



INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY JOHNSON – September 26, 2012

Our State of Generosity, a project of the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy (JCP) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), in partnership with the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF), Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA), Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC), and GVSU Libraries' Special Collections & University Archives present:

An interview with Dorothy Johnson on September 26, 2012. Conducted by Kathryn Agard, primary author and interviewer for *Our State of Generosity*. Recorded at the Johnson Center for Philanthropy in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This interview is part of a series in the project, *Our State of Generosity* (OSoG). OSoG is a partnership of scholars, practitioners, and funders from four institutions – the Johnson Center; CMF; MNA; and MCSC – that collectively form the backbone of the state's philanthropic, voluntary, and nonprofit infrastructure. OSoG's mission is to capture, preserve, analyze, and share the developments, achievements, and experience that, over a period of 40 years, made Michigan a State of Generosity.

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Abridged: The following interview has been edited to assist readability. Extraneous verbal pauses and informal personal conversation not related to the topic of Michigan philanthropy have been deleted. Footnotes to the transcript have been added clarifying any factual errors in the memory of the person interviewed.

Text of the interview questions are as asked. Individuals interviewed have had the opportunity to add or edit their answers in order to provide their most accurate answers to the questions. For these reasons, the edited transcript may not exactly reflect the recorded interview.

Kathy Agard (KA): The first question is, just kind of in a narrative form. If you were talking to a friend over dinner and somebody asked you, tell us the story of the founding of CMF and the early years. Who is involved? Why did they get together? Just kind of tell us the story. It was 1969 when the Tax Act passed and what was going on?

Dorothy Johnson (DJ): Well, the creation of the Michigan Council on Foundations is very interesting. I think the seeds of it happened really almost when foundations were created and the need to collaborate, the need to talk, and the need to compare notes. But it was the 1969 Tax Reform Act that really put things into motion. Because if you think of a tax act, you really have

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some people say two thirds of that tax act pertain to private foundations. There was a meeting about that time [00:01:00] that was called by Bill Baldwin of the Kresge Foundation and such at Meadowbrook. I was not there. Ironically my brother-in-law, Paul Johnson, was there representing the Loutit Foundation and they talked about the need for forming perhaps an association but certainly telling their story better. Then it was in late 1971 that Russ Mawby, then the CEO of the Kellogg Foundation, took matters in his own hands and convened a group of people. It involved Howard Kalleward from the Kalamazoo Foundation. From Kresge, it was then Ted Taylor who was the executive VP. Fremont Area Foundation, it was Ted Johnson and Dick Bell. John Hunting from Dyer-Ives and his colleague Sophia Gorham were part of that. Also Jim Kettler from the DeWaters Charitable Trust. They met and decided “Well, we’ll have a conference,” which they did [00:02:00]. That was in February of 1972. It was in Ann Arbor. There were probably 70 or 80 people that were there. Ironically, I was there then as a trustee of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation. It was really quite exciting. I recall sitting between Harding Mott and Stanley Kresge who were behind this. They were interested in defending ourselves. They were interested in learning more. We were all interested in increasing philanthropy.

Out of that meeting - in fact I was asked to join the steering committee, then quite young, and a woman from a small foundation. We met then under the leadership of Russ Mawby and Leonard White, who was a senior VP at the Kellogg Foundation and formed the Association. Sophia Gorham was [00:03:00] asked to be the executive secretary, which she did for 15 hours a week, and they started to build a membership base. A couple of years later - and I was on the board at that point- a couple of years later they decided to change the name from the Conference of Michigan Foundations. Oh, I'm forgetting one key point. The second annual conference we had Martha Griffiths, who then Congresswoman Martha Griffiths, was on Ways and Means come in and speak. She absolutely tore the foundation community to shreds. “You're not paying out enough money, you're not telling your story, where's this going? You're just a bunch of fat cats.” That is when we knew we really had to get moving. So the name was changed to the Council of Michigan Foundations a couple of years later and our first chair was Russ Mawby followed by Leonard Wright, followed by Gil Hudson. I know you have that long list of wonderful people. About that time [00:04:00] Sophia indicated she was going to be moving and asked if anyone on the board was interested in becoming the executive secretary. I raised my hand. Years later the title got changed, Executive Director, president. But anyway, the Council was off and running. How much more would you like on history?

(KA): No, that’s good. Dottie what was the tone? What were the folks like who were at the table? I remember you telling a wonderful story after Martha Griffiths spoke about Dick that I think captures the positive energy rather than the whininess.

(DJ): That was going to be one of my stories, so I'll keep going. It was interesting at the second annual conference after Martha Griffiths spoke, Congressman Martha Griffiths, again ripped us to shreds. We heard the story [00:05:00]. .We knew we had a lot of good things to say and Dick



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Throne from the Strosacker Foundation in Midland, he was 6'6", he stood up and said, "Well it seems to me we best get cracking." There was a real camaraderie as I think perhaps at that conference. Herb Dow was there. Ranny Reicker was there. Bill White, who was Harding Mott's son-in-law had joined the board. I mean the list of philanthropists in the state of Michigan and these were the people either donating the funds or family of the donors who really cared about what the mission was and to get the story straight.

(KA): One of the things I was struck with when I talked with John Hunting was how young you all were. Everybody was in there what mid-30s, early-30s, enough experience that they brought experience [00:06:00] to the job, but really a generational piece, there were lots of people all about the same generation.

(DJ): We were all relatively young, it's all relative right? But there was a real spirit of can do, there was a spirit of "We are a strong state". At that point I think Michigan had, we were third in the nation following New York and Texas maybe California in the number and the size of the philanthropies. We'd faced issues before, they wanted to face it again. We had CEOs of the companies as the years went on. Carl Gerstacker, CEO of Dow Chemical got involved, Ted Doan. I can go right around the stay and name you the major companies. The automotive companies were all involved and it was like, "We can do this."

(KA): Did you know at the time that it was going turn into a lifelong career and this wonderful thing it's turned into? [00:07:00]

(DJ): Well my own involvement, it came at a perfect time for me. I was 32 and I had decided that with two young children home, I decided the next thing I did that I really liked I was going to stick with it. I was doing a lot, a lot of volunteer work and it just so happened I was invited to this conference and thoroughly enjoyed the mission. You would find that the people were generalists, they were not tooting their own horn, and they wanted to work together for the common good.

(KA): It was just sort of a fun time. Life takes you. You didn't start out to become the President of the Council of Michigan Foundations. I said that our graduate students all the time you just don't know where life is going take you. Let's, so that we have them on record, walk through the major initiatives. What I like to do is give a little snippet of the background of each of them and maybe then [00:08:00] connect why they're important. How did they come about, what were they and why are they important to the field? I will read them off so you don't have to worry about them. The first one was built on RAGS on the Hill. I know it has changed names but I am old-fashioned. I know it you know what I mean by that.

