

**ORAL HISTORY OF:** Norman Pappas  
**INTERVIEWED BY:** Michael Berke  
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History Project

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**MICHAEL BERKE:** Good morning. Today is April 9, 2012, and we're here to interview Norm Pappas for the Leonard Simons Jewish Community Archives. I just want to go on record to suggest that you have been asked to participate in this, Norm, and that we're going to give your permission to use this for educational purposes as appropriate. Do you agree to that?

**NORMAN PAPPAS:** I agree to it.

**MICHAEL:** Good. And we'll have you sign a document afterwards.

**NORM:** Do I get to look at the fine print?

**MICHAEL:** You can look at anything you want.

So let's get started. We were talking before the tape started to roll, but I'm really interested, and it's really the first question I wanted to ask anyway, about your background, growing up. It's not as usual as other people in this community in terms of people who've ascended to

leadership. So I'd like you to tell us a little bit about your background, how and where you grew up, your parents and those kinds of things.

**NORM:** Okay. I was born in Midland, Michigan. My dad grew up in Midland. My mother actually came from Brooklyn, New York. My dad was working in a restaurant, lots of jobs, and decided when I was three years old to go to college, and then he went to Central Michigan in Mt. Pleasant. So we moved to Mt. Pleasant. He finished college when I was seven. Then his first job was as a high school teacher at Waterford High School.

**MICHAEL:** What did he teach?

**NORM:** He taught distributive education, helping kids get jobs. So we moved to Drayton Plains. I was bar mitzvahed at Temple Beth Jacob in Pontiac. We lived here until 1959. We came here in '53. My dad in the meantime went from high school teacher to coordinator of the high schools in Flint, which he did a commute. Then we moved to Marquette, Michigan. In Marquette he was the head of the business department at Northern Michigan University, and I was the only Jewish person in my class. So that was interesting. We had five Jewish kids in our high school: my brother, myself, and two sisters and another guy. The temple was in Ishpeming, which was about a half hour away. My two younger brothers were bar mitzvahed there and I was confirmed.

My teacher was Bill Cohodas. Recently there was an article written about Bill, I think maybe here. And Rabbi Yaskowitz interviewed me, and he was asking me all kinds of questions, and I said, you know, you should talk to my mother because she remembers better than I remember. So my mother got to be involved.

**MICHAEL:** So let's talk about mom. You talked about your dad. Let's talk about your mom. She came from Brooklyn. How did they meet and what did your mother do in terms of her education, in terms of her life in the north.

**NORM:** Well, it's interesting. My dad met my mother when she was 14. She was a beautiful woman, but he didn't know she was only 14. They ended up getting married when she was 18. My mother is only 20 years older than I am. My brother Ed is less than a year -- we're two days short of a year apart -- and my brother Rick was five years younger. So my father, while he was doing all this education, he went on to get his master's degree at the University of Michigan. He got his Ph.D. at Ohio State. So we were moving. She helped him write the papers that he had. So she is very smart, but she didn't go to college because at 18 she was raising a family, and he was on his career path. He ultimately became the president of Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, which we had moved to Cleveland. And then he became the president of Charles Mott Community College in Flint. So she

was a president's wife, she was a student's wife, raising three boys. Both of them were good role models.

**MICHAEL:** Where does she live now?

**NORM:** She's in Fox Run.

**MICHAEL:** So she lives near you.

**NORM:** Yeah. One year we moved them three times, from Flint, from Florida, from here, and they moved to Fox Run. My father passed away about two-and-a-half years ago. And Fox Run is great, and the Jewish population is getting larger and larger. And they have a facility that my father spent his last two years at, which was not nursing but round-the-clock help. In fact he passed away as I was giving my last speech as president of Federation. That was kind of tough. I didn't know it, but I was there, and then I got the call.

**MICHAEL:** Oh, wow. Were you close to your dad?

**NORM:** Yes. You know, it's interesting. I went to Michigan. I was in pre-med. I was going to be a doctor since I was six. And in my junior year I switched to business school. The I figured, you know what, I'll get my master's degree, which I did at 22, I'll work two years, I'll go get my Ph.D, and do what my dad was doing. You know, be a college president. But I ended up in Detroit. After I graduated, my first job was with Armor Dial, and I was supposed to go to Chicago with Sears, but that didn't happen.

