

Oral History of: Josephine Weiner
Interviewed by: Mary Baroff
Date of Interview: June 1975
Location of Interview: Home of Josephine Weiner

Mary Baroff: [00:00:01](#) This is an interview with Mrs. Leonard Weiner, a prominent leader in the metropolitan Detroit community. Mrs. Weiner is the daughter of Milford Stern and Mollie Sillman Stern who also were among the leaders in this community. In connection with the 75th anniversary celebration of the United Jewish charities and the 50th anniversary of the Jewish Welfare Federation, a project has been undertaken to record the memories and experiences of a number of community leaders. This interview with Mrs Weiner is being taped in her home in June of 1975. The interviewer is Mary Baroff.

Mary Baroff: [00:00:42](#) Before we begin discussing your activities and community affairs, could you tell me just a little bit about yourself?

Josephine Weiner: [00:00:49](#) [Inaudible] You want to know when and where I was born?

Mary Baroff: [00:00:51](#) Yes.

Josephine Weiner: [00:00:55](#) Each and everything. I was born in 1912 on East Grand Boulevard, about a block from the Ballard Bridge, and grew up on the east side and attended the field school in the old eastern middle school. Then I had a brief semester finishing school in Washington called National Park Seminary, which was a lot of fun because I got to see Washington officials sightseeing trips and all my dreams that I had dreamed all these years from reading boarding school books where turned into reality for that brief semester, and then I went out to the University of Michigan where I was for five years because I stayed to get a Masters in English Literature,

Josephine Weiner: [00:01:40](#) And my family, I have a brother. My parents, both gone now, were people who believed in doing their share for the community and I think that set a kind of pattern for me. I remember that my mother was an officer of the local part of the Council of Jewish Woman section, would you call it section, seems to me she was once treasurer and she had as much trouble balancing books as I do but my father took care of it

every month so she was all ready to report to the board. My father was very much involved in the early days, in the United Jewish charities, the Jewish Welfare Federation. He was the second president of the Jewish Centers Association and I suppose trying to think back to my earliest memories of community service, he was once invited to address the Mothers Club at their annual mothers and daughters' banquet. He said he'd be glad to do it but he had a daughter and he thought he ought to bring her. That was [inaudible 00:02:45], I mean it was I...

- Mary Baroff: [00:02:45](#) How old were you then?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:02:47](#) I think I was about eight.
- Mary Baroff: [00:02:48](#) Uh-huh (affirmative).
- Josephine Weiner: [00:02:49](#) So I went to the banquet with my father, where he made a very nice speech and they sat me next to him at the speakers table and they gave me a bouquet and I think I had been working for that bouquet ever since. I think the involvement of one's family, can play a very important part. You don't necessarily do exactly what they did, but you have a sense of what was valuable to them and then it becomes pertinent.
- Mary Baroff: [00:03:16](#) Where your parents born in this country?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:03:20](#) Yes, my mother was a native Detroiter. She used to tell me about this town when she was a young girl. How it was really enclosed in the Grand Boulevard, east to west, and if you went for a ride out to Grosse Pointe on a Sunday you had to pay a toll when you got pass a certain place. She said that as a teenager she went to visit some peasants in Kentucky, and they kidded her, nobody ever heard of Detroit except for the Tigers. But of course pretty soon along came the automobile industry and things changed quite drastically. The city grew.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:03:53](#) I remember in school, even as a child, having a lot of interest in the various kinds of people I was with. Detroit Free Press once ran a contest for children. They asked us to write poems or essays about the community chest. So of course Andrew and I got published [inaudible 00:04:20] and then there were scripts written for health shows and all kinds of things, and I always found a lot of fun and satisfaction out of participation [inaudible 00:04:32].

- Mary Baroff: [00:04:33](#) Let me ask you this, your parents became very involved in community activities, did they have stimulation also in this area from their parents or where...
- Josephine Weiner: [00:04:49](#) I suppose so, although, I don't really know. My mother's parents were gone long before I arrived on the scene. My father came from New York and though I knew his parents briefly, I really don't know. I was very much impressed with the gentle sweetness that my grandmother used to come and visit us. My father's mother. In the summer time. I think she had a very busy life raising her children [inaudible 00:05:16]... don't know how much time she had for outside activities but she certainly had the kind of personality and wisdom that would have helped her and all her children got themselves in education and went ahead and did things. So I think she did her job.
- Mary Baroff: [00:05:36](#) Could you tell me a little about your father?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:05:41](#) Well my father graduated from, I think it was City College of New York. Where he was editor of the literary magazine as a young man. He was devoted to books and music, he taught himself to play the piano. He was a school teacher in New York when he married my mother, and then a business opportunity came to him through my uncle here in Detroit. A big decision had to be made, but if you give up the security of the school job in New York to take a [inaudible 00:06:11] Detroit [inaudible 00:06:12] but he decided to come and he did come and he went to law school at night. They tell a story that he was taking his final exams the night I was being born. We had a telephone which was sort of a special thing back in those days and he ran out after answering every question to find out what had happened to him, but my aunt was so busy calling everybody she knew, that he never got the line. So, he was a lawyer and he used his training in business and family affairs and I think it [inaudible 00:06:44]. He was a very sweet and gentle person, I think like his mother. He had a great deal of ability as a speaker and as a person who brought varying groups together and helped them move along together.
- Mary Baroff: [00:07:03](#) You mentioned your memory of the occasion with the Mother's Club, are there other memories that you have of the early Jewish Community organization through your parents activities?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:07:16](#) Well there were some very dramatic ones. My father was also very active in Temple Beth El. Her served as president at some point, I don't remember when exactly. He was active in the union progressive Judaism, the world union for progressive

Judaism, and on two occasions, the whole family traveled to Europe to attend those meetings once in London and once in Berlin. Just shortly before the Nazis took over. And I do remember that experience because the Jewish people we met in Berlin were very worried, and they didn't know what was going to happen to them. I remember speaking to a group of youngsters, I was a young teenager then [inaudible 00:08:01] who talked about this and then I made a little speech in English which they translated into German. There were many associations of that kind. It was a natural part of my life.

Mary Baroff: [00:08:20](#) I don't really have to ask why you became involved in community affairs. You really came by it quite naturally, but in what did you first become involved?

Josephine Weiner: [00:08:35](#) I think the first formal thing I can remember was working as a volunteer on summer during my college days at the Jewish Community Center on Melbourne Street. I was advising to a group of boys and girls who were putting out a magazine and I think I went there one day a week and I enjoyed it very much. There were various people who found me a great social worker, but somehow I never saw myself in that role.

Mary Baroff: [00:09:00](#) That wasn't the direction you wanted to take...

Josephine Weiner: [00:09:04](#) No, I spent a lot of time in it without having done the academic [crosstalk 00:00:09:10].

Mary Baroff: [00:09:14](#) What else was among your early...

Josephine Weiner: [00:09:18](#) One thing always leads to the next. I was out at school in Ann Arbor and people make fun of sororities too often, I think. I think I had a lot of living experiences as a sorority girl. I became involved in the management of the sorority. I was the Dean of Chapter, and learned a lot about how people can get along or not get along under those circumstances. As soon as I came back to Detroit, the thing that was put upon me by the Detroit section in the national Council of Jewish Women. Regene Freund Cohane was the section president. A very wonderful woman with great ability, lawyer, woman of great heart. She was interested in starting a junior group of the Council of Jewish Women. Not children, but young women from about 18 to 30. In those days, there were many girls that age who were at home, not as many went off to school or away, as they do now. It seemed a good group to reach out to, for the future of the council. And so, I became an organizing chairman of the junior group, which had about 125 young women in it. It lasted for

several years until the scene of the community changed somewhat, and there were fewer such people available for that kind of activity. But, we have had many leaders in the council, in the community, who started their community careers in the junior group of the Detroit section.

