

1 ORAL HISTORY OF: Robert Naftaly
2 INTERVIEWED BY: Susan Citrin
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5 SUBJECT MATTER: Early Life, Jewish Communal
6 Service, Leadership Roles

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8 MS. CITRIN: This is Susie Citrin, and I'm
9 conducting an oral history interview with Robert Naftaly, at
10 the Jewish Federation, on September 22, 2004.

11 Bob, do we have your permission to use your words
12 and thoughts in the future for educational and historical
13 research and documentation?

14 MR. NAFTALY: Yes, Susie, you do.

15 MS. CITRIN: Terrific. This is very exciting to
16 interview you because --

17 MR. NAFTALY: It's easy to excite you.

18 MS. CITRIN: See, that's the good thing about you.
19 You always have a wonderful sense of humor.

20 To begin with, why don't you start a little bit
21 about your early childhood, how you became community leader
22 from growing up on Dexter.

23 MR. NAFTALY: First I have to mention Anita, because
24 when I gave my acceptance speech when I got the Butzel, I
25 forgot to mentioned Anita, and I had to put an ad in the

1 Jewish News, so I want to make sure that I don't have to run
2 another ad in the Jewish News. So, Anita, I love you, and
3 everything I have I owe you. I'll remember again later on.

4 You're right. I grew up in Detroit, lived here all
5 my life. Actually grew up originally on Richton in a two-flat
6 and then we moved to Collingwood and Linwood, attended
7 Roosevelt, Durfee and Central all on the west side. My father
8 worked for Dodge Truck. My mother stayed home until my father
9 passed away and then she worked at the synagogue as a
10 secretary of Beth Moses and Beth Shalom. But my mother was
11 always home when the teachers would come and say Bobby was
12 acting up. That's the old style mothers.

13 I had two grandparents that came over from Europe
14 from what was mostly Hungary, although I think it changed from
15 time to time. My mother's parents, Amil and Mary Kahn, if I
16 remember, my Grandfather Kahn was involved in the Jewish
17 community. I remember as a kid, him taking me to the Jewish
18 National Fund in which he was the treasurer. One of the
19 mistakes I made at one point, the director of the Jewish
20 National Fund showed me a check stub my grandfather had signed
21 and I should have taken one and kept it. I didn't and I
22 regret that.

23 My grandfather made a deal with my mother that I
24 could go to public schools if I want to the Yeshivah
25 afternoons and summer. So I went to Yeshivah Beth Yehudah

1 probably for six or seven years.

2 My background in the Jewish community was not
3 through any involvement of my family in the community. I
4 think my father had all he could do to support us. It was
5 probably a combination of things, but I think a lot of our my
6 education at the Yeshivah, in which I think I learned a lot
7 about the Jewish people, the state of Israel, responsibility
8 for others, values and ethics. I believe that that foundation
9 is part of what brought me to the community.

10 MS. CITRIN: So you were ten years old when the
11 state of Israel was founded. Do you remember anything about
12 it?

13 MR. NAFTALY: Vaguely. My recollections of Israel
14 are more my trips to Israel, but I remember going to some
15 celebration, but it's not a vivid recollection. The first
16 thing I remember is my grandfather going over. I think at
17 that time the Jewish National Fund was buying land so they
18 would accumulate some ownership. I think it's obviously in
19 the back of my mind, not in the forefront of my feelings or
20 actions.

21 MS. CITRIN: What was it like to attend Yeshivah?

22 MR. NAFTALY: Mostly because we had to. Taking the
23 bus, studying Rashi in the summer over the bakery when
24 everybody else was out playing and having a good time. They
25 had a building on Richton and Linwood. They also had an

1 additional building over I think it was Zeman's Bakery or
2 something. Wasn't as nice a facility as we now have. There
3 were friendships and values and trying to learn more. I think
4 it was also a place to get some identity for yourself, to
5 understand why you're here.

6 MS. CITRIN: You still have a friend from the old
7 days, don't you?

8 MR. NAFTALY: I have a few friends from the old
9 days. But my best friend, Bernie Mindel, is a friend that we
10 went to elementary school together. We travel together and
11 talk to each other four or five times a day. I have a lot of
12 friends and acquaintances but he's part of my soul.

