

1 **ORAL HISTORY OF:** Richard Krugel
2 **INTERVIEWED BY:** Michael Berke
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5 Community Archives
6 **SUBJECT MATTER:** Jewish Community Leadership Oral
7 History Project

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9 **MICHAEL BERKE:** Okay. We're going to start with a
10 little bit of business before we get started in the interview.
11 This interview is being recorded as part of the Albert and
12 Pauline Dubin Oral Archives. Richard, do you give permission
13 to the Leonard N. Simons Community Archives to publish,
14 duplicate or otherwise use this recording for educational
15 purposes and for use as deemed appropriate by the archives?

16 **RICHARD KRUGEL:** I do.

17 **MICHAEL:** I am Michael Berke. I'm chairman of the
18 archives committee, and I will be leading this interview.

19 So let's start at the beginning, Richard. Talk
20 about your parents and your family growing up. (1)

21 **RICHARD:** Well, I'm a native Detroiter. Actually I
22 was born in Highland Park, but that's close enough. I was
23 born on Valentine's Day in 1943. I always told my mother that
24 I was the best valentine's present she ever got. I'm not sure
25 she believed that sometimes. I grew up in Detroit. My family

1 was here, oh, probably since the 1920s. My grandmother had a
2 delicatessen^{SP?} on Fenkell and Holmer.

3 **MICHAEL:** What was the name of it?

4 **RICHARD:** Modern Delicatessen[?], which in its day was
5 one of the meeting places of business Detroit. There were
6 probably more deals in the '40s and '50s over a corned beef
7 sandwich at that deli than any other place. And I grew up
8 there. I went there every Saturday night to see my bubbe and
9 have a carver's sandwich. That was in the family until 1967.
10 The events in and around Detroit in the summer of 1967
11 convinced my uncle to sell the business and leave. My
12 grandmother was pretty much out of the business by then.

13 **MICHAEL:** What was your grandmother's name?

14 **RICHARD:** Minnie. My parents were not native
15 Detroiters. They were both born in Toronto. An interesting
16 little tidbit is that they -- that I always found interesting
17 -- is that they were actually born two months apart in the
18 same house, because my mother's family had just come to
19 Toronto in 1913, several months before she was born. And I
20 guess they knew the Krugel family that had been there since
21 the 1890s. They needed a place to live and the Krugel family
22 took them in. That's the way the world worked back then, at
23 least in the Jewish community.

24 **MICHAEL:** What was the reason that they came to
25 Detroit?

1 **RICHARD:** I don't know. I think my grandmother's
2 brother was here. He was an attorney and lived in Detroit. I
3 think times were a little hard for the family in Toronto. It
4 was probably just after World War I. And I think that there
5 was some business opportunities for her. She started with a
6 cleaning and tailor shop on Brush Street. I remember my dad
7 always telling stories of growing up in his very early years
8 on Brush Street, which was a pretty interesting place.

9 **MICHAEL:** Even then.

10 **RICHARD:** Even then. But he wound up growing up in
11 the city. He was a very bright man. His name is Ben. He
12 graduated Northern High School at age 15. Then he went to
13 City College, now Wayne State, graduated with a chemistry
14 degree at probably age 19 or 20. He tried to get a job and he
15 couldn't because he was Jewish. So he did lots of other
16 things in his early life. He wound up working for the state,
17 for the treasury department. It kept him out of Europe during
18 World War II.

19 He always told an interesting story, that I found
20 interesting, about liquid bleach. He and a partner developed
21 liquid bleach. He was selling it in the northern Midwest. He
22 gave the business up because he was on the road all the time
23 and he didn't like it. About six months after he gave his
24 liquid bleach business up, Clorox came out. I always found
25 that to be very interesting. Timing is everything.

1 **MICHAEL:** Right.

2 **RICHARD:** My mom came here after they got married.
3 She grew up in Toronto.

4 **MICHAEL:** What was your mom's name?

5 **RICHARD:** Jenny. They got married in 1936, and then
6 she moved here. We were born and raised. I had an older
7 brother, Larry, who recently passed away. My sister Carol is
8 younger than I am by many years. She lives now in norther
9 Michigan.

10 **MICHAEL:** What part of northern Michigan?

11 **RICHARD:** She lives in a town called Wolverine,
12 which is right there (indicating on his hand). It's just off
13 I-75. It's about 30 miles from the bridge. It's a nice place
14 to visit.

15 **MICHAEL:** Why the migration up there?

16 **RICHARD:** She and her husband were looking for a
17 place for the summer, and unfortunately he passed away at a
18 young age, and he passed away two weeks before they were
19 supposed to close on the property. Despite my sister's older
20 brothers giving her advice not to close, she decided to close
21 on the property. She started going up there just for weekends
22 and summertime, and she found that she liked it and that it
23 was very hard to live in Lansing, being a young widow. She
24 just felt she was not totally comfortable with her role. So
25 she went up there and made a new life, wound up meeting a nice

1 gentleman on the Internet, got remarried about ten years ago,
2 and they're very happy. And I have a place to visit.

3 **MICHAEL:** Wonderful. So tell me about your life
4 growing up in Detroit. What were your interests, involvement,
5 family dynamics?

6 **RICHARD:** Well, growing up in Detroit I first lived
7 on Dexter Davidson. I was part of the migration. I lived on
8 Dexter Davidson until I was in the fifth grade. Went to
9 Winterhoffer School. I was a normal kid. Lots of friends.
10 We played in the neighborhood. We spent summers playing on
11 the lot at the Davidson center, played a little bit of
12 baseball there and things like that. I went to day camp
13 there. And nothing special. I did well in school.

14 Then in 1953 my dad came home one day and said we're
15 moving, and we moved to Cherrylawn in northwest Detroit, went
16 to Bagley School. Made wonderful friends that I have to this
17 day. I love to look at my bar mitzvah album and see the girls
18 that were there then at my bar mitzvah who I'm still in
19 contact with. I wound up going to Post Middle School or
20 junior school, and four years at Mumford. Nothing special.

21 The most special things about those years was when I
22 was 16 years old and went to Fresh Air Camp in Brighton as a
23 waiter. I was in the last year of waiters that Fresh Air Camp
24 had. I had a great summer, made great friends, again, most of
25 whom I'm still in contact with. The next year I went as a

1 junior counselor, and then I went as a counselor. I spent
2 seven summers at Fresh Air Camp.

3 It really was a significant part of what my future
4 became, because when I came back to Detroit, I wanted to get
5 involved again with camp. I wound up going on the board and
6 eventually becoming the president of Fresh Air Society in
7 1985. So it really connected me to the community. I found
8 out there was a community. I still see my campers to this
9 day, some of whom are very good friends of mine, and several
10 of whom went to camp on scholarships. And I really learned
11 what the community did. It was a little piece of the
12 community, but it was enough to make you proud of your
13 community and want to do something.

14 Of course when I came back to Detroit after my
15 training and being in the Air Force, it was a door in to
16 giving back and to being part of a community.

17 **MICHAEL:** So when you were growing up, you talked
18 about -- we have a lot of parallels we'll talk about in our
19 lives, may even have played baseball in the same field at the
20 same time.

21 **RICHARD:** Very possible.

22 **MICHAEL:** How about religiously? Did religion play
23 a part in your family's dna when you were growing up?

24 **RICHARD:** Well, up till we moved to northwest
25 Detroit my father attended an Orthodox synagogue, although we

Wohlgelehrter

was the Moga in Anahom Synagogue

1 were not Orthodox. But he knew Rabbi Walgdalantor and Rabbi
2 Walgdalantor's shul was ^{SP} on Moga a From, which was on the
3 property where the ^{Yeshiva SP} Ashiva Bet Yahuda ^{Beth Yehuda} was on Dexter and
4 Cortland I believe. And so that was my growing up, that was
5 my early Jewish.

