

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Sol Drachler
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Michael Burke
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5 SUBJECT MATTER: Detroit Jewish community

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7 MICHAEL BURKE: Today is October the 12th, 2011. My
8 name is Michael Burke, and it's my pleasure to be in Seattle,
9 Washington, interviewing Sol Drachler as part of the Leonard
10 N. Simons Jewish Community Archives oral history project.

11 Sol, it's good to be with you. Do we have your
12 permission to use the contents of this interview for the
13 historic record and for educational purposes?

14 SOL DRACHLER: Yes, you do.

15 MICHAEL: Good. So let's get started. Let's talk
16 about the beginning of your life in Detroit and the things
17 that were most important to you. So let's talk about your
18 family, where you were born in the city. Well, I should ask
19 the question: Were you born in the city?

20 SOL: No, I was born in Persamble (ph. sp.), New
21 Jersey, but I arrived in Detroit when I was two years old. I
22 made an early beginning.

23 MICHAEL: What brought your family to Detroit?

24 SOL: Well, my parents and my brother were born in
25 Russia. My father was a Jewish educator, a regional

1 superintendent in the province Commants Pedulska in the
2 Ukraine. He also taught -- secretly opened up Yiddish
3 schools, but he handled primarily the religious schools.

4 When the czar was overthrown and the liberals
5 socialist government came in, he became a member of the
6 government in the education department. However that
7 government lasted less than a year. The Bolsheviks overthrew
8 them, and my father and family had to flee the country. They
9 spent four years in Europe -- that was in 1919 -- mostly in
10 Poland, but occasionally in some other central European
11 countries. He was a writer, a journalist. He had part-time
12 work in a newspaper in support of the family that way.

13 In 1924 they secured a visa to go to Canada, and a
14 year later they moved into the United States in the New York-
15 New Jersey area. My father was a teacher, a Yiddish teacher
16 in that community. I was born in 1927.

17 In 1929 my father had an offer to teach in Detroit.
18 He accepted the offer because he felt it would give him
19 greater creative opportunities, particularly in terms of the
20 writing he was doing, a good deal of it getting published. So
21 we came to Detroit. I was still two. We moved into the new
22 Jewish neighborhood, Dexter, on Monterey.

23 But within a year of our arrival in Detroit my
24 father had a massive stroke, which remained with him in
25 various stages through the rest of his life. He had to find

1 some form of support for the family. My brother was already
2 18. I was three, a little over three years of age. We had
3 friends. There were a lot of Jews then in the hand laundry
4 business. So they suggested that they would teach my brother
5 and my mother the business, and they'd open up a laundry,
6 which they did in the west side of Detroit, a completely non-
7 Jewish neighborhood, and we moved to that area, lived a block
8 away on West Grand Boulevard.

9 Norman had already started Wayne University. He was
10 studying to be a teacher. As a result of his contacts there,
11 they arranged that I could enter the public school,
12 kindergarten, when I was three and a half, with the
13 understanding that I would stay until a year, year and a half,
14 plus another year of kindergarten, which we did.

15 West Grand Boulevard was lower middle class. The
16 surrounding streets were mostly Afro-American, almost
17 completely Afro-American. The kids who went to the public
18 school, the one where I attended, weren't too well prepared
19 for education. As a result I got double promoted three times
20 in elementary school. When I entered intermediate, the
21 seventh grade, I was ten years old. The level of interest in
22 education, perhaps exemplified by -- one time I was sitting
23 with one of my classmates helping him with his algebra. He
24 knew I was fairly young, but how young are you? I said, well,
25 I'm ten years old. Ten and a half I said. He said, ten and a

1 half years old. Five and a half years before you can quit
2 school. Then I went on to Northwestern High School, and I got
3 double promoted there, too, so I arrived at Wayne before my
4 16th birthday.

5 Norman was really my hero. In a sense he was more
6 like a father because it was at least three, three and a half
7 years before my father was able even to be mobile, let alone
8 speak. And I just marveled at his capacity. He worked in the
9 laundry, he went to school, the university, he managed to look
10 after me a little bit. Bought me my first baseball bat and
11 glove. I guess he was the person that I looked up to in my
12 very early years.

13 MICHAEL: We'll talk about Norman a little bit later
14 on. He had a pretty distinguished career of his own in
15 Detroit as superintendent of the Detroit Public School System.

16 SOL: As you know, Norman was my older brother. We
17 were 15 years apart. My parents did have a third child in
18 between, but the child died in infancy, so there were just the
19 two of us.

20 MICHAEL: So we've heard a lot about you and Norman
21 and that part of your family, but I've heard very little about
22 your mother. So I'd like to hear a few words about your mom
23 and how she influenced you in your life growing up.

24 SOL: Well, as I said before, Mother was born in
25 Russia. She came from a small family. There were seven

1 children in my father's family, four sons, three daughters.
2 Interestingly enough, just an aside, the four sons all ended
3 up in the United States, the land where gold was in the
4 streets. The three daughters ended up in Palestine. They
5 left for Palestine starting 1908, where they were on
6 agricultural settlements, which later became kibbutzim, and
7 one of them became a teacher. It was rather strange that the
8 boys all went to where the good life was, and the girls all
9 went to where it was really a very hard existence.

10 My mother had a brother. All of the family either
11 perished in Europe before World War II or in the Holocaust.
12 My mother's family was fairly well-to-do, and her new role as
13 breadwinner -- you have to remember that the laundry business
14 meant six days a week, from eight in the morning until 6:30,
15 until nine o'clock on Saturday. There was very little home
16 life in that context. Over the years she grew pretty
17 embittered.

18 She had a strong intellectual background in Russia,
19 in terms of her schooling, and she could only express it
20 through the land cries, the reading circle, which she managed
21 to go to when I could stay in the store for a long period of
22 time. She outlived my father by almost twenty years.

23 My mother and I were close, but we were always
24 working side by side. The only family life -- Norman left the
25 household when I was ten. He was married and our family life

1 really revolved around Sundays when we would go to Norman's
2 for the afternoon and dinner. My father, whose intellectual
3 abilities and capacities were so enormous, was pretty much
4 hobbled by what had occurred to him so early in his career.

5 MICHAEL: So was Norman close to your mother, too?
6 Did he have a relationship with her as well?

7 SOL: You know, I wasn't witness to the early years,
8 you know, but it was a mother-son relationship. Nothing too
9 intense, nothing too removed. That's as much as I can say
10 about it.

11 MICHAEL: And your grandparents, they never came to
12 the United States?

13 SOL: They never came to the United States. My
14 father's father had a small mill. He was a rather learned man
15 and somewhat religious. My parents were secular, our family
16 was secular. I was never in a shul, in a synagogue, I wasn't
17 bar mitzvahed. That didn't have meaning for them. And then
18 of course it would have ^{been} ~~become~~ very difficult based on where
19 we lived, so far removed from the Jewish community.

20 Though he was a religious man, my father's father,
21 he was influenced by the hascalah, the enlightenment movement
22 in Jewish life in Europe, and he became something of a
23 Zionist. My father was a Labor Zionist. In fact he was a
24 delegate to one of the World Zion congresses.

25 MICHAEL: You mentioned that your aunts moved to

1 Israel, and the brothers moved here. Do you still have family
2 in Israel, and was the fact that part of your family moved to
3 Israel -- I don't want to suppose anything. But I assume,
4 knowing you a little bit, that your interest in Israel may
5 have started there. So I'm curious whether you were
6 interested in the whole Zionist movement back when you were a
7 younger man.

8 SOL: Yeah, I was very much interested in the
9 Zionist movement. I knew my father's position. My father was
10 interested that I would be involved in Labor Zionist
11 activities. And it was interesting in terms of the
12 relationship, even though the family had been here for a short
13 period of time, friends of the family made sure that they came
14 by, took me to their homes in the Jewish area, where I
15 developed friendships, in the early years, made sure that I
16 joined the Habonim, the Labor Zionist youth group. In that
17 time and that period, Yiddish and Labor Zionism was a very
18 substantial movement in Detroit. So I became involved early.

19 In addition to my brother, I guess my heroes were in
20 a sense Labor Zionists and socialist thinkers. Norman was
21 involved in socialist activity at Wayne, together with the
22 Reuther boys and Walter Bergman. You know, the '30s, Detroit
23 was the center of a very virulent anti-Semitism, what with
24 Father Coughlin, Gerald L.K. Smith. I was very impressed with
25 how my brother dealt with those problems together with those

1 issues, together with his friends and colleagues at the
2 university.

