

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Linda Klein  
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Sharon Alterman  
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4 LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Jewish Federation  
5 SUBJECT MATTER: Jewish life, family history, role  
6 as a community leader

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8 MS. ALTERMAN: Good morning. Today is Tuesday, June  
9 26 and I'm privileged to be here with Linda Klein. We are  
10 participating in the Leonard N. Simons oral history project.  
11 My name is Sharon Alterman.

12 Linda, do I have your permission to use our  
13 discussion as part of the historic record?

14 MS. KLEIN: You do.

15 MS. ALTERMAN: Thank you so much.

16 Let's start at the beginning. Where were you born?

17 MS. KLEIN: I was born here in Detroit.

18 MS. ALTERMAN: And who were your parents?

19 MS. KLEIN: My mother's maiden name was Helen  
20 Fleischer. My father is Paul Zuckerman.

21 MS. ALTERMAN: What do you know about their  
22 background?

23 MS. KLEIN: My mother's family came from -- and I  
24 just tried to find this out from her this morning because I  
25 always forget -- I came from a generation of grandparents who

1 really didn't want to talk about a lot of things. To the best  
2 of my mother's recollection, who's 91 years old now, her  
3 father's family came from Latvia Lithuania area. Her mother  
4 we think came from Russia and because I'm kind of  
5 geographically challenged and so is she, she thought it was  
6 somewhere near Germany because she spoke German and French.

7 My grandmother I feel for my whole life, would have  
8 been one of the most important influences in my life. She  
9 died when I was seven. By the time she died I already knew  
10 how to knit and bake and decorate beautiful cakes. She loved  
11 me. I was the oldest of all her grandchildren. When she  
12 died, as even a seven year old, I grieved terribly. She was a  
13 great loss. She kept an Orthodox home, I understand, but I  
14 was way too young to remember her. My grandfather Sam  
15 Fleischer lived to a wise old age in his late 80s or 90s.  
16 They were wonderful grandparents.

17 They lived on the east side in or near Grosse  
18 Pointe. My grandfather had come to Bay City, Michigan. My  
19 grandmother's name was Oppenheim. They had a country store  
20 and then came to Detroit and he had a quite successful men's  
21 wear store. He lost just about everything during the  
22 Depression. So my mother and her sisters and brother, five  
23 girls and a boy, lived on the east side, so it was kind of  
24 hard for them to have their Jewish identity. My grandparents  
25 tried very hard to make sure that they did.

1 My dad's family, my grandmother was born in Turkey  
2 as was my father. They were not Sephardic Jews, they were  
3 Ashkenazi Jews. How she got to Turkey I'm not sure. But my  
4 grandfather, who was born in Romania, traveled around a great  
5 deal and met my grandmother in Turkey. <sup>My father's oldest</sup> ~~His oldest two~~  
6 brothers were born in Egypt. My father was born in Turkey,  
7 and then the family came here and the youngest one was born in  
8 the United States. So when you ask me later I can tell you a  
9 little bit about their Jewish life.

10 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Oh, let's talk about that now.

11 **MS. KLEIN:** Okay. My maternal grandmother  
12 apparently was Orthodox but after she died I think the family  
13 wasn't there and so I wasn't aware of that till recently. My  
14 father's family were like Reform. I don't remember what it's  
15 called. The one at the Jewish Center in Detroit.

16 **MS. ALTERMAN:** JPI.

17 **MS. KLEIN:** JPI. My grandmother was like that. We  
18 always had a Seder, we celebrated Hannuka. She was very  
19 active, my bubbe, in organizations. My grandfather was a  
20 gentle soul, but I'm sure that's where my father got his  
21 organizational passions and maybe where my mother didn't. I'm  
22 not sure.

23 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What were some of the organizations  
24 that your grandmother was a part of?

25 **MS. KLEIN:** I'm really not sure. I don't know. I

1 think maybe Hadassah, but the women's organizations and she  
2 was the type that was probably the head of it. They didn't  
3 have a lot of money, that much I know. None of them did after  
4 my grandfather lost his money during the Depression. So when  
5 we get to my parents they started out with literally nothing.

6 But we had a very warm, loving family on both sides.  
7 On my father's side I have cousins a little more my age and  
8 we're all like sisters to this day. On my mother's side the  
9 cousins were way younger than I am. My brother is six years  
10 younger than me and all my other little cousins are younger  
11 than that. So for whatever reason they probably thought I was  
12 beyond reach and we were never all that close. Now we're  
13 becoming close again with my younger cousins on my mother's  
14 side.

15 **MS. ALTERMAN:** When did your father come to the  
16 United States?

17 **MS. KLEIN:** My father came as a baby, I think about  
18 six months old. He was the second child of four boys and we  
19 always joked about him, he wasn't the oldest, wasn't the  
20 youngest and he wasn't ill like his second oldest brother. He  
21 got kind of the short end of the stick, I think. I think  
22 that's where a lot of his drive came from.

23 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What kind of man was he?

24 **MS. KLEIN:** I just want to start with him. He had  
25 nothing. For some reason he had a tremendous amount of drive,

1 a tremendous ability. I think he was a born businessman.  
2 Probably a business genius. He was a tough person. He adored  
3 his family but he was tough. He pulled himself up by his  
4 bootstraps and that's something he was very proud of. His  
5 great passion in life was Israel and where it came from I'm  
6 not sure. But I remember as a little girl and we lived in a  
7 teeny, tiny house on Ilene Street that he had built when he  
8 first went into the peanut butter business and was practically  
9 working out of his garage.

10 I still remember his green Oldsmobile and every  
11 Sunday morning he went to a meeting about the state of Israel  
12 which wasn't in effect then. So that would have been around  
13 1944, '45, '46, when I was just a little girl. I was born in  
14 1940. So as long as I remember him I remember his passion for  
15 Israel.

