

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Lynda Giles
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Sharon Alterman
3 DATE OF INTERVIEW: Wednesday, May 25, 2005
4 LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Jewish Federation of Metropolitan
5 Detroit
6 SUBJECT MATTER: Jewish community life, Jewish
7 Experiences for Families, Jewish
8 education

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10 MS. ALTERMAN: This is Sharon Alterman and I'm here
11 with Dr. Lynda Giles on May 25, 2005, and we're participating
12 in the Leonard M. Simons Jewish Community Archives oral
13 history project.

14 Lynda, do we have your permission to use the
15 material within this tape for the historical record?

16 MS. GILES: Yes, you do.

17 MS. ALTERMAN: Thank you very much.

18 It's my pleasure to be here with you today. You've
19 done so much in the community and we're looking forward to
20 your voice on record for the future. So let's start at the
21 very beginning. Where were you born?

22 MS. GILES: I was born in Detroit, Michigan, on the
23 northwest side of the city. One of the things that you and I
24 mentioned was my childhood. So you want me to continue on it?

25 MS. ALTERMAN: Please.

1 **MS. GILES:** When I think about my childhood, and
2 particularly may be somewhat nostalgic because I just had a
3 birthday, so one can't help being reflective.

4 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Happy birthday!

5 **MS. GILES:** Thank you. All of them are wonderful.

6 I think about a very joyful childhood, a very
7 insular childhood. The northwest side of Detroit was a very
8 safe, secure place to grow up. I remember being able to walk
9 up and down the streets with my friends, 10 or 11 years of age
10 and be able to be outside at night and feel safe.

11 The neighborhood was an ethnic population, largely
12 Jewish, so once again the use of the word insular is in the
13 sense that everybody around me was sharing the same holidays,
14 enjoying the same things together. So it just felt like life
15 was familiar, comfortable.

16 My parents were the traditional parents. They were
17 married and stayed married with one another. I had two
18 brothers. It was a very, very loving home and comfortable
19 childhood, which makes me in some ways sad for some of our
20 kids today who have to be worried about their kids going out
21 of doors and the safety. These issues I think take away from
22 a sense of childhood pleasures, just being a child.

23 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What were your parents' names?

24 **MS. GILES:** My mother's name was Shirley and my
25 father's name was Samuel Schwartz, traditional names.

1 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Do you know anything about their
2 background and you're grandparents' background?

3 **MS. GILES:** Yes. My father was born in the United
4 States. He was born in New York, which was really very
5 unusual, and he was very much of a secular Jew, and very much
6 of an American. My mother was born in eastern Europe and came
7 to the United States when she was 16. Her father was actually
8 in the Russian army, and was able to leave the Russian army
9 and come to the United States and eventually brought his
10 family over. So she came here at a later age.

11 My mother was more Orthodox, so I grew up -- while
12 it was a traditional marriage, it wasn't traditional in terms
13 of Jewish observance, and so I grew up in this dichotomy where
14 my mother was more religious and my father was really truly
15 secular. But he did turn over the home to her and really
16 respected her beliefs. So she created for us this wonderful
17 Jewish home.

18 My grandfather, who was the shamus for Rabbi Laser
19 Levine, who was a very well-known Orthodox rabbi here, he also
20 brought a sense of the joy of the holidays. He wasn't
21 Orthodox in his demeanor towards his grandchildren. He always
22 wanted us to love the holidays. There wasn't a sense that if
23 we didn't observe the way he observed there was something
24 wrong, because he had that liberal kind of attitude in life.
25 So that really came through in terms of how he shared with us

1 the beauty of Judaism, and my mother did, too. So that was a
2 lasting thing for me.

3 And I guess that goes back to the neighborhood
4 because all of these things, while I never verbalized, kind of
5 were a preconscious determinative of who you are. It's like
6 through osmosis, you become connected to certain values,
7 certain peer groups, certain religious beliefs that pervade
8 your life and take form so much later on in your life. So
9 that was my background.

10 **MS. ALTERMAN:** And what kind of religious education
11 did you have?

12 **MS. GILES:** Because we were Conservative I went to
13 Beth Aaron, which was on Wyoming and Curtis, and I went to
14 afternoon school. But I also went to services with my
15 grandfather, and because I was a female I couldn't sit with
16 him, but I remember looking through the potted palms while he
17 would be up there, helping to lead services.

18 **MS. ALTERMAN:** And what about your secular
19 schooling?

