

**Oral History of:** Penny Blumenstein  
**Interviewed by:** Susie Pappas  
**Date of Interview:** May 28, 2019  
**Location of Interview:** Max M. Fisher Federation Building  
**Subject Matter:** Women's Philanthropy Dept. of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit

Susie Pappas: [00:01](#) My name is Susie Pappas, and today is May 28, 2019. I am interviewing Penny Blumenstein at the Max M. Fisher Federation Building in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. This interview is being recorded as part of the Women in Leadership Oral History project. Do you give permission to the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives to publish, duplicate or otherwise use this recording for educational purposes, and for use as deemed appropriate by the archives?

Penny Blumenstein: [00:36](#) I do.

Susie Pappas: [00:37](#) The Women's Philanthropy Department has had several names throughout its history. For the purposes of this interview, the questions will refer to it by its current name, Women's Philanthropy, but feel free to use whatever name you're comfortable with.

Susie Pappas: [00:57](#) Okay, Penny, when and where were you born?

Penny Blumenstein [01:01](#) I was born in Detroit. Do you want me to give the date? I will, no. But, Detroit. I was born in Detroit at Harper Hospital.

Susie Pappas: [01:14](#) Where did your family live at the time?

Penny Blumenstein [01:17](#) At that time, they lived on Pasadena in the Dexter Davidson neighborhood. We lived there until I was nine.

Susie Pappas: [01:26](#) And then where did you go?

Penny Blumenstein [01:28](#) Then we moved to Sherwood Forest, Seven Mile and Livernois area. I kind of changed schools a lot.

Susie Pappas: [01:40](#) Tell me the schools that you went to.

Penny Blumenstein [01:42](#) I started off, I was at McCullough. I went to McCullough for kindergarten through the second grade. I moved when I was in the third grade, and I went to Hampton. I went to Hampton until I was in the sixth grade. Then they changed the lines of the district, so anybody who wasn't graduating that year had to move and I ended up going to Pasture for actually the sixth grade, seventh grade and eighth grade. Then I went to Mumford after that.

Susie Pappas: [02:21](#) Mumford, right. Do you have brothers and sisters?

Penny Blumenstein [02:26](#) I do. I have two brothers and one sister.

Susie Pappas: [02:29](#) How does the [crosstalk 00:02:31]-

Penny Blumenstein [02:30](#) I am the second in line, so I had an older brother, a younger brother, and an even younger sister.

Susie Pappas: [02:38](#) Okay, how was religion observed in your house when you were growing up?

Penny Blumenstein [02:44](#) My father was very active in the community, as was my mother, so both of them were active. We belonged to Shaarey Zedek so we were very traditional. I can't say that we were a really, really observant family, but we had Shabbat every Friday with the rule that as we got older, you had to come to the table without curlers in your hair. You could go out, but you couldn't look like you were getting ready to go out.

Susie Pappas: [03:18](#) That's funny.

Penny Blumenstein [03:20](#) We certainly celebrated the major holidays. I would have to say that my father was a little more observant in his Shul practice than my mother, but we did have every holiday. My mother was a very warm, welcoming person so she always included people and the family came together for every major holiday.

Susie Pappas: [03:44](#) What were your parents' names?

Penny Blumenstein [03:46](#) My father's name was Gerson Bernstein, and my mother was Lee Bernstein. My mother actually came from Cleveland, but established she as a bride. She established a great relationship with my father's family, and her family continued to come back and forth because truthfully, this wasn't that far. We went back and forth. We had very good family relations, and it worked out that I have wonderful aunts.

Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">04:17</a>	Two of my aunts are still alive. One is 100, and one is 95.
Susie Pappas:	<a href="#">04:22</a>	Amazing.
Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">04:23</a>	Almost 96. They are dynamos. I'm hoping for all those genes.
Susie Pappas:	<a href="#">04:29</a>	Did you have a Bar Mitzvah?
Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">04:34</a>	No, Shaarey Zedek did not have Bar Mitzvahs then, no.
Susie Pappas:	<a href="#">04:37</a>	They didn't. They didn't.
Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">04:38</a>	I was consecrated. Now Shaarey Zedek was late to the table there. They just didn't have [crosstalk 00:04:46]-
Susie Pappas:	<a href="#">04:46</a>	But did you continue [crosstalk 00:04:47]-
Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">04:47</a>	Neither did my daughter.
Susie Pappas:	<a href="#">04:48</a>	Your daughter didn't either?
Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">04:49</a>	No, because they still didn't.
Susie Pappas:	<a href="#">04:52</a>	Did you continue with... Was there a Hebrew high school? Did you go-
Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">04:57</a>	Yeah, well I went until I was almost 16, so yes. I didn't continue after my consecration, but it did keep me there a little longer.
Susie Pappas:	<a href="#">05:08</a>	Would you say that philanthropy was important to your family when you were growing up? If so, how did you know that?
Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">05:16</a>	It was very important. My father was, as they say, extremely active in a larger framework of working for community organizations, working for the synagogue, doing all kinds of things that really put him out in the place where most things were going on. He worked for a lot of different... He was very active at JVS, and in other organizations. So, you could always see it.
Penny Blumenstein	<a href="#">05:47</a>	My mother was active in Hadassah. She also became very active in the March of Dimes, because my sister at age five, had Polio. She started marching every year for the March of Dimes. One or two years when she didn't happen to be here when the march was going on, I marched. So, it was an early indoctrination into doing your part. It was just what was part of our home.

Penny Blumenstein [06:15](#) My grandparents were very much- I'm not even talking about wealth, I'm just talking about participation and having the ability- my grandmother was very active in the Denver Home, which became this huge asthma hospital, because my aunt had asthma so long ago. She always was raising money, aside from all the other things, for the Denver Hospital, which that was what it was called at that time.

Susie Pappas: [06:48](#) So, you definitely grew up surrounded by philanthropy.

Penny Blumenstein [06:52](#) Yes.

Susie Pappas: [06:53](#) When you were in high school, did you do any Jewish youth groups?

Penny Blumenstein [06:57](#) Yes. It was a Jewish center group. It was not like BBYO, but we had a club. The club had a more adult leader, and it all was centered around the center because in those days- not that there weren't BBYOs. Everything was there, you just had to join. But, if you wanted to have a girl's group, they didn't want you to just... I mean, it wasn't like a sorority where you just sort of went off and you did have an organization. That was really centered at the Jewish Center, which was on Woodward, a long way away.

Susie Pappas: [07:42](#) Okay. Okay. When did you first become involved with the Federation?

Penny Blumenstein [07:52](#) I cannot tell you the year. The first thing I knew about Federation was when I was a young married- very young- and somebody rang my doorbell and asked for money. I didn't know what to do. Was it a dollar? Was it five dollars? I mean really and truly, it was really a surprise to me.

Susie Pappas: [08:18](#) Is this when you were first married?

Penny Blumenstein [08:20](#) Yes.

Susie Pappas: [08:21](#) Okay.

Penny Blumenstein [08:23](#) I had already been involved in a few things, because my aunt who was in Hadassah, had taken me to several Hadassah meetings. But, this was coming to me for money? Oh, that was a really uncomfortable thing. I had no idea that people [crosstalk 00:08:39]-

Susie Pappas: [08:39](#) So, how did you handle that?

Penny Blumenstein [08:41](#) I can't remember exactly, but I gave her something. When I shut the door... I mean, I was literally shaking. When my husband came home I said to him I really didn't know what to do. He said, "Well, you could have given them money." I said, "Well, I did but I didn't know if it was the right amount." I felt so unsure. But, it did kind of wake me up. I was part of an ORT chapter in those years. I don't know how they do it today, or if they do it all, but there was... Women's ORT used to go, and they would have sort of a neighborhood group of people.

Penny Blumenstein [09:16](#) One of my friends said, "We're going to start one here," and somehow all of a sudden we got this group together-

Susie Pappas: [09:22](#) Which group was it? Do you know?