16 Besides being tough he was a great guy. Had a great  
17 personality and was a lot of fun. He was so charming, very  
18 charismatic, all of those great things. He was a wonderful  
19 father. As a little girl I just adored him, and when I got a  
20 little older, he had a little trouble with an adolescent girl  
21 and any kind of little rebellions. But that's family and it  
22 was all good. When we had our children, the sun shone on  
23 them. I think a lot of people would say he might have been  
24 one of the most unforgettable characters that they ever met.

25 He continued to be very active about the state of

1 Israel. He was so thrilled when Israel was declared a state.  
2 He became involved through the Federation and I'm sure he came  
3 in through the back door somewhere. But his abilities took  
4 him and he was becoming successful. He was coming up in the  
5 world, but Israel was still his passion. By the time I was  
6 old enough to even pay any attention, he was already very  
7 active at the Federation. I remember when he won the Butzel  
8 Award. I was in college. In fact I brought Tom, my husband.  
9 We were just engaged; 1960 probably.

10 From what I understand he was one of the toughest  
11 best solicitors there ever were. He wanted very badly to  
12 become the chair of the national UJA. I think it was a  
13 struggle for him because he did not have a placid personality.  
14 He could offend people because he was very, very strong, but  
15 he did become the chair of UJA, which I think he felt was his  
16 crowning achievement. He was the chair during the Yom Kippur  
17 War, which was a terrible time. He got on the airplanes and  
18 they went all over the country to raise a lot of money. The  
19 amount holds up with even today's amount. But it was a very  
20 horrible time for all of us.

21 He built a house in Israel. He was close and  
22 friendly with all the great founders of state. All of them.  
23 Golda Meir, Dayan, Perez was a good friend. He knew them all.  
24 They used to come for Shabat. He was right there with the  
25 founders, which is one of the reasons I'm hoping my mother

1 will do this very thing I'm doing, so she can tell you  
2 firsthand person to person about these people. It was an  
3 exciting thing. I wasn't all that much a part of it. I was  
4 married, having kids. But the stories were wonderful.

5 **MS. ALTERMAN:** You said you had remembrances of the  
6 declaration of the state of Israel.

7 **MS. KLEIN:** I do. I remember being at Temple Israel  
8 in the auditorium when they announced. I don't know if it  
9 happened on a Sunday, but my recollection is that it was  
10 announced at the temple. I also remember at I think age 5 the  
11 day that Roosevelt died. We were up north and my grandparents  
12 worshiped him. The crying and sadness, and as a small child I  
13 don't think I really absorbed it but I remember it.

14 One other thing that my mother probably won't say  
15 about my father, but he always said in the days of Truman that  
16 nobody thought much of Truman but that Truman was going to go  
17 down as one of the great presidents of our time. I don't  
18 think that was the common thought in those days.

19 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Was your father politically active,  
20 also?

21 **MS. KLEIN:** Not so politically active, although he  
22 was very good friends with Scoop Jackson. So I guess he was.  
23 The ones he believed in he supported. And also Daniel  
24 Moynihan was a very dear friend of his. He obviously  
25 supported the Levins. He was a Democrat, although was Scoop

1 Jackson a Republican? Could have been. He wasn't terribly  
2 politically oriented, but I'm sure he did his part, gave his  
3 money, and when he believed in somebody, I'm sure he got  
4 behind them strongly. It probably had a lot to do with Israel  
5 and how these people felt about Israel and our Jewish  
6 community. Things like that.

7 **MS. ALTERMAN:** And your mother, what was her role?

8 **MS. KLEIN:** My mother as his wife, frankly, was very  
9 much in the background. To my brother and myself we knew our  
10 mother was very strong. But in those days she didn't get  
11 involved in the community. I think it was hard. I think he  
12 was a full time job. After he died she came out. I would  
13 never call her an organization woman, she was very courageous  
14 about her money. To go back, I think my father really over  
15 gave. He was wealthy but not nearly as wealthy as his  
16 contributions reflected. After he died though, my mother had  
17 that Jewish passion and she really stepped up to the plate. I  
18 think more so than most widows. She was a person you could go  
19 to and talk to and she would think it over. If she was moved,  
20 she would do whatever she could do, which was quite a bit.

21 She became like a different person after he died.  
22 She went on the women's board, invited and accepted. I think  
23 she definitely became a force in her widowhood for all the  
24 things they believed in together that she never had a chance  
25 to show. It was interesting, when he died, people thought oh,

1 what will she do? I said to people, she's going to be fine.  
2 You're going to be surprised. You're going to see somebody  
3 who is strong. And she is.

4 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Let's go back to your childhood. You  
5 mentioned that you lived on Ilene.

6 **MS. KLEIN:** I never realized until a few years ago,  
7 I went to seven different schools before I got to college. We  
8 lived in a teeny house and then we moved to Wisconsin for one  
9 year only. So I went to Fitzgerald school for kindergarten,  
10 Bagley for first and second grade. Then we moved to  
11 Warrington Drive, which was in Sherwood Forest in the  
12 Livernois/Seven Mile area where we all kind of lived. In fact  
13 we bought Larry Michelson's house. It's Simons-Michelson,  
14 actually, the connection to this project. Larry Michelson was  
15 Leonard Simons' partner of many years. I went to Hampton  
16 School which I was just settling in and loving when they  
17 changed the border. Then I went to Pasteur. My parents  
18 weren't happy with Pasteur, so I went to Brookside, and then  
19 Kingswood, and then begged my way out of Kingswood. I was a  
20 good student. I landed at Mumford, where I spent the most  
21 years which was just four, at that school.

22 My one glue of my childhood was at Camp Tamawkua,  
23 where I went for eight years. That's where I got to know some  
24 of my friends for at least a bit of time. Then I went to the  
25 University of Michigan for four years and got a BA, was an

1 English major. I loved literature and poetry and I also got a  
2 teaching certificate, as we all did, for secondary school  
3 teaching.

4 That was basically my education until many years  
5 later when I went back to law school and became a lawyer. I  
6 practiced for about six or seven years and took an early  
7 retirement. The law part was hard. Everybody thought I was a  
8 great lawyer but me. I had little kids. I've never regretted  
9 going back to law school and I enjoyed my practice. It was  
10 after I went to law school that I really got involved in the  
11 Jewish community, so I was kind of a late bloomer.

