1	ORAL HISTORY OF: Jos	eph Orley
2	INTERVIEWED BY: Sha	ron Alterman
3	DATE OF INTERVIEW: Tue	sday, June 21, 2005
4	LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Jew	rish Federation of Metropolitan
5	Det	roit
6	SUBJECT MATTER: Jew	rish community life
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8	MS. ALTERMAN: Good mo	rning. I am Sharon Alterman
9	and I have the privilege to interview Mr. Joe Orley for our	
10	Leonard M. Simons Oral History Project. Today is June the	
11	21st, and we are at the Max M. Fisher Federation	
12	Building.	
13	Mr. Orley, do I have your permission to use your	
14	words and thoughts for historic research and documentation?	
15	MR. ORLEY: I would say yes.	
16	MS. ALTERMAN: Thank you very much.	
17	MR. ORLEY: I will say yes.	
18	MS. ALTERMAN: As I sp	ooke to you on the phone last
19	week, I said that you have such	a wonderful story to tell
20	about you and your family and you	our involvement, and we're very
21	eager to hear what you have to s	ay this morning. So let's
22	start from the beginning. When and where were you born?	
23	MR. ORLEY: I was born right here in Detroit. I	
24	think it was called Women's Hosp	oital. I was born December

25 22nd, 1920, just before Christmas, maybe during Hanukkah, I

don't know, and here I am.

MS. ALTERMAN: Who were your parents?

MR. ORLEY: My mothers name was Celia Orley. Her maiden name was Goldberg. She had a family here, and they came from Vilna, which is in Lithuania. They originally settled in Toledo. Her father had gone ahead of her and he had established some sort of situation here, and while they were on the ship coming over, he had pneumonia and died. He's buried I believe in the Jewish cemetery in Toledo.

They all immigrated to Detroit. My mother met my father, who had come here after he was discharged from the American calvary. He was a calvary man in American army.

He had come from the Ukraine. At one time I heard it was called Kremenchuk, but I can't vouch for that. A little town near Kiev.

As I was telling you earlier, they were about to leave. They had everything ready to go. He was 12 years old and he had three siblings with him, two sisters and a brother and a mother. Two weeks before they were ready to leave is when his father passed away, but they had the tickets and the passports and they had to leave.

They got to Ellis Island and they had a problem getting off because evidently they found a murmur or something in my grandmother's heart, which really wasn't so. They eventually went to HAS She had no English, no money,

nothing, and took care of her. She had brothers and sisters in New York City, and they settled there. When my father was 18 or 19 he enlisted in the American Army and fought in Europe against the Germans.

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After the war he came to Detroit and settled, His mother knew my mother's mother, and they introduced them.

That's the story. That's where the story begins and that's where I came to be.

MS. ALTERMAN: What did your father do when he arrived in Detroit?

MR. ORLEY: I don't know. He told me he worked in a warehouse or something. They had to make a living and so they worked, and that was life. My uncle had a coal business, and I believe my father later went on to him. Then he became involved in real estate and he stayed in that forever. He loved that business. That's basically where we started out.

MS. ALTERMAN: Where did you live as a youngster?

MR. ORLEY: When I was five years old, we moved to a house on Pingree near Dexter. When I was four and a half my mother decided it was time for me to go to school. There was a school down the street, Angell School, and I went there.

Along came my brother Graham, and after that, about 1930 my sister came along, and that made up our family. We managed to enjoy and live in Detroit and no thoughts of ever leaving,, even though there was a Great Depression on and

things were tough here.

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MS. ALTERMAN: What do you recall about the Depression?

MR. ORLEY: I don't know when it began, but I was 9 years old in '29, so I was 10 in '30. We lost the house. Everybody foreclosed. We moved to a different neighborhood, a Jewish neighborhood, and I went to all the public schools, Angell, Durfee, Central. And that was my life.

MS. ALTERMAN: What was it like growing up in your home? Was it a religious home?

MR. ORLEY: Yes, it was. My mother kept kosher. She went to shul. If I didn't get to shul on time on the holidays, I was in real trouble, as we all were in our family. I was a Cub Scout at Shaarey Zedek when I was about 10. And I went to kindergarten at Shaarey Zedek in the old Twelfth Street building before they moved to Chicago Boulevard. And that's how the progression was. So we've been members of Shaarey Zedek since I went to kindergarten there, so 79 or 80 years. And now my son is now the president, which I'm very proud of. So that's the progression that we made in this lovely city that I live in.

MS. ALTERMAN: You said you went to Durfee and Central. What were your interests as a young man? Were you a good student?