13 MS. CITRIN: It's interesting that from the early
14 Yeshivah days there's certain things in your life that are
15 important to you like education. I'd just like you to talk a
16 bit about how you got started in Federation and the national
17 community, ADL.

18 MR. NAFTALY: A lot of people feel the Federation is
19 an elitist organization and it's hard to break in. In my case
20 it didn't seem that hard. It was hard to get out. I really
21 think I had three different entry points into the Federation
22 community. At that time we were organizing the campaign by
23 professions and I went to the Accountant Section meeting
24 because one of my partners, Merrill Shapiro, who has passed
25 away since, who was a CPA, his father died and he was supposed

1 to go to a meeting. I think the Silvermans had asked him to
2 come. He asked me to do him a favor and go. From there I
3 ended up chairing the Accountant Section and then the
4 Professional Division, and then I chaired the Allied Jewish
5 Campaign.

6 The other entry point is I was interested in the
7 Anti-Defamation League. I was invited to a meeting at Bernie
8 Stollman's house. A number of us, at that time young people
9 -- this is 35 years ago or more -- were invited to meet the
10 national director, Ivan Epstein, of the Anti-Defamation
11 League. He talked to us about ADL and it seemed to me to be a
12 great place for me to join an organization to help with not
13 only anti-Semitism but rights of all minorities. The civil
14 rights movement was going on at that time, and there were
15 still a lot of issues of rights of minorities and women. ADL
16 represented to me an opportunity to have some impact.

17 I think I was the only person who went to that
18 meeting -- there were, I don't know, maybe 30, 40 of us that
19 went -- I drove Dick Lobenthal crazy saying I want to get
20 involved, I want to get involved, until I finally got
21 involved, and I've worked myself up to chair of the Michigan
22 region of the ADL. I'm still the national treasurer. I
23 chaired their budget committee, executive committee, I'm on
24 the foundation board, I chair their audit committee, I chair
25 the personnel committee. So I've stayed active with ADL.

1 Then I got involved in Federation side, which is the
2 spending side of this organization through the budget division
3 that funded ADL. At first my motives were to protect the ADL
4 allocation that they got from Federation. Judge Gubow was the
5 chair and then Avern Cohn was the chair of that division.
6 Over time I became the chairperson of that. Even went on to
7 the National Council of Jewish Federations, which now has a
8 different name. They had a large city budgeting conference
9 and I chaired that for more years than I was supposed to.
10 They couldn't find anybody dumb enough to do it. Everybody
11 would say at the national meetings, wasn't Abba Eban's speech
12 great, and I would say, oh, I don't know. I missed that. I
13 was looking at the budgets of American Jewish Congress.

14 So I had these different entry points. Because of
15 the openness of this community I was able to move up, starting
16 at the beginning of the Federation, end up as its president.
17 So this community has been great to me.

18 **MS. CITRIN:** But you did things on a national level
19 which is very exciting as well.

20 **MR. NAFTALY:** National level is nice and important,
21 but there's nothing like Detroit and this community. I think
22 at the time I chaired the large city budgeting conference,
23 almost all the national spots were chaired by Detroiters. At
24 that time Marty Citrin chaired one of the council of the
25 Jewish Federation, and there was another -- as Max Fisher once

1 said, it's all Detroiters. It shows you what a great
2 community we have. Our leadership is not just in Detroit it's
3 across the country. Detroit's where we need to keep at it and
4 stay with our efforts.

5 MS. CITRIN: Absolutely. I notice that in '93 you
6 had the Champion of Liberty Award from ADL as well.

7 MR. NAFTALY: They'll give anybody an award.

8 MS. CITRIN: No, I think they thought very highly of
9 you.

10 MR. NAFTALY: People probably wonder, who are "they"
11 that make all the decisions. When I went to my first national
12 ADL meeting there never was a Detroiter who was on the ADL
13 Board that didn't come. There was Bnai Brith half of the
14 board and then there was ADL half of the board. ADL started
15 out of Bnai Brith and then ADL became bigger than the parent.
16 No one from Detroit was ever appointed to the ADL that didn't
17 come out of an Bnai Brith.