12 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Let's talk about your religious  
13 education. What was religious life like in your home?

14 **MS. KLEIN:** There was very little religious life in  
15 our home. I was thinking about it for this. I think I can  
16 count on both hands the amount of real Shabat dinners I've  
17 ever been to in my life. We didn't observe anything but the  
18 holidays. We were Reform Jews. I think my father might have  
19 started at Beth-El and then when Rabbi Fram separated from  
20 Beth-El we went to Temple Israel. My entire education was  
21 Sunday School at Temple Israel and camp. A lot of camp. It  
22 wasn't a particularly Jewish camp but it was all Jewish kids  
23 and we had Friday night observance. So my religious education  
24 was hardly anything. My consciousness of being Jewish was  
25 huge and loving and joyous and there was never a question in

1 our family that to be Jewish was the best thing to be. It was  
2 without the religious part.

3 That's how my children pretty much were educated.  
4 They went to Temple Beth-El. We left Temple Israel. I'm not  
5 exactly sure why. We lived in Toledo for a couple years, came  
6 back and most of our friends were at Temple Beth-El. So  
7 that's where we joined and they went to Sunday School. Of  
8 course I wasn't bas mitzvahed because you didn't get bas  
9 mitzvahed in those days.

10 My husband Tom came from Toledo, Ohio, from such a  
11 Reform family, although his grandma was also way more  
12 observant. But Reform Judaism in Toledo they didn't even have  
13 bar mitzvahs then. He subsequently was bar mitzvahed at the  
14 age of 41 here. He was the first person I know whoever got  
15 bar mitzvahed at an advanced age. He studied with a man named  
16 Israel Alpern, who was at Shaarey Zedek, so he studied for  
17 three years and had a real bar mitzvah at Temple Beth-El. The  
18 interesting thing about that was that my father had brought  
19 him a tallit from Israel and really wanted him to wear it for  
20 his bar mitzvah. Tom didn't care whether he wore it or not.  
21 He thought it would be very nice to please my father. That  
22 was a big deal at Temple Beth-El. It was Rabbi Hertz and he  
23 said we don't wear tallit at Temple Beth-El. So I think my  
24 father had a little conversation with him and he wore the  
25 tallit.

1           During the party -- and I had a party for him  
2 because every boy who's bar mitzvahed should have a party for  
3 his friends -- at Franklin Hills, all decorated, very  
4 sophisticated but with balloons and checkered tablecloths for  
5 a grown up kid. And I remember overhearing at the party Rabbi  
6 Groner talking to some friend of his saying, can you believe  
7 that Tom Klein wore a tallit at the ceremony? Rabbi Franklin  
8 would be turning over. I thought well, there's competition  
9 here.

10           Nowadays, of course, at all the Reform temples you  
11 do whatever you want. You wore tallit, you wore yarmulkah,  
12 you walked around. It was kind of a little human interest  
13 story. He did get bar mitzvahed and he studied very hard. It  
14 was meaningful for our kids I'm sure, who were there and came  
15 to the service. That was the parents of our children. Our  
16 religious education was extremely Reform.

17           But his family in Toledo was also very involved in  
18 the community, so there was never a question or doubt how much  
19 we loved our Judaism. We just were never given the basics of  
20 the story, of the feeling.

21           **MS. ALTERMAN:** When did you start going to Israel?

22           **MS. KLEIN:** Tom and I went to Israel with a group  
23 like the young leadership cabinet in 1968 and of course we  
24 were greeted warmly because of my parents and we loved it. We  
25 made some lifelong friends there. It was right after the '67

1 War. There was such a feeling. It was amazing. They still  
2 were pinching themselves in Israel and to go to the Wall and  
3 even believe that they hadn't had access to the Wall because  
4 it was our first time. It was a really wonderful time. I'll  
5 never ever forget it, the joy and excitement and of course  
6 these were the pioneers and the guides carried a gun. Very  
7 much like wild west. We went to the Golan Heights to see  
8 where they used to fire down on the kibbutz It was just so  
9 alive because it had been a year. It was an incredible  
10 learning experience for us and it just sealed our feelings.

11 I'm not sure when we went back again but I know we  
12 went back right after the Yom Kippur War because Tom went with  
13 a group of men and all they did was visit the soldiers in the  
14 hospitals who were all burned. He came home and said we've  
15 got to go back, we've got to go right back, we just have to.  
16 We went back a few months later and that's all we did. I cry  
17 when I think about it. It was a very sad time. We took our  
18 Polaroid cameras. There were so many young boys in the  
19 hospital and it was just a very, very sad time as opposed to  
20 the first time. They'd gotten out by the skin of their teeth,  
21 Israel.

22 Then we've gone through the years. We've seen all  
23 the good and the bad. I remember when I was campaign chair  
24 and one time I gave a speech in front of the Fisher meeting,  
25 which is a meeting I never go to otherwise because I don't

1 give that much money. But when I was campaign chair I did,  
2 and I tried to say to them that the campaigns really do tell  
3 the story of Israel because each year as the needs were  
4 apparent, whatever was happening in Israel the reason we were  
5 raising money was the story of Israel. Whether it was the Yom  
6 Kippur War, the Russians coming, the Ethiopians coming,  
7 whatever was happening was the reason for our drive. We  
8 really are a part of the history of Israel.

9           If you go to Israel and see them living there now  
10 you can think back, I remember when they were living in  
11 trailers and when they were in the ulpan. We were worrying  
12 about how we were going to absorb these Russian Jews who were  
13 going to take over the country. Our work that we do here at  
14 Federation is truly the history of Israel and of our own  
15 community. It's very related and it is the truth. Because  
16 all the things we raise the money for happened and are now  
17 part of the fabric of the country. It's great to do this  
18 work, I think.

19           **MS. ALTERMAN:** When and where did you become a  
20 leader?

