

ORAL HISTORY OF: Barbara Nurenberg
INTERVIEWED BY: Sharon Alterman
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SHARON ALTERMAN: Today is Wednesday, January 25th, 2012, and I am very proud and pleased to be at the JVS Building with Barbara Nurenberg, who is president and CEO of JVS. Barbara, do we have your permission to use the contents of this interview for the historic record?

BARBARA NURENBERG: Yes, you do.

SHARON: Thank you. We know that your words are so significant and you have played in such an important role in the evolution and development of this agency, and so we're just happy to hear the story, your story and the story of JVS.

So let's start from the very beginning. Tell me where you were born and tell me about your family history.

BARBARA: I'm a Midwesterner, a Michigander as they say. I was born in Owosso, Michigan. My parents got there because during the war my father felt he needed a safe place to park my mother. Her family was the in the Cleveland Lorraine area, and he felt if he was going off to fight, he needed to feel comfortable. She had a brother who had moved there to go in the scrap iron business, and he figured it was

safe. Who was going to bomb Owosso?

SHARON: He was right.

BARBARA: He was absolutely right. No defense industry there. Wooden furniture, some other things, but no defense industry.

After the war he was at a point where he needed to look for another job, and so on, and he had come from really a retail background. He had been in the management at Federated Department Stores, and worked around the country in different units of the operation. He decided to take up my uncle's offer to join him in the scrap metal business for a while, which didn't last long. He eventually went into residential building and land development.

Meanwhile this New Yorker was stuck in Owosso, as he kind of felt, but it was good business for him. We eventually moved to Flint. So I grew up between Owosso and Flint. And that's pretty much that part of the story.

SHARON: Where as your mother from?

BARBARA: My mother was from the Cleveland Lorraine area, and her family, the Abrams, I guess were long time Cleveland people. She was second or third generation already. The family had come from Lithuania.

My father was born in Philadelphia but really grew up in the Bronx in New York. His family was of Rumanian origin, Basaravia. However, his mother moved to London,

England, when she was five. So my grandmother had a British accent, and my father's two brothers were actually born in London. He was the seventh son, so they have been in this country awhile by the time he was born.

SHARON: So were you in Flint for most of your formative years?

BARBARA: I went to high school in Flint, basically ninth through twelfth. We stayed in Owosso for a while. My mother went to Flint screaming. She didn't like Flint.

SHARON: She liked Owosso better?

BARBARA: Well, that was her opinion. She found Flint very industrial and it just wasn't something that appealed to her. When they were first married actually, they had lived in Flint for six months because my father went in as a trouble-shooter with the Federated Department Stores there, and when she left, she said, Whew, I'm never coming back here again. Little did she know.

SHARON: So what was life like for you in Flint as a teenager?

BARBARA: Nothing really unusual. Even when we lived in Owosso, we were members of Temple Bethel in Flint, and that certainly continued. Pretty normal life growing up.

SHARON: Knowing you, you must have had some leadership roles in your high school.

BARBARA: Yes. And I was also involved with

Michigan State Temple Youth. I was a board member. I was involved in drama, I was involved in art, theater. As I said, very typical. I continued my Hebrew and Jewish education through tenth grade, which was the limit of what was available in Flint at that time.

My parents were what I would call observant Jews within a Reform framework. They both grew up in traditional households, and as soon as they got married, they joined a Reform congregation and that continued to be their style of worship and observance.

SHARON: What about your university years?

BARBARA: I started out at U of M, but I really didn't want to be there. My father, who went to City College in New York, thought I was nuts because a Bronx boy, if he could have gone to the University of Michigan, oh, my gosh. I really wanted to be in the city and I loved New York. So finally my father relented and let me go to NYU. I was in the School of Commerce there. I also went to Wayne and I have some post-graduate work at Harvard, at Michigan State, and so on, in some specialty areas.

The School of Commerce may seem kind of strange, but I really thought I wanted to go into market research. I was a marketing major. I had a second major in psychology. Towards the end of my college undergraduate years, I had a work experience that made me change my mind about what I wanted to

do.

SHARON: What was that?