- Mary Baroff: [00:10:57](#) What were some of the activities that you related yourself to in the junior group?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:11:01](#) Well we followed along the national programs of service to the aged, service to children. We helped raise money through the thrift shops, which council ran then and still runs its major fundraising effort locally. We had discussion groups and work reviews and charm courses and occasional meetings with the seniors, which were a chance for programing and for knowing what the issues of the day were. This was in the thirties, we were concerned with the Jewish problems all over the world and we learned a great deal about that. As young women we might not have known about [inaudible 00:11:41].
- Mary Baroff: [00:11:44](#) As a matter of fact, one of the questions that I would like to ask you is what were some of the major problems with which the community was faced at that time?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:11:57](#) Well the lights were going out all over Europe, to use a cliché, and it was obvious people didn't know quite what to do about it. People bringing relatives to this country as fast as they could. Finding places for them. There's the beginning of the service of, what is it, the agency that helps these people settle in...
- Mary Baroff: [00:12:23](#) Resettlement service.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:12:25](#) Resettlement service in Detroit. The council was very much a part of that, meeting the trains when they came in from Windsor, and airplanes and helping families find living produce and getting specialized English classes to mothers so she'd know how to take her child to the doctor and say where it hurts. Or to a man who had to fill out an application form as long as his arm, for hoping for a job whatever that be. We were all very much involved in those things.
- Mary Baroff: [00:12:53](#) That probably also created a great deal of economic stress in the community.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:13:00](#) Well we were just coming out of the depression, the depression after the war, and it was a [inaudible 00:13:06]. When the second world war came, I was president of the Detroit section. I

was in the junior group until I was married, which was another couple of years. Then I became a senior, you know, a regular member of the section and because [inaudible 00:13:23], I soon found myself as a very young person in the Detroit section. We were faced then, with all the problems that any group in war time. We got very busy with activities to support the war effort. Selling bonds, recruiting people for first aid and air raid wardens and going up helping with the coupon distribution and all the other things that went on. We also had a problem about how can we have meetings when nobody has gasoline and it seemed to me then I remember a newspaper article where we were all quoted that might be just as well, if people had to think carefully before they held a meeting.

Mary Baroff: [00:14:10](#)

Yeah.

Josephine Weiner: [00:14:11](#)

[inaudible 00:14:11] veterans, we would have better ones, and it worked that way.

Mary Baroff: [00:14:14](#)

Is that right?

Josephine Weiner: [00:14:15](#)

Yes.

Mary Baroff: [00:14:17](#)

Well we'll probably be discussing the Council much more thoroughly later. I just wanted to discuss the early period of your activities. I would like to now go into a discussion of your organizational activities. Could we start with the Jewish community center? Could you tell me when and how you became about?

Josephine Weiner: [00:14:44](#)

Well, I have to go back to the Council of Jewish Women again because in my life it has been a sort of second family, and what's happened to me there, I think has happened to many women who were taken by the concepts of the council. As soon as you become active, you get thrust into the community, in one place or another, because it's a looking outward kind of organization.

Josephine Weiner: [00:15:06](#)

When I was president of the Detroit section, a group of women who lived in the 12th Street area, came to see us. The council. They'd already been to see the senior and had to have a sympathetic hearing. They said they needed a branch of the community center in their neighborhood because it was a neighborhood that was being abandoned by everybody who could leave, and those who were left were the very old and the very young and the very poor. All the synagogues and everybody else was leaving 12th Street and going north. We

took this seriously, as did the Center, and the Center felt that they couldn't do this job alone. So, we talked to them about doing it cooperatively and it took a great deal of talking, a great deal of planning because it had not been the custom, if it had ever happened, for a professional agency to be partners with a voluntary agency in these times before. Together we worked out a plan whereby the center paid the basic rent and so forth for store front and we provided enough money for salary for an executive and volunteers to do almost anything you can imagine, and we did it with a branch of the Jewish communities center called the 12th Street Council Center. It went on there for about seven years. It did a great program and services to the agent and a great deal of work for [inaudible 00:16:31].

Mary Baroff: [00:16:34](#) What were some of the things that were done?

Josephine Weiner: [00:16:37](#) Well, when we first had the conception of a program for old people in the neighborhood, we found out very soon that you couldn't just announce a program and expect anybody to come. One of the leaders in those days, who became a very important woman in programs for the age of the city is Sade Geshman (ph), who now lives in Florida. Sadie and I keep in touch because I've never gotten over what a wonderful lady she is. She decided that her committee would just go knock on doors until the older people in the 12th Street area that we had things going at that little center, where they might enjoy themselves.

Josephine Weiner: [00:17:16](#) She said that at first, her committee was met with great suspicion. The [crosstalk 00:17:21] to see. People say, what do you want from me? Why are you bothering me? What's it going to cost? But eventually they came over and all kinds of things happened. I remember we had a couple of ladies and they were very handsome women as it happened, who took on a job of writing letters because many of these old folks couldn't write in English and they needed letters written for them. There were recreational groups, dancing and singing and cooking and pretty soon we found that we had a golden age club going. It's what you'd call it now. And, the movement was beginning other places because I've noticed, and I'm sure everybody knows, that as soon as somebody gets a bright idea, that same idea has been born somewhere else, and because it's meeting the need of the time.

Josephine Weiner: [00:18:10](#) Our golden age group was inviting golden age groups from churches and ynegogues and all kinds of labor unions too, I believe, all kinds of people for various events. I would remember going to one such party, I think they said Catholic

golden age group. There were 15 of us and we were upstairs in the biggest center. A little worried that the ceiling might fall down because there was a Fiddler and he was playing folk dance music and people were demonstrating the folk dance as they knew and they soon recognized that folk dances are very similar. Whether they come from Russia or from Poland or from Scotland, they're almost the same. People are beginning to dance together. There was some wine on the bar, around a table, and I heard one of the old gentleman say to one of our gentlemen, is this kosher wine? And, our friend looked back at him and said, well it won't be when you drink it. So all and all, a great deal of fun and help was given there. Then of course we acted as a referral source, if people needed some kind of help that we couldn't give. We didn't know where they could be sent or taken. We served that kind of purpose.

