

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Doreen Hermelin
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Susan Citrin
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7 involvement in local and national
8 Jewish organizations, family,
9 role as wife of ambassador to
10 Norway

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12 MS. CITRIN: Good morning.

13 MRS. HERMELIN: Good morning, Susie.

14 MS. CITRIN: I'm Susie Citrin. I'm conducting an
15 interview here today with Doreen Hermelin and I'd like to know
16 if we have your permission to use your words and thoughts in
17 the future for educational and historical research and
18 documentation.

19 MRS. HERMELIN: By all means.

20 MS. CITRIN: Thank you. Let's get started at the
21 beginning. I want to know a little history about you because
22 I've read a few of the documents of where you were born here
23 in Detroit and you grew up in this area, but tell me about
24 your early family life.

25 MRS. HERMELIN: I was the third child of four. We

1 lived off of Fullerton when I was born, and my dad was the
2 president of my synagogue. It was a big influence on my early
3 life. In fact he was the president twice. Those early
4 memories of going to shul, walking to Fullerton and Lawrence
5 where the synagogue was. I went to school there. When I was
6 eight years old, we moved to Canterbury. I still went to
7 Sunday school there and because my parents didn't want to get
8 up and drive every morning, I slept at my grandparent's house
9 because they lived right down the street from the synagogue.
10 So I used to sleep there on Saturday nights and go to Sunday
11 school in the morning from that house.

12 **MS. CITRIN:** Were your parents born here? I
13 remember your mom, but I don't remember an accent.

14 **MRS. HERMELIN:** My mother was born in France. Her
15 parents were from Romania. My grandfather deserted the French
16 army. My mother was the oldest of four. My father was born
17 in Hungary. He came here when he was around 12. My mother
18 came here when she was 8 or 9.

19 My mother could speak fluent French until the day
20 she died. My father spoke perfect Hungarian, but because they
21 both spoke the other language they had to figure out English.
22 And I'm sorry about that because it would have been nice to
23 hear my father with the swear words. My mother spoke French
24 beautifully. We were taught Spanish at our elementary school,
25 which is very unusual. They started in the fourth or fifth

1 grade.

2 **MS. CITRIN:** So I would imagine you were from a
3 Conservative home.

4 **MRS. HERMELIN:** It was very interesting because my
5 father was never bar mitzvahed as a young child because he
6 left Europe with his father and he was living with his dad in
7 the States. He and my mother belonged to the Young Married
8 Club of B'nai Moshe when they were young people. My mother
9 lived in a completely non-Jewish neighborhood. She lived on
10 Gratiot. She had no Jewish education as a child but cared a
11 great deal that her children have it. When they got married,
12 they joined B'nai Moshe and it was a Conservative synagogue.
13 In those days it was separate seating. It was much more
14 traditional. I have tremendous memories of it as a kid.

15 We lived down the street from Rabbi Fisher, who was
16 a couple doors from Dexter. He was the senior rabbi and then
17 Rabbi Lerman came. I spent the time all through my
18 consecration at B'nai Moshe. I used to walk over to Shaarey
19 Zedek to visit my friends. Of course on the holidays
20 everybody walked to see all the shuls around Dexter. That was
21 an amazing time. During Yom Kippur, when you had the whole
22 day in shul, you would walk all over the neighborhood to visit
23 all the different synagogues and all your friends.

24 **MS. CITRIN:** That was quite an exciting time.

25 **MRS. HERMELIN:** It was a very exciting time for us.

1 I liked to be there only for the sermon, which is a switch
2 now. Kids always leave for the sermon. It was the only part
3 I could understand. In my Hebrew education there was the old-
4 fashioned ruler on the back of the hand and that kind of
5 thing. We went through there, my sister, brothers and I.

6 **MS. CITRIN:** What's interesting to hear about your
7 early education, and we'll get later on to how important
8 Jewish education is today and your commitment to making all of
9 our Jewish schools better.

10 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I will say my father's involvement,
11 although he never had formal education, he became the
12 president of the synagogue and he was always very
13 philanthropic. I remember the people coming to the doors on
14 Sunday mornings, my father always inviting them in, coming for
15 tzedakah. He never turned anybody away. He was my role model
16 as a young child, I remember that very distinctly. A man who
17 didn't have a formal education, got an award from the
18 Theological Seminary.

19 **MS. CITRIN:** What did he do for a living?

20 **MRS. HERMELIN:** He was in the tool and die business.
21 He was an engineer. He put himself through college. He was
22 this kid who sold newspapers without shoes when he was a kid.
23 They lived very poorly when he first came to this country.

24 **MS. CITRIN:** Amazing role model.

25 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Then he put himself through college

1 and got himself an engineering degree.

2 **MS. CITRIN:** It's interesting what you say about
3 opening the doors to his home to everybody else. I think you
4 must have gotten something like that from him.

5 **MRS. HERMELIN:** They always said my parents' home
6 was the home everyone came to. We had the holidays. My
7 mother was the oldest of her family and my father only had a
8 brother who married my mother's sister. It was a limited
9 family. I got that definitely from my family.

10 **MS. CITRIN:** You were a party girl even at an early
11 age.

12 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I'd go to the kitchen and help her
13 make hors d'oeuvres.

14 **MS. CITRIN:** I know you went to Camp Tamawkwa. Do
15 you want to talk about that?

16 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I could say something about the
17 camp. I'm very thrilled that we're a third generation family
18 now. They opened the camp to girls in 1949. That's how the
19 girls camp was called the 49ers. We started there because my
20 brother was there already. I met my husband there and my
21 sister met her husband there.

22 It's a very interesting place because it's like an
23 island and you meet the people and spend a lot of time with
24 them and you learn all about them and become very comfortable.
25 It's a wonderful place for kids. Informal education is many

1 times more superior to a child's Jewish education. Tamawkwa
2 was an interesting place because although it wasn't a
3 traditional Jewish camp like Ramah we had chuppa services, we
4 said the blessings, we lit the candles, we had the service in
5 the evening on Friday nights. We all wore white and did that
6 whole thing. Many kids who lived in neighborhoods when my
7 kids were little and went to camp, there were kids who lived
8 in very predominately not Jewish neighborhoods who went to
9 camp in the summertime, and they became their friends and that
10 became their outreach into the Jewish community. It really
11 serves as a very important Jewish connection when kids can
12 spend their summer with other Jewish kids. My kids all went
13 and now my grandkids are going. It's wonderful.

14 **MS. CITRIN:** Anybody in particular you met there
15 that you recall?

16 **MRS. HERMELIN:** My husband. I met him as a kid. I
17 was 10 and he was 12. We didn't start dating.

18 **MS. CITRIN:** Did you like him immediately?

19 **MRS. HERMELIN:** No. He was my sister's friend. My
20 sister when she was 13 was dating the man she is now married
21 to. At his bar mitzvah she lit all the candles on his cake.
22 They became friends. And then they went their separate ways,
23 she got married, had a couple kids. He never married. When
24 she got divorced, they got together. He'd been living in
25 California.