BARBARA: I was actually working within the prisons, in a rehabilitation program that was part of a federal grant. The concept was to develop a model that would demonstrate ways of reducing recidivism so that the prison census would decrease, and I was there as part of the process of teaching some of the life skills and prerequisite work skill on a very part-time basis, two days a week, but I'd learned the power of changing people's lives.

The interesting thing is what comes around goes around. Today we're talking about Michigan prisoner reentry and across the country. We're talking about how we reduce the census in the prison and various models. Interestingly enough, JVS is involved in that among other things.

SHARON: So your training really has been part of your vision.

BARBARA: Yes. The whole background of business administration of course has served me well, because I have the degrees in human services, and master's degrees and post-graduate certificates and so on. But it all kind of came together over a period of time.

SHARON: Because now you're running a big business.

BARBARA: Yes.

SHARON: Let's talk about how you came to this

point. How did you come to JVS?

BARBARA: Well, I had trained at the VA Hospital in Allen Park. My graduate degree is in vocational rehabilitation counseling, which is a two-year interdisciplinary degree that was from Wayne State University. I was in the psychology department there, and I loved what I was doing. They wanted to hire me. I really wanted to work there, but there was a freeze on hiring, and they hired me as a contractor. I was getting a little nervous.

A friend of mine, by coincidence, who lived in the same apartment building, one day gave me a call and said, you know, there's a job at JVS.

SHARON: That was a good call.

BARBARA: She worked at JVS, and they were trying to find somebody to be a career counselor; would I be interested in applying. So I said, well, sure. I'm willing to look at this. So like so many other young people, you begin to, after a while, worry about benefits, health insurance and so on. A contractor with the psychology department at the VA Hospital was kind of risky so I decided to give this a try.

SHARON: And it was a good choice.

BARBARA: It was a good choice. And I think I was also influenced by the fact that it was a way for me to become more of an integral part of the Jewish community in Detroit.

SHARON: From that initial job, where did it take

you?

BARBARA: Well, I couldn't keep a job at JVS for more than a year. I kept changing jobs, with more responsibility and very quickly I found myself in management and the direct service lasted a pretty limited period of time. But it was still that feeling that you get of making a difference in people's lives.

SHARON: Tell me what the agency was like when you came here.

BARBARA: Well, it was small. The career counseling and employment services were actually in the old Butzel Building the Federation occupied. We were on the first floor. What they called the outpost in Southfield was just opening. That was rented space in Southfield. At the time the Arnold B. Frank Building was under construction. They were going to be moving in momentarily. So I really didn't spend any significant time in the Butzel Building because I had an office in the Arnold B. Frank Building, and I was also operating the so-called outpost or suburban office.

SHARON: Let's go back to the Butzel Building. Is that where the agency first had its start? What is the history of the origin of JVS?

BARBARA: Well, JVS started in 1941 actually. The start was really in the Jewish Community Center, as I understand it. Before we were even incorporated there was a

desk in the Jewish Community Center, and the desk was there because the vision of the community at the time was that there was a need to help Jewish women find employment. Prior to 1941 it was during the Depression and during the heart of the Depression as I understand it, and at that time if anybody was going to get a job, it was going to be a man. So you had these women who were unemployed. Often they were responsible for supporting the family. And of course when the war came about, that all changed, and employment for women was not really an issue.

What became an issue was the career planning for returning veterans, many of whom had their lives and education disrupted by the war. You had the refugees from war-torn Europe, many of them with very significant issues. Some of them were very much employable, some had mental health issues as a result of their experience during the Holocaust.

At that point there was the start of the formal agency. At some point, and I don't know exactly when, it moved out of the Jewish Community Center into the Butzel Building. I can't tell you the year. My guess would be it would be 1941 when they decided it was going to be a separate agency.

In the early '50s it was decided that we needed a sheltered workshop. Sheltered workshops, you normally associate them with services to people with severe

disabilities, either mental health disabilities or developmental disabilities. However, the greatest part of the impetus was what to do with the Holocaust survivors who were unemployable but needed money, and they needed sheltered work. When I first came to the agency, and I walked through the workshop, and that wasn't the area I was really working in, but I walked through. I needed to understand what was going on. I was in the career counseling and job placement end of the business, which was in a different location. I looked at some of the people, especially some of the older people in there, and I said, I can't understand why they're here. Their productivity seemed very normal. It didn't seem to be sub par. And I learned very quickly. Not long after I asked the question, one of the participants in the workshop let out a blood-curdling scream, like nothing I've ever heard in my life, and she was reliving suddenly her experience in the Holocaust. She couldn't work. She needed a lot of comfort, assistance, to bring her back to reality from the flashback.

