

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Florine Mark  
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Michael Berke  
3 DATE OF INTERVIEW: Thursday, February 12, 2015  
4 LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Offices of Florine Mark  
5 SUBJECT MATTER: Jewish Community Leadership Oral  
6 History Project  
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8 MICHAEL BERKE: Good afternoon. My name is Michael  
9 Berke. I am the chairman of Federation's Archives Committee,  
10 and we're here to meet with Florine Mark, who's graciously  
11 agreed to be one of our oral history individuals. And as a  
12 perfunctory kind of a thing, I have to ask you this, Florine.  
13 Do you give permission to the Leonard N. Simons Jewish  
14 Community Archives to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use  
15 this recording for educational purposes, and for the use as  
16 deemed appropriate by the Archives?

17 FLORINE MARK: Absolutely, Michael..

18 MICHAEL: Wonderful. So let's start at the  
19 beginning.

20 FLORINE: Okay.

21 MICHAEL: Where were you born?

22 FLORINE: Detroit, Michigan. Elmhurst and Linwood.

23 MICHAEL: Elmhurst and Linwood.

24 FLORINE: Right.

25 MICHAEL: And tell us a little bit about your

1 remembrances of that time. Maybe weave into that your parents  
2 and their persona and how they influenced you.

3 **FLORINE:** My name was Florine, Grossberg. We lived  
4 on 2661 Elmhurst. We were very, very, very, very poor, so we  
5 lived with my bubbe, my zeyde, my grandmother and grandfather,  
6 six aunts and uncles, my mother, my father and my two sisters.  
7 So there were thirteen of us that lived in the house together.  
8 *AND everybody worked.*  
9 And we also lived with an uncle, Uncle Avrum, who had the  
10 intelligence of about a twelve-year-old boy, and he was  
11 fabulous. And he lived with us also. So that made fourteen.  
12 I forgot about him.

13 So I lived in this wonderful family. Even though we  
14 were poor, I never knew we were poor. There was always  
15 somebody to love me. There was always food on the table. My  
16 grandparents and my aunts and some of my uncles rented a  
17 corner grocery store on Webb and Linwood, Grossberg's Market.

18 People say, who was your mentor? Who is the person  
19 who you are really most like? And I say it was my bubbe,  
20 because she would get up in the morning, and she would make  
21 everybody breakfast and clean the house. And then she would  
22 go to work. And on the days that she had to go to the market,  
23 she'd be up at four, five in the morning, buying the fruits  
24 and vegetables, whatever else, and she'd go to work, and she'd  
25 work all day, and she'd come home, and then again she would  
help clean the house and she'd cook the meals. She was a

1 woman before her time. It was an absolutely great, wonderful  
2 growing-up time.

3 My bubbe was very philanthropic. My whole family  
4 was. Every room in the house had a JNF box, every single  
5 room. Now, we could put pennies in in those days because we  
6 didn't have money. But if you did something that you  
7 shouldn't, a penny went into the box. Sometimes you were  
8 lucky and in went a nickel. And on Sundays, if I was a very,  
9 very good girl, my bubbe would let me go with her and she  
10 would stand in front of the bakery on Linwood and Tuxedo, and  
11 whatever she was collecting, for whatever charity she was  
12 collecting for -- I don't know what Jewish Federation was  
13 called in those days, but there was always some Jewish --

14 **MICHAEL:** It was called the Jewish Welfare  
15 Federation.

16 **FLORINE:** Jewish Welfare Federation, whatever Jewish  
17 thing that she had, every week and every month maybe it was  
18 something different, she'd stand in front of the bakery for an  
19 hour or two, and she'd get people to put money in the pishke,  
20 in a little box, tzedaka box, and if I was a very, very good  
21 girl, she would let me go with her. And I would stand there.

22 So I learned philanthropy and I learned giving back  
23 at a very, very young age. Everybody in my family felt that  
24 way. Always there were people that didn't have homes, or  
25 people that didn't have any money, or people that needed food,

1 there was always meals. We would always have -- I never knew  
2 who was going to eat at the table with us. Shabot was a very  
3 big things.

4 We were Orthodox Jews at that time. There was a  
5 little shul on the corner of Elmhurst and Linwood called the  
6 Stoliner Shul, and that's where my parents and my grandparents  
7 and we all went. Saturday was a day of rest and fun and play  
8 for us kids. Growing up was fabulous.

9 **MICHAEL:** Was your zeyde around then?

10 **FLORINE:** Oh, yeah, my zeyde and my bubbe. He used  
11 to tell me stories, and I used to sit on his lap. Actually at  
12 Passover time he really reclined with the pillows. I mean it  
13 was really -- tradition was grown inside of me. I loved all  
14 the traditions of being Jewish. I loved Hanukkah. The  
15 Hanukkahs were wonderful. Yes, I always wanted to have a  
16 Christmas tree, but that was not so. But Hanukkah was such a  
17 special time for us. And Passover.

18 I remember I always found the afakomen. I was  
19 always one that was determined! <sup>and goal oriented</sup> I watched my grandfather like  
20 a hawk, and when he hid the afakomen, I was the one that found  
21 it. And every year, Michael, he promised me a bicycle. That  
22 was my gift, was a bicycle. I never got the bicycle, but you  
23 know what? It didn't matter. It just mattered that my  
24 grandfather wanted to do that for me.

25 The only bad thing about growing up was that we were

1 all fat. My grandmother, my grandfather were little short  
2 people, my mother, my dad were short, and my aunts and uncles.  
3 And we ate whatever wasn't selling in the grocery store. The  
4 rotten fruits and the soft vegetables, and all the other  
5 stuff. The stale bread. My bubbe had a knack. She would put  
6 sugar and shmaltz and butter in all of it and mix it all  
7 together, and we'd have it for meals, and of course I got  
8 fatter and fatter and ~~fatter~~ out

9 I was the fattest kid in class, and I hated it. I  
10 was like 50 pounds overweight when I was like twelve years  
11 old. They used to call me Fat Flo. And I used to come home  
12 and say to my mother, Mom, the kids are making fun of me. And  
13 I used to cry. She would put her arms around me in her  
14 beautiful way and she'd say, come on, sit down, have a piece  
15 of cake, and you'll feel better.

16 So that's how I was brought up, to know that food  
17 was something that relieved the stress and made you feel  
18 better. But it didn't because in the morning when I'd wake up  
19 and I'd have to go to school again, my clothes didn't fit - I  
20 always wore hand-me-downs, so whoever could hand down clothes,  
21 and my mommy would sew a little bit and, you know, it was very  
22 difficult being fat when I was little. That was the only bad  
23 thing. But when I came home, it was okay because we were all  
24 fat.

25 **MICHAEL:** Tell me a little bit about your mom and

1 dad.

2 **FLORINE:** My mother was a pistol. She was fat. She  
3 was an orphan. These are stories that I've heard from my  
4 mother. I don't know how true they are, but this is our  
5 legacy. She came over on the boat with her parents. Her  
6 parents got consumption or something. They died. She was  
7 Jewish, and when they landed, some Jewish social workers or  
8 whatever took her and put her in a Jewish orphanage home, and  
9 there she stayed. I don't know how long it was.

10 The world was going through a depression in the '30s  
11 and early '40s, and my mother was a foster child for the  
12 Weisman family. This was Seymour and Ruth Hamburger, Ruth  
13 Weisman Hamburger. Then Freddie, who was a plastic surgeon,  
14 and Mr. and Mrs. Weisman. They needed money and they went to  
15 the orphanage, and they got my mom, and they paid for my  
16 mother to stay in their house. But they really treated her  
17 like a daughter, and she was a daughter to them. She got  
18 married in their house.

19 She was always a wonderful sales person. At 15 I  
20 think she quit school and she was selling shoes, and she was  
21 the best shoe salesperson. She was fabulous.