A friend of mine was working with presidents of corporations doing pensions and business things. So I left Armor Dial. At the time -- this was '69 -- I was making like \$13,000 a year. I had a car and an expense account. But this friend was doing interesting work, and he had made \$26,000. So I said if you can do it, I can do it. Then I lost my car, my expense account and dropped my income to \$700 a month. But I liked the work that I was doing, and I knew that I wasn't going to go back and get a Ph.D.

But the irony is, and what does this have to do with my dad? My younger brother became the president of Lake Michigan Community College in St. Joe, and my father was president of Charles Mott Community College. They were the first father-son presidents in the country. And not so easy to be Jewish as a president then.

**MICHAEL:** Let's talk about that for a second. And we'll get to Detroit in a while. But I'm interested that you said that you were one of five, four of whom were in your family.

**NORM:** Two in my family. Two sisters.

**MICHAEL:** Oh, two sisters. They were not your sisters?

**NORM:** No. We were just three boys.

**MICHAEL:** So what was it like growing up as a Jew in that area? What kind of experiences did you have, good and

bad, related to your being Jewish? Was it ever an issue for you growing up?

**NORM:** I played a lot of sports and I played in the band, and really, they didn't know about Jewish people. So I really never heard anything about anti-Semitism. There was no community that I know of here. You know, Federation. Because there were so few people -- I mean they felt close together, but very small. And maybe because the temple was in Ishpeming, maybe Ishpeming had more of that community.

**MICHAEL:** And your family itself being Jewish, how was it celebrated, how was it acknowledged in your family, being isolated as you were?

**NORM:** Well, it was important for my parents to have us know that being Jewish was important. My dad, with a name like Pappas, people would say, how could you be Jewish with a name like Pappas? And Greek people would say, how can you be Greek with a name like Norman? My dad always said, we're making a good Jewish name out of Pappas.

But he never hid the fact that he was Jewish, even though it might have precluded him from getting a job in a particular place.

**MICHAEL:** Did it ever?

**NORM:** I think there were times. You know, when you're in the educational world, and you're going to become a president here or there, it has some impact. My brother, the

Lake Michigan president, became president of National-Louis University in Chicago, and today he's president of Davenport University. And there are a lot of times I don't think being Jewish -- maybe being white male -- and a lot of women today are presidents. But he loves his job.

And my other brother is a lawyer. He was the first Jewish person elected to the president of the State Bar in the state of Michigan.

**MICHAEL:** Lots of accomplishments in the Pappas family. And where did the whole issue of being Jewish fall in your lexicon of priorities when you were growing up?

**NORM:** It wasn't that -- I mean getting a bar mitzvah, getting confirmed, celebrating the holidays. But it wasn't a community activity as I know it today with our Federation.

**MICHAEL:** And what was the seminal moment, if there was a seminal moment, that made you decide that in addition to your career, which has obviously been extraordinary, that you wanted to devote your volunteer life in great measure -- and I'm sure you've done other things as well -- to the Jewish community? Was it after you moved down into this area?

**NORM:** Yes.

**MICHAEL:** Why don't you talk about that a little bit.

**NORM:** I think the thing that probably got me and

Suzy most involved was our trip to Israel in 1977. I had a friend in Philadelphia, Mark Solomon, who kept saying, give me ten days of your life and I'll change your life. At the time we had a two-year-old and a one-year-old, and going away for ten days and trying to build my business was a big commitment. But we did decide to go. We went in November of '77. Sadat happened to come over at the time. It was very exciting.

The thing I took away the most was I just felt like I wasn't doing my part: one, from a money contribution perspective, and two, from actually bringing people to Israel. So we made a commitment then, we're going to bring people to Israel, we're going to bring our friends to Israel. And we've subsequently led a number of missions to Israel. Our son spent a semester in his junior year in Israel. Both our daughters have spent time in Israel for school.

One time -- Leslie might not want me to say this -- we were at dinner and she said, it's no big deal being Jewish. So I said to Suzy, you know what, we're going to take them to Israel. And we went on a family mission and it was fantastic.

So that initial trip, coming back, getting involved in the community. And then many of our subsequent trips we've had some unbelievable experiences. It's been great for Suzy and myself. Some of our best friends are people who have gone on missions with us. It's been great for our kids to see our excitement and interest. I believe that's a major plus for



our community that we are so involved, and still bringing people to Israel.