21           **MS. KLEIN:** I was part of the Junior Division. My  
22 husband actually got more active than I did. We were an  
23 obvious choice because of our families. I would be invited to  
24 do things. I don't think I was a particularly good worker. I  
25 had my kids. I was trying to grow up. I think I told you,

1 Sharon, I mean I'll say it, I was invited to be women's board  
2 and accepted. When my youngest was born, who is now 33, I  
3 sort of said to the community, you know what, I'm taking a few  
4 years off. Not that I was just a leader, but I just said,  
5 this is my last one and I'm going to do other things. I  
6 really wasn't around that much.

7           Then I was asked to be on the Women's Board right  
8 around the time I decided to go to law school and I just  
9 wasn't around enough. So they said to me are you going to be  
10 able to participate? I said not really. I went to law school  
11 in '75.

12           While I was in law school, they were forming the  
13 Professional Women's Division and they asked me to become a  
14 part of that and I did. Then I became the president or chair  
15 of that. I don't think they really had too many people but I  
16 did it. Then I learned that I could do it. Then I remained  
17 very active at the Professional Women's Division level, so it  
18 might have taken a few years to become the chair of that.  
19 Then I was practicing law and always soliciting. I can't  
20 remember the dates, I don't think it's all that important. It  
21 would be nice to know what year.

22           I had always been involved at JVS, Jewish Vocational  
23 Service. Nora Baron had gotten me involved there and I really  
24 liked it. I had been an officer on the executive committee.  
25 Then I knew that I was going to become the president. I

1 frankly can't remember whether I was still practicing law but  
2 I think I was. Became president of JVS and I really loved it.  
3 They asked me to do it for an extra year so I was president  
4 for three years, from 1990 to 1993. I wasn't the first woman.  
5 I think maybe Nora Baron was the first woman. Then there were  
6 only two of us.

7           **MS. ALTERMAN:** When you talk about JVS, you're one  
8 of the few people that I have interviewed about JVS and I  
9 think the community has to know about the work that they do.

10           **MS. KLEIN:** Jewish Vocational Service is an agency  
11 that is a wonderfully run agency. It sometimes gets a little  
12 bad rap in the community because it's not an easy agency to  
13 understand, and it serves not only the Jewish community but  
14 the non-Jewish community. It gets state and federal funds.  
15 It does several different kinds of things.

16           The first thing it does is to help people find a  
17 vocation. It helps people by teaching them all sorts of  
18 things like how to write a resume, how to get a job. These  
19 are able-bodied people who might be out of work, who might  
20 have had problems. As bad times hit the city, that's when  
21 that part of JVS really comes into play. It's done  
22 excellently and it's very well thought of in the whole  
23 community.

24           The other part is that it helps developmentally  
25 disabled people and people that aren't necessarily terribly

1 capable and endowed with all the good things to also find a  
2 life and work. So for instance with JARC, many of the JARC  
3 residents come to JVS into the sheltered workshops and they  
4 work there. That was kind of the old-fashioned way. Now  
5 what's happened, which is so wonderful, is developmentally  
6 disabled people are living long lives and so other things  
7 started to happen. They got to be about retirement age and  
8 they wanted to retire. Why not. They wanted to enjoy the  
9 fruits of their labor.

10 I might add that at the sheltered workshops at JVS  
11 the people work for a salary. It's a tiny little salary but  
12 the work is contracted for by regular companies. There was a  
13 company called Chip Clips that always did work with JVS.  
14 There was some part of the automobile industries that had the  
15 workers making little parts. And believe me the people had to  
16 do a good job. Nobody's out to throw a bone to somebody that  
17 isn't going to make something that works. JVS and the workers  
18 had to work very hard to make sure they put out a very good  
19 product.

20 Anyway, when some of the people started to retire  
21 JVS developed a program of retirement. It's now at the JCC,  
22 the Jewish Center, I'm not sure if it's going to last there,  
23 but these people do wonderful things. They go on adventures,  
24 the zoo, the museums, they're having a lovely life and they're  
25 living a longer life.

1           Also at JVS a wonderful thing they have is something  
2 a whole apartment of living. This is for people that aren't  
3 in a JARC home, that are perhaps living in an apartment. One  
4 of the problems with developmentally disabled people as adults  
5 is their parents really try to shelter them. At JVS they try  
6 as hard as they can to pull the most ability out of these  
7 people. They try to exert a little bit of tough love and try  
8 to convince the parents that their children can do way more  
9 than they thought they could do. They can learn to cook, make  
10 a bed, do the laundry. They do it as an experience in this  
11 lovely apartment which when I was president of JVS I used to  
12 say if my husband wasn't really nice to me, I had a place I  
13 could go sleep. I've seen a person make their first bacon,  
14 lettuce and tomato sandwich in their life and how proud they  
15 were. And I've seen parents come in and say I never thought  
16 he could do this.

17           Also at JVS there is supported work. We have sites,  
18 one I think at Olga's, some of the JVS people used to go to  
19 work at Olga's. They would have a counselor from JVS that  
20 goes with them, gets them started on the job, maybe stays  
21 there with them for a month, maybe forever, but not usually  
22 but however long it takes to get them to be able to do the job  
23 and then can leave them and come back if the employer calls to  
24 say, so and so's having a problem. It's an amazing thing.

25           There's so many things that JVS does, I'm sure I've

1 probably forgotten half of them. They have a downtown  
2 building where they work with people in the city of Detroit.  
3 They've been chosen many times over all sorts of different  
4 agencies and given contracts to work with, with people with  
5 drug problems, unemployed in Detroit. They have the Brown  
6 Alzheimer's, one of the two sites is at JVS, and it's  
7 supervised by a person out of JVS working with the people that  
8 have Alzheimer's. This is an out-patient kind of a respite  
9 care thing where people who have parents with Alzheimer's can  
10 drop them off and they spend anywhere from probably three to  
11 five days per week there.

12 I could go on forever with JVS. It's a wonderful  
13 intellectual agency. It's a big business, a huge operation.  
14 Barbara Nurenburg, Al Asher, are among in my opinion the  
15 finest executives I've ever worked with at Federation or  
16 anywhere. I'm a big fan and advocate of JVS. I'm still very  
17 active. I still serve on the executive committee. I'm very  
18 proud of JVS.

