

CELEBRATING OUR STORIES
Jewish Life in Ann Arbor

Harlene and Henry Appelman
Recorded April 21, 2013

21:52-24:18

Harlene: Henry, I know the story, but what were some of the—if you had to pick, I don't know, two, three key changes in this community or important moments in this community, what were they? I haven't asked you about the Yom Kippur War yet and I should, but what were—take it in any order. Either three incredible moments when the Jewish community here really changed.

Henry: Yeah, there are three. There clearly are three, which basically converted us from just a group of Jews living scattered throughout the city. Many of them belonged to either the Reform temple or the Conservative synagogue. I don't even know if we had an Orthodox minyan in those days. But converted that group into a community with a basic—there were three things. One was the newspaper. The other was the Jewish Center, Chuck and Sharon Newman and—who else was involved? Irv?

Harlene: Irv Smokler.

Henry: Irv Smokler. Irv and Carol Smokler, right. There were a number of others. I remember going to organizational meetings for that also. We got a Jewish Center, and then we decided it's time to have a Federation. I remember we organized ourselves into small groups. We would go to various houses and hold parlor meetings, trying to convince the members of the community that we really now needed to have a Jewish Federation because we now had a lot of things going on in our community. We needed some organization to kinda be the guiding light behind all these various activities and bring them under one umbrella. That was successful. I look back upon those three activities, which I was very fortunate to have been involved with from virtually the very beginning, and I can look upon that with a tremendous sense of pride. . .

25:21-26:50

Harlene: . . . '73, Yom Kippur War. What do you remember?

Henry: Well, being scared again like I was in the Six-Day War. I remember I was—I don't remember what my job was in the United

Jewish Appeal at that point. I may have even been the president at that point. President or head of fundraising. I can't remember. We put together almost emergently a fundraising. Normally, our fundraising had been later on in the year, actually in the following spring. Instead of waiting for the following spring, we put together a whole fundraising operation, the entire community fundraising. I don't know how we managed to pull it off, but we pulled it off in about a week or something like that. Then we had a big meeting again in the old Hillel Beth Israel building, where we actually got people from all over the community to get up. That's the first time I remember people getting up and announcing their gifts. It was very important, people got up and announced their gifts. It was, as I remember, a very successful fundraising operation which we felt was critical. It had to be done.

27:00-29:11

Harlene: ... you've also been a Jewish member of the faculty of the University of Michigan for how many years?

Henry: Forty-five. I think this is my 45th year.

Harlene: When you first came, how obvious was it that people were Jewish, and has that changed over the years and people's identification or admission that they were Jewish?

Henry: Well, when I first came, basically the faculty that was here was the same faculty that was here when I was in medical school and in residency. Yeah, we kinda knew who was Jewish, but there certainly were some departments that had very few if any Jews. Even some of them had reputations as being anti-Semitic. We knew that there were some faculty who were Jewish but didn't want to admit that. On the other hand, the Department of Pathology was entirely different. Everybody who was Jewish was openly Jewish. It was not a problem there. My chairman had no problems. He basically was interested in hiring the best people he could. He didn't care who they were.

Harlene: What was his name?

Henry: French. Jim French. Amazing guy. There was not a problem in our department. There were a number of other departments that weren't really problems. Over the course of the years, all this problem of Jews in various departments disappeared completely as new chairmen came in to these departments and established new outlooks, new points of view. It was gradual. Some major

changes occurred during the '70s. I think a lot of the old, supposedly anti-Semitic chairmen were replaced by new, non-anti-Semitic chairmen. *[Chuckle]* Right now, there's not an issue at all.

32:14-34:20

Harlene: Talk about the Salon for a minute. That is a good idea that we supported and I had forgotten. I didn't mention that. It's new. Is it three or four years we've been doin' this?

Henry: I can't remember.

Harlene: Or two? I don't remember, either.

Henry: It's somewhere—these years pass very quickly as you get to a certain age.

Harlene: I know.

Henry: You can—you talk about the Salon.

Harlene: No, no, go ahead.

Henry: No, you talk about it.

Harlene: *[Laughter]*

Henry: You were more involved with it, and you know all the players. You've been involved with some of these kids.

Harlene: Well, my concern is much the question I'm asking you, who's gonna pick up the banner going forward? We've done our share and we continue, but you're right. The young people need to have the leadership opportunities. Salon brings together, I think, 30-somethings. I think it's 30-something professionals, married, singles to learn more about the Jewish community and set their own agenda. I think the powerful thing, although it's sponsored by the Federation, it allows these folks to make a list of the things they're interested in and then facilitates them finding out more by bringing in speakers and having activities. They really have taken on the challenge and, I would say, begun to build something that's gonna be lasting for them. Yeah, I had forgotten about that. You're right.

Henry: Yeah, and from what we've heard, it's been very successful.

Harlene: It has been very successful.

Henry: Remarkably successful. First of all, just getting these young people together, Jewish young people together, is—

Harlene: It's a recurring theme, isn't it? Maccabi Games, Salon. [*Chuckle*]

Henry: Yeah, that's right. That's right. This is—

Harlene: Hebrew day school.

Henry: As I say, this is what I want from the community is that they get the young people involved and the young people take over the leadership roles.