MR. ORLEY: Fair I guess.

MS. ALTERMAN: Well, I saw that you went to the University of Pennsylvania.

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MR. ORLEY: Well, I couldn't get in today. There's no way I could make it today. No way in this whole wide world could I make it today.

MS. ALTERMAN: But that was a prestigious school, wasn't it?

MR. ORLEY: Yes. More so today. You know, those were early years and things were different then, Sharon. The world was different. There wasn't the affluence that we have today. When I was 16, I didn't get a car. Everything was different. Money was different. I remember my Uncle Dave Goldberg was active, as was my father, in doing things. There were poor people who didn't even have food in the Depression, and these things leave lasting marks on you.

When I went to Sunday school, it was in a rented building on Twelfth and Clairmont. And things were tough. They lost the building. They couldn't build a building. I don't remember people sleeping in the basement but they might have. It's very possible.

What I do remember is we didn't live that far from Shaarey Zedek on Chicago Boulevard, and my mother and I and Graham -- maybe my dad -- all walked to the groundbreaking of the Chicago Boulevard synagogue, and that I remember very vividly. I think there are pictures there at Shaarey Zedek,

but when I go through the halls there, I can't find the picture of my graduating class, because I went all through Sunday school there.

MS. ALTERMAN: Judy Cantor probably has them.

MR. ORLEY: Judy probably does. A lovely, lovely girl. Her brother and I were in the same class, so I go back long years with her. She's done a great job.

MS. ALTERMAN: Did you have a bar mitzvah at Shaarey Zedek?

MR. ORLEY: No, I didn't. I don't know why. I went to United Hebrew Schools. Somehow or other the teachers there wanted me to have it there, so I believe I had it at United Hebrew Schools.

MS. ALTERMAN: You talked about your Uncle Dave and your father and their involvement in the community.

MR. ORLEY: With pennies or dollars, but people were poor, destitute in those days.

MS. ALTERMAN: What did your mother do? Was she involved in any community group?

MR. ORLEY: She was a homemaker. But oh, yeah, she was involved in Hadassah, Shaarey Zedek. Very fond of Shaarey Zedek. One of the lights of her life. She always wanted to live near Shaarey Zedek. We were going to move out to the northwest, and she went to Rabbi Adler and said what I'm going to do? I'm not going to be able to walk to shul if we get

this house. He said, if it's a matter of coming or not coming, you drive. So that pacified her and she came.

MS. ALTERMAN: Do you have any recollection of family stories that are part of your family lore? Anything that happened during your years that you'd like to put on tape?

MR. ORLEY: I'll never forget summer. Summer was summer, no air conditioning. On many evenings my mother and my aunts would make a big dinner, and we would all go to Belle Isle and play ball, fuss around, and have a picnic until it got dark. We could swim there and everything. So that I remember vividly.

MS. ALTERMAN: We already mentioned that you went to the University of Pennsylvania. After you graduated from Central, what made you select that school?

MR. ORLEY: I wanted to get some good business background, and I liked marketing and I liked accounting and things like that. Then the war came on, and off we went to the war.

MS. ALTERMAN: Where were you during the war?

MR. ORLEY: I was stationed here, and then I went to the Pacific. Before I left for the Pacific though I got married to Suzanne. We belonged to Knollwood Country Club. I was 23. This one Sunday afternoon I was at the swimming pool, summer, and there was a beautiful red-headed girl. She was a

1	guest of somebody. I had some friends with me, and I met her	
2	and we all started to go out, and that was it. On December	
3	30, 2004, I was married to her 60 years.	
4	MS. ALTERMAN: Mazel tov. Was she a Detroiter as	
5	well?	
6	MR. ORLEY: She was, but then she moved to Cleveland	
7	for a couple years, but then she came back. But she was born	
8	and raised here.	
9	MS. ALTERMAN: So you were separated during the war	
10	years.	
11	MR. ORLEY: For a while. Not long.	
12	There are certain things I could tell you, but I'm	
13	not sure I want to.	
14	MS. ALTERMAN: Whatever you're comfortable with is	
15	fine.	
16	MR. ORLEY: Here I am at 84, and I have a lot of	
17	fond, good memories of this town. All my friends are here. I	
18	walk in someplace, I know people. I couldn't go anywhere else	
19	and search. That's a chore.	
20	MS. ALTERMAN: When did you become involved in the	
21	community?	
22	MR. ORLEY: Oh, I was young. I was involved in	
23	telethons long ago.	
24	MS. ALTERMAN: Did anybody mentor you or encourage	

25 you to do this?

