



INTERVIEW WITH JULIE CUMMINGS – September 7, 2012

Our State of Generosity, a project of the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy (JFCP) 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 Julie Cummings on September 7, 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.

Preferred citation: Researchers wishing to cite this collection should use the following credit line
Interview with Julie Cummings, 2012. "*Our State of Generosity*," Johnson Center Philanthropy Archives of the Special Collection & University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries.

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): ...in the basement of Belmont Manor. Do you remember that? And we used to call ourselves Joel's kids, and it was the start of the commission, and Frank Dirks was there, and Diana Algra, and you were there...

Julie Fisher Cummings (**JFC**): Was that really the start? I didn't realize I was there at the start.

(KA): Yeah, you were. It hadn't even happened in Michigan...

(JFC): I didn't realize I was there from the start. I just remembered Michelle was pregnant.

(KA): Yes, and this was the initial planning meeting, so it was really...

(JFC): Oh, my gosh. I totally remember this place, though. I remember the space.

(KA): Uh-huh. I think maybe that's why I remember it also. And I remember us all calling ourselves Joel's kids because it was funding, everybody suffered so... [Laughter]

(JFC): [Laughter] Except for me; I wasn't being funded.

(KA): Can you do just a little run down for me – and partly, this is just to refresh my memory. The four major organizations that we're looking at are the Council of Michigan Foundations, the Michigan Nonprofit Association [00:01:00] including Campus Compact and volunteer sectors, the Commission, and the Johnson Center. So, could you just give me a little background of your relationship to those groups?

(JFC): I believe I accessed that first through the Michigan Community Service Commission when that was started. And sitting on that board, I became familiarized – because it was such a great working relationship – with MNA (Michigan Nonprofit Alliance). At the same time, I believe I was just about to go on the board of the Council of Michigan Foundations. Those three organizations work so well together; I think it's a wonderful model of collaboration that we need to have in the future of government, nonprofit, and private sector...

(KA): Sure.

(JFC): ...working together...

(KA): Did you know what you were getting yourself into, Julie?

(JFC): I had no idea. Most of the time, it's like I had no idea. I really feel like, in the end, they're going to say on my gravestone, "It seemed like a good idea at that time." [Laughter] But I actually – It [00:02:00] was a time when, I think, volunteerism was really coming to the forefront. I know that it started a long time before coming to the forefront. I know that it started a long time before with George Romney, but actually I was reading my father's biography (*The Quiet Diplomat*) and in fact, I think it was Nixon, asked my father to run the National Commission for Volunteerism. And during Dad said, "George Romney, this is a really good idea for you. Why don't you do this?" So, that's how it started. And then, my father just always felt so strongly about that, and he was an original person to start the Torch Drive campaign in Detroit years ago.

(KA): Wow. Who asked you to be on the commission?

(JFC): Who asked me to be on the commission? I think I heard about it. I heard about it because Lisa Murray, who was Lisa Ilitch Murray, was on it; I think I was talking to her and I heard about it and I told my father. I said, "What do you think about this?" So, that's how it happened [00:03:00]. And as you know, it's not always easy getting appointed – government appointed boards and agencies, right?

(KA): But what a great start.



(JFC): Right.

(KA): And they were lucky to have you with them. As I mentioned, we're going to organize all the material under four big themes.

(JFC): Okay.

(KA): And the first one is under the theme of servant leadership – and there's an advisory committee. We were thinking about what is it that makes Michigan unique that is worthy of sharing, and servant leadership is certainly one of them. I tried to think about *how can we prove that people of Michigan actually are servant leaders?* And the four things that are going to be written about underneath it is: the fact that we listen to local people and empower people; that we value philanthropy no matter what size it is – big foundations, little foundations; that we're encouraged not to compete – in fact, we're encouraged to work together; and that we have people willing to take risks and to [00:04:00] make long-term investments. There, I'm thinking about MCFYP – which was a huge risk and you were involved with that – and even the commission itself (there wasn't a national commission at that time and Michigan organized it). So could you give me a little bit of your own reflection on the people that you've worked with for so many years in Michigan and do you think they're servant leaders? And if you do think they're servant leaders, what do they do that would be useful to share?

