

Oral History of: Jane Sherman
Interviewed by: Michael Berke
Date of Interview: June 27, 2019
Location of Interview: Max M. Fisher Federation Building
Subject Matter: Women's Philanthropy Dept. of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit

Michael Berke: [00:01](#) My name is Michael Berke, and today is June 27th. I'm interviewing Jane Sherman at the Max M. Fisher Building in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. This interview is being recorded as part of the Women In Leadership Oral History Project.

Michael Berke: [00:15](#) Jane, do you give permission to the Leonard N. Simons Community Archives to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use this recording for educational purposes and for use as deemed appropriate by the Archives?

Jane Sherman: [00:27](#) Yes.

Michael Berke: [00:28](#) The Women's Philanthropy Department of the Jewish Federation has had several names throughout its history, including Women's Division, and Women's Campaign and Education Department. For the purposes of this interview, the department will be referred to by its current name, Women's Philanthropy, but you may call it whatever you want.

Michael Berke: [00:51](#) As I just said, this is kind of fun.

Jane Sherman: [00:58](#) I know, I was going to say, when I go back forever, when we were 30.

Michael Berke: [01:06](#) Your career in the community is almost unparalleled, but for the purpose of this interview, we're sort of going to focus on Women's Department, and your involvement with the Women's Department, and how it impacted on you. Some of these questions may be just that kind of focus.

Michael Berke: [01:27](#) Tell me where you were born.

Jane Sherman: [01:29](#) I was born in Detroit, Michigan, Hooper Hospital.

Michael Berke: [01:33](#) Where'd you go to school?

Jane Sherman: [01:33](#) That's more complicated. I started kindergarten in Arizona, then I went to Hampton through seventh grade, and then I went away to school in St. Louis, and I graduated from Clayton High School in St. Louis, Missouri. Then I went on to Connecticut College For Women, got married, came back here, and went to Wayne.

Michael Berke: [01:53](#) Okay. How was religion observed in your family?

Jane Sherman: [01:57](#) There was none.

Michael Berke: [02:00](#) None at all?

Jane Sherman: [02:00](#) None at all, none at all. I think Yom Kippur, my father stayed home. There was no religion. My mother died when I was 12, and there surely was no religion from my stepmother.

Michael Berke: [02:14](#) Did your mother, I'm going off questions just for a second, I'm curious, she died at 12, did she have an interest in philanthropy?

Jane Sherman: [02:28](#) I don't know about philanthropy, but she was very interested in Israel.

Michael Berke: [02:32](#) She was?

Jane Sherman: [02:32](#) Yes, that I know. The philanthropy, I didn't know from philanthropy at 12.

Michael Berke: [02:41](#) Take that one step further, how was philanthropy, how was it important to you and your family?

Jane Sherman: [02:50](#) Then or today?

Michael Berke: [02:52](#) Then, back then.

Jane Sherman: [02:53](#) Then, I don't think that it was even an issue. Nobody discussed it. I did this interview last week in Israel for Toldot, and my first Jewish memory was sitting with my father at the Lee Plaza Hotel, and I think my mother was there too. We had an apartment there, because we were waiting for our house to build, in November of 1947. I remember the radio, I remember exactly where I sat, it was one of those old fashioned radios with the two speakers.

Jane Sherman: [03:25](#) I'm listening to the vote for partition at the United Nations. I remember that thoroughly. Other than that, there is nothing else, except when I went away to school, I did insist that I go to Jewish, not Jewish, Sunday school, so I could be confirmed, which I was in St. Louis.

Jane Sherman: [03:47](#) There was no religious background. My religious background really came from my girlfriend's parents who had Shabbat on Friday night, and I learned that later in life.

Michael Berke: [03:57](#) What about organizational background? Was there any of that, that streamed through your relationships back then?

Jane Sherman: [04:03](#) No, there was nothing. I went to Temple for Sunday school and confirmation. Other than that, there was no Jewish ...

Michael Berke: [04:09](#) Was Women's Department your first major foray into-

Jane Sherman: [04:14](#) No. My first major foray was in Florida. First of all, when we first got married, we were asked to join the Young Adult Division. Then we moved to Florida. After we were in Florida for nine months, we went to Israel on the second Young Leadership Mission for the United Jewish Appeal. That's where I really became involved, enamored.

Jane Sherman: [04:37](#) It changed my life. I wanted to make aliyah, Larry didn't, he had a retail business. He didn't think he had anything to offer the country. In 1961, they didn't need retailers. They needed doctors and engineers, that was his excuse.

Jane Sherman: [04:51](#) I came back to Florida, and I got involved in there, I guess it was a Women's Department, but I helped start what was then the Young Women's Division in Florida, in their Federation.

Jane Sherman: [05:02](#) When we came back here three years later, I think it was Shelby Tauber that took me downtown, to get involved in Women's Division here.

Michael Berke: [05:11](#) Was Shelby sort of a mentor to you when you started out?

Jane Sherman: [05:16](#) We had lots of role models in those days, Frieda Stollman.

Michael Berke: [05:20](#) Yes, tell me about them.

Jane Sherman: [05:20](#) Tilly Brandwine, Edith Jackier. I remember Frieda was the first one to call me for a pledge after the Six Day War, and I gave \$500. I thought I was giving a billion dollars away. I had told her

six months earlier that I couldn't go ... \$500 was the top level of the Women's Division then. I couldn't give the \$500. Six months later, we gave it. I gave it.