22 Now, my daddy, he was the most soft-spoken,  
23 fabulous, wonderful, kind man. I <sup>guess</sup> know it was tradition, but  
24 he was the kind that when I said, Daddy, can I go? Ask your  
25 mom. And I would do something bad, and my mother would say,

1 oh, you're daddy's going to give it to you, and I knew my  
2 daddy would never give it to me. He would never give it to  
3 anybody because he was the most sweet, kind wonderful man.

4 He rented a couple of lots on Witherell and  
5 Columbia, near the law school, Detroit College of Law, and he  
6 and his partner, Charlie, who was an uncle or a cousin to the  
7 Sussmans, to Milt and Lois.

8 **MICHAEL:** Oh, really.

9 **FLORINE:** Yes. They rented these lots, and my dad  
10 would go to work at three, four in the morning, and he  
11 actually parked the cars. It was Leo and Charlie's Parking  
12 Lot. <sup>1 but he parked the cars and</sup> That's what he did for a living.

13 My parents came from Russia, and my father's  
14 parents, too, and they immigrated to Canada; Fort William,  
15 Ontario, which is now Thunder Bay. There they lived and  
16 enjoyed life as much as they could. I think they were in the  
17 grocery business. Then they moved to Detroit.

18 So I was born in Detroit. My aunts and uncles  
19 eventually got married, and we had this really big family.

20 **MICHAEL:** It sounds wonderful.

21 **FLORINE:** It was.

22 **MICHAEL:** So tell me a little bit about your growing  
23 up outside of the family. Where did you go to school? And  
24 were you involved in Jewish-related issues way back then?

25 **FLORINE:** Well, I was always a Zionist. I belonged

1 to BBYO. I remember curling my hair for two days in a row to  
2 go to the Yom Kippur night dance that they would have. That  
3 was THE thing for all the Jewish kids to go to. I remember  
4 how important it was. So I used to put curlers in my hair for  
5 two days. I probably looked horrible. But I was getting  
6 ready for this wonderful Yom Kippur dance. After Yom Kippur.

7 As I grew up, I went to school at Roosevelt and  
8 Durfey and Central. I was two years ahead of myself in  
9 school. I graduated when I was 16. I was 16 February 21. I  
10 graduated in June. Got married in August. And I had a baby,  
11 my oldest daughter, Sherry, at 17. He was a wonderful guy,  
12 real nice guy. He went to the University of Michigan dental  
13 school. But it just wasn't right, we were just too young. So  
14 I was divorced at 18.

15 My mother, who was a strong, fabulous, dedicated --  
16 she gave me all of the strength that I have today. She said,  
17 you know, if you get a divorce, nice Jewish girls don't  
18 divorced -- this was many, many years ago. Girls didn't get  
19 divorced, not only Jewish girls. You're going to put your  
20 father in the grave, and I'm going to make you watch him go in  
21 the ground. You can't divorced. Although she never really  
22 wanted me to marry so young.

23 But I got a divorce, went to work to support my  
24 daughter, <sup>I had this beautiful daughter</sup> and came back to live with my mother and hired  
25 someone to take care of my daughter because they didn't have



1 day cares in those days. Then I met my second husband, who  
2 was 22 years older than me, a wonderful man, Irving Mark. I  
3 went on and had four more children by the time I was 25 years  
4 old. *So AT 25 I HAD FIVE children.*

5 He had business reversals. He was in the building  
6 business. It was Acme Builder Supply. He and Asa were  
7 partners. They had business reversals and they split the  
8 partnership. In those days he built a home in Palmer Woods,  
9 and we were living there. And he said, honey, we have to  
10 move, we can't afford the house anymore. So we sold the  
11 house, actually gave it away, and I had to go to work.

12 Well, I was 50 pounds overweight. Who's going to  
13 hire me? At least that's what I thought. I didn't think of  
14 all the good things about me. I was smart, I was kind, I was  
15 good, I was philanthropic. All I could think of was I was  
16 ugly and stupid and dumb and fat.

17 I heard about this thing called Weight Watchers, and  
18 it was only in New York. It was started by a woman named Jean  
19 Nidetch. I called her up, and I said, I've got to have this  
20 diet. I had overdosed on diet pills. I had been going to  
21 diet doctors for many, many years of my life and taken the  
22 pills and losing the 50 pounds and stop the pills and gain all  
23 the weight back. Went on crazy diets. Cabbage soup. The  
24 Atkins Diet. All these crazy diets. *So I did all this stuff.*

25 So when I called Jean, she said, I absolutely cannot

1 send you the diet. You have to come to New York. So I took  
2 the last bit of money I had, and I went to New York. And my  
3 mummy and dad, who were so fabulous, came and took care of my  
4 children. I went for a week up to 9911 Queens Boulevard, and  
5 I went to classes just like everybody else, paid my money.

6 The first five days, five days in row, went to three  
7 meetings a day, and traveled all around New York. I'd never  
8 been out of Detroit in my life. I lost five pounds, and I  
9 knew that this was for me. I went back once a month. I lost  
10 40 pounds in four months.

11 Then Jean said to me, hey, Florine, you know what,  
12 this is crazy, your coming all the way from Detroit. Why  
13 don't you take this back to Detroit and start a franchise. I  
14 didn't know what the word franchise meant. Neither did my  
15 lawyer at that time. I don't think anybody did. It was the  
16 late '60s and the early '70s. And I said, great. But by now  
17 I'm feeling so terrific, I wanted to do my dreams. And my  
18 dreams were I wanted to be on radio, I wanted to be on  
19 television, I wanted to do marketing, I loved marketing. I  
20 wanted to write, I loved to write, I'm a writer. And this is  
21 what I want to do.

22 And I thought I'm going to have this one class, my  
23 whole family, because they were all fat, and they're going to  
24 come to class, and while I'm doing that class, I'm going to go  
25 to every radio station, every TV station, I just want to do

1 what I want to do. Live my dreams.

2 Well, Michael, I started the first class, with no  
3 training. They didn't give me anything, but they said, here's  
4 the diet, take it home. I had to reproduce it myself. I  
5 rented the Sholem Aleichem Institute on Seven Mile Road and  
6 Greenfield. They let me have the little auditorium and a  
7 teeny little office.

8 Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you something very  
9 important about my life. I have two beautiful sisters, Mickey  
10 and Sandy. My beautiful sister Sandy, when I was eleven and  
11 she was nine, got infantile paralysis. The year before Saulk  
12 invented the polio vaccine. Salk 9p

13 **MICHAEL:** I met her many times.

14 **FLORINE:** She was fabulous. I gave her half my  
15 business. But I have to tell you about philanthropy because I  
16 think this is such an important point for me to remember. And  
17 I think for everybody who sees this to remember. My mother  
18 used to take me and march, go from door to door, to collect  
19 dimes, ten cents. I used to go with her all the time. It  
20 made such an impression on my, like my bubbe made the  
21 impression collecting for Federation. We did all kinds of  
22 charities, but this one with my mother made an impression.

23 My mother said, if I had an extra dime, <sup>I</sup> we had to  
24 give it to the March of Dimes, which I did. The year after  
25 Sandy got <sup>polio</sup> ill and <sup>got the polio</sup> then Saulk invented the vaccine, I was sure

1 that it was my dime that was the last dime that was the thing  
2 that absolutely helped him to invent the polio vaccine so  
3 nobody in the world will ever have to get polio.

4 I'm a big Federation person. I think it's really,  
5 really important what we do for the Jewish people, our Jewish  
6 people, that we really take care of our Jewish people. And so  
7 many people in our community think I can only give \$100, or I  
8 can only give <sup>100</sup> -- it means nothing, you know? And I always say  
9 to them, and it reminds me, that dimes were the things that  
10 made the invention of the polio vaccine possible. So \$100 is  
11 fabulous, and if it's only \$100 you can give, by all means, we  
12 at the Federation, we are just so grateful for every \$50,  
13 every \$25 that anybody gives.