(DJ): CMF had many important initiatives and in some cases we were first in the nation. One of these was visits to Washington DC and this really grew out of "Let's get cracking." When in 1977, the Council of Michigan Foundations led a delegation of only Michigan people led by Bill White,



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who was then the chair of the Council of Michigan Foundations board. We went to Washington to call on Congress and our senators [00:09:00]. At that point, I believe we met with 10 of our congressmen. They were sort of interested in seeing us but didn't altogether understand the issues that we were talking about were the payout. The payout was proposed as high as almost 7% at one point and today of course, it is at 5%. There was an excise tax on private foundations at 4% and it was considerably too high. The monies were going back into the general tax base. Today it is 2% and in some cases 1%, but that took a lot of work. But it was Bill White who led the charge and I will never forget running in the bowels of the capital between the Senate and the House literally through the basement with the pipes.

But over the years, other regional associations, and there are many fine ones, saw the value of all of this and then the Council on Foundations [00:10:00] adopted the program, named it the Regional Association of Grantmakers on the Hill or RAGS on the Hill and today there are almost 300 people that make that visit. It has proven to be extremely valuable to have local people talking about what they've done, the value, and frankly the issues that they have as well. It is something that CMF is extremely proud of.

(KA): Did you have trouble getting people motivated to go? Did they mind acting in public policy? Were they reluctant to go? Were they interested in talking to the representatives?

(DJ): We had no trouble getting people to go. They paid all of their own expenses. We did turn it into something a little bit fun. We would always have a dinner the night before, do the onslaught. We met at different clubs for lunch to compare notes and it was very healthy. I'll never forget [00:11:00] Congressman David Camp, who is now Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. This was when Ranny Reicker had been chair, and we were in Washington, we had lunch at the Capitol Hill Club and we had met him earlier in the morning, all making our calls in many different places, and he said, “Well I might join you for lunch.” Well he came running into the Capitol Hill Club to have lunch. He said, “I was elected, I was elected to House Ways and Means”. He was so excited he paid for lunch. But today, he is Chairman of House Ways and Means. So those long-lasting relationships have paid off with the understanding of our government leaders.

(KA): Yes, he's got a deep understanding of what happens then. So then, Exxon was next? Maybe you could chat a little bit about being opportunistic.

(DJ): [00:12:00] The Council of Michigan Foundations and the mission was to improve and increase philanthropy at that time and there were restitution funds that were made to the state by various in sundry groups. The first one that CMF was involved with was Exxon and it was highlighted by Miriam Noland, who continues to be president of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan. She learned of this and when she, went to obtain the funds, realized that a statewide approach was needed. She came to the Council of Michigan Foundations. She was an active member. The community foundations were very interested in participating and what



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that meant then was that these restitution funds were, there was a competition and they were divided. I believe it was about \$3 million. But that set a relationship with the state to show how you could be equitable [00:13:00] in getting these kinds of resources to all citizens. The programs itself were very exciting. They were energies efficiencies in schools and community service buildings. It was very worthwhile.

(KA): As far as my understanding is, that was the first time the members used CMF as a joint funding vehicle, right? Did you recognize at the time it was a shift that was being made?

(DJ): When you talk about CMF as a joint funding initiative, Exxon was first. And no, I think we rolled out the carpet at CMF and members and board members particularly felt very open to bring any and all ideas at that point, to view the practicality of it, and to see the long-term hope really for those efforts.

(KA): One of the things I'm writing about is [00:14:00] that I think there is a sort of “Make it up as you go along” quality, which is really good. Being open to having things, as they come up be just “okay, well, we could do that.”

(DJ): CMF definitely had a “Make it as you go along” quality about it. The people were pleased to be involved. It was a team effort.

(KA): And they owned it probably. So then we wandered into the Community of Michigan Foundation’s Youth Project. That was a project rather large by itself. Tell us about the beginnings of that and what happened with that.

(DJ): The Michigan Community Foundation Youth Project (MCFYP) started in 1988, but probably a year or two before that, Jack Hopkins, who was on the board of CMF and was president of the Kalamazoo Foundation said to the board, said to those of us on staff, “You know what you need? We need three things to really grow the movement for community foundations in the state. We need some funds for technical assistance to help ourselves, we need secondly, a large challenge grant to motivate all the citizens in the state [00:17:00] and third, we need a tax credit for contributions to community foundations.” Jack had been president of a college and knew about that tax credit of course for our universities and colleges. Well it sounded good to everyone and we went to work on it. The first thing, not the first but one of many things that we did, was to take a delegation to the Kellogg Foundation. At that point, Ted Johnson was the chair of the Council of Michigan Foundations, Miriam Noland and perhaps a couple of others and we met with then CEO Russ Mawby and Pete Ellis, the program director. We laid out the needs and the potential for community foundations. They listened very attentively, asked many questions, didn't make any promises and as we were leaving, the CEO Russ Mawby said to us, think about what you can do for youth. [00:18:00].



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That was the beginning. So we went back to the drawing board and designed an incredible program, I believe, that has been replicated many places throughout the United States and the world, whereby Kellogg ultimately offered a package of technical assistance, the Mott Foundation also chimed in on all of that, but the major challenge grant, the community would raise \$2 million. \$1 million would be given from the Kellogg Foundation to that community and had to be permanent and it had to be for youth and had to have a youth committee composed of a diverse section of your student population, ideally from junior high through high school. They had to volunteer¹, they had to have a staff. There were many requirements. But anyone and everyone could participate. That was really the beginning of covering the entire state of Michigan [00:19:00] with community foundations. I remember getting calls from people saying, you mean, all we have to do is raise \$2 million dollars and we'll get \$1 million? Well I said there's a little bit more than that, but we staffed up to do that. Kathy Agard was the very first person on the road. She will have to tell you the war stories.

(KA): There were a lot of spinoffs happened from MCFYP and a lot of problems arose that were solved. Can you talk a little bit about again, this sort of what it was like on the ground to be reacting to real situations that would come up. I mean calling Kellogg and being able to say, adjust this. I think one of the strengths that Joel and I have talked about was the fact that they were willing to be so flexible. Can you talk a little bit about, you know, we were in uncharted territory at that point. What it takes from a funders point of view? [00:20:00]

(DJ): In dealing with the Michigan Community Foundation Youth Project because it could not overshadow all of the programming of CMF. We still had to have, and did have, an active corporate program and an active private foundation, family foundation, independent foundation program and of course, all the pieces that went with that, but because it was a major piece, because it got the attention of legislators and community leaders throughout the state, there were wrinkles that happened along the way. Again, the Kellogg Foundation, particularly Joel Orosz, who was our program director, was very open to listen to the issues. He challenged us on how to do things, how to make permanent what we were doing, how to involve the right people and again, the spirit was very healthy. Our board [00:21:00] consisted of people from CEOs to program directors, sort of up and down the food chain of philanthropy and certainly donors. No one played the card of, “I have a superior position to another.” It was always, “let's just get this done.” People were very proud of this initiative, which continues today. We have had more than, we have given back all the money that Kellogg ever granted and there have been more than 2000 young people that have gone through this program. I expect that they will be legislators, they are certainly aids right now, CEOs of companies, teachers, physicians, but they all have that ethic of service and giving.