- Mary Baroff: [00:19:26](#) Did the council people serve as volunteers...
- Josephine Weiner: [00:19:29](#) Yes.
- Mary Baroff: [00:19:29](#) ...in the center?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:19:29](#) In all kinds of jobs.
- Mary Baroff: [00:19:30](#) ...and worked with the professionals.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:19:33](#) Yes, all kinds of jobs. They were carefully trained. Whenever we had somebody with special skill, like somebody who would teach piano or knitting or cooking. If we had enough people interested in this activity, we'd have it once a week or twice a week. It was a start of a grassroots community center kind of program.
- Mary Baroff: [00:19:53](#) It sounds almost like the, whatever you know of settlement houses. It had the same quality...
- Josephine Weiner: [00:20:03](#) Yes, it very much was like the old-fashioned settlement houses, but that's what was needed there. The trick in all these things, I think, is not to be bound by rigid rules laid down in somebody's book, but to find out what will be useful and helpful and constructive for the people who are there.
- Mary Baroff: [00:20:20](#) What were some of the activities, that you remember, were evolved for children?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:20:24](#) Well, we had a sort of playgroup. It wasn't really a nursery standard, but it was a playgroup for children. Mothers could see

their children there for an hour or two, you could go shopping, go to the doctor, do things that otherwise we're unable to do. We had some pool tables and ping pong for the teenagers. As a way of giving them a constructive place to be after school, instead of wandering around on the streets. I can't remember the detail, but I know that at the height of the 12th Street center, we had about 100 to 125 volunteers a week in there.

- Mary Baroff: [00:21:02](#) Is that right?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:21:04](#) And it really was a great activity.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:21:05](#) So from that, it was natural for the Senator to invite me on the board and I became a board member.
- Mary Baroff: [00:21:12](#) When about was that?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:21:14](#) I suppose around 1945, I don't know exactly.
- Mary Baroff: [00:21:20](#) Was there anything unique that you remember about the needs in the community or the services that the center was called upon to provide at that time?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:21:32](#) I think that was a time, about the time, when the Jewish Parents Institute was beginning to be developed. We had a Sunday fun program, trying to have something valuable for members and their families of all ages in the center. There's a great deal of USO and the war time [inaudible 00:21:54], parties of all kinds. I don't remember details of that either, but I know we were very busy. We were trying to make the center what I think it has become, a meeting place for vast majority of the Jewish community. Outside of all the bounds and strictures, people of all kinds to come there for stimulation, for interest.
- Mary Baroff: [00:22:15](#) I see. Let me ask you this. Who were some of the people, that you recall, that provided the lay and professional leadership during the time of your association?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:22:31](#) Well, Hy Broder was president at some point during my activity there and Mrs. Samuel Glogower, Gertrude Glogower, who I also knew from the national board of the Council of Jewish Women. Very fine people. Herman Jacobs was the director. I learned a great deal from him because he too was a very sensitive kind of social worker. I used to kid him about the long words he'd use. I once wrote him a letter with words with one syllable and he got the point, but that was my confusion, not his.

- Mary Baroff: [00:23:03](#) This was really when the center was the main office was on Woodward and Holbrook. I see. Anything else that you remember about the center, your activities with it?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:23:19](#) Well it was a meeting place. Many of the Federation women's division meetings were held there. Many council meetings were held there. We felt very much at home here, the council office moved in there for a while. Didn't have much space but it was a nice place to be. I don't know what else I can tell you.
- Mary Baroff: [00:23:39](#) Okay, let's talk a little about your association with the Jewish community council. Again, when and how did you become involved?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:23:47](#) Well it was in the early days. Isaac Frank was the director and Aaron [inaudible] was one of the leaders. The Jewish community council, in the beginning, seemed to embrace all the groups that weren't particularly important in the Federation. And, it was a sort of a point of pride to get them together too and to give them some [inaudible]. But of course those days are long gone and everybody is together now. But we were developing a unified community and I think the council helped that.
- Mary Baroff: [00:24:19](#) Groups came in as groups into the council.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:24:23](#) Yes, and they were very much interested in the defense work and community relations work and building relationships with the labor unions, with other religious groups, so that the Jewish story would get a fair shake.
- Mary Baroff: [00:24:47](#) Do you recall how the council conveyed its interests or whatever to Federation, to the planning bodies?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:24:56](#) Well, there was a lot of duplicate leadership. I remember at one point, Julian Krolik, who was certainly a leader in the Federation was also a leader in the community council. Nobody was walled off, but it seemed to be a place where the people of less length of rootedness in the community or perhaps less affluence in the community. That started in the community [inaudible 00:25:23]. I could be wrong but that was my impression.
- Mary Baroff: [00:25:28](#) So that it actually gave a voice to...
- Josephine Weiner: [00:25:29](#) Many groups.
- Mary Baroff: [00:25:31](#) ... groups that previously did not have a voice with the official...

Josephine Weiner: [00:25:36](#) Or at least didn't feel that they had.

Mary Baroff: [00:25:37](#) Right.

Josephine Weiner: [00:25:39](#) Neither had it, but they weren't sure that...

Mary Baroff: [00:25:42](#) Right. Is that the major role that you feel played at the time?

Josephine Weiner: [00:25:45](#) I think that's how it all began, but I think now certainly much more sophisticated, and the council and the Federation, and the council's part of one of the agencies of the Federation, and its relationship is without any question, very strong. It takes on the community relations job, the formal community relations job. I believe that the Federation does community relations every day of the week, but the formal, organized ones are the response of them, I understand.

Mary Baroff: [00:26:18](#) Do you remember what some of the problems that the council faced during this period were?

Josephine Weiner: [00:26:25](#) Well, there was a lot of talk about shall we be friendly with the Russians or not because they were fighting the Germans. There was all this problem with that and what positions you ought to take. [inaudible 00:26:41] hours on end. There were the Yiddishists and the [inaudible 00:26:49] and the Englishists. We're all saying that the community council should be only in one language or another, and I remember one time somebody made a speech in Yiddish and one of the people who thought English should be the language, took very careful account of all the English words used in that Yiddish speech.

Mary Baroff: [00:27:03](#) And I bet there were hundreds.

Josephine Weiner: [00:27:16](#) I don't really remember the [inaudible 00:27:14]. I think it was mostly a matter of getting everybody into the act of the community, and I'm glad we did it because that's what's made me try [inaudible 00:27:24].

Mary Baroff: [00:27:27](#) What was your involvement with the council?

Josephine Weiner: [00:27:31](#) Well I became a member of the board and I tried to do whatever they asked me to do. I made speeches here and there. I remember residing once on an assembly, and I was just fine as far as the formal speeches were concerned, but when they started in on the discussions, the discussions were coming in Yiddish and in English, and I didn't know who was saying what

to whom and I was just standing there and smiling. Somebody had to come and bail me out and they did.

Mary Baroff: [00:27:59](#) Golda Krolik mentioned the same thing, that her husband used to say that it was so difficult for him to understand the language.

Josephine Weiner: [00:28:09](#) I could get every tenth word, but I couldn't really understand these quick back and forth [inaudible 00:28:16] statements. Another person I remember from those days is Dr. Shmarya Kleinman who I saw just a few months ago as hell and hearty as ever. He was very devoted member of the council and I think is still on the board. He was interested in all the problems they had and he never lost his [inaudible 00:28:38]. So, it's a delight to meet him again, as time goes by.

Mary Baroff: [00:28:42](#) Yes. Now, could we talk about the women's division, where you had been so active for such a long time? Again, how and when did you become active?

Josephine Weiner: [00:28:56](#) I don't know whether I was on the first board of the women's division or not. I know that a group of women, a leadership of our wonderful Dora Ehrlich, sat together and decided in those days. When was it, about 1945,46?

Mary Baroff: [00:29:12](#) Yes, I think so.