(JFC): To me, a servant leader is one that leads by example and not by words; leads by humility, not from power, and that's why "servant." It's really from the point of view – I think what you said is so apt because you talk about empowering local communities and that's really what I learned, is how to treat your local grantees and your local community members as partners and not to feel like because you have more money, or you're in a higher position, that you know better than they do. So, I think it's a learning. A servant leader has that – I mean, I would say the attributes [00:05:00] of a servant leader are really: humility, the ability to learn, the ability to collaborate (as you said), the ability to put their own needs aside in the good of the common goal (so what people need). I think it also has to do with the belief that all people are good people and that they want to care. So, I think that it's really apt that you talk about this because I don't think it was a term that was coined, but I think Michigan is a perfect example. From the viewpoint as a foundation, having worked with the Council of Michigan Foundations and having worked a great deal with starting that family foundation retreat, it really occurred to me how people didn't want to talk about how much money they had; they just wanted to do the right thing. And that's really part of, I think, the ethic of service in our state; people really don't like to have a claim, they don't want to talk about it. They want to do it.

You also, I believe, [00:06:00] mentioned the fact that it didn't matter how small – you talked about foundations, but I would carry that all the way down to anyone that can volunteer. One of the things I learned from the commission and reading through the grants that we had to approve was that – There was a grant won tonight. I just remembered this so deeply because it said it was a grant to give an organization for disabled people the money to help them volunteer. So, they weren't being "done to," right? That really to me, says it all. It's the idea that we don't know more, we know we want to work together.



Collaboration. You're so right, because look at the model that we have in our state which is like no other state – and believe me, I've lived in other places – and that model is the ability to work with people outside of your group. Right? So, whatever that group may be. It's nonpartisan; it's apolitical; it's [00:07:00] a-religious. It doesn't matter. It's in the goal of insuring that all people have a good life. And that's really what people in the state of Michigan – when there's a problem, those three sectors (the nonprofit, the government, and the foundations sector) get together and say, *what can we do make it better?* The idea is – I mean, sum up all the issues that have been addressed.

(KA): How do you think that happened?

(JFC): I think it's really a Midwestern value, and you just do it because it's the right thing to do. It's really hard for me to say when did it begin – because you did ask me that, "When did it begin?" and "Who was there?" – it's hard because I grew up in a home where my father, that was just something that he did. The excuse I gave myself when people would say, "Why isn't your father here?" and I'd say, "I gave him to the world" – like it was my choice. It wasn't my choice, but that's really what he did. He went off doing good for others, and how, as a child, can you be upset? I remember aptly that [00:08:00] when he was in his mid-50s and I wasn't very old at that time, he said, "I've made enough money. Now is the time for me to give it back." To me, that is the great example of servant leadership.

So having grown up in that, I went to a school that did that. I remember doing my first sort of package for CARE when I was four years old. I didn't know that there were people that didn't have the same thing I did. I think it's the ability to step out of where we are, step out of our shoes, and to step into the shoes of other people that maybe don't have as much as we do. That was my father. And then, I, moving through and getting into the circles of – and my mother as well – being introduced to those circles and then being introduced to people like Ranny Riecker, who I consider my mentor and got me on the CMF board; and Dottie Johnson, who has been a great mentor to me; and all the other people from Joel [Orosz] to Bill Richardson to Michelle Engler. I mean, look at all the people in the different sectors that want to come together, and not many people [00:09:00] today can put aside their egos and [act] for the greater good.

(KA): When you think about those people, Julie, what are the qualities? What do they do that made them mentors for you? Do you want to be like them?

(JFC): Right. They're really solution oriented, and they don't worry about they're getting their reward or the acclaim, and they don't give up. They're persevering. They're dedicated and committed. I think of Dottie, she never took no for an answer when she wanted something, but she did it in a way that didn't make you feel bad. The way she did it, she sort of said, "We're part of this team and this is something we want to do. Join us!" That wasn't through guilt either. You felt like you were part of something greater, a greater good – and that's addictive. That's power. I mean, that's what [00:10:00] volunteerism does; that's why it works so well no matter what walk of life you come from.

(KA): Good, good. That's very thoughtful. Thank you. Tell me a little bit about your experience – we have quite a bit about community foundations...



You were in the catbird seat, as they say, on family philanthropy and its development in Michigan. So, can you talk a little bit about your experience at CMF, and what were the family foundations like? Did they know each other? Did they work together? What was it like to sit next to a little foundation, or in your case, is – I don't know if this is true. You have to tell me whether the foundation wasn't founded until after your parents...