Also at that point there was a lot of concern regarding parents of children with developmental disabilities. So one of the things that we were doing was also serving people with developmental disabilities, although the Holocaust folks continued there really basically until they died. I mean this was a subset of our resettlement. It certainly wasn't the mainstream.

Another part of the early development, and this was really prior to my time, in the early days when we first started serving the Holocaust survivors, we also started serving people with chronic mental illness. This was really paving the way to a whole new perception of people with chronic mental illness. At that time, as part of a federal study, there were six JVS's across the country that participated. On a daily basis people were taken out of the state hospital -- in our case it was Northville -- walked to our workshop, and provided work to do, and the normal kind of feedback and positive reinforcement you would give to anybody who you were trying to help improve their work skills. Nothing terribly unusual.

As part of that study they discovered that miraculously people with chronic mental illness, when given the opportunity to work, with no change in medication, protocol, treatment, were suddenly significantly better and less symptomatic. This was an eye-opener. and it was the first time I think that on the national basis people began to think about the potential, the vocational or career potential of people with chronic mental illness.

I remember seeing that study when I first came to the agency. It had been done significantly earlier. But the origins of our working with people with disabilities is directly related to the Holocaust and it kind of grew from

there.

And the other branch, the career development job placement also grew in response to community needs. And originally the workshop was a separate agency. When you look up on the wall here, you'll see names of chairs of boards or presidents, and you will see community workshop or JVS underneath their name. It was only later that the organizations were combined. Interestingly enough, there was a single executive director, a single back office, the accounting and everything, but there were separate boards and they were distinctly separate 501(c)(3)s. By the time I came here of course that merger was long past and it was a single organization at that time.

The vocational component, or what we now call Career Development Employment Services, because the word vocational has become interpreted in today's parlance as a trade school or a trade.

SHARON: Nomenclature changes.

BARBARA: Exactly. The word vocational in 1941 meant a calling. It was not the sense of being associated with a trade or that it is today. When you think of vocational, you think of a trade school.

But the Career Development Employment Services also changed as the community changed. I think that's really the hallmark of any organization that is serving the community.

You need to change with the community and meet the emerging needs. Otherwise you become a dinosaur. I think JVS has done that.

In the very early days there was the Jewish Scholarship Service, and that was in response to the need for financial aid for Jewish youth, and that was housed at JVS. That was the precursor of what today is known as JELS or the Jewish Educational Loan Service.

SHARON: There are so many aspects to this agency. Barbara, this is a very complicated agency, and I know it has evolved and changed. What's the focus of JVS today?

BARBARA: Well, JVS really has five main areas, and today I would describe JVS, and I do describe JVS, as a human service organization. We've evolved from the vocational to the human service. Work force development, which the original employment services is part of that, but the work force development, preparing the work force, job placement, career counseling, the scholarships for youth, as well as other types of career preparation is one area.

The second area is specialized services to people with disabilities. And today the disabilities that we're serving are broad-based. Some of the services are short-term, some of them are long-term. Besides the vocational assessment and career assessment and training that we do. We also do person-centered planning, which help people live their lives

the way they want to live them, and are the main point of contact for many people who are just ill-at-ease and/or their families.

SHARON: Do you work with other significant agencies in that person-centered planning situation?

BARBARA: Yes. The person-center planning is the term we use, and it's really the term that the industry uses today because I think it reflects that we're working with a person in terms of where they're at, where they want to be, where they want to go, and it's all about them. But people used to talk about case management and bringing resources together. Well, we start out and constantly keep in the forefront what is it that you want? How are you living now? How do you want things different? What needs to change? So on and so forth. And we help them bring those resources together. And we are the catalyst. So yes, we are working with community agencies, we're working with families, we're working with people in the community who could be a natural support system for individuals. You know, the whole kit and caboodle.

