

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Samuel Frankel  
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Ruth Broder  
3 DATE OF INTERVIEW: Thursday, April 1, 2004  
4 LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: His office in Troy, Michigan  
5 SUBJECT MATTER: Life story, Jewish community,  
6 Jewish Federation  
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8 MS. BRODER: This is Ruth Broder. I'm conducting an  
9 oral history interview of Sam Frankel at his office in Troy on  
10 April 1st, 2004.

11 Sam, do we have permission to use your words and  
12 thoughts in the future for educational, historical and  
13 documentation?

14 MR. FRANKEL: You certainly do.

15 MS. BRODER: Okay. let's start at the beginning.  
16 Where were you born?

17 MR. FRANKEL: In New York City.

18 MS. BRODER: And your parents, where were they born?

19 MR. FRANKEL: In Poland.

20 MS. BRODER: When did you come to Detroit?

21 MR. FRANKEL: When I was 18 months old.

22 MS. BRODER: So you're a Detroiter.

23 MR. FRANKEL: Practically.

24 MS. BRODER: Where did you live in your childhood?  
25 Where did you start out?

1           **MR. FRANKEL:** I think we lived on Montcalm when I  
2 first was born, and I went to Bishop School.

3           **MS. BRODER:** Bishop. Okay.

4           **MR. FRANKEL:** And then we moved to Sturdevant, and I  
5 went to Hutchinson Intermediate for a year and a half or two  
6 years, and then I went to Central when it opened in 1926,  
7 January of 1926. I was a sophomore, and graduated in January  
8 1929.

9           **MS. BRODER:** Was that when Central is what is now  
10 Wayne, or when they moved out?

11          **MR. FRANKEL:** On Linwood Avenue.

12          **MS. BRODER:** Okay. What about college?

13          **MR. FRANKEL:** I went to the University of Michigan,  
14 was there for a year and a half. I went there from January  
15 1927 or 1928 and left in 1929. In June of '29.

16          **MS. BRODER:** And then where did you go?

17          **MR. FRANKEL:** Wayne State for a year and then to  
18 Detroit College of Law, and that's where I graduated.

19          **MS. BRODER:** So you're a graduate lawyer?

20          **MR. FRANKEL:** Yes.

21          **MS. BRODER:** Did you ever practice law?

22          **MR. FRANKEL:** Six weeks.

23          **MS. BRODER:** And then what did you do?

24          **MR. FRANKEL:** I was in the produce business when I  
25 was practicing law, and this was a family affair. My sister

1 married Ben Morrisman, who came from the produce business.  
2 It's a long story, but anyhow he had food installations in  
3 Becker Supermarkets, and he asked me to join him. I gave up  
4 the law and went in the produce business.

5 **MS. BRODER:** Did you have any feelings about giving  
6 up the law after all that work?

7 **MR. FRANKEL:** My mother looked at me kind of  
8 scornfully and she said, you're doing what? I told her. She  
9 said, well, that's your shot to call.

10 **MS. BRODER:** So you were in the food business for  
11 how long?

12 **MR. FRANKEL:** Until 1951.

13 **MS. BRODER:** And then you veered off again?

14 **MR. FRANKEL:** No. It grew. It kept growing because  
15 the food company I was with grew and became part of Packer's,  
16 and we bought Big Bear, and we later became Wrigley's, and  
17 later became part of a regional chain. We had stores in  
18 Cleveland and stores in Oklahoma and some in Texas, and I was  
19 with that for a long while. And then happy to get out.

20 **MS. BRODER:** And you went from there into?

21 **MR. FRANKEL:** Into the real estate business.

22 **MS. BRODER:** And that's where you've been ever  
23 since.

24 **MR. FRANKEL:** Ever since.

25 **MS. BRODER:** Were you parents in any way involved in

1 the community? Did they do community things or not?

2 **MR. FRANKEL:** No, they weren't. Not really. They  
3 were busy doing their own thing at home, you know.

4 **MS. BRODER:** How many children in your family?

5 **MR. FRANKEL:** Just my sister and myself.

6 **MS. BRODER:** Your community involvement then did not  
7 come from anything that your parents were teaching you; it  
8 came from you.

9 **MR. FRANKEL:** Well, except with my mother. She came  
10 from a large family, and she was the first one over here. And  
11 I remember as a youngster because I could drive a car, I went  
12 around to her brother and helped raise money, and we used to  
13 send for a member of the family every year. And she was  
14 instrumental in bringing over two or three sisters, a couple  
15 brothers and nieces. And so most of the family migrated from  
16 Poland over to Detroit.

17 **MS. BRODER:** And you were involved in that. That's  
18 exciting.