(JFC): That's correct. So, actually... I was an interloper [Laughter]. I was on my Dad's foundation but it was a pass-through for his giving [00:11:00]; you're right, it was a catbird seat. It really starts with the story of going to my first conference. You know how the CMF conferences are the largest in the country, and ours is the largest RAG [Regional Association of Grantmakers], and we have the most family foundations, and it represents 95% of the asset base in the state of Michigan. I remember going to my first conference; I didn't know what to expect. Now, you have to understand, I am not a professional in fundraising. I had been in fundraising but I hadn't been in the philanthropic field. It was so professional but I really felt like I wasn't comfortable talking about family philanthropy. I remember thinking, *I wonder if this is just my experience or if some of the other family members of these family foundations feel the same way*, and in talking to them, I found that to be the case. I thought, *well, we need to have our space, too*.

You know, it's wonderful that you have all these professionals who have made it their life work, but we don't get paid. [00:12:00] That's how we started with the idea of starting the separate conferences or meetings for the family foundations. We really just started the first one saying, "I don't know if this is going to work." We had a meeting. I remember the first meeting, and every time I tried to talk to these families, they weren't even sure they wanted to talk about it, right? They like to sort of disappear into the crowd. And that's sort of the ethic of service in our state. No one wants to talk about what they do, right? I remember getting up in front of all these people and, being the bold person I am, talking about the elephant in the room; I just remember saying to them, "It's not about the zeros. It's about the work we do," and "Is there a collective sharing that we can learn from each other? Because I have a feeling that we all are facing the same issues, and perhaps, if we reach out of that space and talk about it, we can help."

Then the families started coming, because at the conference I'd have a suite open so the families [00:13:00] could come talk before and after the meetings. And then, we started thinking about programming for them. We started the first retreat, and the families were hungry for this. Sometimes, you'd get the whole entire family to come from, you know, zero to 80; and sometimes, like mine, I'd be the only representative. But it didn't matter because once we were there, we were all family, and we could talk about what really mattered to us, and we could approach it as a study. It wasn't just something we sat around the table and sort of tried to deal with our siblings and get this done. It was the pride. We'd learn to be more professional about it, we'd learn how other people were doing it. *[It wasn't just something where we sat around a table with our siblings. We really wanted to get things done. We wanted to be proud of work, to learn how to do it more professionally and to learn about the issues that other families faced doing their work.]*

I remember saying to Susan Howbert – she was head of the family foundations at CMF – and I said, "Why don't we go to other places and see how they do it?" So we took a field trip to Northern California, I



remember, and that was a really wonderful thing [00:14:00] – sitting and talking around the table. The thing that struck me the most is if you took away all the names, all the stories were the same. It was, you sit at a table with your family members and inevitably, all your family issues are going to come up. So, how do you get beyond that for the greater good, right? Because we all want to do the work, but we all have our own sort of way we think we should do it and it seems like when we show up at the table, it's like we're showing up at Christmas dinner from when we were 10 and 12 and 8, you know. There was wonderful learning that went on, and it really is a different sort of way of exploring philanthropy in a family foundation. It's a more personal way and it doesn't mean it's any less professional – although sometimes, the family members feel that way – but because we do just as wonderful work.

The thing I do note – not to get off the subject, but I just want to say this because I really feel strongly about family foundations and the whole movement – I feel [00:15:00] very strongly because you know the big foundations are wonderful and they can really help with infrastructure building, and they go in with lots of money but sometimes, they don't stay there. The family foundations are what I call "the army on the ground," because they want to get to know their grantees, and they'll stay in and they're partners with them, and you see them pulling up their sleeves and working alongside them. It's not like, *come to me for a grant*. In most cases, it's because they are firmly committed to the work they're doing.

(KA): Would it have been different if CMF hadn't existed?

(JFC): Oh. Are you kidding?

(KA): Yeah, in what way... [Laughter]

(JFC): If CMF hadn't existed, I don't think the foundation field, as a sector, would have existed as it does today. I mean, COF (Council on Foundations), actually, I think, takes their model from Council of Michigan Foundations. We were the first – Dottie and Ranny, and all the people who went before and really helped start this, [00:16:00] really were revolutionary in their thinking, of trying to bring together – You know, there were silos even within the foundation world. There's the big foundations, the professional ones, and then there's the family, community, whatever. So, it was one place where they could all come together; it really was an exemplary model for the field. I got lots of other places and I'm just struck by – they just don't have that. What is it that makes it different? I don't know, I really don't. I think it's loyalty to the mission, I think it's loyalty to our state, I think it's a deep, embedded commitment about trying to make the world a better place in whatever way you see.