6 Now, it's interesting that I went to that shul as a
7 kid, but I went to the United Hebrew Schools for education.
8 When we moved to northwest Detroit, my father joined Beth
9 ^{SP?} Aaron, which was Conservative, and he put me in the afternoon
10 yeshiva on Wyoming for my education. So very confused as a
11 young kid as to where you are in the Jewish world.

12 **MICHAEL:** Nothing's changed.

13 **RICHARD:** But we grew up in a Conservative home. I
14 like to joke now that it was modern. We kept a modern kosher.
15 We kept meat, milk and ^{SP?} trayf. You know, we had a set of glass
16 dishes for the Chinese food that we used to bring to our
17 house.

18 **MICHAEL:** That's funny. So you had a bar mitzvah.

19 **RICHARD:** At ^{SP} Beth Aaron. I was part of the junior
20 congregation there. Our family was what is now typically
21 considered Conservative in terms of observing all the
22 holidays. We had a ^{shabbat} Shabbes dinner every Friday night,
23 although my father never said a kiddish or made the motze
24 But we had bread and we had wine. That's how we grew up and
25 Friday night was Friday night with a typical ^{? SP} Shabbes dinner.

Ha-motzi
SP?

? SP
Shabbos

1 When I went away to college, I probably was a Reform
2 Jew, like most Conservative Jews, ^{sp?} masquerading in Conservative
3 Judaism. And I still believe that's what's happening today.

4 **MICHAEL:** Where do you belong now?

5 **RICHARD:** We belong to Shaarey Zedek. My wife is
6 more religious, more observant than I am. She's very
7 comfortable there, and we raised our family there, but only
8 one of our three children belongs there now.

9 **MICHAEL:** Are they all here?

10 **RICHARD:** They all live in Detroit.

11 **MICHAEL:** We'll talk about them a little bit later
12 on in this interview.

13 **RICHARD:** We're very lucky.

14 **MICHAEL:** Yes. So did you have any other
15 involvement, like USY, ACA? Were those a part of the things
16 that you did growing up?

17 **RICHARD:** I was a member of ^{sp?} Mendelssohn AZA during
18 high school, mostly for sports. Played a lot of softball and
19 basketball. A lot of friends were part of that system. I
20 think it was just what we did. You know, we didn't think
21 about it. That was it, we did it.

22 My dad was a Shriner, a Mason. My brother was in
23 DMLA, but I never went way. I went through B'nai B'rith.

24 **MICHAEL:** You went to high school here. You talked
25 about your friendships and education. But I want to talk

1 about your decision to go from high school to where you went
2 for university. And was the medical thought in your head by
3 then, or did that take some evolution?

4 **RICHARD:** Probably not. By that time my dad was an
5 accountant and did public accounting. I really didn't think
6 about what I wanted to be. I was probably like every other
7 kid, wanted to be a baseball player or a policeman or whatever
8 at any particular time. My brother preceded me at Michigan,
9 and there was no question that that was where I wanted to go
10 to school. And I applied and got into Michigan. He went to
11 medical school, and I think that influenced me. I liked
12 science, and I decided that that sounded as good as anything
13 in terms of a career. So I chose medicine.

14 **MICHAEL:** Were you and your brother close growing
15 up?

16 **RICHARD:** We were three and a half years apart, so
17 we weren't really friends, we were brothers. We did things
18 together. We threw a football in the streets together and
19 played catch and threw the ball against the stoops to play
20 stoop baseball and those kinds of things as kids. But we were
21 enough apart that we really didn't mix. We were different.
22 My mother always used to tell me, gee, I know everything your
23 brother does, I know nothing that you do. So we were two
24 different people, and it showed in our growing up I think.

25 But he preceded me at Fresh Air Camp. That may be a

1 reason why I wound up going there. So I did follow him in
2 choosing medicine, and he had those influences on me.

3 **MICHAEL:** So when you were at U of M, were you
4 involved in any way Jewishly?

5 **RICHARD:** Rarely went into Hillel for a party. I
6 was a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi ^{SP?} Fraternity the three years I
7 was an undergraduate, and very active in that. It was very
8 Jewish and most of our events were with the Jewish sororities
9 at that time. Things have dramatically changed over the last
10 fifty years. But at that time Jewish was Jewish. There was a
11 lot more separation than there is today. So your sphere of
12 friendships, your sphere of activities were pretty much
13 controlled by the fact that you were Jewish. And then there
14 was an active Jewish community on campus, and I think the
15 directed Jewish kids to remain Jewish, which is interesting
16 because today I think it's much harder.

17 Even when my kids went to school, I know that the
18 fraternities and sororities had liberalized. The Jewish
19 fraternities were taking non-Jews, the sororities the same.
20 And I think that made it much harder. When you look at all
21 the polls today, and you look at the Pew report, and you look
22 at twenty years ago, the Berman study that shocked the Jewish
23 community, I think we saw it happening. We didn't realize it
24 was happening because it was so easy, the assimilation was so
25 easy, particularly on the campuses. But we saw it happening,

1 it was there.

2 **MICHAEL:** This is just a template, but let's talk
3 about it, because you raise an interesting issue. Obviously
4 there's a big concern in the community about retention and
5 keeping our kids Jewish. So you have had kind of a width and
6 breadth of experience in the community in a whole variety of
7 venues. What from your perspective are the things that we
8 have to do as a community to keep our kids here and also keep
9 them Jewish?

10 **RICHARD:** Well, I've been always involved in my time
11 here, both locally and nationally, in Jewish education. And I
12 think that's primary. I think there's no question that we
13 need to fix Jewish education. I don't think that the
14 afternoon school system is thriving. I don't think it thrived
15 when my kids were being educated. I think that there's a
16 wrong emphasis on what they do.

17 I know in the Conservative movement, the teaching of
18 kids ⁱⁿ ~~on~~ school even today, is synagogue skills, and my kids
19 are very comfortable in a synagogue. They can davat. But are
20 they learned? I'm not so sure. Did they really learn what
21 being a Jew is? I don't know. I think they learn their
22 Jewishness, and all are practicing Jews and are affiliated
23 today in one stream or another. I think they learned that in
24 the home.

25 So I think we need to look at the Jewish education.

1 I think the best parts of Jewish education today, and for the
2 last probably forty years, are the camps and the interactive
3 kinds of things, where they live Judaism. So I think that's
4 one piece of it. I think we really have to figure that out,
5 as to how we education our children Jewishly.

6 I think that a lot of the neighborhoods were a huge
7 thing. When I grew up, we were in a ghetto, basically.
8 Either we went to Mumford High School, or there was a small
9 enclave in Oak Park. And then Southfield was a small enclave.
10 And before us, my brother went to Durfey, but went to Mumford
11 because we moved. But Central High School. But I think that
12 until 1967 Jews lived in ghettos, even in this city. Not the
13 case anymore. They're all over. And you have pockets of
14 Jewish kids in all neighborhoods and in all of the public
15 schools. And again, that leads to assimilation, and it's
16 great. That's what America is. It's great for the Jewish
17 community? Probably not.

18 So I think that's a big part of looking at that
19 generation and trying to keep our children actively Jewish.
20 We have to make Judaism something they love, and that starts
21 in the home. That comes from affiliation. The Pew study
22 clearly shows that there's ^{a decrease} in affiliation going on among the
23 next generation, or the current next generation. And it's an
24 interesting dynamic.

