

Oral History of: Barbara Horowitz:
Interviewed by: Susie Pappas
Date of Interview: August 8, 2019
Location of Interview: Max M. Fisher Federation Building
Subject Matter: Women's Philanthropy Dept. of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit

Susie Pappas: [00:00](#) My name is Susie Pappas, and today is August 8th, 2019. I'm interviewing Barbara Horowitz 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?

Barbara Horowitz: [00:34](#) Yes.

Susie Pappas: [00:35](#) The Women's Philanthropy Department of the Jewish Federation has had several names throughout its history. Including Women's Division, Women's Campaign Department, and for the purposes of this interview, the questions will refer to it by its current name, Women's Philanthropy. But you may use whatever name you're comfortable with.

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

Barbara Horowitz: [01:00](#) I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and lived there until I graduated from high school and went to the University of Michigan. Got married, and did not go back.

Susie Pappas: [01:13](#) What year did you graduate high school?

Barbara Horowitz: [01:15](#) 1969.

Susie Pappas: [01:18](#) Where did you go to college?

Barbara Horowitz: [01:20](#) University of Michigan.

Susie Pappas: [01:21](#) Is that where you met your husband?

Barbara Horowitz: [01:23](#) Yes.

Susie Pappas: [01:24](#) Okay. How was religion observed in your house as a child?

Barbara Horowitz: [01:31](#) My household was conservative. My parents were relatively observant. They were observant. They were spiritual. I lived in a very non-Jewish neighborhood. Very Italian Catholic neighborhood.

Susie Pappas: [01:49](#) Which neighborhood was that?

Barbara Horowitz: [01:52](#) It was in Chicago, but on the West Side right near Oak Park, Illinois. I belonged to one of the two synagogues in the area. The conservative synagogue in the area. My parents were regular synagogue goers, and so was I.

Susie Pappas: [02:12](#) Did you have a bat mitzvah?

Barbara Horowitz: [02:15](#) I did not. But I did do a Torah portion later on when I was in high school.

Susie Pappas: [02:25](#) When you were in high school, were you involved in any youth groups, or any philanthropy type organizations?

Barbara Horowitz: [02:34](#) Yes. USY, at my synagogue.

Susie Pappas: [02:37](#) How involved were you?

Barbara Horowitz: [02:38](#) Very.

Susie Pappas: [02:40](#) It was important to you?

Barbara Horowitz: [02:41](#) I was an officer. I was very involved.

Susie Pappas: [02:46](#) What kind of philanthropic activities did your parents do?

Barbara Horowitz: [02:54](#) My parents were contributors to Federation. My grandmother was in the Jewish home that was part of the Federation. They were very active in their synagogue. Volunteered a lot in their synagogue.

Susie Pappas: [03:12](#) Do you have brothers and sisters?

Barbara Horowitz: [03:14](#) I have one brother. He's older.

Susie Pappas: [03:16](#) Okay. How and when did you first become involved ... Well first of all, before we get to that, tell us how you ended up in Detroit.

Barbara Horowitz: [03:29](#) I went to the University of Michigan. I married a man whose father was in business in Detroit, Michael Horowitz. Michael went into that business for a short time before it closed, and so I got married right out of college, and we moved to Detroit. Which was where the business was.

Susie Pappas: [03:46](#) Did you think that you would spend your life in Detroit?

Barbara Horowitz: [03:51](#) I didn't think about it, I think.

Susie Pappas: [03:55](#) Okay. When and how did you first become involved with Federation?

Barbara Horowitz: [04:05](#) My entry into Federation was through the agencies. I was very active in ... My kids were very active in BBYO, so I became a board member and very active in that. Then subsequently my third child went to, he was in the first graduating class of the Jewish Academy. I became on the board of that. Then I was at some point asked to be on the board of the Jewish Board for Aging Services, when it was going through a lot of issues at the time.

Barbara Horowitz: [04:43](#) After, I became president of BBYO. After that I was looking for a meaningful way to continue my charitable participation in the community. Fortunately, I kept being asked by Women's Department, it was called at the time. To do various leadership positions, until I finally worked my way up to campaign chair.

Susie Pappas: [05:08](#) Let's go back. Tell us what some of the positions that you did in Women's Department? Do you remember?