1 **MS. CITRIN:** Something in the Tamawka water. Did
2 you date David in high school?

3 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I started dating him when I was 15.
4 We got married when I had just turned 19. So we were child
5 sweethearts. He was a very playful man. I think in his mind
6 he wanted to get married young. I went away to school. I had
7 a few more years I wanted to spend foot loose and fancy free,
8 but when he said will you, I said okay.

9 **MS. CITRIN:** He wasn't very persuasive.

10 **MRS. HERMELIN:** No, he was not persuasive. Right.
11 Not persuasive much. He was the all times sales person, I was
12 his biggest customer. He was always trying to sell me some
13 bill of goods. I was afraid to let him go out jogging years
14 later because whenever he'd come back alone he'd have some new
15 idea for something. Some new construction, something.

16 **MS. CITRIN:** That's funny. I know you went to the
17 University of Colorado. How long did you go there?

18 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Not long enough. We got engaged and
19 I came back home. I finished a year there. We got married
20 that next summer. I started off going to the Society of Arts
21 and Crafts because I was an art major. Then I had my first
22 child. I didn't have the kind of help they have nowadays and
23 that was the end of my education at the time.

24 **MS. CITRIN:** And you had five children.

25 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Had five very quickly.

1 **MS. CITRIN:** How many grandchildren do you have?

2 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Sixteen.

3 **MS. CITRIN:** Do you want to talk about early
4 childhood development in your house?

5 **MRS. HERMELIN:** It was fun. It was always busy. My
6 parents and in-laws both agreed that we should buy this little
7 house and they helped us put the down payment on it. We paid
8 for it, and I had three kids in about 1100 square feet. Three
9 kids and a sheep dog. I was expecting my fourth and my
10 husband said, I can't come home because there's no place to
11 put my feet down. Between the toys and the kids and the whole
12 thing, he really wanted to move. We started looking for
13 houses, and we looked and looked and looked. We had all kinds
14 of criteria, school system, what was going on. By this time
15 Marcy had started elementary school at the time. Karen was
16 also in elementary. We only lived there 10 years.

17 We found a house in a neighborhood that I didn't
18 want to live in because I didn't like the name. It sounded
19 too funny. But we bought a lot and were going to build a
20 house right near Shaarey Zedek. We bought this lot and it
21 turned out the builder said it would take 365 working days to
22 complete it. Builders were always on strike in the summer
23 time, different trades people went on strike and it would take
24 a year and a half and I was expecting my fourth. David said
25 we can't stay here.

1 We found a house that was two blocks from that lot
2 and said we'll stay there while we build the house and then
3 sell that one and move into the house. I agreed to do that.
4 I liked the house so much I said I didn't want to move. It's
5 a nice house, it's a great place, I had nice neighbors,
6 everything was really lovely. So we sold the lot. David was
7 never really happy because he really wanted land, he wanted
8 some property. The other lot had backed up onto all this
9 natural reservoir area.

10 So from the minute we moved in he kept looking for
11 houses. I was real happy where I was. We had my fifth child
12 there. We had my daughter two days after we moved in. David
13 wasn't home. David was at Tamawkwa. He came home in a the
14 middle of the night because a friend of his got hurt and he
15 drove him home to get some stitches. I went to open the door
16 and my water broke. So I had my daughter early. Not quite
17 two years later I had my last child. David kept looking for
18 houses.

19 I'm making this a long story, but through a process
20 he found the house we live in now that he fell in love with
21 when he went up the driveway. He wanted this house and I
22 didn't want it in a big way. Too much house for me. I can't
23 handle that. It scared me. But remember, the best salesman.

24 **MS. CITRIN:** Yeah, he was.

25 **MRS. HERMELIN:** The best salesman in the whole

1 world. I wanted a modern house and he just wanted to buy this
2 house because of the property. My father-in-law, myself and
3 my decorator and I sat at a table in the dining room, and I
4 figured my father-in-law would say, David, you can't afford to
5 live there, don't do that. The decorator, who knew I wanted
6 modern, would say she doesn't want that. She was always
7 taking my side. I needed somebody to take my side. My
8 decorator said, what a place to raise your children. I said,
9 you turncoat. My father-in-law said, you can't afford to live
10 there, but even if you could manage it, what a wonderful place
11 to raise your kids. So we bought the house.

12 **MS. CITRIN:** How long have you lived at your present
13 address?

14 **MRS. HERMELIN:** My Francine was three. It's been 33
15 years.

16 **MS. CITRIN:** I didn't realize it's been that long.
17 It keeps getting bigger and bigger.

18 **MRS. HERMELIN:** David says he loves projects.
19 That's why I hate to let him go jogging because he'd come home
20 with a new addition. I used to tell him we'll have 16 acres
21 under one roof if you keep going like this.

22 **MS. CITRIN:** I know in the documents I read there
23 was a quote in which he said "the sales begin when --"

24 **MRS. HERMELIN:** "The sale never begins till the
25 customer says no." I was his best customer because I said no

1 a lot of times. I had to say no because he always had lots of
2 incredible ideas that were beyond.

3 **MS. CITRIN:** It must have been so much fun all those
4 kids in a big house.

5 **MRS. HERMELIN:** What I finally said to him about
6 buying the house, I said they'll never take that bid. Go
7 ahead and do it. He did. I was busy getting ready for Pesach
8 and he was calling me 12 times a day, I swear to God, no four
9 times a day, I'm thinking about the house. I said, I'm busy
10 changing dishes, making Pesach, I'm not thinking about the
11 house. He called and called. He said this is the bid I'm
12 going to put in. I said go ahead, they're not going to accept
13 it. Have a good time.

14 He called me back a few days later from the office,
15 they counter offered. I said oh, my god. He said now I have
16 to counter offer, too. I said, David buy the house. His line
17 to me was life with me is an adventure. I said I'll put that
18 on my tombstone. Life is an adventure. Buy the house. He
19 put in a counter bid and they accepted. And life has been an
20 adventure.

21 **MS. CITRIN:** I was just going to say, what an
22 appropriate quote because life has been a great adventure for
23 you. Think about how many times have you been to Israel.

24 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Susie, at one point I was counting
25 and I finally stopped counting. It's very interesting because

1 I'd never been to Europe. The year we got married was
2 supposed to be my trip to Europe. My parents had sent my
3 sister after her first year of school. They said they'd send
4 her for the summer on a student trip. That was going to be my
5 trip that summer, but instead I got married. Then I had all
6 these children and I never got to Europe.

7 Then there was a terrible flood in Venice and I said
8 it's going to be under water and I'm never going to get there.
9 I didn't want to go to Europe until I went to Israel. I
10 really didn't. I finally got there when Janey led the first
11 mission with the Women's Board. Once I got to Israel, I never
12 went anyplace else.