Penny Blumenstein [09:22](#) Fairview, it was called.

Susie Pappas: [09:24](#) Fairview ORT, right.

Penny Blumenstein [09:25](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Susie Pappas: [09:25](#) They would have different chapters. Chapters.

Penny Blumenstein [09:28](#) Yes. Yes, right.

Susie Pappas: [09:28](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Penny Blumenstein [09:32](#) We did things. It wasn't just about raising money. We had programming, we had projects. I mean it was very low key and very easy. There were several women who were really very strong leaders, so that was good.

Susie Pappas: [09:49](#) Were you one of those leaders in that group?

Penny Blumenstein [09:51](#) Well, this is the thing, do you remember Josie [Keane 00:09:54]?

Susie Pappas: [09:55](#) No, I don't.

Penny Blumenstein [09:55](#) No, you probably don't. Do you know Diane Keane?

Susie Pappas: [09:57](#) Oh yeah.

Penny Blumenstein [09:58](#) Okay, well this... Josie was married to her husband first a long, long, long ago.

Susie Pappas: [10:05](#) Okay, right.

Penny Blumenstein [10:07](#) Anyway, she was one of their leaders. We had others. But, I would do things. First, I was the Treasurer. Then, I was the Program person. I said I would do any job they wanted, I just didn't want to be President. That was my mantra. Anything, but being President. And I wasn't. I remember the first program that I had, that I had to introduce this speaker. I was so nervous. I never heard one word I said. My heart was pounding in my ears. People said, "Oh, you spoke so beautifully."

Penny Blumenstein [10:46](#) I said, "Really?" You're flabbergasted. Are you kidding? I just go through this with my life. But, these are things. I just overcame that eventually, but I also overcame the fear about asking for money and giving money.

Susie Pappas: [11:04](#) How did that come about?

Penny Blumenstein [11:08](#) Because Dulcie Rosenfeld took me in to the Leadership Program. She mentored me through that. It was a wonderful program. It was a very serious program.

Susie Pappas: [11:22](#) Tell us about that program.

Penny Blumenstein [11:24](#) That program was... I can't remember exactly how many weeks, but it was a number of weeks. That program was very intense. I mean, you learned about every phase of what things you would be talking about, about what you would be doing. It really also was giving you some leadership skills as you went along. It was my first experience with a kind of leadership training program, and it was very informative and gave you a lot more confidence.

Susie Pappas: [11:57](#) Do you remember what year you might have done that?

Penny Blumenstein [12:03](#) I don't have a clue.

Susie Pappas: [12:04](#) Okay, well it was probably 40 years ago at least.

Penny Blumenstein [12:09](#) Oh, at least.

Susie Pappas: [12:10](#) Yeah.

Penny Blumenstein [12:11](#) Oh, for sure it was 40 years ago.

Susie Pappas: [12:13](#) Well, maybe-

Penny Blumenstein [12:13](#) That's kind of scary, isn't it? When you say that, "Oh, yeah it was 40 years ago."

Susie Pappas: [12:16](#) I know. So probably-

Penny Blumenstein [12:17](#) It was probably 40 years ago.

Susie Pappas: [12:20](#) Probably in the 70s sometime, huh?

Penny Blumenstein [12:21](#) Oh, yes.

Susie Pappas: [12:21](#) Yeah.

Penny Blumenstein [12:22](#) Yeah.

Susie Pappas: [12:23](#) Okay.

Penny Blumenstein [12:23](#) Yeah, it might have even been in the 60s.

Susie Pappas: [12:26](#) That's hard to know. I took it as well, but I did it in '77.

Penny Blumenstein [12:31](#) Yeah, no it was really early on.

Susie Pappas: [12:34](#) What came out of that?

Penny Blumenstein [12:36](#) What came out of that is then you're identified and they ask you to work, and you started to work. You'd make some calls, you start doing some programming.

Susie Pappas: [12:50](#) Because in those days, Federation... Or Women's Department-

Penny Blumenstein [12:53](#) Women's Department then.