20 **MS. GILES:** My secular school, I went to public
21 school. Elementary school was Bagley and then junior high
22 school was Post, and then Mumford, which was fun. I'm sure
23 there are a lot of people from my generation who went to
24 Mumford. And once again, it was all familiar. The same group
25 of people. So there was just this wonderful sense of

1 community. And a lot of us went to U. of M. together because
2 that's where I went to college.

3 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What were your interests in high
4 school?

5 **MS. GILES:** I was on the swimming and diving team,
6 which I really enjoyed. That's the days when there were
7 clubs, so girls had sororities. That was kind of silly, but
8 it sort of gave you a way of making the group a little bit
9 more comfortable, a little closer. Probably not a lot. I
10 mean I think I loved swimming, I loved my friends, I loved
11 tennis. But you may as well say just the academics and the
12 peer group. That was part of my high school life at that
13 time.

14 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Did you utilize the JCC that was on
15 Curtis and Meyers?

16 **MS. GILES:** Well, I did join the BBGs, so we would
17 have meetings there. And then the various clubs would go
18 there. It was more often in high school just to watch the
19 boys. But yes, I did.

20 **MS. ALTERMAN:** And did you take any leadership roles
21 in those groups?

22 **MS. GILES:** I did in my BBG chapter. I think I was
23 vice president or something of the chapter. But I think at
24 that time of my life, if I really look at this question in
25 terms of leadership role, I think I was less confident and a

1 little shy and not sure of myself, so I don't think I really
2 asserted myself in high school. That was sort of a formative
3 time for me. So it didn't happen then.

4 **MS. ALTERMAN:** You mentioned you went to the
5 University of Michigan. Talk about those years.

6 **MS. GILES:** Oh, those were great. I think that's
7 really when so much of what was percolating inside of me also
8 started to come out, because I knew then that I wanted to go
9 away my junior year somewhere in Europe. I wanted to study
10 abroad. I always had told my parents and they were wonderful
11 about it. They said fine. So I think part of my college
12 years were to be out there, joining groups, joining
13 activities, becoming active in various political things that
14 were going on on campus. Then my junior year I wanted to go
15 England.

16 I was a psych major and an English major. My
17 parents wanted me to have some kind of career where I could
18 earn money for sure, and it was always very traditional at
19 that time of life to go into teaching, so they really asked me
20 if I would do something with teaching. The University of
21 Michigan had a program called the Sheffield Program, and you
22 could go to England and do your student teaching there and
23 take some courses, and I thought that was a wonderful way to
24 do it. So I did go to England and had a wonderful time
25 teaching in a grammar school.

1 Which once again ties me back to my Judaism because
2 I grew and I just felt the world was comfortable, familiar.
3 It wasn't a matter of anti-Semitism, It just was more of a
4 sense that life was my peer group, the world around me, very
5 familiar. Most people shared values, shared religious
6 beliefs. And it was truly a limited sense of the world based
7 on my childhood.

8 Then when I got to England, I had the privilege of
9 teaching in a grammar school, and that was one of the higher
10 tier schools where these kids would then go on to college,
11 because they did break the kids into ability levels. Because
12 the schools are all Church of England, there are prayer
13 services. So the first day I arrived at school the head
14 mistress came out to meet me, and she's dressed in these long
15 black robes and very serious, and she ushers me in, very
16 polite, and introduces me around the school, and said, all of
17 these little girls who are sitting in a very large room,
18 they're from the Church of England, and I will lead services
19 for them, and then she leads me down the hallway to another
20 nice sized room, and there were about 50 Catholic girls in
21 there, and she said, and our priest will lead services for
22 them. She says, you come with me.

23 So now she and I are walking down this little
24 hallway, and it's starting enter my mind, you know, what's
25 next? And sure enough, standing around the piano in this

1 little back hallway are ten Jewish girls. She said they're
2 Jewish, and every morning you will lead services for them. It
3 was a delight, and these kids were delightful. We talked. I
4 had never led services, and we created services.

5 What was interesting was that the realization that
6 the way I grew up and the comfort I felt was not really their
7 experiences in life. They were really truly a minority. You
8 began to see a sense of the minority that we were in life. So
9 these were things that were sort of filtering into my mind. I
10 wasn't sure yet what I was going to do with that.

