

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Alan Nachman  
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Stanley Meretsky  
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5 SUBJECT MATTER: Personal and Family History,  
6 Jewish Communal Involvement and  
7 Leadership Roles

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9 MR. MERETSKY: Today is July 28, 2005. This is Stan  
10 Meretsky and with Lauren Sherman, our videographer, we have  
11 the pleasure of interviewing Alan Nachman.

12 Alan, we have your signed approval to do this  
13 interview, but I also need your permission on camera to  
14 conduct this oral history which will be used in the future for  
15 educational and historical research. Is this okay with you?

16 MR. NACHMAN: Yes.

17 MR. MERETSKY: Thank you.

18 Let's start at the beginning. Where were you born?

19 MR. NACHMAN: Detroit, Michigan.

20 MR. MERETSKY: Tell me about your early history,  
21 your life, your family, growing up.

22 MR. NACHMAN: I'll start with my parents. My dad  
23 came from Poland in 1929. Met my mother in '37. She's from  
24 Toronto, Canada. They met each other at a B'nai B'rith Yom  
25 Kippur night dance in Detroit. She was visiting Detroit.

1 They got married, I was born in '38, a year later.

2 We lived for a year or two on Fairfield and Fenkell.  
3 My dad was a carpenter/builder and he built a home on Kentucky  
4 Street, which was a block away from Mumford High School in the  
5 northwest area of Detroit. That whole area then burgeoned  
6 into a large Jewish community. He built the house in '40 or  
7 '41, just at the beginning of the war.

8 MR. MERETSKY: So you were out in the northwest area  
9 long before it became a Jewish area.

10 MR. NACHMAN: At its beginning stage when the Jews  
11 were just starting to move in there.

12 MR. MERETSKY: Were your folks very Jewishly  
13 oriented?

14 MR. NACHMAN: My dad came from an Orthodox family in  
15 Poland. When I began to recognize what our religion was, we  
16 were basically Conservative Jews. My dad was one of the  
17 founders of what was then known as the Northwest Hebrew  
18 Congregation which later became Adat Shalom Synagogue. It was  
19 started in 1945 right after the war. Rabbi Segal, who was our  
20 first rabbi, had been a Jewish chaplain in the war. My dad  
21 felt comfortable following tradition, not necessarily in the  
22 Orthodox sense, but certainly not in the Reform sense. So he  
23 was a Conservative Jew.

24 When the synagogue started, he became active and  
25 that's where I was schooled. Hebrew Schools eventually had a

1 branch at the Northwest Hebrew Congregation on Curtis and  
2 Livernois, and that's where I got my Hebrew education.

3 **MR. MERETSKY:** Interesting that you went right on  
4 and got very involved with Jewish education.

5 **MR. NACHMAN:** Going to Post Intermediate School, why  
6 I don't know but I wanted to get involved in AZA, and at that  
7 point AZA was very popular. There were no chapters available  
8 to join, they were all filled. A few friends and myself  
9 started a new chapter called Brandeis AZA. It's still around.

10 I was active in BBYO through high school. When I  
11 went to the University of Michigan for undergrad in '56, I got  
12 active in the neighborhood Hillel and quite active in Hillel  
13 on campus. Then I went to law school from '60 to '63 at the  
14 University of Michigan and didn't have much time other than to  
15 study the law, but when I came back a year or two later, I got  
16 involved in the Junior Division of the Federation, which is  
17 now the Young Adult Division and eventually became president  
18 in '69.

19 So I've had a continuity of Jewish involvement for a  
20 long period of time. I think a lot of it is not really  
21 related to my dad because my dad wasn't a joiner. He gave his  
22 carpentry services to the synagogue, that type of thing, but  
23 he wasn't a joiner. But my mother was very active in the  
24 sisterhood of our congregation. That might have been my role  
25 model to see the fact that you donate your time and you're

1 involved and help support a synagogue, non-profit, whatever.  
2 I've done that for my whole life, really.

3 MR. MERETSKY: You know, reading your biography is  
4 just amazing to see how you've moved through all the  
5 organizations and all that you've accomplished, you should be  
6 very proud of yourself.