- Michael Berke: [05:43](#) Your dad was already involved.
- Jane Sherman: [05:45](#) Yeah, but he never really imposed anything. By then, he was Chairman of UJA, he had been Campaign Chairman here, though I wasn't here when he was Campaign Chairman and President of the Detroit Federation. It really was their mentorship and role model that got me involved in what was going on.
- Michael Berke: [06:05](#) You were involved in Florida, in the Young Adult Division.
- Jane Sherman: [06:08](#) Yeah, in the Women's Division.
- Michael Berke: [06:08](#) When you came back here, it was really the Women's Division that you were involved.
- Jane Sherman: [06:12](#) Yes, I never went after-
- Michael Berke: [06:13](#) You never went into the Young-
- Jane Sherman: [06:15](#) No, I never went back to the Young Adult Division here.
- Michael Berke: [06:17](#) Were you involved in any other organizations in the community, or was that the first and only at that time?
- Jane Sherman: [06:23](#) At that time, who had time? You had kids.
- Michael Berke: [06:30](#) The Women's Department was the beginning of your involvement in Federation and Federation activity.
- Jane Sherman: [06:35](#) Correct.
- Michael Berke: [06:38](#) Who are the leaders, beyond the ones you just mentioned? Do you remember who the President of the Women's Department was when you came on board?
- Jane Sherman: [06:48](#) Do I remember? No. Was it Frieda? It could have been Frieda. I don't remember. I know Frieda was very involved, and Tilly, Shirley Harris, Edith Jackier, they were all ... Barbara Marcuse could have been President. She was President before Frieda. I don't remember, I can look up there on the wall and tell you.
- Michael Berke: [07:11](#) Shelby was-

Jane Sherman: [07:12](#) Shelby was a volunteer. She had obviously done more than I did, because she's the one that dragged me down there.

Michael Berke: [07:24](#) When you made the decision to become involved in Women's Department, what were the activities that you sort of hooked onto, that were of interest?

Jane Sherman: [07:34](#) I don't know if you make a decision.

Michael Berke: [07:37](#) Where did they lead you?

Jane Sherman: [07:37](#) I went into the Campaign Department. That was the only thing I was interested in, was campaigning. I loved it, as you well know.

Michael Berke: [07:46](#) Really?

Jane Sherman: [07:50](#) Really. Asking for money was not a tough task for me, I enjoyed it. It wasn't for me, it was for somebody else.

Michael Berke: [07:57](#) Was there the kind of training that you wanted and needed to make you a good fundraiser?

Jane Sherman: [08:05](#) In those days, there wasn't any training. I think Ruthie [Broder] and I started the training program, which was much, much later. There was really no training in those days. There was card call, we sat in a room, and we'd go over all the women's cards and say, "I'll take this one, you take this one." Nobody really taught you what to do. We set up the program years later.

Michael Berke: [08:28](#) Was Larry involved at that time?

Jane Sherman: [08:30](#) Yes, while he was trying to do a business, but he became involved in the retail division, the campaign had different divisions.

Michael Berke: [08:41](#) How much of your time was spent in those early days in the Women's Philanthropy?

Jane Sherman: [08:46](#) In the early days?

Michael Berke: [08:47](#) Yeah.

Jane Sherman: [08:48](#) Well, all my free time that I had. I mean we were trying to raise three children.

Michael Berke: [08:53](#) That's my question, how did your family feel about you being involved?

Jane Sherman: [08:55](#) In those days, I wasn't running around. It wasn't until the 70s, when I became involved nationally, that it really took a toll on my family.

Michael Berke: [09:04](#) Was Larry involved, did he get involved right away with the shoe section?

Jane Sherman: [09:09](#) I don't remember, I don't remember. Probably. Probably.

Michael Berke: [09:11](#) I worked with Larry, he was one of the first people that I worked with.

Jane Sherman: [09:13](#) Okay, so you'll know what year it was.

Michael Berke: [09:16](#) Well, he may have been involved much before I came to work here.

Jane Sherman: [09:20](#) I'm sure he did, because we were both still so in love with Israel, and wanting to give back, that our involvement ...

Michael Berke: [09:32](#) The Women's Philanthropy, a touchstone for them has always been educating, and training, and making them comfortable in doing the kinds of things, including fundraising. What role did you play in educating? You said that you and Ruth started the whole fundraising-

Jane Sherman: [09:50](#) Ruthie and I started a leadership, what was it called? I guess leadership too. Where we taught people how to solicit. In fact, we took it on the road with us. We did a real training program. I don't think there was anything before that. Today, of course, they do it a lot, but this was 40 years ago.

Jane Sherman: [10:14](#) We wrote the program, we put it together, and we went on the road with it.

Michael Berke: [10:19](#) Were you able to get any of that through to the general campaign and the Men's ...

Jane Sherman: [10:26](#) Not until I became Campaign Chairman, which was 400 years later.

Michael Berke: [10:31](#) We'll talk about that department.

Jane Sherman: [10:36](#) I still feel, and I felt at the time that women educate their families. It's not a matter of myself being educated, I feel I already was. It's what we discuss at the dinner table that gets across to your children, more so than what the men do. I feel

the fact that women are involved in the community has a much stronger impact on their families.

- Michael Berke: [10:56](#) I assume that's still going on.
- Jane Sherman: [10:58](#) I would hope so.
- Michael Berke: [11:02](#) Tell me about your rise within the Women's Philanthropy. What positions did you hold, starting from when you started?
- Jane Sherman: [11:09](#) All the way from the bottom, all the way to the top. I took every position from phone a gift, to whatever the next division is, to Chairman of what was major gifts at the time. I forget, it was a \$500 thing, I remember, when I was Chairman, Vivian Dennis came to speak, it was at the Renaissance Center downtown. To Campaign Chairman, to President.
- Jane Sherman: [11:34](#) I went through the whole gamut, I chaired every division right through from the bottom. You said, I really went from the bottom right up to the top.
- Michael Berke: [11:42](#) What were your duties as Campaign Chair? What are the things that you did?
- Jane Sherman: [11:46](#) I felt very important that women in the leadership need to be as knowledgeable as I was about Israel. The first thing I did is we took the executive committee to Israel, on a trip, where I felt that they needed the learning experience.
- Michael Berke: [12:01](#) How many women went on that?
- Jane Sherman: [12:03](#) I think 16 or 17.
- Michael Berke: [12:05](#) Wow.
- Jane Sherman: [12:07](#) I felt it was very important that they have ... In those days, Israel was the number one fundraising tool. If they didn't understand what was going on, and I think I was Campaign Chairman in what? '79? I'd already been involved in the national system by then. I felt very important that I had been to Poland, and Romania, and Israel two or three times, through the national system. I felt it was very important that our women have the same knowledge, and understanding, and feeling for the state of Israel and the problems they had at the time, that I did.
- Michael Berke: [12:49](#) Do you want some water?

Jane Sherman: [12:51](#) I got it.