18 I met Lee Schooler from Chicago. One day he came up
19 to me and said, congratulations, and I said, what for? He
20 said, you'll see. He was on the nominating committee and he
21 nominated me to be on the National Commission of the Anti-
22 Defamation League. I thought I'd gone to heaven. Then I
23 found out there was an executive committee. I said, I've got
24 to get there. They must be making the decisions. I became a
25 member of the National Executive Committee. They don't seem

1 to be making decisions. Maybe I need to be a chairperson. I
2 became chair of the budget committee for almost for life.
3 Maybe it's the officers. Then I found out Abe Fox made all
4 the decisions --

5 MS. CITRIN: He's really the head honcho, huh?

6 MR. NAFTALY: I still love ADL and I'm still
7 involved. I was just in New York on Monday. Unfortunately,
8 the need for ADL, which at one time we thought was easing, is
9 getting tough again. World Jewry is under attack. The ADL is
10 one of our defenses. It's still an important part of my life.
11 It was nice of them to recognize me.

12 As you know, these honors are ways for organizations
13 to raise money and you're just the tool to help them. If you
14 believe in the cause --

15 MS. CITRIN: Well, I think you're a beloved tool.
16 People love to be with you, Bob, because of your sense of
17 humor and also because you're a very down-to-earth person.
18 You are smart about things that you do.

19 MR. NAFTALY: You're so sweet.

20 MS. CITRIN: I say that because I know you
21 personally, but also because I've read all of the things over
22 the years that you've done and your folder goes back 30 years.
23 It's amazing what you've accomplished.

24 MR. NAFTALY: There's a lot to do in this community
25 and there's a need. If people do watch this, maybe I'll get

1 my grandchildren to watch it. We've got to make sure before
2 we leave that I say hello to Zachary and Ben and Emily, who
3 are important to me, and those who are coming that aren't here
4 yet. I didn't mention your name because you weren't born yet.
5 Maybe I'll do an addendum.

6 I've been involved in a lot of different parts of
7 this community. Problems come, problems go. Lot of them keep
8 going on, but I've been involved in the Jewish Community
9 Council, outreach to the general community and tries to expand
10 our role as a minority in this community, understand and deal
11 with other people and other groups, how we can get along, and
12 how we can help them. Involved on the board of the Jewish
13 Center, involved on the board and as the president of the
14 Jewish Home and Aging Services, which was one of the issues we
15 had to deal with before I became president.

16 MS. CITRIN: I think especially as president of the
17 Jewish Home and Aging Services and then as president of the
18 Jewish Federation from '95 to '98, you really spearheaded a
19 lot of very innovative, creative programs. You moved the Home
20 for Aged from just a nursing home facility to a whole spectrum
21 of activities for different types of seniors in our community.

22 MR. NAFTALY: David Page, who was the president who
23 preceded me, gave me the job of dealing with the problem we
24 had of our Homes for Aged, that we had two homes, 400 people
25 in them, one in Detroit, one in Southfield. Borman Hall and

1 one that my bubeleh had been in. At the time she was there it
2 was more a place where people of my age would join together
3 with their friends she had a job. I remember she told me she
4 made a nickel an hour more than everybody else because she was
5 such a good worker.

6 As the years went on, the people were in nursing
7 homes and very sick, very medically needy. Services were
8 hospital-like and the care that was needed was very difficult
9 and intensive and expensive. We were running these two
10 nursing homes poorly, as a community. We were cited by the
11 state for lack of patient care, and it really was a shame on
12 us. For 400 people we were spending a tremendous amount of
13 money. If we were spending a tremendous amount of money and
14 giving them great care, there might have been some
15 justification. But we were spending a lot of money and were
16 giving, according to the state's reports, very poor care.

17 David Page sent me in there to try to come up with a
18 solution. We fired the board, which was not an easy thing. I
19 remember -- this is a lesson for people who are on boards --
20 the board members had not even read the state report. They
21 let the executives tell them what was in the report. When I
22 went to the meeting and asked them, did you read this? I
23 mean, these are our parents, these are our family members.
24 How could you let this happen? One of them said, it's not my
25 job to read it.