**MICHAEL:** We'll get into the whole Israel thing in a second, but you raised that important name, so I want to hear about Suzy and how you met her and where you met, and how that sort of evolved into -- I mean you are a family now of committed people to the community. So I'm interested in that if you're willing to share that.

**NORM:** Sure. Suzy was ta Michigan. I'd already graduated and I was working. She was rooming with my brother Ed's girlfriend Laurie. So they fixed us up. And we ultimately married roommates. He married Laurie.

Suzy comes from Chicago, and I think that her family wasn't so involved in the community there, they were involved in other things, but it's an important thing for a husband and wife to do things together that they like. Unfortunately you'll see in the community maybe the husband gets it but the wife doesn't get it, or the wife gets it but the husband doesn't get it. But we both got the importance of financially supporting and with our bodies, taking people and working in the community activities.

We married in 1971. So we've been married 40 years, 41 years. And it's been a good relationship, a good ride. We have three children and three grandchildren and more grandchildren to come.

**MICHAEL:** And they're going to be listening. Tell us about your kids.

**NORM:** Leslie went to Wisconsin, transferred to Michigan, went on to get a law degree from Cardoza. She left the practice of law to work for the Jewish Federation in New York, and she headed up Do a Mitzvah, Give a Mitzvah, which was very successful. Her bar mitzvah kids, instead of getting gifts, having a charitable experience. Leslie is married to Matt Younger from New Jersey, and they have three children: Tahela, Aliza, and Esther. Three years old and under. So she's got a real handful.

Matt has a Ph.D. in human factors engineering from the University of Cincinnati. He develops software for a company in Alabama, and fortunately can do it from here. They live here. They lived in Israel for about a year and a half after they got married. So they're going to be important community citizens in the future.

Our son Dan, who went to the University of Michigan, was with me three years in the investment side of our business, but it wasn't his passion. So he went off to Boulder, Colorado, and he became the ninth teacher in the country for chi gong, which is Chinese movement, and very strenuous. He also has a master's degree in education from NYU, but this was his passion, and he could pick any city in the country, and he picked Portland, Oregon, and while he was

there, he decided to go to Chinese medical school. So he has a farm, he has a Chinese medical clinic. He just kept getting further away from Detroit. But he may think about coming to North Carolina. He's very much into healing people and making them live healthy lives.

Then our daughter Amy has a master's degree from NYU in social work. So at one time we had all three kids in New York, which was an experience. She works at Rush Hospital in Chicago with troubled teens. She's engaged to Jake Titlebaum, who's a graphic designer, develops bottles for companies like Dial Soap and things like that. He's working on his master's degree. So they live in Chicago.

So we have one here, the grandkids are here, and it's great to be the relief team for the grandkids.

**MICHAEL:** I can relate. I've got four of my own. And are your kids close to one another?

**NORM:** They're different. Leslie is religious, Dan, although he has a degree in world religion, isn't too much into the religious world, and Amy is Conservative, and we're Reform. So they're close, but they're all original thinkers, which is good.

**MICHAEL:** It sounds to me -- and I don't want to predispose you -- that your whole raison d'etre in social issues and social action in Israel rubbed off on your kids because they're all very socially oriented and socially

driven. Are they interested in the Israel-Jewish issues as well?

**NORM:** Oh, yes.

**MICHAEL:** It seems like they've all done something for the betterment of mankind if you will.

**NORM:** Oh, yeah. Amy's very active in Chicago in the Jewish Federation and activities, and Leslie's very active in the community here. She's on the board of the Jewish Community Center. Dan is out in Portland, and we'll see what activities his future will look like.

**MICHAEL:** So let's talk a little bit about back to you again, since this is an interview about you. You know, a lot of people in the community do their minimum to be good citizens of the Jewish community, and it's those special few that make the decision to step up, if you would, and to really say that this really needs to be my priority and this really needs to be something that I not only want to do but have to do. So what were the things, besides the trip to Israel with you and Suzy, that really said to you I want to be a leader in this community and to make a difference that way?

**NORM:** Well, when you go to Israel, you see all the good things they're doing and the commitments they make. And what's our commitment? Our commitment is financial and our commitment is getting other people involved. And a lot of the trips shaped our thinking. It wasn't just the first trip.