3 MICHAEL: Who were some of those people? Obviously
4 we know that Norman was your most important influence.

5 SOL: Yeah.

6 MICHAEL: But who were some of the other people who
7 helped shape the way you thought about things?

8 SOL: Well, while I was able to get to these things,
9 I couldn't spend a lot of time. I had to be at the laundry to
10 help Mother. I started in the laundry before there were child
11 labor laws; I was eight years old. As a result, I really had
12 only one mentor, an older person by the name of Danny
13 ~~Eisenberg~~^{Ginsberg}, who introduced me to these Labor Zionist and
14 socialist thinkers and helped me. I was the leader of a group
15 in Habonim, helped me with my sechot (ph. sp.), my lectures.

16 The other thing that happened to me in my early
17 childhood, after my father's stroke, I got sent off to a
18 summer camp for ten, twelve weeks. I wasn't four yet.
19 Friends of the family, friends of the movement. And I spent
20 my summers in camps in my early years, up until adolescence.
21 One of my heroes there was ~~Micha~~^{Moshe} Harr, a name you may know.
22 He was the cultural director of the camp. Because of my
23 knowledge and fluency in Yiddish, which I acquired not from
24 any school, I never attended a Yiddish school. I spoke
25 Yiddish maybe even before I spoke English; that was the

1 language in the household. As a result he used me in every
2 theatrical production he produced, whether out at summer camp,
3 or back in Detroit, and turned me into a star.

4 He was a fascinating, interesting man. He had
5 served in World War II, was wounded, and became a pacifist.
6 So his thoughts and his care for me was a big factor in my
7 early years.

8 MICHAEL: Is the Ginsberg family still represented
9 in Detroit?

10 SOL: No. He had a brother who was a prominent
11 biologist at work in Maine. Danny Ginsberg himself enlisted
12 in the Marines, became a lieutenant, and was killed in the
13 Pacific theater, the same month that I enlisted in the Navy.

14 MICHAEL: You said you went to school very early.
15 What area did you study?

16 SOL: Well, my interest was chemistry. I enjoyed
17 qualitative and quantitative chemistry. When it came to
18 organic chemistry, I began to lose interest. But I had a
19 facility with numbers, not great mathematics. I added up all
20 the laundry bills for the customers before I was ten. So I
21 thought maybe I'll go into accounting. Just as I was
22 beginning to think about moving in that direction, I got a
23 call from the Jewish Parents Institute, would I be interested
24 in being a club leader and maybe taking on some other
25 responsibilities there?

1 The Parents Institute was an experiment of the
2 Jewish Center. It started after World War II.

3 **MICHAEL:** How old were you then?

4 **SOL:** In my twenties. When I was considering moving
5 into another discipline, another interest, which was
6 accounting, I got this call from the Jewish Community Center
7 about leading a group, the oldest group in the program, and
8 taking some other responsibilities. I decided to accept that.
9 It was an experimental program that the center started for
10 families -- parents -- who were not religious, had not
11 attended any religious institutions. That's one of the things
12 that appealed to me, that helped me in the decision to accept
13 the offer. Also, largely it was a very liberal group. Some
14 of the people who were friends of Norman's were in that
15 organization. So I accepted the assignment.

16 I continued to work in the laundry. We didn't get
17 rid of the laundry until after I came to Federation, which was
18 late in 1956. So then I became the co-director of Jewish
19 Parents Institute ~~at~~ the Center, and Irwin Shaw -- I think
20 Irwin was then the executive; it may have been Jacobs, I'm not
21 sure -- asked whether I would do some adult education at the
22 Center, lead a book group, et cetera, which I accepted. So I
23 had a full-time position at the Center when I got a call in
24 late 1956 from the Federation, would I be interested in being
25 the secretary of the education division, one of the budgeting

1 and planning divisions of the Federation, and also by the way
2 doing some fund-raising.

3 **MICHAEL:** Who called you?

4 **SOL:** You know, I'm not sure who it was. It may
5 have been Bill ^{AVRONIN} ~~Oruman~~ who made that call, but it was preceded
6 by one of the members of the Jewish Parents Institute, the
7 controller of the Federation at that time, Ingram Bander. You
8 remember him. He asked me whether I'd be interested, and he
9 told me I'd be getting a call.

10 **MICHAEL:** How did Irwin Shaw play a role?

11 **SOL:** It was fairly limited. I think Irwin Shaw was
12 my father-in-law Michael Michlan's Hebrew teacher, and I
13 married Michael's daughter, Leah Michlan. So there was some
14 connection there. He knew who I was, he knew Norman. But he
15 was not -- the Jewish Parents Institute was an experimental
16 program. An associate director began a rather radical, rather
17 liberal program. I'm not sure the Center was overly excited
18 about it, but it became a rather substantial program.

19 Irwin never showed up at Jewish Parents Institute
20 meetings or functions, and they were not too eager to -- it
21 was mutual.

22 **MICHAEL:** So this was before you got married?

23 **SOL:** No, I got married in 1950.

24 **MICHAEL:** How did you meet Leah and tell us a little
25 bit about that and about your family, back then.

1 SOL: I met Leah when she came to a Labor Zionist
2 meeting. When I came back from the Navy, I'd been in Habonim
3 from my early years, and a little bit of a leader there. I
4 was the co-signer on the land contract for the Habonim camp
5 that we organized, and Leah came to one of the -- let me back
6 up a moment.

7 One of the early things I did after coming back from
8 the Navy was to organize a new branch of the Labor Zionist,
9 Branch 11, the Daniel Yosef Branch, named for the two men who
10 were active when I was a youngster in Habonim. She came and I
11 met there then. At that time the Labor Zionist movement had a
12 building. We had programs. We had ^{ONE 9} ~~onagim~~ (ph. sp.), Shabat
13 every week. We danced the hora, which she was part of the
14 circle. We would go out afterwards, six, eight of us, she
15 among them. And we gradually developed a rather closer
16 relationship. And then she became a counselor. She was the
17 singing instructor at Farban Camp, a camp of the Labor Zionist
18 movement, actually the National Workers Alliance, but it was
19 all part of the one movement. Our relationship grew there.
20 That was in '49, and within a year the relationship was close
21 enough for her to tell me after one New Year's Eve party when
22 someone handed me a drink that was a little alcoholic for me,
23 that I had proposed to her. So we got married.

24 As I started to say, her mother and father were well
25 known in the community. Her father was an educator, taught at

1 the United Hebrew Schools, was a principal at the United
2 Hebrew Schools. Her mother was equally well known, Hannah
3 Michlen. She was a leader in the Pioneer Women, now known as
4 the Nahamat. So it all fit together. Except for the fact
5 that they were Hebrewists and we were Yiddishes, a little bit
6 of a culture com. And the Yiddishes were predominant then.
7 But we swallowed our pride and we agreed to move forward with
8 the wedding.

9 **MICHAEL:** Tell me about your in-laws and the
10 influence that they had on you.

11 **SOL:** Well, I'll tell you, in our relationship they
12 were two fascinating people. Michel -- that's how we
13 addressed him, at least that's the way I addressed him, he was
14 quite learned, a gentle soul. He was very effective with
15 young people. When we would go to a Seder with the children
16 -- and I say this even before I've introduced the children,
17 our kids, Leah's and mine -- the boys still remember the
18 stories he told, historical stories about Passover and Jewish
19 history. He was like the English film, Mr. Chips, Good-bye,
20 Mr. Chips. Well, it was hello, Mr. Michlen.

21 In any case, her mother, Hannah, was a very
22 effective organizer, an extraordinary cook. That's what
23 really furthered our relationship, Leah's and mine. When I
24 would leave Wayne State from classes in the evening, I took
25 the Dexter bus. The Dexter bus took me to Grand River and

1 Dexter, where I would catch the West Grand Boulevard bus to go
2 home. I always wrestled with the proposition should I get off
3 and hop on the Boulevard bus, or should I continue the bus to
4 Glendale because that's where Leah lived. Well, Leah and
5 Hanna's cooking always -- because whenever I came there, no
6 matter what time it was, she had a meal for me.

7 I wouldn't say she was a brilliant organizer, but if
8 there hadn't been a glass ceiling in America for women, she
9 could have been an executive in almost any enterprise. She
10 worked on behalf of Pioneer Women in Israel. And my father-
11 in-law was very active in the Jewish National Fund. So it all
12 fit together pretty much hand in glove.

13 **MICHAEL:** Did the unions play any part in your
14 upbringing and growing up? Detroit is such a strong union
15 town.