25 There are some areas of hope. I think the Havurah

1 system -- it's interesting. We have a young cousin who we
2 became friendly with when they moved to New York, and we meet
3 with them now. We were talking about the Pew study because
4 she said the Pew study missed the Havurah group. Nobody ever
5 asked them, and they're very active. They have a small
6 Havurah synagogue that is very active, very Jewish, celebrate
7 all the holidays together. And that's a bright spot I think.
8 And we have to look at that as a community, as a national
9 Jewish community, and look at those kinds of activities.
10 Because again, it gets back to experiential.

11 We see experiential working in the camps. I think
12 we're starting to see it in the Havurah movement and the small
13 group synagogues, and I think that if we look at that and say
14 this is a way to live Jewishly, I think there's something to
15 be done in that avenue, in recreating a Jewish family life and
16 a Jewish home.

17 **MICHAEL:** I couldn't agree more with what you said.
18 So let's talk about the other part of the coin, and that's
19 keeping our kids here. It's an important challenge that I
20 think is facing a lot of agencies in the community as a whole,
21 the Federation in particular. I want to kind of get your spin
22 on what you think. I know it's that j-o-b-s word that is a
23 key, but I want to get your take on it, Richard.

24 **RICHARD:** Well, I've always been a fan of the city
25 of Detroit. I mean I grew up in Detroit's heyday, as you did.

1 And that was our city. We lived Detroit. Our dates in high
2 school were downtown Detroit. Our activities were Detroit
3 based. I think that there is a renaissance going on. I'm
4 very excited about what next gen is doing. It's exciting to
5 go downtown. I went down to the downtown synagogue last year
6 for a Friday night. It was amazing what was going on, and
7 more of our community needs to go down there and see what's
8 going on.

9 ^{sp?} *havurah*
Harbah, I'm a member down there now, too. I mean
10 the first thing I did was write a membership check ^{to} ~~so~~ support
11 the downtown synagogue? *Chabad* is down there, you know, it's
12 just down the street. It's very exciting. Kudos to Dan
13 Gilbert for coming back here, for being a Detroiter. Yes,
14 he's a businessman, and yes, he's investing and doing very
15 well in his businesses, even in buying and rehabbing Detroit.
16 But he is putting his money into Detroit, and I hope it's very
17 successful.

18 Detroit has many problems. The biggest problem
19 Detroit has is the neighborhoods, and they have to figure out
20 how to change that. But that may come. That's a much harder
21 problem to deal with than what's going in the center city and
22 the Woodward corridor. But it's exciting. And it's bringing
23 young people back to Detroit.

24 I have no secret plan. I mean our kids just grew up
25 here and stayed here. I didn't have a business for them to go

1 into. They just had friends, their friends stayed, they
2 stayed. And they're very happy living in Detroit. They chose
3 to be here. We love it, having six grandchildren that we see
4 all the time is a real mitzvah for us.

5 But how do we do it? We just have to keep after --
6 we have to make it the right place for our kids to grow up.
7 We have to show them that Detroit's a wonderful city. We have
8 advantages. Economically right now it's far easier for a
9 young couple to live in Detroit than in Washington, D.C., or
10 New York City or Chicago or LA. I've got friends in LA over
11 the years that came to my kids' bar mitzvahs and saw my house
12 in Southfield, and asked me how much it cost. I told them and
13 they couldn't believe it. We were living in \$25,000, \$30,000,
14 \$40,000 homes and they were beautiful homes, and they couldn't
15 believe it, because they were living in very similar homes at
16 \$450,000. So we have advantages; we have to use them.

17 And as you said, jobs is the big thing. We have to
18 creative and we have to get young people here. But we need an
19 infrastructure, too. You know, it's great for young single
20 people downtown. It's very active right now in the Jewish
21 community. They love being there.

22 What do they do when they get married? What do they
23 do when they start having kids? We need infrastructure. We
24 need to be able to provide infrastructure to keep kids living
25 here. If that happens, you start rebuilding community.

1 **MICHAEL:** I want to take a step back before we get
2 into talking about your family, because this last series of
3 questions sort of leapfrogs. Talk about your career, your
4 professional career, your school. You were going to medical
5 school and that whole decision.

6 **RICHARD:** I went to Michigan. Decided early on that
7 I was going to go to medical school. My brother had gone to
8 medical school after three years because Michigan at the time
9 took three-year students as long as you had done all your
10 sciences. And I guess that was my journey, too, because I did
11 the same thing. Would I have done it again that way today?
12 No. I would have spent the fourth year in undergraduate
13 school because I gave up so much that U of M had to offer. I
14 never had time for music appreciation, for art, for some of
15 the history classes that were so important and so great to
16 take there, that was there for our taking, I didn't have the
17 time.

18 My dad's philosophy was, well, you get done school
19 early, it gives you one year at the end of your career of peak
20 earning. He was an accountant. I said what's the big deal, I
21 start a year later. He said, no, it's a year at the end, not
22 at the beginning. And he's right from dollars and cents. But
23 was it a good decision? I don't know. Going back, thinking
24 about where I am today and what I do, we love the symphony. I
25 don't understand the symphony, but I love listening to the

1 music. But it would have been nice to have that background,
2 and it was there for the taking, and we didn't take it.

3 I went to medical school at Michigan and graduated
4 in '67. When I started going to medical school, I probably
5 went to medical school thinking I'd be a psychiatrist and work
6 with children. I loved the time I spent at Fresh Air Camp.
7 We all had those difficult kids we knew about when they came
8 to camp, and I always liked taking them in my bunk and working
9 with them. And they were great. It was a challenge, but they
10 were great kids. And some of them I know today and they
11 turned out great as well, and contribute to our community in
12 many great ways. So that's probably why I went to medical
13 school.

14 when I got into the third year, in the clinical
15 aspects of medical school, I really found I liked surgery. I
16 liked doing things with my hands. As a kid, I always tried to
17 fix broken radios. Sometimes I was successful, and if not,
18 they were still broken. But I always liked playing with my
19 hands, doing things, putting things together. And I really
20 found that I liked surgery. So I decided for two reasons. I
21 felt there were other avenues for psychiatric care: social
22 work, psychologists, Ph.D.s. There was only one avenue for
23 surgeons: medical school.

24 **MICHAEL:** Right.

25 **RICHARD:** So I said I don't want to waste a seat in

1 medical school. I ^{originally} ~~really~~ decided to be a general surgeon. I
2 really wanted to be a vascular surgeon. One of the vascular
3 surgeons, a Dr. William Fry at the University of Michigan,
4 really influenced me. I did some work for him and a little
5 bit of research for him, and I really liked vascular surgery,
6 and that's what I was going to do. I went into general
7 surgery and I found out that I really didn't like general
8 surgery. You have to do general surgery to get into vascular
9 surgery.

10 Two years into general surgery I decided that wasn't
11 for me. I was fortunate enough to be able to change my Berry
12 Plan, because that was Vietnam, and the only way not to go to
13 Vietnam as a doctor was to have a deferment for residency.
14 There was something called the Berry Plan that you volunteered
15 for, and that allowed you to finish your residency and then go
16 in as a specialist. I had the Berry Plan in general surgery.
17 I was very nervous when I switched. The Air Force needed
18 orthopedic surgeons I guess. So I switched my Berry Plan, and
19 I did an orthopedic residency in Brooklyn, New York.

20 A great time. Really important time, because until
21 we went to Brooklyn, New York, with Sally and a young family,
22 we were Detroiters. We had our family with us. Sally came
23 from Flint, not very far. We were with our families all the
24 time. My mom still was making ~~Shabbat~~ dinners that we went
25 to. Being forced away, going to Brooklyn, New York, helped us

1 grow up, helped us grow as a couple, as a married couple, and
2 we were on our own. Very important for who we became and how
3 we developed.