MR. ORLEY: No. But let me say, there was a fellow here named Isadore Sobeloff. My dad knew him, and my dad said he thought they were distant relatives, but I don't really know that. But George -- my dad's name was George -- and Sobeloff knew each other and they must have worked together or something.

MS. ALTERMAN: In the '40s.

MR. ORLEY: So I was 20 years old. So there was Sobeloff and Bill AVAUNIN and Marty Kraar, and a fellow named Wayne Feinstein. And Bob has done a fantastic job. He is the most capable -- he raises money out of the woodwork.

MS. ALTERMAN: Was it in the Automotive Division that you started?

MR. ORLEY: Yeah. I remember.

MS. ALTERMAN: How did that work? How did you solicit in those days? Was it one to one?

MR. ORLEY: Well, you'd go out and make calls, get cards. It was tough. You'd go to a meeting, you'd come up with 20 cards, 30 cards. And you wouldn't get much money.

I remember when Israel started and we had those meetings in the Hebrew School. Max Fisher would call the meetings. He was young then. They'd fight wars and they desperately needed money. Evidently they got it because here we are.

MS. ALTERMAN: You also talked about remembering Lou

Berry and Joe Holtzman when they came to see your father. I read that in one of your speeches.

MR. ORLEY: Lou was really friendly with my father, and when I got to be the head of the campaign, Louie came by and said, Joe, I'm really proud of you for doing that. That touched me, because I was a kid when I started to know him.

MS. ALTERMAN: What kind of man was he?

MR. ORLEY: He loved our shul, and he loved Judaism and being Jewish. A passionate Jew.

MS. ALTERMAN: Able to get the message across to others.

MR. ORLEY: A great solicitor. And JoeHOLT2H#WI remember him well, too.

MS. ALTERMAN: Through the years you took on a lot of roles in the community and then you became campaign chair in 1989. And you told me that you've been involved in some historic events in the community. I know that you went to Vienna with Marty Kraar. So what was that like?

MR. ORLEY: Very interesting. In the airport we saw these Russians getting off the plane. It gave me a few shivers. Then we went to this absorption center. I walked in and it's wall-to-wall people. You couldn't imagine, they were so threadbare. And it had a musty odor. They were being interviewed I think by Israeli interviewers from Israel. She said, would you like to come in for an interview? I said of

course. So I was sitting there just like I'm sitting here, and she's at a desk and there's a fellow here, a husky sort of a guy. Where are you from? He said Kremenchuk in the Ukraine. What do you do? I'm a truck driver. How old are you? He must have been around my age. What are you going to do here in America? Drive a truck. It astounded me, because there for the grace of God was a guy like me. This was in 1990. And I thought oh, my God, how lucky I was to be born here as a free-born Jew, to have all the opportunities that this great society gives us.

You know, I went to Ellis Island one day, and I saw a peckelah. Do you know what that is? A cardboard box and a wicker basket. I saw some of the names up there; Kiev, you know. People have pressures today, but what fortitude, what courage they had to come, no money, zero, no language, didn't know where their life was going to lead. Of course my dad always thought when he got to America, on Ellis Island, he saw his first orange and first banana, and he said when he came to America he thought the streets were paved with milk and honey.

MS. ALTERMAN: Was he a joyous man?

MR. ORLEY: Oh, yeah. He had more fun than anybody. He enjoyed it right to the very end.

And that's the way we grew up. When somebody came to the door in our neighborhood, they came for a contribution for charity. He'd say, don't turn him away. Give him as much

as you can, but don't turn him away. And that's really where you learn charity.

MS. ALTERMAN: Did your mother always have the blue box?

MR. ORLEY: Oh, of course. Right in the kitchen. Unquestionably. Yes, we did.

MS. ALTERMAN: Getting back to Vienna, did you have any feelings about these people, whether they should be going to the United States or to Israel?

MR. ORLEY: Very interesting that you ask me that. Some of them were going to Australia. And some of them were going to Germany, which I couldn't understand. Most of them wanted to come to America, but actually the way it ended up they went to Israel. Some came to America. If they had relatives, they could come here. Truthfully, it was very interesting to me where they picked to go. Australia. I couldn't believe it. But you've read about all the Jews in Australia now. They're all multi-millionaires.

MS. ALTERMAN: They did very well there.

MR. ORLEY: Isn't that amazing? So that's what happened.

MS. ALTERMAN: I read also that you saw our Project
Renewal city in Israel. You saw the Ethiopians in their
resettlement?

MR. ORLEY: I did.

MS. ALTERMAN: What was that like?

