

Louis Ziskind  
Interviewed by  
Ed Humel  
at his Brother's Home  
On  
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ZISKIND: I think I have the most unusual situation in my family and in my early days at USC. I know that you're supposed to go to school and learn, and I had the good fortune, the especially good fortune, of having two brothers. The three of us are close. One of them is a psychiatrist, one is a legal lawyer and both are graduates of the University of Chicago, and they got good ??( sounds like health) plans. My brother Eugene was the Chief of Psychiatry at Cedars for a number of years..

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: And Chief of the Department at USC Medical School for a good number of years. My brother David was senior attorney to Madame Perkins when she was the head of the Department of Labor..

HUMEL: For heaven sakes.

ZISKIND: He spent 16 years in government..

HUMEL: My gosh!

ZISKIND: It was really made to order for this job. It was the Jewish community for personal service and ??. I

learned more from them than a school could ever hope to teach me.

HUMEL: Yes, sure.

ZISKIND: It's true I took on some of their prejudices, and, therefore, I am controversial in some areas. But that's my background. To go back a little bit beyond that, I come from a family of immigrants that came from Russia to avoid the injustices of the government, particularly the anti-Semitism that they had to face and the climate of the governments. We fled from it: my folks came here just short of 1900 in the 1890's. We've been to Washington and Baltimore and my mother came to ?? and my father followed her and married her.

What is interesting from a social work point of view, and what has had a great influence on her children, was my folks were very die-hard socialists. They believed in the underdog. The mother, in particular, was a pacifist. It's a military form: mother was very strong in whatever worked. I was raised in that atmosphere. My mother, at the age of eight, was an apprentice to a seamstress. She became a very fine seamstress, which was a talent. I talked a little bit about that in the journal. Mother was a very loving, caring, devoted Jewish mother..

HUMEL: The best kind in the world (laughter).

ZISKIND: (laughter) Her children were ?? You messed with us, you messed with her. To illustrate it, my dad had to go to Europe on a business trip for his employer and came back with a Swiss army knife, which he gave to my eldest brother. We went downstairs to start playing mumble peg, you know that game where you flip the open blade into the ground...

HUMEL: Open blade into the ground, yes.

ZISKIND: The gang around that part of Chicago at that time, was not the nicest part of Chicago, and a gang leader took it away from him. My brother ran up the three flights to our little flat, crying. My mother grabbed the broom, went downstairs and said "point him out to me" and she went after him and got the knife back (laughter).

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: In later years, it also typifies when I was at Belmont. For some reason, which I will never understand, my mother detested contact sports because you could get hurt. She forbade us so one brother was the chess and checker champion of the high school in Chicago. The other one was very good in declamation, debating and that kind of thing. All of us were very dexterous in our psychical things too. My brothers were excellent tennis players and I what not. I was born a seven-month baby and for the

first year or so, they didn't know if I would stay around or not.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: So, contrary to the way my brothers were raised, my mother let me go to the farm. If I wanted to go out and play, she let me go out and play. She encouraged me and she fed me milk and milk and more milk. If she knew I was playing baseball or soccer or football or basketball, she say, "No, no, no." I went to all the subterfuges because I happened to be fairly adept at those things and I played her. When it came to football, I came into Belmont and played on their football team. I was about 138, 136 pounds. We won the championship in the year 1945. It helped me get into school at USC.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: The first two years, they paid for my tuition; the school gave me a scholarship. To illustrate the story, the week of the championship game, my mother never knew I played football...

HUMEL: (laughter)

ZISKIND: To her I was a good ringer for ???, does that mean anything to you?

HUMEL: Lyle Lovitz), Oh... (laughter)

ZISKIND: Oh... (laughter) And she saw that in me...

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: I would go and play football, baseball, whatever, and my fingers would get crippled up. I'd somehow - as long as she heard this song ??, she was content (laughter)...

HUMEL: (laughter).

ZISKIND: She never knew anything about that.

HUMEL: That's cute.

ZISKIND: When I played football, the girl next door to me literally next door, her parents had hopes that we would someday marry or something.

HUMEL: Get married, yes.

ZISKIND: I would bring my football clothes home because you'd have to wash them every so often and she would wash them.

HUMEL: (Laughter).

ZISKIND: When I would go out in the morning, she'd say, "Hey ho, ho," and I picked up my clothes. On one such occasion, that would be the week before the championship game, my mother happened to come out of the house and she thought, "Are you carrying a football bag?" She said, "What's that?"

HUMEL: (laughter).

ZISKIND: For one thing, I never lied to my mother, but I did some things that are equally as bad..

HUMEL: (laughter).

ZISKIND: I told her, and she said, "You're playing football? Wait a minute." She went in the house, "I'm going to with you. Let's go to school." We went to school. Mr. Trip was a kindly old man principal; he liked me. He said "Louie this is your mother?" I said, "Yes." My mother said, "And you're Mr. Trip, the principal, and my son is playing football? No! I want it to stop right now." He said, "Mrs. Ziskind, it's a championship game, this season and they're expecting him to play. He is an important player to us."

HUMEL: (laughter).

ZISKIND: My mother said "I don't care what, when or, why. I don't want my son playing football." We saw the determination in my mother. She was not fat, she was short and he was tall. He was looking down and she was looking up at him. She took her finger and she said, "I want my son out of this." He said, "Well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Ziskind, if you feel that determined, we'll do it. Of course he will not play, but if you should change your mind, please let me know." That started my mind thinking, "Change her mind?"

HUMEL: (laughter)

ZISKIND: I knew I had as much chance changing my mother's mind as a...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: So I went home and I wrote me a note giving me permission to play.

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: I came back the next day and Mr. Trip looked at me and he said "No I'm not even going to read the note. I'm putting it in this drawer. If anything happens and your mother raises the question, then I have the note. You go ahead and play."

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: Well, we won the championship. My mother never did know that I had a girl sign the note so it had a feminine signature (laughter).

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: That's the kind of mother she was. At any rate, there was no question in my mother's mind she - in Russia - they didn't encourage women to go to school. Also my dad had a good Jewish education, which is equivalent to high school in ?? and Russia. Apparently, he was a good student.

HUMEL: What did your dad do again?

ZISKIND: He, his folks had a mill. It ground flour and you worked with the farmers and the peasants.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: They traded things, and dad learned how to dress animal hair, hides and hair. You go to a concert, you may not be aware, but every bull (?) is strung with horsehair.

HUMEL: Oh, sure.

ZISKIND: So he dressed for ?? and for all sorts of things. One family was very, very popular. He was a skilled workman but he didn't, until he was retirement age, go into business for himself. He worked for a man he built a factory for, and he showed him how. He did the hiring and supervised the work. We were never affluent, but we were never poor. I never had the luxuries that I saw at college. We never were wanting for anything.

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: I always knew that there were other explanations to human behavior. I would come home from school, the view was patriotism, and the things that they taught us in history about our - my mother said, "Okay, they are undoubtedly good people, but there was starvation, there was child labor, there was this that always painted the other side of the picture to me."

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: One thing she was determined above all else, we were going to get an education whether we liked it or not.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: She wound up sending three boys through college, and there was no question about it. My brothers were bright and they earned scholarships to the University of Chicago. I wasn't so bright, but I got a football scholarship for a couple of years (laughter). Anyway, there were a lot of things that operated in my background that made me feel that destiny pushed me in a certain way. It was not a good start. In the first place, as I said, my mother left me alone because she wanted me to build up my hats. Secondly, I had the problem of two brothers who were very bright ahead of me. I'd come into a class and the teacher would say, "You're Eugene Ziskind's brother?" The expectations were there.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: I was mad as heck. I did a lot of extracurricular activities. I had the lead in the senior play, I did this and I did that at school. I didn't put attention to my studying. I was out of class more than I was in class. I really never learned to study properly until I got into college. There I couldn't horse around; I got down to business.

HUMEL: Down to business.

ZISKIND: I didn't know of social work. It didn't mean anything to me. Matter of fact I used to go to the Jewish Community Center in Boyle Heights, where we lived. I thought it was charity. I wouldn't go in there except to play basketball. The guys wouldn't let me stay out of there. They came after me, and we would be sentenced. I had that feeling about the community, and my mother and dad were not church going people. Their insight to life was, as they say, under oppression. My mother and dad joined groups in Russia called Intellectualists, where the women could actually get an education. It was like a folk school.

HUMEL: Oh, yes.

ZISKIND: They learned there and it built in all the mothers, "My kids are going to get an education come what."

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: There was no thought of anything. We never had any other thought in our minds but that we were going to college. There were no ifs or maybes.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: There's a Jewish word ??, and it means maybe, maybe, maybe ?? We knew we were bound by it.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: My father had to get the expense for books, for clothing, for all the things other than what the scholarships provided for two. By the time I came along, it was a little much to ask of him.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I worked most of my years at school. I worked at the school and I worked. As I said, I didn't know from social work. When I got my BS in education and finished my general secondary certificate, the first thing I did was get married. You've got to remember this is in the height of the depression, jobs were no-no's. We couldn't find them.

HUMEL: Yes, this is like the early '30s?

ZISKIND: Yes, the early '30s, when the SRA's started up. I never was without work, and many times it went around my athletic abilities, such as they were. I worked for a box manufacturer. I played on the baseball team.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I was with the county in some work, and I played on their baseball team. You don't know it, but the County of LA was a retreat for ex-professional baseball players.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: When I used to cover Norwalk City Hospital, most of the attendants were former baseball players. They got

too old to play baseball and this was - they had a good league and a good team and I would get there. I coached some of the fire department basketball teams. I coached some of the police department basketball teams. I moved from coaching like I move from...

HUMEL: (Laughter).

ZISKIND: I realized it helped bring bread to the table.

HUMEL: Sure, sure.

ZISKIND: When my wife was a librarian, the LA County libraries, she had a very interesting history about migrations to the United States and so forth. Between us, we did fine.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: She had a sister who was a social worker for the county and Jess would, around the dinner table, talk about her work. So in a hasty manner, I knew there were people ready to do good, no two bucks about it. I got through with my education in '31. There were no jobs in and the whole class was graduating.

HUMEL: This was the school of social work now?

ZISKIND: No, no BS...

HUMEL: Wow, what a year to graduate.

ZISKIND: Guys that graduated in teaching - two got placed - no more. So I managed to pick up these jobs and work, as

I said, and play baseball. Every time I go up to Griffith Park, I see the star gazing part of it...

HUMEL: Oh, yes the observatory, the planetarium.

ZISKIND: I worked on the crew that was building that and putting in roads up there.

HUMEL: (Laughter).

ZISKIND: What was my job? I was timekeeper of the timekeepers. What did I do? I went over their sheets that they had to fill out for work, and I played baseball, of course. (laughter)

HUMEL: Isn't that fascinating! (laughter)

ZISKIND: Anyway, there is a lot of history, and I don't think I had anything to do with this except...

HUMEL: No, that's very wonderful. I'm glad you're including it. Interesting.