14 Anyway, I've taken care of my sister Sandy all my  
15 life. When I started Weight Watchers, I gave her half. She  
16 was 65 pounds overweight, very barrel-chested with skinny legs  
17 and skinny arms, sitting in a wheelchair. And I helped her  
18 lose 65 pounds on Weight Watchers, and she was able to be  
19 fitted for braces and crutches, and get up. She swang, but  
20 she moved on her own, drove a car, and did all that stuff. It  
21 was such a love for me that I was able to do this.

22 And of course my sister Mickey always helped. And  
23 she came to work for me and worked with us. My mother and my  
24 Aunt Shelly, who's going to be 104 this year, and my daddy, my  
25 aunt, everybody worked. In fact I had the first meeting on

1 Tuesday night. You know why? Because in the Jewish religion,  
2 Tuesday is a mazldicka (ph. sp.) night, a mazldicka day. So  
3 everything I've done I've always done on Tuesdays because  
4 that's a mazldicka day.

5           When I started my meeting, there were thirty people  
6 who came to my class. I put a big sign in a candy store. I  
7 figured that's where fat people go. That's how sure of myself  
8 I was, how much self-respect I had because I lost the weight.  
9 I went to the candy store man and I said, let me put a sign,  
10 and finally he did, and it said Come Lose Weight with Weight  
11 Watchers. By the way, the candy store went out of business.  
12 It wasn't my fault. Honestly, it wasn't.

13           The first night thirty people came. There was my  
14 aunts, my uncles, all my family and relations, and a few odd  
15 people. I was scared to death. What am I going to tell them?  
16 I had no training. So I talked from my heart, and I told them  
17 how it worked for me. The next Tuesday, sixty people came.  
18 And the third Tuesday 120. People were coming back and saying  
19 to me, you changed my life. They had lost four or five  
20 pounds, but with no diet pills. Nothing. No contracts to  
21 sign, none of that stuff. It was just a simple good program,  
22 and it was the rapport, it was the companionship, it was what  
23 we had to say to each other. It was the things that I would  
24 give them and tell them about myself and losing weight and how  
25 important it was.

1           I was overwhelmed that people would come back and  
2 say thank you for helping to change my life. Of course I  
3 understand I'm this much instrumental, you're the one that  
4 does all the work. But I'm so grateful to know that I can be  
5 this much instrumental in helping other people live better.

6           **MICHAEL:** That's wonderful. So let's shift gears  
7 just a little bit, although it's in the same line. From your  
8 earlier comments, it sounds to me that Jewish religion and  
9 Jewish tradition has always been very, very important to you.  
10 And I don't know if you remember that the first time you and I  
11 met was in 1972 at Hillel Day School when you were enrolling  
12 Ricky and Lisa at school. So that's where we go back. So  
13 talk a little bit about how important religious values and  
14 religious tradition has played in your life, and the way  
15 you've done your "business" over the years.

16           **FLORINE:** Well, you know, I have to tell you that  
17 education is extremely important to me. I was brought up that  
18 religion -- of course I believe in God, but it wasn't the  
19 religion part, it was the love of each other and the love of  
20 being Jewish. I loved being Jewish, it was so important to  
21 me. So as soon as I made a little bit of money, the first  
22 thing I wanted to do was put my kids in Hebrew school, in  
23 Jewish school. Lisa and Ricky went to Hillel.

24           I've since been able to afford to put every one of  
25 my grandchildren through Hillel, every single one of them that

1 are here in Detroit have gone to Hillel. In fact I even have  
2 a grandson in Florida that I sent to Dona Schechter school.  
3 That's my gratefulness, that's better than the rings on your  
4 fingers and whatever else. It's to be able to do that,  
5 because education is very important.

6 Philanthropy is very important, but what we do, what  
7 we Jewish people do is so different from anything else in the  
8 whole world. We take care of our own. Senior life, you know  
9 we have senior citizens who can't afford, we'll house them at  
10 Hechtman. We have kids that can't afford to go to Hillel; we  
11 have scholarships. We have the Jewish Vocational Service. We  
12 have the Jewish Family Service, and all the 17 agencies that  
13 Federation takes care of, which is so important to me. So  
14 that's my love.

15 Family is so very important. That's the way I grew  
16 up, because we ate together.

17 **MICHAEL:** Talk a little bit about your kids. Let me  
18 rephrase that.

19 **FLORINE:** Okay. Talk a lot about my kids.

20 **MICHAEL:** Talk a lot about your kids.

21 **FLORINE:** Well, every Sunday, I'm so very lucky  
22 because five of my children live -- I can't call them children  
23 anymore because they're grownups and they have their own  
24 children. But they'll always be my children. Five of them  
25 live right here within five minutes of my house. In fact my

1 daughter and my son-in-law -- he's a great son-in-law, which  
2 speaks a lot about him -- bought a house across the street  
3 from me, and they have four little kids. So that was  
4 wonderful because I saw them.

5 My daughter Lisa is a teacher. She's the baby. And  
6 she has four gorgeous kids. My grandson, Matan, is just  
7 graduating the University of Michigan. He has learned Farsi,  
8 Arabic, English, and he speaks Hebrew fluently because they  
9 all went to Hillel. And he is joining the IDF. He's going to  
10 the Israeli army. His sister, Ariella, graduated Brandeis  
11 with a degree in Jewish studies, a master's in Jewish studies.  
12 She married an Israeli. My grandson Aviv is going to go to  
13 Michigan. All the kids have gone to school.

14 My son Ricky is a doctor. He's the next one. He's  
15 a terrific guy. He's got three gorgeous girls. My  
16 granddaughter Pagie just graduated Tulane and she's working  
17 here at Weight Watchers. Her sister Karley is an artist. She  
18 graduated NYU School of Visual Arts, and she's working and  
19 selling her art in New York. Their oldest daughter, Aliana,  
20 is a veterinarian and married to a fabulous guy, Jason, and  
21 he's a Honigman lawyer. She's a veterinarian, but she loves  
22 Weight Watchers so much that two days a week she works here,  
23 and three days a week she takes care of her animals.

24 And then there's Jeffrey, who has three gorgeous  
25 daughters. One's at school in Lansing, and one is getting her



1 master's in social work in University of Denver and the other  
2 one graduated from Lynn University, and she's an entrepreneur  
3 in Denver.

4           Then my son David, who is the pillar of everything.  
5 He's got an MBA and a law degree from Michigan State. He's a  
6 fabulous guy. He worked here for a very, very long time.

7           And my oldest daughter, Sheri, is a lawyer, and she  
8 has a degree in nursing. First nursing, and then she went on  
9 and became a lawyer. And she is not working as a lawyer or as  
10 a nurse; she's doing only philanthropy. She started with my  
11 help and a lot of people's help. The first Paul Newman Hole  
12 in the Wall Camp here in Michigan, the University of Michigan  
13 gave us the land. It's on the old Fresh Air camp that I went  
14 to in Brighton, Michigan, and it's just absolutely beautiful.  
15 It's going to be a free camp for any kid that has any  
16 disability at all. So we'll have one week of diabetes and one  
17 week of heart and one week of kids that are in wheelchairs.  
18 And it's going to be just like regular camp. They're going to  
19 be doing horseback riding, doing everything. We'll have a  
20 hospital right on there with nurses and doctors staffing it.  
21 They have one in Israel by the way. They opened one in Israel.  
22 And this is the last one. We haven't opened it yet, but it  
23 will be opened. So that's what she does.

24           So my five kids.

25           My husband, the father of my five kids,

1 unfortunately died of cancer when I was in my thirties, and I  
2 became a grandmother at the same time. My daughter Sheri had  
3 her first child at 18; I had my first one at 17. So at 35 I'm  
4 a bubbe. My mother was nanny.