4 Brooklyn ^{was} ~~is~~ a great place. What's so bad? We had
5 the New York Philharmonic. One of my attendings had Ranger
6 tickets, so every time the Wings were in town, I got to go see
7 them. It was just a great place. It also helped Jewishly
8 because it was New York. You just lived a different kind of
9 life.

10 Then after my residency, I had to give two years to
11 the Air Force. We went to Montgomery, Alabama, spent two
12 years at the U.S. Air War College. I didn't know there was an
13 Air War College, but I found out. Some of the things that
14 happened along that journey really made a difference in our
15 lives over the last forty years when we came back to Detroit.

16 **MICHAEL:** Very good. So you gave me a good lead-in
17 to talk about something that I know you hate to talk about.
18 Let's talk about your family. Talk about your beautiful bride
19 and then your kids and grandkids.

20 **RICHARD:** Well, Sally came into my life -- I was a
21 sophomore and she was a freshman in Ann Arbor. We got fixed
22 up by a friend of mine who I knew from Fresh Air. We had
23 worked together at camp for several years, a lady named Jan
24 Friedman, who is subsequently deceased, but was a lovely young
25 person. She fixed us up. We eventually went out on a date.

1 It didn't happen quite the way she thought it would, but we
2 eventually went out on a date. We found the trials of dating
3 and going together and not going together and going together.
4 But we got married, and I was in medical school in 1964. We
5 just had our 50th anniversary in December.

6 Talking about a Jewish renaissance, that changed my
7 life, because Sally came from a much more involved Jewish
8 family. She grew up in Flint and then Bay City. There
9 weren't Orthodox congregations. They were Conservative. Her
10 father in his later years was the shamas at the shul in Flint.
11 Her mother was absolutely an Orthodox Jew. And I learned a
12 lot. Sally changed the way I practice Judaism.

13 It was an evolution, and it wasn't just Sally, but
14 it was what we did along the way and various things that
15 changed me. I never kept kosher, even though I grew up in a
16 somewhat kosher home. And I don't today, but I changed along
17 the way that I don't eat ^{sf?} tryf. I won't eat shellfish, pork,
18 which I used to. And that was part of the evolution of who we
19 were as a couple.

20 And other things, other influences along the way,
21 like the Young Leadership experience I had, the Wexner
22 experience I had, all of those played together in making me
23 who I am today.

24 We got married when I got out of medical school, and
25 I think she got pregnant while I was an intern, and we had

1 three boys in four-and-a-half years. Our older two sons are
2 thirteen-and-a-half months apart, which is interesting because
3 they grew up almost like twinning. But not. And during that
4 period of time we were in Ann Arbor, then we were in Detroit,
5 and then we eventually were in Brooklyn, and then we were in
6 Montgomery, Alabama, all before the kids were of school age.
7 I think Joel, our oldest son, started school in Montgomery.

8 And then we moved back to Southfield.

9 **MICHAEL:** Was it always your intention to move back
10 here?

11 **RICHARD:** No. We looked around. I had an
12 opportunity to moonlight in the Air Force. I did some
13 moonlighting, covering a practice in eastern Alabama, in
14 Auburn, and Opelika, Alabama, for a couple of years on
15 weekends. We were in Atlanta a little bit. We had seen New
16 York, we saw the South, and when it came time to decide where
17 we were going -- as an orthopedic surgeon, I could have
18 written my ticket anywhere -- we just decided that suburban
19 Detroit was as nice as suburban anywhere. Our family was
20 still in Detroit. Although my mom got remarried and moved
21 away. My aunt moved away. And it left my brother and I in
22 the city. We just felt that being home was important, that
23 having our kids grow up with family was important. We did,
24 and we turned out okay. We felt that family was very
25 important.

1 And again, living in Detroit, Detroit's a great
2 place. The more you're away, the more you realize what a
3 great city Detroit was. And yes, they've gone through some
4 tough times. But more than that, what a great Jewish
5 community Detroit has. And coming back, not knowing that but
6 learning that, made our decision very easy.

7 **MICHAEL:** Tell me about your boys and their spouses
8 and your grandkids.

9 **RICHARD:** The boys all live here. Joel, our oldest,
10 is an attorney at Honigman. Married, has two girls, 12 and
11 10. We have a bat mitzvah coming up in May. His daughter.
12 And he's done very well. They live in Bloomfield Hills, not
13 far from us.

14 Howard, our middle son, is in sports management. He
15 started in medical school and came home one day and said it's
16 not for me. I don't want to give up what I love, which was
17 sports. I said fine, you know. People would ask me, what do
18 you think? I said I want him to be happy, I want him to get
19 up every day. I love what I do, I love getting up every day
20 for the last forty years and going to work. And he, through
21 some various jobs that he had, one with the Detroit Tigers,
22 wound up in the sports world. He's doing sports management
23 now. He has two girls, 10 and 13. Sloan had her bat mitzvah
24 last September. Orley is turning 11 in a couple weeks.

25 Noah is our youngest. He and his wife have a web

1 design company, called EPK Design, which Ellen is really
2 doing. And a few years ago Noah and a friend, Gabe Rubin,
3 started an Internet business called Gamer Saloon, where they
4 arrange gaming skill matches for competition, for money, but
5 it's not gambling because it's a game of skill. And they're
6 doing very well. Last year was their best year, and they had
7 in the millions of dollars of matches, which they arranged.
8 This year is even better. Of course their dream is, like all
9 entrepreneurs, is that some day somebody is going to come and
10 offer them a lot of money. And they might because they've
11 been told in the business that their model, what they're
12 doing, is probably the best model out there in terms of a very
13 limited field of online gaming.

14 They have two boys. Their oldest just turned 13
15 yesterday and has a bar mitzvah coming up in about three
16 weeks, and their younger son is 11 and a half.

17 They give us lots of joy and lots of plays to go see
18 and lots of dancing to go see. I didn't have any girls, so I
19 didn't know about dancing. Lots of basketball games. And we
20 love it. We have Shabbas dinners available, but as the
21 grandkids get older, we see a little less of them,
22 unfortunately. Two of the three came frequently to our house,
23 and that's changed, but they know there's a ^{Shabbat} ~~Shabbas~~ dinner to
24 come to. Sometimes at the end of the week they'll call up and
25 say we're going to show up. But it's great.

1 The greatest was the end of December when Sally and
2 I decided for our fiftieth anniversary we were going to take
3 our family to Israel. We went with Temple Israel. I was a
4 member there. Two of our three sons went with the
5 grandchildren, and it was probably the best thing that we've
6 ever done. It was just a marvelous trip. Temple Israel did a
7 great job. Being in Israel with our grandchildren was the
8 best. I couldn't have thought of a better fiftieth
9 anniversary trip or present for us than to do that.

10 **MICHAEL:** Well, this is not a test Richard, but for
11 the historical record, and for your well-being, I want to make
12 sure you name all of your grandchildren, because you haven't
13 up until now. And your sons' spouses, too.

14 **RICHARD:** Well, Joel is married to Heide Grode, and
15 their daughters ^{are} ~~re~~ Darby, who's going to be 13, and Camy, who
16 just turned 10. We have very interesting names. Howard was
17 married to Erin Cronik. ^{KRONICK} They got divorced and he remarried
18 last year to a nice lady named Terry Warren, who was not
19 married. And it's wonderful. They're very happy. He has two
20 daughters from the first marriage, Sloan and Orley. Again,
21 we're keeping with common names. I found out Sloan was Ferris
22 Buhler's ^{sp. Bueller's} girlfriend. And Noah is married to Ellen Baborski, ^{Baborsky}
23 who grew up in New York, but they met at Michigan. Their two
24 children are Jesse, the 13-year-old, and Adam. So I know.
25 And I know their birthdays, too.