16 **SOL:** I knew the Israeli labor union. I wasn't
17 really involved with any of the -- not at an early age. Later
18 on, when I was at Federation, I did spend some time with
19 people from Ford Local 600, which was the Ford local, but that
20 was incidental. It was not at all central.

21 **MICHAEL:** Tell me a little bit more about Leah, what
22 her career was.

23 **SOL:** Well, Leah's degrees led her to do social work
24 and then teaching. She was an elementary school teacher. She
25 was also, by the way, a Hebrew School teacher in the early

1 years of our marriage. She taught Hebrew school at the United
2 Hebrew School branch at Adat Shalom on Curtis and Livernois.
3 Her Hebrew was pretty substantial at that point. Not as good
4 as her older sister who spoke Hebrew before she spoke English.
5 As I said, they were Hebrais, and it was exemplified by
6 everything in their household and the way their children
7 behaved.

8 **MICHAEL:** Was there any thought between you and she
9 of ever making ~~Aliyah~~^{Aliyah}, going to Israel?

10 **SOL:** No, there was not. Your mentioning Israel
11 reminds me, you asked whether we had family there. My older
12 aunt with her husband were founders of Karagulah D, a kibbutz
13 in northern Israel. They lived their entire lives there.
14 They were good strong Zionists and Hebraists. I remember on
15 my first visit to them -- I was with Federation already,
16 probably on one of the early missions that I took -- I came to
17 the kibbutz and I sought her out. I didn't know Hebrew at all
18 and Leah wasn't with me, so she couldn't help. I said I knew
19 Yiddish, and she knew a little bit of English, enough to get
20 that far in the conversation. I knew pretty good Yiddish, I
21 can hold a Refarat, I can deliver a report in Yiddish, which I
22 did occasionally. But she called in her husband and a couple
23 of her children and said, listen -- in Hebrew, which they
24 later translated for me -- (Hebrew phrase) he's speaking a
25 jargon, not a legitimate language, Yiddish. And they wanted

1 her to hear it. I mean that's how strong the "culture comf"
2 between the two languages and the two groups of people was.

3 It was obviously wise. They wanted to create a
4 national language, and no matter what Yiddish scholars or
5 prominent Yiddish authors would do to try and influence them
6 to have Yiddish more present -- I remember our outstanding
7 literary figure Lapinsky went with funds that he brought,
8 created the Golden Acape, a golden chain, a Yiddish journal,
9 but it didn't last very long.

10 ~~Her~~ ^{NEGEV} And one of the other aunts was established in ^{the}
11 ~~Her~~ ^{NEGEV} ~~negev~~. The name of the kibbutz escapes me, but it was a
12 major kibbutz, one which Golda Mier retired to. And the third
13 aunt was killed in air raid I think in World War II.

14 **MICHAEL:** So is there still family in Israel?

15 **SOL:** Large, large numbers of people. One of the
16 grandsons of my aunt was an economist and secretary of the
17 kibbutz movement, and also obviously a fairly prominent
18 economist. He would come at teach at Wharton and other
19 universities here for a semester or two. And we developed a
20 rather close relationship, as well as I had with some of the
21 grandchildren of our three aunts.

22 I'd say the family numbers in Karagulah D, we don't
23 predominate but very large numbers. We couldn't bring gifts,
24 but we remember leaving 13, 18, 20 some little checks, you
25 know, for their children.

1 **MICHAEL:** Do you still keep in contact at all?

2 **SOL:** Limited. Pretty limited, yeah.

3 **MICHAEL:** So let's talk about your kids.

4 **SOL:** Two sons. They are both attorneys. Paul is a
5 labor attorney, and he represents a very large union here in
6 the area, the nurses union, and also a couple of other unions.
7 Very busy. Particularly busy these days because the tougher
8 the economy is, the tougher employer gets. I think he has
9 four or five partners in his office.

10 My other son, Danny, was an attorney in New York,
11 antitrust. And he decided -- it didn't take too long -- that
12 New York wasn't the place where he wanted the kids to grow up.
13 They didn't want to live in the suburbs because they didn't
14 want to spend that time riding back and forth, and Manhattan
15 is a little tough place to raise kids. He had been to
16 Seattle, he like Seattle. His wife worked at the New York
17 Times in the classified section, and they made the decision to
18 go to Seattle. Dan said, look, let's develop a business plan
19 for the Times, and maybe you'll open up an office for them in
20 Seattle, which they accepted. So she had employment. And
21 when he started studying for the bar in Washington, he felt he
22 had to tell his employers, and they apparently didn't want to
23 lose him, so they said so you'll open up an office for us in
24 Seattle. So that made the transition for them very easy.

25 The problem is whenever there's any kind of a class

1 action suit, which is one of the things the firm does, they
2 want him to be present, and that mean traveling to three
3 cities in California and to Florida and to Texas and New York,
4 New Jersey. But as I think I mentioned, Michael, to you
5 earlier, Dan was a juggler in his youth, and seems to be able
6 to manage everything remarkably well.

7 So our entire family and all four grandchildren live
8 in Seattle. So that made our coming here a rather easy
9 decision. It came a little earlier than we had planned
10 because we were about to leave Sutton Place in Southfield,
11 Leah and I, where we had an apartment and move out to West
12 Bloomfield. We said to one another, does it make sense to
13 move twice in a couple years? So we came here early. We got
14 in the car and we drove.

15 **MICHAEL:** I know what it's like to have kids growing
16 up in a family where the father is Jewish communal
17 professional, particularly a Federation professional. How did
18 your work impact on your family and impact on your kids,
19 particularly, as they were growing up? Did they have any
20 interest in following in your footsteps at all? Obviously
21 they're both attorneys.

22 **SOL:** No, I don't think so. Both had a very liberal
23 orientation. Paul in Ann Arbor even flirted with the SDS for
24 a while, Students for a Democratic Society. And while they
25 had visited Israel and were very taken with what was taking

1 place there, they were like liberal Seattle in their
2 orientation. So no, they didn't have any inclination in that
3 direction.

4 Fortunately they're both very light sleepers, and
5 occasionally when I'd come home from a meeting, I could sit on
6 the edge of the bed and have a conversation with them. I made
7 sure, because I had heard from my nephew that Norman never had
8 time to go to any of his basketball games or anything of that
9 nature, so I made sure I was around for that.

10 Early on I developed an allergy to grasses, so I
11 taught them how to push a mower, and we spent good times
12 together that way.

13 **MICHAEL:** So it sounds to me that it wasn't a plan
14 to get into Jewish communal service for you. It sort of
15 happened.

16 **SOL:** It sort of happened, although our life was
17 very Jewish. Even though we were far removed from the Jewish
18 community, I grew up listening to the Weinberg and ^{ALTMAN} ~~Alman~~
19 Yiddish hours. My father, when he was a little better, would
20 give me a Yiddish book to read to him and help me along in it.
21 And what did he give me? The history of the Jewish labor
22 movement in the United States.

23 **MICHAEL:** Light reading.

24 **SOL:** Yeah. And I was witness to Mrs. Weinberg's
25 oft-quoted incident, where in 1940, when Wendell Wilke was

1 running against FDR for the presidency, at one point there was
2 a bar of music played, and she came on and said (Yiddish) --
3 you should all go to the polls this Tuesday. (Yiddish) --
4 Wendell Wilke for president. (Yiddish) I myself am voting for
5 Roosevelt.

6 So it was a strong Jewish upbringing, one that was
7 fascinating and pleasant and progressive.

8 **MICHAEL:** So obviously you had the base. So you
9 came to the Federation in this kind of bifurcated, half
10 planning way.

11 **SOL:** Yes.

12 **MICHAEL:** What were your impressions of the
13 Federation at that time, and the Jewish community at that
14 time, from the perspective of someone just entering into the
15 field?

16 **SOL:** Well, two things. One of the things that
17 struck me early is the fact that, as I began to look back at
18 Federation minutes of earlier years, board meeting minutes,
19 the fact that so many of our leaders had such staying power.
20 They were leaders and active in the '30s, and they were still
21 around in the '50s and '60s. That seemed rather extraordinary
22 to me.

23 I subsequently decided there were two factors. One
24 was the United Foundation. At the end of World War II four
25 people sat down, the three chairmen of the automotive

1 companies and Walter Reuther, the president of the United Auto
2 Workers, and they made a decision that employees should
3 contribute to the Torch Drive, the United Foundation's annual
4 campaign. Well, there were hundreds of thousands of employees
5 in the area, and a worker would take out 50 cents a paycheck,
6 a dollar a paycheck, five dollars a paycheck, and it added up,
7 multiplied by a couple hundred thousand, to a very substantial
8 sum. As a result, the United Foundation was the strongest by
9 far in the country, and it provided very well for social
10 agencies. So they didn't need "Jewish philanthropy" to be
11 involved.