5           Then I married Bill, who is a fabulous, fabulous  
6 guy. He was a doctor and artist and very Jewishy. His father  
7 -- and I'll bet you didn't even know -- his father used to  
8 sing at the choir at Shaarey Zedek. He had a fabulous voice.  
9 He was a wonderful man. He used to sing with the Michigan  
10 Opera also.

11           **MICHAEL:** I didn't know that.

12           **FLORINE:** Great guy. He brought me two more  
13 children. So I have seven. I am the only living parent for  
14 all of my children. I have a daughter, Jandi, in Florida with  
15 two grandchildren, and a son that lives in Amsterdam. He  
16 moved there when he was 18, and he's got some great  
17 grandchildren, and he's an absolutely terrific guy. And I  
18 love them dearly. So I have seven children, lots of  
19 grandchildren.

20           Everyone that's here in Detroit, on Sunday, every  
21 Sunday when I'm home, everybody comes in and eats with me. My  
22 sister went on and had six children, but only three are living  
23 here in Detroit. So my sister and her kids come and her  
24 grandchildren come and mine. Last Sunday there were 32 of us  
25 that came and had dinner. And it's nothing fancy, but they

1 all eat with me, and we are very, very, very close.

2           My kids and I on February 18, 2015, I'm taking all  
3 my children, whatever grandchildren that want, whatever kids  
4 that can go, and we're going to Cuba for four days. Every  
5 year I try to take a trip with my children, my grownup  
6 children. We've been to Normandy, we've been to the camps,  
7 we've been all over. We've been to Alaska, we've been to  
8 Australia.

9           Unfortunately Bill died a few years back of Lou  
10 Gerhig's disease. I stayed home for two years. He couldn't  
11 move one thing but blink his eyes. Blink his eyes, that's it.  
12 I had a special computer that he used with his eyes. He was  
13 my hero, he was fabulous. But I stayed home. I wrote a book  
14 at that time. I had to do something to get all this emotion  
15 out. It's not a diet book, but it's a great book.

16           If anybody wants to read it, it's called Talk to the  
17 Mirror, because I talk to the mirror every single day, and I  
18 tell the mirror, which is me, that today is going to be a good  
19 one. I can do anything I want if I want to do it bad enough,  
20 just for today. I don't ask myself to do anything for more  
21 than today. Tomorrow I'll make another commitment and  
22 tomorrow and tomorrow. And maybe tomorrow I'll wake up and  
23 say, I'm going to eat all the ice cream in the world and stay  
24 in bed and watch old movies. And if that's what I want to do,  
25 I'll do it. But of course I haven't done that. But it's

1 fabulous. I read it myself when I'm a little stressed.  
2 amazon.com. Not a commercial.

*Talk to  
the mirror*

3 Anyway, Bill died, and so now I'm a widow. And I  
4 have a nice guy that I've been seeing, and I have the kids.  
5 And for me, unfortunately husbands have come and gone, but  
6 kids are my only constant. So they're very important to me.

7 And the Jewish community is very important to me. I  
8 was Campaign chair. I'm now the president of the JCC.

9 **MICHAEL:** Let's talk about that for a second.

10 **FLORINE:** Okay, Michael. I knew you were going to  
11 say something about it, but go ahead.

12 **MICHAEL:** Well, I'm going to talk about other  
13 things, too, because I think it's very important that people  
14 understand that your involvement is not just in the Jewish  
15 community, but in the community at large.

16 **FLORINE:** It is. Absolutely.

17 **MICHAEL:** But since you brought up the Jewish  
18 Center, we're at a momentous time I think in the community.

19 **FLORINE:** We are.

20 **MICHAEL:** And I think we have the right president at  
21 the Jewish Center to deal with the issues.

22 **FLORINE:** Thank you.

23 **MICHAEL:** So why don't you just spend a moment,  
24 because this is going to be looked at, to talk about what you  
25 believe the challenges that the Center is placing now and what

1 you believe the opportunities that the Center has available to  
2 it, as we move this process forward. And I know it's a  
3 dynamic process right now.

4 **FLORINE:** The Jewish Community Center is the center  
5 of Jewish life in my opinion. I've opened up Weight Watchers  
6 of Mexico, and I took my children and lived there for a year.  
7 And if it wasn't for the Jewish Center in Mexico City, which  
8 is the center <sup>of</sup> ~~if~~ Jewish life there. I met people, I was so  
9 involved. I became involved immediately. I had a family and  
10 I knew nobody there. And I believe that that's what our  
11 Jewish Center ought to be. I've always felt that way.

12 We have a great Center, two of them. We have one at  
13 Kahn and one at JPM on Ten and Greenfield. At the on at Kahn  
14 we do a lot of programs. We do the film festival and the  
15 music festival. We have the Manny Cherich Gallery there. We  
16 have in-line hockey. By the way, the Center is open to all  
17 religions, all races, all colors. The guy that cuts my hair  
18 is from Thailand. His son has been a member there playing in-  
19 line hockey and rollerskating all his life. Go a scholarship  
20 because of it at U of M, because of what he's done at the  
21 Jewish Center. So it's a great place and we have great  
22 programs.

23 I walk in and there's the basketball court, and  
24 there's blacks and whites and all kinds, and the kids are  
25 playing and having a great time.

1 I believe in it so much that I made a big donation,  
2 and it's the Florine Mark Fitness Center, and it's a great  
3 center. All the machines, pilates, anything you want, we have  
4 a great health club. It's a place that people come and go.

5 Now, unfortunately, for a long time before I became  
6 president we'd been losing a lot of money. We had some  
7 problems with some people that are no longer with us, and we  
8 finally looked and saw where we were. We got a true picture.  
9 And we're losing about a million dollars a year. That million  
10 dollars is coming from -- actually \$800,000 -- from the JPM,  
11 is where it's losing it. I don't know if you've ever been  
12 there, but it's a fabulous place.

13 **MICHAEL:** Oh, sure.

14 **FLORINE:** I love going there. It's so warm and so  
15 fabulous.

16 We've had two wonderful committees with great people  
17 on these committees, and they have for a very, very long time  
18 been studying -- a year -- what to do, and the recommendation  
19 was to close the JPM, the building. We're never going to  
20 abandon the people there, ever. We're going to have programs  
21 in different places, right in that area, the Huntington Woods,  
22 the Royal Oak, the Southfield, the Oak Park, Berkley, all of  
23 that area.

24 When we finally came to the conclusion this was  
25 something that had to be done. I mean it's like running a

1 business. If we don't do it, we're going to have to close  
2 them both.

3           **MICHAEL:** Has that decision finally been made?

4           **FLORINE:** No, a decision has not been made. And  
5 this is February. Our board, we have a wonderful board,  
6 decided together that we would have some forums, some open  
7 meetings, and we'd let everybody know about it. We went --  
8 there were four or five of us: Matt Lester, Jeb Eisner, who  
9 is right there as an interim executive director, and myself  
10 and Brian Siegel, who is the chairman of the board. He was  
11 the president before I became president, and then he stepped  
12 up to chairman. And six hundred people -- we had to turn  
13 people away. So many people came that we had a second one the  
14 following night. And we listened, and we told them, these are  
15 the things that our committees have found, but we want to hear  
16 from you. Maybe there's something out there that we haven't  
17 even thought of. What can we do alleviate this problem?

18           We listened to everybody. And at the very end I  
19 said, I came here and my heart was beating, and I came with  
20 trepidation because I thought you were going to shoot me up,  
21 and they didn't. They didn't to anybody. The people that  
22 came were thoughtful. They were thinking of what they could  
23 do. They had formed groups. They talked about what the JPM  
24 means to them. And I realized, and I said it that night, I  
25 came here thinking it was just a building we're closing.

1 We're not closing just a building. That Center is the center  
2 of Jewish life. The Jewish people that are there, all the  
3 people, non-Jews that come, they come to congregate, they come  
4 to see each other. It really is not like the one at Kahn  
5 Building where they come and they go to a program, and then  
6 they leave. They actually sit and talk and they sing and  
7 dance and study, and they do things together. I have a whole  
8 different feeling about it.