19 **MS. ALTERMAN:** As we all are. It's a star in our  
20 constellation.

21 **MS. KLEIN:** I think so. And it's also by the way  
22 the place that everybody brings people because you can show  
23 it, not maybe because it's better than any of the other  
24 agencies but there's so much to show, so much to see. And  
25 when you walk through and see these clients happy and working

1 and learning. They had to cut out exercise and fitness  
2 programs, but there's a nurse on site and the people are  
3 advised of the health needs. It's a great place.

4 **MS. ALTERMAN:** You've also been involved in the  
5 general community. Children's Hospital, Music Hall.

6 **MS. KLEIN:** I'm involved in the arts. I love the  
7 arts. Right now I'm on the board of The Friends of Modern Art  
8 for the museum. I was involved with the Detroit Artist Market  
9 for years and years. The Musical Center for the Performing  
10 Arts, I'm still on their board. My Jewish involvement is my  
11 major involvement. I always try to do something in the non-  
12 Jewish community. I'm a big believer that we must not narrow  
13 ourselves down too much. I think we miss too much and I think  
14 we lose perspective on who we are. And I sometimes think we  
15 really do ourselves damage when we're too provincial and we  
16 only see our own way and we express that, and we lose our  
17 sensitivity to how we sound. We're such a small minority that  
18 I think it's very important to be there and understand where  
19 others are coming from, and try to have them understand where  
20 we're coming from. If I would have to cite one failure that I  
21 see in our organized Jewish community, sometimes I feel it's  
22 that, looking inward too much.

23 **MS. ALTERMAN:** You've worked a lot with the women of  
24 our community. I know that you were president of the Women's  
25 Division. I wanted you to talk about that and the role of the

1 woman volunteer. But I also wanted to ask you about why you  
2 went to law school.

3           **MS. KLEIN:** Okay. I think honestly I was just  
4 having kind of a little hard time. I always cared about the  
5 intellectual side of myself. That's probably the most  
6 important side of myself, I think. When I was engaged, it was  
7 either to be married or I was on my way to Columbia to get a  
8 master's degree. I never felt limited as a woman and I think  
9 that might have been my father, too. He always told me he was  
10 saving for my college education from the time I was a baby.

11 The first thing he did was put away money. There was no  
12 question. I never felt particularly limited. I'm pretty  
13 naive that way. Never felt limited as a Jew, as a woman.

14           I got married, ended up in Toledo, Ohio, I still  
15 remember the day I was left at home and my husband went off to  
16 work and I didn't know anybody and I think I cried the whole  
17 day. I found a job and a woman hired me with no training to  
18 be a social worker for the Lucas County Child Welfare Board.  
19 I did all kinds of sophisticated work. I worked with  
20 dependent and neglected kids and I would go out on home  
21 visits, kids that had been removed from their home and put in  
22 the Lucas County Child Welfare home. My job was to interview  
23 the kids, the family and make recommendations. I even went to  
24 court on that. That's probably where I started to think about  
25 being a lawyer. I went into some pretty horrible scary homes

1 when I think back on it now.

2 I think one of my proudest moments was when I was  
3 visiting a lesbian family. That was in the '60s, very  
4 unusual. I visited a little boy who was in the home and I  
5 visited the mothers and they were living in a little apartment  
6 which was very clean and all they had dividing themselves from  
7 this little boy was a curtain. I interviewed them and how  
8 much they loved him and what nice people they were, and I went  
9 to court and recommended that he be returned to the home. He  
10 was returned. I always felt really good about that. I never  
11 thought about that until just now.

12 I got to a point in my life where I was not real  
13 fulfilled, not real satisfied. I had little children and I  
14 think in looking back over it in the whole scheme of things I  
15 might have been better off to go into psychology or social  
16 work instead of law school, but law school sounded much more  
17 challenging and elevated. So with my husband's approval --  
18 and he sure pitched in a lot -- I went to law school after my  
19 kids were all in school all day long. My son will tell you to  
20 this day he's still mad at me about that. I didn't know it  
21 but he was.

22 It was a lot of work. It was hard. There were  
23 times I wanted to quit and after the first year it was fine  
24 and I was a good student. I worked for Maddin Hauser. Mark  
25 Hauser and Micky Maddin, who wasn't there so much when I was

1 there. I did it for as many years as I enjoyed it, and  
2 frankly after I really wasn't enjoying it very much, I just  
3 stopped practicing. Took early retirement, but I've never  
4 regretted it. It's good about the way I think and the things  
5 I know. I think most people thought I was a very fine lawyer.  
6 You have to really put in the time at the beginning and it was  
7 hard because I always worked part time. It was a definite  
8 positive, I don't regret.

9 If I had to do it over again I probably might have  
10 become a social worker or psychologist because I'd maybe still  
11 be doing it. I'm doing nothing much right now and loving  
12 every second of it. It was a fulfillment thing, a need to do  
13 something more with my brain I think.

14 **MS. ALTERMAN:** And then about 1995 is when you  
15 became the president of the Women's Division.

16 **MS. KLEIN:** First I became campaign chair. I think  
17 I finished law school in '79. I was already president of JVS  
18 in my last year and I said yes and did both together. First  
19 the associate chair for a year. That was definitely the  
20 beginning. I did well. I enjoyed it. I felt very fulfilled  
21 and that I was in the right place. I love working with the  
22 women. I think they are overlooked and underrated.  
23 Especially in those days. I think we were such a laboratory,  
24 an incubator for so many ideas that came up and eventually  
25 found its way into the general campaign.

1           Let's face it, women aren't working so this becomes  
2 their work for many of them. They have more time and  
3 obviously many are as equally every bit as capable as the men.  
4 Within their volunteer work is where all this brain power and  
5 ability and creativity happens. So I loved working with the  
6 women. There's no greater times than being women to women  
7 with the women, which doesn't mean that men aren't the  
8 greatest, too, but they're just great fun and comradeship.  
9 Women are different and they lead differently. I felt we had  
10 a great contribution to make to the Federation. The campaigns  
11 were always successful, we were always innovating different  
12 things within the campaigns. For three years you do it, one  
13 year as an associate and two years as the chair. Then the  
14 last year you're busy training the next one who's coming in.