The second trip we went in 1980. We led that with a national group, and we ended up going to Vienna, Mathausen. We met with Simon Wiesenthal in his office. And he said, this is where Gestapo headquarters was, and that's why his office was there. Fannie Fenelon was on the trip with us. She was at Mathausen. They had a movie about her, Playing for Time. So that was an interesting experience. And you're always seeing, what are the agencies doing while you're there.

I went on the first Miracle Mission. That was really an eye-opener, to see how people who had never been to Israel, how excited they were. When I was 50, I decided I wanted to try out for the Maccabiah Team. They have a Jewish Olympics, and I made the team. I spent two weeks in Israel. It was a whole different kind of experience. My son Dan and I went. Fortunately I was able to win a silver and a bronze. But it was a lot of hard work in the Tel Aviv hot weather.

Suzy and I led a mission one time with Larry Jackier to Spain and Israel. David Hermelin was on that mission. It was a lot of fun. So not only are we in the community helping people, and I think everybody who's strong enough should be rowing the boat. Thank God we're not on the other side needing the help. And we've gotten a lot of great experiences and friends and knowledge in the process. And I think the community cements and follows up and tries to get people involved.

**MICHAEL:** So Israel has obviously been a driving force in who and what you are and who and what you do. How has that been translated to the local community, and what have been your interests and priorities in the local community that have sort of merged and are married to your interest in Israel?

**NORM:** So Federation has been a major player for us, but I also got involved in some other things. I started Friends of the IDF back here, and Hannan Liss was my president and help. A friend of mine who was a general in Israel asked if I would do this. You don't want to detract from the central core of the community, but I feel like if you get people involved in a charitable activity that they haven't been involved before, it'll spread back to the Federation, which it has. And the Friends of the IDF, fortunately, Sheri Lynn Kaufman and Gary Shiffman, they've taken that. So it's a major success every year.

I was chairman of Bar Ilan, and on one of our trips to Israel we went to Bar Ilan University, and a lot of the people that were there became dinner chairmen for Bar Ilan. I was chairman of Weizmann Institute, and we provide scholarships to Weizmann and Bar Ilan. So people that were involved there, we try to say you should be involved in Federation as well.

I sat on the board of the Jewish Community Center,

and been on lots of committees, and ultimately my last major job was Campaign chair. I was Campaign chair with Doreen Hermelin and with Larry Jackier, and then president of the Foundation. Peter was president of the Federation. And Nancy Grosfeld and Alan Nachman before me. So you kind of get to know people over long periods of time, and lots of people.

**MICHAEL:** What do you view as the important challenges -- let me take a step back. I'll ask that question in a minute. I'm more interested in this question for now. Have you seen a change in kind of the profile of the Jewish community in Detroit since you started out as a young man in its relationship to community activities and community priorities, but also in relationship to its commitment to Israel? How, if anything, have you seen change over the years, since 1977?

**NORM:** You know, that's an interesting question. Of course, Michael, I've known you for a long time, and you've been a really good, in-the-trenches worker for this community.

**MICHAEL:** Thank you.

**NORM:** As well as a good executive. I went to my first fraternity reunion at the University of Michigan last year, and they were making a movie about the '60s. I don't think we'll be in the movie, but they interviewed the guys that were there, and they wanted to know what was it like in the '60s versus what it was like now. So to give you a

perspective, I would say this community is strong, and it was strong back when I got involved in the '70s.

I think there are some differences here. First of all, the lay leaders did a lot more of the solicitation. Today the professionals are very involved in the solicitation.

**MICHAEL:** Do you view that as a good thing?

**NORM:** I think it is a good thing. However, I think we need to get the lay leaders to be back in the fold. And the reason for that is, there was a lot of peer-to-peer pressure to give to the community. So business people who did business with somebody said, I want you to be making this gift. And I do that today. If I'm going to do business with somebody, I want them to be part of the community, and I think it's important that they show that. It will be good for them as well as for the community. So I saw more lay leader solicitations.