12 Along with the fact that there were some very
13 wealthy people from the automotive industry and from the
14 lumber industry, the earlier industry, and also from the
15 fishing industry who were patrons of organizations and the
16 arts. I remember once meeting with the director of art museum
17 and I walk into his office, and there's a letter on the wall
18 that he had framed that was from Charlotte Ford. "Enclosed is
19 a check for a million dollars. It was a very interesting
20 meeting." And Skillman, the 3M executive, she -- I've
21 forgotten her first name -- was very generous, to some Jewish
22 institutions as well, particularly Fresh Air Society. But
23 when there was a need, there were extremely wealthy people who
24 stepped forward.

25 Jews weren't involved. That was in the early years.

1 That changed dramatically in the late '70s and '80s when the
2 automotive industry sort of caved in, or at least the
3 beginning of the decline of the automotive industry, because
4 what they did was, as long as workers were getting a paycheck,
5 there was payroll deduction, and the United Foundation was
6 able to say this amount of money over 26 weeks will be so
7 much, but if a worker is laid off, then we'll reduce the
8 amount. But in the late '70s and early '80s they weren't
9 being laid off, they were being let go. The automotive
10 industry was down-sizing and they were in trouble. And
11 institutions were in trouble financially, and cultural
12 institutions as well.

13 At that point Jews began to become more prevalent in
14 the non-profit area of Detroit. That was not the case in the
15 early post-war years. They were involved in the pre-war
16 years; it was a different era. But in the post-war it wasn't
17 payroll deduction. But in the post-war years they weren't
18 involved in that. It made for a significant difference. It
19 was totally unique in the country.

20 The well-to-do did not have to support the United
21 Foundation. I think I mentioned to you and to others I would
22 say to Sophie, you know, Saturday's paper there's a list of
23 contributors to the Torch Drive, the name of the UF fund-
24 raising drive, and it lists -- do you remember the name of the
25 family that sold their early stock back to Ford for \$25

1 million? The Couzens family. Extremely wealthy family. They
2 listed them with pride as a \$500 contributor. So the climate,
3 the environment was totally different, totally unique. So
4 much so that when I was helping the United Foundation deal
5 with the problems that confronted them after the '80s when I
6 left the Federation, it was very hard to get major gifts
7 functioning.

8 That wasn't true in other cities. We looked at what
9 they were doing in Cleveland or in Los Angeles. They had
10 clubs of \$5,000 and \$10,000. Even in Columbus, the fellow who
11 has the Limited, and other Jewish-owned, would invite 150
12 people to the country club, non-Jews as well as Jews, for a
13 \$5,000 function. I don't know if I should say it publicly,
14 but you could count on one hand, maybe two hands, the number
15 of \$10,000 givers, because when I was counting them, Max
16 Fisher had already been the first non-automotive, non-
17 Christian chairman of the United Foundation. So he brought in
18 the Hamburgers and Tom Borman, Jospy, which was the Hamburger
19 family, so maybe there were ten at the very most.

20 And when I suggested a \$5,000 minimum for a major
21 gift, I was told later that the chairman, who was also the
22 chairman of General Motors, who said yes, we have executives
23 in six figures, but they have to give to the church, and
24 that's too much. So I developed a pilpul. I said look, let's
25 do it for \$2,000, \$3,000 the next year, four and then five.

1 And then they'll see they won't have to make any sacrifice.
2 So what ended up is that didn't work entirely, because later
3 on I saw that they had instituted each category. There were
4 donors at the \$3,000 level, the \$4,000 level and the \$5,000
5 level. They didn't move forward. So that was the first thing
6 that sort of caught my eye when I was at the Federation.

7 Of course I came there at a time when the Jewish
8 neighborhoods were changing. It was ~~not~~ longer Dexter.
9 Although Dexter served the Jewish community for almost a
10 generation. We arrived there in 1929. It was a new
11 neighborhood. And this was already 1957. Northwest Detroit
12 was where Jews were moving.

13 **MICHAEL:** What was your impression of Jews
14 supporting Jewish issues and Jewish causes when you came on
15 board? You had some experience beforehand. But the community
16 support for our infrastructure, what was your impression? And
17 who were the movers and shakers in the volunteer world that
18 helped moved the agenda forward?

19 **SOL:** Well, I'll say a few words about the executive
20 leadership of the Federation later on, as you said. There
21 were two reactions. Outside of Federation my friends viewed
22 Federation as the boys downtown, Jewish or not. They were the
23 enemy. You had to be careful.

24 I learned one thing very early, and that became kind
25 of a focus for me, that the Allied Jewish Campaign, not

1 identified with the Federation, even though it was Federation
2 fund-raising, was well-received and popular. And I decided
3 early that I would try to make the Allied Jewish Campaign into
4 like a shul, a place where people belonged to the campaign.
5 And it was easy to do. As you know, we had 100 sections, and
6 I insisted that each section, occasionally two sections
7 together, should have meetings, and they were generally home
8 meetings except for the furniture boys who met in the
9 furniture club, but that was their home. The campaign became
10 almost a all year-round activity.

11 I thought to myself, except for the people who go to
12 the Yiddish movement, the Labor Zionist movement, those
13 movements were shrinking rather dramatically. They belonged
14 to congregations. Some did go more, some went less, but it
15 wasn't central. I felt we could kind of transform the
16 campaign. We had the meetings in people's homes. They
17 enjoyed that. The leader enjoyed being the host. In the
18 furniture club we used to get together frequently. They were
19 there to play cards. But they would all do campaign business.
20 And it was the kind of business where they could be actively
21 involved. Every section meeting when the workers and the
22 leadership came together, what a wonderful opportunity to talk
23 about the people who weren't there and their capacity to give
24 and who would be most effective with them. And the job could
25 be completed. When you work within the Federation, there's an

1 awful lot of emphasis on process. They had difficulty
2 tolerating that, even though you were involved. So that was
3 one of the early conclusions.

4 MICHAEL: There was also a social component.

5 SOL: Absolutely. They became closer, and that got
6 expressed most fully during the Yom Kippur War in the fall of
7 '73. I remember that we started our campaign in '73. We had
8 two meetings every single week for weeks on end, with well
9 over 100 people there each time, people who had not been
10 "good" contributors to the campaign who were influencing one
11 another as to how much they give. I remember one person
12 getting up, made a \$30,000 gift, had been a \$1,000 giver for
13 years. Very difficult. And he got up and made a speech about
14 come on, you guys, you have to get to your feet. It was a way
15 to build identity, it was a way to teach, it was a way to
16 provide social responsibility.

17 Which leads me to a question I'd like to put to my
18 questioner, who I assume would have been visible in this
19 program, if we wearing suspenders. But since he's not wearing
20 suspenders, he can't be shown.

21 I was a little disappointed when I heard about the
22 name change, that it was now the Annual Campaign of the Jewish
23 Federation. I felt that diminished the effectiveness that I
24 was trying to build in terms of mass participation. It didn't
25 affect major giving, but the numbers of individual

1 contributors diminished considerably. Some part may be
2 related to that, but mostly related to the change in the
3 Jewish economic structure. There were no longer so many
4 businesses, retail businesses owned by Jews, and when a Jew
5 owned a business, we got contributions from the workers. Even
6 when they didn't own a business, I remember two of the people
7 at J.L. Hudson coming over to the store, "we'll go around and
8 collect for the campaign." I don't know if they would have
9 come over to tell me "we'll collect for the Federation."

10 The campaign was identified with Jewish needs and
11 Jewish causes in Israel. Federation was viewed as an
12 oligarchy. And of course with my friends, they wondered how
13 could I do it, no matter how. Reason didn't prevail.

14 **MICHAEL:** Did it ever affect friendships?

15 **SOL:** No. No. Your question about some of the
16 people who I worked with, those I had to jot down quickly.
17 The last two or three days I wrote down --

18 **MICHAEL:** Before you get into people --

19 **SOL:** Okay. Go ahead.

20 **MICHAEL:** -- I just have one question. Did the
21 concept that you promoted in Federation, which I of course
22 grew up with.

23 **SOL:** You suffered with it.

24 **MICHAEL:** Well, everyone should suffer so much. My
25 question is was that a hard sell in the community?