15           **MS. ALTERMAN:** What kind of leader are you?

16           **MS. KLEIN:** I never thought about it until you  
17 invited me to do this. I'm definitely a consensus leader.  
18 I'm very happy delegating in a good way. I think very hard  
19 about who I would ask to take a job. I think very hard about  
20 who I asked to be the officers, who to be on the executive  
21 committee. It's very important to me because I fully intend  
22 to have them do their job and I want them to do their job. I  
23 don't make a decision without getting a lot of input. It  
24 doesn't mean necessarily that I don't go with my own gut, but  
25 honestly and usually, lots of people have good ideas and good

1 brains and the right kinds of answers will start to come out  
2 if you ask the people who you respect and think they have  
3 expertise in that area. So I think I'm definitely a consensus  
4 kind of leader.

5 I don't like being alone at the top, particularly,  
6 which doesn't mean I can't make a decision. I think the  
7 executives I worked with enjoyed working with me. I love to  
8 hear what they have to say. They're the ones who are the  
9 professional, that's why they're called the professional. I  
10 don't think I'm a rubber stamp at all but I do, it's an equal  
11 partnership with the professional having a very important role  
12 for me.

13 I also think I'm the kind of leader who can bring  
14 out the best in people, because I think I give a lot of  
15 praise. I'm very careful about criticism because I think that  
16 dampens people's spirits. If I have to, I do, but I think I  
17 can get around it in better ways by pointing out the good  
18 things and looking at the strengths. Personally, if someone  
19 gives me good positive feedback, I feel better about myself.  
20 I can do a better job. I feel like I've got the stuff. If  
21 someone would be picking on me and criticizing me too much and  
22 making feel like I have to keep looking over my shoulder,  
23 which hasn't really happened to me in this area too much, I  
24 think I would wither a little bit. I try to lead that way.  
25 It's very important to me. I think you get so much more out

1 of people by making them feel really good about what they're  
2 doing. So to the extent that you can.

3 **MS. ALTERMAN:** What are some of the critical  
4 decisions that you've been involved in lately?

5 **MS. KLEIN:** Well, lately I don't know.

6 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Or in the past.

7 **MS. KLEIN:** In the past. I told you that one kind  
8 of stumps me. I don't think of what I did so much as my own  
9 critical decisions. I think all of the things that I did that  
10 made a big impact, a make or break impact was when the  
11 Federation wanted to sell the JVS building downtown. I was  
12 the president of JVS. We had been through this whole thing  
13 and they were going to sell it to the DMC, I think. It was  
14 not a very well thought out decision. They hadn't figured out  
15 what we were going to do. We'll rent an apartment, an office.  
16 We looked into it and it wasn't very feasible.

17 Not being very political I hadn't realized that  
18 actually it had all been set up at the board meeting, that  
19 certain people had been called. They never called me to set  
20 me up because I'm not very set up-able. They just sort of  
21 pass over me if they need to line people up.

22 Anyway, unbeknownst to me, people had been talked to  
23 and they came to the board meeting and the vote was going to  
24 be whether or not to sell the JVS building. I got up and just  
25 very passionately laid out the story why it was a huge mistake

1 why they were doing this over the best opinion of JVS and how  
2 I was really quite angry and taken aback by it and why it  
3 shouldn't be done. One by one the people on the board said, I  
4 had been ready to vote for this but I'm not going to. I  
5 remember my friend Jane Sherman said, I promised I was going  
6 to vote for this but I'm not going to. The JVS building was  
7 not sold and it would have been a mistake. Now the JVS  
8 building is thriving. Bob Aronson always says to me, that was  
9 the one time. I felt I made a big difference there.

10 **MS. ALTERMAN:** That's critical.

11 **MS. KLEIN:** Critical. I thought that was like a  
12 make or break. Other decisions that I've been part of that  
13 were wise community decisions, many things at Women's Division  
14 when I was president or campaign chair, things we innovated.  
15 I think I've been on the side of helping some very good  
16 decisions be made. Not too many bad ones. I'm a pretty  
17 deliberative person. I really like to walk myself through  
18 everything, get to the end and see what the scenarios would  
19 be, A or B, and try to come up with the best guess on these  
20 things.

21 We started Choices when I was president, we changed  
22 it from Women's Division to Women's Department, which seems  
23 minor but I think did have an effect on where the Women's  
24 Department stands in the whole hierarchy of the Federation.  
25 The women's Seder started when I was president. During the

1 campaign just lots of strategic decisions of how to run the  
2 campaign and how to best go after new gifts. Our unending  
3 search for new gifts.

4 **MS. ALTERMAN:** My next question. What are the  
5 critical issues that we face as a community today?

6 **MS. KLEIN:** Well, within the Federation I think one  
7 of the critical issues is the relationship between staff and  
8 the lay leaders because I think it's becoming more and more  
9 difficult to find the lay leaders and then therefore the staff  
10 steps up and by necessity, particularly in the campaign, takes  
11 over more and more and like everything is cyclical. Maybe  
12 works for a while and then you have to go back and look again.  
13 So I think that's one of the things we have to look at.

14 I think we have to look at our relationship to how  
15 we allocate our money, how we solicit for our money, the whole  
16 question of the designated giving as opposed to the umbrella  
17 concept. The umbrella concept has always been our concept.  
18 That's what we believe in. But it's getting harder and harder  
19 to convince people that they should give one for all, and  
20 understand, to me it's so important because you take an agency  
21 like JVS that isn't a real understandable agency. You might  
22 not find people that want to give to JVS whereas other  
23 agencies might get all the resources. I think that's the fine  
24 line. Of course Bob Aronson works very well, understands  
25 people to get them to give how they want to but still benefit

1 the whole community.