Susie Pappas: [12:56](#) It was really Women's Division.

Penny Blumenstein [12:57](#) Yes, it was.

Susie Pappas: [12:58](#) Okay.

Penny Blumenstein [12:59](#) You are so right.

Susie Pappas: [13:00](#) I know.

Penny Blumenstein [13:00](#) It was Women's Division.

Susie Pappas: [13:01](#) I know.

Penny Blumenstein [13:02](#) You are so right. Thank you.

Susie Pappas: [13:02](#) In those days, there were two tracks. There was the fundraising track and the education track. Were you on one side more than the other? Do you remember-

Penny Blumenstein [13:15](#) Both.

Susie Pappas: [13:16](#) Okay. Do you remember-

Penny Blumenstein [13:18](#) I don't know why it was both, but it was.

Susie Pappas: [13:19](#) Well that's how they did it. They did it-

Penny Blumenstein [13:21](#) Yeah, I did both.

Susie Pappas: [13:22](#) Yeah, they did that because they wanted people to feel comfortable on both sides of the aisle so to speak.

Penny Blumenstein [13:31](#) Right, right.

Susie Pappas: [13:32](#) Do you remember certain programs that you might have chaired in those days?

Penny Blumenstein [13:37](#) Well, I remember doing one at the center that was on Davison-

Susie Pappas: [13:45](#) Meyers.

Penny Blumenstein [13:46](#) Yeah.

Susie Pappas: [13:46](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Penny Blumenstein [13:51](#) That one, we did where we had rooms... We kind of created a little Israel in different aspects of Israel. Do you remember that one?

Susie Pappas: [14:01](#) Yeah. Yeah, and everybody really... There was like a [Shuk 00:14:05] and all of that, yeah.

Penny Blumenstein [14:06](#) Yeah, right.

Susie Pappas: [14:07](#) It was fun.

Penny Blumenstein [14:08](#) Right, yeah.

Susie Pappas: [14:08](#) It was fun.

Penny Blumenstein [14:09](#) It was a lot of work doing these programs, but it was fun and there was a lot of comradery. I made so many friends. It was

such a wonderful experience. Look, one of my dearest friends today is Nancy Grosfeld. I would never have known her- I mean, maybe I would have, but never in that way- if I hadn't met her through some Federation activity.

Susie Pappas: [14:30](#)

She said the same thing about you.

Penny Blumenstein [14:32](#)

Yeah.

Susie Pappas: [14:37](#)

Do you remember... Well, you mentioned Dulcie Rosenfeld. Were there other leaders that you remember when you first began?

Penny Blumenstein [14:44](#)

Edith Jackier, Tillie Brandwine, oh gosh we were so lucky. We had some of the most incredible women, and I always say that if times had been different, any one of those women should have been the President at one time or another of the Federation because they were so competent and so devoted, and focused. They had it all. They really did. It was just, as you say, it was Women's Division. What was Women's Division? Nothing but another part of the campaign. We were like secondary- no, not even secondary, that's way too high. We were just out there somewhere, just a division. We got to a point where we did start to fight for our place.

Susie Pappas: [15:39](#)

Well, do you remember when they changed the name to Women's Department? I remember that. It was right around... Because I remember it was Linda Klein when we did that, and she came right after you.

Penny Blumenstein [15:52](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative), mm-hmm (affirmative).

Susie Pappas: [15:52](#)

Yeah, and that was kind of-

Penny Blumenstein [15:54](#)

Right.

Susie Pappas: [15:54](#)

Now we were a department.

Penny Blumenstein [15:55](#)

How about the Lion?

Susie Pappas: [15:57](#)

Well, for sure that. Lion, that was [inaudible 00:16:00] when they brought that.

Penny Blumenstein [16:01](#)

Yes.

Susie Pappas: [16:01](#)

Okay, so was your husband involved in Federation?