Michael Berke: [12:57](#) That was, I'm editorializing, that was a very important innovation, something that had never occurred before. Were there other innovations in your Campaign Chairman life?

Jane Sherman: [13:08](#) Do you think I can remember that? I can't.

Michael Berke: [13:10](#) I think you remember everything.

Jane Sherman: [13:11](#) I cannot remember. I would hope there were, but I really can't remember.

Michael Berke: [13:17](#) Do you remember how much the Women's Philanthropy raised at that time?

Jane Sherman: [13:20](#) Maybe a million dollars.

Michael Berke: [13:22](#) A million?

Jane Sherman: [13:22](#) Yeah, probably a million. Michael, I'm being absolutely honest, I cannot remember.

Michael Berke: [13:27](#) That's okay, that's okay. How long were you the Chairman of the campaign?

Jane Sherman: [13:32](#) I was Chairman of the campaign for two years.

Michael Berke: [13:35](#) Did you go immediately to the Presidency?

Jane Sherman: [13:37](#) I took the Presidency, I did not want to take the Presidency.

Michael Berke: [13:39](#) Because?

Jane Sherman: [13:41](#) I'm a campaigner. I wanted to be a campaigner. I wasn't, I can't say not interested, but I really didn't want to take the role. I did it for one year. I promised Dulcie Rosenfeld that I would do it for one year, because we were hiring a new exec, and they felt that I should be in that position.

Michael Berke: [13:57](#) Who was the exec?

Jane Sherman: [13:57](#) Michelle Passon.

Michael Berke: [13:58](#) Oh.

Jane Sherman: [14:02](#) I took it for one year, screwed up the whole system.

Michael Berke: [14:06](#) In what way?

Jane Sherman: [14:06](#) It was two years, two years, it screwed up the whole system.

Michael Berke: [14:10](#) I get what-

Jane Sherman: [14:11](#) Then somebody came in to be President that had never been Campaign Chairman.

Michael Berke: [14:16](#) Not a good thing probably.

Jane Sherman: [14:17](#) Well, I don't know. It worked, it was Ellen LaBes. I think you need the Campaign Chairman.

Michael Berke: [14:23](#) Were there any innovations in your Presidency that you're particularly proud of?

Jane Sherman: [14:28](#) I wasn't there a while, I don't know. If there were any, I'd like to say there were a billion, but I don't remember what they are.

Michael Berke: [14:32](#) What role did you play as President in the campaign?

Jane Sherman: [14:36](#) In the Women's Campaign?

Michael Berke: [14:37](#) In the Women's Campaign.

Jane Sherman: [14:38](#) A major role. You have a Campaign Chairman, but you still play a major role as President. Everything that goes on, the President's really involved in that, and the Education Department. You don't take over. Marlene Borman followed after me, and she was Campaign Chairman. I didn't want to get in her way.

Michael Berke: [15:00](#) You said that the campaign didn't benefit from Women's Philanthropy until you became the Campaign Chair.

Jane Sherman: [15:10](#) I did not say that.

Michael Berke: [15:12](#) Let me finish the question. I'm saying, what are the things that you think in your Presidency and your Campaign Chairmanship, that you were able to impart to the men, to make them better campaigners?

Jane Sherman: [15:24](#) I don't know if it happened til I became Campaign Chairman of the general campaign.

Michael Berke: [15:30](#) Yeah.

Jane Sherman: [15:31](#) I would understand the enthusiasm, having meetings. Of course, I had it with David Hermelin, and so it was fun too. I think that our enthusiasm and our excitement for what went on, teaching them how ... David and I would go out and solicit people face to face all the time. We tried to instill that upon our weekly meetings, with all the other campaigners. I would hope some of that ... That all came obviously from the training I had in the Women's Department or Women's Division, or whatever it's called today. I would hope that it instilled in the men ... We had a very, very successful campaign when David and I were Campaign Chairmen.

Michael Berke: [16:11](#) Yeah, I know.

Jane Sherman: [16:12](#) A lot of fun.

Michael Berke: [16:13](#) I know that too.

Jane Sherman: [16:14](#) A lot of fun. It cost us both a fortune. Every time you go ask somebody for money for the campaign, you've got to give back.

Michael Berke: [16:22](#) When you and David were Chair of the campaign, what was the mood in the community? What were the challenges that we were facing at that time? Israel related? Local community?

Jane Sherman: [16:36](#) I think it was still Israel related. It was '89, Russian Jewry. David and I took missions to the former Soviet Union, it was before the breakup. We had all these refuseniks coming out, going to Ladispoli. That was a very, very important part of our campaign.

Michael Berke: [16:57](#) Did the Women's Department play an important role in that whole initiative?

Jane Sherman: [17:00](#) I would hope so. I'm sure they did. We were discussing the other night going to Washington. I was in a meeting, and somebody asked Ray where was I, and I was in Israel. Somebody asked, "Everybody in this room that was in Washington for the march in 1986, raise your hand." I was at a Jewish Agency dinner, and it was amazing the number of people that had been there.

Michael Berke: [17:25](#) Is that right?

Jane Sherman: [17:25](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Michael Berke: [17:26](#) I was there too.

Jane Sherman: [17:27](#) I know. I know. Remember, I lost Larry Jackier's son.

Michael Berke: [17:30](#) My son was there too.

Jane Sherman: [17:31](#) My kids were there too, but I lost Seth Jackier, I will never forget it.

Michael Berke: [17:41](#) Do you have anyone that you really underline as being one of your mentors in Women's Philanthropy, the ones that really taught you?

Jane Sherman: [17:49](#) I said that, Frieda, Tilly, I think they were two of the most important role models.

Michael Berke: [17:57](#) In what way did they serve as a role model, and how did they make you a better leader, in terms of being able to move the Women's Philanthropy agenda forward?

Jane Sherman: [18:12](#) First of all, they taught me the importance of Women's Department. I think their demeanor and keeping me calmer. I think their understanding of what went on in the world, and instilling it upon me, and obviously other women, not just me. They were a major, major importance to what I did.

Michael Berke: [18:37](#) You took the 16 women to Israel in your campaign trip. What were some of the other proud accomplishments that you think you had at that time, President, Campaign Chair? How did the whole Women's Philanthropy change in that dynamic of Jane Sherman?