We've got work force development, specialized services to people with disabilities. We have elder care, and we are part of the network of Jewish elder care in our community. When people say what do you really do? I usually think of us as the day program people. It goes from senior

volunteer services for people where the average is 86. Our oldest participant is 101, and it's a man. We have many people in their 90s.

All of our elder care programs are to help people age in place and try to keep them out of institutions. By any name a nursing home is an institution. None of us want to do that. We all want to age in place, and that's really what we're about. There are memory clubs for people who have memory concerns and issues, to help them improve their memory. We have dementia day care for people with a diagnosis of dementia, and both the person with dementia and the family care giver are really both clients, because if you can't support the care giver, the whole thing falls apart, even though they may be in our program all day.

We also have specialized elder care programs for people with disabilities. We now know that people with Down syndrome, if they live long enough, they have a better than 95 percent chance of becoming dual diagnosed. By dual diagnosed, I'm talking about Down syndrome and dementia. And we have a specialized program for caring companion, so they too can age in place.

We also have retirement programs for people with lifelong disabilities or chronic mental illness, which we house at the Jewish Community Center. There are JVS programs that involve recreational activities they're choosing. We

have vans. They go out, they go to art fairs, they go to concerts, they go shopping, they go to the movies, whatever. But there's always that base at the JVS, and they can also take advantage of those activities. This was designed for people who really couldn't integrate into the regular senior programs in our community.

SHARON: Do most of those programs take place in this building?

BARBARA: The senior volunteer programs started out around the community. For cost containment reasons and transportation reasons we needed to centralize it. The memory club, even though it meets here regularly, we've got memory club on wheels, and we do short-term programs, maybe six to eight weeks at the Jewish Community Center or at different senior housing units. The one at JVS is a group that's an ongoing group that can come either once or twice a week. But the short-term programs are there.

I think it's just one example of how we've tried to integrate services throughout the agency, and we have certainly done that in other areas also, which we can talk more about later, what some of the locations are and collaborations are.

The dementia day program is at two locations. It is in this building, which is the Rose and Sidney Diem Building, and it's also in collaboration with Jewish senior life in a

special addition to Fleischman.

Besides the senior programs we also have specialized programs for youth, which range from your education and career counseling, which go way back, to specialized programs for at-risk youth or youth with disabilities to transition from school to work. In fact we're part of a national model called Project Search right now, and we are working with a group of students at the Troy Beaumont Hospital with job coaches there. There are also classroom teachers that are at the hospital. So they spend the whole day there. They're getting the work experience through JVS, and they go into a conference room and do their classroom work right on the premises. But that's not the only model of school to work transition that we use, but at the moment that is the latest national model.

We also work with the Jewish Community Center. We have a collaborative program, Teens All Together, for youth with disabilities who've aged out of day camp but are really not prepared to go into some of the older teen programs, and their peers are no longer still at the JCC. So there's a special recreational component that's combined with work experience, and again we're using job coaches and these teens are getting their first summer jobs so to speak, but also taking certain recreational activities through the JCC. And that program has been spectacularly successful in meeting the need in our community. I could go on. There are a variety of

youth programs that we have been involved with.

And last but not least, and I put it last simply because it's probably the latest major component that's been added in, and that is financial literacy and affordable housing. That really started about ten years ago, in 2002, when there was really need for help with down payment assistance, and we were doing it here in Oakland County, and we also began to be part of the empowerment zone programming, which the Frank Building in Detroit was right in the middle of the empowerment zone. We were using HUD funds to help people obtain home ownership, provide counseling, and helping them qualify for mortgages and as appropriate providing the down payment assistance.

That began to morph into the area of housing counseling, because we began to have people come to us: This mortgage business is confusing. I'm not sure what I should be doing. I'm getting these papers. I don't know if this is right. And we began to formally do pre-purchase housing counseling, which began to morph into financial literacy. As things got bad in our community in 2008, and otherwise well-educated people were making some serious financial mistakes or mistakes that they had made a long time ago were suddenly catching up with them, there was really a need for helping them sort out what to do next, helping people if possible save their homes if they were getting close to foreclosure, credit

repair, budgeting, because often people had very reduced incomes at that point, very different financial circumstances.