I think another major difference is we had a larger population, and today we have a lot of infrastructure and down-size population. So what does that mean? We have, you know, maybe too many country clubs for the Jewish people? Too many synagogues? And there are political issues as to, if we're down-sized, how do we take care of the people that are in need? And yet Detroit is the second largest, oldest community next to Florida. So the older people are moving back, and the younger people are moving out. I mean we've got



a lot of people that are going to Chicago, New York, Los Angeles.

I am seeing a resurgence in emphasis on let's bring the kids back. But to do that we need to have jobs. Back then, the auto industry was strong. Detroit is a city that served three masters: General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. Two of the masters went bankrupt, trying to come back. But even so, where you don't have the population here, it makes it tougher. So there is a difference.

**MICHAEL:** Do you view that as our largest challenge, trying to keep the community vibrant and bringing the young people back into the community that will help us in the generations ahead? And what do you think our chances of success are?

**NORM:** First of all, I think there are several challenges. The other thing about the past is we had a lot of really major givers: Max Fisher, Sam Frankel, Sam Grand, that are not here. And now the families need to carry on. And the Fisher family is carrying on and the Frankel family is carrying on. Unfortunately Steve moved out of the city. Al Taubman is here, and you want the families to continue on what their parents have done, and that's a different maybe challenge or work program for our leaders. But I think the critical issues are, yes, let's bring young people back. We have to find jobs for them. Let's get them engaged in the

community. I think Scott Kaufman is doing a good job of the outreach and the new gifts. I think that his team has very good people. I think there's a very good relationship between leaders and the professionals that are here. I think our elderly absolutely have to be taken care of, with the size population that we have.

And I think our education has to continue to be supported. I think the Orthodox community here has done a great job, and we have a very nice working relationship. So that's maybe not as usual in other cities around the world. I think we're pretty innovative today in our getting people involved, the Next Gen, and what's going on in Detroit. And the new leaders with like Dan Gilbert stepping forward. They need to take their place.

**MICHAEL:** Do you see a difference in the way our agencies interact with one another over the years? Is there a difference in that from your perspective? Is it better? Is it different? Is it the same? I'm curious what your sense is about that, Norm.

**NORM:** I think that the agencies have done some fund-raising on their own, which is an interesting balance, you know, how we support them, and then the fund-raising activities that they're doing that they don't stop people from giving to the Federation because they're getting directly. I think the people in Detroit are very charitable and if they're

charitable, they support lots of things, and they're capable of the agency campaigns as well as the Federation. I think that's more of an issue today than it was in the past.

But you can't stop their creativity and their need to support what they need to support. You know, you're an officer of Hebrew Free Loan. What a great agency that is. We have great agencies, great people there, and it's just good that there's a good working relationship with Federation.

**MICHAEL:** How comfortable are you from your important perch that there's going to be the kind of resources, both human and financial, that are going to allow us over the next 25 or 50 years to maintain the very high level of service that we provide and the well-deserved reputation that Detroit has? I'm wondering what you think about that, and whether you think that's an important issue for us.

**NORM:** It is an important issue. You're asking a good question. First of all, I don't have an important perch. I'm a has-been, I'm an ex-president. But I still stay involved in issues and solicitations. I have a theory, and really, when I was president of the Federation, I had a theme that everybody should replace themselves. Everybody is capable of replacing themselves. So what does that mean?

If you make a gift and you could provide an endowment -- I don't care if it's in a will or an IRA or a

life insurance policy or whatever -- so your gift would continue, that would sustain this community forever. So we are on a big campaign for bequests and endowments. I happen to believe a lot in the Pace Fund. So Suzy and I have a Pace Fund that our gift will continue after we're gone. That is how we're going to be able to continue this community. We need to get all able bodies rowing in the boat, making gifts that are commensurate with their capabilities.

Some people get it and some people don't, so it's a huge educational process, to get those that don't to be part of the community, however we do it, whether it's a trip to Israel or whatever.

**MICHAEL:** Well, does Israel still continue to play the most important part in your opinion?

**NORM:** I think Israel is the best sales tool that we have. However, it really is always person to person. So, you know, a friend of yours asks you to be involved in something or making a gift to something, you need that networking. And sometimes the friends -- the friends aren't as effective as seeing, going on a trip together, having fun together, learning together, learning what should be your obligations.