13 Finally, when I turned 40 he surprised me and took
14 me for four days. My friends said, is he trying to kill you?
15 He never took time from the office. He couldn't go away. He
16 took those four days and totally surprised me, told me to pack
17 an overnight case the day of my birthday and he was going to
18 take me away for a few days. I packed my toilet articles and
19 make-up, he came in the bedroom and the kids handed me this
20 big box of presents. He said get dressed and a bus pulls up.
21 My girlfriends are in the bus.

22 **MS. CITRIN:** You had no idea.

23 **MRS. HERMELIN:** No idea. Some had their coats on
24 over their pajamas because it was real early in the morning.
25 We took the bus to the airport. They had a cake on the bus

1 and a violin player who played at my engagement party, this
2 Hungarian violinist, champagne at the crack of dawn. The
3 violinist followed me into the airport playing. I have a
4 photograph of this.

5 **MS. CITRIN:** At what point did you know you were
6 going to Europe?

7 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I didn't know. I saw luggage coming
8 in and I saw my skis. I thought I'm going to Vermont skiing.
9 We're going on a plane to New York. When I got to New York,
10 my daughter was in college there at the time. She greets us
11 there with flowers. We get on a shuttle that says Air France.
12 I said, Air where? He took me on the Concorde to France.

13 When we got to France, I had cousins there and they
14 were there at the airport waiting for us with flowers. He
15 really planned this thing. We stayed at the airport and he
16 never told me where we were going from one day to the next.
17 We went to Geneva, and went to Switzerland and skied. Came
18 back to Geneva, spent the night there, went to Florence for a
19 night, Rome for a night, back to Paris for a night. In Paris
20 I crashed. The first day we got there I'm sleeping on the
21 bed. I'm like dead. Then we came home but not on the
22 Concorde. I wanted the whole day in France so we came home on
23 a conventional flight that night. So that was my first time
24 in Europe.

25 After that they started doing the missions to

1 Israel, and you'd go to Prague or someplace before. We went
2 on a mission to Israel that was going to Paris for three days
3 and then to Israel, the Jewish community in Paris. Somebody
4 said to me that's crazy, three days. I said, do you know what
5 you can see in three days in one city? It's a luxury.

6 **MS. CITRIN:** It sounds like a wonderful trip.

7 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I remember friends of mine bought me
8 a book on France, Paris, Florence and Geneva, so I would know
9 where I was. But I've been to Israel many, many times.

10 **MS. CITRIN:** I've been there with you.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I don't remember how many times I've
12 been to Israel. People ask me, and I sure it's many.

13 **MS. CITRIN:** It's like carving notches in your belt.

14 **MRS. CITRIN:** Yeah. I'm a mission junkie. In fact
15 I can't believe I'm not going on a family mission. I was
16 trying to put a family mission for my own family this year,
17 but my family is too young to be on the big family mission.

18 **MS. CITRIN:** You've got lots of little people. How
19 many little babies under five?

20 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Under five I have nine.

21 **MS. CITRIN:** That I know keeps you busy.

22 Let's go back to the early years and you were busy
23 with kids, David's moving you all over and building onto the
24 house.

25 **MRS. HERMELIN:** We didn't build so fast, we couldn't

1 afford it. We built on much later. We built on the house
2 because when we bought it, it didn't have enough bedrooms to
3 begin with. I had just added bedrooms to the home we lived in
4 because the family had grown. Then he took me to a house that
5 didn't have the five bedrooms for the kids. We did do some
6 work on the house so we could have five bedrooms for the
7 children because I really felt strongly that the kids needed
8 to have their own space. Then we didn't do any additions
9 until my daughter Julie was 16. Before her consecration we
10 added a room. We were having a lot of meetings in the house.

11 **MS. CITRIN:** Yes, you were having meetings.

12 **MRS. HERMELIN:** We had started already getting
13 involved in the community. When my kids were little, he was
14 very involved in the community. Because my sister was older
15 than I, she was involved in the community in different places,
16 Children's Orthogenic School that Norman Wachler was involved
17 with, the Kayes were involved with, these were friends of my
18 sister's that had been very involved in this school for kids
19 with special needs. Reggie brought me into it. And then I
20 had been involved with the board of Hadassah as a young girl,
21 as all the young women joined when they were first married,
22 but I didn't do a lot because when you've got a house with
23 children and you tend to their needs.

24 David was involved from an early time. He joined
25 the Young Leadership Cabinet. We had a meeting around the

1 table at Federation, and he saw all these leaders. Joe
2 Tauber, Frankel, he saw all this potential leadership. He
3 said to himself, they don't need me here right now. They've
4 got all these young people coming up. So he looked for some
5 place that needed him more, another organization. He got
6 himself involved in Bonds and in ORT. Bonds was a new
7 organization that the Israel government had decided to
8 establish. He was out a lot at night because the work he did
9 took him out a lot at nights. He was in the insurance
10 business and doing renewals at night. People who were buying
11 insurance didn't want to meet during business hours. If you
12 wanted to buy life insurance, whatever, you would do it in the
13 evenings. He would make house calls at night all the time.
14 Somebody had to be home with the kids, so I didn't get that
15 involved early on.

16 When my last child started school, my motto was if
17 you can't fight them join them, by this time I got involved in
18 a lot of organizations a little bit at a number of
19 organizations.

20 **MS. CITRIN:** Do you want me to tell you what they
21 were? The list goes on and on. ORT, Bonds, Hadassah,
22 National Council --

23 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Sisterhood.

24 **MS. CITRIN:** Absolutely.

25 **MRS. HERMELIN:** It went on and on. I wanted to be

1 busy. I couldn't go to work because I had to be available for
2 my kids and husband, but I felt I needed to be busy. I wasn't
3 going to clean house and cook all day. I like to cook but I
4 just wanted to be involved in the world. So I started when my
5 youngest started school.

6 We always had meetings in the house because we had
7 room enough in the living room for people to sit. We always
8 started meetings in motion.

9 **MS. CITRIN:** You were behind the scenes making the
10 cakes and serving the coffee.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** In those days I did all the cooking
12 and baking. I had help to serve but I did all the baking
13 myself. I enjoyed it and that part was mine.

14 **MS. CITRIN:** It's always been yours. You've always
15 been an incredible hostess.

16 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I used to tell him I'll do anything.
17 He can do the speaking and I'll do the cooking. That was our
18 deal. I said I was happy to do it, but you do the speaking
19 and I'll do the cooking part. That's what we did for a long
20 time. But I did get involved in the community because that's
21 where my heart was and where my caring was.

22 **MS. CITRIN:** I had an opportunity to read some of
23 your old speeches in your folder and you had a great sense of
24 humor. I know that myself, but I think people always look to
25 David as being the jokester.