1 SOL: It varied.

2 MICHAEL: Was it a hard sell for the national
3 leadership?

4 SOL: It was a little harder sell for the
5 professional leadership than it was for the lay leadership.
6 Lay leadership were available. We had an army of workers. We
7 didn't have as many generals as I would like, competent
8 generals, but we had an army of workers. And they didn't
9 think, god, another meeting? You rarely heard that. So
10 that's what encouraged me even more.

11 Later on, when I was the executive, I felt
12 comfortable devoting more time there and to a lot of little
13 projects that I had in mind, because there was a very
14 competent associate director, Sam Cohen, who was an excellent
15 social worker. I wish he had been a little more pragmatic. I
16 always felt he was a little bit of a prisoner of his
17 principles and overly committed to process, but that was just
18 a different orientation. But I felt comfortable in terms of
19 his dealing with the agencies and the other portion of
20 Federation responsibilities.

21 MICHAEL: Who were the names of the volunteer
22 mentors that you had the best relationship with, that
23 influenced you the most?

24 SOL: The influences were varied. You know, we
25 worked with some very successful and talented people. Hard to

1 separate out. Well, I think I have to start with Sobie and
2 Bill.

3 **MICHAEL:** So we're in the professionals.

4 **SOL:** No question about it. Detroit, when I took
5 executive responsibility at the Federation in '76, although
6 Sam and I were sort of co-directors, maybe two years earlier
7 Bill, his illness and his convalescence kept him away, if you
8 recall. When I took leadership, Detroit Federation had had 40
9 years of separate and joint leadership by Sobie and Bill.
10 Isador ^{Sobeloff} ~~Sobalov~~ became the director of Federation in 1937. He
11 was a brilliant organizer, brilliant fund-raiser, very, very
12 skilled, extremely bright. He also knew Yiddish. That
13 appealed to me.

14 He was a wordsmith. He had worked somewhere along
15 the way with H.L. Menken, and his first work was in public
16 relations in New York I believe. And as a wordsmith he would
17 fill me in on, you know, words like logorrhea. When one of
18 our occasionally a professional but more frequently a lay
19 leader was talking too long, too much, he said, you know, it's
20 a disease, it's logorrhea. I'd never heard that before. He
21 usually would query me about a Yiddish word that he wasn't
22 sure of, even though I knew he had Vinroch's dictionary at
23 hand. And he had an open door. And he enjoyed that kind of
24 thing. He was the dean of the field, he was the dean of the
25 professional world by far. Acknowledged and recognized as

1 that.

2 Bill ^{AURONIN}~~Runyan~~ came to the Federation in 1948, after
3 the war. Maybe it was '47 then. '48 I think. And he was a
4 social worker par excellence.

5 These two men, together and separately, Sobie from
6 '37 till '64, with Bill being there from '48 to '64, and then
7 Bill from '64 till '76. Forty years. That was an
8 extraordinary gift to the community and to me. You know,
9 Sobie developed -- first of all, he dealt with the Depression
10 years, '37, '38, '40, all the way up to the world war, the
11 American participation in World War II. He dealt with the
12 anti-Semitism that was then. And he developed the contours of
13 the social service community. He added the Jewish Family
14 Service, he added the Jewish Home for the Aged, and he
15 developed the big gift program. Then when Bill came on after
16 World War II, he added the Jewish Vocational Service. I don't
17 know when the Hebrew Free Loan -- you know that better than I
18 as an officer of the Free Loan when he came on, when they came
19 aboard.

20 One of the things the two of them did was -- I
21 mentioned the Histadrut. They did something which no other
22 community in the country was able to do, not that the
23 Histadrut was that strong everywhere else as it was in
24 Detroit because of the labor orientation in the Jewish world
25 and the general community, but they ran separate campaigns,

1 and they ran campaigns and sought gifts from many of the big
2 givers from the Federation community. So there was kind of a
3 conflict there. Well, they worked out a formula where there'd
4 be one campaign run by the Federation. A small part of what
5 was collected would take care of Federation overhead, and
6 there would be a split of the remaining funds. That made for
7 peace.

8 The Shumers and the ^{Schavers}~~Shavers~~, you know, were able to
9 make that gift and it took care of their Histadruit pledge,
10 and it took care of a part of their Federation pledge. It was
11 extraordinary.

12 **MICHAEL:** Revolutionary.

13 **SOL:** Even more so was their -- I mentioned earlier
14 that the community was moving to the northwest, which meant
15 the synagogues were moving to the northwest, and part of the
16 Federation was the United Hebrew Schools. They transformed
17 the United Hebrew Schools into a communal school system, one
18 of only two communities in the country that had a communal
19 school system. I think Milwaukee may have been the other or
20 Minneapolis. But relatively small. In a most ingenious way.

21 They said to the congregations -- it wasn't easy for
22 congregations to raise money for a building. One of the first
23 things they would do was build a school. Federation
24 leadership, mostly in the form of ^{Adwin}~~Runyan~~ and Sobie
25 occasionally would come and say look, United Hebrew Schools is

1 expanding into this area. We want to build a building half a
2 mile from you or a mile from you. Let the United Hebrew
3 Schools run your weekday school, four day a week school.
4 Their teachers, it will be part of their program. You won't
5 have the responsibility, financial responsibility for that.
6 And the carrot, in addition to not having to pay that, we will
7 give you ten years advance rental in one bite. So half a
8 dozen congregations, the United Hebrew Schools, you know,
9 expanded.

10 They were exceptional leaders. In Bill's day they
11 added the Jewish Community Council. Sobie -- I didn't have a
12 role in this -- but since we're talking -- Sobie didn't
13 believe there should be a Jewish Federation apartments. He
14 said I don't think we should be taking government money to
15 build low-cost housing. That's a general community project.
16 He just wasn't sure that it was the right thing to do. I
17 said, Sobie, you know what's happening? I don't know if you
18 saw the notice -- I assume he did, he behaved as if he didn't
19 -- B'Nai B'rith is going to build -- is taking money to build
20 a low-cost housing, I think it was called Freedom Hall or
21 something or other -- downtown Detroit. There are going to be
22 a handful of Jews who will live in downtown Detroit. It can't
23 be a Jewish community for them. No Jewish services or
24 anything else. Yeah, but -- Bill ^{Benjamin} Bunyan saw it differently,
25 convinced the Federation leadership that we should have it.

1 And it's now one of the larger least costly agencies of the
2 Federation, and one that provides extraordinary service to the
3 senior Jewish community.

4 Similarly Sobie and I had a conversation. Sobie
5 didn't want that the UJA should establish a young leadership
6 cabinet in Detroit. He said to me it's a Trojan horse. And I
7 said Sobie, it's true. When you're involved in a national
8 organization, you will have some loyalties that may conflict
9 with the local community, the local federation, but you can
10 trust the boys. There'll be some arguments, but that's good.
11 We want another place for them to be involved. It will make
12 them better donors and better leaders. Well, it wasn't a big
13 issue for him. It was just his inclination not to have it.
14 So that was great.

15 What kind of assets did I bring? Well, I didn't
16 have to bring much. The Federation was a piece of cake in
17 those years. My assets were largely in 3M as I used to tell
18 people. I had math skills. A number of the leaders were
19 always impressed that at every meeting when it concluded, I
20 knew the total and the percentage increase. That made me a
21 winner.

22 The second M was memory. When I was in the Navy, I
23 was going to go to V12, and they gave you a variety of tests,
24 and they said, you know, you have close to a photographic
25 memory based on my ability to identify. But while I was still

1 in boot camp the war ended in Europe in April, and they said
2 no more V12. They sent me off to San Francisco, the naval
3 post office, where I was in a section where I helped direct
4 where the mail would go, what APO it would go to because a
5 ship was going to be docking there. And after six or seven
6 months there, living in a hotel and going to work from nine to
7 five, they sent me to Pearl Harbor. It was four years after
8 the Japanese were there. They felt it was safe enough for me.
9 Because in boot camp I'd already been tagged.

10 We had one occasion where we had to go to the rifle
11 range, and I don't know what the hell it was. I took the
12 bullet, I put it in the rifle, and it would fall out. About
13 the third or fourth or fifth time, the guy came along. I felt
14 somebody grab me by the back of my uniform, pull me up, get
15 the hell out of here.

16 The memory thing, whenever somebody came to a
17 meeting, once I saw the name, I knew what his gift was. I
18 remembered. So the third M of course was modesty. Maybe the
19 most important one at the time. At any rate, that's what was
20 taking place.

21 I had known that I wasn't going to be -- well, I'll
22 get to that later when I deal with leadership. The names, if
23 I can find it on this thing that I scrawled down, because I
24 only put initials. I have to remember what the initials stand
25 for once I find them.