Penny Blumenstein [16:05](#) Yes. Actually, it was very sporadic. Harold's not much of an organizational person. Give him something to do, and he's going to take care of it and whatever. But Harold got very enthused. It was during the time of the '67 war. They had a meeting at the United Hebrew Schools, and he was there. People were raising money. He came home, and he said to me, "I gave them \$5,000.00. I pledged \$5,000.00."

Penny Blumenstein [16:43](#) I said, "Harold, where are we going to get \$5,000.00? Are you kidding?" And he said, "We'll find a way. We'll get it." Not just the war itself, what was going on, the need of the moment, but the way other leadership people came out and came together, and gave untold amounts of money. That was it for him. Then he was identified as a Young Leadership person- not that we ever were part of Young Leadership. By then, we were... It wasn't how our age, it was we got married younger. We did all those things younger.

Penny Blumenstein [17:30](#) So, we kind of passed that. But, we went on a Young Leadership mission to Israel for two weeks. Two weeks in Israel.

Susie Pappas: [17:43](#) What year?

Penny Blumenstein [17:44](#) 1971.

Susie Pappas: [17:49](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Penny Blumenstein [17:52](#) There were people from across the whole United States. Couples. We spent two weeks in Israel, which was a really in depth program. It changed our lives, truthfully. It really did. It just changed our lives and focused on just those things that we knew, but we didn't feel the same way that we did when we came home. It was [crosstalk 00:18:16].

Susie Pappas: [18:16](#) How did your involvement affect your children? First of all, tell us about your children, and-

Penny Blumenstein [18:23](#) I have three children, two boys and a girl. Unfortunately, they all live in different places. I have one here, and one in Wisconsin, and one in Arizona. That's always too bad. But, I'll tell you how it affected them. There were days I wasn't there, meetings I attended where somebody else was taking care of them, or they were tending to themselves. The phone. So, campaign time would come, and I would say to them, "I need some quiet time. You go do whatever you're going to do, but I need to be able to be able to be on the phone without being interrupted so that I can make my calls."

Penny Blumenstein [19:06](#) They learned that that was really important. They learned why I was doing it, obviously, but they also respected it. I would say that each one of them has absorbed this feeling of philanthropy from us, some maybe more than others. I mean, there's no one like Ricky who just... He's my bonding person. My other kids too, and in their communities they do things. They think it's really important, and they follow through-

Susie Pappas: [19:43](#) And learned that from you. From you and Harold.

Penny Blumenstein [19:46](#) Yes.

Susie Pappas: [19:47](#) Right, okay.

Penny Blumenstein [19:47](#) Yeah.

Susie Pappas: [19:51](#) Before you became President, what positions did you hold within Women's Philanthropy?

Penny Blumenstein [20:00](#) I chaired several divisions. Actually, I chaired the Ruby Division the year that it was... They decided at the meeting- and it was a \$3,600.00 gift. At the meeting, I'll forget this, Diane Klein gets up and says, "This Division is going to be-" When was Sharon Hart? Sharon Hart. She said, "Our minimum's now going to be \$5,000.00."

Susie Pappas: [20:41](#) So that's the Lion Division, that's not the Ruby Division?

Penny Blumenstein [20:45](#) Yes. That was the Lion... I'm sorry, the Lion Division.

Susie Pappas: [20:47](#) Yes.

Penny Blumenstein [20:48](#) So, I'm sitting there. I've already agreed to chair this. Now, they're telling me... And I looked at them and I said, "So, now I have to go home and tell my husband it's just that I raised to \$3,600.00, now I have to say \$5,000?" Oh, that was very good.

Susie Pappas: [21:04](#) Yeah.

Penny Blumenstein [21:04](#) That was very good. But I did.

Susie Pappas: [21:06](#) Okay.

Penny Blumenstein [21:07](#) Of course, in the long run we found a way.

Susie Pappas: [21:11](#) Of course, of course. So, did you at that time see yourself as eventually being President of Women's?

Penny Blumenstein [21:21](#) No.

Susie Pappas: [21:23](#) Is that something you aspired to?

Penny Blumenstein [21:25](#) No, I really didn't. I've never aspired to any of the roles. It's just not my thing. I don't sort of plan out my life, or say, "This is what I really want to do."