1 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I had a lot of help from my friends.
2 He felt the best thing he took in school was typing. He was
3 an amazing typist. He bought the first computer ever sold to
4 a house in Detroit. The reason I know that is because they
5 came from the television station to interview him and ask him
6 why you bought a home computer. When the Apple store opened
7 in Birmingham many years ago, he walked by the store and said
8 if you can install that today I'll buy it. He was slightly
9 impulsive. Very impulsive. What he wanted he wanted then;
10 otherwise he didn't need it.

11 He put the computer on the table in the family room.
12 He said my kids will have to know Basic more than they'll have
13 to know French and Spanish. That's how he felt. He felt it
14 was the wave of the future. He was very farsighted. He put
15 the computer there and everybody studied except me. Like a
16 dummy I was busy cooking, cleaning and doing my things and not
17 doing the computer.

18 **MS. CITRIN:** It's interesting because in reading
19 some of the things, I came across the fact that he was the
20 magician and you were the assistant.

21 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Well, actually my children started
22 out being the assistant. He got me to do it a little bit when
23 he was young but actually my ex-sister-in-law was his
24 assistant in high school, so when we were first married she
25 acted as his assistant because I was much too shy to do that.

1 I was not comfortable in front of a crowd. There are some
2 very funny stories about how she did that and once split her
3 pants in the trunk that she was supposed to get out of when my
4 daughter's class was watching the show. She wouldn't get out
5 of the trunk. He said you've got to get out of the trunk or
6 I'm going to seal all the holes. And she wouldn't come out
7 and the show ended on a flop. They couldn't do the finale.

8 **MS. CITRIN:** That was my point. You need the
9 assistant. You can't have the full show if you don't have the
10 assistant.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** He enlisted his children as soon as
12 they were old enough to do it and then over the years I ended
13 up acquiescing and helping him, more in Norway than here.

14 **MS. CITRIN:** You put on magic shows in Norway?

15 **MRS. HERMELIN:** He put on magic shows in Norway. He
16 was an ambassador like none other. That's a whole other -- we
17 went to a meeting in Geneva for the ambassadors from that part
18 of the world and as we drove from the airport to the first
19 meeting he drove by a big building that said Vienna Magic.
20 His eyes lit up like a kid. I knew he was going to get there
21 no matter what. We were very busy at meetings, and then the
22 last day of the meetings there was an open luncheon, no
23 speaker, and the spouses came together. David couldn't be
24 found. I didn't know where he was. Three-quarters through
25 the meal he appears, quick, get to the room packed, we're

1 leaving now. He'd been to Vienna Magic.

2 This was a place that made magic tricks for all the
3 big illusionists, the guys from Vegas and everybody. The
4 second floor was their creating room. We went up there and he
5 made selections. I said okay it's going to be your birthday
6 in a couple months you can buy it for your birthday. It's my
7 present to you. So we bought two big major presents, one that
8 cuts you in half and the other one that made you disappear
9 behind a curtain. You would move the curtain and the person
10 you had tied up on a board would be gone and the magician
11 would be there tied up. He sent them back to Norway.

12 He had taken his magic with him when we went to
13 Norway. When we had kids over at holiday times, the school
14 children used to come to the embassy, and he would do magic
15 shows for them.

16 **MS. CITRIN:** Oh, my goodness.

17 **MRS. HERMELIN:** He took himself there. This was an
18 ambassador that no one forgot.

19 **MS. CITRIN:** And you, too. You have to have the
20 assistant to have the show.

21 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I definitely was his assistant. He
22 was very cute. We had this big holiday party. It couldn't be
23 a Christmas party because we didn't want a Christmas tree in
24 the house. That was the major thing because we kept kosher in
25 the house. So he said we'll make it a holiday party. We had

1 all the greens and snowflakes and a big snowman blow-up thing
2 and all the things that went around, but we didn't have a
3 tree. We called it a holiday party and we had dredles on the
4 table and Hanukkah menorah and candles and everything for all
5 the holiday.

6 We had all these ambassadors and people from the
7 government, all these Norwegian people. He insisted on doing
8 magic. I said you can't do a magic show, you're an
9 ambassador. Like I said, he was a salesman. Finally I
10 relented, but I said you can't do that big one with the circle
11 because we have no place to put it. We have too many people
12 in the house for the party as it was. We entertained for more
13 people than the house could really hold. But I'll do the
14 zigzag one where they cut you in half because it was narrow
15 and we could put it away when the thing was over. Sure enough
16 in the party he got the attention in one of the rooms and he
17 did a bit of a magic show and put me in this thing in front of
18 all the ambassadors.

19 **MS. CITRIN:** You got sliced in half?

20 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Sliced in half.

21 **MS. CITRIN:** Somewhat like one of his salamis.

22 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I was his assistant when it was the
23 most embarrassing time.

24 **MS. CITRIN:** We're sort of skipping around a little.
25 I want to know about Women's Department.

1 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Let me stop talking about this.

2 **MS. CITRIN:** No. I want to talk about Norway
3 because you're smiling and obviously it was a wonderful
4 experience.

5 **MRS. HERMELIN:** It was a wonderful time but we'll
6 come back.

7 **MS. CITRIN:** No. I just want to ask you because you
8 had guests at the embassy like Ahood Barak and Yassir Arafat
9 and Bill Clinton. You had some incredible experiences. What
10 was that like for you personally?

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** It was a fairy tale. We used to
12 pinch ourselves. On Saturdays and Sundays we would be
13 completely free. We'd go to synagogue there and we'd also go
14 walking in the afternoon. In Norway you had to walk or bike
15 or hike or something on the weekends or ski. That's how they
16 lived their lives. We would be walking or running and we
17 would say, can you believe this, can you believe we're here,
18 that this is happening? It was a real fairy tale existence.

19 The Norwegians loved America because the Marshall
20 plan saved them after the Second World War and so many of
21 their children and grandchildren and relatives live in the
22 United States. There's a larger community of Norwegians here
23 than there is in Norway. There's only 4.5 million there and
24 7.5 million here who came from Norway. They love the United
25 States.

1 But they said the only thing they never had was a
2 sitting president come and visit them. The presidents always
3 go to their hot spots and things that are problematic. They
4 don't necessarily go to the easy places that are your close
5 allies. When they told that to my husband, he said he wanted
6 to have that happen, he wanted to bring the president to
7 Norway. So from the first time we went there, every time he
8 had an opportunity to be in the White House or talk to the
9 president or talk to the state department, he kept nudging the
10 president to come. And in fact when the president did come,
11 he said in a speech at the last piece of the trip, I had to
12 come finally to get David to stop bothering me. They all
13 laughed and then David piped up and said, but you haven't been
14 in the summer. You think that's going to stop me? Having him
15 in the house was incredible.

16 My office was the office for Madelyn Albright and we
17 made another bedroom for the Palestinian delegation, a bedroom
18 for the American delegation and Israeli delegation, they were
19 all in the house and we were serving them hot dogs.

20 **MS. CITRIN:** Delicious kosher hot dogs.