(KA): I know of the things when we were working together that I was really impressed with was how supportive the family foundations were of benefits to the community foundations, and the leadership that the family foundations took in developing community foundations and meeting the [00:17:00] MCFYP challenge in pushing for the tax credit, which are really very small gifts for different kinds of donors. Can you talk a little bit from your perspective about why and how the family foundations were so supportive of the community foundations, or why do they care?



(JFC): Well, I think they care because, as I said before, they're the army on the ground. They see the benefit of leaving those resources in the community and really having them come – you know, as family foundations, we don't all give locally. But we all live locally and we all will do something locally. And I think they realized that the community foundation is a repository of that and it's sort of a way of spreading the ability for everyone to come into the fold. See, you know, there's been such a division I feel between "philanthropist" and "communities" – they use these terms to separate. You know people say, "Well, I can't be a philanthropist. I don't have a \$1 million," or "I don't have \$10 million." Everyone is a philanthropist. If you're giving from your heart, you're a philanthropist, let's face it. [00:18:00] So I think they – It doesn't surprise me that the family foundations felt that way. And these were their resources, so of course, they're going to want to have the tax credit there, they're going to want to see the field being grown so they can give more money. But they're going to give money whether they have a tax credit or not, I have found.

(KA): Thanks.

[Break]

(KA): I can still take a look at my notes here. So you served as the chair of the CMF board. Can you tell us about that?

(JFC): That has been – out of all the boards that I've ever been on, that has been my highest good.

(KA): Is that right?

(JFC): I enjoyed it so much. I enjoyed the people I worked with. I really feel [00:19:00] it is the deepest honor that I've ever been given, a privilege really. One thing I do like is – because I'm on the National Center for Family Philanthropy now, but that doesn't combine all the different foundation sectors – to be able to sit on that board and to be able to sort of dream or vision, *where do we want this sector to go? Where should the foundation sector go?* My brother is now sitting on the CMF board, and his passion is social impact giving. You know, that's a whole new public-private partnership. But I love learning from my peers, I had so much to learn.

One thing that CMF does that I haven't noticed other RAGs doing, is they have a very strong government relations piece and they really educated us about the need to really engage our policy makers. I have found through my life – and we can talk about this later – is that no change really happens unless it's driven from policy change. So they understood [00:20:00] that. Ranny really, was the lead, I mean, I remember going to Foundations on the Hill and we'd have 45 people, and no one else had that. I mean, it was – We knew how to do it. Every single thing we did – I think it started with Dottie, and Rob has been able to carry that on, so that when we go and see our legislators, we take them a book and we say, *this is how much we're granting in your district and this is the things that matter to us*. It really makes a difference. And also, one other thing I do want to say, the board really was nonpartisan. If you asked me who was a republican and who was a democrat, I couldn't tell you. We just knew who to go to if we needed one thing done with one lawmaker or the other.



(KA): It didn't come up. You know, one of the things as an observer of the board that I was always impressed with was the level of discussion and the fact that people didn't – it wasn't that people didn't disagree, they would disagree on some things, and I can remember not sharp but [00:21:00] real disagreements about where we do we want to go, but the way that was handled, it was always so constructive. So I don't know to begin. How that was as chair person?

(JFC): Well, I have to tell you that particular, sort of, value or quality – I call it, "We agree to disagree without personalizing," – I've tried to take to our family foundation board because I think it's a really – discussion is fine; it helps us. I've really loved discussion and I love pushback, because if I come to a discussion and I'm totally on the other side, you're going to try to convince me and I'm going to learn a great deal about your position. It's the only way for us, on one side, to be able to step into the shoes of another. So if we don't have that kind of very valid and sort of emotion-driven debate, we're never going to learn. And I enjoy that. I learned so much. There's also the aspect when we went into these discussions, [00:22:00] we didn't know where we would end up. You know, you're sitting on a lot of boards and some of them you just come to the board meeting and say, "Okay, I agree with these grants," – which is unfortunate. And others, you do that work. But this way you really felt like you were making a difference.