(KA): Out of that came the tax credit. So tell us about trying to get a tax credit and doing it successfully. That was the third rail [00:22:00] of Jack's suggestion.



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(DJ): Yes. In terms of the third rail and the community foundation tax credit, we really balanced it off what we knew was already going on in public radio, public TV, universities. Food banks were coming along about the same time and we thought we really are going to go do this. Again, because we had coverage over the entire state, we had people that knew legislators that could make this happen. Governor Blanchard was governor at the time and he took a real interest in this and was very supportive. That was a huge help in what we were trying to do. Of course, the state had many more resources at that time too, which was very attractive. But the other reality was the credibility that was obtained with the major community foundation grant from Kellogg. Kellogg gave those funds to the Council of Michigan Foundations [00:23:00] to regrant, so I signed the checks for \$1 million at a crack and because of staff signing that, people listened to what we had to say, they listened to all of us, they listened to our staff.

They listened to Kathy and later to Jim McHale as they made suggestions, so that whole credibility piece and again the Kellogg Foundation was very supportive of building the Regional Association, building sustainability at the same time as building the program. Well legislators took note of that and when we proposed the tax credit, they were very supportive. One little sidebar story was that knowing that there would be some pushback from other nonprofits, we talked about the community foundations being the savings account of the community and that United Ways and the individual charities were the checking account. Well I took to lunch the CEO at the time [00:24:00] of the United Way of Michigan and told him exactly what we were going to do and how we had hoped to do it. His response to me was “oh, we tried that. Good luck. You won't have any luck.” Out of that, he was very irritated when we did get it, but as I said, we told you what we were going to do and so why don't you set up funds within the individual community foundations for the benefit of your United Way's and they will be able to receive that tax credit. In the end, because community foundations serve the entire population, everyone was a winner.

(KA): When they said “you couldn't do it” that was a red flag in front of Dottie. If you think we can't do it, you just watch us.

(DJ): I have to add that Rick Cole, who was an aide to Governor Blanchard was just very, [00:25:00] very helpful to us as we were working through this. Recently I saw Governor Blanchard in Washington DC and he came up to me and said how is that tax credit doing? Well unfortunately, we've lost it, but hopefully it's just temporary.

(KA): It may come back. So there was a start of, to go back into the period, real fear and no understanding of the AIDS crisis. It was coming into the Midwest from having been a real crisis on the coast. Can you talk a little bit about how in the world CMF ever got involved in the AIDS issue?

(DJ): Interesting to know how the Council of Michigan Foundations got involved with AIDS, actually, from two different directions and again being entrepreneurial and being opportunistic.



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Bill White, CEO of the Mott Foundation, who had been a board chair of CMF and very respected [00:26:00] in the state, called me and indicated that he was interested in helping the AIDS epidemic, particularly in the Flint area, but didn't necessarily want to make a big public splash about it and would there be a way that CMF could be helpful in expediting those funds? Well, I happen to know at the same time I was having conversations with some program officers and individual foundations who were very interested in funding in the arena, but weren't quite sure how to approach it. It wasn't spot on with their particular priorities, so they talked to me about this. It was Barbara Getz, Glenn Kosick and several others. The light when on and I said to Bill, “I think there will be a way to do this.” So convening all of the partners, they were very supportive of starting this as a supporting [00:27:00] organization to the Council of Michigan Foundations. They had their own board, ultimately the CMF board had to approve the grants. They did their own fundraising but it was a group of grantmakers who saw the need and wanted to proceed.

(KA): Dottie, this is one of the examples that CMF had funding for it. It was a cutting-edge, if you will, social issue that had a lot of interest and yet CMF gave it away. Can you talk a little bit about why CMF, most organizations would hold onto every single piece that they had ever created, so tell me a little bit about the ethic of spinning things off.

(DJ): CMF has been an incubator for many good things that have happened in the state, Michigan Campus Compact [00:28:00], Michigan Nonprofit Association, the Economic Alliance, Michigan AIDS Fund and it was because grantmakers were interested. I would honestly say it was easier to get the seed capital and when you saw the multiple interest, they thought would be sustained. But it was never intended that the Council of Michigan Foundations would be the permanent home of any of these projects. With the Michigan AIDS Fund, it came to a point where the control of the disease is greater, certainly it's not finished, it was important to spin that off and to still be supportive financially as well as with governance, but it was time.

(KA): Good. So now can you unlock for us the history of grantmakers/grantseeker, which the records are really sparse [00:29:00] about. If you could start back to how did the idea ever happen and where did it end up. That the piece of history we really need to fill in and you know it so we really need to have you talk about it.

(DJ): The grantmakers/grantseeker conferences, it's very interesting how that relationship started and where it went. One day I got a call from Pete Ellis, who was the program director that the Kellogg Foundation. He said Dottie when you're in Detroit I would like to take you for lunch. Well, of course, you respond to members. So we went to lunch. He said to me, “I have been observing that there is a certain tension between grantseekers and grantmakers and I think there's something we might be able to do with that.” He said “if I were able to convince the Kellogg Foundation to make me a release time executive for year, would the [00:30:00] Council of Michigan Foundations board think that was a good idea?” Well, I was elated. I said, “Pete, immediately I will call our chair. Consider it done.” So Pete Ellis came on board and he did a lot of



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investigation. This was probably 1988. By 1989 we had our first grantmaker/grantseeker conference. There were over 1200 people and there were obviously probably 200 to 300 grantmakers, because the numbers don't pan out, but Peter Ellis was the beginning of that. This was before the Association for Nonprofits in the state of Michigan, MNA existed, CMF ran that conference for two years. It was a huge success, the topics were relevant. They were able to see how people could help each other [00:31:00] and it worked.

(KA): And then what happened to it?

(DJ): Grantmaker/grantseeker then continued, once MNA was created, to be a joint partnership of MNA and CMF and over the years that has taken on different purposes, different lives. The 40th annual conference of the Council of Michigan Foundations and the Michigan Nonprofit Association, which is coming up in October of this year, is an example of where that has evolved to.

(KA): Thank you. We now have it on the record and clear. It's been really a murky one for us. The other ones we can run through a little more quickly but if you want to talk a minute about FIMS and just continue to take one at a time so that is not too much to try to remember.

(DJ): When you run projects, things evolve that people need [00:32:00]. There was a real spirit and interest to collaborate within the Council of Michigan Foundations within all of the associations, but particularly with our members dealing with community foundations. Out of that grew the Foundation Information Management System. We called it FIMS which had to do with the computer. That program has evolved here in 2012 a whole new rendition of it. Kathy Agard was extremely involved in investigating which kind of software to use, there were all kinds of task forces but again, the collaboration and joining the financial resources was very important.

(KA): And then the Great Lakes Protection Fund. Now we are getting to the end probably of your term at CMF, right?