Josephine Weiner: [00:29:17](#) That it was time for the women of Detroit to organize themselves for the benefit of Judaism all over the world. Women had always been part of our community fundraising, and there was a community that worked with the United Jewish Charities and in the early days of the Federation. But we, in these days and the beginning of the women's division, the theory was that every woman had a right to participate in the life saving tasks of both welfare Federation, both at home and... and that we had to provide that opportunity and this meant some kind of formal organization to which a woman could belong by giving up her own ability and her own resources to work in the Federation.

Josephine Weiner: [00:30:04](#) The women's division was formed as early as the first president and has a continuing source of inspiration, I think, to every woman in the community. She was followed by Clara Frank, and that was the third person in this division. In the early days, there was much discussion about what kind of an organization this ought to be. There were some people who felt that if we organized a committee, which would work to raise money from

woman, at campaign time, that would be sufficient. There were others that thought that would be a very thin way of operating, because we would have no opportunity to educate and to train. That debate took quite a while, and it was finally decided that it should be a year round operation with some educational facets to it, so that the community would work to know what the causes were and if you know you're always willing to do your best.

- Mary Baroff: [00:31:08](#) So in other words, right from the beginning, the whole concept of this being an educational training service was part of...
- Josephine Weiner: [00:31:17](#) I think it began very soon after the first organization because I remember, I don't know the year, I wish I were better with dates, but I remember what I think was the first Institute. I used to call him the January Institute and then they moved to January Institute to November so now it's just institute. That was a big open meeting that was held at the Statler in those days, downtown, where all everyone in the community were invited to learn about the causes served by the Federation. They hoped that learning about them mean that they would want to support them. We've gone on having had an Institute every year since, as far as I know, but we've gone much beyond in our education programs. Trying to devise training and various levels for leadership for young women new to the community. Where strangers who never heard of the Federation, not to have the story told in somebody's living room and the education program has been very helpful.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:32:22](#) There were some people who felt that a year round program would detract from the other organizations in the community. I think there is a reason to be sure that the women's division does its own business and not everybody else's, but so far they've been pretty good at that.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:32:41](#) There were other people who felt that with the organization of the women's division, all the other women's groups should disappear. I think that would have been a terrible thing because the other organizations can do special pieces of work. Once the family, which is the Federation, lays the groundwork, then they can come in and do special things and also they can develop the leadership that the Federation needs and keeps getting fed to it by these other groups.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:33:10](#) I think we've had a wonderful women's division. It's open to any woman who makes her own pledge.

- Mary Baroff: [00:33:16](#) As an individual.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:33:17](#) As an individual. Now in the early days, there was some difficulty explaining this to some people who would say, and from one point of view with great logic. My husband earns the money and he makes the gift and that's it for both of us. But, Dora had a good answer for that. She said there isn't any woman here who doesn't have some freedom with her household money, at least. And there are many women who had much freedom in [inaudible]. And, if they want to, they can do something about it. And if they feel, if they can cry their own tears and feel their own heartbeat and have their own sense of sympathy, then they will do something about it. And on that bases, I think we finally got across the message that women have to express themselves at whatever is there on best level. And our job, as the women's division, was to help them reach that best level and to keep it, and we've been at it all these years since 1946.
- Mary Baroff: [00:34:19](#) In the beginning, were there considerations as to whether people should come in as individuals or as groups?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:34:31](#) Well many are women's divisions, ours is one of the first that organizes year round, but many of them which did organize in other cities were sort of organization of organizations. We never went for that. We felt that it should be an individual matter, and I think this avoided a great deal of rivalry and you know one organization trying to be more important than another. People came in there on their own. The organizations helped us. We accepted treasury gifts, and still do. But they're usually token gifts which simply say to the members of that organization, we believe in the Federation, we want you to do your path and so we make a token gift to get you started.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:35:19](#) We find the women's division has introduced women from one part of the community to another. Made them friend and coworkers. It has built all the organizations because if you work with somebody from an entirely different pass of the community that you never knew before, and you love her and respect her and believe in her, then you're likely to go along with her and her organization too, and she in yours. And I think we've all gained from it.
- Mary Baroff: [00:35:46](#) So then in other words, one of the unique contributions that the women's division is made, is unifying kind of force within the community.

Josephine Weiner: [00:35:55](#) I think so.

Mary Baroff: [00:35:58](#) Are there any other unique contributions that the [crosstalk 00:36:02]

Josephine Weiner: [00:36:02](#) Well what's very unique is the amount of money that they've raised for women, because women, I think, we were liberated. I used to say of council, it was the women's labs for women's lib. I think the women's division liberated women too, because as Dora said, you think for yourself, you feel for yourself, and you express yourself at whatever level you can afford. So I think it did a great deal to raise that consciousness as women.

Mary Baroff: [00:36:27](#) And actually, the fundraising itself, has been a sizeable amount each year.

Josephine Weiner: [00:36:34](#) Oh yeah, it's tremendous. Really wonderful. I wish I was better with figures. I heard the figure at the last meeting and I don't have it in front of me [inaudible 00:36:41].

Mary Baroff: [00:36:42](#) I think Mrs Broder said that the goal has always been 10% of the general goal.

Josephine Weiner: [00:36:51](#) Well that's in general terms, but we've gone beyond that. [crosstalk 00:36:55] 12%, I remember one year, and this year it was a tremendous amount of money. I don't remember, I wish I did, we got to look it up and put in these tapes somewhere.

Mary Baroff: [00:37:09](#) What has been your personal involvement in women's division?

Josephine Weiner: [00:37:14](#) Well, I started out with the education department. Somehow it always seems to fall to me to be an interpreter, which I like to try to do, not always successfully. But I worked in the programs for the first Institutes. I don't remember the whole progression. All of a sudden I found I was president of the women's division and again, I was a very young woman for that kind of job, but I had the great joy of working with Pauline Jackson, who was our executive director, and I learned many things from Pauline. I think one of the main things she taught me was if I ever had a good impulse, just to act on it, don't wait, don't hold back. Just do it.

Mary Baroff: [00:37:56](#) Theodore Wright would say listening with the third ear, right?

Josephine Weiner: [00:37:58](#) I guess. And she was well organized. She had a great belief in the cause we were trying to serve and together I think we had a very good time. It was during those years that we dreamed up

the community, so we were...antiseptic in those days... we called them community clinics. I remember sitting with Pauline one day, she was saying that we have these wonderful meetings, but the people, a lot of them don't come. I said, we have to take the information out to them, and that was the beginning of Communi-teas.

- Mary Baroff: [00:38:35](#) Would you meet at people's homes to interpret?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:38:37](#) Yes. Our hostess invites friends or neighbors, or just new people that she's heard of in the community, and then we'd go out and tell the story. It's not a direct fundraising meeting, so we didn't get education involved.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:38:59](#) Those days we had many activities, which I suppose the city is too old and sophisticated and big now, to go for. But I remember one fundraising meeting, at some hotel downtown, where all the women and every range of giving, went together and then they picked their own room with a label on it, from \$100 to 500, 5,200, from 500 to 1000, to go in and make their pledges.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:39:31](#) We had a very good time, out of our work. Perhaps it's too late for that now, life got too serious and people got too loud. But we tried to build a great deal of friendship. We had fun. Many of our meetings had skits and songs and I was very much involved in doing those. In fact, I used to kid about how the Federation really should pay for one ticket to the best musical show each year because every year when I went to New York, for a council board meeting or the national board of the United Jewish Appeal women's division, I would be sure to go to see the most famous musical and then that became a father for the next annual meeting.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:40:16](#) One of the favorite shows, it was really suggested to us by an older girl. We said, why don't we call it gifts and gals? And of course that was a Europe guys and dolls and it was just wonderful. To write a song about, if I were a chick, I'd be stretch, stretch, stretch, stretch, stretching. And we had all the songs from that show, and that usually was the way we did our annual meetings.
- Mary Baroff: [00:40:42](#) Who were some of your other co-producers?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:40:45](#) Jerry Gross did a great many of the shows. Flossie Krieger was a partner and script writer for many. There were a lot of people

involved. Again, I wish I had all the names. If I went through all those papers, I'd find them.