21 **MRS. HERMELIN:** We figured they were going all day
22 long and we thought it would be nice to serve. We knew that
23 Barak and Arafat and Clinton were going to go and have a
24 private conversation and the rest of the delegation would be
25 hanging around the house. We brought food out to serve them

1 because it was already evening and it was late.

2 **MS. CITRIN:** You're really a witness to history.

3 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I have a phenomenal picture of the
4 four of them standing in front of David's music box in the
5 front hall of the embassy. We'd taken this big music box over
6 there. The president said, what is that, it was actually
7 Grand March that was playing on it, so he'd play it and the
8 four of them were standing in front of it.

9 And we had some amazing opportunities. We actually
10 went out on a boat with the American delegation and the
11 Palestinian delegation to have a quiet conversation, to see
12 what they could do because things had been really rocky. They
13 wanted a place they could talk -- you may have to cut this out
14 of the tape, seriously. As an ambassador you can't say things
15 and divulge things. You just slice it out.

16 Of course the Palestinians fell in love with David.
17 They wanted him to meet them in Jerusalem. It was quite an
18 experience when Arafat came in and kissed my son on his
19 cheeks, and my son said, "he kissed me, he kissed me. Such a
20 gross person." And I said you have to be very polite, as you
21 have to be as the ambassador and the ambassador's child.

22 **MS. CITRIN:** I know when I saw you in Norway, you
23 always had this love of art. You took us to the museums.

24 **MRS. HERMELIN:** This program we had for me was like
25 being a kid in a candy store. When you're an ambassador, you

1 are in -- it's called the Art to the Embassy Program, you can
2 select the art you want in your home because this is the
3 culture you want to take to the other country so they can
4 understand the culture of your country, the art and
5 everything. You bring some performing things. Whatever you
6 do it's always to reach out to the country you're living in,
7 to tell them what the United States is all about. For me
8 being an art collector I had this whole list, a dream list of
9 what I would love to have in my house. I had two Dynes in the
10 dining room as you remember. I had all these pieces from
11 foundations and I had all these famous artists' pictures. And
12 of course I took many of my own things over, which I'm glad
13 because they only give you X amount of pieces. The house was
14 quite big so I needed some of my own art to fill the walls.
15 It was very exciting.

16 **MS. CITRIN:** What an experience. You went to
17 ambassador school, didn't you?

18 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Yes. For two weeks. It wasn't long
19 enough. You need a month at least. It was excellent that we
20 did it. We met wonderful people who became friends of ours.
21 The ambassador from Sweden became a good friend of ours. The
22 ambassador from Portugal, who just had an article in the *New*
23 *York Times* about this couple who -- he had been a widower with
24 seven children and she used to work in the Clinton White House
25 as a lobbyist to the White House. They were both Irish. They

1 were engaged while we were in ambassador school. They moved
2 to Portugal with him. She who had never had any children now
3 had seven children from his first marriage. Two in college.

4 **MS. CITRIN:** You could have advised her.

5 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I did, trust me. We had lots of
6 good conversations. There was a story in the *New York Times*
7 about a month ago about them.

8 She loved trains, and so they'd come to Norway to
9 take this special train that went from Oslo to Bergen and you
10 went through a mountain. And inside a mountain the tunnel
11 went round and round starting at the top of the mountain and
12 you ended up in the valley. They came to take this train so
13 they spent three days with us. They fell in love with my
14 husband. And all these people called me to say there was an
15 article in the paper about David in the paper a few days ago.

16 **MS. CITRIN:** I want to get back --

17 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Let's get back to what this is all
18 about.

19 **MS. CITRIN:** This is so interesting because this is
20 how you live every single day. I don't know sometimes how you
21 keep up the schedule you do to this day. Parties at your
22 home, meetings all the time, awards. So many different
23 awards. Women's American ORT, State of Israel Bonds, and
24 B'nai B'rith, Heart of Gold from United Way, Yad Ezra, Woman
25 of the Year from B'nai B'rith, recently the Butzel Award.

1 Anything in particular, any volunteer experience? You've been
2 president and on so many boards.

3 **MRS. HERMELIN:** You know, I joined the organizations
4 because I wanted to work in the community. I cared a great
5 deal. That's drove me to come into the volunteer world, and
6 when you work in the volunteer world, you receive so much more
7 than you give. It sounds trite and it's used so much but it's
8 really the truth. It enriches your life so much. It gives
9 you so much to understand, and you care and you love. As a
10 couple and as a person it enriches your life. Over the years
11 there have been different experiences that have been very
12 special.

13 The awards, I have to be honest, the Butzel Award I
14 was thrilled and delighted. I couldn't have been more
15 thrilled. But many times, and I understand this, if you're
16 going to be involved in the community, if you know the
17 organization needs the money and if you can help them by
18 lending your name, this allows -- I've asked people over the
19 years to be the honorees. So when it came around to being
20 asked by them, I said if you're going to go out there, you
21 better do it yourself. It's not easy and I know it's not
22 easy, and I tell an honoree it's not easy, but it's so helpful
23 to take that other step. You can give your time and you can
24 give your money, but if you give your name to it and help them
25 to raise more money, you're giving them a gift.

1 So when you say all these awards, you know, I put
2 myself out there. If it will help at the time, fine, and if
3 you care about what they're doing and the work they do, then
4 you say yes. The awards are there because of that because
5 over the years I've been the one that's been asking other
6 people to do it.

7 And David, god bless him, used to say, don't honor
8 me, just let me chair the dinners for you. The biggest
9 important thing I did in this community -- and I'm going to
10 say it on the tape -- if I did one thing important, I think I
11 helped influence a lot of young women who thought they
12 couldn't take leadership roles because they couldn't speak in
13 front of people. From the very beginning I shunned them all.
14 I wouldn't take a leadership position that put me in a
15 situation to make speeches. I would do this and that, but
16 don't ask me to take the microphone and make a speech. Like I
17 said, I made a deal with my husband, I'll do the cooking you
18 do the speaking. I couldn't do it. It was so nerve-racking
19 for me. It caused such anxiety prior to and in the speaking
20 situation that I couldn't do it. But I say to the young women
21 now who are coming up and coming along and say I can't do
22 that, I can't do it. Well, many of the women are working
23 women who are lawyers and in the business world and they speak
24 more in their business worlds.

25 But I came from a generation that we weren't. We

1 didn't have bas mitzvahs so we didn't have that exposure even.
2 We didn't have to get up in front of the shul and do a bas
3 mitzvah when we were kids. I did one as an adult. I said I
4 just want the education, I don't want to get up and do it. I
5 was with a group and we did it. That also gave me anxiety.
6 But the fact is that I get up and tell the young women if I
7 can get up and make speeches, then anybody can do it. I know
8 there's a few women who followed me who had that same feeling,
9 and who have done an amazing job and even better than I,
10 because they finally said, okay, if Dori can do it, if she can
11 do it, then I can do it. I think that was my best gift.