(DJ): Yes. The Great Lakes Protection Fund was really the idea and the vision of Rob Collier², the current CEO of the Council of Michigan Foundations. They were a group of foundations in the Chicago area, in and around Lake Michigan, that formed this collaborative, [00:33:00], grants were made, it expanded beyond just Michigan and Chicago. Once again, a joint interest, we made it easy, we had all of the administrative systems, we didn't charge anything. It worked.

(KA): So two questions about that. One is, I remember at the time there was real concern by the community foundations about tackling the environment, that their donors might flee, that there was real concern about that. Do you remember about that controversy and how it got, and in the end it turned out being wonderful, but how that ended up working its way through the Council?



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(DJ): You know definitely there were controversies from time to time. I recall the one when we talked about the environment and certain foundations had one opinion and others, but CMF really used conferences and information and steady communication on the issue because basically [00:34:00] there was, if you wonder why CMF is successful, there was respect for each other's opinions.

(KA): You're headed down the road that's my second question. As I have looked at the way these have worked, and again I don't know if it's a conscious strategy, but it appears to me that all of the project ideas came from one person, a study was done to see what is going on, a group was put together and then action was taken. Can you, I want to get at, what were the process pieces that someone would take in your kind of a spot, when you are leading a big multifaceted people of very divergent points of view. How you were able to pull these things together and make them more, can you walk through – so I call you up and I say, “Dottie I'm really interested in going to the moon, or really interested in teaching kids K-12 philanthropy education.” What were the internal steps you would take?

(DJ): It is interesting because [00:35:00] our members had an idea a minute, which was all good and we listened. I listened, the whole staff listened, the board certainly listened, but to have anything reach the level of starting a MCFYP or an AIDS Fund or the environmental collaborative, it usually came from one person who had an idea. What I would say to them, I would listen and I could fairly well tell if it would fly with our board. I had a couple of failures, but that's another subject.

In terms of how we proceeded, I would ask the person to put their request in writing. This was, in many cases, before computers. So they would put that in writing and we would gather support, take it to a board committee, take it to the board, but we operated quickly. There were not a lot of hoops [00:36:00] to go through and again, people called each other, we had frequent meetings where they explored ideas and so it was really quite effective. I think of Michigan Campus Compact, John Marshall, who was then the VP at the Kresge Foundation, had seen that idea work well in the East and wanted to bring the program to Michigan. Rather than immediately starting another nonprofit, he brought it to CMF and once again, our funders, our members, there were schools and colleges throughout the state, they were interested. They were interested in philanthropy and volunteerism and how to build a service ethic. So it all tied in to this general theme of enhancing, of our state in enhancing philanthropy.

(KA): You often brought in all kinds of people. How did you go about selecting those first early groups [00:37:00] that you would put into a room all together just to hash it out? How did you go about picking them Dottie?

(DJ): Yeah we had great fun because we tried to get the players that cared about the issue and some that didn't care but should care. We used common sense, we used invitations, we used



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members to invite members. I mean who's gonna turn down a request from the Mott Foundation to attend a meeting and to share ideas? That was all valuable.

(KA): Is there anything else about the CMF initiatives that you would want to say?

(DJ): Are you covering the Branding Project or Learning to Give?

(KA): Yes, why don't you talk a little bit about that.

(DJ): I'll do that quickly. It's interesting with the community foundation movement we had the computer initiative but then probably the major initiative that grew out of the collaborations of our community foundation members was what we call a branding project [00:38:00]. Diana Sieger led the charge from the Grand Rapids Foundation and today you've heard the phrase “For Good, Forever,” you will hear it all over the country and that grew out of the seeds of our members interest in joining forces.

They employed the Williams Group here in Grand Rapids and that was a two-year effort. That worked out very well. And then Learning to Give, one of my personal passions, that actually grew out of, you see how these things connect? It grew out of the Michigan Community Foundation Youth Project when we realized that many of the youth we really had hoped would be involved in the project, hardly knew what the word philanthropy meant. They hardly knew what the word meant and consequently we could see the need to educate. At that point there was a green light group. Cal Patterson from Michigan Bell at the time, led that effort and there were several of us [00:39:00] that were surrounding the need for Learning to Give. An incredible curriculum was developed, Kathy Agard launched the charge and now we are very close to being national. I'm going to save all of that for you to talk about.

(KA): Dottie one of the things that I think we should capture is that these were not designed to be national, so you think about MCFYP, you think about the branding project think about FIMS, that we didn't start those to become national projects. I mean they really weren't. So can you talk a little bit about how things in Michigan developed and then how they ended up being national models?

(DJ): It is interesting that the seeds of these projects [00:40:00] that the Council of Michigan Foundations undertook, several of them have become national if not international efforts. That wasn't our intent in the beginning, but with the other regional associations and the national associations, the Council on Foundations, there was just interest. Frankly, we learned from them too and used many of their fine ideas, but they say the greatest sense of flattery is when you take an idea from someone else and that's in fact what happened.



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(KA): Let's talk a little bit about the Michigan infrastructure organizations and we started with the CMF history because we knew it was at the bottom of the creation of all the other organizations. So let's talk about, you started to talk a little bit about Campus Compact and we did interview John about Campus Compact, is there anything else that you want to say about it relative [00:41:00] to CMF's role? Let me ask it this way, what was CMF's role in the development of Campus Compact?

(DJ): Okay, John Marshall brought the idea of the Campus Compact to CMF and the members loved it because most of them had a university or college in their neighborhood, they were supporting it, they loved the idea of service and it was a good fit. CMF was home to that for about two years and then they were strong enough to go on their own and did. Our members were very supportive of that. Alternately they became part of the Michigan Nonprofit Association but even when they were independent, we continued to be helpful.

(KA): And then, we don't have much about the founding of the Michigan Nonprofit Association. Can you tell us about how did that come about?

(DJ): With the Michigan Nonprofit Association, which was incorporated in 1990, [00:42:00] but we had talked about that and the need for it at the Council of Michigan Foundations board really for three or four years. You know you take Grantmaker/Grantseeker, you take the projects, they needed their own “Association.” There was a very fine one in Minnesota, there were others in North Carolina, and we could see that that would be an important value, so members funded a study. This was housed in the Council of Michigan Foundations.

But before that, the real seeds for the record, out of the debate that I had had with the United Way director, I was in the shower and I thought “this is ridiculous. We should all be part of an association. We should be talking to each other, we should be collaborating on tax credits for more people, we should get sound tax policy [00:43:00] that would benefit the citizens of the State of Michigan.” So I went to Russ Mawby, who was CEO of the Kellogg Foundation and said “Russ, I see this need and I know others do as well. Frankly, we need your clout to convene people.” Russ added the piece of having the board chair, as well as the CEO involved to participate and the first meeting was held at the Kellogg Foundation. We have a wonderful picture of that and it is going strong. It has not stopped since. It really, we'll be celebrating the 20th anniversary, we feel very good about where it's that, what's been accomplished and CMF felt terrific and over the years there has been more collaboration on research, certainly on public policy and increasing philanthropy.