1 So we put together a board that had doctors on it,
2 nurses on it, people in the health care business. We came to
3 the decision that we just could not run this ourselves, well,
4 and that we needed to out-source it and privatize it. We
5 found two businesses, one a large health care company, HCR,
6 which I think was the second biggest nursing home company in
7 the country out of Toledo, and a local group. Leo Eisenberg
8 helped us with this. So instead of paying the basic care, we
9 decided to set up an organization called COJES, Committee on
10 the Jewish Elder Services.

11 We took all of our agencies, brought them together.
12 I think Mark Schlüssel had come up with the idea and I helped
13 implement it under my term. But we took all the people
14 delivering services to the seniors and we said, what are we
15 missing? What should we be doing? What are the priorities?
16 I think it's safe to say that this community really stood up
17 to the challenge and we now serve thousands of seniors. We
18 have day care for Alzheimer's, we have transportation for
19 seniors, we have a tremendous program on home health, in which
20 we supply people in their 80s and 90s and even 100s now, in
21 apartments and in their homes, people who help them stay in
22 place so they don't have to go to a nursing home.

23 We have a fund, the Rubin Fund, a trust for the
24 elderly. The Danto family put their name on the nursing home.
25 All of this money has been put into service for the elderly.

1 The amount of services we give and the people that we're
2 touching is a tremendous amount over the 400 we used to serve.
3 I'm real proud of my little part in that. There's more to do.
4 We're all getting older and we're going to need more services.
5 But I really think we're a model for the country.

6 The second stool was Israel and overseas, which has
7 continued, and Israel continues to need our help.

8 The third stool that I'm also proud of where I spent
9 a lot of time with Harlene Appleman and Lynda Giles. We set
10 up Alliance for Jewish education. The goal there was to take
11 education -- and everybody talked about what a priority it
12 was. But to take education and organize a group of people who
13 would be advocates for education and put together a road map
14 for the future. It started at a general assembly that I went
15 to with Harlene and Judah, and we interviewed people from all
16 over the country. What are other communities doing? What are
17 the best practices?

18 Amongst the things we came up with was Synagogue
19 2000, which we brought into this community to help the
20 synagogues and temples. Your temple was part of that. How
21 did they face the future? How did they organize themselves
22 and grow so they provide services to their members? How did
23 they make the services more interesting? We had hundreds of
24 people around this community working on that.

25 We came up with the Alliance, which was kind of

1 copied on the COJES model a little bit, in which we brought
2 the Agency for Jewish Education into the Federation so that we
3 would act as a priority in our community. We set up a program
4 for scholarships, for synagogues. We added a half million
5 dollars to it which brought the temples and the synagogues
6 closer to us because they have financial issues, too, of
7 affordability. We don't want a Jewish kid not to get an
8 education because his parents don't have the means, and by
9 helping affordability we did that.

10 Milt Shiffman was on our committee and he came up
11 with the idea of the Shiffman grant for scholarships for the
12 day schools and affordability is a big issue there. We can't
13 depend on grandparents to take care of educating our children.
14 It's become very expensive to become a part of our Jewish
15 community and affordability is an issue.

16 We set up the ^{Hermelin} Harmalan-Davidson Committee to start
17 with pre-school children, to educate our teachers better.
18 There's nothing like a good teacher to make a school better.
19 We put all our pre-school teachers at the synagogue schools
20 through a program together with Bill Davidson through the
21 Jewish Theological Seminary. I think it's now headed by
22 Doreen Harmalan who chairs the committee. We're now training
23 the teachers in the grades above kindergarten. We take them
24 to Israel, work on their curriculum. We've had tremendous
25 positive feedback from the teachers that they now have better

1 skills and are able to help educate the children better.

2 In addition to that, we have a whole road map,
3 there's a lot to be done. We set up through this committee
4 working with educators and experts in education things that
5 can also be approved that we don't have the money for yet.
6 There's still a lot more work to be done in curriculum
7 development and how to use technology. We set up a technology
8 network in the synagogues, giving them the capabilities that
9 was also funded by the Federation. So I think we've done a
10 lot of things in education, but not as much as we need to do.

11 **MS. CITRIN:** It's amazing to me that you go from a
12 little Yeshivah boychik to really Mr. Alliance for Jewish
13 Education, that's what people know you as. Here you're
14 describing something that's so wonderfully enriched for our
15 community.