Jane Sherman: [18:56](#) I would hope that it became much more exciting in that time. We used to have great meetings, a lot of enthusiasm. A real understanding and involvement of more people than there had been previously.

Michael Berke: [19:13](#) How did solicitation change from the time you started in Women's Philanthropy to the time that you sort of evolved out of it, into the general community? You said that you had meetings and you called cards, but was there more personal solicitation as you-

Jane Sherman: [19:32](#) Yes, no, it was more personalized solicitation earlier than it was later. I was still personalized solicitation when I was Campaign Chairman. We still called cards at meetings, at the big meetings, etc., etc. It was one-on-one solicitation. Today, I don't know if there's any, and a lot of it, I don't know when the Women's Campaign, but surely in the general campaign, it's done by staff

now lately, which I think is a mistake. I think you have to do both.

- Michael Berke: [20:01](#) Did the activity that the Women's Philanthropy had in soliciting their prospects in the Women's Department have impact on the general campaign, and the way those people were solicited?
- Jane Sherman: [20:15](#) I don't know about the way they were solicited, but I think it definitely had an impact on the campaign.
- Michael Berke: [20:20](#) In terms of the quality of the gift?
- Jane Sherman: [20:22](#) Yes. I would say the quality of the gift, yes.
- Michael Berke: [20:29](#) You talked about Michelle Passon being the staff person that came on board. Talk to me a moment about what you think the relationship is between staff and the volunteer leadership.
- Jane Sherman: [20:41](#) I think it's a partnership. You know how I feel about this. I think it's a partnership. I think one can't do the job, you have to do it together. If not, it doesn't work. I don't view staff any differently than I do lay leadership.
- Michael Berke: [20:56](#) Give me some examples of the partnership that you had.
- Jane Sherman: [21:00](#) My partnership with you.
- Michael Berke: [21:02](#) That was later on. I'm talking about in Women's Philanthropy, where you worked together to really ...
- Jane Sherman: [21:08](#) That's a tough question, because I don't remember.
- Michael Berke: [21:11](#) Talk about your partnership with me.
- Jane Sherman: [21:13](#) Do I have to?
- Michael Berke: [21:15](#) No.
- Jane Sherman: [21:15](#) You and I had a particular relationship, we could share everything together. I felt you were, you in many ways were my role model and my mentor. You did a lot of things to help me, to encourage me. You knew how I felt about becoming general Campaign Chairman. I didn't want to be the second woman. If I wasn't the first woman, I wasn't interested.
- Jane Sherman: [21:39](#) Just your help all the way along the line was very important to what I did in the general campaign, in any campaign.

Michael Berke: [21:46](#) Do you think that you served as a mentor for a Michelle in the work?

Jane Sherman: [21:52](#) I think so, even though I was only there for a year. I think so.

Michael Berke: [21:56](#) You kept an ongoing relationship with Women's Philanthropy, even after you moved on, didn't you?

Jane Sherman: [22:02](#) Yeah.

Michael Berke: [22:03](#) There were cards that you solicited.

Jane Sherman: [22:03](#) I did it for 20 years, 30 years. Yeah.

Michael Berke: [22:08](#) Did you think that was important, the continuity?

Jane Sherman: [22:10](#) Yes. All the continuity in any organization is very important.

Michael Berke: [22:18](#) It's interesting, as more and more women became involved as they evolved into the general dynamic of Federation, was there a sense that we were losing them in the Women's Philanthropy because they were going on to other things?

Jane Sherman: [22:32](#) I don't think so.

Michael Berke: [22:33](#) Were more people like you, who ...

Jane Sherman: [22:35](#) I don't think so. I think we were more concerned on the women that started in the Women's Philanthropy, I mean on the general campaign, we wanted to get them into Women's Philanthropy.

Michael Berke: [22:44](#) Did that occur?

Jane Sherman: [22:44](#) In some cases. In some cases, it didn't.

Michael Berke: [22:48](#) In your opinion, there's been a dynamic change because more and more women today are professionals and involved in the community at large, and really involved in other institutions beyond the Federation. What do you think we need to do? What do you think we're doing to keep women involved, not only in the Federation, but in the dynamic of Women's Philanthropy, which I still think is very important?

Jane Sherman: [23:16](#) I still think it's very important. I think what they've got to do has to be for the younger generation. I think the big luncheon they have, the Women's Philanthropy, I don't even remember what

it's called, the Signature Event, I think it's a very important event. I don't know if it's a fundraising event, but it is a very important event to show ...

- Jane Sherman: [23:39](#) One of the biggest complaints, and you know this as well as I do, among men or women, is the Federation only calls for money, "The only call I get is ..." I hope it's evolved over the years, that we provide much more than picking up the phone with money. I think that we've done that. I think Miriam probably did it better than anybody. When Miriam Rosenzweig came in here and started the work with the young adults, or whatever they call it today, and started all these programs, where they'd come and they weren't asking them for money. Then they got them involved, I think that's the most important, particularly with this generation. I think it's much, much harder today to raise money among the younger generation, than it was to do it with our generation.
- Jane Sherman: [24:25](#) First of all, you had a state of Israel that was going to war or having wars. You had the Russian immigration. You had the Ethiopian immigration, things to tie to. Today, the younger generation doesn't have these issues, so it's very difficult. We have to bring them in with an understanding that they have a sense of ... To explain to them a sense of community, which again, is a problem.
- Michael Berke: [24:51](#) You just named a lot of things that were there for us, that we could build a campaign on. Did the women play an important part in moving those agendas and those initiatives forward back then, Jane?
- Jane Sherman: [25:05](#) No, no. I think they were there, I don't know if they played an important part.
- Michael Berke: [25:10](#) Were they part of the-
- Jane Sherman: [25:13](#) No.
- Michael Berke: [25:14](#) I was just going to say was it part of the dialogue that was held in Women's Department, to help them raise money?
- Jane Sherman: [25:22](#) Oh yes, it was part of the dialogue, but were they part of making the decisions, I don't think so.
- Michael Berke: [25:27](#) What about now?

Jane Sherman: [25:29](#) I would hope, we've got a woman President, you've had two women Presidents, lots of women Campaign Chairmen, I would hope they'd have part in the dialogue.