From there we began to say, you know, this is a lesson learned. Maybe we need to do proactive financial literacy through various types of interesting catchy seminars. So now we are serving a significant number of people in this area. And we've also integrated financial literacy with many of our employment programs because people are distracted by their financial issues, because they've been out of a job for a while, and they're having issues. They're really not good job seekers, and we began to integrate a certain amount of financial literacy programming into certain employment programs at the same time.

SHARON: You must have a very large staff, and you're managing all of it.

BARBARA: Well, we served over 19,000 people last year.

SHARON: Wow.

BARBARA: Close to 20,000. Many years ago the JVS board made a decision. We started out as a totally sectarian agency. We only serve the Jewish community. Very early on, I'm not sure of the exact date, but probably late '40s, the decision was made to serve people on a non-sectarian basis. What had initially been identified as a Jewish community problem, unemployment, they suddenly realized was a community

problem, and the recognition was also that by serving people from all walks of life and not restricting who we would serve, we would really increase our capacity to serve the Jewish community. If you think about it, if you're only serving the Jewish community, you're not eligible for governmental funds. Many employers don't want to deal with you because there are issues in terms of equal opportunity and so on. So it really opened up our services and made us be much more effective, and allowed us to do more within the Jewish community. And certainly as the number of people with disabilities increased, the ability to serve this population would have been very hampered without governmental monies because the cost per person served is significantly higher than a person without a significant disability.

So we really are now serving the tri-county area. Our mission is Jewish to the core, and certainly there are specific programs within the organization that are targeted to the Jewish community. But we are involved in the wider community effort, and as I said at the beginning, for instance in the Michigan prisoner reentry, we are certainly part of that. And we've been part of other community initiatives.

The areas of work force development or employment, the area of disability, the area of serving refugees, the specialized services to youth in terms of counseling and financial aid and so on, those things have never changed. But

out of some of these experiences and the changing community, we have evolved. For instance the dementia day care is dealing with people with disabilities and their families. It's a different disability, but we've been dealing with people with chronic mental illness, with physical disabilities, with industrial injuries, with late onset of certain chronic disease and so on, the dementia day care was a natural evolution.

On many of the services to the seniors, especially our group is the older end of the senior group, you're working with people who you hope will be able to age in place. That's the ultimate goal. Everybody should die with their boots on. Age in place. However, we're now dealing with people who are now developing age-appropriate disabilities. And helping people cope with those disabilities and live a fruitful life in spite of it is right back to where we started. Whether it's a younger person, older person, the core issues are very much the same.

SHARON: So what kind of a budget do you have these days?

BARBARA: Our budget is around \$21 million. Over the last five years it has varied. It's been a little lower, it's been higher. A lot of the variants have depended upon the availability of certain government funding. Also there are times where we are given a lot of client support services,

which is wonderful, or dollars for client support services, where we can buy training for people. There are times when we've had budgets for \$2 million to pay for training for people, who met certain government criteria. We could literally say, oh, you want to become an LPN. Okay.

SHARON: We'll help.

BARBARA: You meet the government qualifications, you've got the prerequisite skills and education. We can help you. And we're going to give you a grant or the school a grant to pay for your tuition or maybe books or whatever. Right now in our economic environment that kind of flow-through money just isn't available, what I call flow-through money, for client support services. So a lot of that has impacted our budget up and down.

Our staff size has been fairly constant, and there has not been a great deal of change there.

SHARON: Who are some of the people who influenced you as you made your journey through JVS?

BARBARA: Well, I would say the greatest influence was my predecessor, Al Asher, who I'm proud to call my mentor. He's still in the community. He was a wonderfully skilled and gentle man who took great pride in helping staff develop. And I worked side by side with him for many years.

SHARON: What is your leadership style? Who are you grooming?

BARBARA: You know, we're really grooming our whole staff. I will tell you that. We are looking at succession planning. We are looking at staff development. We feel that is absolutely critical. In fact we have an internal training program called EDGE, and I can't begin to tell you the number of training modules, and they're geared to people at different levels with different needs. There's training for management, there's training for line supervisors, there's training for staff in various disciplines. And it's much cheaper than having to pay to bring it in-house. Although obviously for some people we do send them to conferences. We may pay for college classes or whatever, but by and large, we've taken that very seriously, our staff development throughout the agency.