16 **MR. NAFTALY:** We heard last night from the outgoing
17 president, the incoming president, education, education,
18 education. What we have to do, there's tremendous goodwill
19 and financial resources in this community. The goal of the
20 Federation and the job in its leadership is to match up that
21 goodwill and these good ideas. I think we've laid out a road
22 map of things that need to be done. Synagogues have
23 tremendous pressure. Educational systems in synagogues are
24 not money-makers. They're a drain on synagogues. They need
25 more help.

1 When we set up the new Hebrew high school, it was a
2 group of young people came to us and said we want to start a
3 high school. And I had doubts. We said, you have to do
4 certain things. We'll give you some start-up money but you
5 have to prove to us that you can do it. You're going to have
6 to get a certain student base to get this started, raise a
7 certain amount of money to match what we put up. They did it
8 and we have a great high school, but it needs a building, it
9 needs scholarship money.

10 We have the Frankel gift, hopefully it will be
11 funded, that will assure the financial viability of that
12 school for years to come and this community should be proud.
13 It's another tool in what this community needs to make sure
14 that we're here in the long-term future and that we pass on to
15 our grandchildren a stronger community than we took from our
16 forefathers and mothers.

17 **MS. CITRIN:** It seems in the elderly, you come in at
18 a crucial time with innovative creative ideas. COJES is your
19 baby and here's education with the Alliance.

20 **MR. NAFTALY:** These are community things. Mark
21 Schlusel came up with the idea of COJES. I was just lucky to
22 be at the time where I could see that it was implemented.
23 Lynda and Harlene and Judah and I came up with the ideas of
24 education. Not one person. The nice thing about being in
25 leadership is you can help implement programs that are

1 important. Nothing gets done by the president alone or the
2 CEO of the Federation. It's the community.

3 We're now in a process and I'm co-chairing with
4 Linda Klein, redoing our campaign. How we raised money in the
5 past is not necessarily bad, but we're going to have to figure
6 out how to do it differently and better in the future. We're
7 raising more and more money from less and less people. We're
8 not doing as good a job as we can of being inclusive and
9 reaching out. Less people are giving us money even though we
10 raise more and we have to figure out why. We can't be a
11 community fund-raising organization if we don't represent the
12 community. It's not their fault. It's our fault. We're not
13 telling the story well. We've got to tell the story better.

14 We've had 70 some people meet with us over the last
15 four or five months working on ideas and a process I think has
16 given us another road map for the future. The ideas are here,
17 we have to open our ears and listen to them. Once we get it,
18 I think leadership's job is to push it through and make sure
19 it gets done.

20 **MS. CITRIN:** You mentioned education and the
21 elderly. The third prong was Israel. I read for a long while
22 you carried a couple of stones from Berkenow in your pocket.

23 **MR. NAFTALY:** From Auschwitz-Berkenow. I've
24 probably been to Israel 25 times or more. Even been to
25 Lebanon when we shouldn't have been there.

1 MS. CITRIN: Poland.

2 MR. NAFTALY: One of the trips I went to Poland, and
3 then to Israel. It had a tremendous effect on me for a couple
4 different reasons. The overt anti-Semitism we felt there.
5 The sense that every place we went, people sneered at us. We
6 would wear yalmukas and go to places where they took the Jews
7 from the ghetto out to the concentration camps. The general
8 disdain that the Polish government seemed to have for
9 everything Jewish. There was a museum with a few counters
10 downstairs and David Mondry, who spoke Yiddish, who was with
11 us, the guides we had with us at the time -- this was before
12 things opened up a little and they've let Jews in because they
13 wanted the hard currency -- the guides were really government
14 workers. The people who worked in these institutions were
15 afraid to say too much to us because the guides understood
16 English and Polish. But they didn't understand Yiddish.

17 So David was able to talk to them in Yiddish. They
18 took us behind the counters and the displays that they set up
19 and showed us how everything was just a disaster. Books,
20 prayer books, all thrown in piles and messes and attics, it
21 was all a sham. There were very few Jews left in Poland but
22 the anti-Semitism still stayed there. We spit on the ground,
23 at least I did, when we left.