Barbara Horowitz: [05:16](#) I participated in campaign many times. I was, boy, I don't remember. I was definitely on the vice president's council, or whatever called at the time. There were three or four vice presidents, and I was one of them. I was the liaison to the board of governors, which I found really interesting. Then I was -

Susie Pappas: [05:47](#) Who were some ... Go ahead.

Barbara Horowitz: [05:48](#) After years of doing those kinds of things. I also felt part of Federation when I was working at the agencies. Because they were agencies of the Federation.

Susie Pappas: [06:00](#) Who were the leaders of Women's Department when you were involved?

Barbara Horowitz: [06:08](#) I think Susie, you were the president when I first started to switch from BBYO to more Women's Department. Then after, you remind me. Was Susie after you? Susie Citron?

Susie Pappas: [06:26](#) Susie Citron, yes. Then Marcie [Orley].

Barbara Horowitz: [06:29](#) Right. When Susie was president, the second year she was president I became associate campaign chair. Then I worked with Marcie. As she was president, I was campaign chair.

Susie Pappas: [06:43](#) What were some of the activities that you remember specifically, that Women's Department or Women's Philanthropy, what were some of the activities that they were doing when you became active?

Barbara Horowitz: [06:58](#) I always really really admired what Women's, what Philanthropy, that's what it's now called, was doing. I remember for sure that they were starting the business and the Professional Women's Business ... I can't remember exactly what it was called. But -

Susie Pappas: [07:22](#) Yeah, business professional, right.

Barbara Horowitz: [07:23](#) Right. It was business and professional for women. It was called something else. We were ... I don't remember.

Susie Pappas: [07:37](#) Did you chair some of the divisions for Federation?

Barbara Horowitz: [07:41](#) I did. I chaired TOV for a while, which is Tikkun Olam Volunteers.

Susie Pappas: [07:45](#) Tell about that, because that's very important.

Barbara Horowitz: [07:52](#) I was first a member, and then chaired this. What was called TOV, Tikkun Olam Volunteers. Which was going out into the community and doing community service events and jobs, I guess you would say, for -

Susie Pappas: [08:09](#) Do you remember why they developed TOV? Do you remember why that was so important?

Barbara Horowitz: [08:16](#) You know, I think that there is a value in Judaism. That Tikkun Olam is important. There was a lot of women who wanted to be involved in that. It was a good way to bring in new people who were looking for something to do, to physically do, that made them feel a meaningful attachment to the community. To doing good things, and subsequently to Federation.

Susie Pappas: [08:47](#) Absolutely.

Barbara Horowitz: [08:48](#) I think it did bring in a lot of new people, actually.

Susie Pappas: [08:51](#) What did your family think about your involvement in Federation? You can talk about your husband also, because he was involved in Federation.

Barbara Horowitz: [09:00](#) Right. While I was doing BBYO and the Jewish Academy, he was getting more and more involved in Federation. We both did together, a series of educational events and travel. It was called the Zuckerman ... Remind me.

Susie Pappas: [09:23](#) Leadership seminar?

Barbara Horowitz: [09:24](#) Council, or something like that. Yeah. So we did travel together, Michael and I. We did go to those meetings together. Actually, he was the principal participant, but spouses were invited. He started on his own path of -

Susie Pappas: [09:41](#) Do you remember what the purpose of the Zuckerman committee was?

Barbara Horowitz: [09:43](#) To build leadership.

Susie Pappas: [09:45](#) Right.

Barbara Horowitz: [09:46](#) To build leadership. The commitment was that you would someday be the campaign chair. He definitely was the campaign chair for the general campaign. But he also had a lot of different leadership positions. Especially in the area of Israel and overseas. He became chair of Israel and overseas. He went on to be one of the Detroit board members of JAFI, which is the Jewish Agency For Israel. So he would travel to Israel three or four times a year.

Susie Pappas: [10:22](#) When was your first -

Barbara Horowitz: [10:22](#) In the meanwhile -

Susie Pappas: [10:23](#) Oh, go ahead.

Barbara Horowitz: [10:24](#) In the meanwhile, I was also by this time following my own path in Federation. I became part of the Penny Blumenstein Leadership Conference, or whatever it was called. That was again a similar thing, where there was multiple different educational events, and leadership training. I did eventually become campaign chair of Women's Philanthropy.

Susie Pappas: [10:56](#) What did your family think of the involvement of you and your husband in Federation?