7 MR. NACHMAN: I don't know how much I've  
8 accomplished but I've been a member of a lot of organizations.

9 MR. MERETSKY: So you went elementary school where?

10 MR. NACHMAN: Bagley Elementary, which walking from  
11 my house to the synagogue you had to go right by Bagley, which  
12 is on Curtis. We'd walk from Kentucky and Curtis to the  
13 synagogue, which is close to Livernois, and half way was  
14 Bagley. That's where my elementary school is and a lot of the  
15 people that I know in the Detroit area now all schooled at  
16 Bagley. Bagley and Hampton were the two schools that were the  
17 cradles of most of the Jewish families at that time as far as  
18 where their kids were schooled. And Mumford became the big  
19 place that everyone still remembers, I think. Post was also a  
20 school I went to as an intermediate for a couple of years.  
21 The days at Mumford were the glory years. Graduating 400, 500  
22 kids, 95 percent of them Jewish, 94 percent of them going to  
23 colleges. It was a great time.

24 MR. MERETSKY: It's interesting to see how you start  
25 and follow all the way through. Who were some of your mentors

1 and friends in high school?

2           **MR. NACHMAN:** The first mentor was really two people  
3 in BBYO who were the professionals that ran BBYO. Harry  
4 Mervis and Paul Deutchburger (ph. sp.). These two were the  
5 professionals assigned to run AZA and BBG. I learned a lot  
6 from them, how to organize a meeting, Robert's Rules of Order,  
7 all these things. What did we know in the eighth grade about  
8 how to run a parliamentary style meeting, but I got used to  
9 going to meetings back in AZA.

10           After that I don't think I had any mentors. There  
11 were a lot of us that had moved out of the city. There are a  
12 few still living here. None are really my close friends now.  
13 The first mentors I really came to was when I got involved  
14 here at the Federation with Harlene Appleman's mother-in-law,  
15 who was then the professional who oversaw the Junior Division  
16 back in '65-'66. Lillian Bernstein was the professional that  
17 oversaw the Junior Division amongst other things, and that's  
18 where I really learned a little more of the professional  
19 aspects of meetings and agendas, how you handle yourself at  
20 meetings and how you persuade people, all the things that you  
21 have to do to run an agenda and get your point across and have  
22 it accepted in the spirit in which it was intended.

23           **MR. MERETSKY:** Let's talk about you were the winner  
24 of both the Boesky and the Wetsman awards.

25           **MR. NACHMAN:** The Boesky Award was supplanted by the

1 Florine Mark when Mr. Boesky became somewhat notorious on Wall  
2 Street. He started this award in memory of his father. When  
3 the son, Ivan Boesky got into financial difficulties, his name  
4 was sort of taken off the award and it became the Mark Family  
5 Award. People don't know now what the Boesky was but it's the  
6 same as the Mark Award. That was for people showing some  
7 leadership abilities in the Young Adult Division. A few years  
8 later I got the Wetsman award for deciding to stay on at  
9 Federation, perhaps chairing a few more committees doing a few  
10 more things.

11 **MR. MERETSKY:** Well, I think you're being very  
12 modest. What were some of those committees that you chaired?  
13 Let's start with the Boesky Award.

14 **MR. NACHMAN:** Well, I presume I got the Boesky Award  
15 shortly after I was the president of the Junior Division. As  
16 long as you did a fair job, it was sort of assumed you would  
17 get the award.

18 **MR. MERETSKY:** You're being very modest.

19 **MR. NACHMAN:** Just about that time I got involved in  
20 the Young Leadership Cabinet of the United Jewish Appeal,  
21 which is part of the national organization of UJA. We took  
22 trips to Israel, brought others with us and turned them on to  
23 Israel.

24 **MR. MERETSKY:** When was your first trip to Israel?

25 **MR. NACHMAN:** In 1961 while I was going to law

1 school. I went there on my own as part of a summer trip to  
2 Europe. I had some family there that I visited. The first  
3 trip through Federation was in '71. It was a couples mission,  
4 a Young Leadership mission. My wife and I and couples from  
5 around the country who were around our age went there for  
6 about two weeks. There was a rabbi active in the overall UJA  
7 of the United States. I can't remember his last name now, but  
8 he was assigned to get young people like myself active, who  
9 were showing some activity in our local area active on a  
10 national level. He was a very charismatic guy. If there was  
11 ever a guy as a pied piper for young Jewish people it was he.  
12 He was an amazing lecturer, knew all the answers, wonderful  
13 person to be with and very stimulating. That trip to Israel  
14 really turned me on.