24 I went to Auschwitz Berkenow, the stones you're
25 talking about. I had a friend, Emery Klein, who survived

1 Auschwitz. I stood there and tried to understand how he felt
2 and I couldn't do it. I took the stones as a reminder of his
3 pain. I lost them eventually. Bothered me. I don't know
4 what happened to them. Every day I would touch the stones and
5 remember what I saw.

6 And I think that's a concern I have about our
7 community. I had more of a concern before that our
8 grandchildren would not understand how we got to where we are,
9 and therefore wouldn't understand why we need to be part and
10 have some responsibility to our fellow Jews, the pain they
11 went through, the hatred affixed upon them just because of
12 their religious belief, hard for somebody to understand. And
13 in America, where we're getting homogenized, the anti-Semitism
14 is under the surface, a guy dressed up in Nazi paraphernalia
15 that's going to shoot up a school, these are the fringes.
16 It's not as much a part of accepted society. You're not
17 supposed to be anti-Jewish or anti-black or anti-Spanish
18 speaking or something anymore.

19 I worried that would harm our ability to stay
20 together as a Jewish community, but the world has set itself
21 up to target the Jews again. When Jews can't walk through the
22 streets of Paris without being feared of attack, when the Arab
23 so-called militants, wherever they are, are able to kill
24 children and kill people because they're Jewish, throw people
25 off a boat because they're Jewish, cut off someone's head

1 because he's Jewish, says that there will still be the need
2 for us to be strong communities and protect each other. So
3 America has been a great place for the Jewish community.
4 Hopefully it will stay a great place for all people. But it's
5 not quite the same in the rest of the world and we have to be
6 vigilant and aware.

7 Israel was missiled by Iraq. Scuds came in. Every
8 week or so there's another suicide bomber blowing up innocent
9 people, as Peter Alter mentioned, people came from different
10 places to find freedom, this hatred all in the name of God,
11 continues. So our concern for our fellow Jews has to be one
12 of our responsibilities. If not us, who?

13 MS. CITRIN: When was your first trip to Israel?

14 MR. NAFTALY: I don't remember the exact date.
15 Probably 25 years ago.

16 MS. CITRIN: How many times have you been there
17 since?

18 MR. NAFTALY: Twenty-five or 30 times, probably.
19 One year I think I went four or five times when there was
20 trouble and I was active in the campaign and stuff.
21 Tremendous progress over there. It's amazing what they've
22 done. I wish I was optimistic. I hope if my grandchildren
23 watch this and they'll say Israel is safe and secure and the
24 borders are secure, suicide bombings don't happen anymore, the
25 Arabs treat them friendly and there's trade between the

1 countries and peaceful borders, everybody respects each
2 other's religion, I hope the Muslim world comes to respect the
3 Christians and the Jews.

4 I don't have a lot of faith in their leadership at
5 the moment. I hope they look at this and say, geez, what's he
6 talking about. Things are so wonderful over there. But it's
7 not so. I have this terrible feeling in my heart that the
8 problems that were there 25 years ago still may be.

9 I saw a quote under President Clinton. An offer was
10 made to Yassir Arafat for 97 percent of the land. The West
11 Bank, Gaza, slight adjustments. They could have the ownership
12 of their holy sites in Jerusalem, there are no Israeli troops
13 in the West Bank and contiguous land. He turned it down
14 because they told him he had to stop the belligerency. When
15 the negotiator for America asked the chief negotiator of the
16 Palestinians under Arafat what this meant, he said, it
17 probably means no peace for the next 50 years. If that's
18 true, that doesn't bode well for us and for the state of
19 Israel. I hope America stays behind Israel and I hope they're
20 still strong and well and that there is no crisis. It would
21 be a lot better for everybody. But it doesn't seem to work
22 that way.

23 MS. CITRIN: Talking about Israel, in reviewing some
24 of the things that you've done, your presidency was so rich
25 with things for our community and the hundredth anniversary of

1 our Jewish community, the big celebration. And yet, you face
2 things like Rabin being murdered in Israel. Must have been
3 hard at certain points during your presidency.