(KA): So MNA [00:44:00] wasn't incubated at CMF, it was launched by CMF. It started out independent, but from CMF's interests in making sure that that happened.



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(DJ): Yes, CMF was involved in about 1990 they did not incorporate until '92 and I know that you will have, if you want to include, I can go through names of people, but...

(KA): No, we got them from Kyle but I wanted to make sure that I had the CMF piece of it, so that's good to know, that relationship. Then the Michigan Community Service Commission which you helped to launch and then went on to grander scales at the national level. Tell us about that.

(DJ): As we know there is a Corporation for National and Community Service which was a national program started under the administration of President Clinton and that required that you have state commissions. Michelle, Governor Engler was in office and Michelle Engler decided that she would accept the leadership [00:45:00] of that initiative and she did one incredible job. Joel Orosz, thankfully, program director at the Kellogg Foundation, work hand-in-hand with her to get that established and in order to obtain national funds, you needed a state commission and I was honored to be involved on that first board, Julie Cummings was involved, there were several grantmakers and nonprofit's leaders, but Michelle Engler really took this quite seriously and accomplished a great deal in those early years.

(KA): Talk a little bit about your service on the corporate board and, from a national perspective, you, I'm going to talk a little bit more about this, but you were wearing two hats, you were wearing a national hat as a corporate trustee and then you were wearing the Michigan hat in that you had been part of the founding of the Michigan Commission. Tell me how Michigan looks [00:46:00] when you are looking at it from the national hat.

(DJ): I served on the Michigan Commission for my full term of nine years, but during that time I was asked if I had an interest in serving on the national board, which I did, and I was appointed originally by President Clinton, reappointed by President Bush and served almost 10 years. I have no doubt it wasn't me personally, it was the fact that Michigan had such a model program. They were interested in learning more about that, how it worked, what our issues were, how we solve them, which we did. So it went hand-in-hand and I was very proud to represent Michigan.

(KA): Volunteer Centers of Michigan and Gov. Romney.

(DJ): Oh, we all know and loved Governor George Romney and he believed in volunteer centers. I think I was joined at the hip [00:47:00] with him for several years as we drove nearly every byway of the State of Michigan. As you know, he believed in that every town or city needed a volunteer center, just like they have a post office. So we worked hand-in-hand and collaborated with that effort. Ultimately they were a solo organization and then they joined the Michigan Nonprofit Association. But the roots of that collaboration with our members started at the Council of Michigan Foundations.



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(KA): I said to Paula that he bullied us all into doing it. He was so enthusiastic. The center here, what happened with both IU Center and the launching of the Center on Philanthropy at Grand Valley?

(DJ): You know, centers of philanthropy are incredible and doing absolutely outstanding work but in the beginning there weren't any. The [00:48:00] first vision came from Bob Payton of Indiana University. The first vision came from Bob Payton. The IU Center was fortunate in having substantial funding from the Lilly Endowment focused on Indiana, but with a national perspective. It became a national voice.

Again, the leadership of the Kellogg Foundation and Russ Mawby, the vision said “why don't we have something similar in the state of Michigan?” So Russ asked of Council of Michigan Foundations, again a member, asking the associations if we would sponsor a conference, which we did in Lansing, for every college, university, community college, we invited the president and the idea was to express the vision of the centers and what could be achieved.

Brian O'Connell who was then CEO of Independent Sector spoke [00:49:00], we had people from IU speaking and the vision was thrown out. Interestingly, I lead a session there on what kind of research could be done and I was thrilled, the room was packed when I walked in and I was looking at all of these faculty members thinking, “they're undertaking research to help the nonprofit sector.” Wrong. There were three in the room who were doing that. The other 80 were there to seek funding, so we knew we had an issue with that, but the Kellogg Foundation threw out the initiative to all the universities. We had the president and usually a Dean or a Provost there and Grand Valley with the leadership of President Don Lubbers, submitted the best proposal to create this. The University at that point, I think they put in \$500,000 back then to get this launched [00:50:00]. It has been almost 20 years and it has been highly, highly successful. Other schools in the state have an individual professor or maybe two within a department that are talking about similar issues but is not nearly the comprehensive program. Today the GVSU center is, I would say one of the top three in the nation. I like to think it's second, but...

(KA): And different from the others.

(DJ): And doing very well.

(KA): And then Connect Michigan Alliance. For me the miracle of the Connect Michigan Alliance is the \$20 million endowment. I mean, how that ever got raised is just a miracle. Tell us how in the world did you raise \$20 million before something even existed for endowment?

(DJ): You know, the partners in the nonprofit sector thought it's time that we have some endowment [00:51:00] to sustain this work because our members knew that this could not continue forever and ever, so at that time, the State of Michigan also had many more resources.



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They were flush. So we proposed to the State of Michigan that if they put up a \$10 million challenge grant, we would go out and raise a matching \$10 million and it would be housed for the benefit of the Michigan Nonprofit Association’s programming which included everything that we have talked about, Grantmaker/Grantseeker, public policy etc., research. Well, the members listened. I recall going out to the Mott Foundation, or excuse me, I recall going out to the Dow Foundation and meeting with Ted Doane, with Bill Richardson who was then the CEO of the Kellogg Foundation. It was the easiest hit we ever had.

(KA): I think so [00:52:00]. It's just that you used the networks to be able to do and really the vision. It was a vision right, people were attracted to the vision and what it could be.

(DJ): With this initiative, people were really attracted to the vision and the sustainability and they had seen what had been accomplished in the past and had great expectations for the future.

(DJ): Is there anything more that you would like expanded upon?

(KA): No, you did a great job. That's exactly what we need. What I'm trying to get at with some of this is [00:53:00] and I'll ask you a second off-the-wall question or two, is to me, when I look, for example when I look from Michigan to Ohio, there is a spirit in Michigan of cooperation and collaboration that I think other states would like to emulate, where people are fighting with each other instead. Can you talk a little bit about, is it in the water? How do we get to this, so reflect on your part, how do we get to this place where people are basically cooperative. Things come up, but people work them out, they don't get into real glitches over them, they just try to call each other on it. Did it just happen that way? Was it a tone that was set, or tone that was inherited. How did we end up with the state that works really quite well together?

(DJ): I have speculated as time goes on why CMF and MNA and frankly [00:54:00] the whole state collaborated so well with our members in philanthropy. I think part of it was the time, time in history, but I also think there was similar passions among people. We were all going in the same direction, we weren't pulling apart, there was mutual respect for all points of view and listening. But we all knew how to bring closure, to strike a deal, get it done and move on. There was recognition that every organization has something in it that we could benefit from and that everyone could succeed. I would also say that overlapping board service was very important. [00:55:00]

(KA): Dottie are there other things that you would add to the list of attributes that have made Michigan work the way that it does?