1 **MICHAEL:** And you're not too proud of them.

2 **RICHARD:** No, not at all.

3 **MICHAEL:** Shifting gears again, was Fresh Air
4 Society your first active Jewish involvement as an adult?

5 **RICHARD:** Yes.

6 **MICHAEL:** Talk a little bit about your Jewish
7 career. We're going to talk about how you got involved in
8 Federation in a moment.

9 **RICHARD:** I was in the center. I played basketball
10 like all of us growing up in northwest Detroit at Meyers and
11 Curtis. Used the facilities. But really just assumed they
12 were part of our neighborhood.

13 **MICHAEL:** I'm talking more about after you became an
14 adult.

15 **RICHARD:** But as an adult, my first contact was
16 working at Tamarak. I wasn't involved otherwise because being
17 a resident is a full-time job. And we were away for much of
18 that time.

19 My first contact with the Federation, the first gift
20 I ever made, was we were in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1973, and
21 there was a little war in Israel. We were involved in the
22 synagogue in Montgomery and had a good relationship with the
23 rabbi. And when the Yom Kippur War occurred, there was a
24 Jewish community meeting, and I went, and they called cards.
25 I didn't know anything about campaign or anything, but the

1 dollars that were raised were significant at the time.
2 Montgomery had a very good Jewish community, small but very
3 active and some wealth in the community. And Sally and I were
4 amazed at the dollars. I think I wrote a check for \$180,
5 which for me at the time was a lot of money. I think my
6 salary in the Air Force was about \$17,000 for the year. But
7 that was our first involvement of stepping forward.

8 Then we came back to Detroit, and it was a whole
9 different experience of what happened. My journey once with
10 Sally, it changed again coming back to Detroit. That's when I
11 really started getting involved in the community.

12 **MICHAEL:** Talk about that a little bit.

13 **RICHARD:** So when we came back, my experience was
14 that I had some good friends from Detroit, friends from
15 Michigan, friends growing up, that we kept in contact with.
16 And we moved back to Southfield. Our nextdoor neighbors were
17 the Hoovermans. Carol Hooverman was my fifth grade girlfriend
18 when I moved to Bagley. My wife wasn't so sure, but they're
19 best friends for the last forty years.

20 I had a job with Woodland Medical and I was on staff
21 at Sinai, and I was on staff at Mt. Carmel, and people knew
22 the Krugel name from my grandmother from the store. And my
23 father had been somewhat active, although I don't know that he
24 was Federation activity was. It just never was around our
25 house. My mother had the requisite blue boxes that she put

1 money into, but we just never talked about Jewish community.
2 It was interesting.

3 So I went through six months of being here, and my
4 friend ^{spie} Eddy Lumberg was the president of the Junior Division
5 that year. And in the spring, I said to ^{spie} Eddy one day, you
6 know, I've been here six months. Nobody's ever contacted me
7 for any money. I said, how do you give money to the
8 Federation? ^{ie} Eddy said, well, I'll take your pledge. He said,
9 what do you want to give? Well, I'll give \$1,000. He said,
10 oh, for sure I'll take your pledge. And that was my first
11 gift. I didn't join Young Adult or anything.

12 The next fall a friend of mine said, there's a
13 recruitment meeting for a trip to Israel. And this was 1976.
14 And there was a large UJA mission called This Year in
15 Jerusalem, and Young Leadership was recruiting a plane full, a
16 747. Larry Jackier, who was a friend of mine from high
17 school, was leading the bus. Stanley Frankel, who I didn't
18 know -- I knew Judy, his wife, from college -- was also
19 involved. So I went to this recruitment meeting and I was
20 really blown away by the whole idea.

21 The reason we went was because in the Air Force, the
22 two years I spent there, the second year that I was in the Air
23 Force we lived on base. There was a young Israeli family that
24 came on base. The family was named Ben Nun, and ^{Avihu} Aveu Ben Nun
25 was a pilot in the Israeli air force, and he had been the

1 first Israeli pilot invited to study in the American War
2 College, and it happened in 1974. So they lived on base, we
3 lived on base. I think we were the Jewish community of
4 Maxwell Air Force Base, on base, and we got to know them very
5 well, and they were wonderful people. As we were leaving and
6 they were leaving, ^{Avihu} Aveu said to us, when are you coming to
7 Israel? And I said, we don't know. What's Israel? But that
8 put a bug in our head.

9 Then we went to this recruitment meeting, and Larry
10 sold us. So we signed up to go. And we did. Had a great
11 time. We were on Larry's bus. I was solicited in the back of
12 the bus. I guess I gave a good gift. And we saw the Ben Nuns
13 the last day of the trip, and I was worried because we had
14 left the bus. I said, you know, we've got to be at the air
15 port at seven o'clock in the morning. ^{Avihu} Aveu said don't worry.
16 I know some people. And he did get us to the airport, and we
17 came back home. That summer I was asked to go on the Young
18 Leadership cabinet of UJA.

19 **MICHAEL:** Who asked you?

20 **RICHARD:** Actually Joel Gershenson was the one that
21 asked me, over spareribs. There was a little problem there.
22 But that led to my stop eating spareribs.

23 **MICHAEL:** I understand.

24 **RICHARD:** So I went on the cabinet, and the cabinet
25 was a great experience. I was on the Young Leadership Cabinet

1 for four years. During that time I was the campaign chairman
2 of the cabinet one year and I was the missions chairman of the
3 cabinet one year. Stanley and Larry were chairmen back to
4 back, so they put us to work. It was a great experience. I
5 learned about the community, I learned about national, what
6 was being done in the United States, I learned about UJA, I
7 learned about philanthropy. We were put to work.

8 You put us to work doing leadership development, and
9 we had great leadership development programs for couples in
10 this community. I went to Israel probably three times in that
11 four years. I think one year I actually went three times in
12 one year doing various things, either nationally or locally.
13 And we were the experts. We went out and solicited small
14 communities in Michigan and spoke for Campaign. It was really
15 just a great leadership time, and you got involved. We still
16 have friends from all over the country that we see whenever
17 we're in town. Like in LA we have several friends that we go
18 see all the time that came from that experience. So that was
19 the one major experience.

20 And of course being on the cabinet, you were used
21 locally as well, and I got involved in Campaign. I got
22 involved with Tamarack Fresh Air Camp, got on the board, and
23 eventually, as I said before, I became president for three
24 years of Fresh Air Society.

25 And we continue traveling to Israel and we continue

1 taking missions. Sally and I have led missions of all sizes,
2 one bus, two buses. For the cabinet I did a ten bus mission.
3 We were involved in David Hermelin's first miracle mission in
4 '93. I think I went on all but one of the miracle missions.

5 Along the way we made friends and we stayed friends
6 with the Ben Nuns all through this time. Every time we went
7 to Israel we saw them. And as our kids started going, they
8 saw them, and they lived at their house. And they're like
9 family, they really are. We still see them every time we're
10 there. They'll come to see us, we go to see them, we'll go to
11 stay with them. He wound up being a commander of the air
12 force in his career. Then when he retired, he became the CEO
13 of United Motors Israel, which happens just to be the GM
14 affiliate in Israel. So all of a sudden Aveo was visiting us.

15 Somewhere along the way Sally got into the Wexner
16 Group in Detroit. We were group number two of the Wexner
17 leadership program. Again, a great program. Because Les
18 Wexner, who owned The Limited, was asked to be chairman of the
19 UJA, and I guess he said yes. But he said, why are you asking
20 me? I have no idea about Jewish things. What he did with his
21 money was he started a leadership program, for free initially.
22 He paid the whole shot. And he educated us, selected
23 leadership development groups.