Michael Berke: [25:36](#) I'm even talking about Women's Philanthropy having a role in the dynamic of the Federation.

Jane Sherman: [25:41](#) It's really hard for me to say, because I'm too far away from it.

Michael Berke: [25:48](#) What would you suspect?

Jane Sherman: [25:50](#) I would hope so. I'm not going to say suspect anything.

Michael Berke: [25:57](#) It says here, who were the staff people in Women's Philanthropy, besides Michelle, that you worked with?

Jane Sherman: [26:03](#) Barbara ...

Michael Berke: [26:04](#) Satinsky.

Jane Sherman: [26:04](#) Satinsky. What's her name before Barbara? She died, short. I was going to Frieda, it wasn't.

Michael Berke: [26:16](#) Bertha Chomsky?

Jane Sherman: [26:16](#) Bertha Chomsky.

Michael Berke: [26:17](#) Did you work with Lois?

Jane Sherman: [26:19](#) Yes, I worked with Lois, Lois Brown.

Michael Berke: [26:22](#) Yeah, she was unique, because she was a lay leader before she was a ...

Jane Sherman: [26:24](#) Yeah. I became a professional too, as a lay leader.

Michael Berke: [26:29](#) You still are.

Jane Sherman: [26:29](#) Yeah.

Michael Berke: [26:32](#) How were you affected by transition from one staff person to the other? What did you feel was your role and responsibility, when one staff person left and a new person came on?

Jane Sherman: [26:44](#) I think you have to be able to be there to mentor them and help them with what's going on. Obviously, somebody like Michelle, who came in out of the blue, and she had to learn what was

going on, and begin to understand what was happening in Women's Department. It's more of a partnership, but it's a teaching role too. Without telling, it's a teaching role, "Here's how we do it. Maybe you've got ideas to do it better." If we're doing a leadership development program, going through the whole process. It's not easy to step into that role from out of nowhere.

- Michael Berke: [27:18](#) What skills do you think are required to make a good leader in this, not only Women's Philanthropy-
- Jane Sherman: [27:26](#) The biggest skill is you've got to turn around and make sure they're following you, somebody behind you. Somebody following you.
- Michael Berke: [27:31](#) Interesting.
- Jane Sherman: [27:34](#) Well, it is. If you don't have anybody behind you, you're not a leader. I think probably enthusiasm, dedication, and be able to instill that upon the people that are following you.
- Michael Berke: [27:45](#) Was Women's Philanthropy sort of the impetus for moving you through the system?
- Jane Sherman: [27:50](#) Yes.
- Michael Berke: [27:50](#) Was that a good first-
- Jane Sherman: [27:51](#) Well that, yes. That, and getting involved in the overseas operations and the national level.
- Michael Berke: [28:01](#) Was that concurrent with your involvement in Women's Philanthropy?
- Jane Sherman: [28:03](#) Yes, it was even before. I became involved in the national women's scene. I went to Poland, and Romania, and Israel with Silvia Hassenfeld in 1974. I was maybe Chairman of the big gifts division. I've got a mental block. Ruthie and I went, and I think that catapulted me. I went that year, I went the next year. Then I was asked to go on the National Women's Board, then I was asked to start the Young Women's National Young Leadership Cabinet. That all happened before I became Women's Division Campaign Chairman.
- Michael Berke: [28:39](#) You did all of those things, important things. Were you able to translate and bring that back?

Jane Sherman: [28:44](#) What I learned on the-

Michael Berke: [28:46](#) What you learned on ... Tell me a little bit about that.

Jane Sherman: [28:48](#) I definitely think the fact that I had been to Poland, and Romania, and Israel, I had been there right after the Yom Kippur War, I think that gave me an opportunity to explain, and I hope instill in everybody the feelings and what was going on in a world that not everybody had seen at that stage of the game.

Jane Sherman: [29:13](#) I think by my storytelling, I would build hope, that people got [inaudible 00:29:19] I'm a pretty enthusiastic speaker, so I think that ... I believed in what I was talking about.

Michael Berke: [29:26](#) Were you able to translate that beyond the Women's Philanthropy? Did the general campaign make use of those skills?

Jane Sherman: [29:34](#) Yes.

Michael Berke: [29:35](#) What impact do you think that, that had? Was it Jane Sherman related? Was it someone coming from Women's Philanthropy related, or a little combination of both?

Jane Sherman: [29:46](#) I think it was probably both. I think it was my expertise. I think it was my leadership ability. I think it was the amount of stuff that I knew, that others didn't know. Where I had been in the world, and what I had learned. I hope all those things led to some leadership in the general campaign.

Michael Berke: [30:04](#) Do you think women solicit differently than men?

Jane Sherman: [30:08](#) Well, having never-

Michael Berke: [30:10](#) Back then and now?

Jane Sherman: [30:14](#) I don't think I do. I think most women are probably a little bit more timid than I am.

Michael Berke: [30:19](#) Still?

Jane Sherman: [30:20](#) I believe so. Most women, they still don't ... I feel that you don't get if you don't ask, and I'm not scared to ask. I don't know how many women really ask, or they just pick up the phone and call, "Michael, I've got your card. Will you make a pledge today." I'd rather call Michael Berke, "I have your card. Would you raise

your pledge \$10,000." I think that's little bit more effective. Not exactly like that. I don't believe, if you don't ask, you don't get.