4 **MR. NAFTALY:** The Temple was destroyed by the
5 fighting between the Jewish people, not by the outsiders. We
6 have a tendency when things are good or not good, sometimes of
7 making problems for ourselves. In addition to the challenge
8 to Israel and its leadership, there was anguish between the
9 orthodox community and the rest of our community. We did have
10 a meeting here of the leadership of the rabbinate of the
11 different parts of our community. The good news is that we
12 could have a meeting and talked to each other. The bad news
13 is that the respect isn't where it should be between the
14 communities. I think that the community shows up for the
15 Yeshivah dinner, but then it goes home and separates itself.
16 It's almost like we are with the African American community.
17 The Jewish community is always in the leadership of civil
18 rights, but yet doesn't have a lot of ongoing relationships
19 with the general community. It's sporadic and different
20 pieces.

21 I think there's still a lot of work to be done in
22 tolerance inside our own community and respect for your views,
23 whether you believe or don't or how much you believe. People
24 need to respect people's choice. It's like, I'm a Democrat, I
25 support a woman's choice to decide what she does. I don't

1 want the government telling her whether she can or can't do
2 something related to abortion or birth control. I think it's
3 the same thing in the Jewish community. We need to respect
4 the different parts of the community and we need act it out.
5 A lot of it needs to come from the leadership and rabbinate.
6 If the orthodox rabbis don't show respect to the rest of the
7 rabbis in this community, it's hard for lay people to show
8 respect. I think there's work to be done and I hope the
9 future bodes a little better.

10 MS. CITRIN: Is this your next project?

11 MR. NAFTALY: Well, that's a project Gary Torgow and
12 I have talked about working on. We haven't made much
13 progress. It's maybe too big for me. Right now my project is
14 this campaign overhaul.

15 MS. CITRIN: You do have a tremendous talent for
16 taking a situation and bringing people together who would not
17 otherwise sit at the same table and discuss new ideas. Our
18 community has really been changed by your leadership.

19 MR. NAFTALY: I appreciate that. I want to say a
20 word about what my wife does, if that's okay. She'll be
21 embarrassed, but the fact is, my wife does more for people
22 than I do. She's affected more lives.

23 Anita is the love of my life and a special woman, as
24 you know.

25 MS. CITRIN: Absolutely.

1 **MR. NAFTALY:** Because you work with her on special
2 ed. She's a special ed teacher who came up with the idea
3 starting at Shaarey Zedek, of how can a child, who in public
4 school is having trouble learning English, go to school
5 afterwards and then learn a second language and prepare
6 themselves for a bar mitzvah when they're struggling to learn
7 how to say the words in English, and now they have to learn
8 the backward language which they see differently and are able
9 to understand things differently maybe than other people. So
10 she put this program in place and took it to the general
11 community. She presently has set up an organization in which
12 she hires, trains, oversees and places in all of our
13 synagogues and temples and our day schools special educators
14 that are able to give over 700 children a year, so thousands
15 and thousands of children in our community have been allowed
16 the dignity and opportunity of performing their bar mitzvahs
17 or bat mitzvahs or their education that instead of a bad
18 experience it has an opportunity to be a better experience.

19 The example that sticks in my mind was we were
20 invited to the graduation of Shaarey Zedek at the Hebrew high
21 school by one of her former students. Wasn't one of the
22 things I wanted to do, but you know, it's what you do. So we
23 went. Every kid got to speak a little bit about the thing
24 that affected their life more. They all had gone to Israel on
25 a trip and so out of the 12, 15 kids most of them talked about

1 the Wall. Went to the Wall, experienced the Wall, the
2 emotional part of that. One of them lost a parent and talked
3 about a teacher and the effect they had on their life.

4 This kid near the end, got up and he said, I am so
5 and so, and I have learning disabilities. The only reason I'm
6 here is because of Anita Naftaly. Cry now. He said, when it
7 was time for my bar mitzvah, I thought I had to run away from
8 home. I couldn't stand up here in front of all these people.
9 Anita Naftaly sat down with me, said we're going to do this
10 together and we did it. Because of that I stayed on and I
11 stayed on in high school. This is one child of thousands of
12 children. So when you talk about what I've done, it's
13 nothing. Susie's crying.