1 After the two of them, Sobie and Bill, you know,
2 they're head and shoulders above anyone else who -- because I
3 had the most involvement with them -- there was the S. S.
4 Frankel. Both Sam and Stanley were extraordinarily helpful
5 and models that I couldn't be. So there were the Frankels.
6 There was Irwin Green, also a very interesting person.

7 I printed here so you'd be able to read this. You
8 keep criticizing my writing, although I was grateful for you
9 because I learned that you interpreted it to other staff.
10 They couldn't read it.

11 There was Bill Berman and David Handelman and Irving
12 Rose. Irving Rose was a special guy. There was Lester
13 Burton. And they all had something a little different to add
14 to my experience. David ^{Herman}~~Herman~~ and Dan Honigman. He
15 wouldn't be on a lot of lists because he was not a person to
16 -- although he recognized. He said to me when he became
17 chairman of the campaign, you know, Sol, I thought I could
18 make a difference in terms of the fund-raising, the gifts of
19 people, particularly with the number of men I was going to be
20 talking to, but you know, the campaign is an institution. I
21 mentioned the Allied Jewish Campaign. We argued occasionally
22 over nickels and dimes, but they were ready to step forward
23 with large sums of money.

24 Zuckerman in another category, but he was an
25 influence. Leonard Simons. ^{Jospey}~~Jospey~~ was an extraordinary guy

1 and really the bedrock of that Hamburger business. The
2 Hamburgers were for many years the largest contributors to the
3 campaign.

4 Davidson, he was extraordinary. No chairman was
5 able to move a meeting along like Bill. It was the Yom Kippur
6 War. We had planning meetings, assignment meetings, in
7 addition to the two fund-raising meetings. Someone would
8 raise something that had been discussed at a previous meeting
9 and a decision made, and Bill was the only chairman who -- the
10 guy wanted to say something I guess, get to his feet, and Bill
11 would say, look, we discussed that previously, we made a
12 decision, we have to move on. He was riveted. I could see
13 why he was who he was.

14 Marty Citron, who was a very thoughtful guy. My
15 feeling, he was my first president I think when I was the
16 executive, and I felt I could just meet with Citron and tell
17 him my point of view and he would be able to get it across and
18 sell it. He was very articulate, very thoughtful.

19 Fisher, I don't say he was an extraordinary person.
20 The remarkable thing about him was his ability to achieve
21 collective action, largely because no one used power like Max
22 did. No one used it more effectively. It wasn't with a club,
23 although he could club.

24 What happened was he was no longer that involved.
25 He was an international figure. But he wanted to know what

1 was going on. So he would have me come over to the office and
2 we'd sit in his office, with a milk-shake and a tuna sandwich,
3 and he wouldn't take calls. Occasionally he would take a call
4 from Kissinger, occasionally a call from Mayor Coleman Young,
5 and he was doing the talking. Both of those fellows could
6 talk, but he was doing the talking.

7 **MICHAEL:** More than one or two presidents called
8 him.

9 **SOL:** Yeah. And Fisher liked the fact that I could
10 announce totals. He was more impressed with the fact that I
11 knew the amounts of money. And then I had a fortuitous thing
12 with him. Project Renewal, if you recall, was a project of
13 his. He wanted to develop something in which people related
14 more closely to Israel, to a city in Israel, and he and Al
15 made a joint gift. And Ed Rose wanted to make a gift. He
16 didn't know anything about Project Renewal, and I don't think
17 the boys knew anything either. But we decided that if he
18 would make a gift, we'd make it to Project Renewal. He wanted
19 a school somewhere. So we made it in Ofakim, some little
20 hamlet in the Negev. So I told Fisher when we were getting
21 together that I have a Project Renewal gift from Ed Rose. Oh,
22 yeah? How much? Half a million dollars. Well, that was the
23 same size gift that he and Taubman together gave. Oh, who the
24 hell is he? And when I told him Irving, you know, he knew.
25 So he was pleased with that. And that's the only real

1 contacts we had.

2 I had contacts with Avern Cohn. And by the way, I
3 would see him here when he would come to lecture at the law
4 school at the University of Washington. He was involved with
5 another one of the people who I worked with frequently, Tilly
6 Brandwine. Tilly was an exceptional woman, gifted. She got
7 Avern to make a gift in honor of his father, Irwin, who -- to
8 do a list of Jews in Michigan in cemeteries. And Tilly ran
9 that program by herself. She got people to go to cemeteries
10 in upstate Michigan and everywhere to record Jewish names. I
11 don't know whether the project ever got completed, but she
12 worked on it for some time.

13 Well, Jane Sherman, she was beginning to appear on
14 the national scene and a little bit on the local scene, but
15 she was interesting in terms of how she pressed an issue in
16 terms of, she wanted answers to questions, but she didn't
17 easily accept them. She was an interesting personality. And
18 of course she's grown enormously since then.

19 Connie Giles was a person who you couldn't help not
20 being influenced by.

21 And the last person was Mike Zeltser, who was
22 president, the second three-year president. I'd known Mike a
23 good deal before I came to the Federation. He was a Labor
24 Zionist. And it was fortuitous in the sense that when I
25 became the executive at Federation, there were things going on

1 in my life at home, and I didn't spend money at the
2 Federation, and neither Leah nor I spent it at home, and even
3 though we were very limited wage earners, we were pretty
4 comfortable in terms of what we wanted.

5 And I said to myself, half a dozen years maybe. And
6 by '78 I was already clocking our total needs and our assets,
7 and I knew that there was no reason why I couldn't leave. And
8 I began to see it. I felt, you know, I'll meet with a few of
9 the organizations in town to counsel them on fund-raising,
10 because I saw many of the same people I was working with in
11 the Federation were moving there to be of assistance. So I
12 ended up meeting for longer or shorter periods without about
13 forty different groups all in the city, and Mike of the
14 savings and loan bank, and Al Deutches, was going through
15 failure. The boom in the real estate market at that time. He
16 was looking for something to do. He said, you know, I was at
17 the Council of Federations to see if there's something they
18 think I could do, either here or with them somewhere else.

19 This was a certainly an opportunity. He was
20 certainly knowledgeable enough to be able to handle the
21 Federation in a transition until they go through three other
22 executives to find the right one, Bob. So it worked out very
23 nicely.

24 The other thing during my administration, you know,
25 we had the bicentennial, 1776-1976. I know Charlotte Dubin

1 worked on that, and I think maybe Sharon Alterman. That was
2 an interesting thing.

3 And then of course we had the General Assembly in
4 Detroit, and that meant fooling around with Koshering the
5 Westin. My second experience working with the VAD. You know,
6 we made a deal how much we would pay them for the job, and Ida
7 Levine, our assistant controller, came down with a bill, which
8 was more than twice as much. So I said don't pay it. She
9 said what can I do? I said, I'll call them. So I called, and
10 they said, oh, it was such a big job. We had 14 MITs working
11 there? MITs? Mishgia in training. We had to be all over the
12 place, so that's why the bill is so high. I said, look, we
13 made an agreement. We didn't agree to run a school for you.
14 It was essential, until you get a bill. Then I got a call
15 from Irwin Cohn. He says not a big deal. But Irwin, it's not
16 a big deal, but it's just you can't take them at their word.
17 It's not fair. He said, I'll pay half. I said, if you'll pay
18 half, we'll pay the other half.

19 My second experience was when we wanted to do what
20 Toronto did. Phil Stolman and some less religious people like
21 Venice came and asked, you know, we're the sons of the people
22 who used to give to these emissaries, these michalchim who
23 come around for Jewish institutions to raise money, and they
24 come into the office, eight, nine, ten times during the year.
25 There's no reason for that. Let's have a central fund, a fund

1 for traditional institutions. We'll write a check and send it
2 to you and you'll distribute it. Seemed like a good idea.
3 And I learned later that Toronto -- or maybe earlier, I don't
4 remember -- had instituted such a program.

5 So we had a few meetings with Lazar Levine, a
6 saintly, wonderful man who was the head of the VAD, head of
7 the Council of Orthodox Rabbis. He agreed, and he agreed to
8 be the spokesperson for it at a meeting where we would confirm
9 it and move ahead.

10 Well, I don't know what went on in the back rooms of
11 the VAD, but when we got to the meeting, there were a number
12 of people there who weren't members of the VAD, they were
13 orthodox rabbis. And he presented the proposal along with
14 Phil, a major orthodox figure in the community, and they began
15 to tear them apart, without any consideration. It was vicious
16 kind of stuff. And the basic tenet that they had was that
17 we're denying mitzvahs. If they give ten checks or twelve
18 checks or fifteen checks a year, they've done fifteen
19 mitzvahs. If they write one check, they only do one. At any
20 rate, it was voted down.