- Michael Berke: [30:52](#) It's true, I agree with you.
- Jane Sherman: [30:55](#) You taught me too.
- Michael Berke: [30:56](#) Where does Women's Philanthropy fit into the lexicon of your skillset, in terms of how important it was to you?
- Jane Sherman: [31:05](#) It was very important, it taught me everything that I know.
- Michael Berke: [31:09](#) Yeah?
- Jane Sherman: [31:10](#) A lot of it. I don't know if it's Women's Department, National Women's Division, but all of it, which you don't have in a general campaign, you don't have that. That and the Young Leadership Cabinet, all those things gave me the tools that I was able to use later in life.
- Michael Berke: [31:27](#) Now I'm going to flip that, what did you teach us, from your perspective as a leader in the community? I'm focusing on Women's Philanthropy, because I know that you did.
- Jane Sherman: [31:41](#) What did I teach Women's Philanthropy?
- Michael Berke: [31:43](#) Yeah. How did you as a leader change-
- Jane Sherman: [31:46](#) I hope that I taught them that you have to really love what you're doing, and really believe in the future of the Jewish people. That we have a responsibility to the future of the Jewish people. If I taught them that, and sense of community, which was very important. It has to be the total community, it can't be the home for the agent, or just the state of Israel. If we're going to keep this community going, the sense of community is very important. I think the excitement, and the knowledge I had about many of these things, I believe I instilled in the women that followed after me.
- Michael Berke: [32:24](#) Is it true still today that, that's an important thing to do?
- Jane Sherman: [32:28](#) Community? Yes, it's more important today than it ever was, and we have a real issue with it.
- Michael Berke: [32:34](#) I'm interested in what you think the challenges we're facing today ... We can talk about how the women can play a role in meeting those challenges, but I'm interested-

Jane Sherman: [32:45](#) I think it's men or women, I think the biggest challenge we have today are two things with the younger generation. Number one, sense of community, and wanting to designate, and designation of giving. Then you've got the issue of whether we should be supporting Israel, against the fact that we're bad to the Palestinians. Those issues for the many very liberal young Jews that are in college. I think we have a threefold process to deal with.

Jane Sherman: [33:16](#) First of all, I think the one about Israel and the Palestinians is one of education. I've just dealt with it in Israel for the past three weeks. I think we have to teach our young people, they have to be much better educated to be able to counteract what's going on, on the campuses. You probably know that as well, being President of Hillel.

Jane Sherman: [33:39](#) The other thing is that I believe that this generation, maybe it's because Israel is not as important to their life. They should believe it's important to their lives, but they don't. They don't have the same sense of community. I think we have to teach them about community, that it's for all Jews. Everything has to be together, everybody can't go out and make Shabbas themselves. It's a very difficult process with this generation.

Jane Sherman: [34:06](#) We have to start with them when they're young, educate them properly. Some of the programs they've got going here, the Grosfeld trip, the Emerging Leaders Program, involving men and women, not just doing it for men, I think are very, very important to teach people here, teach people all over the country.

Jane Sherman: [34:23](#) Obviously, we come from a community that is much stronger than anyplace else in the United States, maybe Cleveland's as strong, community wise. Still, you're hearing the young people talk about how they want to designate their giving, and not become involved ... They don't want somebody else making their choice of where their money's going.

Michael Berke: [34:46](#) What do you think about that?

Jane Sherman: [34:46](#) What do I think about it? I happen not to agree with it.

Michael Berke: [34:50](#) Because?

Jane Sherman: [34:51](#) Because I feel that if everybody starts making Shabbas for themselves, we will not have a Jewish community that can support all the needs in the future. Be it here or in Israel, it

doesn't make any difference, or in Poland, or Hungary, or Germany, or Argentina, wherever you want to talk. I believe if everybody next week decides they want to give to the Home For the Aged, and nobody wants to give to JVS, and nobody wants to give to Israel, what happens to the whole Jewish structure of the Federation movement?

- Jane Sherman: [35:22](#) I think it's very important, and I think we need to teach them to understand that.
- Michael Berke: [35:27](#) Do you think we're doing an adequate job of that at this point?
- Jane Sherman: [35:30](#) I think in Detroit we are, but a number of other communities, they're not.
- Michael Berke: [35:34](#) Do you think Women's Philanthropy, that's a priority for them?
- Jane Sherman: [35:37](#) I don't know, you'll have to ask the Chairman of the Women's Philanthropy? I can't answer that. I would hope it is. I think they've shied away from ... They are doing a leadership development program, I'm not involved enough in Women's Philanthropy to really give you the answers about that.
- Michael Berke: [35:53](#) You really can't speak about how it's changed over the years?
- Jane Sherman: [35:57](#) Not in the last 10-
- Michael Berke: [35:57](#) Maybe you have a sense.
- Jane Sherman: [35:58](#) Not in the last-
- Michael Berke: [35:59](#) Tell me how it changed over the course of when you started with them, til you sort of lost contact.
- Jane Sherman: [36:05](#) They became much more involved in campaign. When they stopped calling cards at the Lion of Judah meeting, it drove me crazy. Even my daughter said, "I went to this meeting and they didn't call cards," she was amazed. They get much more insulated. I would have fought the battle to keep calling cards. I still think it raises more money. They'd kill me if I did it.
- Michael Berke: [36:29](#) Did you have something to do with the creation of the Lion of Judah? I don't remember.
- Jane Sherman: [36:33](#) No, I didn't want to bring the pin here, if you remember.
- Michael Berke: [36:36](#) I don't, that's why I'm asking you.

Jane Sherman: [36:37](#) I didn't.

Michael Berke: [36:39](#) That's because?

Jane Sherman: [36:40](#) I didn't think we needed something to raise the money on. Listen, I was wrong, it's proved very, very successful. I don't like to put labels on things. I'm a real, what's the word I want?

Michael Berke: [36:54](#) Purist.

Jane Sherman: [36:55](#) Purist. It's raised billions of dollars.

Michael Berke: [36:59](#) Right. Lion of Judah's still an important part of Women's Philanthropy, isn't it?

Jane Sherman: [37:01](#) Oh yeah, it's a very important part.

Michael Berke: [37:04](#) Has it grown?

Jane Sherman: [37:05](#) Yes.

Michael Berke: [37:05](#) I know it's grown in terms of dollars. Has it grown in terms of numbers, Jane?

Jane Sherman: [37:10](#) Oh yes, yes. Yes. I think even here it's grown in terms of numbers.

Michael Berke: [37:14](#) Yeah. Maybe you don't know the answer to this question, but I'm curious. What's Women's Philanthropy's relationship to Women's Departments throughout the country? What role do you think we might play?

Jane Sherman: [37:33](#) I think there's four or five people on the National Women's, whatever it's called, it's not UJA, National Women's Board. I would hope that they play a role in learning from each other, but I don't see it the way it was in our day. Somebody got a national program, like when Ruthie and I did the leadership development program, they were able to take it nationally and teach other people how to do it. I don't believe they do that today. I don't believe they take ... By the way, that's one of the problems with JFNA, they're not utilizing the resources they have.