9           And so now we're just waiting. We've said we'll let  
10 all these wonderful groups that are together -- and they were  
11 professors from Wayne State and lawyers and doctors and  
12 carpenters and everyday people and teachers -- they've formed  
13 committees and they're trying to do something. So we thought  
14 that maybe August, September 1, that we'll come and revisit  
15 it, and hopefully it will be their decision what we have to  
16 do. And if we have to close the building because we have,<sup>to</sup>  
17 then it's something that we're going to have to think very  
18 hard on what we can do.

19           We're going to try to keep the building Jewish.  
20 We're hoping the people in the community down there will maybe  
21 buy the building and use it, or maybe they'll take it over and  
22 do something. There's a whole bunch of suggestions out there.  
23 I have to tell you, I cried the whole time.

24           I want to tell you that a lady came up to me -- I  
25 get tears in my eyes now. She gave me a check for \$1,000 from



1 her 401(k) plan. People were handing me hundred dollar bills  
2 at that meeting. I cried then and cried all night and I get  
3 teary when I think about it. But for every problem comes a  
4 wonderful opportunity and something good happens. So I'm sure  
5 something will come of this that will be good and that will be  
6 workable for everybody.

7           **MICHAEL:** So you have confidence that this is going  
8 to come to a satisfactory resolution, but we don't know quite  
9 what that resolution is yet.

10           **FLORINE:** I think the resolution will come from the  
11 people at the JPM rather than from us sitting on a board in a  
12 building, in the Kahn Building.

13           Keeping in mind that the Kahn Building needs  
14 maintenance, which we haven't done in years, and so does the  
15 JPM Building. I mean I'm looking for I think it was St. Louis  
16 or Cleveland when they had this problem -- we're not the only  
17 JCC that's had this problem. A donor came up with \$15 million  
18 and kept them alive. Well, we need a \$20 million endowment  
19 from somebody or a group of people, which will give us a  
20 million dollars a year to keep it alive. That's one solution.  
21 I don't know what they're thinking about.

22           In the meantime we're looking for a new executive  
23 director. We've got some really good candidates, so I'm sure  
24 that wonderful things will happen. And from me, I am asking  
25 everybody I know, join the JCC. People say, but I'm not going

1 to go. I don't care. You give to American Cancer. Hopefully  
2 you're not going to ever get cancer. Just become a member.  
3 If we could get 800 more members right now. And then why not  
4 come and see what we've got to offer. Why go to an LA Fitness  
5 when you're surrounded by your own people and come to see what  
6 we have to offer. Come and see all the programs that we're  
7 doing. And if we're not doing a program that you want, we're  
8 happy to start it. I mean we're looking to elevate both  
9 locations and make it so it's really fabulous. That's my goal  
10 as president.

11           **MICHAEL:** You know, it's instructive, and I'm not  
12 supposed to editorialize, but the thing that I came out of  
13 this most is that we started talking to one another.

14           **FLORINE:** Absolutely.

15           **MICHAEL:** And I think that we have to begin to think  
16 about talking to each other when we're not in crisis.

17           **FLORINE:** Right.

18           **MICHAEL:** So that we can avoid crises.

19           **FLORINE:** Absolutely.

20           **MICHAEL:** How do you feel about that?

21           **FLORINE:** I agree, Michael. And I think that's what  
22 we do do at Federation. And again I just want to make a point  
23 of saying that everybody in the Jewish community -- there's  
24 only 65,000 of us left here in Detroit. Your \$50, your \$100  
25 is just as important. And I am urging on the committees and

1 sitting on the board of the Jewish community of the Federation  
2 that we ought to pay more attention to people that only can  
3 give \$100, so that we get their voices. It doesn't mean that  
4 they're not as smart, maybe even smarter than we are and have  
5 better ideas on how to keep Jewish life alive in this  
6 wonderful community, this wonderful city that we live in.

7           Look what's happening in Detroit. Aren't we proud  
8 that one of our Jews, Danny Gilbert, is revitalizing downtown  
9 Detroit. A Jewish person. Okay? So I think it's really  
10 important. And there are so many kids right now that can grow  
11 up to be Danny Gilberts or to be Florine Marks or Michaels.  
12 You know, to grow up. But we have to do it together. They  
13 have to know that they're part of, and we are a great  
14 community.

15           **MICHAEL:** So we talked about the Center, but you've  
16 been very involved in a lot of things Jewish. And we don't  
17 have three weeks to have this conversation. But what are some  
18 of the things Jewishly that have stood out of the things that  
19 you've been instrumental in. And then we'll talk about the  
20 non-Jewish things.

21           **FLORINE:** Okay. Well, Marketing Committee for the  
22 Federation. We've gotten now Ted Cohen, who is working for us  
23 at Jewish Federation who is absolutely fantastic. A great  
24 Marketing Committee. If you noticed, our ads are better.  
25 Everything we're doing is better.

1 I was Campaign chair one year, and that gave me a  
2 real thrill. I sit on the board. I've been an executive,  
3 vice-president of the Jewish Federation. I've been appointed  
4 to the JFNA, so I go to those meetings and see what I can do  
5 nationwide or worldwide for Jewish communities.

6 I'm part of Jewish Women's Fund. In fact this year  
7 we're bringing in a friend of mine, Kim Worthy, who is the  
8 Prosecuting Attorney for Wayne County, and Michael Duggan, who  
9 is the Mayor of Detroit, will be introducing her. So it's a  
10 great thing for all of our Jewish women that will come out. I  
11 mean they support us, they're wonderful. So we've done a lot  
12 of wonderful things.

13 You know, I'm just this much. I'm just a little  
14 part of this great group of Jewish people that are living  
15 there. And you want me to talk about non-Jewish things?

16 **MICHAEL:** Before we get to that, I want to talk  
17 about what you see -- obviously Israel has been in the news.  
18 We haven't talked about Israel. And we as a people are facing  
19 a lot of challenges. So I want to get your perspective.

20 **FLORINE:** It's a little scary, Michael.

21 **MICHAEL:** So I want to hear from you what you think  
22 about that.

23 **FLORINE:** It's scary. Scary because I have kids, a  
24 son and a daughter-in-law and grandchildren that live in  
25 Amsterdam, call me and say, you know what, mom, we're thinking

1 of how much longer can we live in Amsterdam. He makes a  
2 living there, that's where he's been for 25 years, and his  
3 business is there and everything, but they're scared. And I  
4 understand that they're telling people all over Europe not to  
5 wear yarmulkes on the street, not to wear like my Jewish star  
6 that I never take off, not to wear it if I go to Europe. Be  
7 sure not to wear a Jewish star. It's very frightening.

8 I don't know why, Michael. I mean if you look at  
9 the things that are coming out of Israel, I love Israel. I  
10 think it's our homeland, but it's our place. It was a desert  
11 65 years ago. Look what the people have done together. And  
12 not only that, look what we've done for the Palestinians that  
13 are happy and living cohesively with us. Look what we do at  
14 Shaarey Zedek Hospital. All the hospitals where you find the  
15 Arab doctors working along with the Israeli doctors and taking  
16 care of Arab patients along with Israeli patients. How those  
17 that are living there are working cohesively.

18 Look at the things that are coming out of Techneon.  
19 Look at all the stem cell research and all the wonderful pills  
20 and antibiotics and things that have come that are equipped  
21 because we don't have an FDA there that prohibits us. We have  
22 to wait ten years to get something approved here in Michigan,  
23 United States.

24 How many Jewish people have won awards.

25 **MICHAEL:** The Nobel Prizes.

1           **FLORINE:** There's so many things. And when there's  
2 a crisis in Haiti and a tsunami in Thailand, when there's  
3 something happening, who are the first people there to take  
4 care of other people? It's the Israeli people.