Susie Pappas: [21:39](#) How did it come about? How did you first become Campaign Chair and then ultimately become President?

Penny Blumenstein [21:47](#) Well, that's the choice of the past Presidents.

Susie Pappas: [21:50](#) Right, but-

Penny Blumenstein [21:51](#) So, when they come to you and they say, "We'd like you to be the Associate Campaign Chair," it's a really big honor.

Susie Pappas: [21:59](#) Were you surprised? Or just-

Penny Blumenstein [22:02](#) I don't know by that time that I would say I was surprised. I would say, "Okay, I've done all these other things. I've been involved for a really, really long time." You recognize when it's your turn. Everybody should take their turn if they're ready, and people are ready for them. So, that was the natural thing.

Susie Pappas: [22:28](#) Do you remember some of the duties that you did, or anything that you felt that you brought to your time as being Campaign Chair?

Penny Blumenstein [22:42](#) Well, we have such a wonderful program here, and so many wonderful people that work with you. I would say, if anything, having had my experiences of not being able to do this so easily made it easy to talk to other people about you can overcome this. Nobody finds it like, "Oh, I can hardly wait to get to the phone." [crosstalk 00:23:08]-

Susie Pappas: [23:08](#) Is that Susie Citron?

Penny Blumenstein [23:10](#) Maybe. You've got it. She just can hardly wait. I don't know know anyone else who does.

Susie Pappas: [23:15](#) No, I don't either.

Penny Blumenstein [23:16](#) They all say, "Okay, I've got to get this done. I'm just going to get started. I'm going to get started. Okay, I'll do it in an hour." I think my ability to be relaxed and accessible, if I added anything

to that, it was that. I'm also well organized, so when I planned out certain things, I was able to help in that way if they weren't... If I didn't think we were structured in the right way, or I thought there were other things that we could do. I know that worker training became a huge plus for me. I really felt that worker training was the kind of thing that you could really help people in their ability to move forward.

Susie Pappas: [24:10](#)

I agree. I think worker training is primary. So, you were Campaign Chair, and then you became President. How did you view both roles, like Campaign Chair and then President?

Penny Blumenstein [24:28](#)

That's interesting, because when I became President I said, "I think I'll just be a one year President." It isn't really what I want to do. By that time, I was so immersed in campaign I didn't really think I wanted to be President. I told you President, that was really not the thing I would ever like to do.

Penny Blumenstein [24:46](#)

But somehow when I was there, and I saw that I could have let's say direct influence on interesting programming, or putting people in the right places to help them to rise, being not only a leadership person but also someone who could help other people to that role, and you could do that a lot more in a broader sense with a lot of people. That's where we get many of our campaign workers, is from those people who think they just want to do programming. So, anyway one year led to two.

Susie Pappas: [25:25](#)

And you enjoyed it, right?

Penny Blumenstein [25:28](#)

I did. I really did.

Susie Pappas: [25:30](#)

So, when you think back... First of all, who are some of the staff people that you worked with? Do you remember that?

Penny Blumenstein [25:39](#)

Oh my goodness. Oh geez.

Susie Pappas: [25:40](#)

Well, I mean did you have an exec that you would-

Penny Blumenstein [25:43](#)

Well, I had... Well, Sally Krugel was my exec for a while. I had so many execs during that time period. We were-

Susie Pappas: [25:53](#)

Did you have a lot of transition going on?

Penny Blumenstein [25:55](#)

A lot. That was kind of hard, and then sometimes we would get a new person, and then you'd have to start... It was kind of like starting all over again.

Susie Pappas: [26:04](#) Frightening.

Penny Blumenstein [26:06](#) When I first started working with the Women's Division, it was what... What was her name? Oh my God, that sweet lady. She ran everything. Do you remember who she was?

Susie Pappas: [26:17](#) No.

Penny Blumenstein [26:18](#) She was the Woman's Division person- and I'm sorry I can't remember-

Susie Pappas: [26:24](#) I can't remember.