19 **MR. FRANKEL:** We went on Hastings Street to buy a  
20 ticket and send it to them. I forget the name of the place.  
21 Goldman or something. I forget.

22 **MS. BRODER:** That's exciting. So what inspired you  
23 then to become involved in the community? When did that  
24 happen and how did it happen?

25 **MR. FRANKEL:** I don't know. I think it was my

1 mother's teaching, that you help others. I think that's what  
2 rubbed off on me. And I was very independent. When I was 11  
3 years old, my uncle, my father's brother got me a driver's  
4 license. I never went down for an examination. He brought it  
5 to me. We had a Model T and I was better with an automobile  
6 than my father actually. So I drove since I was 11. And I'd  
7 go and visit, do things. He'd buy a piece of property and I'd  
8 go and collect rent after school. He made an entrepreneur out  
9 of me.

10 MS. BRODER: He made it very early on.

11 MR. FRANKEL: Very early on. I never had a bicycle,  
12 but I had an automobile.

13 MS. BRODER: And at 11 you were allowed to drive  
14 around?

15 MR. FRANKEL: Drove a Model T.

16 MS. BRODER: There were no age limits on when you  
17 could drive?

18 MR. FRANKEL: I don't know. It didn't matter. I  
19 think you had to be 16 to get a license. I think so. I'm not  
20 sure because I never went there.

21 And then when I drove my grandmother over, I used to  
22 take her around to visit her son, drive her home and back.

23 MS. BRODER: Independent spirit right from the  
24 beginning.

25 MR. FRANKEL: I became a family man at a young age.

1           **MS. BRODER:** Yes, indeed. So when did you start  
2 your community work? Did you start in the Jewish community  
3 first?

4           **MR. FRANKEL:** Yes. In the produce business I became  
5 friendly with Harry Becker, and they had an event in 1946, a  
6 fund-raiser, and I think it was at Harry's home, and some of  
7 the Jewish fund-raisers were there, principally Lou Berry and  
8 Joe Holtzman and others, and I think Sobeloff was there. I  
9 went with my brother-in-law, who was my partner, and they  
10 called our names and I made a pledge. I didn't know what I  
11 was doing actually.

12           **MS. BRODER:** How much did you pledge?

13           **MR. FRANKEL:** Oh, it's ridiculous. \$10,000.

14           **MS. BRODER:** In 1946.

15           **MR. FRANKEL:** In '46. And when I sat down -- you've  
16 got to stand and announce your pledge. When I sat down, Ben  
17 said to me, what did you do? I said, I'm not sure. So then a  
18 day or two later I worried about where are we going to get the  
19 money to pay for this thing? I went over to the bank on  
20 Michigan and 19th Street and saw the manager and told him I  
21 needed \$10,000, and we signed. And fortunately he gave us a  
22 loan. We paid it back. And that's how we started. But I  
23 never made another one like that.

24           **MS. BRODER:** Oh, yes, you did.

25           **MR. FRANKEL:** Not like that.

1           **MS. BRODER:** Not the same year.

2           **MR. FRANKEL:** No. Never like that because I didn't  
3 know what I was doing really. I was carried away by the  
4 enthusiasm of the audience.

5           **MS. BRODER:** Did you go to Israel early on right  
6 after it became a state?

7           **MR. FRANKEL:** In the '50s I went.

8           **MS. BRODER:** You went that early.

9           **MR. FRANKEL:** Yeah. And with Jean and I, and I took  
10 another couple or someone else. We met someone in Paris who  
11 went on. I forget the exact details.

12           **MS. BRODER:** Did you ever go on any of those real  
13 early missions that some of the Detroiters went on. Early in  
14 the '50s I think there were some missions.

15           **MR. FRANKEL:** Yes. I went. We had one every year.  
16 I went two or three times. I met fellows like Morrie Cohn,  
17 Sid Forbes on one of them one year. I think I was with Irv  
18 Rose on one one year. There were a number of fellows. I  
19 forget now. It's been a long time ago.

20           **MS. BRODER:** When you started volunteering in the  
21 Jewish community, where were your interests? Where did you do  
22 it first?

23           **MR. FRANKEL:** I didn't select. Because maybe I made  
24 the pledge, Soby often concocted an idea, and if they thought  
25 you had the ability or the wherewithal, they appointed you to

1 some sort of committee. So I was asked to join a committee  
2 chaired by Harvey Goldman I think to do development for  
3 something, and I went to meetings. And it turned out that  
4 they were interested in building a Jewish community center  
5 because they had sold Woodward Avenue and didn't have one  
6 actually as a permanent residence. They did some part-time  
7 work at Dexter and Davidson with the Jewish War Veterans, and  
8 there was nothing else.