**MICHAEL:** I'm going to shift gears a little bit but not really. Let's talk about Israel now in some more depth. What's your opinion of the number one, two, three, four challenges that are facing the country now that will continue

to allow them to flourish and grow and be successful? In the world we know that there's an agenda out there that is counter to Israel's ability to succeed. I'm just curious what you think the challenges are that Israel is facing in the years ahead.

**NORM:** Well, obviously their neighbors are not friendly. I think it's a very unsettled situation there. I mean what's going on in Egypt, we had that peace for so long. What's going on in Syria, what's going on in Iran. It's a very delicate balance for Israel.

And I think one of the things you were getting at earlier is, Israel plays an important role today, but the younger generation may not feel it like the older generation, because the older generation, Israel was born in 1948, and you had Holocaust survivors that have been an important part of our community here that aren't there. So do they feel it? Do they get it? There hasn't been a crisis of the '67 War, or the '73, or all of the things that happened before. You hope there's not a new incident that makes us want to have to be involved.

**MICHAEL:** Right.

**NORM:** But you know what, Israel is very innovative, very successful business-wise. They've done great things there. But they need our support, they need the world's support, and that still has to be a major part of every

community.

**MICHAEL:** I agree with you that there's a different feeling about Israel maybe from the younger generation. What do we have to do to insure that we educate our youth to want to be supportive of the country as we move forward? We're going to have to do some different things perhaps. I'm just curious what you've thought about those things, Norm.

**NORM:** I think young people in Detroit, and I see the young people in Chicago, they're in the game. I mean they're doing trips to Israel, they're doing community events. I think we need to continue doing it. I mean it's educational and the communities need to foster those good relationships.

Even though there's a missing generation somewhere that isn't so involved, I think that the young people, if their parents are not involved, those that are engaged will get their parents to be involved. So we need to work upward as well as peer-to-peer level.

**MICHAEL:** That's an interesting point. Do you think that the community recognizes that, that we have to sort of manage up as well as manage down? You raise a very interesting concept that I have not heard with other people that I've talked to.

**NORM:** Listen, what's the parents' Achilles' heel? It's their kids, it's their grandkids. They want to do things. It's like my daughter Amy had a rough boss in her

prior job, and I continually said you need to manage up the boss. And the same thing here. As the parents. You know, Alon Towlin is doing a great job with Aish and the developing communities, and those families, as they engage their parents, is very effective. I think that's an important activity that the community should watch.

**MICHAEL:** Are you confident that as we move forward in the years ahead that we will have the pool of leadership that will be able to continue? I think I asked the question a different way before. Do you think we're going to have the pool of leadership that will allow us to continue to be a leading community in the future?

**NORM:** I do. I think that if the families stay strong from the patriarchs that we've had in the Detroit area, you have that base of support income-wise, and you provide the leadership training and identifying the people that are the future leaders. I don't care if it's the Campaign. Who are the next ten people you want to be Campaign chair, Federation president, Foundation president, Women's president? You know, our women are very strong here, very well organized. The Young Adult Division, the Leadership Cabinet, they're strong and well organized.

Take that in combination with the able-bodied, capable, giving -- you know, Detroit gives at levels that other cities around the country don't do. They don't get it

in other cities that it started with that peer pressure back when, and we've tried to maintain that. So I think Detroit will continue to be successful.

We have to figure out, you know, do we have too many institutions that need to be consolidated.

**MICHAEL:** Let's talk about that for a second, because you raised that issue earlier on, and I made a little note of it. But now you've raised it again. What's your sense about the infrastructure of the community and what might have to be changed to keep us vibrant and vital?

**NORM:** Well, those are hard subjects because, do we have too many synagogues, too many temples? Should there be mergers? People love their rabbis, they love their place of worship. How do we get everybody organized to where maybe we have a buying pool? I mean how can we help them -- and we have good relationships with the synagogues and educational schools. How do we help them be more efficient in staffing, expenditures, fund-raising? And I think that's going on, but that's not been accomplished.

The agencies, you know, some may be able to raise more money by themselves. Will the agencies be the same agencies 15 years from now as they are today? How do they evolve?

**MICHAEL:** What's your sense, Norm?

**NORM:** I think there will be consolidation. I think



there may be some mergers, consolidations. We don't have new people flocking to the city of Detroit, we don't have that population growth. So if that's the case, we have to work with a smaller infrastructure than having all of the big infrastructure without the population to support it. And you don't have the population putting too much pressure on too few people to support everything that's needed. So you have to bring in new revenue, cut your expenses, much like operating a business.