24 **MICHAEL:** It sounds like it was as much for him as
25 for the group.

1 **RICHARD:** Yes. In various cities. We learned
2 weekly. They brought in some of the greatest minds in
3 Judaism. David ^{Hartman} Harkman and Dean ^{SP?} Finesaltz, Shlomo ^{RISKIN BP?} Griskin.
4 It was just amazing. It wound up at the end of two years with
5 a trip to Israel. What it did and what Les's idea was to
6 teach emerging leadership the sources, where to look for how
7 to make Jewish decisions.

8 We have a 4000 year history all written down about
9 making decisions and the Talmud, all these things, that we
10 didn't learn. And Les's idea was to make leadership or give
11 leadership the opportunity to learn where Jewish decisions are
12 made. And it was a great two years. I joined the second
13 year. They asked me to join the group. I had gone to all the
14 retreats with Sally the first year and had looked at the
15 material she brought home, but I missed out on some stuff.
16 But it was a great, great experience.

17 You look at the leadership in Detroit, many of whom
18 came. Not everybody was successful in what they did, but many
19 came out of the Wexner experience. More came out of the
20 cabinet experience.

21 But those two experiences changed what I did. I
22 started studying. I studied for fifteen years now with
23 Partners in Torah, with Rabbi Del Lokich. We study pretty
24 much every week. We've been through the Torah, we spent three
25 or four years going through the entire Tenach, from start to

1 finish. And just learning, talking and learning and
2 questioning, because I ask a lot of questions about what's in
3 those sources, and it's amazing what's in those sources. And
4 it's way of life. And it's a very, for the most part, ethical
5 way of life.

6 So that's how I got involved. What happens when you
7 get involved and you do Federation work, one word drops out of
8 your vocabulary, the word "no". It's hard to say no. So I've
9 chaired the Alliance locally, I've been involved in Israel
10 overseas. Sally and I have been -- we don't even know anymore
11 how many times we go. We led the last miracle mission. It's
12 time for another one. And I've chaired the missions
13 committee. I've chaired Israel overseas. And just things to
14 do, and the need to get them done.

15 My latest foray is with the Jewish Community
16 Relations Council. I'm not sure how that happened, but I
17 wasn't doing anything a couple years ago and was asked to be
18 the Federation representative on their nominating committee,
19 and at the end of the process I said, do you have an extra
20 spot? Maybe I'd like to come on JCRC for a little while. And
21 they said sure. And that's what I'm doing. Then I was asked
22 to be president.

23 **MICHAEL:** I'm going to want to talk about that in
24 some detail a little bit later.

25 **RICHARD:** Giving back, and giving to the community,

1 there's nothing more rewarding. And it's just been a great
2 journey for both of us. Sally has been as involved as I have.

3 **MICHAEL:** She has.

4 **RICHARD:** Both as a professional and as a lay
5 leader. And the culmination was last October when, I don't
6 why, but I was asked to be the rewardee for the Butzel Award.
7 I was very honored. It's a very elite group of individuals,
8 many who were my mentors who have been Butzel awardees, and
9 many who are my close friends. But I was very proud to have
10 been chosen to do that.

11 **MICHAEL:** Well, speaking personally, they couldn't
12 have made a better choice.

13 **RICHARD:** Well, thanks.

14 **MICHAEL:** Let's talk about Israel a little bit.
15 It's obviously played a critical role in your lives and I
16 think in our generation's lives. And you have an interesting
17 view from the community relations perspective, as well as the
18 Israel perspective. Has Israel played the same kind of role
19 in your opinion in the next generation of people? And
20 what do we have to do to make that a seminal part of their
21 Jewish DNA? A fair question?

22 **RICHARD:** Yes. And I think Israel is the Jewish
23 DNA. I think that of all Jewish experiences, Israel is the
24 seminal experience for most Jews. We see it in Birthright.
25 Birthright is one of the most successful programs that the

1 world Jewish community, and certainly the North American
2 Jewish community, has ever done. Because the experience of
3 Birthright really changes lives.

4 We have to do things to help that. But getting
5 people to go to Israel, I'd say in my experience, and Sally
6 and I have accompanied probably thousands of Detroiters over
7 the years on experiences in Israel, have really been a
8 successful part of making people Jewish. I think the
9 experience, the fact that we have a homeland, the history is
10 vital to everything. I would absolutely love to see every
11 single Jewish child born in the United States get an
12 opportunity somewhere in their first eighteen years to go to
13 Israel. I think it's vital for the Jewish people.

14 But Israel has changed. We were not involved before
15 1967, when Israel was the David. In 1967 the world changed in
16 terms of the Middle East, and then over the next ten years
17 Israel kind of morphed from the David to the Goliath, and it's
18 changed a lot about Israel. We have to sell Israel now. The
19 view of Israel in the world, and in the United States, has
20 changed. And I think you've seen the change culminate this
21 past summer in Gaza. The world view of Israel changed this
22 past summer, a lot of it due to media, a lot of it due to the
23 way the world's change, because we now live in a 24/7 media
24 world. So you learn more.

25 In 1973, when we got involved because of the Yom

1 Kippur War, you got news, you know, at seven o'clock in the
2 morning and six and eleven at night. Two-and-a-half hours of
3 news at the most.

4 **MICHAEL:** Right.

5 **RICHARD:** It was hard to even follow what was going
6 on. Now just turn on CNN or FOX or whatever your choice.

7 **MICHAEL:** And you have to hope that the information
8 is accurate.

9 **RICHARD:** Yes.

10 **MICHAEL:** Which it often is not.

11 **RICHARD:** And you have to know that.

12 **MICHAEL:** Right.

13 **RICHARD:** And the problem is that most people that
14 watch the news don't know what's truth and what's not truth.

15 Again, I think Israel is a seminal event for a
16 Jewish person. Be it family or anything. Taking our family
17 to see those kids and to have them know and know that they
18 were on the ground, and that they were at Massada and that
19 they were in Jerusalem and that they put notes in the wall and
20 that they had bar mitzvahs overlooking the old city through
21 the temple. Those kinds of events are lifetime events. And
22 they'll go back.

23 I've seen it in Birthright. I know lots of young
24 people that have gone on Birthright and then gone back. And
25 we meet people all the time on our travels in Israel that came

SP Aliyah

1 on Birthright and are there on Aliaon now. It's something
2 that we have to cherish, it's something we have to protect.

3 I don't like what's going on right now in Israel. I
4 don't like their politics. I hope it changes in this next
5 election. We need to do things differently as far as I'm
6 concerned. But it's Israel, and it's there. Somebody said
7 the other day -- I was reading something in the Wall Street
8 Journal, about anti-Semitism in Europe, which is again on the
9 rise and we are being bombarded with events unfortunately all
10 the time now -- what's different? And somebody said, there's
11 a state of Israel.

12 **MICHAEL:** So you raise, obviously, important and
13 valid points relating to reaching out and getting people to
14 Israel. It's always been the glue that has held us together.
15 But if I may be so bold -- and I want to talk about the
16 challenges you're facing in the CRC area, whether we're doing
17 the kind of job that we should be doing and what more can we
18 be doing. But I just want to go back to the one thing that
19 you said. Birthright and all those things are wonderful
20 programs, but we're not going to get everybody to Israel.
21 That's the goal. But what do we have to do from your
22 perspective with those people who are on the periphery or --
23 well, I'll let you talk.

24 **RICHARD:** Well, I think we have to educate. A lot
25 of it comes down to education. Yeah, we're probably not going

1 to get everybody to Israel, but we should.

2 **MICHAEL:** Absolutely.