9           So this committee sat around to figure out where it  
10 should be. If they had the funds, where would they do it and  
11 what would they look like? Well, after much deliberation, we  
12 came up with the idea of Curtis and Meyers. That's a long  
13 story, and I won't go into the detail. But we were trying to  
14 buy -- I think a religious group, a Catholic group, owned it,  
15 and they had an auction, and we were going to buy it. But we  
16 didn't put up an offer early enough, and it was sold to Mr.  
17 Nemer. Mickey's father and his partner bought it.

18           There was another corner at Six Mile and Meyers.  
19 There was talk about a department store buying that so we  
20 forgot about that.

21           So we decided we still had to buy, but to get  
22 another thing going for center activity. So the committee  
23 decided to put one in Oakland County, and we bought Ten Mile  
24 -- I was instrumental with Burt Smoker in buying that site,  
25 and we built that one, designed it. Al Taubman and his



1 father. Al took the contract and his father supervised the  
2 construction. I think the building cost \$200,000 when we  
3 built it.

4 **MS. BRODER:** You're talking about Ten Mile in Oak  
5 Park.

6 **MR. FRANKEL:** Right. And the funny thing is, we had  
7 some repercussions from it. When we decided to build that,  
8 the Jewish community around Huntington Woods said we were  
9 going to ghettoize the area. Would you believe it? And there  
10 was some discussion about that. But finally that was  
11 resolved. So that was built I think in '53 or '54.

12 During that time we finally worked out a deal to buy  
13 the property from Mr. Nemer. Now, we were determined to get  
14 it, so I said, I'm going to go to see Nemer. And I worked for  
15 Irwin Cohn at the time, and he kind of taught me the way  
16 around the world, and he was a very good guy and a smart man.

17 Anyhow, I said, I'm going down to see Nemer, and he  
18 was from Florida. So I flew down there and went over -- they  
19 had a place on the causeway. I went over there, and Mickey  
20 was there, and I said, I'd like to see your father. Well, he  
21 said, he's napping. Some other friends of his were playing  
22 cards. I said, how long do you think I'll have to wait?  
23 Well, I can't wake him. So I figured that was a lost cause.  
24 But we came back, and I told Irwin what happened. We finally  
25 worked it out, and with Sobeloff we engineered a deal. I

1 think he bought it for \$200,000. The Federation gave him the  
2 \$200,000 and give him a gift, for around \$75,000 as his  
3 compensation, profit in the deal, and that's how we acquired  
4 that.

5 And that I felt was my obligation to come up with a  
6 plan. I said, we're going to build a center that's different.  
7 So when I was chairman of the building committee, Jacob Keiden  
8 -- he's still living I believe.

9 **MS. BRODER:** Yes, he is.

10 **MR. FRANKEL:** He was president at the time and I was  
11 chairman of the building committee. I took six fellows that I  
12 felt were interested in the center: Irving Rose, Dick Sloan,  
13 three, four others. We made two groups. We each went to  
14 three cities to look at centers. We came back and digested  
15 what we saw and recommended, and we came up with an idea how  
16 to build it. Hired Paul Tills, the architect. Do you know  
17 Paul?

18 **MS. BRODER:** Sure. Well, I know who he is.

19 **MR. FRANKEL:** He used to do theaters for Whisper and  
20 Wetsman. We decided that we wanted to put an auditorium in  
21 this one, so we wanted someone who could handle the acoustics  
22 well and do it well. It was fun doing this thing entirely.  
23 And Helen DeRoy came through with \$500,000 to include the  
24 auditorium. This was the marvel of Northwest Detroit. But I  
25 remember we had to go to the capital lease committee to

1 justify the loan -- a gift for that building of \$100,000. And  
2 Hy Safran sat on the committee, and said, what makes you think  
3 the place is in the right location? I said, well, we've had a  
4 demographer tell us that in '75 the center of the Jewish  
5 population would be Seven Mile and Schaefer. This was only in  
6 the '50s, '53 or '54.

7 The reason he asked that question, because he was  
8 connected with Shaarey Zedek and they'd gone out and bought  
9 land on Northwestern Highway.

10 **MS. BRODER:** Already.

11 **MR. FRANKEL:** And they'd done a lot of research work  
12 on where the Jewish population was moving, and what would be  
13 convenient, that sort of thing.

14 It turned out that our location didn't live long.  
15 It opened in '59 and closed in '76 or '78. But I thought it  
16 was a great building. It was a lot of fun. And we involved a  
17 lot of new activities in the building. We had drama. We had  
18 the Winers. Melba and Sid Winer were involved.

19 The architect was Louis Redstone. He is now in his  
20 90s, still swims, he and his wife. He paints and draws. We  
21 had areas of activity. So our budget came in a little heavier  
22 than we had planned.