(DJ): Yes. I was talking about overlapping board service and the members of the Council of Michigan Foundations were on a whole rap. We used our networks and that worked very successfully. Also, humor. We laughed a lot. We had fun. We made the conferences like one big



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giant party. At one point, when I was the CEO, we had 500 members. Our conferences were over 1000. Again, that was a different time, people learned differently, the Internet was not nearly as prevalent, but consequently, human relationships were formed, trust was formed and work got done.

(KA): Tell me, [00:56:00] as much as you are comfortable, about your partnership with Russ in terms of leadership of the state. I mean there has been a back-and-forth. We take things to Kellogg, Kellogg takes things to CMF, you personally have had a trust relationship with Russ. When did you meet him and talk, this is a little bit on the personal side, but talk a little bit about how that worked for the benefit of Michigan. I mean it really is a, I think, a model.

(DJ): People from time to time have said to me, “how did you get on the Kellogg Foundation board at the same time you were CEO of the Council of Michigan Foundations?” It is rather an interesting story and an interesting balance. I met Russ Mawby, who was CEO, at the 1972 conference of the then Conference of Michigan Foundations. Then [00:57:00] I served for a couple of years with him on the board, so I would see him sporadically and he was always interested in what you were doing and what board you served on and what was being accomplished.

Then I assumed a staff role at the Council of Michigan Foundations and I would see him much more frequently as we worked on common interests and common projects. He took me to lunch a couple of times and talked about a whole wide range of issues, whether it was corporations, family values, politics, and I found that very interesting. My job had many, many meetings with donors and CEOs and listened attentively. Then one time, one day he said to me [00:58:00] “Dottie, the Kellogg Foundation board is currently all men. We need to diversify this board and I'm going to start with a woman. Would you please propose some women? Would you help me with this?” So I remember coming home that night and saying to my husband, “you'll never know what I get to do now. And that is propose some women candidates for the Kellogg foundation board.” I told him “I would love to do that. I know I could do it” but I would never stand a chance, so I went to work on the project. I think I had eight serious candidates, we had set a meeting for three weeks later and I went to the Kellogg Foundation and sat down and we talked about various and sundry issues and got to the subject at hand and he said to me “ what about you?” and I said, “you got a deal”.

But you know we had to watch this relationship because [00:59:00] I served on his board and he was no longer on the CMF board but certainly Kellogg was a major player with what was happening in philanthropy. I would say some of these major initiatives, the conflict of interest policy at the Kellogg Foundation was very serious. I was removed, I did not stay in the board room, there were private discussions and it was all very healthy and there was a dual respect because CMF wasn't just one person, we had a board of 21 people, had membership up to 500 members. I was merely a facilitator of that effort, but there was a common reality. Personally, I love the man. He has great spirit, great vision. He is extremely intelligent, very modest and he has mentored many people. But you hardly know you're being mentored when it goes on [01:00:00].



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(KA): We're headed down this road so let's keep going with this, in that you have had, and I agree with you that is the strength of Michigan, is the fact that people have served multiple roles, but what I'd like to get at is how you as a leader have juggled those in your own brain. Sometimes you are Kellogg Trustee and sometimes you are a CMF and sometimes you're at the community foundation and you've got Learning to Give and you've got the National Corporation and you know the people in Michigan Community Service Commission we have a lot of people who have those kind of multiple hats and I want to get at the unusual, I mean this is fairly unusual, but it has really been well handled in Michigan. So can you tell me a little bit about what it's like? Let's do it this way, how about, tell me why it's important and how it's done well to juggle various [01:01:00] roles?

(DJ): Several of us in this whole philanthropic pie have had to juggle many different roles. Sometimes you are the CEO, sometimes you're the board member. Sometimes you're the leader, sometimes you're the servant. Knowing how to do that, it's a personal skill, but I think it also can be learned. Personally, I found myself, in my mindset, I thought always you are a servant leader. First you serve in the Council of Michigan Foundations, and anoint may be too strong a word, but then you lead. Through pulling that together, everyone benefited and all ships would rise. Consequently good things were accomplished. But never could you go in and say [01:02:00], "I am now the leader." It is not going to work. Because I had the benefit of working with so many people that felt the same way, my board chairs, each and every one. I think of Kyle Caldwell and I think of Rob Collier and Kathy Agard. I think of the community foundation leadership that we've worked with. At some point, all we all know that we have a leadership role to play and we certainly have a servant role. You need to listen to all points of view, incorporate all of the people and then you can lead.

(KA): When conflicts come up how have you handled them between two organizations that you might be sitting on?

(DJ): Conflicts are sticky. I think the process is very important as you look at [01:03:00] those conflicts and whether or not you are the trustee or a staff, divided, learned, they are not all perfect. I am pleased to say, I think, in my career, they were handled respectfully and carefully.

(KA): I want you to talk a little bit about what you have learned about how leadership works in Michigan? What is your own philosophy and what have you learned [01:04:00] and what have you tried to put in place?

(DJ): What have I learned about leadership? There's all kinds of leaders. There are the tyrants and there are the servant leaders and sometimes both factions are needed within the same meeting or certainly the same organization, but what I learned? You don't declare yourself leader. Just go do the work and it will evolve. Now, you have to be opportunistic, when it comes time to write the



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paper, take the notes. The power of the pen is terrific. You can propose ideas. Today with the Internet, follow-up is very strong. Be a person of your word and that will naturally take over. Bring consensus, and that is not always easy. Walking the middle of the road, which I have my entire career, I am [01:05:00] a moderate politically. I have voted both sides of the aisle, but you cannot express that when you're working with people. You just have to bring consensus on whatever the topic might be.

(KA): This is down the same path, but anything else that you would comment about when you worked alongside really good board members, what do they do? How do you go about being a really good nonprofit board member?

(DJ): Throughout my career I have the 10 top board members, 10 top program officers. I'll never tell anybody. But when I look at the common characteristics and now particularly when I talk to young people who are building a career, I've shared these. I think the first characteristic is to listen. A good board member listens. A good board member is a generalist, they don't [01:06:00] have a single point of view that they hammer, but they are a generalist and well-informed, not that we all can't learn more about a lot of things.

I would also say that they will always be open to every point of view. That says to listen, but you have to be open to it too, your body language or whatever. Understanding finance is crucial. It is crucial. Being able to read a balance sheet. Now you don't have to be an accountant, but it doesn't hurt to understand the premises. Then you need to understand programming. Whether it's the nonprofit organization you are part of or a grantmaking institution, you need to understand what really makes it work. I think you have to help the entity focus and then, of course, you have to attend all board meetings whenever possible. If it's a nonprofit organization, you have to contribute [01:07:00] and you have to be willing to ask others to support it.

(KA): The next set are the themes that we are organizing the state of generosity under, you talked a little bit about servant leadership, I am going to make the argument in the writing that Michigan has an ethic of servant leadership and the question is whether you agree with that or not, and if you do or don't, if you have examples of why you do or don't. Does Michigan nonprofit leadership exemplify an attitude of servant leadership, and if so, why? Do you have a story about that?