15 I went again in '74 on Young Leadership Mission.  
16 That one with my wife and me was when I got captured by the  
17 Egyptians.

18 MR. MERETSKY: Yeah, I want to hear about that.

19 MR. NACHMAN: I'm going from point to point.

20 MR. MERETSKY: That's fine.

21 MR. NACHMAN: One of the few interesting things I've  
22 done in my life is getting captured by the Egyptians. There  
23 were probably 30 or 40 couples that were in Israel together  
24 for two weeks in the summer on this UJA Young Leadership  
25 Mission. The day that we decided to go down to see the Suez

1 Canal, and this was in February of '74, that was when the  
2 disengagement -- was right after the Six Day War in '73. The  
3 Suez Canal was in Israeli territory but there was some  
4 undisputed area still. They separated the men from the women  
5 on this trip. The women went to Hadassah Hospital, the men  
6 were flown on an Israeli Air Force plane to Refedem (ph.  
7 sp.), which is now a land that we don't own anymore. It was  
8 in the Sinai. It was an air force base that the Israelis  
9 built in the Sinai when they won the territory from the  
10 Egyptians. They ended up giving it back in '74 when peace was  
11 made with Egypt.

12 We flew down there, we got on a bus, and the bus  
13 starts going towards the Suez Canal, maybe 15, 20 miles away.  
14 We got stuck in the road. There had been a sand storm and we  
15 had to take shovels out of the bus and shovel the road clean  
16 so we could continue on the road. As we were doing it, we saw  
17 over a small sand dune a half track coming towards us with a  
18 red flag with a white crescent. It turned out to be Egyptian  
19 soldiers claiming that we were in Egyptian territory.

20 They forced us to get on the bus, blindfolded us,  
21 took all the film out of our cameras, told the bus driver to  
22 sit in the back. The Egyptian captain took control of the  
23 bus, drove us down the road over a pontoon bridge over the  
24 Suez Canal. We ended up in Ismalia, which is an Egyptian  
25 city. We were taken to the courthouse, fed and then for 24



1 hours each of us were interrogated by Egyptian army  
2 interrogators as to what we'd seen, what kind of planes, what  
3 kind of armament, why were we there, were we spies, et cetera.  
4 None of us got hurt except the naval air force guy who was on  
5 the plane who decided to take our tour. He didn't stay with  
6 the plane. Because he was military they roughed him up pretty  
7 good.

8           Twenty-four hours later they put us back on a bus,  
9 drove us back over the bridge to Ismalia, we got in a plane  
10 and flew home. Home was Tel Aviv. Every news service in the  
11 world was waiting for us at the hotel and interviewing us  
12 about what happened. We made Time Magazine.

13           Meanwhile, the women the night before were told the  
14 husbands were not going to come back because they were  
15 captured, none of them believed it. They thought it was a  
16 trick or whatever. We were none of the worse for wear. It  
17 was a tough 24 hours, but one thing I've got a lot of talking  
18 out of it. I've told that story for years. I tell that story  
19 every night at Passover. Needless to say we bonded with those  
20 guys, people I never really knew until that trip around the  
21 country, guys our age.

22           An interesting piece of information is that Rabbi  
23 Fred from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, was on that trip and we got  
24 to know him very well. Turns out years later this is the  
25 rabbi that took up with one of his congregants and then ended

1 up killing his wife. You may have read about it in the paper.  
2 This happened just a few years ago. 2004 he was finally  
3 sentenced. We went to Yad Vashem with him, cried with him as  
4 we said the prayers and everything, and here this guy turns  
5 out later to have an affair with a congregant and is charged  
6 and found guilty of killing his wife. That was one of the  
7 soft under bellies of that trip.

8           **MR. MERETSKY:** Who were some of the other people in  
9 the group with you?

10           **MR. NACHMAN:** The other person from Detroit was  
11 Irwin Alterman, who's been a good friend for many years, who's  
12 now president of the Jewish Community Center. He was the only  
13 other Detroiter on that trip. His wife is now deceased. If I  
14 saw a list, I'd remember all the names, I can't remember them  
15 now. People from all over the country.

16           **MR. MERETSKY:** How did your wife take it when you  
17 were captured?

18           **MR. NACHMAN:** She didn't get upset at all because  
19 she knew that I would make the best of it. Everyone had the  
20 sense that the Egyptians were not going to hurt Americans.  
21 That was the underlying premise I had and my thought process  
22 and I think the wives had, too. I'm sure the wives were  
23 upset, but if you asked my wife, I'm sure she would say, I  
24 really wasn't worried that something would happen to Al, he'd  
25 find some way out of it.