Penny Blumenstein [26:25](#) Her name now. You'd have to-

Susie Pappas: [26:26](#) Not Lois Brown, no.

Penny Blumenstein [26:28](#) No, Lois Brown was there, but then there was this other person-

Susie Pappas: [26:32](#) I can't remember who it was.

Penny Blumenstein [26:34](#) But anyway, and then we started evolving. All of a sudden having-

Susie Pappas: [26:40](#) Well, I remember Sally, but then we had Barbara Satinsky for a little bit after that.

Penny Blumenstein [26:46](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Susie Pappas: [26:47](#) Well, okay. So-

Penny Blumenstein [26:48](#) I'm sorry.

Susie Pappas: [26:49](#) No, that's okay.

Penny Blumenstein [26:50](#) Listen, I'm really lucky I know your name, Susie.

Susie Pappas: [26:55](#) Penny, since this is obviously, we're talking about Women's. This would take all night if we were going to go on. I'm just going to talk about Women's. When you think back to your time, what were your proudest accomplishments? Maybe you just told me that, but do you have anything else that-

Penny Blumenstein [27:13](#) No, I will say that one of my proudest accomplishments was making it more important within the Federation that women had not only an active role, but an important role. I, for whatever reason, had a very good relationship with a lot of our

men leaders. I just felt like you cannot push these women as if they're just an appendage. They are really the heart and soul. I think I had a lot of influence with them, and because of that, was able to have them be a greater part of the Federation as a whole. When I was Campaign Chair, we decided that we wanted to bring the Lion to this community.

- Susie Pappas: [28:15](#) That's a big one. Tell us about that.
- Penny Blumenstein [28:17](#) Whoa.
- Susie Pappas: [28:19](#) Tell us what that meant, bringing the Lion.
- Penny Blumenstein [28:23](#) There were so many communities that had the Lion pin-
- Susie Pappas: [28:27](#) The Lion pin.
- Penny Blumenstein [28:28](#) We already had the identity. We already had the dollar levels-
- Susie Pappas: [28:37](#) The vision.
- Penny Blumenstein [28:37](#) We already had all that. But, when I had the pin, it was something that our senior leaders did not think we needed. We've always done great. I just picture either Jackie or Suze. We don't need that. It is not necessary in this community. This community is special, and it was. Our community always had a higher per capita, fundraising that any other community- it didn't matter how much the dollars were and the total, higher per capita.
- Penny Blumenstein [29:15](#) The pin was relevant to them, but I had heard so much. During those years, we used to have UJA training. I'll tell you, it's something that is sorely missed today because no community can do as much as these regional meetings did.
- Susie Pappas: [29:38](#) So, yeah about the regional meetings.
- Penny Blumenstein [29:41](#) I went to lots of them, and learned all kinds of different skills, and met the whole world of women leadership out there, which was a very valuable thing. We're really missing that.
- Susie Pappas: [29:56](#) Yeah, I agree. We are missing that.
- Penny Blumenstein [29:56](#) Really missing that. A lot of their training helped me do whatever else I was doing. One of the things that they were talking about at every meeting now was using the Lion as a fundraising tool. When I came back and talked to my little

cabinet, we agreed that we should do that. But then I had to bring it to everyone, and we had these stalwarts who just... They were, believe me, my mentors and the people I respected, but we said, "You really need to consider the fact that this has been so useful. If you don't want one, you don't have to wear one. But, we found it to be amazing. From the minute I started wearing my pin, people would come and say, "Oh, what a beautiful pin that is." I'd say, "Yes, but you can't just buy this pin." It was great. It was a golden-