21 That was my earlier experience, and I was always a
22 little suspicious whether it wasn't a setup, but I couldn't
23 believe it was a setup because it had such a vicious tone to
24 it. Vicious is overstating it. Vicious in terms of in terms
25 of the saintly figure who was standing in front of them.

1 At any rate, so that was one of the projects I
2 fooled around with in my years.

3 I wrote down a few of the others. Of course I
4 tried, before I was the executive even, when the ~~JARC~~^{JARC} came to
5 buy the home that the Federation owned on Evergreen, which was
6 used by the National Council of Jewish Women I think for kind
7 of a half-way house. They no longer needed it, and I said
8 gee, there's every reason why we shouldn't sell it to ~~JARC~~^{JARC}.
9 It's not an agency. ~~It's~~^{But...} a good program. Norman ~~Walker~~^{WACHLER} was
10 one of the spokespersons and another one who was involved with
11 the Jewish and the Campaign. I can't think of his name. And
12 Sam Frankel was ready to do it. So I did that.

13 Sobie at that point, and even earlier, said only one
14 thing. Drachler wants to have a friendly Federation. I
15 didn't want a friendly Federation, I wanted a caring
16 Federation. When we can do something that is useful for the
17 community, then we should do it, if it doesn't divert us from
18 our mission.

19 MICHAEL: Is there anything that you wanted to do
20 that was important to you that didn't happen?

21 SOL: Well, when the United Hebrew Schools and
22 Sharay Zedek worked out a joint project, I thought, you know,
23 Hebrew school enrollment was shrinking for a variety of
24 reasons which you're all aware of. Hard to run a school two
25 sessions, four to six and six to eight, and also a unionized

1 school. And when you had to go to a single session, it was
2 impossible. But congregational, particularly in the early
3 suburbs, Oak Park, Southfield, was shrinking in the
4 synagogues. I thought at one point -- but I never did a study
5 of it -- we ought to make the synagogue a neighborhood school.
6 I was thinking of ways the Federation could help. It would be
7 a neighborhood school. Children who live in the neighborhood
8 or unaffiliated, let them go to the school; Federation will
9 pay for the first two years. After that they have to join.
10 If they don't join, they drop out. Well, I never got around
11 to working on that. I don't know if it would have made a
12 difference or not.

13 Generally I tried to do things that I think would
14 have a double-edged effect.

15 Some of the other things I was involved with, the
16 General Assembly, I talked about it from the standpoint of
17 koshering the hotel. But the General Assembly, I was a Labor
18 Zionist, working, raising money for Israel, and the government
19 was Labor Zionist. It was hand in glove. I even got four
20 people who were either Labor Zionists themselves or associated
21 with Labor Zionists on the staff of Federation. And then when
22 I became the executive, who comes to the General Assembly that
23 we have to greet? The member of the Likid Party, Begen, the
24 archenemy. It was so ironic.

25 Beyond that, other events during that time, I

1 mentioned the bicentennial.

2 Oh, the Russians were an issue in our time, a big
3 issue. My involvement, other than the usual thing, with the
4 way we'd get the money from ^{HIAS}Hias and for the resettlement
5 service, et cetera, was when the FBI came to visit me. They
6 wanted the business addresses of where people worked. I said
7 it's a Jewish Family Service. You have to go to them, they
8 run that agency, we don't.

9 Anyway, they sent a regional director of the FBI. I
10 said you're very persuasive. If you can influence it -- and I
11 kept it away from other members, both staff and laity. I
12 figured there was no point in having a discussion. It's
13 something they should do. But it was a couple of tense days
14 and meetings for me.

15 Another item, of course, the mini missions were
16 something. Again, it fit in with my pattern.

17 ~~And there was something I supported because I felt~~
18 ~~it would provide dual benefits, but I can neither think of it~~
19 ~~or find it on here.~~

20 **MICHAEL:** I'm just curious. You know, Detroit
21 always had the reputation of going far beyond their numbers in
22 terms of generosity. You took the Federation through a number
23 of wars, '67, '73.

24 **SOL:** Yes.

25 **MICHAEL:** What do you think was the reason that

1 Detroit was the eightth largest community and it was the second
2 largest or third largest contributor?

3 SOL: Yes. I assume there were a lot of factors. I
4 can't help but think that the anti-Semitic period that we went
5 through in the '30s, and many of the people in our experience
6 were aware of, it didn't play some role in that. Detroit was
7 always a good fund-raising community. My brother for a while
8 was educational director at Temple ~~Bethel~~^{Beth El}, and my brother and
9 I had a pattern where every Sunday we would sit in his office
10 at home and discuss a variety of things. He gave me Irving
11 Katz's book and other about the history, and I was impressed
12 with people I didn't even know, like David Brown, who was a
13 major fund-raiser nationally in the general community. Fred
14 Butzel was very involved in the general community. That was
15 the pre-World War II era, when there was Jewish involvement,
16 and the Jews who had major department stores and others
17 downtown were all looked to. Sam's CUTRATE^{CUTRATE} was the sponsor
18 for the Detroit Symphony, where Chambers, or whatever his name
19 was, was involved with the anti-Semitic newsletter.

20 But we were involved, and that history had some
21 impact I think on our ability.

22 And then I think Sobie and Fred Butzel was a factor,
23 Max Fisher was a huge factor. It's one thing to being good.
24 there's another to being able to maintain it. And someone
25 always came along. Maybe it's Gilbert now, I don't know,

1 whoever you have, we see his ads here, Quicken Loans or
2 something. Very bright. You don't get a mortgage anymore,
3 you get a yourage, something that just fits you, you know.
4 The guy's something else.

5 The fact that we weren't involved in the general
6 philanthropies until much later in our history, all of those
7 things contributed to it. And there was no fund-raiser to
8 match Sobie, and no organizer to match Sobie, and no
9 administrator to match Sobie in the field. We were just very
10 fortunate to have him. Tragic that his career ended in Los
11 Angeles the way it did. But he was always exhilarating.

12 I remember seeing him once. His vision was pretty
13 gone. His wife had already passed away. He said, you know, I
14 have a high school girl who comes in and reads to me, and
15 someone who comes to clean and someone who handles my
16 checkbook. But I still have a vacancy. I said what vacancy?
17 I need a personnel director. He was just an extraordinary
18 human being.

19 **MICHAEL:** Any closing words about the state of the
20 world that we're in?

21 **SOL:** No.

22 **MICHAEL:** Or the state of the Jewish people?

23 **SOL:** No. Nothing. You have to come to my men's
24 club, coffee club every Thursday, and you'll hear that.

25 I do think that Federations, the agencies, they're

1 fairly large businesses, and while I think we're training the
2 workers, the soldiers fairly well in a variety of programs,
3 we're not doing as well by the generals. I don't know that
4 you can run an organization with a \$12 million pretty
5 complicated budget or a \$20 million pretty complex budget
6 without having an executive who either has an MBA or at least
7 has some business training or an institution that doesn't have
8 a chief financial officer. That's awfully hard to do it, and
9 unless you're able to do it, you suffer. Although I see a lot
10 of companies that have all of that, and they suffer, too. But
11 I think that would be helpful along the way, make a
12 difference.

13 There is some work being done in terms of training
14 executives at the universities. I think Stanley Frankel is
15 involved in something. Max Fisher was involved in something
16 at Brandeis, so that would make a difference.

17 Beyond that, I think of my hometown and the decline
18 of the auto industry and what's happened to the city. Only
19 the decades will give the answer to that, I'm afraid. There
20 aren't any shortcuts.

21 Anything else in closing that occurs to you?

22 **MICHAEL:** No. This has been my privilege to do
23 this, and I appreciate that you've taken the time to do it.

24 **SOL:** Did I miss anything that I wanted to say? As
25 I said to you earlier, I want to get on the record as many of

1 those things as I possibly can because some day Federation is
2 going to do a history from the Six Day War on to the present,
3 and at least there will be one place where everything that I
4 could think of was put down and available, ~~and whoever,~~
5 ~~Bilkowski~~, whatever historian you get to do that, will be able
6 to turn to that.

7 Obviously the Maple Drake thing was a big issue in
8 my time. That was Irwin Shaw's involvement. We built the
9 biggest Jewish Community Center in the country, and we had the
10 biggest fiscal problems. Sobie and Bill had taken care of the
11 Sabbath issue in respectable fashion, but the income issue was
12 -- and it was a dilemma. Social agencies don't have the
13 capital and borrowing capacity to go out and bring their
14 system, the health club, up to date every six months in
15 competition with the private clubs that surround them. So
16 it's pretty hard to stay ahead of the game.