1           **MR. MERETSKY:** Tell me how you met your wife. Did  
2 you meet her through BBYO?

3           **MR. NACHMAN:** No. I used to live in Lafayette Park  
4 in the mid to late '60s. I lived in the Lafayette Towers. A  
5 woman lived there who had been my wife's counselor at a Jewish  
6 camp around the area and had invited my wife down to a party  
7 that I was attending. That's how we met each other. Turned  
8 out my wife had gone to Bagley School many years later. She's  
9 eight and a half years younger than I am. She'd gone to  
10 Mumford. We were never there at the same time because of the  
11 age difference.

12           **MR. MERETSKY:** Very interesting. What about the  
13 Wetsman Award, what was that won for?

14           **MR. NACHMAN:** I think what it is meant to do is  
15 award young people who have demonstrated some level of  
16 leadership in the community, let them know that the community  
17 thinks positively about people that continue on to show  
18 leadership let's say after the Junior Division. It's a pat on  
19 the back saying thank you for what you've done and we want to  
20 recognize you. I guess in a way a pat on the back is nice  
21 every once in a while, let you know you're recognized. I  
22 don't know that that would have made any difference whether  
23 I'd have continued on with my involvement with Federation.

24           **MR. MERETSKY:** Going through your background  
25 information it seems one of the key areas you've been involved

1 with is education, various committees and whatnot. Through  
2 the course of the years with the changes and how kids receive  
3 Jewish education in this community, I'd like to hear some of  
4 your thoughts on that and your various committee involvements.

5           **MR. NACHMAN:** I've been involved in allocation  
6 committees of the Federation, which they allocated monies to  
7 Jewish education, whether it be day schools, Yeshiva, United  
8 Hebrew Schools. The community realized 10, 15 years ago that  
9 we could not, as we had for many years, continue to support  
10 United Hebrew Schools. These were schools that were lodged  
11 within synagogues. And basically somewhat run by an amalgam  
12 of talent from the synagogue as well as the United Hebrew  
13 Schools which was then an agency of the Federation. We  
14 thought it would be better if we gave the money directly to  
15 the synagogues and let them run their own schools. One of the  
16 most difficult things I did.

17           So I had, for lack of a better term, put out of  
18 business United Hebrew Schools. That wasn't accepted well by  
19 some of the teachers, wasn't accepted by the community, but  
20 those of us at Federation felt strongly that synagogue based  
21 education run by the synagogue was probably more effective  
22 than if run by the central agency, in this case being the  
23 United Hebrew Schools as an agency of the Federation.

24           Eventually we phased out the support to each of the  
25 synagogues to run their school but instead changed that to a

1 scholarship for those kids that would go to each of the  
2 synagogue or temple schools that could not necessarily afford,  
3 we'd give scholarships. I think that's still what's done now.

4 I guess my philosophy is that if you don't have an  
5 educated Jewish populous, we'll eventually whither away. Even  
6 if you help out the Jewish agencies by raising funds for the  
7 Allied Jewish Campaign, which is what it was then called, now  
8 it's called the Annual Campaign. If you go to people who have  
9 no knowledge of their Judaism or very little knowledge, they  
10 won't necessarily respond. How do Jews take care of other  
11 Jews? How do you do it if you're not going to get funding  
12 from the Jews that care? You have to care right here. You  
13 have to care in the pit of your stomach and in your heart.  
14 Part of it is learning about your heritage, learning about  
15 your history, knowing a little bit about your Hebrew roots,  
16 going to Israel, all of which Jewish education supports and  
17 it's important to support Jewish education.

18 We're grappling currently as we speak with one  
19 educational institution that can't meet its budget or pay its  
20 teachers on a monthly basis, have become perilously close to  
21 having payless paydays. We're grappling with that as we  
22 speak. Jewish education is always on the front burner. It's  
23 our highest priority in the community. A lot of our money  
24 goes to Jewish education. Doesn't seem to be enough. If  
25 there's one mantra that's been heard over the years from the

1 '60s to 2005 it's we never quite have enough to do everything  
2 that we have to do. The Jewish agenda is a large and varied  
3 one. We work hard on our campaign every year. I just left a  
4 meeting where we talked about the goal for our 2005-2006  
5 campaign and how it has to increase from the last year's goal  
6 which was \$35 million. We're going to hopefully raise a  
7 little more. A lot of money goes to education. We all feel  
8 strongly about that as a top priority.