ZISKIND: One day I woke up, read the newspaper, and it said President Roosevelt, SRA, work, work, work, social work. Well, he had a problem the minute they opened up SRA. Where were they going to get the people, the social workers to do the job? There weren't enough of them.

HUMEL: S R A was?

ZISKIND: State Relief Administration.

HUMEL: Oh, okay

ZISKIND: WPA was Works Progress Administration.

HUMEL: Right, okay.

ZISKIND: Overnight, they created the need for a tremendous amount of social workers. You could work if you wanted to. Anybody with a college credential could get a job. I got a job.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: DI did the same as my sister-in-law who was head of the Highland Park office that opened up. Frances and I were amongst those that were first hired to go there.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: The fact that the woman, who was a very - I think of her as a good social worker, but she was a tyrant.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: As an administrator, she was a really a Hitler.

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: She knew my family, she knew my brother who was a psychiatrist. Immediately, she made me medical social worker. I didn't know anything from social work, hadn't heard the word. (laughter)

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: I was a social worker, and it had a story to it. Those were the years when we had some very bad earthquakes in Los Angeles.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Some of the killer earthquakes. Wouldn't you know, it happened in Long Beach and Compton. I was a medical social worker for those two areas.

HUMEL: Oh, my (laughter).

ZISKIND: (Laughter) It was something.

HUMEL: That's very interesting.

ZISKIND: When I first did social work, from the very first day when I hit that, I said, "Brother, this is for me." It was like love at first sight; this is what I want to do help people.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I made up my mind; I was going to go back to school and get a credential. The MSW's had just come out, the very early stages. Very few men had MSW's.

HUMEL: Yes, I bet.

ZISKIND: That's how I got my first big job.

HUMEL: Interesting.

ZISKIND: I must say this: in my junior and senior years at USC, I worked at a settlement house in East Los Angeles.

HUMEL: Which one?

ZISKIND: Neighborhood Settlement House.

HUMEL: Neighborhood.

ZISKIND: Yes, and that was right on Santee and Ninth.

HUMEL: Oh, on Ninth and Santee, yes.

ZISKIND: It was a wonderful experience.

HUMEL: Isn't that great!

ZISKIND: I sort of was primed. All of this primed through me when I hit social work. I knew that's what I wanted to do.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I went back, and fortunately for me, because I was married, I had to work, and I was able to go to school in addition. They permitted it. I don't know if they do now. Hopefully so.

HUMEL: So you work and go to school?

ZISKIND: Yes.

HUMEL: Actually, I think they still have that.

ZISKIND: Right.

HUMEL: Which is very good.

ZISKIND: Yes, yes.

HUMEL: Excellent.

ZISKIND: It insured that instead of getting through in a year or two, it took me four and so forth.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: But by that time, I had well collected my study habits and I did fairly well at it. I've had a tremendous amount of experience. SRA was really something. We'd come

to work one day, and Ms. Arms would come around and say,  
"This is the last day."

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: From 4 o'clock we're sitting there, come back to  
work tomorrow.

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: She herself was a very bright, brilliant person  
who did right. She worked on a philosophy of "I am  
fighting your battles, therefore, you owe me the effort and  
the time to do the job right." We would work overtime like  
you never would believe.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: We did it without any extra pay.

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: There was no overtime pay. We got all of ninety  
bucks a month. I didn't give a damn. You could have paid  
me nothing, and I would have enjoyed that work.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I just sopped it up like a plotter sops up ink.

HUMLE: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: I never wanted to go beyond a case working  
level. They wanted me to do this, go in training for  
supervisor, but I said no. I want contact with people and  
see what I can do to help.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I got my first job, a real job, when I worked with the SRA and WPA for two years, from '37 to '39. A job came open at the Jewish Big Brothers. The Rabbi, who was a mathematical genius, left the job to go to MIT. In those days, it was private agencies that were the premiere agencies. The public agencies were considered beneath your service, and they carried themselves that way.

HUMEL: Oh, yes.

ZISKIND: When you came in to apply for a job there, they looked you over upside and down and I can tell you some very interesting experiences there.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: My brother was on the board of the Jewish Community for personal service. Back then ??? was on the board, and the name may not mean anything to you, but he was one of the outstanding psychiatrists in America at the time.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: When he introduced the convulsive therapy, the shock therapies to America in New York, and then they brought him from New York to California ???. My brother, Eugene, who was also a very fine researcher, had heard about the convulsive therapies, and he went to Europe to

see them. He brought it to Los Angeles. He was amongst the earliest.

HUMEL: What did he do?

ZISKIND: He did two things, he did it on them, he used it for hyperactivity. That was when Zantoff (sp?) became appointed head of the state hospital system, the mental hygiene department.

HUMEL: Oh, yes.

ZISKIND: He took ?? from the organization to put in a program into the state level. It's the first time they brought in social workers.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: More than that, we had a very unique system. Our history was very unique. In the sense that it did its work in the field, you didn't sit in an office, and they came to the office.

HUMEL: You went out.

ZISKIND: You went out to the family?

HUMEL: That's right.

ZISKIND: It led to a lot of criticism on that technique because so many people said, "Why are you snooping in it? You're snooping." It wasn't snooping at all. You went in there and you met the family. You got right down to the nitty-gritty of family problems.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Poverty..

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Everything, it was bad.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: As a matter of fact, if I were to be critical of the system today, I would say hold on now. Social workers sold there birthright, ?? garbage..

HUMEL: Garbage, yes.

ZISKIND: We left that method of operating, and we went into an office to act like psychiatrists.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: They tried to take on all the actions and the information in those areas and gave up being the family counselor.

HUMEL: Yes, and reaching out.

ZISKIND: Today you hear medicine, schools of medicine have their doctors go and do family work. Work with a numbered set of families; go into the family. That's the thing that social workers should have done.

HUMEL: Should have done, yes.

ZISKIND: Still today that is true.

HUMEL: Yes, absolutely.

ZISKIND: That was a tremendous experience for me going in. Of course, I have funny stories as well. One of my first cases out of the Highland Park office was the Green family. They had 21 children on welfare, and I had to figure out a budget for them.

HUMEL: Oh, yes.

ZISKIND: I came there, and, to my surprise, it was a Black family.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: When a person gazes at you intently and over a period of time, you start getting nervous. What's the matter with me? (laughter)

HUMEL: Yes, right.

ZISKIND: Did I leave my fly open? Did I do this? This guy was looking at me from head to foot, constantly. He looked at me and says, "Are you Jewish?" The famous joke about this happened in the movie industry, and they asked a writer was he Jewish and he says, "Well, could be." He wasn't telling. I didn't know what to say, so I looked at him and I said, "Yes, I am." He started speaking Yiddish to me, pure and much better than I could speak..

HUMEL: Oh, my gosh!

ZISKIND: But, I understood it, and I looked at him and said, "Well, the old joke about that is a Jewish person

sees a gentlemen bus riding, and he sees a colored person reading the Forward, a Jewish paper. He looks at him and he says, "Are you Jewish?" He says, "What do I need? Double trouble?" (Laughter)

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: I was standing there and I said to the guy, "Well, how come?" He says, "Well I was raised by a Jewish family in the Bronx, orthodox Jews. Although I was never converted, I was in a family who spoke Yiddish all the time."

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: The grandma, grandfather, and everybody were in it.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Another thing, I am sitting there minding my own business in my office, and I heard one of the workers say, "Gee, I got a file of a deaf client and I don't know what to do. I don't sign language." I said, "Weren't you ever a boy scout? I never got to be a boy scout, but I went through their manual and I learned A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, you know. While I was signing, the supervisor walked by and said, "Ziskind, you know sign language?" I said, "This sign language I know." He said, "You're getting a load, now, of deaf." I said, "Gee, I would love it, but I don't

want - why saddle them with some guy like me that doesn't know their problems?" He said, "Go to Alysian Park, which is along side of the LA riverbed there, by Highland Park, I think..."

HUMEL: Okay.

ZISKIND: "here is your first assignment: let them know that you're their new social worker." So I go down to the park, it's not a big park. It's a very small park.

Nobody's inside, nothing.

HUMEL: Nobody's there or...

ZISKIND: Nobody's there, not even people in the park, people who would normally be in a park. So I look around, I walk over to the riverbed, nothing's there. I decided to go back to the office. As I'm waking back to the office, I noticed a couple of big trees, the utensils, the axes, shovels, rakes, everything was up against the trees...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I said, "Wow, I don't think the city is giving them away (laughter) let's see..."

HUMEL: What's going on?

ZISKIND: I went back to the LA riverbed and went down and sure enough, there were my guys. What were they doing? They were taking the rocks that accumulate in a riverbed and taking them to the other side of the bed. So the

minute I started to sign, whoo! They all grabbed around me.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: It's a long time: you have to spell out each word with this sign language. By the time you get a sentence out, you're tired. (laughter)

HUMEL: Yes (laughter).

ZISKIND: It was the most interesting experience I had. I didn't have the time to learn sign language. At that point, I might have become a specialized worker, but I didn't. The people were terrific: their eagerness and their humanity were so terrific. Actually, by the time I got into the Jewish Big Brothers, I applied for that opening and they asked whether I had a Masters Degree. I said, "No but I'm going to school." I showed them the courses that I was taking. He says, "You've got the job when you get out of school, but there's one condition. You give us at least a year's work when you get your Masters, or two year's work. I said, "Well if I like the work, you have me, hopefully, for as long as you want." Then I found it a very unusual learning experience. My predecessor - I told you he was a brilliant guy in mathematics...

HUMEL: Now were you taking the leadership of the agency?

ZISKIND: Oh, no, I was a caseworker.

HUMEL: I see.

ZISKIND: They gave me a caseload. I got the job on a Monday, and Monday night was his last day. I looked at those things, and I took them home, I took the caseload home. I read all the cases. He was very opinionated. The word may be bad, because I'm not saying it in a bad connotation...

HUMEL: I see.

ZISKIND: He had his - he's a person who came to decisions. He was decisive...

HUMEL: Decisive, yes.

ZISKIND: He had analyzed his cases, and he had talked about prognosis based purely on their records. Most of these kids had been in juvenile court. I spent most of my time in juvenile court representing these kids and proposing to handle their cases. Then the court would assign them to us. It was funny. When I read the case records, I didn't come to the same conclusions he had.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Not a single one.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: I thought to myself, here is a bright guy and I don't know anything, and I'm in here and being critical of him. Crazy! So my brother thought it was going to be a

good lesson for me. He says, "Well, you read the cases, see the people, you give a plan of treatment and a prognoses. Let's see what you come up with."

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Which I did over a period of time.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I worked long enough to see these kids and their children when they married. To see what our prognoses..

HUMEL: Was right, right on the money you know.

ZISKIND: (Laughter) It wasn't always right.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: Exactly the opposite. Some of the kids that we had predicted that were doomed to end up in the penitentiary became doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc.

(laughter)

HUMEL: Oh my. (laughter)

ZISKIND: That taught me a lesson...