23 At that point already I'm the president of the  
24 Federation. I said, we're short money, so they said, you've  
25 got to see someone at Federation. I said, so who do I see?

1 Max Fisher. So I went to see Max. His office was around  
2 Meyers and Puritan. I told him the story. He was very  
3 patient, very kind. I said, we need some money. He said, how  
4 much? I said, I think \$150,000. He looked at the plans and  
5 said, I think you better cut back on some of your programs. I  
6 thought, well, that we could have done without visiting you.  
7 But that's was the news that I brought back to the group, and  
8 we did have to curtail some activities.

9 But a bond was developed between the center and the  
10 Federation where they supported us, and still do. Kept adding  
11 more money right along. But it's a great facility and it's a  
12 great opportunity to orient people in the community, strangers  
13 and the people that reside there. It does the best job of  
14 telling about Judaism and who you are in the community than  
15 any agency you have, I think.

16 **MS. BRODER:** I think that's a good evaluation.

17 Were you involved again when they made the next move  
18 out to West Bloomfield?

19 **MR. FRANKEL:** No. But I was involved in obtaining  
20 Maple and Drake.

21 **MS. BRODER:** The property.

22 **MR. FRANKEL:** There were about four or five of us,  
23 and we decided that was a good place, and we went to down to  
24 the capital needs committee to tell them to help buy it. And  
25 Bill Berman suggested, do as the archdiocese does: Invest

1 money in land because it will serve your purpose. So we went  
2 to the capital needs committee to help buy it, and once we  
3 found out how much it would cost -- and I'll never forget  
4 this. You remember the name of Louie Tabashnick?

5 **MS. BRODER:** Sure.

6 **MR. FRANKEL:** He was on the capital needs committee.  
7 And I forget the amount we had to pay for the property. He  
8 said, you mean we're going to invest money in land? I said,  
9 yes. He said, why? It doesn't pay anything. It's an expense  
10 to maintain. Well, it is isn't much because they'll take it  
11 off the tax rolls. But I said, how else can we grow? He  
12 said, well, we need the money to invest it in income. We can  
13 buy income stocks with that \$400,000. Anyhow, he was outvoted  
14 and they gave us some money to buy Maple and Drake.

15 **MS. BRODER:** And they built a new center.

16 **MR. FRANKEL:** The sad part was there that once they  
17 bought it, they expected people to build right away, and they  
18 went through inquiries. They sent every agency a letter:  
19 What are your plans? Do you plan to move? If so, where would  
20 it fit? Does this site attract appeal to you? So they wanted  
21 activity right away.

22 You know, when you go into kind of a rural area, you  
23 have got to wait until it matures on its own. You don't push  
24 these things. It's not like taking a drug. You've to got let  
25 it feed on its own. But that's the way it went.

1 MS. BRODER: Well, you had to listen.

2 MR. FRANKEL: Now it's overcrowded.

3 MS. BRODER: Yes. Well, it's in the right place.

4 MR. FRANKEL: Just because the Jewish community  
5 built around it.

6 MS. BRODER: Yeah. It's in the right place. Which  
7 brings us to something else that's out there, which is the  
8 Jewish Academy, which is jumping ahead. I didn't mean to go  
9 there so quickly. But the Jewish Academy is now on that  
10 campus, isn't it?

11 MR. FRANKEL: Yes.

12 MS. BRODER: And you're somewhat involved in the  
13 Jewish Academy.

14 MR. FRANKEL: Yes, I am.

15 MS. BRODER: Well, tell me about it.

16 MR. FRANKEL: Must I?

17 MS. BRODER: Yes, because I'd like to hear how you  
18 got involved. Now you're off in another thing. You're in  
19 Jewish education now.

20 MR. FRANKEL: We've been involved in education for a  
21 long time. When we went to Israel -- this is a long story.

22 MS. BRODER: I know, but I want to hear it.

23 MR. FRANKEL: So let me hold the Academy off for a  
24 minute.

25 MS. BRODER: Yes. Go to Israel first.

1           **MR. FRANKEL:** I became acquainted with the Goldsmith  
2 family, and he and Rabbi Segal, who was the rabbi at Adat  
3 Shalom of which Jean and I were members, were involved in the  
4 development of Hillel. And that's Jewish education. And we  
5 gave some money, but that was nominal.

6           Mr. Goldsmith came to me with his daughter, Barbara,  
7 when she made Aliyah in Israel, and they went through a long  
8 process of putting in their form of Judaism in Israel. You  
9 either were state operated, which they support, which is very  
10 religious, or secular, which you're on your own. And they  
11 wanted to do something similar to what they have here. Well,  
12 you can't do that in Israel unless you get the franchise from  
13 the government. So they had to go to the Kinnestet. And they  
14 worked for a long time, and they finally got a franchise.  
15 They wanted a school.