14 MS. CITRIN: I am, because I know.

15 MR. NAFTALY: And you help her. It's a great
16 program. She was awarded the professional of the year, the
17 Berman Award. She loves it. What Anita does and what you do
18 and what all of us do is an example of what makes this
19 community great. What I'd ask my grandchildren to do is be
20 part of the community. Give back to the community. Whatever
21 you do for the community you get back a lot more. You meet
22 people you never would meet. You have experiences you never
23 would experience. It adds a value to your life that can't be
24 the same by only doing for yourself. There's just so much to
25 do and so many people that you can help. There's so much you

1 get back from helping others that there's no better experience
2 than to do and help your community.

3 MS. CITRIN: You're not supposed to make the
4 interviewer cry, though.

5 MR. NAFTALY: Sorry.

6 MS. CITRIN: It's true, you make such a wonderful
7 team because you handle the big picture.

8 MR. NAFTALY: I get to make the big decisions, you
9 know, do we go to the moon, do we take over Russia. Anita
10 makes all the others.

11 MS. CITRIN: It's interesting that recently you went
12 to Melton.

13 MR. NAFTALY: I spent a couple years in the Melton
14 school. It was a great experience. I did it with Bernie
15 Mindel and we had a great class of people that I did not know
16 before. We stayed together for three years. You're never too
17 old to learn things, even though our children think they know
18 more than we do. As they get older, their revenge will be
19 their children will think the same of them. It's nice to
20 learn and experience and listen to how other people learn and
21 their thoughts. There's no homework and no tests. They pass
22 you. You all graduate. You just have to show up. You've got
23 to read the material. The more you put into it, the more you
24 get out. I thought Melton was a great experience.

25 Bernie and I are trying to figure out how else to do

1 it. There are tremendous courses in this community. My
2 daughter lives in California. Lisa and her husband Howard.
3 He's involved in a program of trying to figure out how to take
4 adult education programs, get a community calendar. My
5 daughter Beth and her husband Larry are active at Shaarey
6 Zedek. My two stepsons, Bruce is active and goes to Yad
7 leadership. I think he's looking for a girl. Alan has gone
8 back to his roots. Mar just spent a year in Israel. Both are
9 doctors, just gotten engaged to a woman from New York and has
10 become more religious. I got lucky, they're all still in the
11 community and to their abilities are involved.

12 There's a tremendous lot to do in this community.
13 The synagogues have tremendous programs, educational programs.
14 Monday night, Bernie wanted me to go to hear Rabbi Wine. He
15 had a program on Saudi Arabia. There's no end to what you can
16 learn, add to the value of your life that this community makes
17 available to you, all at a reasonable price. Just join up,
18 come on in and be part of us.

19 **MS. CITRIN:** When you were president of Federation
20 you celebrated the 100th anniversary. If you had a crystal
21 ball what would you see in the next 100 years?

22 **MR. NAFTALY:** I'm an old accountant, so I'm a
23 pragmatic, practical person to a great degree. Don't see
24 myself as a great dreamer, even though some of the stuff I had
25 some people thought was a big dream. There's part of me

1 that's concerned, will we assimilate out of existence? Will
2 we have less and less people involved, and therefore things
3 will be much more improved? But I think the optimist in me
4 says that that's probably what the people who preceded us
5 thought, if you look back on the wall, that my god, this new
6 leadership, they look at us and say they'll never be able to
7 take care of this community.

8 So when I come to meetings and see these young
9 people involved with tremendous ideas and energy, I say to
10 myself, the community will probably be a lot better than it is
11 today. I mean who would believe the technology we have today?
12 Everybody's sitting there with their Blackberrys and sending
13 their e-mails to their friends all over the world, and I'm
14 struggling with how to answer the phone. But I've got
15 grandchildren who say, this is how you do the computer. You
16 move the mouse. They're three years old.

17 So my guess is it will be a better community than it
18 is today. There will still be problems at the Jewish Center.
19 That's my hope.

20 MS. CITRIN: Any words for your three grandchildren?

21 MR. NAFTALY: I love them all. Crazy about them. I
22 wish California was closer. The boys are doing fine.

23 MS. CITRIN: I always see your face light up when
24 you talk about Zachary and Ben.

25 MR. NAFTALY: Zachary, Ben and Emily. The only

1 regret I have is that Emily is in California. It's not as
2 much fun when you get to spend more time with the others. I
3 want them to be happy, to be strong and to be Jewish and
4 remember their grandpa.

5 MS. CITRIN: Thank you very much.