HUMEL: Interesting.

ZISKIND: Don't be so Goddamned (that's what he said) judgmental. It's good technique for working with people...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: You can measure your work, at least in your opinion, on what's happening.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: You have some evaluative tools that were really not taught in schools of social work.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I began following the medical model of - look for the early signs, look for a course of development and following acceptance...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: You can further diagnosis those symptoms, so that you can confirm it one way or another. All of your diagnoses, while you are handling a case, are tentative, until you are through with a case and you can look backwards and you find a few things out.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: So each experience was really very interesting.

HUMEL: I would think.

ZISKIND: Then I went from there to my first administrative post. I worked with kids in juvenile court, juvenile delinquents. Not the same type of delinquency that you have now, entirely different...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: The community that I worked in was poor but it was not crime ridden.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: You wouldn't have the gangs and the violence was ??

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Stories just prp out of me. There was a Jewish family with a woman and she had four or five kids. Poor as church mice. You came into their house, and the living room was barren of furniture, no rug on the floor, no nothing.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: One thing was in the room up against the wall, a shinny brand new refrigerator. She was a Harrison harried lady, as a kid she (laughter) ?? massive work out. I got them to join the club for the community center and things like that. Things that helped her do things. In that same block was a church that ???? Proselyte (sp?) Jews, they tried to get Jews converted. I don't know how to say this, it's nothing to do with my own feelings. I'm just trying to be descriptive. To the Jewish community - I think they would have welcomed Hitler rather than to have a Proselyte group around.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Now I became aware that this lady was going to the general hospital. Her kids were sick and she was there most of the time. We became aware that what they did was

they tried to get the kids organized into choirs. Then they would go out to inner lands like San Bernardino, Pomona, in and around those areas, and the kids would sing at church and the church would make a donation.

HUMEL: Was this the outfit that was trying to convert them?

ZISKIND: Yes. That was their method of operating.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: One day I dropped in at the home for an appointment and the mother was at the hospital and there was a worker from that Proselyte group in the house. He had no use for social workers, Jewish social workers, certainly (laughter)...

HUMEL: (Laughter).

ZISKIND: He starts trying to proselyte me, the bible says this and that...

HUMEL: On, my.

ZISKIND: He took the right guy, because my folks always felt that organized religion was an opiate of the masses. They taught us that, and here I go to work in a Jewish community (laughter).

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: This woman came home after the church left, and I said to her, "This is so and so, how can you do this?"

What do you mean you want your kids to go...?" "It's a practical matter," she said. "Is there anything in the Jewish community that would call for me in the morning, take me to the general hospital? One of them will come and pick me up and take me home." She said, "Look at me. I'm an old lady, I've been cut up opened like a chicken." She said. "I'm a sick woman and I need the care, there's nothing. Would you come and get me and take me in the morning?" (laughter).

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: You're right up against it then, where do you see social work come in then?

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: There are these stories by the..

HUMEL: No, that's interesting.

ZISKIND: You go into the home you see these things..

HUMEL: Sure.

ZISKIND: You miss it sitting in an office.

HUMEL: Oh yes that's right, that's absolutely right.

ZISKIND: Now I get off on one of those tracks that I don't know how to get back (laughter).

HUMEL: That's fine, that's very important because I remember - I'll tell you over lunch - about some stuff that fits right with that.

ZISKIND: Incidentally..

HUMEL: When do you want to break?

ZISKIND: It doesn't matter to me. I can talk and talk you to death..

HUMEL: (Laughter) Maybe you want to go another ten minutes and then..

ZISKIND: Then we'll have lunch and come back.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Well so much is from the influence of family, and to me it was all empowering. I had one difference with my mother, whom I love dearly, and that was I had wished that she had raised her kids so that they made their own determination about the amount of rigidity they wanted to have. The reason that I would do things differently, probably I don't know. At least it would have been my choice.

When I had my kids come along, I had a decision to make, and I went through the traditional ways with them. About half way through, they looked me in the eye and said "Dad, you weren't barmitzvahed, you didn't belong to a temple, why are you driving us to it? We don't want to go!" (Laughter)

HUMEL: (Laughter) That's interesting

ZISKIND: To make it even more interesting, who was my boss, but then Rabbi Edgar F. Magnum...

HUMEL: Oh, my.

ZISKIND: Who was president of the board.

HUMEL: Yes he's right up there.

ZISKIND: That he was, he was. He was so remarkable.

HUMEL: Oh my dad respected him so much, he thought the world of him.

ZISKIND: I had tremendous respect for him, but he was a rich man's Rabbi...

HUMEL: Oh yes, yes.

ZISKIND: He was not a poor man's Rabbi.

HUMEL: Yes I think that's right.

ZISKIND: He was the representative Jew to the non-Jewish community in Los Angeles.

HUMEL: Oh yes, I bet.

ZISKIND: He said so many bright things to me. When I first came, in I didn't know anything. That's another thing about the schools of social work: they don't teach you anything about administration - nothing, zilch, and here I come up and the agency has been put in my hands. What do I know about running it? Magnum was very charitable with me, he liked me and I liked him. The first bit of advice I remembered at the moment, "Louie, you're

going to talk to these groups of women, so let me give you a bit of advice. Think, before you go there, of two or three points that you want to make, no more. Go there, make them, stop, and get out of there!"

HUMEL: That's pretty good advice (laughter).

ZISKIND: (Laughter) Damn good advice. I followed it many times and many times I got into trouble because I didn't (laughter).

HUMEL: (Laughter) That's great, yes.

ZISKIND: Don't misunderstand me. I have a great deal of respect for what I learned at USC and there were some terrific people there the ?? (sounds like Bovatices), Earl Young and Pauline Young. Remarkable people.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: In that sense, I feel grateful to 'SC. There are other things that I did not like and experiences that I had.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I took a course from Dr. Alexander, the psychoanalyst...

HUMEL: Was that, that wasn't Franz...

ZISKIND: Franz Alexander.

HUMEL: Oh was it, Franz Alexander. Oh my gosh!

ZISKIND: My brother was playing in the biological school. He was respected there. Freudian concepts - he knew them well. He had great doubts about many things that they said. But first I inherited - I'd go to school and hear a teacher, and I had my doubts and misgivings, and most times it's best left inside.

HUMEL: Yes, probably.

ZISKIND: The first opening remarks from Franz Alexander were very interesting. He came into the classroom said hello to the students. He said, "I'm going to open up this course with a statement. You're all bright young and eager, and I don't want to have arguments with you..." I'm sitting up front. "Where you agree with Freud, I agree with you, where you disagree with Freud, I disagree with you."

(Laughter)

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: When we wrote the blue books for the final exam, I sent him two blue books. On one I said what you expect me to say and what I believe on the next one...

HUMEL: (Laughter) That's pretty good.

ZISKIND: Got back the blue books and he gave me an A, but that was beside the point. He wrote on there "You're a true disciple of resistance, he spelled it reziskind.

(Laughter)

HUMEL: (Laughter) That's interesting.

ZISKIND: ...We started off, they said we'll give you clerical help. They gave me a secretary who was good. They gave me an office, which I took over and built up myself and furnished it. President of the Board came along and said, "Gee, I like this office, it's a lot better than mine"...

HUMEL: So he took it?

ZISKIND: No. I said to the secretary I'm writing about some concepts, it's not a finished product at all and I don't want to show it to anybody until I get it congealed...

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: So if anybody asks you what this is all about I want you to keep my privacy. She said "I'll do it for everybody but the executives." I asked why? She said, "Well, the executives and the president, those are the people I work for. I don't work for you." So I said, "That's true, I appreciate your candor and that's fine." I said, "If I need you again, I'll call you, don't bother me."

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I found also that when I was giving them work, if they were in the midst of a campaign or if they had this or that, everything was given priority over mine. So I

said, "What is this? "It's no good to me and it's no good to them."

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: So I moved out of ???, I'll do everything from home. I choose what I do.

HUMEL: That's too bad though that they didn't have a better spirit about it.

ZISKIND: The point I was going to make - fortunately, we're not taught this in administration - but an administrator is like the conductor of an orchestra. He has to find out where his strengths and weaknesses are in the support group in the programs. I used to marvel at the way Dr. Samuels played the medical staff like, "It sounds like a manic depressive, give it to so and so, he's an expert in it." He moved around amongst his experts so the expertise that I didn't have, he supposedly had, and we used it. Therefore, we always got along regardless of what the specialty was. If a person changes staff it was a psychologist patient person came to staff who believed in finger painting as a treatment and this one believed in music as a treatment. We said fine, come and show us and prove it and we'll help you all we can. It always kept...

HUMEL: Appreciating people's unique talents.

ZISKIND: Unique talents and also making it available to others who don't even realize it exists.

HUMEL: Yes, yes, that's true.

ZISKIND: We always had a far ranging ? treatment of coaches.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: My regret is that we weren't able to write up those that were good and those that were bad and what was good about them and what was bad about them. With all the paperwork with the government coming into the mental health field, you just don't have the time for it.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: I sit down and I think, "Gee, why didn't I do this, why didn't I say that?"

HUMEL: What is the status today on the - does the agency have papers that if you wanted to go and look at them to do writing, is that available to you?

ZISKIND: I'm not so sure, I don't think they've gone so far as to turn that out. If some things did happen, it was probably my fault. I didn't have any experience, so I didn't know enough to know that they could happen. When we moved from headquarters on Vermont Avenue to the present quarters on Wilshire Boulevard of the Jewish Federation...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: They moved everything out of these headquarters and they said, in essence if you don't, so otherwise, by a certain date, we've got to be out, so we're just going to leave, and we're going to destroy all of the records.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: There were twenty-some odd floor boor (?) steel cabinets full of records - we never destroyed a record, we kept it from day one. The incoming administrator, to me when I left, probably needed room for records and the obvious thing was to destroy. Didn't ask permission, didn't say anything, just destroyed them.

HUMEL: Wow!

ZISKIND: To add to the handicap, I said I would do a history of the agency, the bay office, and the main office which grew out of San Francisco. It's in San Francisco and there a similar thing happened. They took on an administrator of the agency, a Federation agency..

HUMEL: Are you talking about Jewish Federation now?

ZISKIND: Yes, the Jewish community for personal service.

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: The Federation took on a bright young doctor of social work and a hell of a nice guy. He decided when he looked over our programs - we hadn't had a review in about 60 years - he decided that we had outlived certain

functions. I wished he had said something, because I would have liked to have rebutted it with him and discussed it with him.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Well, they decided to merge our Northern office into the Jewish Families Services in San Francisco. The board approved the action, and what he did was the Federation fell apart, so who are we to say no? It happened, the board offers its physical plan, upsetting a case that I knew we had in Northern California years ago. We had a spectacular case, and I wanted our records, so I wrote up to the San Francisco office and asked for the records. Came back with the news that when they merged, they put the records together with the Jewish Family Service. Jewish Family Service didn't want their records to be polluted, so they destroyed all the records.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: So here we are - an organization of all these years, and we have really few records to place it. Guys like me would be invaluable to them because we were there..