- Mary Baroff: [00:41:02](#) Does someone have all of these skitz that were done?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:41:06](#) I have many. I have many of the songs. Yes. I gave them all to Esther Jones before this last meeting, in case she wanted to use them. I think she's getting them back to me, but they're still around. It would seem to me that, that would be great to have in the archives because it would also, in addition to the fun of it, would probably give some picture of some of the things that were dealt with at a particular time.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:41:34](#) Well Jennie Jones had a favorite song, We're Young at Heart, so that turned into the Generous Heart, whenever someone said "I like this song" and I said okay.
- Mary Baroff: [00:41:43](#) And it went.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:41:44](#) Yeah it went, and then we read up a few [inaudible 00:41:47].
- Mary Baroff: [00:41:47](#) That's great. You've mentioned some of the people who made important contributions to the woman's division, Dora Ehrlich... could you tell me a little about Dora Ehrlich?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:42:05](#) Well, I knew Dora all my life. She was the kind of person you could say to me and to almost everybody else in the town, I knew you before you were born. She had a tremendous memory, which I don't have, it's obvious already. She could look at someone and tell them about their mother and their father and their aunts and cousins and [inaudible 00:42:24]. She knew all relationships. She had been active, I think, in every good cause that was developed in this city, for her whole lifetime. And she was sort of the Grande Dame for the community and I think a wonderful person because she crossed all these lines and she did it with so much love and feeling.
- Mary Baroff: [00:42:45](#) I never knew her, but that's true that everyone mentions Dora Ehrlich.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:42:52](#) Golda Krolik is another favorite lady of mine. Golda taught me something interesting for me, which I might've been smart enough to learn for myself, but I had to see her do it. When she was involved in participating in a meeting, she just relaxed and [inaudible 00:43:06]. If she felt like telling a joke, and it was appropriate, she told it. She didn't sit there with big words pouring out of her mouth. She just let herself go and I watched

them. I thought, that's what makes her so able, so able to reach people. So, I tried to copy that style.

- Mary Baroff: [00:43:26](#) You've done all right. Is there anyone else, among the leadership, that you could tell me about?
- Josephine Weiner: [00:43:35](#) Well, there are many wonderful women in this town. I think of Mildred Welt, who was a past national president of the national Council of Jewish Women. Anne Kasle always had a very incisive mind, very handled analytical skill, who served the women's division. I think she was chairman of [inaudible 00:43:57] neighborhood service organization.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:44:01](#) Somehow these people again going, they never stop because as I say myself, one thing always leads you to 10 others. The problem is, how are you going to encompass them all. But they're so exciting and so interesting that [inaudible 00:44:16].
- Mary Baroff: [00:44:18](#) Also, not only in the Jewish community, but so many of these people have really taken a very active role in the general community affairs also.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:44:28](#) Well I don't see how you can stop. I've had this discussion from both ends, with the people who say, there are some, all your attention should be devoted to the Jewish community or the people who say all your time should be devoted between the community. And I say, well I am who I am. I'm an American, Jewish woman, and all of these are a part of me. I can't pigeonhole myself here or there. I have to be myself everywhere and so wherever there's something which I get called out and do a thing, tell me whether it's true or not but I have a contribution to make. Not if they say it won't take any time, because they say there's something we need you for, that you've been doing particularly, I want to do it, and I keep trying.
- Mary Baroff: [00:45:12](#) Well there are many people in the community like this, so we're very fortunate.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:45:17](#) I think that's true.
- Mary Baroff: [00:45:28](#) We are now continuing with side two of the taping with Josephine Weiner. Mrs. Weiner, when did you become a board member of Federation? Approximately.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:45:39](#) I think I served on the board of Federation when I was the women's division president. It was an interesting experience. One of the memories I have is that a big problem at that time

was borrowing money. I think it was the first time we made Jewish appeal, I asked to borrow a lot of money so that cash would be available for the overseas needs. And it was a question, whether one should borrow or one should not borrow?

- Mary Baroff: [00:46:08](#) In other words, from bankers...
- Josephine Weiner: [00:46:10](#) From banks, yes.
- Mary Baroff: [00:46:11](#) I see.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:46:11](#) Out of credit of the community. And I remember it was either the board or the executive committee, the chairman going around and asking each person what he felt about this and I, not a business person as I said to them, very frankly, I'm a housewife and anything over \$100 scares me. But I know that if I had a sick child, I would borrow or beg or do whatever was necessary to heal that child. So I think we ought to borrow. And I guess that was a satisfactory answer from my point of view.
- Josephine Weiner: [00:46:46](#) It was done and it's been done many times since and the community has always come through and made it good, and so it's legitimate.
- Mary Baroff: [00:46:55](#) So there were strong overseas concerns at the time. What were some of the other problems that we tell...
- Josephine Weiner: [00:47:06](#) There was the difficulty of keeping the local community strong at the same time that these overseas needs were so great. And again, and early, he had a very good answer. That if we didn't have a strong local community, there would be nobody in the future to take care of overseas needs. And so all people could do, would be to do their best for the total campaign. Then everybody would grow and the needs of all community will be met and on that basis, we went ahead. I think those were the early days of the budget conferences, when people were called together to hear the story from all the divisions of the Federation, from the national organizations and the UJA and the Joint Distribution appeal. And then to make some kind of percentage decision about how the funds raised would be expanded. I think that was a very fine exercise because community had a chance to express itself and those who were doubtful of their particular [inaudible 00:48:10] began to see the total picture. I think that was important for the Federation.

Speaker 4: [00:48:17](#) In other words, the question of how distribution would be resolved, really had input from the various people from the various agencies and so on.

Josephine Weiner: [00:48:29](#) Oh yes, and individuals who were interested. All the boards and board members of all agencies were invited to those meetings. They, of course, the board of the Federation, the women's division and all its agents and they sat together. Those who represented national item agencies too. They began to see the total because it's very easy when you are deeply involved in any one good cause. There are millions of good causes. To see that, only with a bright light on it, and everything else in the dim background. Here the light was turning on the whole thing. The important thing was to explain the story to everybody, to get the best possible gift from everybody, so that everybody could have the light where they needed it.

Mary Baroff: [00:49:14](#) Did you have any specific jobs while you were on the board of Federation?

Josephine Weiner: [00:49:19](#) I started on one of the budget committees. I think it was the education. Helping to make the decision on which agencies got what.

Mary Baroff: [00:49:31](#) I see. Who provided the leadership, both lay and professional, during your term of office with the board?

Josephine Weiner: [00:49:39](#) You mean, who was president of the Federation?

Mary Baroff: [00:49:43](#) Okay.

Josephine Weiner: [00:49:48](#) I don't really remember. There were a lot of good men and true, and I don't remember which one. I was always impressed through the years with Hy Broder. I don't think he was still here in those days [inaudible 00:49:57]. Sam Rubiner, who was president of UCS when I serving [inaudible 00:50:03]. There were many, many more. I can't remember. Very fine people.