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MR. ORLEY: Well, I'd read about the Fallashas. I was intrigued. And I always thought they were descendants of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, and they very well might have been. They were Jews, but they had gone back so far and they were so encapsulated in a small village, they didn't know about our modern holidays, which was very interesting to me. I believed they all deserved a chance. I can't answer how well they do in Israel, but I hope they do very well. With a little education in a society that encourages growth, they have a shot.

MS. ALTERMAN: Probably in a couple generations.

MR. ORLEY: It was very interesting to me. When I was Lidispole, I met some Jews that had escaped from Iran by horseback or camel through the mountains, treacherous, and they'd gotten here, and it was so interesting how they had taken their life in their own hands to get here. It just was unbelievable.

MS. ALTERMAN: As Jews we connect to all those people throughout the world.

MR. ORLEY: It's very interesting now that you say that. I was in Paris at a French Jewish friend's house, and her mother was there. She didn't speak English. She was from the Rhodes. Rhodes was originally Italian but went to the Greeks as a prize of war. So I said to her in Sephardic --

I'm an Askenazi -- and she said let me tell you, Jews are Jews no matter who they are or where they are, which really impressed me.

MS. ALTERMAN: Let's talk about your family now. I know you are so proud of the accomplishments of your children.

MR. ORLEY: Oh, I truly am. Truly very proud.

MS. ALTERMAN: What are their names?

MR. ORLEY: I have Joy, who's my oldest child. Joy

ACHMAN Melissa Lax. Greg Orley and Robert Orley.

Very interesting, I was very fortunate, just last Saturday, to be present at my son's 50th birthday, and they all said, Dad, I remember being at your 50th, and I said yes, but that was 34 years ago. And I'm thrilled and proud and very fortunate to be here.

We encourage them, I guess, Sharon to be on their own, and lo and behold they all are. They're all doing good things. Joy is a psychologist and works hard, and don't ask me why. A very interesting lady. She has two lovely children. One lives in Dallas and one is here. The one here is happily married. They belong to Shir Tikvah in Troy. She married a non-Jew but he's very Jewish-minded and he goes to shul with her, celebrates all the holidays with her, and maybe eventually we'll get them.

The son lives in Dallas and he's vice president of a financial company, and he works very hard. So that's him.

Melissa has a son and daughter. Interestingly enough, her daughter went off to Michigan and her son went to Lehigh University, and in the last four years since he got out of college, he's been with a fund on Wall Street with offices in Greenwich, Connecticut. Her daughter is moving to New York. She has a job there.

Melissa was drifting around, and when we decided to sponsor the Jewish Family Service Building, I said, Melissa, why don't you try and be on the board, and she thought that was a good idea. And now she's very involved, and she's on the executive committee and she's very, very involved and loves every minute of it. So that's her.

MS. ALTERMAN: She found her niche.

There are so many wonderful agencies in this community, but what drew you to the Family Service in particular?

MR. ORLEY: Well, Jews have to take care of their own. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think Jews have more problems than some of the other people in this world. Of course I don't really know, never having been any other person. They do such wonderful things for our group. Norman Keane is a wonderful administrator. He and Bunny Friedman do a lot of great things.

I don't know whether you were at the dedication, but it was very interesting. A few days before I was at some

meeting, and somebody walked over to me and said, I think you're doing such a nice job with the Jewish Family Service. He said, Twenty years ago I hit a brick wall. I had no money. I was depressed. I had nowhere to go. I went to Jewish Family Service and they counseled me. Now it's 20 years later, and I'm happily married. I have children, I have a wonderful wife, a wonderful job, and I'm very happy. That's what I owe to Jewish Family Service.

Now, when you hear stories like this, this is why you do it. And when I said a building is only a building, it's really only a building. It's the people in it that count. And they have so many volunteers. As a matter of fact, that's one of the things Lissie works on is the volunteers.

Now Greg. Greg went to Michigan and he got a job in real estate. He went on to two or three other companies as he was going up the ladder. Then he decided to go on his own, and he's got a good organization. They do very well. If it's his store, he runs it. Robert is his partner, and they have other partners. Someone asked Greg how he became so involved, and he answered that very clearly. He was going to be bar mitzvahed and one of the prerequisites at Shaarey Zedek is you go to shul on the Sabbath. He happened to be in the synagogue when Rabbi Adler was shot, and that left a lasting impression on him, and he never, ever forgot it.