HUMEL: Sure.

ZISKIND: We saw it. I'm the only one alive, today, that knew some of the old timers up there..

HUMEL: Sure, I'll bet. It's a shame

ZISKIND: And yet, did I ask the Jewish Family to make a search and really do it? Now I'm go to the United Way, and I want some financial records that go back. They should have them when the Family started in 1919. I ought to be able to get some data out of those. I don't know what they'll tell me. I know they're not going to say, "Oh yes, come on in." They'll probably want to get a motion from their board to reach out to dig those records. I don't know what, but I'm sure it's not going to be easy. Those are the things that when you dig up the past and the people are no longer there...

HUMEL: Yes, it's too bad.

ZISKIND: There are so many thing that went on, such as policy setting, wonderful things.

HUMEL: Can you speak a little about that?

ZISKIND: It's hard...

HUMEL Yes, hard.

ZISKIND: I think what we ought to do, if it's all right with you, your still a lovely guy, but I'm saying I don't want to. But if you want to take a certain few subjects and meet on that, then we'll exhaust that and then we'll go to others.

HUMEL: That's good.

ZISKIND: I'm available as long as you have the patience and endurance to outlast me (laughter).

HUMEL: (Laughter) Good, good.

ZISKIND: That can be my last contribution to the world: Gateways into the Jewish Federation.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: The Historical Society of the Jewish Federation has been on my tail to do it. Gateways has offered more financial help. When I say financial help I don't mean to compensate me for my work. But I want to go up to San Francisco and help them and Sacramento and San Diego and spend the time it'll take me to dig up things. If I don't have some sharing of my ? and my transportation...

HUMEL: Sure, expenses and transportation.

ZISKIND: They said no, so fine.

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: Now the Jewish Historical Society says that they have some funds that they'll bring in if I want it. I don't want it. If I can get along without it, I will.

HUMEL: Sure.

ZISKIND: When I can't get along without it, it just won't be done. That's all.

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: I'm not, unfortunately, in a financial status to leave them money. I have responsibilities to family and grandchildren, to take care of...

HUMEL: Yes, sure.

ZISKIND: I really should go up to Oakland and San Francisco, Sacramento. You may not know it, but I'm the bird that raised the question of practice, the questionable practice of having religious groups in the penitentiaries and jails that are not qualified. Rabbi ?, so I discussed this with my - we discussed it regarding the county jail and the sixty-something different religious organizations...

HUMEL: Oh my--

ZISKIND: From the Fundamentalist, the holy rollers, to when I come in sometimes and they gave us an office behind a stairwell. I would come in and there were holy rollers rolling all over the floor and praying and what not.

HUMEL: Oh, my.

ZISKIND: I looked at it and said what does this have to do with...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Sheriff Biscouls (sp) said at that time, "Look, I'm not, I welcome all religious groups. Give me volunteers, I'll take them. We all have to live with each other." I don't have to tell you about the poor Protestant

groups. I felt sorry for them because they were backed by each other and those Jewish groups were backed by each other (laughter).

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: A number of our leaders in our institutions, like our chief probation officer, Daryl Holten (sp), Ken Stutter, the administrator of the California Institute for Managed State Penitentiary, their fathers were ministers, and they were raised in a deeply religious background. Ken, who had brought up in the federal system, generally speaking, my experiences taught me over the years that the farther you got away from local administration, the healthier the system was. Politics were still there, but it wasn't as intense as ?. Our federal institutions, federal criminal justice system was much more rigorous than the ones with a penalty. I presume, because in the county, every Tom, Dick and Harry that lived in the community had a voice in it and would say his piece and the federal system couldn't deal with that.

HUMEL: Yes, that's interesting.

ZISKIND: But their institutions are run better, their institutions are built better. Generally speaking, most of the administrators they get were not only bright but they were well trained. Most of them went to Princeton, Yale,

Harvard, and they got in at one of these schools. They were all those schools with a lot of tradition and a lot of experience behind them.

HUMEL: Interesting.

ZISKIND: When you got up to ??? and group and that group and this group that would not be here tomorrow, you get into all sorts of crack pots. I learned how to get in and out of institutions, and I learned early the admission policies and the discharge policies as well. I learned that it was more important to know what the practices were than what the policies were. Most times the practices and policies didn't get together too often.

When I approached an institution, the first thing I did was to convince these people that I'm not an egomaniac, that I'm not throwing my career, that I'm not there to point out the criticism of that institution and to take social action against them. When they felt comfortable with me around, then we were able to tap in logical performances. I have many proud moments. I have moments when we were all adult with authority. They would call me into meetings to sit down unofficially and advise. If you know the social work community and the resources, then you know the linkage, then you know everything out there, and they wanted it.

There were always problems in custodial institutions of outsiders coming in and interfering with your custodial effectiveness. One of the things that I think that is true is that you're not subject to the same discipline, supervision and hierarchy command as a staff member is. They have to go up the steps of command, and I can go right to the warden. I can go right to whoever it is. My contention always was that the public staff, plus the private agency staff, was stronger than either of us would be, alone.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: The old timers don't believe in - most of the old timers in correctional systems have come up through police work. They're not always the best type of people to have around. But to get back to my original complaint, there's no unity around in the schools of social work. Now, if I were to be critical of USC today, I would say here is a beautiful opportunity that we're missing, that we're not even looking at. No one wants to consider, although it's a very logical thing to do, you have a university. When you go down, you will see we have a plethora of correctional institutions on all levels: juvenile, adult, city, county, state, federal. Within our community, within minutes of one another, we don't have to

go far to be there. We have this great university that doesn't even have, as far as I know, a sequence of studies in the correctional field.

HUMEL: You're probably right.

ZISKIND: You cannot get a degree in correctional work here. You can in Berkley, but you can't get it here. Again, I have to put in as far as I know. I'm not that familiar with it any more. Just imagine what plethora of subjects would have to be studied why would our community be ignored? We wring our hands with all the violence and all the tragedy that this population brings us. We can face and say what can we do and I got that when I was at the University of ???. I saw ??? there in which they had prisoners come from the state, the country's prisons, murders, all kinds of prisoners, housed in a dormitory on the campus of the University of ???. The only thing that divided that campus from the community outside was the street that surrounds it. Now the families of the prisoners would come and rent homes and buy homes close to the prison, so they were right there. Also, you had an incentive to make a prisoner behave and want to behave because he wanted the privilege of being close with his family.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: You held that out, the word "cooperation." But then you made it available to the social status to behavioral status. Didn't matter whether they were a psychiatrist or psychologist or physician. It didn't matter whether they were an anthropologist or any of the behavioral sciences would have access to that population. Not behind bars, you didn't have to go into a prison and be careful with where you walked and where you went and what they said. These people were subject guinea pigs for their research. Of course, the research had to be supervised by the University to see that it was proper and everything. But they ignored it. Every day, every year passes and nobody does anything. You have the plastered-down state hospital, which was created as a hospital for the criminally ill. They have varying relationships with Berkley with ???. But again, the question of money comes up. What better investment is there to try and find out the sources of criminal behavior and how to handle a bad behavior?

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: They ignore it. With no pressure valve today, one of them gets a degree in collections.(?) Go to Berkley or Michigan - a fine place, the east. They have some fine

places. You go off there to do it. But here in our own community, with everything around us so close..

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: We don't do anything.

HUMEL: Yes, this is sad commentary. Actually Meninger(sp) was probably somebody that I suspect you got a kind of equivalent concern from, or what would you say?

ZISKIND: Well, no, I certainly respect Meninger(sp) and there were many private educational institutions and very fine ones. John Hopkin...

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: ...does good work. The only thing I say is that they don't equip us. As I say, to go out and do administration. We could go into other sequences of courses like public administration...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: You can go out too, but it's not the same.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: How to operate on a non-profit basis. How to operate...

HUMEL: Yes, that's really tough.

ZISKIND: Get some skill in fundraising, get some direction. I walked into a group of family members of people in prison. We tried to have that for a while. It

was too difficult for us, but we tried. We got these family members together and - I lost my thought...

HUMEL: You were referring to administration for what's...

ZISKIND: Yes, these family members came and asked me to sit in with them because they were running into difficulties about status and stigma and were quarreling amongst themselves. I came to a couple of their sessions and, again, I was so busy, but nothing equipped me for that. You know...

HUMEL: Yes, yes.

ZISKIND: I felt like I kept looking for things, and as I say, I would go to seminars, I would go to meetings where they talked about administrations, always seeking what were the secrets. What was I doing that I shouldn't be doing and what wasn't I doing that I should be doing?

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: There was no help from school.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Now, if your going to do continuing education - I'm looking over the material that comes to me - I see nothing in the correctional filed. The whole field has been ignored...

HUMEL: No, it's not there.

ZISKIND: I shouldn't say that - substance abuse is the only thing I see.

HUMEL: Yes, but it's very little. You're right, from what I see, very right.

ZISKIND: Yes, yes.

HUMEL: Often, I don't think - well there was a period where it seemed like there were a number of initiatives in preventing - early intervention with juveniles, before they even slip up. But even that's kind of hard..

ZISKIND: I was warned by a person that I have tremendous respect for. He had one of the private treatment facilities in New York in Queens. It was run primarily by the psychoanalysts, and at that time, we had never taken on juveniles. At Gateways, I decided I wanted all age groups: children, juveniles, early adults, middle adults, and the aging, and I planned to get each section. I never was successful in getting any thing in the children's area, primarily because there was no money involved.

I had twice in my lifetime - I had plans for things that I felt were very important, but at the last minute, died because people that were my main supporters died accidentally in accidents. Gateways would have been developed ten years earlier, but one of my chief financial supporters died on a trip to New York.

I was told by the people in the east that had specialties in adolescent care. There is nothing as destructive to an organization as an adolescent program. Don't go into it if you're only going to go into it for a year or two or three. It takes longer than that to make the changes in adolescents, number one.

Number two, if you build your institution like a concrete fortress, you might be there in three years. If it's anything less, within a year or two, you'll have to rebuild the institution. Adolescents will take it apart. There's nothing as destructive to staff, because it creates problems amongst staff of who did what and what the effecting cause was. Think twice before you go into adolescence, and I did, and I didn't. I didn't go into adolescence. I didn't try to go into adolescence because I was afraid of it. Finally came the time when we had some money, and we had the desire to want to do adolescents and we opened it up. We found that most of those things were true to a lesser extent than what was reported to me, but nevertheless were true. It created dissension of staff, primarily because the behavior in the adolescents..

HUMEL: Well...

ZISKIND: We had a one-story building with an addition, a second story for part of the roof area. Wouldn't you know

that we were catching our adolescents escaping - not through the door, the door was there, and they could have walked out. No, they had to do from window to roof.

(laughter)...

HUMEL: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: I could tell you stories you wouldn't believe, you just couldn't believe it.