2           The question of the finite resources and the  
3 infinite needs. It's getting harder and harder, the problem  
4 of the Jewish community branching out into the greater  
5 community where our largest donors are being solicited for  
6 universities and the cultural institutions. Even though I  
7 said before that I think we have to look outward, my belief,  
8 my fervent belief is that we should try to be involved in the  
9 non-Jewish community, but as far as our charitable priorities  
10 they have to be here in the Jewish community because nobody  
11 else is going to do it. Somehow we need to get that over to  
12 our larger donors. It's so terribly important. You can make  
13 your abilities felt in the greater community but to really  
14 understand where the charitable needs need to be.

15           Smaller issues, the day schools. It's huge. They  
16 require so many of our resources and it seems like no matter  
17 what we do, it's not enough. I don't know what the answer to  
18 that is going to be. We're working on an education trust.

19           I think it's a little problem that out in our  
20 citizenry our community of Jews, many of them are not as  
21 involved as some of us here with questions of Jewish  
22 education. So to make it the primary focus of our PR and  
23 outreach to the community I think sometimes presents a  
24 problem. I think that has to be articulated in a better more  
25 sensitive way. Even though you may not understand and this

1 may not be the way you feel, this is the reason why we are  
2 going so strongly for Jewish education, i think it's terribly  
3 important not to just assume that everybody's out there on the  
4 same page that we are, particularly with Jewish education.

5 I think we have to keep our eye on the ball of the  
6 elderly and the human needs and human services. And hunger,  
7 and the primary needs are still very primary. We're going to  
8 have an issue with Israel and how our community deals with  
9 Israel and how our efforts and monies are allocated between  
10 Israel and the local is going to be a very big issue.

11 Also, how do we allocate our attentions between the  
12 national organization and our community. We have a fairly new  
13 national organization. It's got problems. We've got issues  
14 with it. Twenty years from now it will be very interesting to  
15 see where everything is.

16 As our donors and our community become more  
17 insistent on autonomy here in our community and not being told  
18 what to do, how do we draw the line between being team players  
19 and a great community that the whole rest of the country looks  
20 up to for leadership. Can we be the community that breaks off  
21 and becomes a maverick community and doesn't do our part?  
22 These are things that we will be dealing with, even right now.

23 Of course now the inter-marriage problem, the  
24 continuity problem. Unfortunately we've been dealing with it  
25 at least 10 years strong, maybe 15. We don't seem to be

1 making inroads. We're making inroads, but I'm not sure we're  
2 accomplishing what we hope to accomplish. I don't know what  
3 the answer is to that.

4           You haven't asked me about my own family.

5           **MS. ALTERMAN:** I was about to.

6           **MS. KLEIN:** That leads me to my own family. I have  
7 three children, two girls and a boy. My oldest daughter is  
8 40, next daughter is 38, and my son is 33. My kids got about  
9 the same Jewish education as I did. They were members of a  
10 Reform temple. My oldest daughter was not bas mitzvahed.  
11 They weren't doing so much of it by the time my second one  
12 came along. She was bas mitzvahed, mostly because her friends  
13 were, and my son was bar mitzvahed.

14           My husband and myself and my parents and my in-laws  
15 are all very involved in the Jewish community. There was  
16 never a question, to me to be Jewish was the greatest thing.  
17 I was brought up in a very non-Jewish neighborhood. My dad  
18 would bring a little Christmas tree home from the office.  
19 When my kids were little, we had stockings that we hung out on  
20 Christmas. We didn't have a Christmas tree.

21           Then we moved to a very non-Jewish neighborhood and  
22 then we looked around and said, no, we can't do this anymore.  
23 One time when my son was about four, he was watching old  
24 family movies and there were his sisters coming down the  
25 stairs and the stockings and the Santa Claus pinata was by the

1 fireplace. He looked at the screen and he said this cannot be  
2 us, this is Christmas. We're Jewish. This cannot be us.  
3 Obviously we changed and that was the end of that.

4           They went to Roeper School for kindergarten and then  
5 they went to public school where they were definitely not even  
6 close to the only Jewish kids. My son came home from  
7 kindergarten, he was at Way School. We had just taken him to  
8 Israel and every single picture he brought home had Jewish  
9 stars and planes with Jewish stars, and I said to John, I was  
10 curious, I wanted to know what it was all about. I said, John  
11 I love your pictures, they're wonderful. How come everything  
12 has a Jewish star? He said, Mommy, I'm the only Jew in my  
13 class. He was carrying the flag.

14           When they all got older in high school and I was at  
15 Federation and it was a big thing at Federation you shouldn't  
16 let your kids date non-Jewish kids and you shouldn't let them  
17 go junior year abroad except to Israel. There were big  
18 discussions in Women's Department and they would have speakers  
19 and I was always the one who would stand up and say, you know,  
20 my kids are at these ages where they're very humanistic,  
21 they're very idealistic, they're looking to rebel. I'm not  
22 giving them anything to rebel against. I'm not going to say  
23 anything. They bring their non-Jewish friends home and I  
24 don't want them to think we're judging on that basis. If they  
25 date non-Jewish kids, they know how we feel about getting

1 married. But they're in high school and I'm not going to  
2 worry about it. I'm not going to say anything about it. Most  
3 of their friends were Jewish but they also had many non-Jewish  
4 friends and boyfriends.

5 My one daughter had a non-Jewish boyfriend at Duke  
6 in college and by then it was getting time to talk a little  
7 more and we did. She got very upset. Why did we feel that  
8 way when we weren't that observant and what's it all about.  
9 My spoiled Jewish friends. That didn't impress her much.  
10 When I didn't give her a good answer, enough for her, she said  
11 she thought she was going to go back to school and study  
12 Judaism and she was going to learn for herself and decide how  
13 important it was. When she graduated from college, she went  
14 off to work in a big firm and she said to me, you know I'm not  
15 going to date anyone who isn't Jewish any more. I've made up  
16 my mind I'm not letting myself go there. I called her a  
17 couple times, how's it going, meeting anybody? No, haven't  
18 met anybody. The Jewish boys, nobody's tall enough and  
19 whatever, some silly things.