17 The other big thing in my time was the Holocaust
18 Memorial Center. I was eager to have it at the Center, and we
19 spent an awful lot of time trying to convince them and
20 convince the Center, and we finally did. The motivation was I
21 felt it would be helpful, it would have a dual benefit. There
22 would be some control of the Holocaust Memorial Center, which
23 wasn't an agency, and it would benefit the Center in terms of
24 the presence of possible members and people in the community.
25 It had some benefits.

1 **MICHAEL:** But it didn't quite work out.

2 **SOL:** Yeah. Well, you knew from the beginning that
3 you were working with an executive at the Holocaust Memorial
4 Center who needed complete control, and while we were able to
5 keep him in check for a number of years -- I don't think it
6 had to do with my departure. It would have happened no matter
7 what. He and I spent a lot of time together.

8 **MICHAEL:** One of the accomplishments that I think
9 can be attributed to you, and it is something that is
10 burgeoning all over country, particularly as the Jewish
11 population ages, and others, too, is the whole issue of
12 endowment. I thought it would be worthwhile for you to say a
13 word or two about endowment, that our program at Federation
14 you clearly began.

15 **SOL:** Well, it happened sort of -- I'll give it to
16 you organically. Early on Federations in Detroit and all
17 around the country would occasionally get a check from an
18 estate, a person who had been a contributor and wanted to
19 leave something to a number of institutions. Sometimes they
20 would get something pretty substantial from someone whose
21 commitment to the Federation was so great that they left a
22 large portion of their estate. I think of Judge Simons and
23 his wife who left almost a half million dollars fairly early
24 on.

25 But one day I got a check in the mail, I think it

1 was from David Cohen, but I'm not entirely sure, for \$5,000
2 from the estate, and I went into Sobie and Bill and I said,
3 you know, I know what happens to these. Either Federation
4 uses it to bolster the campaign or it's used for some other
5 purpose. I'd like to suggest that it would be nice, this
6 fellow was a contributor most of his life. He gave us a
7 \$5,000 check. I'd like to set up for the time being a fund,
8 Allied Jewish Campaign Perpetual Endowment Fund. A little
9 later on we came to the point where we actually organized it.
10 This was before I was an executive. The boys were still
11 around. Our campaigns were always very good. We may not
12 have, as Sobie used to say, they argue with us about
13 percentage of the money, how much goes to Israel, how much of
14 goes to domestic purposes. He would always say, look, would
15 you rather have a percentage of a smaller amount or a larger
16 allocation? That's the way it always was.

17 The arguments were in towns where they were giving
18 not so well, and they wanted a higher percentage to go
19 overseas. But our campaign, as you had pointed out earlier,
20 was so successful that the way in which we divided the funds,
21 which in the earlier days, post-war days, it was established
22 at pretty much 50/50. Our 50 percent was a much higher amount
23 of dollars than the 60 percent that another community was
24 giving. So he always pointed out the obvious, that you're
25 better off this way.

1 So he said yeah, put it in the fund. So we did
2 that, and a few additional checks came in that were not
3 designated, and when we had 35, 40 checks in the fund as
4 contributions, I said, you know, now's the time to institute
5 -- this is before the time we had a full endowment, an Allied
6 Jewish Campaign Permanent Endowment Fund. And the principle
7 was a simple one. These were people who had given to the
8 campaign most of their lives. They may not have been involved
9 in the Federation, but they gave. And they gave to the
10 Federation because there was need, and they believed that the
11 Federation would divide it in a way which reflects their
12 interests and reflects the needs that exist. So why not get
13 them to give a perpetual endowment. They will then know that
14 they're giving something which will support the community at
15 home and overseas in exactly the same fashion as it did during
16 their lifetime. So we set it up.

17 Later on, when Chojak here was the chairman of the
18 United Jewish Charities, and I think Jack Miller was the
19 chairman of the endowment fund, the general chairman, I said,
20 you know, it's time to create an endowment program. There was
21 a lot of resistance to endowments, particularly from the
22 friends overseas. of Israel. So I said let's have a five-
23 prong campaign. Give for an Allied Jewish Campaign permanent
24 endowment fund, give for services of Federation agencies. The
25 Jewish Home for Aged and the Fresh Air Society already had a

1 small fund. So there will be one for aged, one for camping,
2 and Sinai Hospital wants to set up a medical endowment fund.
3 And we'll have a \$100 million campaign.

4 Well, Zuckerman lashed out at me. I said, Paul,
5 we're setting up a fund that will put money into the campaign.
6 People who aren't around making pledges, you know. Your and
7 my interests are taken care of. Well, he finally relented,
8 and he was something of a friend. He had given to the
9 hospital, and we had our first medical endowment meeting at
10 ^{Citrin} Citrin's home, and we got the elder Pritzger to come here
11 shortly after he had given 25 million or something to a
12 university near Chicago, Northwestern perhaps, and named the
13 medical school in the Pritzger name. We raised a few dollars,
14 nothing significant, but we started the idea.

15 I always was an advocate of my child, the Allied
16 Jewish Campaign Permanent Endowment Fund. I thought that's
17 what would appeal to most people. If you have an overriding
18 interest in some one area, then you can set up an endowment
19 there. But certainly your lifetime of giving has demonstrated
20 an interest in this fund. Why not? And we had some
21 successes.

22 When we formally set it up, the endowment fund and
23 the Permanent Allied Jewish Campaign Fund, the Reagan years,
24 interest rates were high, so we had another carrot: We could
25 offer 10 percent growth, and we were getting 15. But we could

1 offer 10 percent growth for the fund, and that appealed to
2 people.

3 And I said it has another purpose. There's money on
4 the shelf that's available to us. It will help on our
5 collections as well. And I said that to Zuckerman in terms of
6 collections. So we instituted it. It's grown as big as it
7 did because I understand the person we had talked to a lot and
8 ^{Gerry} Gerry worked on a lot was Bielfield, and if I'm not mistaken
9 it was an eight figure sum that he got. Was it 10 or 20?

10 **MICHAEL:** I think it was 10.

11 **SOL:** Yeah, 10 million. So I had one sort of figure
12 at 60 million. That means \$6 million a year goes into the
13 campaign right away, or \$4 million, whatever the percentage
14 happens to be at the time. It's a wonderful way to assure
15 security for the community and to make the Federation more of
16 a personal institution, that the family will see thereafter
17 that their father, their grandfather not only was a lifetime
18 contributor but also felt it was important enough that it
19 should be perpetuated, and maybe that will have an impact on
20 them as well. So that was the endowment program that I'm
21 pretty sure was started during Jackier's administration.

22 **MICHAEL:** Pretty revolutionary at the time.

23 **SOL:** Some communities have tried. When I would
24 tell that to other executives or non-profits in Detroit, they
25 said we have such immediate needs that we can't do that. And

1 I notice that there is a huge temptation to set up other
2 monies that will be available for purposes that aren't part of
3 the regular programs that are supported by the campaign of
4 various beneficiaries. You know, you like to be able, if
5 you're a leader, either lay or professional, to be able to
6 direct additional funds. So there was a period where the
7 Allied Jewish Campaign Fund was sort of denigrated. You have
8 to do what you have to do I guess. But it still makes a
9 difference.

10 I don't know that it's still being promoted as fully
11 as it should. Certainly the people who are participants
12 aren't recognized as much as they should, even if it's a card
13 that goes out annually to the family.

14 **MICHAEL:** I have a fund for my father. I get a
15 report every year.

16 **SOL:** Yeah, you get a report, right, on what's in
17 it, and I assume they're sending reports. They have to be I
18 think. But just like I wanted there should be major
19 recognition of Allied Jewish Campaign donors, we put it into
20 the annual -- you know, a person makes a capital gift and
21 their name is on a building or an auditorium or a library
22 forever. Although I think we're moving over and non-profits
23 are moving over, namely it's a time limited gift unless it's
24 stretched way beyond the original amount. But people who have
25 given \$10-\$20-\$30-\$40-\$50 million in their lifetime aren't

1 recognized. I think that's double-edged. It makes some
2 people who talk about the oligarchies say see, but I'm more
3 concerned about the people who gave the money than I am about
4 the critics.

5 **MICHAEL:** Well, at least we have a wall in the
6 Federation building, all of the people and their cumulative
7 giving.

8 **SOL:** Glad to hear that.