Jane Sherman: [38:08](#) Here, we had the Sherman Leadership Mission. There's two communities that followed up on, only because Vicky Agram got on their backs. There were all sorts of programs, Grosfeld, how many other communities are doing Grosfeld? Nobody, because

nobody has taken that program out. The Emerging Leaders Program.

- Jane Sherman: [38:25](#) There's a program in Cleveland, I just talked to Erica, the new President of the Cleveland Presidency, they've got a fabulous program for helping people in Cleveland. I said to Scott, "Why don't we take that," I think it's called J Help, "Why don't we utilize this here?" In other words, there's no sharing of ideas like there was in our day. We used to have regional meetings, they don't have them. They don't have that today. I don't know if the big 19 execs meet, they have meetings, but I don't think they share ideas. I think there's a lack of sharing of what's going on throughout the country.
- Michael Berke: [39:07](#) There's no women's Presidents interaction with other women's Presidents?
- Jane Sherman: [39:13](#) Not that I know of. There could be, but I surely haven't heard of any yet.
- Michael Berke: [39:22](#) Are women playing a more important role in how we do our business?
- Jane Sherman: [39:26](#) Yes. Obviously, we've got women Presidents, Vice Presidents sitting on the boards, chairing different agencies, etc., etc.
- Michael Berke: [39:34](#) Does Women's Philanthropy, in your opinion, is it still an important feeder?
- Jane Sherman: [39:39](#) Yes. Not even so much a feeder, it is a feeder, because you get better trained in the Women's Department than you do anyplace else. I think the women are much better educated, understand things better, and know what to do easier than most men that come into the system.
- Michael Berke: [39:58](#) Tell me about your, this is off script, but I want to hear from you. You have strong feelings about support for Israel, as opposed to support for the community. I will bring it back to Women's Philanthropy. How do they deal with that dynamic?
- Jane Sherman: [40:18](#) Look, there's different areas. I don't feel that Israel is ... I think we have an overseas agenda that we have to take care of. Whether it's the former Soviet Union, or it's Berlin, or Argentina, or Israel. I believe in Israel, we brought in all these immigrants, and we have a responsibility to make sure they're viable, productive citizens of the country.

Jane Sherman: [40:43](#) At the same time, I understand about the needs here. If you'd asked me this question 15 years ago, I'd say a bigger, we can't stop supporting Israel. I don't believe we can stop supporting Israel at any time, just because we need the relationship. But they're doing other things, creating people to people relationships, and trying to bring us closer to the Israeli population, or the Israeli population closer to the diaspora Jews. I think that's very important. At the same time, taking over the responsibilities that we have to do.

Jane Sherman: [41:22](#) I don't know if the Women's Department plays any more role in it than the general campaign. I was kind of disappointed when the Federation came out with this new thing at this meeting, where they decided to cut the overseas allocation. I don't think quite as upset as Penny and Nancy were. I think it's a mistake. I think if we don't have Israel at the other end, we're lost. That's how important I think it is. I think we need it, and I think we have to teach our children and our grandchildren the same thing.

Michael Berke: [41:57](#) Are we doing that?

Jane Sherman: [41:59](#) No, not as well as I'd like.

Michael Berke: [42:01](#) Can the Women's Philanthropy play a role in that, teaching our children well, so to speak?

Jane Sherman: [42:07](#) I think it's not just a women's thing, I think we have to get people to Israel. Teach them about the love of the state. That doesn't mean they have to give out billions of dollars, but it's a fact of having ... I think we have not created as much.

Jane Sherman: [42:26](#) I had an interesting discussion, because I was at Birthright board meeting too, with Len Sachs, who does all the studies for Birthright. I had made the comment, I guess I made the comment at the Jewish Agency meeting, and he jumped on me. That I don't believe our young people are in touch with the state of, much less in touch with the state of Israel. He said from all statistics he's brought, he said, "We've brought 700,000 kids on Birthright." They're not all from the United States. He said, "They now have a touch with Israel." I said, "Len, you've got two million more you've got to get the same relationship to."

Jane Sherman: [43:02](#) If we get them on Birthright, I think that it's more not just the Women's Department, I think it's a general Federation thing, on Birthright, on Onward Israel, on Mossad programs, Jewish summer camps. These are the things that maintain our

Jewishness. Their love for the state of Israel is also their love for community.

- Michael Berke: [43:24](#) In your opinion, do you think women in the community have the same love for Women's Philanthropy as they did back in your time? Women's Philanthropy was kind of a single focus priority. There are no many more opportunities for women around the community. I'm just wondering what your sense is, to how we-
- Jane Sherman: [43:45](#) I never thought about it, but you're probably right. I've never thought about it. Also, they have the opportunity to go into the general community, general campaign or general part of Federation, where in my day and age it was a tough battle to get in there.
- Jane Sherman: [44:04](#) I don't know if it's a lack of ... It's unfair for me to say, because I'm so far away from it now. I attend the board meeting, but it's hard for me to say. They announce people at these meetings, they're like grandchildren of my friends. I'm delighted to see them there. If they have the same sense of, what is the word I want?
- Michael Berke: [44:30](#) Commitment?
- Jane Sherman: [44:31](#) Yes, or many of them have the same-
- Michael Berke: [44:33](#) Passion?
- Jane Sherman: [44:34](#) Passion, that we had. Again, part of it has to do with the era we lived in, with all the catastrophes, or wars, and everything else.
- Michael Berke: [44:45](#) Do you think that Israel is still the best common denominator for philanthropy? If that's true, are the women taking advantage of Israel?
- Jane Sherman: [44:57](#) I don't think they're taking advantage. I do believe it's one of the ... Yes, I think it's the best common denominator, it's not the only one. I think you have to talk about a Federation that's for everybody. I think that keeping a centralized system is very, very important. I don't know if Israel is the only one anymore. I don't believe that anybody in this community is doing the role that I think they should be, with involving the state of Israel.
- Jane Sherman: [45:26](#) Forget state of Israel, let's talk about Berlin, or Argentina, or any of the countries that we take care of Jews.