5           I don't know why the world doesn't look at us  
6 differently. I can't understand why when you hear of a, God  
7 forbid, Palestinian or an Arab kid that's been killed by a  
8 rocket from Israel, and I'm sure we all feel terrible it, it's  
9 front page. And when you hear of Israeli kids that are killed  
10 in Israel, it's a little item. It's on the back page of a  
11 newspaper. So I can't quite figure it out.

12           There are certainly rotten people in every  
13 organization, and there are extremists, but overall the Jewish  
14 people and the Israel people -- and I don't think it's so much  
15 Israelis right now that they're targeting. Certainly  
16 countries are targeting Israel. I think it's the world  
17 talking about Jewish people. And I don't understand. I don't  
18 understand why the Protestants and Catholics are fighting in  
19 Ireland. I don't understand why religion or part of being a  
20 Jew and always trying to help people, it just doesn't make  
21 sense to me.

22           **MICHAEL:** So what do we, as Jews, have to do to  
23 strengthen and keep strong?

24           **FLORINE:** We just have to keep strengthening each  
25 other, strengthening ourselves, believing in ourselves, being

1 good people. Trying to tell our story as much as we can.  
2 Helping the world. I don't just help Jewish causes. I'm very  
3 involved in non-Jewish causes. And everybody knows I'm  
4 Jewish; okay?

5           And I don't see what else we can do. I think if you  
6 look back, history after history after history, they've always  
7 oppressed the Jewish people.

8           In Catholicism, so many Protestants moved from  
9 Catholic, Baptist moved from Catholic. There was one Catholic  
10 organization and now we've got a whole splinter group of  
11 people that have moved away. Why didn't they all want to stay  
12 Catholic? I don't know either.

13           So I think we just have to continue on being good  
14 people as we are, and hopefully one day the world will let us  
15 live in peace.

16           **MICHAEL:** Good sentiment. So talk about the non-  
17 Jewish responsibilities that you've had over the years. What  
18 has stood out to you in those efforts? And I want to bring it  
19 back to Jewish. And how have your Jewish values helped you to  
20 deliver the message to the non-Jewish community?

21           **FLORINE:** Well, I think not only Jewish, but being a  
22 female, being a woman, being a girl. First of all, Michael, I  
23 graduated high school in June at 16, never went to college.  
24 Put my two sisters through college, worked to put them through  
25 college before Weight Watchers. My sister Mickey has a degree

1 and Sandy went to the University of Michigan. So I don't have  
2 a college degree. Everything I've learned has been self-  
3 taught. But I think I was born entrepreneurial, I was born  
4 with marketing. I think I was born with a charisma. I think  
5 I get it from my mother and my bubbe and the sweetness from my  
6 father and my sadie.

7 I think one of the most exciting things for me was  
8 being appointed to the Federal Reserve Board, Chicago/Detroit  
9 Branch. There are twelve Federal Reserve Banks in the United  
10 States. And people don't know what they do. Of course  
11 they're monetary; we make the money and store the money. But  
12 one of the things we do is with my job in the health and  
13 fitness and fashion field, to give reports on a monthly basis  
14 of what's going on. I had to study this in the world of  
15 fitness and health, health care, fashion, all the designers,  
16 and Macy's and Burgdorf's and others; I'd call around. Every  
17 board member of every Federal Reserve gives this information  
18 to their chairman. And the chairmen, twelve members, sit on  
19 the board, and they decide whether interest rates are going up  
20 and down. So it's a very big honor to sit on that board. Not  
21 only was I the only Jew on the board, I was the only female.

22 And not only was I appointed to the board, but you  
23 are appointed every year. I don't know who appointed me or  
24 how I got reappointed, but many of the board -- I think eight  
25 or ten of us sat on the board -- were not back the following



1 year. You can only serve six years and then you're rotated  
2 off. I served every single year, and the last three years on  
3 the Federal Reserve Detroit/Chicago Branch, which is one of  
4 the biggest ones, I was chairwoman of the board. So that is a  
5 Jewish person as a non-graduate of any college, to be able to  
6 do this was a very thrill for me.

7 But then of course I worked for March of Dimes, and  
8 I sit on the community foundation, which I think is very  
9 important. Cancer. I've sat on the American Health Board.  
10 American Heart. I've kind of gravitated toward health and  
11 health care.

12 Forgotten Harvest is a big one for me. Last year I  
13 helped bring in Tim Allen, who is a friend of mine. I was so  
14 thrilled because we filled Max Fisher Hall, and he was  
15 fabulous. And as a friendship to me, he didn't charge us one  
16 thing. So all of the money, the hundreds of thousands of  
17 dollars we would have paid for this man, went back to  
18 Forgotten Harvest, which feeds people all over Michigan, who  
19 are homeless. There are so many people in Detroit, the east  
20 side, the west side, who just don't have food every day.

21 I belong to a group called Women of Tomorrow, where  
22 I go into Cody High School myself, where there are bars on the  
23 doors and security men walk me to the class where I mentor  
24 girls from the ninth grade to the twelfth grade. And these  
25 girls, if we don't give them breakfast and lunch, they don't

1 eat all day long. They just don't eat. Some of them don't  
2 have parents, some of them have one parent. Many of them are  
3 drug addicts. So there's so much in our city that has to be  
4 taken care of.

5 So I work, and I could go on and on.

6 **MICHAEL:** It sounds to me that you're imparting  
7 Jewish values wherever you go.

8 **FLORINE:** Absolutely. You're absolutely right,  
9 Michael. I'm bringing my Jewish values to all the non-Jewish  
10 organizations that I belong to.

11 **MICHAEL:** So tell me, who are the people over the  
12 years who have been of influence to you and have helped you  
13 move your philanthropic -- I'm most interested in  
14 philanthropic -- but your general career forward. But  
15 Jewishly who are the people that you look to who have been the  
16 ones who've been most helpful to you?

17 **FLORINE:** Well, of course with my bubbe. She was  
18 the first one. She not only helped me in my professional  
19 life, telling me a woman can do anything she wants to do.  
20 Raised her kids, did all the philanthropic work, ran a  
21 business. So she was way before her time.

22 And then after my bubbe there was my <sup>mother</sup> ~~ether~~. She was  
23 an orphan. She has no living relatives. There isn't one that  
24 I can remember that's a living relative of hers. Yet she made  
25 her way. She raised three beautiful girls, if I can be a

1 little egotistical, three women that have grown up to give  
2 back to the community, and each one of us have done something  
3 in our lives. My sister Mickey has now got her Ph.D. She's  
4 Dr. Mickey Berg, and she is a coach, and she is fabulous. And  
5 Sandy was terrific. She was terrific in what she did here at  
6 the business. And of course myself.

7           Then the first people that were really my mentors --  
8 there were no women. I was the first Jewish woman that ever  
9 really did anything in the community; okay? I have to tell  
10 you, I have to go back to philanthropy for one moment and tell  
11 you.

12           **MICHAEL:** Please.

13           **FLORINE:** I was the first Jewish woman who started a  
14 business. It was very difficult. I couldn't get a loan from  
15 a bank. I had to have \$5,000 to buy the franchise, which was  
16 much, much more money, but it was a down payment. The banks  
17 told me as a woman I could not get a bank loan. I'd have to  
18 have my husband sign for me. I said absolutely not. I went  
19 back to the parent company and convinced them that I would pay  
20 them the \$5,000 through when I was going to make the money.  
21 So I didn't need the money.

22           I was in business not even a year, and I had a  
23 little office in the Sharmaluke Institute. I gave my sister a  
24 desk and I had a desk, Sandy and I. And when one of us had to  
25 go to the bathroom, both of us had to get out of the room,

1 that's how small the room was.