**MICHAEL:** What do you think the priorities are going to be, the three or four most important priorities are going to be for the community in the years ahead?

**NORM:** Well, again, I think creating jobs, bringing young people back to the city, energizing them about the community and the city, taking care of our elderly, education. You know, Bob Aronson did a great job on the fund-raising side of things, and still is helpful in the community. Scott Kaufman, very creative, outgoing, networking, bringing new people, involved. So there's a time when you have different events, but you never can give up the bringing of the revenue in and the involvement of as many people as possible.

And I think that those challenges, the elderly, the sick, the education, the agencies that we have -- we've done great things with the agencies. I mean look at the JFS and the medical support, helping people who have lost their homes.

I mean it's unfortunate that we've gone through such a difficult time. And I say there are some people that don't support the way they should. There are people that used to support that can't support, and we have to understand that, too, and help them.

So those are large challenges to a very small population with a lot of large needs.

**MICHAEL:** Right. So we've talked a lot about community and about your involvement in the community. I'm curious who you view as some of your mentors, some of the people in the community who, when you look back, you can say those individuals really helped make a difference in my life and in my life as a community leader.

**NORM:** We've had a lot of good leaders here. You take a Max Fisher, who was on a big level. But I look at the first thing other than Federation I got involved with was Bar Ilan and Bob Naftaly and Emery Klein asked me to come to a meeting, and then I get to the meeting and everybody's congratulating me. I said for what? Well, you're the new endowment chairman. I didn't know anything about that. So their ways of getting you involved, which is fun if you accept it the right way. Leading missions with Larry Jackier, who's been to Israel so many different times. And I spent a lot of time with David Hermelin, too. We did things, talked about things. What a great role model he was.

Watching Emery Klein solicit or being on the other side of Emery, you know it's a non-stop education. But there's a lot of people, Aronson being the Federation and watching what's going on, and being involved with Scott and watching what's going on with him. Being co-president with Peter Alter and Nancy Grosfeld. Everybody's got different ways. But the hearts are there and the commitments are there.

But you know, everybody that's a leader -- I mean when I first started, I had a two-year-old and a one-year-old. I had to get my business off the ground. Still you had to do something physically. I played basketball at the Jewish Center at the time. Today it's grandkids and kids, and I still like my work. I have 30 employees. I play tennis three times a week. You know, your people that are involved have other parts of their life they need to maintain: their health and their vitality and their interests. But those that stay active -- I mean look at Bill Berman.

**MICHAEL:** God bless him.

**NORM:** I mean those are good role models of people that stay active for their whole life in the community. Even those that don't necessarily have other finances to do it, but they're worker bees. You know, they're just as important and valuable, making calls. So kind of observing all the different people and different parts.

Even the new people, what Levi Shermtov is doing

with the Friendship Circle and what Simca's doing. And I watch what Ellie Mayer is doing. Gary Torgow, you know, how he's bridged the communities. You look at what the agencies are doing. There's a lot of leaders. They don't have to be the people in the past. There's really good talent at the young level.

And the bad thing about me saying names is there's so many other names.

**MICHAEL:** I understand. It's a slippery slope, I understand.

**NORM:** Yes. There's a lot of leaders that you can have fun looking back and seeing what they accomplished.

**MICHAEL:** I want to ask one or two more questions. This is a question that's sort of a priority of mine, so I'm going to insert. I just was invited and agreed to serve on the Wayne State University Hillel Board, and the reason that I did that was because of my concern about kind of the interaction and inability for the Jewish students to counteract some of the things that are going on on campus related to Middle Eastern politics and the Arab community. I'm wondering whether or not you have a similar concern and what you think are some of the things that we need to do to better prepare our students to be able to counteract some of the things that are going on, not only on the campus at Wayne State, but at the University of Michigan, and really all over

the country. I don't know if that's something you've given any thought to.

**NORM:** I think that is very important. And we have people taking leadership roles there. The Jewish News has taken an active position there. I think Mike Florian's done a lot of things there.

I shouldn't forget to mention Leonard Simons. I got a chance to spend some time with Leonard. He was a great guy. The archives is so important. It's nice that he's remembered by that.