My leadership style? I think it's best described, although it may sound pretty trite, is leading by example. And I never ask anybody to do anything I'm not willing to do, whether it is one of my board members or one of my staff. And I feel that's critical. And everything else is pretty much commentary. Of course in this day and age, team building, people working together, getting rid of silos within an organization, those are all critical. Certainly I'm about that and try to promote organizational structures as well as an environment that creates agency-wide teams. But the real core is don't ask anybody to do something you either haven't

done or are unwilling to do.

SHARON: You mentioned your board. How do you interact with your board? What is their function at this point?

BARBARA: Well, the board is really our government and our policy setting, and we have what I would call a corporate structure. I'm the president and CEO, the head of the board, the chair of the board. They're a policy-making board, they're a fund-raising board. They are a fiduciary board. They carry out all the other basic corporate board functions that you would expect. I'm the only employee on the board, and then I am empowered to employ everybody else.

The organization, the board itself, is divided into a number of committees to get the work done. And we really have, based on best practice, taken the position that although Sarbanes Oxley Act only has two provisions that really apply to not-for-profit, that the best practice among larger not-for-profits is to follow Sarbanes Oxley. So we have an audit committee, we have corporate compliance programs that are very formal and so on and so forth. And I think in this day and age you would expect to find that in hospitals and universities and other large organizations.

SHARON: Are you attracting a lot of young people to your board?

BARBARA: Yes.

SHARON: Oh, that's good.

BARBARA: And I would say that we have a nice mix of ages, from early 30s on up.

SHARON: That's good. Barbara, what is your wish list for this organization? What is your vision? What would you like to see happen in the next ten to twenty years, if you had unlimited funds?

BARBARA: Well, unlimited funds. You know, I would love to be able to serve everybody who needs service and serve them in the best manner possible. That would be my wish. In certain areas we have very restricted budgets. We can serve them and serve them well, but there's more that could be done.

For instance, one of the things I mentioned is money for services. Whether it's educational services or gas money for somebody who's unemployed to be able to go to job interviews and come here for services without worrying about whether they're going to be able to feed their family. That's always a wish of anybody that runs a human service organization, to be able to give everybody the maximum amount of service, do the most for them possible. That probably will never be.

However, I think that the agency has set a pattern that I certainly hope will continue. It's really a couple of patterns. One is that as our community changes, and needs move on, we stop doing what isn't needed, we start doing what

is needed. The best example I know is that during the Vietnam era, as part of our career counseling, we did draft counseling. I mean that of course would be ludicrous to continue. But often agencies continue to hold onto things that aren't necessarily needed. And we have not done that. We have evolved our services.

We also have evolved into an organization that is extremely collaborative and works very closely in order to maximize the impact of community dollars, and I would hope that would continue. For example, for several years now we have a career counselor that is housed three or four days a week at Jewish Family Service in West Bloomfield. A financial literacy person who is regularly there. We have now, with the help of United Way, extended this model, and we have just started at Spaulding for Children having a career counselor and a financial literacy counselor that helps round out and works as a team with their staff to maximize the services. That's also going to happen shortly with Catholic Social Services of Wayne County through the United Way funding.

The staff have been for many years co-located in other mental health centers also in Oakland County that are supported through community mental health dollars, so that our vocational rehabilitation counselors are working side by side in the same unit with the therapists and the medical doctors and so on. I think that this kind of integration of staff is

a wave of the future and something that I think needs to be built on.

Also in the areas of services to people with disabilities, we really, in the metropolitan Detroit area, paved the way on community-based services. We were very early on in terms of providing job coaching and finding people community-based jobs. Yes, we had a sheltered workshop. But our vision wasn't that the people should be in the sheltered workshop their entire life, instead that that might be a jumping-off point. Today many of our people with significant disabilities may graduate from school and go directly into supportive employment or community-based employment with us. And I see that not just as a stagnant thing, but something that will evolve.