9 We're always grappling with the priorities. You  
10 have the Home for Aged, Jewish Vocational Service, Jewish  
11 Family Service, people out of work coming to Jewish Family  
12 Service and burdening the social workers way beyond their  
13 capacity. You have to run your schools. You have a finite  
14 budget of dollars you raise by the campaign. How do you  
15 allocate that?

16 A very difficult decision was made a few years ago,  
17 we used to fund Israel 53, 54 percent, local agencies maybe  
18 46, 47. We took some millions of dollars out of Israel  
19 support and threw it into our local needs. It's maybe 51-49.  
20 There's those in the community that don't agree with it. I  
21 could mention names of people who are so supportive of Israel  
22 that say, without a strong Israel, you can't have a strong  
23 Detroit, you can't have a strong Jewish community here.  
24 Israel is paramount. Others say Israel can take care of  
25 itself. It's got high tech industry, et cetera. There's not

1 an outgoing war anymore, they certainly have a terrorist war  
2 going on. We really have to take care of our own. It's that  
3 constant battle. Every time we allocate dollars in May or  
4 June of every year there's different echelons of people that  
5 will argue both ways.

6 MR. MERETSKY: Which came first, the chicken or the  
7 egg. If you have educated Jewish people here, they'll help to  
8 support Israel.

9 MR. NACHMAN: And that debate will continue to go  
10 on. There's no answer.

11 MR. MERETSKY: Forever.

12 MR. NACHMAN: As long as they're around to debate  
13 it, that's good.

14 MR. MERETSKY: You've been involved with a lot of  
15 other groups in the Jewish community. Talk about some of the  
16 other things.

17 MR. NACHMAN: Until the late '70s all of my  
18 volunteer time was really Jewish community related. I've been  
19 an officer of my synagogue for many, many years.

20 MR. MERETSKY: Which one?

21 MR. NACHMAN: Adat Shalom. It occurred to me it's  
22 really important to give something back to the secular  
23 community, and my choice basically for the reason that United  
24 Way gave money to our Jewish agencies, I felt it was important  
25 for Jews to show a level of activity in the United Way. So I

1 got active in that and got to chairing a budgeting panel that  
2 budget a number of the United Way agencies, reviewed their  
3 budgets, allocated monies to them. I was active for maybe six  
4 or seven years at the United Way, and then as I got more  
5 active in the Federation, I sort of phased out of that.

6 I'm currently quite active in the Hospice of  
7 Michigan. It's my current secular foray, so to speak, and I'm  
8 involved the investment committee, the finance committee of  
9 Hospice and I take that seriously. It's important for the  
10 general community. The reason I'm involved with hospice is  
11 it's the only non-profit hospice around that will take anyone  
12 who needs the help and not turn away because they can't pay  
13 for hospice needs. I think that's important.

14 In a year and a half when I'm done with my  
15 Foundation presidency I then have a decision to make, where am  
16 I going to put my volunteer time. Right now I'm putting in  
17 probably a good 20 hours a week in my presidency of the  
18 Foundation. When you're done, you're done. Someone else  
19 takes over and you're old news. I'm already thinking about  
20 what do I want to do in a year and a half from now, whether  
21 for the secular or Jewish community. I haven't quite figured  
22 it out, but I have some time.

23 **MR. MERETSKY:** I heard that one of your hobbies is  
24 wood working. When you mentioned your dad being a carpenter,  
25 was that kind of an outgrowth of that?



1           **MR. NACHMAN:** My dad taught me, not an outward  
2 lesson but just an intuitive thing, the beauty and grains of  
3 wood. It's natural art. Just gorgeous. I just resonate with  
4 that. My dad passed away back in the mid '60s, younger than I  
5 am now. But in the '80s I got exposed to some galleries that  
6 were selling vessels made out of turned wood. Beautiful  
7 vessels made out of mahogany, cocoa bolo and beautiful exotic  
8 woods. I started buying some of these vessels to start a  
9 collection. Then at a certain point I decided I'd like to  
10 learn how to do it, so I went down to a well known vessel  
11 turner down in Kentucky, in the boonies of Kentucky, and took  
12 lessons with him for three or four days in his shop. Came  
13 back, bought a lathe, put it in my basement and started making  
14 wood vessels.