(DJ): Most definitely. The philanthropic sector in the State of Michigan [01:08:00] represents servant leadership in its best example. I think of the people that I know so well, Russ Mawby, Rob Collier, Ranny Reicker, Miriam Noland, Kathy Agard, Pat Johnson, this is an endless list of people who have become dear good friends. How have we done, again, you listen and then you lead. In terms of the tax credit, some people might have had a philosophical concern that that not be done, but when it was pointed out that yes, it can be done and yes, the funds will be used to help others, it worked.



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(KA): What about the role of resources. Some people might look at Michigan [01:09:00] and say, well it's easy for you to do. You've got the Kellogg Foundation, you got the Mott Foundation, the Kresge Foundation. Again, under this theme, the argument that I'm making is that people resources as in just hands-on, energy, people came to meetings, knowledge, they were smart people who had background and some financial resources, but in the writing that I'm doing I am talking about the power of leveraging. So assuming that you agree that those are kinds of resources, could you talk a little bit about the role of resources and achieving Michigan's philanthropic objectives as a state.

(DJ): It is interesting again, that we played, not just on money, not just on people, not just on good ideas or research, but on a combination of all that. People would say to me, “oh, you have an easy job. [01:10:00]. You work with all those foundations. You've got all the money in the world you want.” Wrong! I remember every year we had to raise our budget and the budget went up every year. I ran a nonprofit organization. I had a payroll to meet. I had funds to raise, members to please, so in fact we could get the job done. I will say, working with the spirit of the people that were involved who were willing to put resources in because they saw results was a true joy and for that I would say yes, that part of it was easy, but it wasn't just the financial resources. It was the brainpower. It was the willingness to talk to me at 10 o'clock at night about an idea. It was willing to get up at five in the morning to catch a plane to go testify in Washington for the day. It was the willingness to cancel a vacation [01:11:00], all of which our members did as we worked together. They also, if I had a problem, they would put me in touch with someone that they knew who could be very helpful in the thinking. They also funded the research that needed to be done in order to take a stand. And then, frankly, with their involvement, it made the collective whole stronger and we were able to get whatever it might be accomplished.

(KA): Dottie did you use your board members as counselors? Did you consult with them or did you keep at arm's length?

(DJ): I had an incredible relationship with my board trustees. I felt very open to share, warts and all, and I got excellent ideas, excellent suggestions, how to solve problems and I tried to take some potential solutions to them. I didn't just dump it [01:12:00] and then with the potential solutions they might enhance them and come up with even a better idea, but being open to your board is absolutely key. We met as a board three times a year and had a major annual conference and today, it is a lot easier to be in touch via the Internet quickly, but we used the US mail. The other aspect is to meet with your board individually, regularly, to see what's on their mind. That's where you get a lot of good ideas.

(KA): They want to do it more privately. Talk a little bit about CMF's role in public policy, you talked about the roots of it and that really one of the reasons for getting together, but I'm also intrigued by this idea, especially with how hyper-political the world has become that you were able to navigate and you talked a little around the fact that you had strong Democrats and strong



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Republicans and very strong independent thinkers [01:13:00] and that despite the fact you are working in public policy, it never seemed to degenerate into partisan politics. Can you talk a little bit about how CMF approached the public policy work?

(DJ): You know, CMF approached public policy in the beginning from really self-interest. It was telling the story. It was maintaining the payout for private foundations at a reasonable level, keeping the excise tax as low as feasible. It met with community foundations getting that tax credit. So from a self-interest standpoint, most everyone was on the train and wanted to participate. When we got into some specific issues regarding state politics, that became a bit stickier, but CMF has never taken [01:14:00] positions on individual ballot issues. Things have changed with Rob Collier's administration more recently and I am not sure where that is headed. That you will have to speak to him, but when we were involved, CMF would, whatever the public policy issue might be, we did not take a stand on it, but we would provide information, written information. We would have people speak at a conference or workshop and we would, if appropriate, do research for that point of view and in each case individual members made their own decisions on those kind of subject public policy issues.

(KA): It was really a fine line. I always admired the fact that it never did devolve.

(DJ): It was a delicate dance and I would say people skills, for whoever was presenting, without [bragging] that was me [01:15:00], had a lot to do with it.

(KA): We talk a little bit about the national and international models. Is there anything under that whole idea that Michigan has ended up being a national/international leader even though we didn't set out to do that? What else did you have it you may want to talk about?

(DJ): CMF members have always been willing to share. They have been willing to jump on a plane and go tell their story. I'll never forget Ranny Riecker was sharing our whole legislative program and how to give accomplished and how to organize. I think of Kathy Agard on a plane going to Montana to talk about the tax credit there. They have \$10,000 tax credit now, so we got to get that going for the State of Michigan. But members have been willing to share. CMF didn't do all the work, our staff didn't do all the work, I didn't do all the work. Our members spread the word and whether it be Learning to Give or the MCFYP program or For Good For Ever community [01:16:00] foundations, the Michigan AIDS Fund, members were willing to tell the story.

(KA): So a couple of your favorite Michigan stories. When you think about your career, I have a whole bunch of Dottie-isms that I will share if you don't about practical and specific things that you've taken out of the Michigan experience.

(DJ): Okay. What I learned about this Michigan experience, this philanthropic circus? One thing is share, share, share. We shared, I learned, we shared. Secondly, consistently, consistently



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recognize all participants. Even if you don't agree with them, there has got to be some seed in that. Be interested. Even if it's in their personal life, where did you go on vacation? How's your family [01:17:00]? But hopefully there would be a few ideas along there that you could talk about.

Next I would say, and I said this repeatedly, listen to every point of view and wherever feasible, find a way to include something in that and however it is resolved. Communicate frequently. I can't say that over again. My days were long and raising a young family, I would go to Detroit and I would leave, I had a rule. I would not leave before four in the morning. If I had to I'd go the night before, but otherwise I'd leave at 4:00 am and be there comfortably before 8:00 am to start the day. Also, make whatever you are working on exciting. Put some joy around it. Show the positiveness, show what it can be, but make it exciting so that people want to be involved and get the right people involved to make that happen.

(KA): My other Dottie-isms are homework before help. [01:18:00]. I think I've heard that 1,000 times – and give away the credit. What are a couple of others Dottie?

(DJ): You've got to give away the credit consistently, always. Sometimes it kind of pulls that the strings, but you give away the credit and take pride in what has been accomplished. It will come back to be good for everyone. Secondly, something I actually learned early in my career, was homework before help. Don't just come in with a problem. I tried to do it with my board if I had a problem. I would come in with an analysis and some potential solutions. When working with staff it was that way. Working with an individual member I would give them that advice because we all would get frustrated once in a while, but it works.

(KA): Now [01:19:00] your favorite Michigan story. You have 5000 of them I'm sure. A couple you might be willing to share that are illustrative of your years at CMF.