And even for services that are not employment services. Some of the community integration services for people with disabilities, for many years we've been using the community and people are out in the community with staff to support them, to learn how to navigate the community, begin to learn what the possibilities are. They might be supported in volunteer work, as well as in gaining new community skills and increasing their independence, helping them realize their life's potential. I think all of these are programmatic trends, where you're not serving people in a vacuum.

When I first started in the field, yes, there were

inter-agency referrals and people went back and forth. But it wasn't really the level of integration of services. You know, even 25, 30 years ago we were regularly meeting with JARC to make sure that the services that we were each providing to our joint clients were completely integrated. That was very much ahead of the scheme. Today that kind of thing is standard practice in working with people with disabilities. We always felt that jointly you can create much more than you could on an individual basis. Trying to become an expert in everything, you really can't.

SHARON: The benefit to the individual is so striking.

BARBARA: Exactly.

SHARON: We see it with our JARC clients. It's amazing what you've done over the years to make people independent, and our community really admires you for your work.

BARBARA: Thank you.

SHARON: We're getting to the end of the interview, and we didn't talk about your life outside of JVS, and I know what a busy lady you are. But you do have a life as well. Do you want to talk about your family?

BARBARA: First of all, I'm a volunteer, too. I'm not just a professional. I volunteer in the community. I've been on my temple board. I'm on the Work Force Development

Board in Oakland County. I'm on several other local advisory boards. I believe that volunteerism is important. And once again, you lead by example.

My personal life has changed a lot over the last few years. I have a daughter, Leah Nurenberg, who hopefully will return to Michigan. I don't know. Right now she's in Syracuse, New York, at Syracuse University, and we will see. She's 25 years old and still not settled really in her life. She's still figuring out exactly who she wants to be.

I was married for over 30 years to Don Nurenberg, and four years ago he suddenly passed away. So that has certainly been a change in my life in recent years.

SHARON: Is there anything we didn't mention or talk about that you would like to include? We've pretty much covered the waterfront.

I also wanted to mention something that you wouldn't talk about, how your work has been recognized nationally and your leadership skills have been recognized. You've won wonderful awards. You mentioned Harvard. Do you want to tell us how you got to Harvard?

BARBARA: Well, the local Harvard business club a number of years ago developed an executive leadership award, and they raised money to send a local not-for-profit executive who won the award to a not-for-profit training institute at Harvard, and I think I was the third person in Detroit to

receive that award. It was not only a great honor. And at that time you also had to come back and talk to the club at a dinner, which was somewhat intimidating. It was filled with the likes of people like Bob Lutz and Rick Wagner stature. But it was certainly an experience that helped pull together everything that I knew and helped me to bring it to another level, and look at things in a more theoretical way, which I think brought value.

I've also had some other experiences, post-graduate work that I think have brought a lot of value to the table. Looking at leadership and management specific to not-for-profits, although frankly the difference between for-profit and not-for-profit is very small, but basically the mission. One is profit oriented, one is mission oriented. You still have to do the same things, you still have to balance the bottom line.

The other value that was very interesting to me, very early Al Asher, my mentor, sent me to what was then called the University of Judaism in L.A., and that also gave me the broader perspective of the Jewish community. I knew the Detroit Jewish community basically. I'd lived in other communities as a kid or a college student. But looking at the framework of the Jewish community, where we came from, where we're going, where we thought we were going at times, that was also very helpful.

SHARON: Would you mention your role vis-a-vis Federation. What is that?

BARBARA: Well, we're a member agency of the Federation. They've changed the wording over the years. We certainly receive an annual allocation. However, I think the more important role is that we really participate in social planning in the Jewish community. I work with my colleagues, as do many of the people who work for me work with their respective colleagues, but at the executive level. We work very closely to plan, to resolve community problems, to figure out what the synergisms can be, what the missing components are. And obviously we are very supportive of Federation. Not only do I personally support Federation, but our board is a board that fully supports Federation. One of the requirements to be a JVS board member is to give a gift to the campaign, and many of them do more than that.

SHARON: Thank you. Speaking as a representative of Federation, we're so happy that we have that full participation because it's so important.

Barbara, this has been a wonderful interview. I've learned so much about your agency, and as I said before, you are such an important part of this community and your work is so valued. And we thank you.

BARBARA: Thank you for your kind words.