and spoke, "You may have curly hair, but look at how bad this job has made me.
- Berke: [00:55:51](#) That's funny.

Broder: [00:55:51](#) And I thought of that last night. I haven't thought about that for years.

Berke: [00:55:55](#) That's a funny story.

Broder: [00:55:56](#) Yeah, yeah.

Berke: [00:55:58](#) What message would you wanna deliver to the women, in terms of from your rich perspective in this community?

Broder: [00:56:05](#) I would say, keep going because we can do it, and we're gonna make it. I feel that we've always more or less done that because we educated our husbands and we educated our children. It took with one of mine. I've lost my identity, you know. I am now Richard Broder's mother. That's how people refer to me. That's how they introduce me. What's his name, Bubba, the other day I met him outside the building, he's with another man, he says, "This is Richard Broder's mother." I said to him, "Bubba, I have a name." Oh, another thing we did Michael, and I don't remember exactly when we did this, but it came out of a Women's Division meeting. I used to be Mrs. Brewster Broder on the stationery and referred to that in newspaper articles, whatever. And I said one day, "I am not Mrs. Brewster Broder. I am Broder. I am Ruth Kahn Broder. Please not that."

Berke: [00:57:09](#) That is a big achievement, Ruth. It really is.

Broder: [00:57:12](#) In this building. And I think the only way we can figure out what year that happened is to find all the stationery and we'll see the change, 'cause it changed on the stationery.

Berke: [00:57:25](#) Well, you know something about the archives. You can go [inaudible 00:57:26].

Broder: [00:57:27](#) Well, I looked for it once. I didn't find the exact year. But where it will be in the annual meeting books, that we got our own names. That was an achievement I thought. That was a great achievement. But I did enjoy working with the men. I really did. And I didn't, I found out some things, you know. I really figured out things. And I spoke up when I felt that the women were ... We used to have four vice presidents, and I remember I was at a small meeting and they said, "Let's have five vice presidents and have one of them be a woman," or something like that.

Broder: [00:58:11](#) And I remember I took umbrage. I said, "Oh, you're telling me a woman can't make it into, you gotta add a place to put the woman?" I don't remember when that happened. It was a small

meeting. Stuart Hertzberg was in charge of that meeting. I just thought of that. Yes. And I think that was, you know, that's where we are today, that I think as a community, as good as we were, and we always felt we were the best community in the country per capita, it took us a heck of a long time to have a woman president. Longer than other communities.

- Berke: [00:58:59](#) Yeah.
- Broder: [00:58:59](#) Yeah.
- Berke: [00:59:00](#) But we did.
- Broder: [00:59:01](#) But we did, finally. And now it's happening.
- Berke: [00:59:07](#) Anything else you'd like to share before we-
- Broder: [00:59:10](#) No.
- Berke: [00:59:11](#) We've sort of, not in exact order of these questions, but we've covered everything that-
- Broder: [00:59:15](#) Have we really?
- Berke: [00:59:16](#) I think so.
- Broder: [00:59:17](#) Yeah.
- Berke: [00:59:17](#) Any other people you wanna acknowledge? You've acknowledged a lot of people through this whole-
- Broder: [00:59:21](#) Yeah. Jennie [Jones], of course. Jane and I, we had a road show, Jane and I, where we did briefing in other communities, and we briefed in Palm Beach. Jennie set it up. We stayed at her house. I remember Jennie so clearly. If you'd get out of your bed to go into the bathroom in the morning, your bed was made when you came back. And briefing with Jane was very interesting. I'm glad I made Jane the briefing chairman. It was a good move on my part.
- Berke: [01:00:02](#) You're right about that.
- Broder: [01:00:04](#) Yeah, it was a good move. It really worked out well. So anyway, I mean, my family was very involved. Milt Mahler. This was a cousin of my father's. My father and brother both worked in the campaign, in the mercantile division.

Berke: [01:00:25](#) Your brother worked for many, many years.

Broder: [01:00:27](#) Yeah. So I mean, I just, I don't remember not being involved in the community. My grandfather, the one that died when I was three and a half years old, he had been president of the Jewish orphanage when we had an orphanage here. We were an involved family. That's pretty good, coming out of Harrisville, Michigan, I'll tell you.

Berke: [01:00:27](#) That's right.

Broder: [01:00:54](#) But there was a lot of involvement. And even, my aunts were involved in the temple too, but I never got into temple politics. That wasn't for me.

Berke: [01:01:11](#) Well, Federation has been your place.

Broder: [01:01:12](#) Federation has been my portfolio.

Berke: [01:01:13](#) And Women's Department particularly.

Broder: [01:01:15](#) Yeah, yeah. And now what I'm doing now, yeah. That's it.

Berke: [01:01:19](#) Thanks, Ruth.

Broder: [01:01:19](#) You're welcome.