We were really breaking ground because every single project we seem to be doing, no else was doing. And it was really a wonderful perspective and everyone had an equal voice. It wasn't like, *okay, Kellogg has \$8 billion so they have the bigger voice than the person from the family foundation that has \$1 million*. We all had an equal voice. I will say, the staff of CMF is marvelous; Rob is so excited. No matter what happened, he was like, "Oh, this is a great idea!" The staff was flexible. I think so much about life is remaining flexible. You know, to – about everything and that's what happened.

(KA): Yeah, people are open to all sorts of good ideas. Yeah. [00:23:00] So, could you tell me your favorite CMF story?

(JFC): Yeah, I knew you were going to ask that.

(KA): [Laughter] Sorry.

(JFC): I really don't have one. [Laughter] You know, when you said that, I was trying to think of what is my...

(KA): Yeah. Maybe a moment with RAGs on the Hill or at a meeting or a conversation...

(JFC): There are a lot of those kinds of situations that I feel really helped and really made a difference. You know, I remember our speakers and I remember having Ken Burns and having people that really – What was interesting for Ken Burns to come to us, and he's gotten funding from, you know, other – He couldn't have produced all those documentaries without funding, but when he came to us, he was really struck by how we did our work. You know, so watching it from the other point of view.



The other thing was RAGs on the Hill. One thing I did notice was that every legislator we went to really respected what we had to say. After having been working on the Hill recently, usually [00:24:00] what happens is you call for a meeting and they give you their staffers. I didn't realize how unusual it was at the time, but every single legislator met with us and they apologized if they were late. This does not happen, trust me.

I remember there was the issue about the support foundations and doing away with the tax deduction for the support foundations; I remember it was Carl Levin, Senator Levin. We went to speak with them and he had – you know, legislators are overwhelmed with the amount of information that they have to digest – and he didn't really understand that there were like 800 support foundations in our state, and that Michigan AIDS Foundation, which was the largest at the time came from that, and was a support foundation, and some of these other great work that was being done that really saved money by doing it as a support foundation, and he said, "Oh my gosh, what can I do?" Because he was, at first, against [00:25:00] helping us and he said, "What I need is a story. I need a story from you so I can go tell that story, because stories are what really make people change their views of one person or one organization." It really struck me how they looked to us for our knowledge which, trust me, that does not happen.

(KA): It must have been quite an experience...

(JFC): Oh, it was.

(KA): ...to go on the Hill. It was really great. You know, when I think about it, Julie, one of the places that I have been struck by– and I guess I didn't realize it at the time – was the number of big risks that CMF was willing to take, and one of them was Michigan AIDS Fund. You know nobody at the time so you could speak about that?

(JFC): I wasn't there was when they started – I don't think I was there... when they started it. It's interesting to me because they started it before my sister was diagnosed with HIV, and then she became very active in it. I guess I didn't realize how big a risk it was [00:26:00] because it was done a few years before she even gave her speech at the republican convention. Taking those risks – I'm sure, I can guarantee it, not all of the members of the board or all of the constituents of CMF probably felt comfortable doing that.

(KA): It was very early on...

(JFC): Yes.

(KA): ...in the AIDS crisis.

(JFC): Right. There were a lot of misconceptions. Mary, when she got up – I remember when got up at the convention, one of the things she said was, "You think that you have to be poor, black, gay, intravenous drug user to get AIDS. I am the face of AIDS." This beautiful blonde mother. You know, it



was... think of Michigan, a very conservative state for the most part and that they did that, it's really remarkable.

(KA): It seemed to me like there wasn't really any controversy. Rather, it was sort of like, "This is the right thing to do. We've got to figure out how to do it."

(JFC): The amount of money raised – The interesting thing is, okay, so you have that as a support organization and when it was [00:27:00] finished, it was finished. You know, it wasn't – There's ebbs and flows.