3 **RICHARD:** We should. And there's money, there's
4 lots of money out there now. I ask Sally every day, you know,
5 when we talk about things, when did millions become billions?
6 But it has. And there's lots of people with lots of money.
7 And we have to tap into that. We really have to use those
8 dollars. And we have to make that opportunity available.

9 Some people won't go, just like day schools. You
10 can make them free; not every Jewish child will go to day
11 school. There have been studies that have shown that. But
12 it's important. If you could get them to day school, it would
13 be a great thing.

14 The same with Israel. How do we do it? We just
15 have to keep educating. We have to get the right people in
16 the right places. We have to be on campus. The Jewish
17 Federations of North America are trying very hard to do some
18 of these things and to organize educational efforts for the
19 campuses. And we've got to work very hard against BDS. And
20 we have to be around. We have to help our Hillels.

21 I just came back a few weeks ago from JFNA board
22 meetings because I'm on the board, and we talked about this.
23 It's education. We have to help our young adults be
24 comfortable because many of our young Jewish students are not
25 comfortable, and we're fighting a very sophisticated enemy.

1 The Islamic fundamentalist world is very educated, very
2 organized, and they have placed professionals on our campuses.

3 What happened at the University of Michigan last
4 spring with BDS, we were fighting professionals that were
5 leading the Arab students.

6 **MICHAEL:** Right.

7 **RICHARD:** We didn't have professionals. We had a
8 few. Hillel did a great job. We were involved and we talked
9 to Hillel and Tilly Shamus, the director now, and Tilly said,
10 our students want to handle this. Support us, help us, but
11 don't flood the campus. And we didn't. And it worked out
12 great. We won that one.

13 But we have to be available. And we have the
14 resources, we have the educators. We need money to support
15 them. We need those efforts. And we need to educate our
16 students. And we need to make the knowledgeable. How do we
17 make them knowledgeable? Well, we educate them, we try to do
18 it in high schools. We get them to Israel. We give them
19 support on campuses, but let them grow. Let them learn. And
20 that's what I think we really have to do for the future of our
21 Jewish community.

22 **MICHAEL:** And this is a natural segue. You know,
23 we're in momentous times, we're always in momentous times, but
24 this is particularly momentous times. And as the president of
25 the Jewish Community Relations Council, you're in a unique

1 perspective to understand and see the challenges that we as a
2 community are facing. So I was wondering if you might spend a
3 few moments talking about what you believe those challenges
4 are, not only locally, which is a unique community, but
5 nationally and internationally, and what we have to do in the
6 future to make certain that we're on solid ground going
7 forward.

8 **RICHARD:** Well, I think the challenge is radical
9 Islam to Judaism. Anti-semitism is anti-Jewish. Even though
10 there are many people in the world not Jewish who would say,
11 oh, no, we're not anti-Jewish, or to separate anti-Semitism
12 from anti-Jewish. But I think they're synonymous as far as
13 I'm concerned.

14 We live in a unique community. I work in Dearborn,
15 one of my offices is in Dearborn. We live within a community
16 that has 250,000 Arab population, we have a large Chaldean
17 Christian Arab population. We have to deal with them on
18 sensible topics, not fighting but talking. We've reached out
19 as a JCRC last summer when ISIS was threatening the Chaldean
20 community in Iraq, and they're still under threat. We reached
21 out to the Chaldean community, we talked with them, we wrote a
22 very strong position paper from the Jewish perspective that
23 actually got published nationally in the Chaldean press that
24 came from our JCRC.

25 We've lobbied or used our resources to get to people

1 in Washington to try and lobby for them, to change immigration
2 practices to liberalize the ability to get them out of Iraq.
3 I know that there have been efforts in the national Jewish
4 community through ^{7 3 P} HIST, which does still exist, to help with
5 immigration, because these are an endangered population. And
6 that's part of who we are. We're not just homeophytes. We
7 live in a world and we care about people.

8 So those are some of the things that JCRC is doing.
9 This summer I tried very hard, as much as I could get an
10 opportunity, through JCRC to educate the Detroit community
11 generally about what's really going on, because there's a lot
12 of myths out there, that Israel was killing innocent people,
13 and they had a very bad publicity summer because of it. This
14 enemy is very sophisticated. The radicalized Islam, and we
15 have to call it what it is, despite what President Obama wants
16 us not to use, but we need to say what's what, and this is
17 radical Islam. And it is based on their beliefs of the
18 religion and the Koran.

19 Now, not all Islam is radical. Far be it. But
20 there's almost two billion Islamic people in the world, and
21 say it's 10 percent. That's a lot of people. We have 18
22 million Jews, maybe. Ten percent isn't so many people. But
23 we have to reach out, we have to educate, we have to take
24 every opportunity we can.

25 A couple of weeks ago we spent a lunch with WXYZ

1 news staff, briefing them on Israel, on the Jewish community,
2 on what's going on, answering their questions, letting them
3 know that we're around. Last week I met with Mark Hackel, the
4 head of Macomb County, talking with him, letting him know that
5 there is a Jewish history in Macomb County, that Mt. Clemens
6 was a favorite resort place for old Jewish women in the '50s
7 and '60s at their sulphur baths, and we have Jewish cemeteries
8 sprinkled around Macomb County, and there was a Jewish
9 community on the east side of Detroit at one point, and a
10 thriving Jewish community.

11 So we're reaching out. We try to outreach to
12 whoever we can. This past Monday we had our new Congress
13 people in to Federation, and we briefed them about what we do,
14 and they talked to us. And we heard from Debbie Dingell and
15 Dave Trott and Brenda Lawrence and even John Conyers, the dean
16 of the Democratic House.

17 **MICHAEL:** Quotations.

18 **RICHARD:** Quotations. He was there. So we are
19 trying. We are reaching out.

20 **MICHAEL:** Are we up to the challenge, Richard, in
21 your opinion?

22 **RICHARD:** Yes. We have the knowledge.

23 **MICHAEL:** Are we up to the challenge as a community?

24 **RICHARD:** That I don't know. It takes money, and
25 we're struggling right now. 2008, 2009, 2010 was a hard time

1 for Detroit Jewish community. Our campaign dropped \$5 million
2 overnight. \$5 million is a lot of money. And we've seen it
3 in our funding of the services that we can fund, because
4 that's all the extra, that's all the fluff, that's all the
5 dollars that we use for essential programs, but not frontline
6 essential programs. You know, not keeping people in food and
7 shelter and health, but preserving our Jewishness and our
8 Jewish community.

9 **MICHAEL:** This question wasn't in anything I've
10 asked, but it just comes to mind. Do we as a community of
11 agencies, who have their own specific agendas, do we have a
12 responsibility as agencies to the total community related to
13 this sanctity of our Jewish people and vitality of our Jewish
14 people and the issues that we're going through from a
15 political kind of a standpoint?

16 **RICHARD:** Absolutely. Our primary concern as a
17 Jewish Federation is the Jewish community, because we're the
18 only ones that will do that. And we have a responsibility,
19 and our agencies are doing it. We need money.

20 The fact is that our community is shrinking. The
21 fact is we have probably 65,000 now. From the 20-year-old
22 statistics, at that point it was 96,000. I never believed
23 that number. I said, where are they? But that's what the
24 number was. But now we're at 65. And we're an aging
25 community.

1 **MICHAEL:** Right.

2 **RICHARD:** Our last demographic study showed that we
3 have the oldest Jewish community percentage-wise in the
4 country outside of the sunbelt.

5 **MICHAEL:** Right.

6 **RICHARD:** That's an amazing fact. In Detroit our
7 percentage of elderly is higher than in any other community.

8 **MICHAEL:** That's because those elderly can't afford
9 to move down.

10 **RICHARD:** Or we do a good job, and they come back.

11 **MICHAEL:** Both. You're right.