11 The continuation of that thought is that at the end
12 of all of my teaching experience in England I then went to
13 Israel in 1964, and it was unusual time because there were
14 still the Jordanian soldiers, and you couldn't get into the
15 old city. But there was such a wonderful feeling. You know,
16 everybody around you had the same religious belief, and it
17 once again gave you another picture of the world, and made me
18 realize more and more the strength of my Jewish identity and
19 the appreciation of the values and the religious beliefs that
20 I had been raised with. So it was just kind of bringing it
21 all together for me.

22 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What were your memories of Israel at
23 that time?

24 **MS. GILES:** It was very powerful because I had been
25 gone for almost a year, and when I landed, my grandfather was

1 there to meet me and my mother. My father couldn't get away.
2 I had some relatives there who I had never met. They were on
3 my mother's mother's side of the family. When they had to
4 leave Europe, they got on a boat that said to America, but
5 their boat went to South America, so we never saw them until
6 they eventually moved Israel.

7 It was a country that filled me with the sense, the
8 joy, the pleasure, the strength of people who so wanted to
9 make a life for themselves. It was just alive with purpose
10 and value and determination, and you just felt it. You just
11 felt it. There was a real strong kibbutz movement at the
12 time, and they were just filled with how they were going to
13 turn this soil, this earth, everything, into something -- you
14 know, the land of milk and honey. You just always had that
15 sense of strength as a peoplehood.

16 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Did you give any thought to staying
17 there?

18 **MS. GILES:** No. No.

19 **MS. ALTERMAN:** So when you returned to the States,
20 what did you do?

21 **MS. GILES:** I finished my senior year. I thought I
22 would go out with my psych degree, but ended up getting
23 married, taught for a while, and had a couple of children. We
24 moved to Chicago, which is always so funny for me, because
25 when I went to University of Michigan, my father said, I just

1 want you to go there because you'll meet somebody from
2 Michigan and stay in Michigan. But I moved to Chicago, we got
3 married and had two kids. Then I eventually got divorced and
4 moved back to Michigan.

5 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What are your children's names?

6 **MS. GILES:** My son's name is Jerrod and my
7 daughter's name is Jamie.

8 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Do they still live in this community?

9 **MS. GILES:** No. Following college -- both of them
10 went to U. of M. -- my son married and he and his wife moved
11 to Chicago, and they're there now with two children. My
12 daughter wanted to be a documentary film maker, and made a
13 wonderful film called *Urban Scrawls*, which is about bathroom
14 graffiti, which is like a precursor to the chat world online,
15 and she ended up getting a job in Chicago. So it happened to
16 work out that they returned to Chicago. But she's now
17 actually on her way to California.

18 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What are the names of your
19 grandchildren?

20 **MS. GILES:** My grandson's name is Jonah and the
21 little girl is Ivy. But Conrad and I also have between us six
22 kids, so I have four other children, and I don't know if he
23 mentioned their names, but there's Keith, who just remarried
24 -- her name is Christine, and she has a son Matthew -- and
25 Keith has two boys, Aaron and Sam. And then there is Suzy,

1 who has two kids, and then there is Amanda and Alex. They're
2 in their 20s. Then there is Brian, married to Lauren, who
3 just has two, and that's Celia and Levi, who was just born.
4 And then there's Barb and Kevin and they have Seth and they're
5 expecting another.

6 **MS. ALTERMAN:** A beautiful family.

7 **MS. GILES:** Thank you.

8 **MS. ALTERMAN:** We skipped a little bit ahead of
9 ourselves because you spoke about the fact that you got
10 divorced. So I know that that has some significance in your
11 life and your professional life as well. Would you like to
12 speak about what that meant to you and how it changed your
13 life?

14 **MS. GILES:** Yes. When I got divorced, it was in the
15 '70s, and at that time there were very few women who were
16 divorced. I mention that only because in terms of peer
17 groups, in terms of sharing relationships, there weren't many
18 who were experiencing what you were experiencing. Not that
19 divorce was ever new. The immigrant population that came to
20 the United States, a lot of women were abandoned. But it was
21 unusual for my peer group.

22 I moved back to Detroit because, one, I wanted to be
23 near family, but two, because my mother was terminally ill,
24 and it was important for me to be with her. When I got back
25 here, while there were lots of wonderful friends and wonderful

1 family, I realized that in terms of my peer group, it was much
2 more limited because I was a single mother. I didn't have the
3 mobility or the financial mobility as well to keep up with my
4 peer group. It was really more fleeting in terms of my
5 awareness because there were just the tasks of daily living
6 that you have as a single parent that so take up your mind.