2           One day I get a phone call from Sam Frankel, of  
3 blessed memory, and I say "hello". "This is Sam Frankel." I  
4 knew who Sam Frankel was. He said, "Do you know who I am?"  
5 "Yes, I know who you are." And he said, "I'd like to come and  
6 see you." He came into my office, Sam Frankel came to my  
7 office. I couldn't believe it. He said, "I'm here to get  
8 your pledge for Allied Jewish Campaign." I thought about it,  
9 and I'm always giving money, but at this point in my life I  
10 wasn't giving money. There was no money to give. I had five  
11 kids, I had a sister in a wheelchair, mother and dad to take  
12 care of, starting a business. I had no money.

13           So he said, "I'm here to get your pledge." I  
14 thought about it, and I said, "Okay, Mr. Frankel." And I'm  
15 thinking maybe \$50, maybe \$100. And before I had a chance to  
16 say anything, "I'm putting you down for \$500." I started to  
17 sweat and my heart was beating. \$500? I said, "Okay. Thank  
18 you very much." And then he said, "Thank you. It was nice  
19 meeting you." And out he went. And after he left, I thought,  
20 how am I going to get \$500 to give to the Allied Jewish  
21 Campaign? And you know what? I put two bucks away every  
22 single week. I found two bucks. And then I put a little bit  
23 more away as my business got a little bit better. And I paid  
24 that \$500. And I've paid my pledge every single year, and  
25 every year grateful to God that I've been able to increase my

1 pledges. It's really important, and it made me a better  
2 person.

3           **MICHAEL:** So who else? Sam had that influence on  
4 other people, too.

5           **FLORINE:** Right. There were no females, so my  
6 lawyer, who was Joel Jacob, of blessed memory, and Herb  
7 Selman, of blessed memory, was my accountant. I decided I'm  
8 going to the best. I went to these two guys because I heard  
9 Hertzberg, Jacob & Weingarden was the best attorneys around.  
10 I went to them, and Joel Jacob, and I convinced him I'm going  
11 to be his best female client, but I can't pay him any money.  
12 Will you be my attorney? Convinced him and he became my  
13 attorney. I did the same thing with Herbie, and I convinced  
14 him. And I became both of their best female clients in their  
15 lifetime.

16           I had to have a board, and they sat on my board.  
17 And the three of us, we went through everything. They were  
18 really my mentors.

19           **MICHAEL:** And they were really involved in the  
20 community, too.

21           **FLORINE:** Absolutely. And there were a few non-  
22 Jewish girls like Bev -- I can't think of her last name. Her  
23 husband wrote for the Free Press. She had a PR firm. You  
24 remember Bev? I think she was Catholic. We became very good  
25 friends. She helped me a little bit. And I would network as

1 much as I could because I was selling Weight Watchers.  
2 Marketing has always been very important to me, so there were  
3 a few non-Jewish people. But actually Herb and Joel were my  
4 mentors.

5           **MICHAEL:** And Jewishly, I know I see pictures of Max  
6 and David.

7           **FLORINE:** Oh, Max Fisher and David Hermelin.

8           **MICHAEL:** So who were some of those people?

9           **FLORINE:** David Hermelin was my mentor. In fact  
10 it's a wonderful story. David Hermelin and Bill Ross were  
11 born on the same day. Doreen and I are five days apart in our  
12 birthdays in February. We both had five children. My Ricky  
13 and her Marcy were born on the same day. My Ricky and her  
14 Marcy were married on the same day. We couldn't even go to  
15 our own weddings. I mean there's such a closeness. David was  
16 a very big influence in my life.

17           Max Fisher was a very big influence in my life. He  
18 would say, "What could I do for you? What could I do for  
19 you?" At one point he had gained weight, and he used to come,  
20 Max himself would come in that door, and I would teach him  
21 Weight Watchers. In those days it was a different diet, and  
22 he used to write down what he'd eat, and he'd come in every  
23 week and he'd take out his list. He'd say I had five fruits  
24 and two milks, two breads, and he would sit and talk to me and  
25 help me. He always would say, "Don't let anybody ever tell

1 you you can't do anything. Never let anybody ever tell you  
2 that."

3           When Bill died, Al Taubman was so good to me. He  
4 was always a mentor also, but he was so good to me. He would  
5 take me to dinner. He would encourage me. Be grateful. And  
6 I was always grateful for every husband that I had. Grateful  
7 that I lived with them long enough, and every one gave  
8 something to me. So Max and David and Al were absolutely  
9 great mentors to me.

10           **MICHAEL:** Wonderful. I want to shift gears again a  
11 little bit because we haven't talked about it, but I know that  
12 you're very involved in Detroit and its future. So at this  
13 stage in the Detroit kind of renaissance, whether or not  
14 you're encouraged, and where you think we're going to be going  
15 to revitalize our city.

16           **FLORINE:** I am extremely encouraged. We are  
17 revitalizing our city; we're not going to revitalize it.  
18 Chris Illich is a good friend of mine. He was the first guy  
19 -- the Illich family was the first family that went down.  
20 They bought the Fox Theater, moved their people in, renovated  
21 the Fox. <sup>It was gorgeous</sup> They have the Detroit Tigers, the Red Wings, they  
22 built the arenas. Now they're building a brand new facility.  
23 They're fabulous people. Then came Pete Karmanos. Pete and  
24 Danielle are good friends. He came down, brought all his  
25 people, built this gorgeous building. Then came Dan Gilbert.

1 And through all of them, everybody's revitalizing.

2 But there were small law firms that moved down  
3 there. My law firm, Hertzberg Jacob, was always in downtown  
4 Detroit, they never moved out of downtown Detroit. And David  
5 Page became my lawyer after Joel died. And Honigman was  
6 always downtown. It's still in downtown Detroit, even through  
7 all of the stuff.

8 Restaurants are opening up, here and there, all  
9 over. Another thing I didn't talk about. I was the first and  
10 only woman on the Detroit Renaissance as it was called at that  
11 time, and it was Alfred and Max and Alan Schwartz that started  
12 Detroit Renaissance. Detroit Renaissance was the chairmen of  
13 the boards and the CEOs of the largest companies. GM sat on  
14 the board and Don Barden sat on the board. <sup>Wagner sat on the board</sup> Everybody sat on  
15 the board. It wasn't as big a group as it is right now.

16 The group decided they needed a woman, they needed  
17 diversity, so they wanted a token woman. Me token? Ha, ha,  
18 ha. So Max and Al got me and I was the first woman on the  
19 board. I've never been a token. But now we are Business  
20 Leaders from Michigan. We've enlarged and we have all the  
21 chairmen and CEOs of all the companies. We have the Meijers  
22 that sit on our board and the Devosses that sit on our board  
23 and the La-Z-Boys and all the companies, all over: Traverse  
24 City, Grand Rapids. We all meet like every two or three  
25 months. They're very involved because they have lots of



1 contacts with politicians, and we want to make Michigan the  
2 very best. So I'm very, very involved in that.

3           Through the years I sat on a board with Mike Duggan.  
4 So I've done a lot with him and to encourage him to become  
5 mayor. I think he's one of the greatest mayors we've ever  
6 had. Just recently Danny Gilbert, who is one of our BLM --  
7 Business Leaders for Michigan -- had us at a meeting at his  
8 offices, and he took us down and we went through all the  
9 offices. And Shinola's in that building, so we went through  
10 the Shinola. And Alfred has taken us through CCS, the  
11 Creative Studies and what they've done down there.

12           I guess I'm a frustrated doctor because I'm on every  
13 hospital board. I'm an executive vice president at Henry Ford  
14 West Bloomfield. I was in the inception. They called me in.  
15 Gerard Van Wesson, who came from the Ritz Hotel, when it was  
16 nothing, and they wanted to be a healthy, healthy hospital.  
17 So I did their hospital restaurant and their room service. We  
18 don't have a French fry machine, we don't serve corned beef  
19 and hotdogs and all the rest of that stuff.