The other thing, if you don't mind me speaking about it, of the risk is MCFYP. I just want to talk about MCFYP. Kellogg was – is – one of my heroes. They really pushed forward the community foundation movement among all the states. And believe me, I've sat on other community foundations. Kellogg, in doing that, in engaging all the community foundations from the vantage point of trying to educate youth by bringing together diverse groups to train them in philanthropy, that model is still active. I have actually taken that model of youth action (you know, youth advisory committees) to other places. I started one at a Jewish organization in Florida so they could learn. I started one at the Fresh Air Fund, which is a major organization [00:28:00] in New York City that sends 10,000 kids to camp every summer, and they have a young women's group. And I said, "You guys need a YAC." It's been their most powerful fundraising tool. So I mean, that model of bringing together diverse groups of young people to learn – and it may be even organizations when they're going through the process of budget allocation committee, and they're going through the site visits, and some of these youths may have been going to agencies that have served them. But they could see that there is a future for them in something besides that. So, I give a lot of credit to Kellogg too, for that. *[We also became the first funders of this model at the Jewish Donors Forum. It is known as the Jewish Teen Funders Network. Funds are granted to organizations that engage and educate young people about how to be generous with your time, talent and treasure]*

(KA): And they wanted to make a big impact over lots of years.

(JFC): And Russ, one of my heroes. [Laughter]

(KA): Russ has sort of been talked about in other places, but tell us a little bit about your observation of his leadership.

(JFC): Oh, he is the most humble leader. Reminds me of like Gandhi or something. [Laughter] Russ, seriously. [00:29:00] He has a very soft spoken way. Every person he greets, it's like it's his old friend, it doesn't matter what socio-economic class you come from. What your views are, they may not agree with his. He respects you and values you, and says, "I can learn from you." That's the best in leadership, right? And he's loyal, he is so loyal.

(KA): I remember the controversy over Jane Fonda [Laughter] at a conference here in Grand Rapids, and I remember Russ at a board meeting, saying, "I can listen to anybody and be respectful"



(JFC): See?

(KA): ...and all of them – you know, all of a sudden just went [\[Unintelligible\]](#) [Laughter].

(JFC): Right.

(KA): It was good. So, you served as one of the first people on the Michigan Community Service Commission, and now you serve on the Corporation for National and Community Service. Can you talk a little bit about, [00:30:00] from those two perspectives, both about Michigan's role in the whole service movement, and then also a little bit about your role in encouraging the volunteers. I know you've talked a little bit about that.

(JFC): Right.

(KA): Yeah. I want to get some of your national corporation hat.

(JFC): So, the Michigan Community Service Commission. My time on that was wonderful because I was still learning about how you build infrastructure for volunteerism. I learned it was wonderful to be with people across the state that I normally wouldn't have met, and from business and from philanthropy and from government. Sitting on that board to try and figure out what's the best way to grant funds to help build that field. And then out of that, with the help of John Engler – who balanced our budget in the state, he didn't come in with a balanced budget – he gave us a \$10 million challenge grant that then we had to raise \$10 million to go into an endowment [00:31:00] to help build the infrastructure of our volunteer centers. That whole concept of what can we do to build the field, to me, really started there. For me, I came to understand service in a different way, from a very diverse perspective, from the importance of building the field and not episodic, sort of, projects.

Then, sitting on the Corporation for National and Community Service, I was there at the end of Dave Eisner's tenure and then we went through a period of time where we had temporary CEOs until now. I'm leaving, and they're bringing in Wendy Spencer, a former CEO of the Florida

State Commission on Volunteerism. So to watch it from the national perspective – the national [00:32:00] perspective is supposed to be helping all of the state commissions, and help build that infrastructure and help build AmeriCorps and some of the – It is a difficult field in the sense that there is a lot of controversy about *should you pay for service*. Historically, that's sort of been the republican viewpoint that *why should we have to pay for people to serve*. *Why should we pay for AmeriCorps* – which it's really not paying, it's a stipend. Then, the sort of the democratic – That's why they made it National and Community Service, so a national service versus community service. It strikes me that our governor, John Engler, who was a republican, very strong republican, wouldn't even think of that. He wouldn't even think, "We shouldn't build this infrastructure." You know what I mean? Because he understood the value of service, he understood that our country was built by volunteers. They weren't paid, right?



So, the Corporation for [00:33:00] National and Community Service then tried to really help on a national front. There are a lot of competing issues about that. It's sort of in diametric opposition to my experience on our state commission, and I'll tell you why. In our state commission, as we were just talking, we need Michigan AIDS Fund, we started Michigan AIDS Fund. We need helping to build the community foundation movement, we helped it. We need IDAs [Individual Development Account], we do that for poor people, right? We do that. The Corporation for National and Community Service, every time I tried to start an initiative to help build that infrastructure, it really was difficult through a government structure. It was the bureaucracy, really, because I had started with Patrick [Corvington], when he was there, we had stated raising money as a private enterprise, like Kellogg put up some money. Because what actually happens [00:34:00] is, especially these times, you have matching funds (government funding, federal funding) coming down to the local level, in order to pick up those AmeriCorps, the agencies on the local have will have to come up with matching funds.