**MICHAEL:** Yes, absolutely.

**NORM:** I think we need to educate ADL. It's got good educational programs. Very important to be on the campuses. The Hillel activities are very good. That's good that you're doing that. This is the largest Arab population in the United States.

**MICHAEL:** Correct.

**NORM:** Right here. We should get along and understand each other.

I was on a TV program one time, and it was interesting. It was a difficult subject to be on with the Arab community, but we had a nice conversation and understood some things. Very important.

**MICHAEL:** Last question for me, and then we'll just see if there's anything else that you want to talk about. How

would you characterize the volunteer professional relationship in the community and what that relationship should be in your opinion.

**NORM:** I think that it should be collaborative. And I think that working together, getting more lay leaders involved in helping on the solicitation. The pendulum went where the professionals -- at the University of Michigan and whatnot, it's all about professionals more than it is here.

But through the years there's things that I got involved with with the professionals that they let me come up with. For example, when I was the Campaign chair, there was a challenge fund in Philadelphia and a challenge fund in Houston. I said we should do the challenge fund here. I tried to get a particular person to do it, and he wouldn't do it. So the first year we had to have a whole bunch of us do it. But no community in the country has sustained the challenge fund like we have sustained the challenge fund, which has been very important. So that isn't just professionals separated from lay leaders. That's been an important thing.

Then we started the President's Club because I kept asking people to join the President's Club but we never had one. It was a \$10,000 commitment level. I said we have to do something, which we did a black tie at the beginning.

So I like the staff that we have. I'm always very

supportive of the staff. I think they're very hard workers and very committed, so I think the partnership is very good.

**MICHAEL:** Are you confident that we're going to have enough resources, both human and financial, to meet our needs in the future?

**NORM:** Yes. I think it's a mission and a cause that the strong in this community are not going to abandon. And yet you have to discover the new people that maybe haven't been involved to buoy up those that have fallen by the wayside. We're not going to fail at this.

**MICHAEL:** From your mouth. Anything else you want to say, Norm? Is there anything that we've missed that you'd like to talk about?

**NORM:** I think one of the fun things that Suzy and I have done that we've really enjoyed is we created a Pappas Prize for innovative idea of the year. So I do kind of a mini biography of the people who have that one idea that really resonated well. And that's kind of what you're doing. When you interview people, you're getting a biography of where did they start, how did you get involved, what's important about it. I find some things that they did in high school or college that they might not want people to have known.

But this has been an important part of Suzy's and my life. She was president of Women's, and she's very active in getting new people involved, young women involved, and

soliciting. So it's nice for a husband and wife to be on a similar mission that has importance, that shows well with the kids and gets the kids involved.

One of the best decisions we ever made, to take that trip to Israel, even though I didn't want to take those ten days, because that really turned us around.

**MICHAEL:** What were some of the innovative things that really have piqued your interest that have won the Pappas Prize?

**NORM:** Well, there's a lot. The first one was the Grant Makers Mission to Israel, where non-Jewish people went to Israel.

**MICHAEL:** Always a good thing.

**NORM:** The Elderlink concept. We had a brown bag lunch. Bernice got people to learn at lunch together. Geli and David Contour tried to get the Russian community involved. Andrew I think was involved in the Fisher mission to Israel. Karl Alterman had the business link. They're all great. And it's kind of fun when we get together. We have all the past winners, and it's a democratic decision, what idea had the most important impact. And it's people that are sort of in the trenches, that aren't like visible.

Now you've asked me the question, now I should really make the list of all.

**MICHAEL:** Well, you can always supplement this a



little bit later on. But that's okay. But it's interesting that you say what you say, because you mention David Contour, you mentioned Andrew Echt, Karl Alterman. You mentioned all these young people that are now giving back to the community in a leadership way. So you're to be patted very strongly on the back for your support of that kind of thing, too, and it really is sort of instructive of what you said, that if we mold and support our young leaders, our security is insured a little bit.

**NORM:** And it's fun learning about how they came to their job and what they did, how they got to the idea, and then how the idea has impacted the community. It's been a very worthwhile fun activity.

**MICHAEL:** If there's anything else?

**NORM:** No. You're a great interviewer,

**MICHAEL:** Thank you, Norman.