7 Eventually I remarried, and at that point as well I
8 went back -- I married Conrad. It's a funny story. We always
9 talk about it and laugh. When my daughter was born in
10 Chicago, she had^{*} crossed eye, so when I moved back, she was
11 little, and the doctor who had operated on her in Chicago had
12 recommended that I follow up with Dr. Conrad Giles. Then my
13 pediatrician also recommended that I follow up with Dr. Conrad
14 Giles. So I went to see him. He saw her and he said she was
15 fine. Then eventually a little bit later when he saw her
16 again, he said that she would maybe need some surgery.

17 In the interim I guess he had divorced and I hadn't
18 even realized it, and then at some point later on, when I did
19 go back to sign up for the surgery date, that's when we
20 started to go out.

21 **MS. ALTERMAN:** It was beshet.

22 **MS. GILES:** Yes, it was beshet.

23 When we got married, at the wedding everybody made a
24 toast, and they made a toast not only to Conrad and me, but to
25 Jamie for bringing you together. She at that point decided to

1 leave the table. She didn't want the responsibility. She's
2 very happy about it though, very happy.

3 Anyway, when I did go back to school and got my
4 Ph.D., which was a wonderful, for me a very special
5 accomplishment in life. I always wanted to be able to get
6 that in psych. I had to do a dissertation, and I knew that I
7 wanted to do something about divorce and single parents and
8 raising children because I know there are special dynamics
9 that go on and readjustments for the children as well as for
10 the parents. I happened to have a large population of Jewish
11 parents that I could be interviewing.

12 I was talking to this gentleman who was the head of
13 Jewish studies at Brandeis, Dr. Gary Tobin, and I told him
14 that I had this population and I wanted to do a study about
15 single mothers. He said, if you would do it on all Jewish
16 women, we would really be appreciative because we have no data
17 on this population, and I will be your outside resource person
18 if you would like. So that was wonderful for me.

19 University of Michigan was very supportive, and it
20 was an unusual study. It was a qualitative study. I followed
21 these women for over a year. Most of them had two children,
22 and I followed their adjustments and their connection to their
23 peer group, their connection to the community, their
24 connection to Judaism, and what was going on in their lives.
25 And it really demonstrated for me the kinds of issues that

1 define us as a Jewish community and the kinds of issues that
2 they experience.

3 What I mean by that is that divorce in general has
4 created a new pool of poverty, and those are single mothers.
5 That the economics of divorce really means a downward spiral,
6 that they lose the home, the family home. Most women have not
7 been out in the workplace, and so they're not prepared for the
8 economic changes. And there are just a lot of losses then,
9 for the kids in terms of neighborhood, in terms of certain
10 kinds of stability, friendships, social, all kinds of things.
11 That's the general picture of divorce.

12 The Jewish women as well experienced that, but the
13 catch was that also by definition the American Jewish
14 community is upwardly mobile, and we are middle to upper
15 middle class. So therefore we are living in more affluent
16 neighborhoods. We are partaking in more things that involve
17 finances. Being Jewish is costly, whether it's congregations,
18 JCCs; all kinds of activities are costly. So what was
19 developing was -- and this is a term I described -- this is a
20 population creating a minority within a minority population.
21 So they were being isolated, and that's how they felt, that
22 they couldn't keep up with their peer groups, that they had
23 lots of losses that they weren't prepared for. And as a
24 Jewish community, it was very important for us to refocus on
25 identity and affiliation and continuity, and we weren't

1 reaching out to these women. And in addition these women all
2 had two children. What was fascinating as well is that these
3 women wanted the Jewish connection, so there was something
4 missing.

5 I had this opportunity to meet with Harlene
6 Appleman, who has been just a wonderful, wonderful close
7 friend ever since our meeting, and she also was a woman who
8 was divorced and remarried, and we together -- I told her I
9 wanted to do a program, I wanted to do an outreach for these
10 single mothers -- we together created Jewish Experiences for
11 Families, where I eventually became the chair of Jewish
12 Experiences for Families, a program for single mothers. That
13 night when our board first met, was in 1990 or 1991, sitting
14 at the table were probably 15 of the most dedicated women who
15 were determined to raise money to create programming, to do
16 outreach, to do advocacy, everything to make us more conscious
17 of this population and the sensitivities that they have. Even
18 just walking into a congregation because you're married people
19 and they walk in alone, because their children are usually in
20 children's services. So there were so many areas of just
21 trying to create a new sense of how to be supportive.