HUMEL: They didn't choose to just walk out the door. They had to go through a window out on the roof.

ZISKIND: Yes, that was also true with developing thrift shops as a fundraiser. There's nothing as much of a destructive force to your organization as a thrift shop. Very simple explanation: Molly and Jessica are volunteers sitting in the thrift shop. There are two times in the day when it's of special importance: when materials arrive you get a fresh look at what comes in, and when they leave because they have a whole entire ??? Number two, thrift shops attract dishonest people. They come to work, because it is work, and they find ways to be compensated. Very simply, I'll tell you how. Molly is there and Jessica is there at the time the truck comes in. They look over the things. Molly says, "Gee, just what my son needs. He just got married and he needs a dinning room set. There's a dinning room set beautiful..."

HUMEL: So there goes the dinning room set.

ZISKIND: No, not that crude. She calls her son and the son comes in, oh mom terrific. Now they are in charge of pricing things too, the staff. So Molly comes to Jessica and says, "You know, I want to buy that. What would you charge me for it?" Jessica says, "Well, it's worth \$500 easy, probably paid \$1,000 to get the chairs and the..."

"Well, they can't afford it. They just gotten married."

"Well, what can you afford?" "Well, I'll give you \$50.00."

HUMEL: I'll bet that's what happened.

ZISKIND: "But can you give \$100?" Sold. Then tomorrow, in comes a load of things and Jessica sees a fur coat that was sold originally for \$8,000 ten years ago. Today, it's worth maybe \$150 to \$200. She says, "My Maggie, at home, would be terrific with that. What do you think you would charge for that?" "Well, I already have a price offer on that for \$200 on that, and I told them it was too low." She says, but I'll give it to you for \$200." She says, "I just gave you a furniture and brought it down to so and so. Reciprocate, please." So you have that kind of thing going on. Or we'll have a board member come in who has property, who has apartment houses, he winks at us and he says I want that bed and that table and chairs and this and that, get it all together. He takes the cream of the crop.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: He gives you very little for it.

HUMEL: I bet that happens, yes.

ZISKIND: Then we'll have the people who are really weak characters come through and there are knick-knacks and some antiques that they recognize and know the value of.

They'll get together with the other employees and say you know I can sell this for this and buy it very cheap and give a portion to each one involved in the transaction.

HUMEL: Oh.

ZISKIND: I have had wealthy, wealthy women whose husbands were very successful in business get caught stealing things from the thrift shops.

HUMEL: Wow

ZISKIND: Was saving it for her neighbors, how much is this? She looks at the wood. How much is this, it's worth \$500. Here's my check for \$500 and another \$100. The first thing you know, the two lifelong friends, Molly and Jessica, aren't speaking to each other (laughter). It starts breaking up your organization. So it's not without its other side.

HUMEL: I'll bet.

ZISKIND: What do you do with a woman who goes and is sent to jail for theft or in a department store, shoplifting?

HUMEL: Sure, sure.

ZISKIND: I've met them and it's a pitiful ? you know...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: Social work schools do not (laughter)...

HUMEL: Cover those things (laughter).

ZISKIND: Cover those things. We have to do something.

HUMEL: Yes, yes you're right. Well it's a good example of where alumni could be very helpful if they were to really use them more actively, I'll bet you.

ZISKIND: Well I appreciate what you're saying very much and I think the school has a right to expect help from its alumni where it made a contribution in their lives.

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: But unfortunately, not all of us are in a position to be financially helpful. Also, for those of us that had to work when we went to school, we earned the money the hard way. We don't have that kindly feeling that we would have had, had we had a free education.

HUMEL: Sure, sure. I was thinking in terms of really calling to develop better ways of making or inviting people to come back and even compensating them, for heaven sakes, to share some of their wisdom. I don't know that this is done and it's too bad because there is a lot of accumulated experience out there.

ZISKIND: It seems to me that it depends on what kind of life you're in...

HUMEL: Yes.

ZISKIND: If you're in your middle life, then you have your biggest time of strength, financial acquisition and things. You can expect one thing, when you get to your senior citizen and your retirees who are now able to live like I can, very nicely. I wish I could have lived this way all the times of my life, but at the same time, I know what it is to be...

Tape 2  
Interview by  
Marj Schwarz  
On  
August 11, 1993

SCHWARZ: the first part of the tape he goes into great detail about his family and his early schooling. When we pick up on the tape he is just getting ready for his first job with the - when he is going to apply to the SLA. From then on, I think the whole thing is there, but the machine was not recording. It was only playing for the first part of the tape and I'm very sorry about that. But the relevant material is as follows.

ZISKIND: I got my teaching credentials, but I couldn't get a job in social work. So I did many, many things. I

worked in a box factory, I worked as a houseboy, and I worked as a special delivery boy. I never was without work, but I never had anything that I knew I wanted to continue. All along this time, I had a girlfriend. My first wife was my girlfriend. I courted her for five years before I married. So we were worried about my situation and what I was going to do.

At that time, my brother was established in the practice of medicine, and he said to go back to school since you want to do medicine. I'll help you financially. I said all right, and I accepted the idea. I talked it over with my wife. When I got my teaching credentials, I got married. My wife was a librarian with the city library system, making all of 80 bucks a month. That was her income, our income. But I was never without work. I was always doing something. I coached the city fire department in basketball. In the police, I played baseball, went out and did one or another. I always had some money coming in. It was a meager life, very unsatisfactory. One thing playing athletics when you love it, it's fun. It's another thing when you're making your living at it. If you didn't feel like playing it, you have to go out and play it any way. So that didn't please me too much.

This opportunity to go back to school came along. I went and talked to the Loma Linda people, because Eugene, at that time, was also teaching at Loma Linda on the medical staff there as well as at general hospital. They encouraged me. If you're pre-med, we'll find a receptive group here. So I went to UCLA. Now I had gotten my undergraduate degree and my general psychotherapists ??. I went to UCLA because it was ??. I had to make up courses, which was very difficult. If I took physics, I had to take the course that was offered at that time and it may be intermediate rather than beginning physics.

SCHWARZ: Oh.

ZISKIND: But I couldn't get around it, I had to take an intermediate class.

SCHWARZ: Yes.

ZISKIND: I had to take what was offered to fill in. My study habits were not the best anyway. I did all right, but I never did what I was capable of doing. This made it very hard. I got through my pre-medical except one course and that course wasn't being given for two years. I would've had to wait two years to get that course.

By that time, I had had about six years of college. My wife said I had to do something. I don't like the sight of you going back to school for another five or six years.

She had a sister, a lovely person, who was a social worker in the county. The State Relief Administration started up and they needed workers. How do you develop social workers overnight? You can't, so anyone with a college degree was accepted as a social worker. Through her I got to know who the director was of a district in the State Relief Administration. I got a job in Highland Park.

The first time I hit that function, I knew this was what I wanted to do. It was like love at first sight. I said this is what I want to do and I want to go back to school and get my credentials. I didn't want to be uncredentialed. That was due to my first supervisor who was a little Jewish girl who came from Chicago, and she got her degree at the University of Chicago. She used to talk about social work and I liked what I heard. My wife disagreed that I would go back to school and in those days, you could go to school part time and work part time. I enrolled in a school of social work. They accepted me. This is at the graduate school and it took me four years to get my Master's for that.

I have to slide over and tell you another little story. You know Mark ? (sounds like Ruterma)?

SCHWARZ: Certainly.

ZISKIND: I met Mark as a kid: he lived on Temple Street. I went to Belmont High School, which is right off Temple Street. When we came to Los Angeles, I had an aunt that lived in Edendale. We went to stay with her for a while; that's how I got into Belmont High School. I got to know a lot of kids on Temple Street, and Mark was one of them. We had a friendship, if one could call it that. We did not mix socially or were seen together at all, but we liked each other spontaneously. He had an athletic build and an athletic ?? at times, so we had something in common. Whenever I would see him, we were very friendly with one another.

I didn't see Mark until I got to USC. There Mark was enrolled in the School of Dentistry. The dean of the school of dentistry, in those years, was an anti-Semite, openly. At one time, he had refused to admit, or kicked out, a number of Jewish students. There was quite a rally about it. They didn't know where to go, they didn't know what to do. Mark and I didn't see each other for a while, and then I saw him one day. He was very depressed. I said why do you look so sad? What's happened? He said, "Well, I left the School of Dentistry and I went into social work." Every thing I knew about social work was that I had a sister-in-law that was a social worker. What it did, I

didn't know. He said he was going to take an examination for the county clerk job as a social worker. He said, " I wish I knew some body who could help me with that, study for that." I said, "I've got a sister-in-law. I'll talk to her."

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: I talked to her and she said sure bring Mark over and I'll show him what to study and how to study. Then I didn't hear any more about it. I went to work for the SRA, I hear that Mark is Sacramento. I said, "Yes, Mark is up there." I didn't seek him out or anything and of course time went by and I told..

SCHWARZ: You met Charlie Shepherd in those days?

ZISKIND: Oh, yes, I met them in a different way.

SCHWARZ: Oh.

ZISKIND: That's a different story. Let me finish this one.

SCHWARZ: (Laughter) Well I'll let you get done with this..

ZISKIND: If you want to know how I got into social work, I went back to social work and met a number of friends that were in social work. A number of my ?? at that time were in the same spot that I was in. They couldn't get a job, so they went into social work. In those days, the public agencies were not considered the best from a quality stand

point. They were interested in budgets and release and work and so forth. The private agencies were the cream of the cream; they paid better. I worked for the SRA, and it was a very interesting job, and I must have done well, because they kept putting me in positions of responsibility. In those days, they had offices all over the county and Long Beach and they needed a medical social worker. I didn't have ? My only qualification for it was that I had done pre-medical (laughter). So they asked me if I'd like to go out and do that and I said yes. They put me in Long Beach. Remember the earthquake in '34?

SCHWARZ: I lived in Long Beach during that time, but I was in Pomona that year.

ZISKIND: Well, that earthquake hit and I was brand new in my office. The community descended on me. I didn't know what to do, but I learned and I learned fast. At that time I decided that I would try to get out of it. I had done two years now: one with family and one with medical work. So I moved on to career possibilities. An opening had opened up at Big Brothers. I saw a Rabbi at Sinai Temple at Third..

SCHWARZ: Bob ?

ZISKIND: Bob ?, I left the job to go to MIT. He was a math genius, as you know. He apparently wanted to go in

that area. Know they needed someone, they wanted a male in the first place. Males were hard to come by. Social work was still considered, in many circles, a woman's occupation. They wanted one with this new thing called the Master's degree. They wanted - they said they would settle for someone who's in school. I was going to school at night. So I got the job. How I got the job is a whole different world, if you want to go into that..

SCHWARZ: Let's skip that and go on with it, to progress.

ZISKIND: ...that's how I got into social work, and I want to tell you before my folks died they relaxed a little bit. They thought I would be all right.

SCHWARZ: Who was the executive then? Edward ??