So he started going on the Sabbath, took his children, and continued and continued. He's had a real love for the shul. They put him on the board, went to all the meetings, and he's president of the shul. He tells me it's a tremendous amount of work, but he loves it and he's there. He was there during some of their financial problems, and he helped work them out. He's very charitable to them. He believes in them. As we are in our family, Graham -- my brother -- and I.

MS. ALTERMAN: You were on the Endowment Committee also.

MR. ORLEY: Oh, yes, I was on the Endowment

Committee. I don't go to many meetings but we gave them the money, and we believe in the shul and we're very close to it, and they're not going out of business, after 140 years or thereabouts.

MS. ALTERMAN: You and your wife obviously did a beautiful job raising your four children. You gave them such strong family values and Jewish values. How did you do it?

MR. ORLEY: Gee, I don't know. Suzanne is a very giving, kind person, and she always worked with the children and did everything. She came from a Reform family, Temple Beth El, but she adores and adored him, Rabbi Groner. We grew up with him. He was our rabbi, our friend, our mentor, whatever. We went there for Shabbes dinners. We're all

family.

MS. ALTERMAN: I know you and your brother are such close friends.

MR. ORLEY: Yes, we are. We love each other. We worked together from the time -- we slept in twin beds in the same bedroom, and we get along great. We have different businesses and I run different ones than he does. We go to lunch together and we talk about what's going on. Our offices are next to each other. We see each other all the time. Our wives get along fine. They never come down to our offices because they think that's our domain.

As we get older, we enjoy each other. We always embrace when we meet at a party or something like that.

MS. ALTERMAN: And you each received lifetime achievement awards.

MR. ORLEY: We did. But don't ask me why, Sharon.

It so happens that I was down in Palm Beach. It was late one morning and the phone rang. I picked up and the voice said, this is Peter Alter and I have Alan Nachman on the line. I figure what happened? And your brother Graham on the line.

And I said, well, is there something wrong? Something happening? No. We just wanted to tell you that we're going to give you the lifetime achievement award. I said, I'm completely befuddled, I'm absolutely flabbergasted, and I just don't know why. Well, we think you deserve it, Joe. And then

on and on and on. So if you ask me why we got it, I don't know. I don't know.

I'm thrilled. I'm very proud that I was recognized for this award. You know, there's an old song. I was just doing what comes naturally. That's the story. I can't answer it any other way.

I did tell Bob Aronson though -- Bob called me and said he wanted me on some committee for a legacy, and I said, you know, Bob, I have four children, and each one of them is going to carry on my heritage, and no one's leaving Detroit. Maybe the grandchildren but not the children. And truthfully I feel that I am leaving a great heritage. My son Robert was the president of Hillel for two years. Greg has taken on Shaarey Zedek. Alan is the head of the Jewish Foundation. Larry is the campaign chairman this year. All my siblings, the children, all work, they're all on committees. My daughter Joy is on some big committee here. Melissa is at the Family Service. Marcie is doing something. And Harriet's involved with the shul. So I say we have covered it. I don't know what else I can do, Bob. He said, Joe, you have a point.

MS. ALTERMAN: That's your legacy.

MR. ORLEY: That's absolutely right.

MS. ALTERMAN: I think we're coming to the end of our interview, but I have just a couple closing questions. First of all, is there anything I didn't ask you that you

would like to talk about?

MR. ORLEY: Maybe lots of things. I didn't tell you about Robert, if I may. I don't want to miss him because everyone is important and equal in my life. Robert went to law school and he went to work in New York. Some way or other he met Marcie, and that's a long story that I won't dwell on at the moment. A very cute story. And we didn't know. He used to take out all these blonde girls. One time my wife went to New York and they went out to dinner, and he said, well, I'm going to bring Marcie Hermelin. They decided they wanted to come back to Detroit for obvious reasons, where they wanted to raise their children. I get calls all the time from the grandsons who live away, gee, what did you do? Did you have a barbecue? What did you do? They always want to know.

For some reason that I couldn't possibly explain, we're all connected, which I think is extremely important. I've seen some of my friends, Sharon, with no family connections, with all sorts of problems, and at the end, you know, it's like a friend of mine said to me one day, when they ring the bell, Joe, be sure you didn't forget anything because you can't go back and get anything.

MS. ALTERMAN: Do you have a message for your children, something that you'd like them to hear on tape?

MR. ORLEY: Oh, I've given them many. But yes, I do. I'd like them -- this is not a message, it's a hope. I

would like them to have the same pleasures from their children that I have had from mine. That's what I can say.

MS. ALTERMAN: A beautiful hope.

Thank you so much. I really enjoyed our time together.

MR. ORLEY: It was a pleasure.