Mary Baroff: [00:50:14](#) Now, I wanted to talk with you about one of the real loves in your life and that is the Council of Jewish Women. Right. Okay. When did you say you left the junior division of the council?

Josephine Weiner: [00:50:32](#) Well when I was married, the junior division was not a separate thing from the Detroit section. It was a group in the Detroit section, and young women who met when it was convenient for them, like Sunday afternoons [inaudible 00:00:50:45]. When I was married, I became more active in total section, and I

remember my first job was as assistant to the public relations chairman. I had a little baby by that time and I wasn't free to run around town, but I was free to telephone anybody, and I was either given or took for myself, the job of writing one story a week about some phase of council activity, and sending it to all the Detroit papers and the Jewish News, whether they printed or not, was not my worry. I had [inaudible 00:51:17], and that way I learned a great deal about what the section is doing and I did tell a story as many places as I possibly could.

Josephine Weiner: [00:51:28](#) Then shortly thereafter I became a vice president of the section. Then something happened, the president got sick, and the other vice president became the president and you know how it goes.

Mary Baroff: [00:51:37](#) Yes.

Josephine Weiner: [00:51:39](#) I went on from there.

Mary Baroff: [00:51:41](#) What have been some of the unique contributions of the counsel to our local community life?

Josephine Weiner: [00:51:47](#) If you're talking about specific age institutions and programs, some of the current ones are really very exciting. There's The Orchards, which is the residential. It started out only as a residential home for, mostly, disturbed boys. There is still that facet to it. We have a house in Livonia, where nine or 10 can be housed. There, youngsters who have not made it at home, not made it in school or who the community needs a special setting, as a chance to give them a way to work themselves back in society. They live at the house where it's 24-hour care, but they go to the public schools, which [inaudible 00:52:39]. We've had many success stories with boys staying a year or two and many of them have gone on to college. We had one who was a candidate for the Rhodes Scholarship a couple of years ago.

Mary Baroff: [00:52:54](#) Is that so.

Josephine Weiner: [00:52:55](#) I don't think any of them have failed to make a decent life after coming out of The Orchards. But The Orchard's program has proliferated beyond that into summer camping, in conjunction with Camp Tamarack, for a period where emotionally disturbed youngsters are served. This is used now, not only to get those kids a good time but a chance for the social workers to understand their problems better and to keep a connection with them over the summer, and go on throughout the year. The Orchards also has an outreach program for boys and girls who don't have to live in the residential center, but who need

some kind of specialized activity after school. Hundreds [inaudible 00:53:39]. There's always been family counseling, along with service to the children at home. I think it's made a real contribution. The city had nothing like that.

Mary Baroff: [00:53:52](#)

How is The Orchards funded?

Josephine Weiner: [00:53:54](#)

The deposit funding, buying the property and all the special things are done by the council. Then the children are referrals from one agency or another, and they're paid for by the government agency. Sometimes it can be a government agency or [inaudible 00:54:11].

Mary Baroff: [00:54:11](#)

I see. What are some of the other contributions that the council has made?

Josephine Weiner: [00:54:20](#)

Well you can go back before my time. One of the projects that always interested me, and it's such a good example of council philosophy, was the penny lunch program. This is a long time ago, before I was thrown out, maybe, I don't even know when. Maybe even before I was even around. The council women in Detroit realized that children couldn't learn on an empty stomach and that's brand new news coming out of studies on hunger nowadays, but they knew it in those days. So they set up a program in one school in Detroit, I don't know the name of the school. They went down and they cooked one hot meal a day for the kids in that school. They didn't want it to be charity, so they charged a penny, so the children would feel that they were paying their way. This was the fore-runner of the school lunch program.

Josephine Weiner: [00:55:07](#)

I think that's the kind of activity that the council does. The philosophy has always been, from 1893 when we were organized, that in our local communities and nationally, we look for unmet needs and demonstrate if we can, on how to meet them, and then hope that the bigger communities will take them on and can go on to something else. Detroit section right now is very deeply involved in the meals on wheels program, which is done cooperatively with the Jewish Children and Family Service and Federation Apartments, where they're now serving about 15 home bound elderly men and women. Volunteers packing lunches, which are dietetically proper and which are prepared under the supervision of the chef at the Federation Apartments, and are carried five days a week to the homes of the home bound. One hot meal and one cold meal in a basket. The women go in teams and some men will join them. Some

men are joining the council because of their interest in this program.

Mary Baroff: [00:56:21](#) Is that right.

Josephine Weiner: [00:56:24](#) They also act assertive, friendly visitors and troubleshoot because they go in with the food, they talk to the people, establish a friendly relationship. They are in a position to report back to family and children's service, if there's a problem there that they feel needs professional attention. What started as an experiment with 20 families, about two and a half or three years ago, is now up to 50. The women are eager to extend the program or to find other people to extend it because they know it's needed all over the city.

Mary Baroff: [00:56:54](#) Tremendous need.

Josephine Weiner: [00:56:56](#) Their own group is largely Jewish and many of the meals have to be especially arranged for diabetics and so on, but all of them are done with great love and great care. There are programs of all kinds all over the place in the council. I know that any morning when I wake up in the national Council of Jewish Women throughout the United States where we have 100,000 members in the sections all over the place. There are well over a thousand community service programs going on, in the councils direction. It's a lovely thing to have. They go from small things to big things.

Josephine Weiner: [00:57:34](#) There are council sections which have built and maintain, with federal grants, homes for the aging. There are sections that have boy and girl scout troops for mentally retarded children. I remember going to Tulsa, here's another example of how council works. I went to visit there, Tulsa section once some years ago, and they took me to see a program that they were doing. They had a bus, and I'm trying remember what it was called, the Green Hornet or the Green Snake, it had painted on it. It was a bus which some gentlemen in the community had donated to them which they had refurbish. Instead of steps, it had a ramp. It could receive wheelchairs and people in crutches. This bus went all over town, five days a week, in those days, and picked up the closet cases who hadn't been out of their homes for years, and took them to an old warehouse which was turned into a recreational center.

Josephine Weiner: [00:58:34](#) I saw people playing shuffleboard from their wheelchairs. I saw people doing arts and crafts from their wheelchairs. All kinds of things. Then I went back a few years later and lo and behold,

council checked in to see their rehabilitation program which was now part of the community organization, like the community services here. Beautiful buildings, specially designed, and not just one class, and not just five days a week. Seven days and six nights and several buses and no longer a council project per se with the council volunteers still very active and involved. Whatever the need is, that's what the section... [crosstalk 00:59:17]. It's really wonderful.

Josephine Weiner: [00:59:21](#)

Then nationally, we tried to parallel this with the programs overseas for the sacred fellow Jews. In Israel since '46, we've had various programs in education. In the early days we were the ones who enabled this to have its first teacher training program for high school teachers at the university, which they later developed into a school of education, which doesn't need our support for that anymore. So, our money went into special research programs and from that we finally evolved into an institution which is now well established in Israel. About five years old, called the NCJW. National Constitute of Jewish Women. Institute for innovations and education. It is a central research institute for meeting the educational needs of disadvantaged people in Israel. It does all kinds of programs with the blessing and sometimes, at the request of the Ministry of Education, tries things out. If they're any good, they become part of the school system right away. It doesn't take 30 years.