ZISKIND: Edward ??, yes. We got along fine. My next-door neighbor was Jason Slope. In the Jewish Community, for Personal Service, and next to him was Lawyer ??, who was the head of the Jewish Free Law. I also made friends with Donna Baris (sp) who's a counselor with the Jewish Community..

SCHWARZ: Yes.

ZISKIND: With Seda Moore. It was an arm's length relationship with Seda. Now I'm getting into some trouble so I have to go ?? if you want me to I'll do it.

SCHWARZ: We can keep on going. Or maybe we shouldn't. Should we put it in? Wouldn't it be interesting to the teacher?

ZISKIND: It has terrible parts.

SCHWARZ: But it's primitive.

ZISKIND: The Jewish Community of Los Angeles is lots different than the Jewish Community I've found anywhere else. I've been in many of them throughout the country and out of the country. Part of the reason was that the leadership in the community had complications. The agencies, instead of being cooperative one with the other, jealously guarded their own turf. When you're in to go for a budget allocation, you were in open competition with 30, 40 other agencies. Everybody played everything close to the chest. They kept their own counsel, and they strived to get the kind of people on board that had influence on the allocations process, budgeting process.

These people, to me, were very bright and well educated and competition was their life. For instance, who was to be the head of the Federatio? I didn't know Irving Lipcshitz, but that was about the time I'd seen him at Big Brother. When he died, who was going to be the head of it? Arthur Greeley and Sully Sutton (sp), she'll move a part of this to Vista Del Mar. Go up there and ?? all declare a

tight ship maneuver over the other one to give in. Sully Sutton was one up, I don't know how but...

SCHWARZ: We have a long interview with him. A couple of days, I think.

ZISKIND: I have to learn from watching Sutton, because he was, when I was a teenager, lived in Boyle Heights, head of the Mexican ? Center. Now I've been raised that welfare is for poor people. You didn't go to the agency, because you wanted to be as far away from being identified with the poor as you could. So I went to the center to play basketball and clubs and so forth. But my mother didn't like it she said, "You're not poor." Yet, we didn't have the money to pay for a facility, we wanted it public. We used to go out to China Town and go crazy. I wasn't a member of the center yet, but I used the center for this sole reason. I played and we caused him a lot of trouble. He was always kicking me out of the place. Thank God Sully didn't remember us. In later years, we laughed about it.

I didn't know anything about the Jewish Community. My folks were not observant to, so although they've seen full families of orthodox, they were so-called deliberated. Intelligence came from ??, and we were raised in a curious and questioning family. If I came home and talked with my mother about what was at school and American Heroes, she

looked at me and said they were involved in this infanticide or they were involved in this war and they killed people. We learned not to take for granted what people said, it has a way of turning over in your own mind and you make your own decisions.

So then I, although we always lived in Jewish communities and all of my friends were Jews, I would run into the ??? (center?) and pull the kids out of the play. Mine and my family and my mother, father didn't want to speak Yiddish to us. They always spoke English to us, and they always tried to get over their accents. We tried to speak Yiddish; they said come on speak English. But they talked and their friends talked, so I gathered a smattering of it, and that has come into activity in my life, time and time again. Came into my professional life, time and time again, too. When I was at Solis (?), I said that increased my Yiddish (laughter)...

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: My German professor used to say to me...

SCHWARZ: At Pacific High School?

ZISKIND: My German professor would say, "For God sakes, quit talking Yiddish." (laughter)

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: Where was I?

SCHWARZ: You were, Sully became the head of Federation.

ZISKIND: Yes, Sully became the head of the Federation and his wife, Edina (Edna?), and I were at Belmont together. I was the school hero in athletics, so she took to me. Edina has always liked me, and when I got to Big Brothers, that was what I considered my first center ?? to equality social work job. I'm of the nature that I like to be the idealist in the profession. I think about laws, I think about the majesty of law, I think about its weakness, its faults. I think about medicine, I think about the majesty of it and the noble purpose of it and so forth. Not about the fleeting flame that most doctors have. In social work, I think if a person is going to come into this field, he has to dedicate his life to it in a certain way. You're not going to become wealthy, you're going to make a living all the time. There are certain ethical concepts that you must prevail or you'll be a lousy social worker. I've had my share of both in my lifetime. This has always filled me with enthusiasm for the field of social work.

SCHWARZ: Have you encountered many obstacles along the way, once you got into the field?

ZISKIND: Well, human beings are of the nature that the first priority as a rule is self-interest. Anyone who tells me otherwise is sadly ?. You look for your career,

you look for the opportunity to have a family, to raise a family, to educate your kids like everybody else. The obstacles are really the personal lives that you live. How you try to improve yourself is a constant one. Yes, there were many obstacles and some of them were funny. When I was hoping for a job in the - at the time, I was looking at Big Brothers. There was an opening in city health department and a woman by the name of ?? (Zadanta Bouvic) who was a very lovely, really a nice person, advertised for a social worker, so I applied. We got through the interviewing and apparently she liked what she saw. She says, "I want to tell you something. I know your brothers, you come from a nice family, what the hell are doing applying for a job in social work? This is a woman's business."

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: She said, "I'm going to do you the best favor of your life. I want you to go about doing something in life that is male-dominated, orientated and you go ahead and do it." My father told me many years ago that if you're going to make a success in life it's not going to be with your hands, its got to be with your head, and you've got me worried (laughter)...

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: Business was, I never was a good businessman. So I knew I had to do it in some type of intellectual person, I had to do it. Obstacles of all kinds, in the first place in the work I chose which was the Jewish Community for Personal Service and areas with criminality and mental illness. You're always working in somebody else's home. We didn't have a hospital at that time. I had to go into institution after institution and it's just increasingly different. In some you had people who were very narrow-minded. Some, you had people who were so ill fitted for their jobs, it was pathetic. But you had to work in their areas and you had to work according to their policies, which was very difficult for me. If I agreed with something or I didn't like something I was attitude I'd say something about it. Although I knew I couldn't, because if I did openly, I was not going to have a job. So I'd get many anti-Semites, openly anti-Semetic. I'd get many people who didn't like the Jewish community and I'd get Jews who didn't like the Jewish community and so forth. That was a part of my professional life.

I must say that the main obstacle was the hierarchy of leadership within the Jewish community. They were a bunch of people that I did not understand. They were affluent, they were open to the ?? and I thought there was little in

top. In the two area that I chose to work in, mental health and criminology, in themselves were obstacles, because people did not think well of these areas of service in the first place.

In mental illness, it was so stigmatized. The average family, Jewish family, had manageable children didn't want to admit such a thing existed - not in their life, not in their children. The common concept at that time was that if you had mental illness, your bloodline was tainted and you opened it up to the community. Who wanted to marry into a family that had mental illness in it? So generally, if you came in and you tried to talk to them about their problem, they would invariably say to me where were you when I needed you? When I had no problem here, now I have and their placing us in a state hospital. It's no longer threatening my family and work now. Now you're opening up something we don't want to open up, we tried to close it. The persons in the prison, you want to talk about it? My mother and my father were in prison, this that and the other thing. Both of these areas were not pleasant, polite talk.

SCHWARZ: That's socially acceptable...

ZISKIND: That's right. Now, so I was born in a hurry to get out in this world and I don't now why. Still can't

answer that question. But I never was in this world at peace with either myself or the world. I was fighting all the time. I went to bed at night I had to think about this, I had to think about that.

Now we were, our agency was low man on the totem pole of support. If you take all these federation agencies, you rank them, we were the last to be considered. If we got cut, our agency got cut at the maximum level. If we had good years and United Way was ready to give us some extra money, we would get a lower percentage than our colleagues at other agencies. I think one of the big obstacles to overcome, I don't know that we really overcame it, when I came in the Federation, an agency got the kind of support according to the influence that it had. It paid its workers more than the others could afford, we couldn't afford to pay high salaries. So with competition for workers, the higher workers we were always behind.

SCHWARZ: Yes.

ZISKIND: I don't have to tell you, it went from the top to the bottom. My salary was lower. I used to think, in those days, as I said, my wife was making \$80 a month and nurses got \$80 a month in those years. The State Relief had benefits, and I was making \$90 a month and I could afford obviously nothing. I Came to Federation making \$120

a month. I used to think in those days, dear God, if I get \$200 a month, I'm going to retire (laughter)...

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: When I got to \$200 a month, everybody else was getting much more than I. I realized, early in my life, that if I want to make myself unhappy or that kind of thing, just try to compare yourself to others. Otherwise, put on the blinders and do your job in whatever it is you do. Whatever you do you get, you choose where you're at. I choose to face it, but nevertheless, it was there.

It not only was there at our respected agencies, our main office for the Jewish Community for Personal Service was in San Francisco. San Francisco paid higher salaries than Los Angeles...

SCHWARZ: Oh my goodness.

ZISKIND: So, as a matter of fact, in those days, I used to rant and rave about taxation with out representation. We had to send all of our money to the San Francisco office and they sent back to us what we approved in the budget for us. It caused a lot of unhappiness. While I'm generally of an optimistic nature, I thought, well I could hit my head on the wall, but it's not going to do any good, so the thing I better do is pay attention to my business and do. Now that was changed when Maurice Carp came to be the head

of Federation. When he came to be the head of Federation, he accepted the principal, "equal work deserves equal pay." Under that rule mark, we got the same salaries that were paid to other workers in similar categories in the Federation. With my Northern office, we got to be strong, we grew, and then we dictated. We said no more let's do it according to ?? and we did. So it straightened out, but it took many years. You're talking about obstacles, so..

SCHWARZ: Yes, because you were not the only agency to suffer the same way.

ZISKIND: That's right. Now when it came to Federation, every head had a variation, he had his own personal philosophy. Freda Moore did not believe that any specialty agency should exist in the Jewish Federation, if the family agency could do the whole job by departments. In all the years I worked with Freda, she never once referred a client to us. She didn't want to go into prisons and she didn't want to go into mental hospitals. We had many a battle about it.

Also, it was dictated somewhere in the past that our agency should not handle relief budget. I presume this was on the basis of our people who were institutionalized and they were taken care of and they didn't need it. I don't know any other logical reason for it. The fact remained

that these people came out of institutions and they needed relief so the channel that was set up was I had to go to Freda and ask, hat in hand. She wanted to know the case and the particulars. Okay, you don't want to give money unless you know that it's proper so we had to do that. However, we could not depend on that same situation being funded the next time around. The processes are pretty similar for one person and another. Maybe last week she gave me money for this problem, but this week, she got up on the wrong side of the bed in the morning and didn't want to give it.

I finally got to the point where I brought it before Federation before Dr. ???. He had reviewed the situation and came to the same conclusion that I had, she couldn't do it. She snubbed her nose at that. She said "I'm a social worker and I'm not going to give money if I don't have the case under my control." For the first time, they gave us a budget. Twelve hundred dollars a year (laughter).