15           We had a lot of fun a couple years ago. At the  
16 Jewish Community Center we had a show of all my vessels. Some  
17 of the ones I've made and more importantly some of the 300  
18 that I've collected.

19           **MR. MERETSKY:** Wow, that's quite a collection.

20           **MR. NACHMAN:** It was really well received. I felt  
21 good because I wanted to expose people in the community to a  
22 form of art that maybe they didn't know about. We had a lot  
23 of fun with it. I was there for a month, month and a half. A  
24 couple other members of the community also collected and had  
25 their wood vessels.

1           Last thing I made on my lathe was when my daughter  
2 got married in December I made her a Kiddish cup out of wood.  
3 Since that time I've been so busy with Foundation I haven't  
4 even gone back to my shop. Probably some time in the next few  
5 months when the weather gets cooler again.

6           **MR. MERETSKY:** Is your art collection mostly wood  
7 vessels?

8           **MR. NACHMAN:** It's a vessel collection. Glass,  
9 ceramic pieces, a lot of ceramic pieces, woven baskets, and  
10 mostly wood bowls in artful designs. There are people around  
11 the world that do that. The latest bowls I collected were  
12 carved not really turned on a lathe but carved by people in  
13 Australia. They're wonderful with the tactile sense of the  
14 wood. It gives me a lot of fun and good feelings to play with  
15 wood and collecting it and to turn it, to look at it and show  
16 it to people.

17           Tomorrow I've got the executive staff of Federation  
18 Foundation is coming to my home and we're going to spend an  
19 afternoon just to lay back and shmooze a little bit,  
20 socialize. I'm sure some of those people haven't seen the  
21 collection. I'm excited to show it to them.

22           **MR. MERETSKY:** I've heard it's very beautiful.

23           **MR. NACHMAN:** Thank you.

24           **MR. MERETSKY:** As an attorney you must still be very  
25 involved with your career. That's a great way to relax.

1           **MR. NACHMAN:** Coming back from a Federation meeting  
2 also I need a little relaxation. Actually my law practice I'm  
3 cutting it back. I probably practice half time now. My  
4 volunteer activities are the other half time. I also do a lot  
5 of world travel with my wife. We just came back from Berlin,  
6 Barcelona. Every place we go we try to find the Jewish piece  
7 of the city. In Berlin we went to the Jewish museum which was  
8 opened a few years ago, a Jewish music festival at a synagogue  
9 there. We take our Jewishness with us when we travel. Even  
10 in India. In New Delhi, 12 million people, and we sought out  
11 a Jewish service at a shul. There's only one shul left.  
12 There were only 25 or 30 people there for a service.

13           **MR. MERETSKY:** Fascinating.

14           **MR. NACHMAN:** Fascinating and interesting in the  
15 sense. Bombay has a fair Jewish population. But here 12  
16 million in New Delhi where they used to be a lot of  
17 synagogues, there's one left that meagerly has a minyan once a  
18 week. Sign of the times I guess.

19           **MR. MERETSKY:** Are your children involved in the  
20 Jewish community and your wife?

21           **MR. NACHMAN:** Traditionally after bringing up our  
22 kids, who are now 28 and 31, my wife went back to school and  
23 got a masters in psychology. She's a psychologist and quite  
24 actively practices that. She's currently the chairperson for  
25 Stewardship which is overseeing those people who have given

1 major gifts to our millennium fund supporting education,  
2 supporting the aged. It's important that there be a  
3 Federation representative who meets with them, talks with  
4 them, let's them know how their money is being used. Makes  
5 them feel good that their money is being put to good use.  
6 It's called Stewardship and she's overseeing that. She really  
7 enjoys that opportunity.

8 My son David lives in Dallas. He's not active in  
9 Jewish things at this time. When he settles down with a  
10 family, he may be but he's still foot loose and fancy free as  
11 a single 28 year old.

12 My daughter Ilana is 31. She got married in  
13 December. She's quite active in APAC. Not active in the  
14 Young Adult Division. She sees herself as a little different  
15 than the typical young adult active person. She's got a mind  
16 of her own, very independent. She supports Israel and she's  
17 gone with me to conferences. I think she'll get more actively  
18 involved as she gets a family together.