12 I still don't like it. I still find it very
13 difficult. Until they see you hide you don't even look like
14 you're nervous; trust me, I'm still nervous. I used to laugh
15 and say, when they go around the table and ask your name, I
16 would be nervous, da da Doreen. And my kids know it.

17 David being sick and putting me in a situation where
18 I had to do it, it forced me. Jumping back to Norway, when he
19 got sick. As an ambassador you welcome people into your home
20 and you make a little introduction. His timing was amazing
21 when he was well. David knew how long to speak, how long not
22 to speak, when to stop, when to start. The hardest thing
23 after he had his surgery was he lost his timing. He would
24 start welcoming people to the house for receptions and things
25 like that, and he couldn't finish it. Because of protocol

1 nobody would interrupt the ambassador. The deputy chief
2 couldn't say anything, and he and I talked and I said, I can
3 sidle up to David, I can, I'm his wife, and finish for him.
4 He literally couldn't finish a conversation, even on the
5 phone, even at home. I would do that. So he put me in a
6 situation where I had to start taking the microphone and
7 podium. It doesn't make me any happier, but I think that
8 that's my contribution to the young women of today.

9 **MS. CITRIN:** You've given much more than that but
10 that's a wonderful gift to give.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I was very involved in fund-raising
12 always. That's what I started out doing with Bonds and with
13 Federation. I joined the National Council for Jewish Women
14 because they do more hands-on work and they're not necessarily
15 a fund-raising organization, so I became involved and the
16 vice-chairman of the Orchards Children Services at the time.
17 The year I joined we started to build a camp. So I had to
18 raise money.

19 **MS. CITRIN:** You've been campaign chair of Women's
20 Department and of the general campaign. And you were one of
21 the first women to be a campaign chair, which who for people
22 like myself who followed after, it was a great inspiration to
23 know that a woman could do this and be given this kind of
24 responsibility.

25 **MRS. HERMELIN:** There were many before us that could

1 have broken that ceiling, but they finally were ready when we
2 came along, Susie.

3 **MS. CITRIN:** They obviously knew you could do it.
4 You may not think you inspired but you did.

5 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

6 **MS. CITRIN:** Any one volunteer activity that sort of
7 jumps out at you?

8 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I have to tell you that being
9 chairman of the campaign of the Women's Department was a high
10 point for me. It was the most exciting job. You really get
11 into the whole thing and understand and learn and want to help
12 make it happen. And then when I was chairman of the campaign,
13 I was very honored to take that position. It was a big job, a
14 good job. It's easier in the Women's Department you write
15 your speeches yourself, and in the general campaign they give
16 you your speeches which is much nicer. They have much more
17 back-up for you at the general campaign. Those were probably
18 the highlights of my volunteer years.

19 Except I think now that I'm in, I have to say that
20 at this point what I'm doing now with the education programs,
21 the Hermelin-Davidson set up for Congregational Excellence, is
22 most important. When I first took it on, unfortunately David
23 was sick and I didn't want to do it because I just didn't want
24 to do anything that took me away from him that much. Then as
25 I got into this program, seeing what we're doing, I feel so

1 strongly that the next generation of children should know who
2 they are and what they are and feel comfortable. David used
3 to say and I'm giving this as a Dori and David kind of memoir
4 of things we did together.

5 **MS. CITRIN:** We remember you together.

6 **MRS. HERMELIN:** But he used to say that our children
7 are not going to be Jewish because of the Holocaust. They're
8 going to be Jewish because of the joy of being Jewish. That
9 truly is what we tried to embody together. I mean our Pesach
10 Seders are memorable because they were fun and the kids loved
11 them. Over the years there were reasons they didn't want to
12 come, because there was this and that activity. There was a
13 concert, a recital, a practice recital for dancing. My
14 daughter couldn't go to the recital because the practice was
15 on Passover and she couldn't come, and the teacher put her out
16 of the recital. Over the years when the kids didn't want to
17 come for various reasons, we used to say call your Papa. We
18 were fortunate that my father-in-law lived until he was 99.
19 Call Papa and tell him you're not coming to Pesach. Nobody
20 ever made the call.

21 Getting back to this Congregational Excellence
22 Program, it's really become a highlight for me because I care
23 so much about the fact that the next generation loves and
24 wants to be Jewish because of this joy of Judaism. I went
25 through an after-school school and didn't like it and 95

1 percent of those who did didn't have great memories from our
2 generation. I wanted to help improve the quality of education
3 and the best way to do it -- when a kid had a great teacher,
4 they had a great year. I had three that went to day school
5 and two that went to after-school school. When they had a
6 good teacher, they had a great year, and they didn't mind
7 going and they were fine. But when the teacher and them
8 didn't click, it didn't click for them.

9 So we've discussed this in this Congregational
10 Excellence Program, that the best way to create this situation
11 in the classroom was to help the teachers create more programs
12 for them. Anything you could give them is a plus and to show
13 we appreciate them. They're working with our most precious
14 possession, our children, and they're doing the most important
15 job we can ask them to do is. to give them a good Jewish
16 foundation.

17 **MS. CITRIN:** It's a very clever program because you
18 take all of these teachers and build them up to a wonderful
19 excursion to Israel.

20 **MRS. HERMELIN:** The two missions I've been on with
21 the teachers has been phenomenal, so inspirational. We took
22 the artists last time and the family educators, and it was so
23 exciting and inspiring for me. I'm a mission junkie and I
24 love to see what happens to people.

25 We took Israeli teachers with us and they'd never

1 seen Israel that way and experienced it that way and done the
2 things that we did with them. And now they're creating these
3 programs to give to our kids in the schools. It's just so
4 exciting. If they can translate that excitement, that love
5 and that joy to our students, that's what it's all about. Our
6 next challenge is the sixth through the twelfth grade. We
7 took the kindergarten through fifth grade teachers this last
8 trip and it's been a real high point for me.

9 **MS. CITRIN:** It will change the whole complexion of
10 Jewish education in this community.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** I think it will be a pilot program
12 for the country and working in conjunction with the seminary,
13 all the denominations, working with the Conservative and
14 Reform teachers, the reconstructionists; it's been incredible
15 opportunity. I'm loving doing that.

16 **MS. CITRIN:** In mentioning Israel, is there any one
17 incident that sort of stands out as the highlight of all of
18 the times you've traveled there? I can see in your face when
19 you talk about taking anybody to Israel, especially for a
20 first time.

21 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Yes, it's the best. There is
22 nothing like going to Israel for the first time. The first
23 time for me I said we got to go back, got to go back, take the
24 kids back. Not too long after that we went back. We took a
25 PHISEL teacher -- that's the initials of all the families that

1 came with us. We took a trip with Diana and Murray Schechter.
2 They were not living in Israel at the time; they were living
3 here still. And we took all of our kids, and it was really
4 cute because my kids, who were at Hillel and could speak a
5 little Hebrew. We would pick the soldiers up on our bus and
6 take them with us, my little kids could talk to them, my older
7 kids couldn't say a word. They used to get so frustrated.
8 Here's all these handsome soldiers on the bus. That was a
9 special trip. And I'm looking forward to taking it again when
10 the little ones get a little bigger.