16           The state of Israel gave them a couple of abandoned  
17 kindergartens, metal huts. I've got pictures of them. So  
18 they gave them one or two of those. But they needed a  
19 building. So Jean and I were going to Israel that year, and  
20 Barbara Goldsmith invited us to meet some of her friends,  
21 people that are involved, show us what they have. We went to  
22 the King David on Saturday evening about ten o'clock, and they  
23 were there, about four or five people were there, and the  
24 Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, who was an awfully nice man.

25           He told me, now that you've got a school, he said,

1 if we match -- it needs \$500,000 -- we'll give you half if you  
2 raise \$250,000. I said, here I go again. And I said, I'll  
3 think about it. And that's what we did. We raised \$250,000,  
4 and they matched it, and we built the first Tali School. It's  
5 called the Jean and Samuel Frankel School. That was built in  
6 '81 I think. And it's grown.

7 We have room for just 530 students. We've added  
8 facilities every couple years. The building has grown. My  
9 son Stanley goes there two or three times a year. Barbara  
10 Goldsmith has been the principal all these years. It's called  
11 the Tali School, an offshoot of Montessori. And they now have  
12 90 tracks around the world. They've got some in Russia. Most  
13 of them in Israel.

14 **MS. BRODER:** Is it more like a --

15 **MR. FRANKEL:** It's like a conservative.

16 **MS. BRODER:** Like we would have here.

17 **MR. FRANKEL:** Yeah, but they don't teach all  
18 conservative in Israel because they're not on the same level.  
19 You're either orthodox or secular.

20 **MS. BRODER:** Right. Right.

21 **MR. FRANKEL:** But each is fighting for a position or  
22 recognition of something. I don't get too much involved in  
23 that.

24 **MS. BRODER:** That's the politics of Israel.

25 So that spiked your interest, I assume, in Jewish



1 education.

2           **MR. FRANKEL:** Yeah. So when we got here -- running  
3 a school is a problem because it's always a loser. The cost  
4 of education keeps going up. The people that want to enroll  
5 their children can't generally afford it. It's -- it's  
6 expensive. So you have to create endowments or subsidies. So  
7 it makes it difficult.

8           Now, if you have too few enrollment, you can't have  
9 a faculty. If you have too many, you can't afford that  
10 either, because each student involves money to support. You  
11 follow me?

12           **MS. BRODER:** Yes.

13           **MR. FRANKEL:** That's the way it goes. So they came  
14 to Jean and I, and we talked about it, and we wrestled with it  
15 and finally succumbed, and we made a pledge, and it's supposed  
16 to be finalized this coming year. Now, when we get that  
17 straightened out, they're going to need new facilities.  
18 They're working out of temporary quarters.

19           **MS. BRODER:** Temporary quarters. But they're on the  
20 Center property, aren't they?

21           **MR. FRANKEL:** Yeah.

22           **MS. BRODER:** How many students in the school?

23           **MR. FRANKEL:** 150 some. They're trying to get up to  
24 about 200, 210, something like that.

25           But the point is, if you've read *The Jewish News*,

1 the graduating class of the Academy has turned out brilliant  
2 students. High grades. Of the 35 that graduated this year,  
3 17 or 20 were accepted at the top colleges in the country, and  
4 they have high grades. They have a good program, good  
5 curriculum. They're just smart kids.

6 **MS. BRODER:** Does the Academy work kind of like the  
7 Hillel Day Schools where they have half day on Jewish topics,  
8 half day on general? How does it work?

9 **MR. FRANKEL:** They go to total curriculum.

10 **MS. BRODER:** It's total curriculum.

11 **MR. FRANKEL:** Yes. And Rabbi Buckman who runs it is  
12 a very capable and brilliant man, and he does a super job with  
13 it. He's in charge of the institution.

14 **MS. BRODER:** What about your involvement in the  
15 Federation per se other than just the Center?

16 **MR. FRANKEL:** I was an officer for a long time, and  
17 then just too much politics. So I decided I was involved in  
18 business, and I didn't have time for all three.

19 **MS. BRODER:** Were you involved in the campaign? The  
20 Allied Jewish Campaign.

21 **MR. FRANKEL:** Yeah, I was in the campaign. In 1971  
22 I think I was chairman of the campaign for two years. One  
23 year with Philip Handelman. The first year alone, and then  
24 the second year he joined me as a co-chairman.

25 **MS. BRODER:** Dave Handelman?

1           **MR. FRANKEL:** Dave Handelman's brother.

2           **MS. BRODER:** Oh, Phil. Okay. Now, did you have  
3 involvement in the hospital, too? What about Sinai Hospital,  
4 did you have any involvement in that?

5           **MR. FRANKEL:** No.