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: It never grew. That's one of the reasons I went out and raised and developed my own volunteer groups and had my own money coming in. Federation didn't like it, but you were in competition with it. I said come on little fishes like us, we're not on top. I said if you want to

stop it, pay us the amount that we raise, then we don't have to raise it. No, because they'd have to do it for all the other agencies. All right I understood. But these are obstacles.

SCHWARZ: Did you have the same obstacles with the United Way?

ZISKIND: At times, not anywhere near that degree.

SCHWARZ: Okay.

ZISKIND: United Way knew they were getting a bargain. They pretty well handled us. United Way was a different thing, they wanted me to go out and do fundraisers.

SCHWARZ: It was Community Chest?

ZISKIND: I didn't fight any more, I had enough of trying to do my own and keeping my own head above water. I wasn't about to go out and they didn't like that. It really hurt me and I sensed that sometimes in my relationship. But then each person, Joe Bonaparte (sp), Joe Bonaparte would not accept a referral from us. When I would tell a client when they went to Bonaparte, don't tell them you know us. Just go in and make your application. They would go through the process and get in. ?? was a ?, she was an attorney and you talk to her with your problems. She reached out ?? was a gem. We sensed another problem what

we had was assistant Pauline, who I'm very fond of.

Pauline uses a ? so all the men circle to get that ?.

SCHWARZ: Did she ever marry?

ZISKIND: Oh yes...

SCHWARZ: Okay.

ZISKIND: She married Lilian's husband. When Lily died, her husband married Pauline.

SCHWARZ: I see. I never knew it was ?

ZISKIND: Really wonderful people, just wonderful people. The fact of the matter was that these people - Freda Moore is a wonderful person. I've got to tell you a story. In those years, there was a character named Fome, remember?

SCHWARZ: F O M E?

ZISKIND: Yes.

SCHWARZ: No.

ZISKIND: During the depression, Fome became quite a character and they made a movie about it. She sold apples in the state building in the first of the - against the wall. There is a wall that says you cannot sell unless you have a license in the state. She was there with her apples and she was quite a character. She was a bawdy looking woman and she always was high. Today we'd say she was a bag lady. She was a client of family services. You'd imagine the kind of living you could make selling apples

and begging for money. When she did make money, and Freda found out about it, she cut her off. So Apple Annie would yell at her. One time, I'm minding my own business, in the office on Temple Street, nobody was in the building, I thought. It was after hours. The janitor comes up and said, "Wow, am I glad to see you." He said, "Go down and help Freda Moore." I said, "What do you mean help her?" "She's got a woman here threatening her and doesn't want to go out of her office. That woman's standing right at the doorway." Lesson number one, I learned then, never to have just one door out of your office (laughter).

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: Then he said, "Will you go down and escort Freda?" Freda lived in the neighborhood, not too far away. She went by bus because it was more convenient. She went to walk from her office out of the building to the corner to the bus and she's afraid this woman will assault her. I come down stairs and I see this bawdy lady there. I knew her by reputation so I said what can I do for you, you're standing here and we don't want to call the police. She said, "Boy I like you, you're a gentleman, but that SOB, if I ever get a hold of her..." I got another lesson - number two, I learned you use tough words. We reached an accommodation, and she said, "If you will let me silt(?)

her," silt is curse for her, "I won't touch her, I won't spit on her, you can walk us to the bus but I'm going to silt her every step of the way into the bus."

SCHWARZ: (Laughter).

ZISKIND: I heard a flood of Yiddish curse words I have never heard before. ?? (Yiddish words) you know all of them. You should burn like a fire and go out like a light (laughter). Just a constant stream of it. It would have made a spectacle, but Freda, in her way, was a very hard lady. She was very nice, she was educated, and she was a good social worker. Just idiosyncrasies, she had it, Joe Bonaparte had it. He didn't believe, although he ran a specialty agency, he didn't believe our agency should exist except as a department of the family agency. Now there is nothing wrong with that, that is a possibility. But the powers that be didn't set it up that way. I was made executive of that agency and ordered to run it, not to see it go out of business.

SCHWARZ: We're talking about?

ZISKIND: The Jewish Community for Personal Service...

SCHWARZ: The Jewish Community for Personal Service, at this point, which latter became Gateways?

ZISKIND: Yes, yes. Well Gateways...

SCHWARZ: We haven't gone over the history of all of this, of the agency itself. That we'll have to take up.

ZISKIND: That you're going to have trouble with me because my memory goes (laughter).

SCHWARZ: But you started with the State Relief..

ZISKIND: State Relief, then Big Brothers..

SCHWARZ: You went to the Big Brothers and then to Community for Personal Services?

ZISKIND: Yes, I used to, you talked about Nathan Sloan and we were great friends, colleagues.

SCHWARZ: He was the one who used to actually go to the prisons and the..

ZISKIND: Yes, that's right. Now when that job came up I was a male, and I was working for my Master's degree. That got me the job, however..

SCHWARZ: Was that about the time that I knew you on campus in '34?

ZISKIND: Could be, could be.

SCHWARZ: Could be because I was there from '34 to '37.

ZISKIND: Could be. There was a man by the name of Ruben Resnick (sp) does that ring a..

SCHWARZ: Yes, oh sure.

ZISKIND: I met Ruben first when I was at the university and he was a Pi Epsilon Phi, and they had decided they

wanted to rush me. Ruben was given the responsibility for it. I'm of a nature that, you want to challenge me, then tell me of something I can't do or shouldn't do, in which I don't believe (laughter). I won't take it. Ruben was telling me a lot about the EPS and how wonderful they were. It's just contrary to my upbringing. I didn't believe in superior people. I believed in everybody being the same. The Tao Delta Phi was another organization that wanted me and they were more closer to my things. They needed an athlete because, in intercollegiate athletics, they needed to fill the teams, so it all appealed to me, and I went there. Ruben never forgave me, he said, "That was my responsibility, I thought you were coming to us." He tried to get me to change my mind, but I wouldn't change it. Little did I know that later in life, I'd meet up with him. (laughter)

SCHWARZ: (Laughter).

ZISKIND: Ruben was the executive of the Jewish Community for Personal Service almost from its beginning. That's why the Rabbi had served only six or seven months, and when he died, Ruben came in. Ruben did a terrific job. Ruben was an attorney in addition to being a...

SCHWARZ: Social worker...

ZISKIND: Social worker. Now in the Jewish Community for Personal Service, in their criminal justice work, being an attorney came in very good. Now for many years we hired attorneys; people just getting into practice or attorneys who wanted to get into the public defenders offices, the district attorney's office. They used us as a stepping-stone as others did to get to judgeships. Dave Coleman - there are a whole string of them that went from our agency. So it had a useful purpose in that sense.

Ruben had a brother who was an attorney, also a very fine very intelligent kid. Must have been about my age. Knew my brother, Eugene, treated a member in Ruben's family very successfully, so there was a close tie there. When this opening opened up, so they urged me to go for it. So I talked most of it over with my brothers. He says, "Yes, I know the Resnick family. If they don't want the job, then you pursue it. I'll talk to Ruben and see." He talked to Ruben and Ruben said, "No, his brother is no longer being connected with this big firm and that big firm, he won't want the job." So, I went ahead and threw my hat in the race. There was a member of the board then by the name of Harry Bolter (sp).

SCHWARZ: Harry Gram Bolter.

ZISKIND: Harry Gram Bolter. Now Harry, the Bolters were related to my wife's family. The old folks were very close but the younger are not. Now I knew Sandy Bolter because he was a hero at Roosevelt while I was at Belmont. So we knew each other. So Harry Bolter says yes, I'll support you and about three or four days before the board met to consider the applications, Ruben's brother decided to change his mind and threw his hat in the race. Ruben had a powerful influence with that board. But Harry, and, of all things, Lily Ladine, (sp?) said that wasn't right, have this job ?? She said, "I'm going to give him a ??." She put her hands and fingers on the result, I had one vote (laughter). I still think that Resnick owes me a favor because he went on to do nice things in law and was very successful in law.

But I mentioned this because all my life in Federation I felt that it's the same for neighbors that we don't cooperate, one with another. We're colleagues, we're professionals and how much more effective would our service be if we used one another services. Instead of finding a closed door, we would be welcomed. I found that in Federation almost all the way through my professional life.

I had colleagues come to me when I dreamt up the thing about Gateways, you'll never make it. Why even try

it, the Federation doesn't want you to, they don't need another area of service to raise money for. United Way doesn't want you, because they don't need the money. Another money draining on them and very seldom have I found them to be helpful. Very unusual. Joe Goldberg in the Jewish Free Law, he was a great help. He used his agency to meet these, that what he was there for and he did it..

SCHWARZ: Yes.

ZISKIND: I have great respect for that agency, although it was relatively without influence. It's a smaller agency. But I have great respect for them because they don't necessarily give money and grants, they do some of that, they also loan it at an interest that is..

SCHWARZ: Payable.

ZISKIND: Payable.

SCHWARZ: Affordable.

ZISKIND: Affordable. So there are relatively few. Dora Barris (sp) was such a person. She wanted to help. But the politics in the Federation were such - there were obstacles. In a sense, you were afraid of what was going to happen. Policies were interpreted selectively, they didn't all fit for everybody. In my buildings were socially minded people. They were - most staff, I had a

tremendous respect for the trustees and the board people because they were giving of themselves and their substance.

But I really feared going before Federation budgets and the budget year. I'll never do that. To this day, I have no fear. I never know and the stories are legion. I watched ? (sounds like king), a prominent jeweler in our community, got into trouble and got into prison. Unfortunately for him, in the course of events, the victim was injured. It was the wife of one of the board members of the Federation, an influential person. I came up before the allocations committee. This husband gets up and says, "The Jewish Committee for Personal Service, you work in the prisons?" I said, "Yes." He says "Did you help so and so who was in the prison?" Well, in the first place, it was confidential. I didn't know what to say. I said, "Well, yes, I did." He said, "For that you're not going to get a penny out of this place. I'm going to see to it, personally, that you get no budget. Not only won't you get an increase, but you're not going get any budget." I said, "Mr. Salsa, (sp?) you're talking to the wrong person, I didn't hire ?? trust, and I'm running it. You don't like it, that's all right. You do have your rights. But I have a duty to perform. I was hired to do something and I must do it. If it injures you, I'm sorry. Let's try to talk it

through and see if we can arrive at some understanding out of it." Fortunately, other people got on the seating, you cannot do that, you cannot threaten an agency. You can vote against it because they're not doing their work properly. This agency is there to help the people and the prisons. These are obstacles. I don't know what kind of obstacles you want, but I've had them all. (laughter).

SCHWARZ: You've had tremendous success too, actually.

ZISKIND: Well, you break through some, you win a few, you lose a few, but the regrets are always there. I've always had the feeling that if somebody had my opportunities, they would have done lots better with it than I.

SCHWARZ: You're very modest.

ZISKIND: No, it isn't a question of modesty. It's a question of true fact. I could be going with stories all day. What's missing?