(DJ): When I think about my time at the Council of Michigan Foundations, I go really to the first conference which was held in Ann Arbor. I was like a deer in the headlights with all of this. All I had done was served on a community foundation board and individual nonprofit boards and then I was sitting there between Stanley Kresge and Harding Mott and one time, when I was on the steering committee, we had a Native American gentleman that suddenly realized his flight was two hours earlier than he expected. Harding Mott literally throws me his car keys and says get him to the airport.

Well, Harding had a Cadillac convertible, white. [01:20:00]. I'll never forget it. I am flying down 94, that was kind of fun, and Stanley Kresge at the same time, his wife's name was Dorothy, as mine is, and he liked that and he kept repeating that and we were talking about Thanksgiving and I said to him oh, he was telling me all the family that was coming in I said oh, I'm sure that Dorothy, your wife has some help. His response was well, she has a dishwasher. It was kind of fun. Dick Thrune and I'll get cracking, I'll never forget it. And I have worn a lot of hats and the grantees that I have



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worked with, I will never forget their stories and what has been accomplished, the children that have been helped, the vulnerable children that have been helped. I think of the mothers, single moms raising children, working a job [01:21:00] and trying to do the very best for their children. Have I been in tears over the years? Yes.

(KA): Tell me about you. As Bob Payton would say, what is your personal philanthropic biography. Tell me about you and how did you ever end up in this work? We all wandered in from somewhere, right?

(DJ): Yes. I've had the pleasure of meeting so many fine people who have been mentors and examples, but personally I grew up in California. I had two very smart, hard-working parents. My mother, later in life went into real estate and my dad worked for Paramount Motion Picture Studios. He was head of the scenic department. I grew up in the era where if you work hard, whatever you were doing [01:22:00], whatever you wanted to be, you could accomplish it, and what a gift to be in Southern California that time. I went to Berkeley.

I was vice president of the student body at that time. I always wanted to help. I was in student government all through everything. From there I attended the Harvard Radcliffe program in business at the Harvard Business School, the last class. I'm dating myself. Women were admitted directly the following year, same classes same courses, professors as the students across the river had had. I met my husband at that time, who was at the Harvard Business School. We were married and went to New York City, worked for J Walter Thompson in advertising. There were 12 men and me. I know I was an afterthought, but I took it. But even then in New York, I was volunteering. I volunteered at the LightHouse which was reading [01:23:00] to the blind and really, was very passionate and compassionate and concerned. I eventually ended up in Grand Haven, Michigan and really threw, at 25, threw myself into the volunteer service. I was involved with United Way and the Arts Council and our church, many different things. One thing I should share, when I think about my philanthropic story and ethic. I don't know if it's in the genes or what, but both my grandfathers were ministers, although I never knew either one of them. They were deceased by the time I was born. There was always the importance of giving back so I just sort of grow up with that. It was very natural.

(KA): Did your parents, were your parents both actively involved. They had big careers, but were engaged in philanthropy as well?

(DJ): I grew up in a middle-class [01:24:00] USA family and my parents were certainly philanthropic. My mother donated her time for the Community Chest which ultimately became the United Way. She was very involved with the PTAs and things that would help her children. We were just a typical middle-class family with all the promise and excitement about what would happen. I never met, at that point, any big fancy donors. It was just a matter of doing good with what you had.



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My first philanthropic experience was in the third grade when we all brought 10 cents to buy a harmonica in Mrs. Jones class and I will never forget it because I knew one of the girls in the class family, 10 cents was too much and so I suggested to 10 of my friends that we each bring 11 cents. I didn't know it at the time, but I guess [01:25:00] it was my first fundraising effort. Anyway, with my career, I was very blessed. As far as the Council of Michigan Foundations conference I got that invitation at a time when I was on probably six different boards and I told myself, the next time that something that you are really interested in comes up, focus on that and see it through. It's not all going to be peaches and cream, but see it through. Well, I'm still in it, all these years later. How much further do you want me to go?

(KA): What kinds of things are you saying to your children and grandchildren. You've got beautiful grandchildren and beautiful daughters and sons in law. What kinds of things do you want them to see from you and Mart's service. I mean your husband is also really involved in things. What are you hoping that you are sharing with them?

(DJ): I married a very philanthropic man. I didn't know it at the time. We'd known each other five months [01:26:00] when we were engaged, but we have a joint value of ethic and service. We have both been on many different nonprofit boards and that has carried on with our children. We have two daughters and six grandchildren who are continually asking what we are doing. They want to help others. Sometimes I think it's in the food we eat, or the gene pool or it is an ethic and that is why we started *Learning to Give*, which is to have others to be exposed to that. Today there are some wealthy people on the Forbes 400 list who never have and it is all new to them and their motivations for giving can be very different. I was blessed – beyond blessed with career opportunities, meeting the right people at the right time, people who opened doors and yes, I served, but [01:27:00] it was a team effort all along the way.

(KA): Who do you think of as your inspirational, that you look to and say wow, this person has made a difference and that you admire.

(DJ): There are so many people that I admire in philanthropy. Kathy Agard is one of them. She goes the extra mile time and time again and never gives up and never says no and is talented all the while. I so admire Russ Mawby and his wise thinking and at the same time, his feet are on the ground, but he has a universal knowledge of how to help people. I have admired Ranny Riecker. She continues, to this day, to be of assistance wherever it is needed and that value, I knew her parents and felt the same way about them. [01:28:00]

(KA): It's fun to see it across generations. She's been very careful with her kids also getting them engaged in philanthropy. Anything else about your history that you would want to have formally on the record?



Dorothy “Dottie” Johnson

(DJ): Well, again, I had an opportunistic career because not only did it involve the whole nonprofit sector, having served on the boards of the Council on Foundations and Independent Sector and the Foundation Center and the Better Business Bureau and the National Center on Family Philanthropy, the list is endless, but again it was what we had in Michigan that I was able to bring to the table and that was all extremely valuable. Forever I will be grateful for the people that I met and opportunities and the doors that were opened because while you are very thoughtful to ask me this as a personal reflection [01:29:00], it is the good that ultimately came out of it that I am the most proud of.

(KA): Anything else that you wanted just to make sure to say in general. Not so much about you or the project, philanthropy in Michigan?

(DJ): You asked me what attracted me to philanthropy and, I guess when I think about it my mother told me I wanted to please and maybe that's true. I always wanted to help other people within the means that I had. I was raised in a culture of giving back. I married a man that felt the same way and philanthropy includes working with all sectors of society and that is an interest [01:30:00] I have. I get ideas from all people, whether it's the parking attendant or the man that owns the hotel and frankly, I like to be part of people and places and things to get things done.

¹The original rules for the MCFYP challenge grant did not require the youth to volunteer. In fashioning local youth advisory committees, many of the community foundations included a service component requirement for their young people. In subsequent years, volunteering became a part of the statewide expectations for local youth committees.

²The Great Lakes community foundation collaboration was launched by Kathy Agard. When she left the Council of Michigan Foundations, the project was picked-up and expanded by the new Chief Operating Officer of CMF, Rob Collier. Rob then followed Dottie as the CEO of the Council of Michigan Foundations.