6           **MS. BRODER:** Tell me about receiving the Butzel  
7 Award and how you felt about that.

8           **MR. FRANKEL:** Oh, I was really thrilled about that,  
9 because it's a very select group of people, who've shown their  
10 devotion and interest, concern, dedication. Legitimate  
11 people. It's not politics, I don't think. I'm proud to be  
12 one. I hope it keeps up their good work.

13           **MS. BRODER:** Let's go back a little bit to 1967,  
14 which was kind of like a watershed year, in the history of the  
15 city of Detroit, but I think in the Jewish community, too,  
16 because of Israel. So how did you feel about all the changes  
17 that came about after that?

18           **MR. FRANKEL:** Well, do you know Paul Zuckerman? Do  
19 you remember him?

20           **MS. BRODER:** Oh, yes.

21           **MR. FRANKEL:** He was very much involved at the time,  
22 and he had a position or an arrangement or worked for Israel  
23 in a very high way. He was friendly with Golda Meier and the  
24 prime minister. So when this thing happened, he called a  
25 meeting. I forget where it was. A room packed full of

1 people. And he wanted to raise millions, which he did. We  
2 all got up and did our share.

3 I must say that he, from an actual rolled-up sleeves  
4 working guy, a fellow that was shy and nervous about visiting  
5 with the people, he did a super job. He gave of himself time  
6 and energy and money. And I knew him when he drove a truck.  
7 Before he got involved in Velvet Peanuts. A great guy.

8 You develop a certain -- if you know the person, it  
9 rubs off on you, and you get to pass it onto the next. It  
10 becomes kind of an inner circle and it expands. It grows on  
11 its own momentum. I found that to be the case.

12 **MS. BRODER:** What were your feelings about what  
13 happened in the city of Detroit and the exodus of the Jewish  
14 community?

15 **MR. FRANKEL:** That was a shame. That's a shame.  
16 It's like you build a neighborhood. This is the only  
17 community that I can think of that's had this problem. First,  
18 Detroit physically is a bad deal because half of Detroit is in  
19 Canada. The river divides us. And we have a poor  
20 transportation system. So it hasn't grown in the orthodox way  
21 that most cities grow.

22 But we've had our different groups of people living  
23 in different places. And when the automobile people imported  
24 workers, there was no place for them to live. They moved in.  
25 And finally they kept moving, Detroit to Oak Park. Skipped

1 Hazel Park. Some of them went to Royal Oak. Kept going. So  
2 you either went out Gratiot Avenue, Michigan Avenue or  
3 Woodward Avenue. Those were the only three arteries. You  
4 couldn't go anywhere else or you wound up in the river.

5 So everything has a short life in Detroit. That's  
6 where we're going. Detroit is expanding now, our metropolitan  
7 Detroit is expanding now 40, 50 miles away from the city, and  
8 that's shameful. You have to build. But so be it. Maybe  
9 that's why I'm in Troy. I don't know.

10 **MS. BRODER:** But the interesting thing is that you  
11 obviously still have a feeling for the core city because of  
12 what you did with the symphony.

13 **MR. FRANKEL:** Metropolitan Detroit can't survive  
14 without Detroit, and Detroit has to be built -- I don't know  
15 if they're on the right track yet. They do little things here  
16 and there. But if you drive through the city, it's a lot of  
17 blight. And that's either lack of leadership, interest.  
18 There's been money given to Detroit by federal grants. I  
19 don't think it was spent wisely. And the political climate  
20 wasn't conducive to growth. You know, we had a mayor here  
21 that didn't want whites in Detroit, and there was a lot of  
22 friction. It didn't work right.

23 And I feel sorry for Mayor Kilpatrick. He can't go  
24 too far either.

25 **MS. BRODER:** What brought you to supporting the new

1 Orchestra Hall Max M. Fisher Center? Has the symphony been a  
2 part of your life for a long time?

3 **MR. FRANKEL:** Did you go to Orchestra Hall when you  
4 were a youngster? Maybe not.

5 **MS. BRODER:** No. I started at Music Hall.

6 **MR. FRANKEL:** Music Hall on Madison Avenue.

7 **MS. BRODER:** Yes. And then to Masonic.

8 **MR. FRANKEL:** Masonic was a great institution. I  
9 used to go there to see world events there. Beautiful. And  
10 today it's abandoned. It's not because Masonic Temple is old  
11 and not modern. It's because the neighborhood around it is  
12 not attractive for people to drive. And that was one of the  
13 problems for Orchestra Hall.

14 Orchestra Hall had another problem. The Ford  
15 dealers -- you know, Ford is the only native automobile  
16 company in Detroit. The rest are all immigrants. Dearborn  
17 and Detroit was synonymous. They built Ford Auditorium down  
18 there as a recognition of Ford Motor, and they used that for  
19 the orchestra. Well, that was equipped for bands, not for  
20 music, and they used it for many years, but the acoustics were  
21 poor.