11 Each trip, it's very interesting when you ask which
12 one stands out. Every trip has a special significance to it
13 over the years. We had a guide once, he said you've been here
14 so many times I've got to find something to do with you that
15 you never did before. I took my sister and brother-in-law for
16 their 50th birthdays to Israel. I was there on vacation
17 actually it was no mission but going as a tourist, doing
18 everything together, the four of us.

19 I went shopping there for the first time and found
20 out you could buy some fabulous clothes in Israel. I bought
21 some suits. I was chairman of Israel Bonds at the time, and I
22 wore my Israel suits, and they're gorgeous. I wore them a
23 lot, for years. But I would make a point of wearing them to
24 my meetings and give my speech and say this is from Israel,
25 because many people go on vacation, you go shopping in a

1 country. People are so busy on tours so often that they don't
2 take the time. Whenever David and I did a mission, we always
3 made sure that they had time to spend their money because That
4 only helps the economy.

5 **MS. CITRIN:** I remember one of the Michigan Miracle
6 Missions where we stopped at the stores.

7 **MRS. HERMELIN:** They asked the store if they knew
8 David. You've got a big group coming in, keep your doors open
9 a little longer. We always made sure people had time to go
10 shopping.

11 Talk about speaking, the Israel Bonds is where I
12 made my first speeches. I had the opportunity to become very
13 close to Franka Charlupski, may she rest in peace. She was
14 the chairman just before me. She would talk about the
15 Holocaust experience at our meetings. She gave me the courage
16 to speak. If they had the courage to live and do what they
17 had to do in their lives, I can get up and do what I need to
18 do to help support the state of Israel. We've met so many
19 amazing people.

20 We went from Norway to Israel for the 50th
21 anniversary with our children. Marcy and the kids were living
22 with me in Norway. It was very cute because the vice-
23 president was there and we were at a luncheon. He said hi to
24 David and he turned to Barak, the prime minister of Israel at
25 the time, and said I'd like you to meet our ambassador to

1 Norway. He says, oh, no, he's our ambassador to Norway. We
2 had become very close friends of the Israeli ambassador at the
3 time to Norway and we have subsequently stayed very close
4 friends. The rabbi kept getting on his case because they
5 didn't keep kosher in the embassy in Israel because they were
6 secular Jews but we kept kosher in Norway. That wasn't their
7 life but it was our life.

8 **MS. CITRIN:** I know in Norway you sort of
9 infiltrated the Jewish community when you were there. In
10 Israel you know so many people there. Here you do so much.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** We have the most wonderful community
12 in the world. We really do. You don't appreciate it until
13 you start working on the national level. It's said all the
14 time that when you go out of town and talk about where you're
15 from, Detroit, oh, my god, Detroit's got an amazing Jewish
16 community. We do. We are a people city and people who care.
17 Every organization that has fund-raisers has a fund-raiser in
18 Detroit because Detroit just understands and cares. David
19 said it when we left and I agree, they allowed us, they helped
20 us to achieve what we achieved in going to Norway.

21 They always supported us, supported David when we
22 got involved in something. They would do it when we did huge
23 fund-raisers for Clinton and he called and asked people to
24 come and give ridiculous amounts of money that they don't
25 usually do, and David, the best salesman in the world, people

1 loved it. It was a wonderful experience. That's what
2 propelled us, because of this community. People got behind
3 everybody. But not just us, everybody. The Women's
4 Department, the women who came before us supported us and
5 helped and encouraged us and were there for us when we needed
6 them.

7 **MS. CITRIN:** But you also brought experiences to
8 this community in terms of bringing Clinton to your home,
9 introducing him. How many of us get to shake hands with a
10 presidential candidate.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Many more than we realize. There's
12 a lot of people who are very involved in our community. This
13 community is an active, participatory community that really
14 cares and supports each other and what we have going for us.
15 It's wonderful. It was a fairy tale and David left us big
16 shoes. You get nervous when you're raising your children,
17 they could have said forget this, it's been pushed down our
18 throat forever, you get kind of nervous when you're raising
19 your children and you wonder what they're going to do when
20 they get older. Like my kids used to say they couldn't get
21 undressed in their bedrooms at night because somebody would
22 say we're looking at the house and they'd open the door. They
23 would be trying to get ready for bed and somebody was just
24 seeing the house because David said it was okay. Sure, go
25 around. Never said anything was off limits.

1 **MS. CITRIN:** They're right behind you.

2 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Brian has taken up the gauntlet.
3 Tremendously beside me, ahead of me, whatever. The three out
4 of town have picked up in their own communities. It thrills
5 me beyond belief. That's what I want to see for everybody, to
6 be able to get that pleasure and joy. That's why I feel so
7 strongly for Jewish education in the future, that we should
8 have that pleasure with our kids and grandkids.

9 **MS. CITRIN:** You're doing an incredible thing by
10 really supporting the teachers who have not been in the past
11 cultivated and honored.

12 **MRS. HERMELIN:** We need to do this.

13 **MS. CITRIN:** I would be remiss if I didn't ask you
14 about salami mania and how it got started.

15 **MRS. HERMELIN:** The truth be told is, it got started
16 because David ate nothing. My husband was an amazing man as
17 far as being all over the place, but the one huge flaw he had
18 was he ate nothing. He ate plain steak and plain chicken and
19 plain potatoes and french fried potatoes and salami. I mean
20 salami was the mainstay his whole life, because if he couldn't
21 find something to eat, he would eat salami. So when we
22 traveled, we took salamis. Particularly on a mission, if
23 there's a plate of dinner, and you don't have an option, and
24 he would know if worse came to worse, he would have a salami
25 sandwich. He would never eat alone so he took enough salami

1 for everybody always. Anyplace.

2 **MS. CITRIN:** But the one Michigan Miracle Mission
3 had 1284 people with salami.

4 **MRS. HERMELIN:** He chaired the mission and he and
5 Paul, we decided to give the salamis to everybody. We gave
6 them out when people turned their suitcases in. The next time
7 we gave them as they left. They either ate them or gave them
8 to the people in Israel. We took enough salami to pass out to
9 people that we knew. Our driver --

10 **MS. CITRIN:** You started a whole Detroit tradition.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Tradition, yes. David passing out
12 salami. It wasn't just a Detroit tradition; it was a
13 tradition he started wherever he went. I'll tell you one very
14 funny story. It was sad and funny. David went to Israel when
15 they signed the peace treaty in Jordan and that was very nice,
16 and of course he took salamis with him because he was going to
17 be gone a few days and he needed to have salami. He went on
18 Air Force II with all these dignitaries, and of course he
19 shared the salami. Because this guy was sitting beside him, I
20 think it was somebody quite important, he said, would you hold
21 this tray for me and got him slicing salami.