12 **RICHARD:** They'll go to Florida when they're 70 and
13 80. They come back here when they're 90 to live here.

14 **MICHAEL:** Very good point.

15 **RICHARD:** Because the services that we provide for
16 our elderly are really excellent.

17 **MICHAEL:** But it would seem to me that there's some
18 things, like there are community relations issues, that we
19 could provide more at the Jewish Community Center, camp, to
20 make our populations more knowledgeable.

21 **RICHARD:** Absolutely.

22 **MICHAEL:** You know, I'm not supposed to editorialize
23 in this regard. I don't think we're as prepared as a
24 community as we could for this new onslaught that you talk
25 about from the Arab community, the radical Arab community.

1 **RICHARD:** You know, fortunately in America so far
2 we've had very isolated incidents, and they really haven't
3 been very anti-Jewish. They attacked the military, a couple
4 of incidents where shooters were ^{at} military bases. We've seen
5 very little anti-Semitic activity, overt like in Europe. Will
6 it not come here? Of course it's going to, somewhere,
7 somewhere in time, if what's going on in the Middle East
8 continues. That's why we have to fight it. I mean I'm very
9 concerned about the American foreign policy right now. I am
10 not a fan of the current administration's foreign policy. I
11 think that they're selling us way short, and we're letting the
12 world get out of hand.

13 You know, the world did better when there was a
14 policeman. Even though it cost us a lot of money, the world
15 did better when the United States was out there, and that's
16 not the case right now.

17 **MICHAEL:** You're correct.

18 **RICHARD:** And I worry about that. I worry about the
19 future. I've got six grandchildren here from age 10 to 13. I
20 worry about their future, I worry about where they're going to
21 be living in ten years, and what kind of Jewish world are they
22 going to live in, and it's very scary.

23 **MICHAEL:** I agree with you. We're coming near the
24 end. You mentioned some important names not only to you but
25 to me: Stanley Frankel, Larry Jackier, Joel Gershenson. Who

1 are the people over your career who have had the greatest
2 impact on who you are and how you're doing your Jewish
3 business anyway?

4 **RICHARD:** Well, those are my friends. They've been
5 friends for a long time. Stanley and Larry and Joel and Dan
6 Geier and Mark Hauser and Jane Sherman. These are our
7 contemporaries and they've certainly affected all of us in who
8 they are and what they do in various ways throughout my time
9 in Detroit involved in the community. But I had the
10 opportunity to know some others.

11 Bill Berman, number one on my list. I don't see him
12 in the winter because he's in Florida, but in the summer I see
13 him every Shabbes or almost every Shabbes, and he's an amazing
14 man, for what he's done for not only Detroit but for North
15 America Jewish community and for the world Jewish community.
16 And I've learned a lot from Bill. He's been a mentor and he's
17 sure been a role model as a very bright man with very good
18 ideas and great leadership skills. So he's number one on my
19 list.

20 Connie Giles. Connie's been a friend and a
21 colleague, and he's a little bit older than I am. I learned a
22 lot from him. He's a wonderful speaker. I had to suffer
23 through many early years where we spoke together and I had to
24 follow Connie. That's unfair. But I've learned a lot from
25 him, and he's been a good friend and a real mentor.

1 I had the opportunity to know the Frankels, Sam and
2 Jean, and to really sit down and talk to them at times. I
3 remember Jean being in my office one time several years ago
4 when we were bringing the Israeli campers, and I think it was
5 somewhere in the second or third year of the whole program,
6 and they were running out of money. Then I heard that Sam and
7 Jean had funded the program for a year. Jean was in the
8 office, and I mentioned to her that I have this little spot in
9 my heart for Fresh Air, had been a former president, and I was
10 so excited for what they did. She said, Doctor, my father
11 told me that money is like manure. It's no good unless you
12 spread it around. And I said absolutely.

13 **MICHAEL:** A great line.

14 **RICHARD:** Larry's parents. I didn't know Joe a lot
15 because he died somewhere when I was growing up.

16 **MICHAEL:** Too early.

17 **RICHARD:** Way too early. But Edith I knew and very
18 well. It was wonderful to be able to talk to her and learn
19 from her. And that's what this community has offered.

20 I didn't really know Max Fisher well, but I had some
21 opportunities with him, but I had got to listen to what he had
22 to say, a lot, coming through the Federation.

23 Some of the leadership of Federation, the
24 professional leadership. I think Bob Aaronson was a great
25 leader. I enjoyed working with you over the years when we

1 were both younger and worked harder. Mark Davidoff. David
2 Page, wonderful man. I learned a lot from David over the
3 years. I worked with him on the Jewish Fund since its
4 inception. Penny Blumenstein. I mean we've just been so
5 blessed with such great leadership, both locally, nationally,
6 and internationally. And these are the people that I learned
7 from.

8 And I learn every day with my colleagues, and it's
9 been great because we're still friends and we still talk and
10 we still see each other. I see Jackier almost every week at
11 Partners when one of us shows up. And things like that. And
12 we still Stanley all the time. And those are the things that
13 have made my life better. Again, you just learn to live
14 without the word "no".

15 And the emerging leadership I have also had the
16 ability to have relationships with. And I think we're in
17 pretty good shape. I know who's out there. I've worked with
18 Larry Wolfe and I've worked with Ben Rosenthal and Matt Lester
19 and Jim Bellinson and the potential future leadership of this
20 community, and it's there. But we know that about Detroit.

21 I've spent the last ten years playing nationally
22 with JFNA, and I chair their financial relations committee
23 now. They got tired hearing me complain about dues, so they
24 gave me the job.

25 When Detroit talks, they listen. People listen. I

1 was at a meeting a couple years ago during the mini-recession
2 or the recent recession that we had, talking about Project
3 ^{chessed}
Tacit. I got up at a national meeting and described Project
4 ^{chessed}
Tacit, what we were doing in Detroit for people that needed
5 health care, that were caught in the middle, that didn't have
6 Medicaid and didn't have Medicare and had no cash, and had
7 good jobs but lost them, and they had no health care. And
8 Detroit stepped up. A thousand doctors said we'll do it,
9 we'll do it for nothing, we'll give pro bono treatment. I
10 talked about this system, and everybody said, you're doing
11 what? I don't know if any other community had it, but they
12 sure listened.

13 So that's what's great about Detroit. That's what's
14 great about working for Detroit for the last forty years, and
15 I'm not through. I'll still be around.

16 **MICHAEL:** I hope so.

17 **RICHARD:** But it's proud because we are Detroit.
18 And everybody, people know the Detroit Jewish community, and
19 they listen. And we've been very innovative. The miracle
20 missions. Every community is doing that now. It started
21 right here through David Hermelin and others. Those are the
22 things that make be proud to be a Jewish Detroiter.

23 **MICHAEL:** I think we've interwoven most of the
24 questions in our conversation, but I'll give you one last,
25 which I think you've just said eloquently what I think you

1 wanted to say, but if there's any closing words that you want
2 to say?

3 **RICHARD:** As I said at the end of my Butzel speech,
4 the journey's not over. The journey goes on. And we're all
5 part of a Jewish journey. I strongly believe in the Jewish
6 journey. It starts at some time, some it starts another, some
7 it takes a long time. But the journey doesn't stop. And we
8 live in a very ugly world right now. It will change. We've
9 lived through it before. But we have to every day fight for
10 what we believe is our rights and to live a good life. And as
11 a Jew sometimes that's been forgotten in the world we live in.

12 **MICHAEL:** Richard, I can't thank you enough. This
13 has been a wonderful addition to the oral history project, and
14 we're so delighted that you were able to come and spend these
15 moments with us.

16 **RICHARD:** Thanks, Michael.