20           I sit on Wayne State's Medical School board. I'm  
21 very involved in Wayne State. I sit on their Business School  
22 board. And I sat on their education board because I think  
23 Wayne State is one of the jewels in our city. More of our  
24 Jewish people ought to come to Wayne State. It's a fabulous  
25 school and what we're doing is fabulous.

1                   And I'm also very involved with U. of M.  
2 Cardiovascular Center. Kim Eagle is a friend of mine, and he  
3 runs it. And I was there when we built the new cardiovascular  
4 center.

5                   We have some of the best health facilities. And  
6 people say, well, how can you sit on these boards? Well, I  
7 believe in all of them. One isn't enough, and they're not in  
8 competition. We all do our thing. And I think they're  
9 fabulous and what they do for people. I don't think most  
10 people understand. Especially at Ford Hospital downtown and  
11 DMC. Everyone that comes in has to be seen by us, whether  
12 they have money, don't have money, insurance, they don't have  
13 insurance. So people don't understand what our hospitals do  
14 and why they're not making a lot of money.

15                   **MICHAEL:** What's your confidence level, Florine,  
16 that the future of both the Jewish community and the general  
17 community is in good hands in the next generation? How do you  
18 feel about that?

19                   **FLORINE:** Well, I think our Jewish community has the  
20 most fabulous next generation ever, ever. In all the time  
21 I've been involved in Jewish Federation, I have never seen a  
22 next gen like we have now. They are increasing, their gifts  
23 are increasing, they're doing things. I think what they're  
24 doing is solidifying being Jewish and marrying Jewish people  
25 and enriching our Jewish community, which I think is very

1 important. A lot of people have gotten away. I know our  
2 synagogues aren't as filled as they should be, and I feel so  
3 bad because it's such an important part. You know, whether  
4 you're religious and keep kosher or not, that's not important.  
5 But the traditions and being Jewish and feeling proud of it is  
6 so very important. So I think that we are growing up our new  
7 leaders in Federation. There's no doubt in my mind.

8 In Detroit, well, I think our hospitals are. They  
9 have succession planning. Nancy <sup>Schlichting</sup> ~~Schlicton~~ is going to be  
10 stepping down soon. she has a great guy. We just got a new  
11 president at Wayne State, Dr. Roy Wilson. We've got a new  
12 president, Dr. <sup>MARK</sup> ~~Herschel~~ Schlissel at University of Michigan.  
13 And I think people are more conscious, I know I'm very  
14 conscious of succession planning. It's very important.

15 I mean what would happen if, God forbid, Bill Ford  
16 would break his legs or Joe Milani of DMC or whoever else, who  
17 would be his successor? So I think people are very interested  
18 in succession planning.

19 We are the Motor City, and our companies are GM,  
20 Ford and Chrysler, and will be on forever and ever and ever.

21 **MICHAEL:** So the leaders are there.

22 **FLORINE:** Absolutely.

23 **MICHAEL:** But we have to do our job to train them.

24 **FLORINE:** Absolutely. And we have a Jewish  
25 president at Ford now. We have to train the next gen to take

1 over for us. It's very important. That's a way of giving  
2 back. That's absolutely a way of giving back.

3           **MICHAEL:** So we're finished, except I wanted to give  
4 you the chance to articulate anything that we may have missed,  
5 and any thoughts that you may have had to conclude this with  
6 Florine Mark's thoughts.

7           **FLORINE:** Well, first of all, Michael, I am so  
8 honored that the Jewish community and you guys thought enough  
9 of me to have me be your person that will be in the archives  
10 for many, many years.

11           **MICHAEL:** Forever.

12           **FLORINE:** Right. And I think that women -- we never  
13 talk much about women -- women are right today coming more  
14 into their own. We're still not where we should be, although  
15 we can vote. Did you know we can vote? But I think that  
16 human beings, not just women, have to really believe that they  
17 can do what they want to do. And you can't be thin-skinned  
18 and listen to the nay-sayers, who say, oh, you know, this  
19 can't be done and this can't be done.

20           I do a remarkable one-woman show because for years  
21 Joe McCarthy, J.P., used to have me on his show. I was the  
22 only woman. I said, but what about the other women that are  
23 here? You've got great women in Detroit. Well, you know, it  
24 was always sports men and entertainers and all the rest. So I  
25 started a show, it was on WNIC, every Sunday, and it's called

1 Remarkable Women, and I interview for a half hour with no  
2 commercials women from all over, mostly Michigan, but from all  
3 over the country that are doing something. They don't have to  
4 be affluent or whatever. They just have to be women that are  
5 doing something. And the whole purpose of the show is that if  
6 these women can do it, so can you, sitting, listening out  
7 there. It's going to give you hope. Because I think hope is  
8 so very important that we have to give each other.

9 I think my mission in life right now is to get  
10 Michigan to be the healthiest and thinnest, or less fattest  
11 state in union. We are the fattest state in the union and the  
12 least healthiest state in the union. I just want everyone to  
13 just lose ten pounds. I don't care how you do it. You can go  
14 to a nutritionist, you can go to Jenny Craig, you can go  
15 anyplace. I'd like to think you'd come to Weight Watchers  
16 because it's the easiest. <sup>It's the simplest.</sup> I overdosed on diet pills and I  
17 ended in Sinai Hospital, and my family doctor said, if you  
18 ever again take an amphetamine or any one of these diet pills,  
19 I'm not going to be responsible for your life. I mean my  
20 heart was beating so fast it was terrible. I was in  
21 arrhythmia, it was horrible. From one diet pill given to me  
22 by a diet doctor.

23 So Weight Watchers, you sign no contracts and it's  
24 easy food. It's very easy to do. It's a lot of fun. You  
25 will change the way you think about food, and that's what my

1 mission is: to change people's relationship with food and  
2 make them healthier. Because I know if you can succeed in  
3 taking off some weight, which you felt you never could succeed  
4 at before -- what we sell is self-respect -- that you will  
5 have more self-respect. And on top of it, your chances of  
6 getting cancer and stroke and diabetes and all the rest will  
7 be lessened.

8           So that's really what my non-Jewish and Jewish  
9 ambition is for the rest of my life, is to just enrich  
10 Michigan and make sure it's the healthiest and most wonderful  
11 state, and make sure that anything that I can possibly do, of  
12 course for the JCC, which I will, but all Jewish communities,  
13 that we just keep this community going.

14           When I go to JFNA and I hear other communities and  
15 what they raise -- they'll talk to me -- and we're such a  
16 small community. I think Las Vegas has more Jews than we do.

17           **MICHAEL:** Right.

18           **FLORINE:** And I think this year we raised \$31  
19 million plus a challenge fund. People look at me and say how  
20 could you do this? And I say because we have very kind-  
21 hearted, wonderful people, and wonderful people that ask,  
22 wonderful people that are on the campaigns and people that are  
23 really willing to give their time and energy, and I think  
24 that's important. Right now Doug Bloom just got through with  
25 a great presidency at Federation and now it's Larry Wolf.

1 He's so very dedicated. And that's really important. *Sachse*  
2 And with all these people, the Todd Saxes *SP* and the  
3 Matt Lesters and all these wonderful people that we have in  
4 Jewish philanthropy, we're only going to continue on being the  
5 best. And I hope that we enrich, because some day our city is  
6 revitalized, that all these kids that have run away to  
7 Chicago, New York and LA will start coming back, and that we  
8 have 150,000 Jews to be part of our Jewish Federation instead  
9 of the 65,000.

10 **MICHAEL:** Well, for the first time in my life I  
11 think we have a shot at -- I don't know about 150 -- but the  
12 kids are moving back.

13 **FLORINE:** I agree.

14 **MICHAEL:** And that's in great measure to good works  
15 that you do, Florine. So thank you very much on behalf of the  
16 Archives and the Federation.

17 **FLORINE:** Thank you for this Honor. Thank you.