Josephine Weiner: [01:00:28](#)

We have many visiting professors from the United States coming to do research at our Institute and many of our people come here to lecture. I now live in Lansing. I've gone out to have lunch with our fellows in Lansing and the University of Michigan. There is an exchange, so whatever we learn there, would be of value to us in this country too.

Mary Baroff: [01:00:49](#)

That's very exciting. Let me ask you this. What has been the relationship between the Council of Jewish Women in a Federation and Federation agencies? Both provide services to the community.

Josephine Weiner: [01:01:11](#)

Well, they both provide service to the community and I think they're sort of complimentary. Council began before the reign of Federations. It is the oldest of the organized Jewish women's groups in this country, and I told you the philosophy. The early motto was faith and humanity. You can interpret that any way you want, but in the early days it was interpreted as meaning faith, Judaism in its perpetuation and safety, and humanity was all people. Where we have to live. Federations have come along and have put together the various good causes that were

started by volunteers in the country, so that there could be efficiency, be planning and budgeting and forethought, and understanding, and why their outreach grow in these agencies. The council continues to be innovative, to look for the unmet needs. Very often demonstrates to a community, and the Federation takes over. Sometimes it's a partnership, sometimes it's something which council gives [inaudible 01:02:20] moves on to other things.

- Josephine Weiner: [01:02:22](#) I think that council is not the only agency that does important things in the community. There are many, and I think all of them need the overall agencies like the United Hebrew services, like the Federation. To form the basic wall work of support, to meet human needs, like the federal programs, but you can't just stop there. You have to have a chance for a special ideas or special feelings for a grassroots movement, and the council, and other organizations, are met. So, I don't think there's any competition. I think they simply help one another. Without the basic organizations, council programs wouldn't be very much, but without the council programs, the basic organizations wouldn't advance very far.
- Mary Baroff: [01:03:08](#) Has council provided any leadership to Federation, by that I mean people?
- Josephine Weiner: [01:03:16](#) Of course. I'm one example.
- Mary Baroff: [01:03:20](#) That's right.
- Josephine Weiner: [01:03:21](#) I'm not the only one. We have a marvelous young woman, I'm just thinking, on our board now from Atlanta, who is the director of the women's division in the Atlanta Federation. We had another lovely young woman when I was the national council president. I asked her to take an important job in the council and she had been on the board with me. She's from St Augustine. [inaudible 01:03:41]. Names, names are terrible. Down in Texas, way down there by the Mexican border.
- Mary Baroff: [01:03:51](#) San Antonio.
- Josephine Weiner: [01:03:52](#) San Antonio. So I wrote to my friend in San Antonio and she wrote back and she said, "I'd love to do it, Jo, but I've just become director of our women's division." Now this goes down all the time. I think one of the special things that council does is to train women, so that many of them are ready for professional careers. If they're not ready for professional

careers, they become presidents of everything in sight. I think it's wonderful and I think it's a contribution to...

Mary Baroff: [01:04:18](#)

It's a fantastic service.

Josephine Weiner: [01:04:19](#)

... the American Jewish community that very few people pay much attention to. But if you look in any city or look at the bios of any of the council national leadership, you'll see they've done all kinds of things. In their temples, in their religious schools, in the Hebrew schools, and the PTAs, in the Synagogues. Anywhere you look, they've been. The mayor's youth committee, the justice programs, the courts, they're everywhere and they got trained by counsel. My own experience has been that I can always go back to council and get refurbished, and all new excitements sent out again. That's been the story of the lives of many others.

Mary Baroff: [01:05:02](#)

One other question. What are some of the services that have been adapted by Federation agencies that council initiated? Are there any?

Josephine Weiner: [01:05:19](#)

Well I think the service to the aging, which really began in our 12th Street center, is a very simple example, but that's one which is certainly gone far beyond what we do, but it really began there. It led eventually to a city committee on the aging and the mayor's commission, now state commission on the aging, and I don't see, we were the only group that did it, but we were in there at the beginning. If you go back into the congressional record, you'll find that Head Start, their speeches in the record, which accredit the Council of Jewish Women in New York City or being the first ones to point her to Head Start program.

Mary Baroff: [01:05:54](#)

Is that right?

Josephine Weiner: [01:05:55](#)

Yes, and that sort of thing goes on all the time. We did nationally, a daycare study, a few years ago, which only a national organization could do. It was not a scientifically statistical study, in the sense that statistic experts would do it. But what we did was, we formulated questionnaires, under professional direction, and Mary W. Heisin (ph) was the director of the study. She's one of our members. We asked our sections and I think 96 of them took it on. To take a look at the daycare services in their own community. To report it on this questionnaire then we put all those names, six studies together, and we got what we call Windows on Daycare, which was a frank look at what the communities had to offer. Big and small.

Across the country. It's been used as a basic text, by all kinds of burdens and issues in the daycare [inaudible 01:06:52]. We are now involved in a similar study in justice for children, which has a great [inaudible 01:06:59] to do. It's a timing one, with the whole Michigan, for instance. The rewriting of the juvenile code. The new national legislation, having to do with children and this kind of information is one of the big things that we do.

Mary Baroff: [01:07:16](#)

I'm sure you've had your fingers in many of those council ties, but are there any specific jobs that you have had that you can tell me about?

Josephine Weiner: [01:07:28](#)

Well, my first job on the national board when I was elected in 1953, was to service chairman of the national public relations committee. So there I was again, trying to tell a council story to our various publics. The internal public of our own organization and the general community and the Jewish community. I've always found that, that's a fascinating thing. It's not an organization. Council is not an organization that you can interpret in three words. I had friends who say to me, I know you do good, but what do you do? And to try to say it on one foot, you should be able to, if you can tell all about Judaism on one foot, but it is a many faceted organization and it has a constant philosophy of service to faith in humanity, but the programs change as it needs to.

Josephine Weiner: [01:08:15](#)

So that was always fascinating to me. And then I became an assistant recording secretary, which I thought was a pretty miserable kind of job, and until I really got started at it. I learned that serving as secretary of something, is a wonderful way to understand the organization because in order to write decent minutes, you have to not only hear what's actually said, but you have to know what's underneath it, and you have to be able to put enough of that in to make your minutes coherent. So a couple of years of that was great training and then I became a vice president. In council, we have five of those. So it isn't such a great honor, it's just a lot of work. Then you serve as the president's helper and whatever you can do. If something new is being developed in the organization, you may have the job of developing it.

Josephine Weiner: [01:09:08](#)

I became a great traveler for counsel. I went all over the country. Visited council sections every week. I remember one trip when, in 11 days, I visited nine sections with a different job to do in each one. I found that this was a wonderful experience for me. I'm a sightseer by nature and I felt at home everywhere I went because the faces were different. The motivation of the

women in their sense of values, is the same every place and I felt rather at home. I did a great deal of that. I also got very much involved with our work in Israel. I was very happy to have a part in the development of this new research center, the research Institute now, it was the center until it became a permanent established Institute and university. I have enjoyed going to the centers, seeing our programs in action, talking to the people who worked with us. Academic people, scientific people, people in ministry of education and people here who are related to our center through their similar interests. All of this has been very exciting for me and I hope that the counsel will keep me busy for years to come. I don't expect it to stop.