22 The second time he went after Rabin was killed, and
23 he was invited to go with the president on Air Force II. I
24 said David, this isn't the time to take salami. He said, I've
25 got to eat something. So of course he took salami to sustain

1 himself for three days because who knew what they were going
2 to serve him. He comes home and says to me, you were right,
3 it wasn't the time to take salamis. You can't imagine what
4 happened. When we got to the airport, they put all the bags
5 in the center of the tarmac and they had all the people stand
6 in a circle and they brought the dogs out, the drug dogs.
7 They smelled for the drugs and they come to his suitcase and
8 they start going crazy. The army was saying whose suitcase is
9 this? My husband said, oh, these dignitaries, my suitcase.
10 What's in the suitcase? He said, salami. Well, we knew it
11 wasn't drugs because the dogs are trained to sit when they
12 have a suitcase of drugs, they sit beside it or contraband or
13 explosives or whatever. But the dogs were going crazy, so we
14 knew it had to be something else.

15 **MS. CITRIN:** Contraband salami.

16 **MRS. HERMELIN:** He said I was embarrassed when I had
17 to go forward in this scoop of people, all these dignitaries.
18 He said, you were right, I shouldn't have taken salami at this
19 time. On the plane he cracked open the salamis and started
20 serving everybody on the way to Israel.

21 We met people all over the world with salamis. I
22 mean I have friends from Mexico City now who we met many years
23 ago in Acapulco, when my kids were babies. We met them again
24 a few years later. We spent some time with them and then lost
25 touch with them, and bumped into them years later and said,

1 you're the salami man. I forget to take them some time. I
2 forgot to take them with the teachers this year. It was my
3 fault. They're looking for the salamis and I was, you know,
4 it wasn't my necessity, but it was his necessity. It became
5 the necessity of everybody then. People who never eat meat,
6 they said, I don't eat meat I'm a vegetarian, but I eat the
7 salami.

8 **MS. CITRIN:** One of the things in looking through
9 your folder, which was vast, I noticed that you went from
10 motor homes and schleping, driving cross country in motor
11 homes to inaugural balls. Any comments you want to make about
12 those trips?

13 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Those trips were probably the best
14 that ever happened to us, the family really in that respect.
15 Because David worked 24/7. He worked very hard, very long
16 hours, he had lots of night meetings and stuff. This was the
17 first time we spent 24/7 in the motor home together. You
18 couldn't leave baby-sitters because you're in strange places,
19 so we're all together. We did it from the time my daughter
20 was 15 till the time he was president of Shaarey Zedek and he
21 couldn't get away that summer. We had different size groups,
22 sometimes all the kids, sometimes some of the kids, sometimes
23 nieces and nephews with us, we'd travel with other families.
24 Ended up having a caravan of three motor homes across the
25 country. It was amazing times. I could talk about that for

1 another three hours.

2 The funniest thing happened, the year we went east
3 with the children and went to Washington and Marcy was with us
4 with the kids and Robbie and the grandkids, we get to
5 Washington and wanted to have the White House tour. We called
6 Senator Levin and he arranged for us to have a private tour,
7 so you could go through with a smaller group instead of a
8 giant group.

9 I guess the White House must look through the list
10 of people that were coming on private tours and they saw our
11 name there. They sent word to David's office that they were
12 inviting us to meet the president, to have an audience with
13 the president. We were so excited, this was years before
14 David was ambassador. This was incredible. We always took
15 one nice outfit with us. Marcy said, mom, we take it every
16 year and we never use it. We get to Washington and have
17 nothing to put the boys in. No clothes at all. And here we
18 are, invited to see the president.

19 **MS. CITRIN:** Which president was it?

20 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Clinton. It was right after he was
21 in office. We went around town looking for something for the
22 kids to wear; there's nothing. We are in shorts and t-shirts
23 and the president is walking through, we were going to have a
24 picture with him as he left the White House to get into his
25 helicopter. And there was like four families that were

1 gathered there at the end of the tour. Here we are in shorts
2 and t-shirts. David and I had something but the kids had
3 nothing. We were across from this family that was all decked
4 out and looking so beautiful and this other family that
5 happens to be Roosevelt's grandson and his family is all in
6 white pants and blue blazers. We were standing there looking
7 like schleppers. We had a car pick us up because we couldn't
8 take the motor home to the White House. We told them wait at
9 the gate, but the guy didn't listen. He came pulled up, we
10 get out of the motor home and get in this fancy car and people
11 are looking out of their motor home doors.

12 Clinton comes and greets all the families and takes
13 pictures. We apologized for our attire.

14 **MS. CITRIN:** The future ambassador you were with.

15 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Amazing times. Traveled every state
16 in the union and every province in Canada. One place we
17 didn't make was to Alaska. We tried but the ferry was out and
18 we couldn't get the motor home across. Those were wonderful
19 years.

20 **MS. CITRIN:** Well, it's hard in such a short time to
21 cover all that you've done but any final thoughts looking
22 towards the future?

23 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Well, this is being done for our
24 Federation, this video, and I think this is such an important
25 organization in our community that we take care of our Jews

1 here and around the world and we take care of the world. The
2 hurricanes, we, as a Jewish community, sent money there to
3 help the communities there. We as a community must all band
4 together to understand and teach our children and
5 grandchildren this purpose that we are a family, all of us.
6 So if we teach them tzedakah, they understand you give to your
7 family, you give to your Jewish community, you give to the
8 community you live in and you give to the world. That is a
9 huge lesson that the Jewish people have taught from generation
10 to generation. Judaism teaches us this and I think this is
11 what I care so much about. I hope this will be my legacy to
12 my kids, my grandkids and the program of education will help
13 the kids beyond my family, to our whole community.

14 **MS. CITRIN:** It already has. You've made an
15 incredible start on education and you have continually
16 supporting our community and doing wonderful things
17 everywhere. We see you everywhere as a very gracious and
18 wonderful lady. So thank you very much.

19 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Thank you. It will go down in
20 history that my house was Jewish Community Center East.

21 **MS. CITRIN:** That's true. Thanksgiving is coming
22 up.

23 **MRS. HERMELIN:** Actually not. We go other places
24 for Thanksgiving. We always travelled at Thanksgiving time.
25 The Canadians came here on their Thanksgiving. My kids would

1 go to Toronto for our Thanksgiving. This year it's a hard
2 time, it's been five years since David died the day before
3 Thanksgiving. So it's got a different connotation now.

4 **MS. CITRIN:** You have a lot of Davids in your
5 family.

6 **MRS. HERMELIN:** A lot of grandchildren named after
7 him. He left me an amazing legacy. We're going to do a video
8 for him. I think that's an important way to remember him for
9 the kids.

10 **MS. CITRIN:** Absolutely. Thank you.

11 **MRS. HERMELIN:** You're welcome and thank you for
12 asking me.