Barbara Horowitz: [11:01](#) I think that we felt that this was a great example for our kids. I think that we felt we were showing them what our values were, as far as giving to the community and Tikkun Olam, and our religion, and the progression of the Jewish people.

Barbara Horowitz: [11:23](#) We still feel, and I can't speak for my kids necessarily. But I think that they do realize how important that was to us. We feel good about the way that they feel about Judaism and what we did. Even though we were out of the house a fair amount at night, I think that they always ... They didn't always. But I think now they understand what it was that we were doing.

Barbara Horowitz: [11:53](#) Particularly, I loved the fact that they were all leaders in BBYO. They were all leaders in BBYO.

Susie Pappas: [12:00](#) That's very good.

Barbara Horowitz: [12:03](#) With my son Adam and my son Jeffrey, I actually was working with them on the board when they were the president of the regions. So we worked together in charitable pursuit. I loved that, actually.

Susie Pappas: [12:24](#) We didn't really talk about ... We talked about how important Israel is to you. But do you want to tell us about your first time going to Israel?

Barbara Horowitz: [12:37](#) My first time going to Israel was when I graduated from high school. I didn't really, it was just a tour. It didn't have anything to do with the Federation. But my parents had instilled in me and my brother, this love of Israel. I definitely felt the connection to the land when I went there. Then I did not go again until I had all four of my kids, and Michael and I went together. It was his first trip, believe it or not. He was emotionally overcome when he was there.

Susie Pappas: [13:15](#) What year was that?

Barbara Horowitz: [13:20](#) 1990, I want to say?

Susie Pappas: [13:23](#) You've probably, well he's been back many times.

Barbara Horowitz: [13:25](#) He's been back.

Susie Pappas: [13:27](#) Have you been back many times?

Barbara Horowitz: [13:27](#) Yeah, many times. Now we have a son who's living in Tel Aviv. So we definitely are still, even though he's not on the board of JAFI anymore, and was going multiple times a year, we get there at least once a year.

Susie Pappas: [13:47](#) We've talked about what inspired you to work your way to campaign chair. Can you describe some of your duties that you did as campaign chair?

Barbara Horowitz: [13:58](#) My primary duty was to make sure that the campaign reached its goal, was viable. I was leader of all ... Women's Department, at the time, Philanthropy now, has, which I think is really effective, is this pyramid. Where we build chairs, and then those chairs have women who are willing to call other people who will make campaign calls. Those people each are responsible for a few more people who will call for the campaign. So there's 50 women that are all calling for the annual campaign. I, as campaign chair, managed all of that.

Barbara Horowitz: [14:51](#) We did hit our goal. Even though 2009 when I first started was, I was worried that it was a difficult year. Because of what was going on in the economic world.

Barbara Horowitz: [15:04](#) I also, Marcie and I, I thought really worked as a partnership. Because obviously the campaign doesn't operate on its own. If you don't teach women why they should be giving, if they don't feel part of the organization, then why would they give if they don't understand why they're doing it? So all the programs that -

Susie Pappas: [15:31](#) Absolutely. So education is important.

Barbara Horowitz: [15:31](#) Education. All the programs that build up. Young women's groups. TOV. The working women's thing. The coffee -

Susie Pappas: [15:42](#) Coffee talks.

Barbara Horowitz: [15:43](#) Coffee talks -

Susie Pappas: [15:44](#) Food For Thought.

Barbara Horowitz: [15:45](#) ... that we had. Which were a smaller group of women, where we just explained what Federation was. Right.

Susie Pappas: [15:49](#) Right. You did not go on to be president, because something pretty big happened in your life. Do you want to talk about that?

Barbara Horowitz: [15:59](#) I will talk about it. It is a regret that I have, that I did not get to become president. But at the time, my husband had sold his business and was looking for something meaningful to do, and was offered a position. Interviewed and was offered a position as the executive director of the Jewish Federation of Atlanta.

Barbara Horowitz: [16:30](#) We had a child, both of our sons had gone to Emory in Atlanta, so we knew Atlanta. We still had a child that lived there. This was an opportunity, we both felt, for him to do a lot of good within the Jewish world, and so we decided to do it. I could not become president, and he, after one year, resigned. He was the lay-president of the Federation here at the time.

Susie Pappas: [16:59](#) How was Atlanta for you?