19 **MR. MERETSKY:** What do you feel has been your  
20 greatest accomplishment in your profession and in the Jewish  
21 community?

22 **MR. NACHMAN:** I can't pick out one accomplishment in  
23 my law practice. I'm a real estate attorney. It's not like a  
24 litigator where you have one major case that hit the papers.  
25 I represent builders, developers, investors in real estate.

1 It may take a month, it may take six months to represent them  
2 in buying or selling or financing or developing something.  
3 Then I move on to something else.

4 MR. MERETSKY: You teach.

5 MR. NACHMAN: I did some teaching at Wayne when I  
6 got out law school. Taught legal research. I think one  
7 wonderful thing that came out of the law practice is the long  
8 established relationships I've had with my clients. They tend  
9 to come back over and over. You go to their weddings, they  
10 come to your bar mitzvahs, whatever. I've been in two law  
11 firms, one from getting out of law school until '87. I became  
12 a partner in the firm of Hyman, Gerwin, Nachman, Friedman &  
13 Winkleman. That firm disbanded in '87. An active Jewish  
14 firm. I went to the Butzel Long firm where I am now. The  
15 camaraderie of practicing with the guys at each firm. At the  
16 Butzel Long, which when I joined had fewer Jews than it does  
17 today, but they're still in the minority there. We've had a  
18 convivial and supportive atmosphere in both law firms.

19 What is my more important thing in Federation? I  
20 think from '65 to '67 when I got involved in the Junior  
21 Division through until a couple years ago I chaired almost  
22 every chairmanship you could have and every allocation  
23 division. Did a lot of different things. I can't pull out  
24 one and say I did the best job in the world. What I was  
25 aiming for was the chance to be a president of either the

1 Foundation or the Federation. I'm the president of  
2 Foundation. I think because I was so active on the Federation  
3 side, which is the agency side and allocation side and  
4 programming side, and then coming into the Foundation, which  
5 is the asset holding arm and investment arm of our Jewish  
6 community, I think I've been able to put my experience in both  
7 of them together. I feel like I'm doing a fair job as  
8 president. My view is a 360 degree view, not just the assets  
9 and dollars of the foundation and investing endowments, but  
10 everything we do as a Foundation to support our agencies and  
11 all the programs. It's a mixture of things. I'd like to  
12 think I'm doing a fair job.

13 I don't know that anyone walks away and says I've  
14 been the best president or the worst president. Every  
15 generation is like a link. If you pick up where the last  
16 person left off and you do a fair job and preserve that  
17 organization and let it continue a little. We're already in  
18 the process of nominating my successor and hopefully he'll  
19 pick up where I left off. As long as the chain doesn't break  
20 and everyone does their piece to keep the Jewish community  
21 stable, I feel good about it. I don't have a heavy duty ego.  
22 I just want to support the community and make sure it sustains  
23 itself. I think so far we are.

24 **MR. MERETSKY:** Before every interview I do a little  
25 research, read, talk to people, ask questions. What I learned

1 about you is you're kind of the quiet, you're there, doing a  
2 great job, but you're there quietly. Your thought processes,  
3 the points that you add are always some of the very best that  
4 are ever put on the table.

5           **MR. NACHMAN:** When you've been around for years,  
6 there's nothing new under the sun. Maybe some of my thoughts  
7 are bringing up things that I've heard of or done in the past.  
8 You can't help, you have things you've learned and get more  
9 and more over the years. I don't believe that being loud and  
10 boisterous is going to get you anywhere. Hopefully I'm the  
11 voice of reason.

12           I just came from a weekly presidents meeting of the  
13 Foundation and Federation presidents. Very vociferous debate  
14 today about a major communal issue. Peter and I looked at it  
15 a little different way but we respected each other. I don't  
16 know that we came up with an answer right now, but sometimes  
17 one of us or the other is the loyal opposition and it takes  
18 two sides, and hopefully from his position and my position,  
19 we'll come up with a position that makes sense for the  
20 community. But where I'm coming from is do your job, stable,  
21 don't have any big ups and downs, just roll the endowments,  
22 roll the campaign, make some sound decisions and keep the  
23 Federation here for the future. That's what I'm doing.

24           **MR. MERETSKY:** I think you're doing a great job of  
25 it.

1           **MR. NACHMAN:** Thanks.

2           **MR. MERETSKY:** Is there anything you'd like to add,  
3 other thoughts, something for the future generation.