20 Then she started to tell me about this boy and he  
21 was such a cutie, and she just wasn't going to date him. He  
22 had blue eyes and he was so cute. She wasn't going to date  
23 him. One day she called and said, guess what. You know that  
24 boy with the blue eyes? Well, we were having lunch and he  
25 started to Hanukkah me to death. He turned out to be Jewish

1 and that was her husband.

2           Then my daughter Liz went to Michigan and then to  
3 Kellogg for her MBA, and Kathy my older one also went to  
4 Kellogg and so did her husband when they finished this job.  
5 Liz met a young man the first day of school and she said, oh,  
6 I met the cutest guy but he's three years younger than me.  
7 He's too young for me. I said, hey, you look about 12. That  
8 evolved from a friendship to a marriage, so she also married a  
9 young nice lovely Jewish man.

10           **MS. ALTERMAN:** What's his name?

11           **MS. KLEIN:** The first one is Peter Bressler for  
12 Kathy, and the second one is Steven Brodsky. Both from  
13 Chicago. My daughters live in Chicago. My four grandchildren  
14 live in Chicago.

15           My son, who always dated non-Jewish girls but not  
16 with a vengeance, it's just kind of who he happened to be  
17 with. When we went to visit him in college he said, did I  
18 ever tell you that Loren Abraham wasn't Jewish? We were just  
19 coming to meet her. We said no, but I'm really glad you told  
20 us. He said, well, I wouldn't want to say anything. She's  
21 really half Jewish. My husband said, well, which half. He  
22 said, not the half that celebrates. That was his big love  
23 affair in college and that broke up.

24           Then he decided he was not going to date non-Jews,  
25 and he married a lovely young Jewish woman from Detroit,

1 Gretchen Goldberg, whose parents and grandparents we happen to  
2 know but he never knew her. So very lucky us. Very lucky us.

3           With our daughter when she was dating this non-  
4 Jewish boy and she was all upset, I said to her, if this is  
5 your sweetheart and this is the one and you marry him, even  
6 though we don't like him for you on all sorts of different  
7 reasons, it will be fine. We'll work it out. It won't be any  
8 problem. However, it will be your marriage and not our  
9 marriage, and you will own the part that's going to be  
10 difficult and you will own all those decisions that you will  
11 have to make and you will not be part of a big Jewish family  
12 like ours. So just know that. It will be fine with us. The  
13 part that might not be fine, will be difficult, will be yours.  
14 Maybe that helped. I don't know.

15           My entire Zuckerman side of my family, my cousins,  
16 none of whose fathers were the least bit religious, every one  
17 is married to Jewish people. The other side, my husband's  
18 family, lots of inter-marriage. Something happened. They  
19 knew how much we loved our Judaism and how proud we were.  
20 There was never a question in our mind. I also said to Kathy,  
21 if you marry him, it won't be our first choice, it won't be  
22 our thousandth choice, but we'll be okay. We'll work it out.  
23 So far so good.

24           When our kids got older, each one of them said to  
25 us, we didn't get a good enough Jewish education. You didn't

1 give us a good Jewish education. I said to them, well, I'm  
2 really sorry about that but I'm not like that. I'm still not  
3 like that. I'm not religious at all. Rebel. This is your  
4 life. Go give your kids a good Jewish education. This is  
5 your time now, not our time. As it turned out our four  
6 grandchildren go to a day school in Chicago. It's a very  
7 secular, wonderful, beautiful little school. They had to go  
8 to private school. Our kids still aren't all that religious  
9 although they joined a Conservative synagogue.

10 So for the first time in our lives when we have  
11 Seder, we have four little grandchildren -- our 4 and a half  
12 year old twins aren't quite there yet -- our 10 year old and  
13 our 8 year old can chant the four questions and they know  
14 everything and being knowledgeable Jewishly is like, I'm going  
15 to read Harry Potter, I'm going to bench, I'm going to out and  
16 play, I'm going to wear my kippa (ph. sp.). It's the fabric  
17 of their lives. It's beautiful and they love it and it's part  
18 of them. I can't think of anything nicer. I certainly would  
19 encourage my kids here to consider Hillel. I don't know if  
20 they will, but it's great. It's wonderful.

21 **MS. ALTERMAN:** Linda, we're coming to the end of the  
22 interview. Is there anything that I missed, anything we  
23 didn't talk about?

24 **MS. KLEIN:** I don't think so.

25 **MS. ALTERMAN:** I'm going to ask you one last

1 question. If you have a message for your community or your  
2 family?

3 **MS. KLEIN:** Not really. I would just say as far as  
4 being Jewish -- I always said to people at Federation who were  
5 pushing, now I think Judaism is coming around to that point.  
6 If being Jewish is joyous enough and reasonable enough, which  
7 I think it is, which is why I always loved Judaism even though  
8 I'm not a believer. The philosophy, the story, the part that  
9 makes us civilized is good enough and that can be given out, I  
10 think that's our best chance, myself, personally. I don't  
11 know the phrase, but you've been given a great mesorah, a  
12 great legacy, hold it close to you and cherish it and treasure  
13 it. I think that's very important. Just be true to yourself,  
14 to go with your passions, to look at your history even though  
15 you didn't live it, look at the Jewish people and not forget  
16 it, not let it be part of your learning as you go forward just  
17 because you maybe weren't there. To not be the kind of person  
18 who has to have the illness to get involved in the illness,  
19 doesn't have to have cancer to give to cancer and understand  
20 it. But to understand the whole world. Just go with your gut  
21 to be kind and good and empathetic to people. And to know  
22 that you're going to grow up. Everything that you think you  
23 have to know when you're a young person you don't have <sup>to</sup> know.  
24 Just be willing to change as you get older and be willing to  
25 grow.

1                   Another thing I would say as you get older is to  
2 have young friends. Stay with young people.

3                   **MS. ALTERMAN:** Thank you, Linda. What a beautiful  
4 message.