Barbara Horowitz: [17:00](#) It was good. It was a big adventure. It was, Michael was working 150 percent of the time. I was determined, I guess you would say, to not give up the expertise and knowledge that I had of Federation. So I became active. One of the things that I did was to become active in the Federation there. Which I was sort of, the staff was going, they would ask him, "Is it all right that your wife wants to do this or that or the other thing?". I'm going ... He would say, "Of course it's all right". But I would say, "Don't ask him. I'm my own person. I have knowledge in this, and I want to be part of it", and so I was.

Susie Pappas: [17:54](#) I want to talk about that for just a minute. What you just said really explains why a Women's Department, why a women's separate gift. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

Barbara Horowitz: [18:07](#) Why a women's separate gift?

Susie Pappas: [18:08](#) Yeah. Why is there a women's campaign?

Barbara Horowitz: [18:17](#) To me and my family, it's important, as I sort of just said. You're right. For my family to know and for me to know that I'm an

individual with my own mind, and my own giving history. I want it to be known that I stand up on my own. There are other reasons for women's gifts, I think. Especially in Detroit, where the amount of gifts makes a big difference. The amount of individual gifts makes a big difference, because we are connected with government grants, and they look at those things.

- Barbara Horowitz: [18:59](#) In Atlanta that was not the case. I often was asked to make the case in Atlanta, as to why a woman should give her own gift.
- Susie Pappas: [19:12](#) How was your grand adventure in Atlanta? How many years were you there?
- Barbara Horowitz: [19:17](#) We were there seven years.
- Susie Pappas: [19:18](#) Did you always think you would come back here? Or did you not know that when you started?
- Barbara Horowitz: [19:26](#) I think we always thought we would come back here. We always kept an apartment here the whole seven years. The only thing that would have kept us there would have been if our kids moved there. Which was a possibility for a minute. But it didn't happen, and so we came back to where our home was. After he retired from being a Federation exec -
- Susie Pappas: [19:55](#) But I bet it was a fun -
- Barbara Horowitz: [19:57](#) It was very fun.
- Susie Pappas: [19:58](#) You probably met some really -
- Barbara Horowitz: [19:59](#) We met a lot of really wonderful people.
- Susie Pappas: [20:02](#) You were welcomed there, probably with open arms. Yes?
- Barbara Horowitz: [20:09](#) We were welcomed there very, yes. Very hospitably. It's hard when you move to a new city, where Michael's working all the time, and I had to make my way. But I did, and there were wonderful women who were willing to open themselves up. Even though, I don't have to tell you, they had a lot of other friends. They didn't need any new friends. But I did.
- Susie Pappas: [20:33](#) But it's a great growing experience for you, isn't it? Or wasn't it?
- Barbara Horowitz: [20:37](#) It was. It was.

- Susie Pappas: [20:38](#) What skills do you think make for a good leader?
- Barbara Horowitz: [20:45](#) That's a tough one, I think. I never thought of myself as a leader. I never liked public speaking. I always thought I was pretty quiet, believe that or not. But I think if you have a passion for something and you want to participate in it, and you keep saying yes when people ask you to do something, that you develop the skills. Many times I think, you develop the skills that you need to be inspirational. I think that's, if anything I hope that's where my leadership expertise quality comes from.
- Susie Pappas: [21:37](#) What are your hopes for Women's Department in the future? Women's Philanthropy in the future?
- Barbara Horowitz: [21:45](#) My hopes for Women's Philanthropy and the Jewish Federation I think are all tied into my hopes for the Jewish people. Federation is a complicated organization. It's got lots of agencies. People get confused about what it does. I think the more we can explain, educate people on what Federation is, what it's doing, why it's so necessary to have it, why there needs to be some central organization. If people understand that, that that will ensure, I think, the future for the Jewish community.
- Susie Pappas: [22:35](#) Is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to add? As far as your communal work here, or in Atlanta? Is there anything more you would like to talk about?
- Barbara Horowitz: [22:53](#) I just would like to say that I'm thankful for being given the opportunity to do all the things I've done for this community. I really feel like they were meaningful. I feel like for me personally, it always goes both ways. Always goes both ways. I learned a lot. I made great friends. I did things I never thought I would be able to do. I hope in return I did a lot of good for the community.
- Susie Pappas: [23:24](#) Thank-you.