Mary Baroff: [01:10:28](#)

My hunch is that they will keep you busy.

Mary Baroff: [01:10:34](#)

Mrs. Weiner, you've mentioned some of the people who have had instrumental roles with the council. Are there any others?

Josephine Weiner: [01:10:44](#)

Well I think of a few who are not local people. There are coworkers, even though we may not know them personally. One who I have always respected and admired tremendously, who is not with us anymore, is Mrs. Irving Engle. Katharine Engle, who was the president of the national council some years back, who came into our work from, I think, HIAS, because we had always done a program overseas. Work with refugees and tracing families and so on, and who brought a great deal of knowledge and stimulation and just downright good sense to the Council of Jewish Women. I was impressed with some small things about her. I think small things tell you, as much as big things, about people. I remember going to a conference of the National Council of Federations and [inaudible 01:11:39] in Atlantic city with my mother one year, when Judy Stang was the director of the women's divisions. It's a long time ago that Judy was [inaudible 01:11:46].

Josephine Weiner: [01:11:48](#)

Katharine Engle was there and she set up a little notice that all council members were invited to meet with her, she was the National President, at her hotel in a certain room. We went over there and the first thing she did was personally move the chairs all around to make a circle for everybody. She knew everybody's names. See I'm impressed with people that know about everybody's name because I don't know my own half for time. She knew all about us and she had a way of uplifting a woman and making her feel that she could do twice what she ever thought she could do before. I think that is one of the qualities of leadership that I've seen in many people who are leaders. They have a way of bringing out the best that's in another

person and opening up new doors that, that person never thought of. That's one of Pauline Jackson's abilities too, which I think is so very special and has been still after all these years.

Josephine Weiner: [01:12:40](#) There are other wonderful women. Another one who is my good friend is Viola Himes in Minneapolis, also a past National President of council, who is now on the staff of the Federation in Minneapolis. Another example of how we train people for things. She was a school teacher. Has a very well organized mind, thinks clearly, is not afraid to stick her neck out, and these are qualities that a young woman has to see displayed before her, before she has the courage to make use of that quality in herself. I sat on the National Board for several years and didn't open my mouth. I was completely awed. We had then, a treasurer, her name was Lillian [inaudible 01:13:24] , from New York. A Great, big, impressive woman, who used to come to the meetings early with a copy of the Wall Street Journal. Read it from cover to cover while she waited for the rest of us to settle in and she was one to put up with no-nonsense.

Josephine Weiner: [01:13:37](#) The ladies would have wonderful ideas and they'd say, we'll send a letter to the sections and it will be done. And she was the one that got up and said, you better send the mouth with the letter. And of course she was right. Well after watching me sit there for about three years, she could feel the excitement [inaudible 01:13:53] in me one day, I suppose, and she gave me a poke with her elbow and she said, Joe, get up and give it to them, and I did and I haven't stopped since and I'm very grateful to her for giving me that courage. I think that's another quality of leadership, encouraging other people to say what they think. It isn't necessary to agree with people. I've always felt that leadership takes many forms, and the farm I've had is usually being in the middle and trying to get both hands to come a little bit forward. I appreciate both hands because if they didn't both make a lot of noise, there'd be no movement at all.

Josephine Weiner: [01:14:28](#) So they're important and the people in the middle are important, and it takes all of them pushing together to even make one step forward. I've seen these qualities in these different women I've, worked with it, and I've tried to learn from them and appreciate it very much. Not just the words, but the living example of what they [inaudible 01:14:48].

Mary Baroff: [01:14:50](#) Have there been any significant changes in the role that women have played in the Jewish community during the time that you've been active in community?

Josephine Weiner: [01:14:57](#) I think so. I think that there are, as women generally, are being looked at more and more as full partners and being expected to bear the responsibility as well as the privilege. I'm glad that most of them seem to take the responsibility as well as the privilege. This is good because the world is made up of men and women and to cut out half the population, meaning any good causes, is a mistake.

Mary Baroff: [01:15:21](#) Has this been a gradual development?

Josephine Weiner: [01:15:25](#) I think so. I think women have had to feel more assured about expressing themselves and men have had to feel less threatened. I remember doing a song once about it, so nice to be a Federation [inaudible 01:15:36], to keep discussions cool and coffee hot. Well that's still all right. There's nothing wrong with serving the coffee, but you can do other things too, and I think when women are taking their place, generally speaking in the community as full fledged people. This means that they have to spend more time knowing what it's all about. Considering issues and being serious about them. But most of them are willing to do that and then they have a contribution to make. I'm a strong believer in the voluntary sector of our society because I think without it we wouldn't have a free country, and I think that the volunteers not only as people who do direct service, but the volunteers who are interested in issues and who try to influence community climate and who make their wishes and their opinions known to the people who can change the laws or add to the laws.

Josephine Weiner: [01:16:42](#) These are all important contributions of the volunteers, that make to freedom in this country. I think that the volunteer organizations, which respond to human need, cannot substitute for the government, which has to do major life saving tasks, but without them would be a very long lag between the need and the doing. I think the volunteer organizations are at the grassroots level. They can make a personal response much faster than any government bureaucracy, and they can experiment, whereas the government can't afford to. For all these reasons, I think the voluntary sector is terribly important to our country and I'm all for making it strong and keeping it going.

Mary Baroff: [01:17:33](#) Has there been a change in the role of the volunteers played through the years that you've been involved in community?

Josephine Weiner: [01:17:40](#) Well all of these aspects, which I've just mentioned, are becoming more and more important in the volunteer role. Years

ago, in the history of social work in this country, as I understand it, almost all social work was voluntary, and we're getting to the point now where it's a real team work between the volunteer and the professional who represents continuity in the specialized training. But, the two together can really do the job that needs to be done in this country.

Mary Baroff: [01:18:13](#) There are those who seriously questioned whether volunteerism is necessary and effective. In other words, you are not among those who feels this.

Josephine Weiner: [01:18:24](#) No, I feel that it's terribly important. I think that otherwise, we wouldn't have a monolithic kind of a country in which one's welfare was only of concern to the impersonal state and the relationships between volunteers and clients are very important to keeping the heart of the community.

Mary Baroff: [01:18:50](#) What do you see as the role of the volunteer in the future?

Josephine Weiner: [01:18:54](#) Well, I think there would be a great deal of this kind of advocacy, as well as direct service. I think the volunteers will find, well they are already, will find that they are all people who are professional somewhere else. I mean, being a professional here, doesn't mean you can't be a volunteer over there, and that the volunteer opportunities for trying new fields, for getting a wider vision, for making contacts with people you wouldn't ordinarily see, are a tremendous payment to volunteers, which maybe they don't think out very often. They get a great many of satisfactions and joys out of it and more and more of this will be happening. I do think that it's important to use volunteers wisely, that they have to be placed where they can do something and that the time and energy has to be put into training them. In service jobs they can be staff members without pay. That's really what they ought to be. They should have the same kind of responsible feeling toward their agency and in service training and chances to grow those staff members. This takes a real understanding on the part of the staff and [inaudible 01:20:07].

Mary Baroff: [01:20:12](#) Mrs. Weiner, I thank you very much for participating in this taping.

Josephine Weiner: [01:20:17](#) Well it was a great pleasure Mary. I enjoyed it, and I really feel highly honored to have been one of those selected.

Mary Baroff: [01:20:23](#) Thank you.