- Susie Pappas: [31:01](#) It was a great fundraising-
- Penny Blumenstein [31:01](#) Opportunity-
- Susie Pappas: [31:01](#) A great fundraising-
- Penny Blumenstein [31:01](#) Absolutely.
- Susie Pappas: [31:02](#) And you brought it during your campaign.
- Penny Blumenstein [31:04](#) Yes, but believe me, I got a lot of backlash.
- Susie Pappas: [31:08](#) [crosstalk 00:31:08] here we are so many years later.
- Penny Blumenstein [31:09](#) Right.
- Susie Pappas: [31:12](#) So, I'm going to just ask you a few things about Women's, and why is it important to you? Why has it been important? I think you've probably talked about that, but is there-
- Penny Blumenstein [31:24](#) I have, but I'll tell you that I really believe that philanthropy starts in the home. Philanthropy starts with a woman. It isn't that all women are going to be philanthropic, or that they are even going to be that person. But most of them are, on whatever level. Therefore, they inspire their children, and they influence their husband. Now, when I was first active, most women didn't work. It was your gift that you discussed with your husband, so you wanted to give something, but you managed to... If you were knowledgeable enough, you could instruct your husband with the things that he didn't know.
- Penny Blumenstein [32:17](#) Tell him what the new things were, what the needs were, or whatever it is. You could be his resource. I do feel that way. I feel that children take an example as much from their mother, if not more so in those areas, because they see her first doing that. The father, if he's active, he's going to meetings. He's not

at home or interacting with these other women, or making the telephone calls.

- Susie Pappas: [32:50](#) That's true.
- Penny Blumenstein [32:51](#) All right, so you set an example for your children, and you I think in the long run, really educate your husband.
- Susie Pappas: [33:03](#) Why do think it's important for a women to have their own separate campaign?
- Penny Blumenstein [33:12](#) I think for our own self image, and in some ways, I know it's just a portion of what the total gift is. But I also think that that's, in it's own way, a little bit of a fundraiser, because if the husband wants to get up and announce his gift, or be in the Division even though yes, the money can be merged, he wants to know he's giving that much. Whatever that much is. What his wife is giving is that much plus.
- Susie Pappas: [33:47](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Penny Blumenstein [33:48](#) Now, I know it doesn't always work that way, but it works that way often enough. The thought is, "Well, I don't want to really take away from your gifts, so I'd like to give X," and therefore the gift does get bigger. I feel really fortunate because my husband says, "Take whatever part of our gift you want, and call it yours," so I do. I take a big chunk. I know it doesn't matter because that's the money we're going to be giving as a total at this point in life, although at every big meeting he gets up and he adds to it some way or another.
- Penny Blumenstein [34:27](#) But, I feel really good about that, and he knows I feel good about that. He wants me to feel that I'm really a part of this. Although today's world is a little different, and the women... The relationships, the way they do their money, I recognize all the changes. There's still that heart and that connection. Sitting down to talk about it, where the husband used to just make the gift and the woman didn't even really know, and now it's a conversation.
- Susie Pappas: [35:01](#) Do you remember they would say that the government would-
- Penny Blumenstein [35:09](#) That they count, and that's really true.
- Susie Pappas: [35:10](#) Okay, but there would be two gifts, not just one.

Penny Blumenstein [35:13](#) Absolutely, and that's true. But that would be if you gave a dollar and he gave \$100,000.00, but it was true. They were counting, and particularly then, they were counting how many people were supporting the Jewish causes of particularly Israel, and it made a big difference.

Susie Pappas: [35:30](#) I know. I know. I'm going to end with a question for you. What are your hopes for women's philanthropy in the future?

Penny Blumenstein [35:46](#) I would have to say that my hopes is that we can continue it in somewhat of the form we've had, because it draws the women in- not the women who just have the money and can give it freely, but the women who need to be encouraged, the women who need to be involved in some way. I think that we have a great opportunity here of bringing new people in all the time, and helping them to become philanthropists.

Susie Pappas: [36:24](#) Thank you. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add?

Penny Blumenstein [36:28](#) No, I'd just like to say, thank you Susie for reminding me about a few of the things that I couldn't quite remember.

Susie Pappas: [36:34](#) Well, [crosstalk 00:36:35] a good team.

Penny Blumenstein [36:36](#) Yes, it's great.

Susie Pappas: [36:37](#) Thank you, Penny.

Penny Blumenstein [36:37](#) Thank you.