22 That program has been going on ever since. We have
23 started in other communities. They've taken up the banner.
24 Today we have outreach for both single mothers and single
25 fathers. So it's a single Jewish parent network.

1 It's really just a wonderful story on behalf of the
2 fathers. We have a fathers camp, where they go away for a
3 weekend. This one family -- this is a very touching story --
4 this father had custody of his children and I think he was a
5 widower. So it's not just divorce. I want to also mention
6 that. There are a number of individuals who are part of this
7 program who are widowers.

8 He was a widower and he had custody of his children,
9 and he developed this camaraderie with all these men and their
10 children, and after family camp I guess he had some surgery,
11 and wasn't able to take care of some of the daily tasks of
12 living for his kids, and these fathers who went to family camp
13 with him came in and brought Shabbes dinner and made Shabbes
14 dinner for everybody. This has been a wonderful group.

15 So the outreach, the sense of connection, the
16 chavarot feelings are really being generated through this
17 group. And some of these families are joining congregations.
18 So it's had wonderful effect.

19 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Under whose auspices is the program?

20 **MS. GILES:** It's still under the Alliance for Jewish
21 Education. Marilyn Hertzberg is its chair right now. We've
22 already had our mothers camp. The Mother's Day weekend is
23 also very special because some of these women, this is their
24 only vacation. So what we do is we bring the mothers and
25 their kids, and we have counselors for the kids, and the

1 mothers get some free time and time together with other women
2 and they enjoy Shabats, and for some of them this is their
3 only Jewish experience. Once again, it creates a sense that
4 the community cares, gives them a Jewish learning, in the
5 sense of a respite.

6 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Was that your first real step into
7 the Jewish community world?

8 **MS. GILES:** I was very fortunate. When Joel Tauber
9 was president of Federation, he asked me if I would work on an
10 identity affiliation committee, and in the area of Jewish
11 education. So once again I was relating back to my childhood.
12 All those things and feelings and experiences that I had sort
13 of came to bear in terms of this particular activity because
14 we looked at Jewish education, and it made me realize that
15 this is such an area for me that I would like to be able to
16 spend more time with, but didn't really do much with it
17 because I was writing my dissertation at that point and very
18 busy.

19 So being a part of Jewish experiences for families
20 and this single parent group -- actually Harlene made a very
21 cute offer to me. She said, Lynda, if you become the chair of
22 Jewish Experiences for Families, I'll do this program with
23 you. So it was a double. So I had this program and also
24 Jewish Experiences for Families. And that was just the
25 beginning of a long series of wonderful experiences with

1 Jewish education.

2 I think I focused on Jewish education -- this is my
3 feeling about it today -- that I think it has an incredible
4 ability to be transformative in our lives, to be able to teach
5 us about how to make everyday living tie in with who we are
6 Jewishly in terms of values, morals, ideals. It can bring a
7 wonderful dimension to our lives. And I think it is such an
8 important place in shaping who we are.

9 That was why I think when the Alliance got started
10 and Harlene and I had an opportunity through the Hermelin
11 Davidson Millennium Fund to start a program for preschool
12 children, that was so important to me. That was a program I
13 really wanted to zero in on because I felt once again, we had
14 an opportunity to bring families and young children in and
15 shape minds and values in an important healthy way. And young
16 families are connected to their kids, and a lot of them want
17 Jewish nursery schools for the children. So it was a
18 wonderful blessing. And I just think that's why my focus is
19 so much on Jewish education, because it is transformative.

20 **MS. ALTERMAN:** And I think that you've shaped Jewish
21 education in the last ten years. You've been on the cusp on a
22 lot of changes in this community. Can you ~~sort of~~ identify
23 some of the issues that brought the changes about?

24 **MS. GILES:** Well, when I was getting involved with
25 the Jewish education, at that point Federation was looking at

1 the delivery of services for Jewish education, and Joel was
2 president and then Conrad was president at that time, and we
3 realized that the service delivery program that we had, we
4 were primarily only reaching a population of Conservative
5 children, and that we really needed to do more than that. So
6 because of that the United Hebrew School program was
7 transformed -- I'll use that word again -- to the Agency for
8 Jewish Education, where we became a service delivery person
9 rather than delivering the service, and we went and reached
10 out to the congregations, all of the congregations.