22 And then there was talk about finding another place,  
23 and at one time the Stroh family was going to build one out on  
24 the east side, but I guess the cost was too high and they  
25 couldn't do the mechanics the way they wanted.

1           I was on a board with the president of the symphony,  
2 and we were talking. I said, you know, you're going to have  
3 to leave there one of these days. Why don't you come up to  
4 Orchestra Hall? In the mean time I'd been working on  
5 Orchestra Hall as a saving situation. A fellow by the name of  
6 Paul Ganson took me there one night, and the place was a mess.  
7 And they were selling seats -- maybe you were involved in it.  
8 You could get your name on the seat for \$100 and they figured  
9 they would raise enough money to begin restoring the  
10 auditorium. I said \$100? You're not going to get very far.  
11 You need a million, and you haven't got the receipts. So they  
12 began selling seats for \$1,000. But that didn't help.

13           At any rate, they had a retired General Motors  
14 engineer who pro bono worked for them, and he got mechanics  
15 and people to help, and we put out priorities. The place was  
16 a shamble. We would take one wall and do it. Fix a panel  
17 first. So if people came, they saw a change. Then next month  
18 we'd go across the hall on this side. So it wouldn't all be  
19 in one place. To show there was some activity. And we did  
20 that for a year or two and finally got it straightened out.

21           Frank Stella, who is quite active in the city, a  
22 great guy and a good leader, picked on me and Dick Kughn to  
23 work to restore it all. Dick was supposed to do the fund-  
24 raising and I was supposed to do the work. I think that's the  
25 way it went.

1           We had to put in money, so the three of us each went  
2 to the bank and borrowed a quarter of a million dollars and  
3 used some of that money to restore it, and we finally put it  
4 together so it was presentable.

5           We hired a fellow from Ann Arbor. I think his name  
6 was Prector or something like that, and he would engage  
7 events. One time we had the Moscow Symphony here. From all  
8 over the world. Whichever was available at a price we could  
9 afford, we'd bring them in. That wasn't continuous. We'd  
10 have one month of shows and then we'd have a lapse and then  
11 we'd have another show, but enough to bring people around. So  
12 the place was beginning to get some life in it. The musty air  
13 was removed and it had a life in there then.

14           That's when I talked to the president of Detroit  
15 Edison and president of the Detroit Symphony, Mack something,  
16 and I said, if you've got to move, why don't you consider  
17 coming back to Orchestra Hall. And at that point, to do that,  
18 everything happened. Steve Miller from Chrysler, who I knew  
19 as a great guy, got involved, and Deborah Border came from  
20 Minneapolis down there and she worked for a couple years.  
21 Smart and very capable. And the thing began coming together.  
22 I think she was involved and instrumental in getting Namee  
23 Jarvi to be conductor. And Mark Volpe came and he was here a  
24 few years. And it began to grow.

25           The trouble was we had never had a person that was



1 real knowledgeable about music and how to run a symphony work  
2 for us. Never did. We made an effort. We all liked music as  
3 an audience but didn't really understand it and know how to  
4 work with it, and that takes years of training and knowledge.  
5 Now we've got the facility and the people to run it.

6 **MS. BRODER:** You got Orchestra Hall and you had a  
7 role to play when it expanded into this great big music  
8 center. They called on you again obviously.

9 **MR. FRANKEL:** Yes. Peter Cummings became involved.  
10 He's done a great job fund-raising and working. He talked to  
11 his father-in-law and got him to give them some money, and  
12 they built the Max, that part of it.

13 **MS. BRODER:** And you were involved in that, too.

14 **MR. FRANKEL:** Well, yes.

15 **MS. BRODER:** Yes. You're too modest. You're too  
16 modest, Sam.

17 One thing we haven't talked about at all, so we've  
18 got to move back a little bit is your wife and children.

19 **MR. FRANKEL:** Yes.

20 **MS. BRODER:** Who's your wife? What was her maiden  
21 name?

22 **MR. FRANKEL:** Grosberg. Jean Grosberg.

23 **MS. BRODER:** And you have how many children?

24 **MR. FRANKEL:** Four.

25 **MS. BRODER:** Name them.

1           **MR. FRANKEL:**  Stuart and his wife Maxine; they have  
2 two children.  Stanley and his wife Judy, and they have two  
3 children.  Bruce and his wife Gail, and they have two  
4 children.  Joellen and her husband, George Nieman; they have  
5 three children.  So we have nine grandchildren.  We have one  
6 great grandson and a second granddaughter due next month.