SCHWARZ: We have the history of your various agencies and you've talked about each one of them as we've gone along. But I do think we need to know a little bit specifically about the history of Gateways itself ...

ZISKIND: Yes, I will talk about that, it will be my pleasure. But I want to tell you that if I think of accomplishments, it's not the things that I've done for people and the certain circumstances I found them,

necessarily. The big obstacle, the big thing that I think, at least in a personal sense, is that I went up against bureaucracy, solid and big. These were some of the most influential people in the Federation. Without influence, after 13 years of knocking my head on the wall, I broke through. I got what I think is right.

To get to Gateways, let us understand some things; the times the nature of the times. One of our primary functions was to serve the people in the state hospital, the state mental hospitals. The average length of time that a Jewish patient was in the state hospital was nine plus years. Within four years, they lost contact with their families on the inside. Most families they're taking care of, they withdrew. They were locked away in public institutions, which had great difficulty treating them humanly. I don't say this with anger, I say it because I recognize the problems these institutions had. State hospitals then, as today, were not used as hospitals are now. They were used as the end result of people that they didn't know what to do with. There were no facilities in the community for treatment that these people could afford or could access. There were no agencies that would take them because mental illness in those days was a reason to refuse accepting a client. Jewish Family Service would not

accept a person that was mentally ill, and the home for the aging would not. That was the norm, not to accept them.

The only place left to dump these people was in the state hospital: the misfits, the trouble seekers and the desperately ill. They were bunched and put in the state hospital. If you went on a ward in a state hospital, it was ???. You weren on a disturbed ward, you could see people taking off their clothes, people defecating on things. It was not a nice thing. The best thing that the state hospital could do was to keep them in decent clothes, give them food and a ??. The ?? was another situation. Those that needed long-term care was another situation, those that needed short-term cares were another.

The tragedy of it was if you had mental illness and could not afford private care, regardless whether you were middle class, you went into a state hospital. Once those doors closed, you waited until a doctor said you were ready for a trial out in the community. That was our area of work. We would go in and get those who were ready for a trial. We'd take them out and we'd find them jobs, if we could. We'd find them housing and we counseled with them about their daily problems. To you, as I speak to a normal person, it would not be a big deal. We all have to do these things. But when you have a person that is so

handicapped that they cannot implement their best interest, they have to be grateful for whatever anybody was willing to do for them. This included the family. This included parents for children and children for parents and children amongst themselves.

The average family - and it is still a complaint today - what happens to my mentally ill child if I die? Who's going to take care of them? I'll tolerate them in the home, I'll do everything I can, but if I die, who's going to do it? Families, brother and sisters, if they're raising their own children, they're not quite sure if this mental illness is not familial in nature. It is not the kind of thing you can catch. They don't want them around their children, our children are growing up well and they don't want them associated with a mentally ill person who fears catching and they'll catch mental illness.

Whatever the reasons are, there are many, but the point of it is, the state hospitals perform a function, it is a hotel where people need care and there are no facilities in the community to give it to them. You talked a lot about ???. This to me is one of the great tragedies of our life. My big job was to go in there and convince the state hospital that I'm a responsible person and I will not exploit the patient when I take them out on leave.

They were so grateful for this, because there was nobody else around, that anytime I came to the state hospital, it was as though they were walking me through the flowers of spring.

The first place we got a good history on the patient. We developed a system: we had heavy postcards in those days, and when a Jewish patient came in, we got a penny postcard from Camarillo or whatever hospital was saying we admitted so and so on this date, here is his address. We would go to the address and talk to the family, see what resources they had and what happened. Get a history and we would come to the hospital with a 10-, 12-page history of the individual and of the family and the familial patterns. Sure they were glad to see us, otherwise they had to wait for a relative to come, if a relative came, or they had to depend on what the patient could tell them and the patient was irrational. This was a real service.

SCHWARZ: Oh, yes.

ZISKIND: I saw this and it bothered me. Fortunately, I have a brother who is a psychiatrist, a teacher. Taught a lot of the interns and the residents. He was the Chief of Psychology at Cedars, and he was Chief of Neurology and Psychology at Medical School at USC and General Hospital. He had years of experience and he taught me all the things,

all the things, the few things, precious few I heard about or dealt with in school, went out the door. It was more misinformation than information. But being close to my brother, I got the experience and he would take the time and trouble to explain it to me. I must tell you, when I went to Belmont High School and lived in Boyle Heights, the General Hospital was in-between. On my way home from high school, I'd stop off and see my brother. Not only my brother, but the superintendent had two kids and we played tennis together.

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: So I would come in when I could. My brother would say, "I have a clinic in epilepsy. Come and sit in and see me." I'd see epileptics, and I knew what to do with an epileptic when he was having a fit. Eugene would take me on his rounds and I would see this and see that. As a matter of fact, he began to realize I was interested in girls, and he took me to the syphilis wards (laughter). Okay the point is that I had an exceptionally good background. I knew what I was looking at, I knew the different points of the rule. I had my own prejudices. I still have them...

SCHWARZ: You're entitled.

ZISKIND: Yes, Eugene was one of the first in the community, and the only ones in the United States, that handles convulsive therapies commonly called shock treatments. He did a lot of research with it. He kept in touch with the research centers around the world so I would get to know a lot. I'd help him. I'd help him at the table getting the ???. I was his best gofer, go here, go there, and I did it. It was almost when I came into the system - it was more than just having feelings of pity, I was curious.

How can you improve the situation? Eugene was a great one in believing what we call rapid treatment program center: the reason some mental illnesses are recovered pretty rapidly, if you do certain things to do it. Now that had a ??? because if you went to the psychopathic court, which you had to go to if you didn't have any money, you went to General Hospital, and they put you in the psychopathic ward.

Some people, when they enter court in full blown symptoms, no doubt about their being psychotic, went into the state hospital. By the time they go into the state hospital, it would be a week or ten day later, the episode blows over and they would no longer be with symptoms, but they stayed in the hospital for nine years. There was no

place outside that they could get rapid treatment. So it didn't take much to realize that there was this big gap, let's have some rapid treatment.

We could see the patients instead of at General Hospital or in addition to General Hospital or before General Hospital saw them and determine if they are suitable for rapid treatment. Then we wouldn't send them over to the state hospital. We have a way station that would give the rapid treatment. The first name of the hospital that we thought of was Midway House. But there was a Midway House already, and they threatened to sue us if we took the name. Therefore, we had a raffle amongst our women's groups and they came up with the name The Gateways. That's how The Gateways idea got formed. Me, with Eugene's help and tutelage, drafted the whole program.

In 1941, I first came up with a plan and presented it to the United Way mental health section, and they were delighted. So I said I'm just going to go for it. I can't, without influence, with no base for financial and a hatred for fundraising, no knowledge of fundraising. What would I do? I showed it to Rabbi Mayor, he says, "It's a very good thing, but I don't think you'll be able to get it through Federation." Talk to my board of directors, they didn't know what the hell I was talking about. I had to

educate them. It's like a dog with a bone, I was wearing that bone, I wasn't ready to drop it. I kept it, going through obstacle after obstacle, coming back being disappointed.

When I first came to work at the Jewish Community, Rabbi Magnum used to say to me, "Ziskind, whenever you talk about something, think about it. Putting your mind to only one or two ideas, three at the most. Come to those three ideas and stop, get off. I'll tell you something that came from my depth of experience, if you're a lousy speaker, you're not interesting, you're boring, the fact that you get off quick is in your favor because the scene changes keeps the interest of people. What's next, says what you have to say and get off." The fact is that he never followed his own advice (laughter). The fact is that as I got older, I couldn't follow his advice anymore, because the memories got in on me.

SCHWARZ: (Laughter)

ZISKIND: Nevertheless, I saw them. Another thing, I said to the Rabbi when I came in, in the early days, mostly, we went into the hospitals and met the comforts of the patient. We were bringing them matzo ball soup, and we would bring them pungent sandwiches...

SCHWARZ: Jewish food.

ZISKIND: Jewish food basically. Sure people like it, but you weren't doing anything for the people. Matzo ball soup wasn't soon enough and we had forgotten egg salad. We'd bring them cigarettes but the ???. So I went to Magnum and I said, "Rabbi I'm a social worker, what did I go to social work for if I'm to run errands - only to bring them these things? I want to do something." He says, "I have a suggestion: go to my wife, Evelyn, and tell her to help you raise a group for women." Incidentally, there are always women on the board of Jewish Community for Personal Service and those women were the core that made up the food stuff that we brought to the hospital. Baskets of this and baskets of that. But there were none that really go into the operation of the agency.

He says, "You go to Evelyn and tell her to help you develop a support group, a social support group of women." I went to her, and she very graciously helped me out. We saw through, we canvassed by letter and follow up, only temples in the community. The response was excellent. We got a large number of women. There was a wonderful lady, her husband was a federal judge, the only Jewish federal judge of his day, ? Rosencranz (sp). Her husband - and she was a very wonderful lady. I don't know if you know her...

SCHWARZ: I never knew her, but I heard a lot about her.

ZISKIND: She was a Dutch girl; Jewish, but from Netherlands. She was the epitome of refinement. You came into her house like this, it was something to look at, very lovely. She would spread a table and women would want to come just to see what she did. Her husband died in an accident, and years later, she developed a very successful business, a party, arrangements and things like that.

SCHWARZ: Yes.

ZISKIND: We opened it up and the first response we had close to 300-400 women...

SCHWARZ: Wow!

ZISKIND: ...signed up. Of course our objective was to have fundraising. I hate fundraising, I don't feel comfortable at it. But nevertheless, these women made a ?? out of me. I saw what could be done and they did it. I saw what that money did. In the first place, it was the first moneys that I didn't have to worry about how I spent. I could spend it for administration, I could spend it for my things that ordinarily you would say money's scarce, so I better not put it in there. We'd put away - my mother always taught me, you make a little salary, you put a little bit away. Just take it, you don't know when it's going to come in handy, but it will come in handy...

SCHWARZ: Always save some.

Tape 3

ZISKIND: One of these days, sit down, and if not, write the history, I'll write an anecdotal stories about the old timers and what happened.

SCHWARZ: Well if you don't want to write it you can dictate it on tape.

ZISKIND: Yes, but I have a certain block on dictation.

SCHWARZ: Oh, (laughter) so the other's easier.

ZISKIND: Yes, so I don't know. I'm now looking for somebody who would do it as a volunteer. I finally decided, after the last five or six years of experimenting, that I had better do it in something I know and I like ? in mental health. I have gone through the State Department of Corrections, local county ?.

The question really resolves itself is how much time do I want to give. It's difficult and now, as a matter of fact tomorrow, I do some things of mine. Very busy talking to these departments. All of them want ?? like me because of me, but they want my background and training in a variety of ways. I'm trying to figure what makes sense, not to get overwhelmed.

SCHWARZ: Just please remember that if you had papers that would be of interest to future generations, send them down

to the archives. We just want you to remember that one thing. We are very grateful for your time and...

ZISKIND: I don't think they're that good (laughter).