4           **MR. NACHMAN:** I'll add one more thing. Every  
5 succeeding generation is less linked and less knowledgeable of  
6 what the past has been. I remember a little bit about the  
7 Holocaust, the next generation remembers less and the next  
8 generation remembers less. We shouldn't necessarily be bound  
9 to our Jewish future based on what the Holocaust taught us but  
10 it did teach us a major lesson. We have to take care of  
11 ourselves. No one else will take care of us unless we take  
12 care of ourselves. As I see the numbers of givers to our  
13 campaign getting a little less every year, although campaign  
14 numbers are still stable, but fewer and fewer people are  
15 giving, it's an indication to me that we maybe have to do a  
16 better job in Jewish education, a better job in letting people  
17 know we have an organized Jewish community that takes care of  
18 those who can't take care of themselves and to continue with  
19 our campaign. I think it's going to be a bigger challenge as  
20 years go on. All the more reason to have vigorous Jewish  
21 education, all the more reason to keep up our Jewish  
22 educational institutions, the Hillel day schools, the new  
23 Jewish academy, whatever.

24           The other thing I wanted to mention is sort of  
25 interesting to me. My wife's family, the Orley family in



1 Detroit, we just realized there's a confluence of things  
2 happening just about this time, my brother-in-law, Larry Lax,  
3 who's married to my sister-in-law Melissa, this year is  
4 chairman of the annual campaign. I'm president of the  
5 Foundation. My other brother-in-law, Rob Orley, is chairing  
6 the Fisher Mission to Israel coming up this year. He was  
7 president of Hillel Day School. My other brother-in-law, Greg  
8 Orley, just became president a few weeks ago of Shaarey  
9 Congregation of Shaarey Zedek. We look and say isn't it  
10 interesting that in this family I married into, all of us in  
11 our upbringing felt the need to be involved Jewishly and here  
12 in one fairly good size family we're all actively involved and  
13 have major positions in the community. We feel good about it.

14 MR. MERETSKY: Do you have any siblings?

15 MR. NACHMAN: I have two sisters. The oldest -- a  
16 couple years younger than me -- is Delores <sup>CIKUREL</sup> Kreal. She at one  
17 point was married to a Venezuelan and lived in Venezuela for  
18 many years. She now lives here. She has two children, one is  
19 getting married out in California, who is actively Jewish and  
20 a daughter who is marginally Jewish at this point, Nora.

21 And I have another sister, Linda Goodwin, who's  
22 very, very active in our congregation, Adat Shalom. She has  
23 two children, David, who just graduated from Michigan Law  
24 School, moving to New York, active Jewishly, and Rebecca, who  
25 lives in New York, graduated U of M and will be active

1 Jewishly. She's single right now and doing what single people  
2 tend to do. Both my sisters are active in my synagogue I  
3 guess. Delores is active in Jewish study at the Federation,  
4 as does my other sister. I guess the apple doesn't fall far  
5 from the tree. My dad cared a lot about it, my mother cared  
6 at lot about it, we were exposed to synagogue at a young age  
7 and we've continued.

8           **MR. MERETSKY:** That's what will keep the Jewish  
9 community strong, in my opinion, as we help our children to  
10 learn and grow into it and they their children.

11           **MR. NACHMAN:** The issue I continue to have is the  
12 inter-marriage issue, which no one has an answer to that. My  
13 daughter is inter-married although I have great confidence  
14 from her Hillel Day School education. The Jewish ceremony,  
15 being married by a rabbi, going to Shabat services  
16 periodically, will be important to her. I know she will bring  
17 up her children Jewishly. She will have a Jewish home.  
18 Hopefully my son will, too. Jury's still out on that one  
19 because I don't know who he's going to marry yet.

20           But that's of some concern to me and many of us as  
21 to what the inter-marriage rate will have as far as the effect  
22 on our Jewish community. I don't want to leave it on a low  
23 note. Maybe it could be on a high note and things will turn  
24 around and get better. All the more reason for Jewish  
25 education.

1           **MR. MERETSKY:** I agree. Unless you have other  
2 comments I think that we've finished.

3           **MR. NACHMAN:** I enjoyed the opportunity to be part  
4 of the archives.

5           **MR. MERETSKY:** Very glad to have you. Thank you  
6 very much.

7           **MR. NACHMAN:** Thank you.