11 The Orthodox really didn't seem to need our services
12 as much or didn't want our services because they had their
13 own. But we were reaching out to the Conservative and the
14 Reform and going into the schools and doing things for the
15 afternoon schools. So that was the Agency for Jewish
16 Education.

17 When I was through being chair of the Jewish
18 Experiences for Families, I became president of the Agency for
19 Jewish Education. We had a lot of changes then in terms of
20 the executive. At the last point -- this is now when Bob
21 Naftaly was president -- we were once again looking at Jewish
22 education, and I think that's the wonderful thing about this
23 community, is that we're always trying to be able to create
24 ways to translate Jewish education because as a community we
25 can do lots of wonderful things, but we are the only ones as a

1 community that can do Jewish education. Others can also do
2 care for elderly or care for other services. We have lots of
3 other providers that can assist us, but we always need to be
4 the ones who can be able to provide Jewish education. That's
5 not taking away from how important all the other agencies are
6 and the services, but primarily it is our role and our
7 responsibility. So we constantly are looking at it.

8 At this point we felt that the agency -- we had an
9 evaluation of the agency -- it wasn't doing as much as it
10 could, and so then the Alliance was created. The purpose of
11 the Alliance was to create doorways, conscious doorways, that
12 would reach out to everybody in our community, from birth to
13 death, to provide them opportunities for Jewish education. So
14 while the agency was doing wonderful things, this became a
15 concept and a direction that dominated our thinking. That's
16 when we started to create all of these programs and focused on
17 the initiatives early on with preschool, and focusing on
18 retraining our preschool teachers, who had wonderful secular
19 education, but they didn't have Jewish education.

20 Then the two-year programs, and taking the teachers
21 to Israel, and then starting with K-2 and moving on up through
22 the system, we really felt that we were instilling the
23 afternoon schools with a heightened dimension.

24 We were also offering Hebrew immersion, so we were
25 changing the level, and as the system hopefully moves forward,

1 we are continually changing the depth and the knowledge level
2 of the teachers as well as the kids.

3 **MS. ALTERMAN:** And what about the disabled
4 population? What did you do there?

5 **MS. GILES:** That was another very important -- we
6 had the Opening the Doors program, which was run by Anita
7 Naftaly, and that was started through the Agency for Jewish
8 Education. I think when we started, we had like five to seven
9 schools, and now we have 15, and this includes the Orthodox
10 population. It has been very receptive in terms of our
11 assistance in this area. And we are doing more outreach with
12 the Orthodox population and the day schools.

13 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What are the challenges that you see
14 in the future for the Alliance?

15 **MS. GILES:** For the Alliance, I think the hardest
16 challenge are the financial challenges, because Jewish
17 education is costly. But I don't want to say it's impossible;
18 it's just a challenge. It's something that we do need to be
19 able to do. I think a day school education particularly is a
20 wonderful opportunity for kids, but it is very costly to
21 educate, and we need to be able to find ways to make it more
22 and more affordable. Those I think are some of the
23 challenges.

24 I guess another thing I'd like to be able to see
25 here is more opportunities for teacher advancement through

1 education, a certain kind of certification program, and I
2 think we're looking into it. But I think probably the
3 financial is the biggest challenge, to be able to provide
4 affordable Jewish education for everybody. And I'd also love
5 to see Hebrew being taught in high school.

6 **MS. ALTERMAN:** A lot things in the future.

7 You talked about your husband and Harlene. Who were
8 your great mentors?

9 **MS. GILES:** I think there are so many people who are
10 so good in so many areas that we need to always be able to
11 learn from each other, so I think there's lots of people in my
12 life who are wonderful. I think in terms of shaping
13 sensitivity to Judaism and a sense of joy for Judaism, I have
14 to go back to my mother and my grandfather for creating that
15 in me. I think Harlene is wonderful when it comes to how she
16 puts the world together in terms of Jewish education. She's
17 creative and innovative, and she can make learning fun and
18 exciting, which is just very, very special.

19 But probably my best mentor is my husband. His
20 sensitivity to people, his interest in Israel and the Jewish
21 community and reaching out to everybody has really been such a
22 powerful motivation for me to be involved and to stay
23 involved. I just so respect his thoughtfulness and his
24 sensitivities and his decency towards people. I know when he
25 was president, he always went to everything that he could go

1 to. He was very understanding and thoughtful of people's
2 issues. And that's something that he has carried forward
3 today.