Michael Berke: [45:34](#) Do you think it's important to maintain a Women's Philanthropy department?

Jane Sherman: [45:38](#) Yes.

Michael Berke: [45:39](#) Why?

Jane Sherman: [45:40](#) Because I believe they're the educators in the homes.

Michael Berke: [45:45](#) That's a good answer. What are your hopes-

Jane Sherman: [45:48](#) What would you have done if I had said no? They wouldn't put this recording out.

Michael Berke: [45:51](#) I would have listened to you, but that was a good answer. Why is philanthropy important to you personally?

Jane Sherman: [46:01](#) Why is philanthropy important to me? I believe I should give back. I've never thought about it. Why is it important? It's part of my life. I want to do it. I think that I want to be able to see things, be able to provide things for people that otherwise can't have them, no matter who it is or what it is. I guess that's why philanthropy's important. You get a lot more out of it than you're giving away, I have to tell you.

Michael Berke: [46:31](#) I agree with you. What are your hopes for the Women's Philanthropy for the future? What are your hopes for the Federation for the future? You and I may not be here 30 years from now.

Jane Sherman: [46:43](#) You don't think so?

Michael Berke: [46:45](#) You never know. If we woke up 25 years from now, what would you like to see Women's Philanthropy and Federation look like?

Jane Sherman: [46:54](#) First of all, I'd like to see Women's Philanthropy as strong as it is today, if not stronger. As I said before, I believe that they still are the educators in the home. I believe, for no other reason than getting across to younger children, to be involved in their Jewish life, I think it comes from the woman.

Jane Sherman: [47:14](#) For Federation, I would hope it would be as strong as it is today, if not even stronger. We have many needs in the Jewish community here, as well as abroad. If we don't continue that, who's going to send the kids to Jewish Day School, or to camp, or take care in the Fleischman Apartments? All the needs the

Jews that cannot afford it, will not have an opportunity to have, if we don't have a strong Federation.

- Michael Berke: [47:44](#) What's your sense of ... I want to phrase this the right way. I'll let you go in a second.
- Jane Sherman: [47:51](#) Okay.
- Michael Berke: [47:51](#) What's your sense of the vitality of the Detroit community and the vitality of the Women's Department, as we move forward? Are you optimistic about who and what we are, or do you have concerns?
- Jane Sherman: [48:05](#) I'm very optimistic. First of all, the vitality of our Federation is so far above any in the country, that I believe that it's going to be here and be very, very strong. I would hope the Women's Department would have the same vitality.
- Michael Berke: [48:25](#) Good. Anything else you want to talk about? I wanted to ask about your kids.
- Jane Sherman: [48:27](#) You want to talk about my kids?
- Michael Berke: [48:29](#) Yeah, what's going on with the kids?
- Jane Sherman: [48:31](#) First of all, you know I have three great-grandchildren. Who was I telling? I just ran into Derone Levine. I said, "You tell Adina she's got to stay there, teach first grade four more years, when Beau becomes a first grader at Hillock," because he's in the preschool.
- Jane Sherman: [48:46](#) All my grandchildren are back here now, those that aren't in college.
- Michael Berke: [48:57](#) Still Shabbat dinners at your house?
- Jane Sherman: [48:58](#) Every Friday night, every Friday night. Whoever shows up, shows up. The kids with the little babies have to leave, because they're on this time ... I know with Mark, well Mark's kids are too big. My grandchildren, if they don't get to bed at a quarter to 7:00, their children get to bed at a quarter to 7:00, the world's going to fall apart. They have to leave the table at 6:30, at least my one granddaughter-in-law. They don't last quite as long.
- Michael Berke: [49:26](#) What about your boys and girls? Your sons and daughter?

Jane Sherman: [49:29](#) Silvia you know is living by me, she's divorced. She lives by me.

Michael Berke: [49:34](#) Is she involved at all in the Federation?

Jane Sherman: [49:36](#) Yeah, she's on the Women's Board. She's on the IOC. Although, I think her year's up. She doesn't know it yet, but I heard that yesterday from Bob Hertzberg, she's on the IOC. She's very involved in ORT and Book Fair, very involved. Book Fair, not Book Fair, Book Stock.

Jane Sherman: [49:55](#) David is involved in Yad Ezra, he's doing this J, what's this new thin they're doing? There's a whole new thing, where they're putting everything on an app. Anyway, he's been involved in starting that. They've got Montreal involved.

Jane Sherman: [50:18](#) Scott said after this trip, we just took the entire Fisher Foundation, all the kids, the grandchildren, and Scott said after this trip, he says, "I'm going to come back," and he's going to get involved in the Fisher Foundation, on one of their committees, which is very good. His wife, Robbie, you know, she was President of Michigan Art.

Michael Berke: [50:33](#) I do know.

Jane Sherman: [50:34](#) She's now very involved in the Women's Department.

Michael Berke: [50:37](#) My former neighbor.

Jane Sherman: [50:38](#) She's very involved in the Women's Department. Andrew is Emerging, part of my grandchildren are involved too, Emerging Leader. Brett and Dakota are now getting involved, so it's exciting.

Michael Berke: [50:51](#) What you said, that the women are the educators, and they're the continuity.

Jane Sherman: [50:56](#) I hope so.

Michael Berke: [50:57](#) I suspect Larry has a little role in that too.

Jane Sherman: [50:59](#) Yeah, yeah.

Michael Berke: [51:00](#) Anything else you want to talk about? Anything else?

Jane Sherman: [51:01](#) We could talk about a lot of things, but you can turn off the tape.

Michael Berke: [51:04](#) Just related to Women's Philanthropy.

Jane Sherman: [51:07](#) No, I can't tell you anything about Women's-

Michael Berke: [51:09](#) I want to thank you on behalf of the Women's Department for coming in and spending a little time. Personally, I want to thank you because-

Jane Sherman: [51:17](#) I love it that you did the interview.

Michael Berke: [51:18](#) Yeah.

Jane Sherman: [51:19](#) That was exciting. You been doing these?

Michael Berke: [51:20](#) Yeah.

Jane Sherman: [51:21](#) Who else did you do? I think you just wanted to do me.

Michael Berke: [51:23](#) You can turn it off.