7           **MS. BRODER:**  That's terrific.

8           **MR. FRANKEL:**  That's it, and that's the whole  
9 Frankel tribe.

10          **MS. BRODER:**  That's a good tribe.

11                   We're going to get really serious now.  What do you  
12 think are the major issues facing the Jewish community today?  
13 And let's not talk about Israel yet.  But what do you think  
14 are the major issues for the Jewish community in Detroit and  
15 in this country?

16           **MR. FRANKEL:**  Well, I really don't understand the  
17 problem anymore, it's grown in such dimensions.  First,  
18 there's been a lot of new elements.  You know, when I was  
19 young, Detroit was a small, compact city, like most cities  
20 were.  We've grown helter skelter, so we're all over.  Our  
21 population's grown by a hundred million or more in my  
22 lifetime.  And this is a wonderful country to live in.  
23 Freedom of thinking.  You can do anything you want within the  
24 law.  You can express yourself.  Sometimes you talk out of  
25 turn, you get your wrist slapped, but you can still speak out.

1 And as a result you get sometimes built into the doctrine, of  
2 necessity, things that can wait or should be rethought without  
3 jumping into them. You know, once you get into them and you  
4 get your feet wet, it's difficult to dry them off and get to  
5 walking again. So that I think is the problem in our country,  
6 but that I think will always continue here because the country  
7 permits it. And that's going on now politically in our  
8 environment.

9 About Israel, I don't understand at all. That to me  
10 is a confusion. We have developed so much antagonism between  
11 the Jews and particularly Islamists, and maybe we resort to  
12 what we were taught or what our grandparents learned or our  
13 forefathers learned that isn't practical today anymore, and  
14 that's influencing our thinking. I'm not sure.

15 There's got to be an open mind and a privilege to  
16 live with. I'll tell you, I've learned a little bit about  
17 this on my own on a very small scale. Being in the real  
18 estate business and driving around, and every summer I used to  
19 take the kids for a ride with Jean. We'd go for a picnic and  
20 take a ride, and I'd look at areas for places to build or to  
21 buy or sell or whatever. The reason I am here was because I  
22 was involved through my arrangements with Jay Kogan, building  
23 north of Oakland Mall.

24 And I said Troy has got great opportunity and  
25 nothing but vacant land and poor as church mice. If there was

1 a good piece of land, Birmingham would annex it from Troy.  
2 Birmingham's city dump was in the city of Troy. That's the  
3 way they treated Troy. Troy was a doormat for junk. But it  
4 had a lot of land, it was reasonably priced, and it was in a  
5 good location, just east of Birmingham and out all the way to  
6 the lake. A lot of people east of us here. And the other way  
7 was good. Sixteen Mile Road came all the way from the lake  
8 down to Woodward Avenue. Once we were across Woodward, we  
9 were in trouble because that was all residential.

10 But I found this land here and put this together,  
11 and you know, it was a pleasure dealing with the city  
12 forefathers here, building this community originally, because  
13 they had nothing; they had no tax base, they had nothing. We  
14 decided here and booked 46 properties in six weeks. You  
15 wouldn't believe it. From a half acre to two acres. A long  
16 stretch. It all started from a small piece of land and it  
17 kept growing. The city helped us and we did a pretty good  
18 job.

19 Once we got up to a point where it was big and the  
20 neighbors saw us getting big, they felt a challenge. Now,  
21 that's human nature. You know, when you saw green grass last  
22 week and next week you see something else, it begins the  
23 challenges. So they figured maybe we wanted to take over the  
24 city of Troy. That would be the last thing anybody would  
25 want, but that's what they thought, or some of them thought:

1 we were crowding them.

2 I remember at one time talking to neighbors here to  
3 get a rezoning, and I called some neighbors and I said, how do  
4 you feel about this? Well, we don't care. I said, What do  
5 you mean you don't care? You live in Troy. Well, we live in  
6 the Birmingham school district, and we have a Birmingham  
7 mailing address.

8 Now, when we came to build here and across the  
9 street, I couldn't do anything because they figured I was  
10 trying to take over the city. Now, that would be the last  
11 thing any man with brains would want to do. What would you  
12 want to take over a city for. They've got their own problems.  
13 Just live with them and help them or let them help you.

14 Finally, after a period of time it worked. And  
15 fortunately, we've been very fortunate, we built this thing  
16 across the street and here, and it's one of the finest in the  
17 country, and I think it's got a pretty long life yet, and we  
18 spent a lot of time and money watching it, and I'm as happy as  
19 a boy. That's why I'll take whatever it generates and plant  
20 seeds in other places. And my priority -- I shouldn't say  
21 mine -- our priority, Jean and mine, is education and health.  
22 Period. Oh, we have other things, but that's our prime thing.