4 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What is in the future for you? Are
5 you working on any new initiatives or projects in the Jewish
6 community?

7 **MS. GILES:** Right now I am co-chairing with Conrad
8 and two other couples, Beverly and Arthur Liss and Hannan and
9 Lisa Liss a family mission, and it's going to be December of
10 2005, and we have about 700 individuals going, families going,
11 so that's very exciting. We're very busy planning all kinds
12 of things for the families.

13 Also I'm a co-chair with Michael Stein of a
14 demographic study that we're going to be doing for the Detroit
15 Jewish community.

16 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Can you tell us a little bit more
17 about the demographic study? What the focus will be?

18 **MS. GILES:** It was 1989 when we did the last one,
19 and at that time what was fascinating, and it's one of the
20 numbers that stands out, we thought as a Jewish community that
21 there were about 75,000 of us, and what we ended up finding
22 out was that there were 96,000. Yet, a large percentage of
23 the Jewish population is really at the periphery of
24 involvement.

25 So what we want to find out today is how many people

1 are out there; one, numbers. Two, how do we get people more
2 connected? How do we get them connected to Federation, to the
3 Jewish community, to synagogues? How do we get families
4 interested? And also we have to find out what are they
5 interested in? How do they want to spend their time? How do
6 we plan for this population?

7 We have a larger population of elderly, so it's not
8 only the elderly, but where are their caregivers? Where are
9 their children? Are their children still living in Michigan?
10 So we need to have a sense of what's going on with that
11 population.

12 What are the gender? What are the age range of
13 kids? Because a lot of young adults are moving out. That's
14 what we think and we just want to be able to clarify a lot of
15 these issues.

16 **MS. ALTERMAN:** It should be a very interesting
17 study. I'm looking forward to it.

18 **MS. GILES:** And I'm looking forward to it.

19 **MS. ALTERMAN:** You touched on the role of women and
20 how it's changed, and I think that as a result of your Ph.D.
21 study you have some insight there. Could you talk a little
22 bit about that in terms of women in the community, and also
23 women as volunteers.

24 **MS. GILES:** Well, I think that women today have a
25 greater sense of independence and a greater sense of purpose.

1 I see this in my practice. I'm a clinical psychologist. I
2 think they have grown up with a greater feeling of opportunity
3 out there for them than women of former generations. So
4 that's a wonderful thing. I don't think they feel that there
5 are barriers out there. So more and more women are going into
6 the workplace I find than even going into the volunteer world.
7 But as far as opportunities for women in the work and
8 volunteer world, I think that it's still a struggle, and I
9 know that there's been a large program being developed
10 nationally in the united Jewish communities about women in the
11 workplace and trying to get more and more women involved
12 professionally in Federation, feeling as if they can move up
13 and they can become executive directors or presidents of their
14 Federation. But there still is in some ways the mind-set of
15 very much of the man's world in this community. Not in
16 Detroit, but in the whole concept of the Federation and moving
17 up professionally, as well as a lay individual in this world.
18 But the doors are open and we're very conscious of it, and I
19 think there is greater respect for women.

20 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Have you thought of any message you
21 would like to leave?

22 **MS. GILES:** I think my message for the future
23 generations is just to be protective of the environment. It's
24 really important because I think we need to keep on leaving
25 that for our family, and I am concerned about the environment.

1 So every conscious effort, every ability to advocate -- I'm
2 such an advocate for things -- I think we need to be able to
3 do that, to protect the environment.

4 But as far as the Jewish people, I guess my message
5 is that it's so important as Jews that we be a community.
6 This is how we exist in prayer. We can't pray alone. We're
7 really supposed to pray as a community. That's a concept of a
8 minyan. And I think that we need to be able to recognize the
9 value of community and be protective of it, be supportive of
10 it financially, and in terms of our volunteer time, because it
11 is our responsibility to do tikun~~olam~~ to do repairing of the
12 world, to do tzedakah, you know, to give. That would be my
13 message, that we recognize the value of community.

14 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Thank you.

15 **MS. GILES:** I really feel very flattered that I was
16 asked. Thank you very much. I do these things because it's
17 so natural for me and I get such a joy and satisfaction out of
18 it, that I don't think of a leadership role in that regard.
19 To be interviewed for this is my pleasure to be able to do
20 what I do.

21 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Your words are beautiful and a
22 wonderful message that you've left for us.

23 **MS. GILES:** Thank you.