The economy since 2008 has been so dreadful that a lot of these local agencies can't pick up the AmeriCorps. Now, AmeriCorps and VISTA really helped build that volunteer infrastructure, helped build some of the parts of the field that these agencies can't do because they don't have funds. My personal experience is Greening of Detroit where, they were building community gardens and my mother was really funding a lot of this too – but the Greening of Detroit can't pick up that AmeriCorps, so now the AmeriCorps volunteer has to be lost, right? So now, in the private sector, we should know about that, right? We should know because it wasn't much. Well, you can get somebody to put up \$5,000.00 who has the money and now this [00:35:00] agency can do its work, right?

I had this idea that if we could start a fund to pick up these dollars, because I really felt that people on the grassroots knew where Kellogg put up \$250,000.00 for AmeriCorps in the rural areas in Michigan, that we would be able to do it. Well, that sort of stopped because there are all sorts of constraints, and understandably so, on raising funds. The corporation can't be seen as a fundraiser and so it's just a lot more difficult to get things done with government. I have enjoyed just being part of that but really, I enjoyed it more so in Michigan. I really did, I hate to say that.

(KA): Yes. I hadn't thought of the commission, as a quasi-governmental organization, was actually funded as nonprofit, I guess I never really knew that. That's good for me to put at the back of my head. This is not on my list, but would you tell me a little [00:36:00] bit about – as a Detroit – the difference that having a community foundation has made to Detroit? What's the impact of the fact that at the start of MCFYP, or just before really, the Detroit Foundation was languishing for what, 20 years and \$100,000.00 or something? So tell me about that experience with Detroit.

(JFC): What you're referring to is the challenge that basically Kellogg put up through CMF? Is that what you mean?

(KA): And the fact that a community foundation exists in the Southeast.

(JFC): It really was visionary of the Council of Michigan Foundations as well as Kellogg to realize that they needed community foundations. We had talked about that a little bit, because it becomes an asset



based in the community. You have this human and asset capital, right? What happened with that grant, with that challenge of [00:37:00] having to raise that money, is people love challenges. They don't want to be the first in but if they have a challenge, they feel like their money is leveraged properly, and people – because there was this push, they started on the local level to build this – you know, sort of this need, understanding of why it was so important.

I think my father was one of the original people, funders of that too and he was on the board of the – I wasn't on the board then on the Community Foundation but I know that they're now over, I think, \$500 million. I mean and the thing that's amazing about the community foundation – because it represents seven counties, right? It's a very large area and they have all the business leaders and important people that really make change – is that they were able to take that large an area and really fulfill all the grant request so it wasn't like one area got more money because only a certain amount was raised in one. It was not like that.

You also said the – what is the importance of the community foundation for [00:38:00] Detroit and it's different than, say, United Way that has to raise funding every year or – which is very important – or some of the other grant-seeking organizations because it looks to the long range health of what can we do to this region. That's why they started the Greenways Project, to build Greenways through Detroit. That's why they took the tobacco monies, I was on that committee to – *how can we spend these tobacco monies in a way that's going to help people in this region?* Everything was done in a very professional way, a very studied way.

Most recently – It's interesting because my mother, during I think it was 2009, when things were really bad in Detroit. It was a horrible winter and she was so worried – she's in Florida but she's a Detroit, she always will be – she was so worried about how these people are going to be able to keep their lights on and their heat on and food and clothing. [00:39:00] She wanted to do a challenge grant – she wanted to give money. And she did a challenge grant to raise funds for (I think she put up a million or more dollars to raise a comparable amount) these basic needs, and the community foundation was able to do that. If there is a need in the community, the community foundation will find it and they'll convene a meeting of whoever they need to. They bring people together to figure out how they can best address that. Whether it's this New Economy Initiative, whatever it is. It's so funny you say this, because I have this visual of the community foundation sitting right in the center of Detroit having these big arms – this big web of support, and if people really need something, that's where it's going to come from.

(KA): I've been impressed with what you all have done. It's just amazing, astounding nearly in 20 years to build that kind of [00:40:00] endowment, especially given these particular economic times. It has been really really good. Now, you're spending some time in New York and time in Florida. Can you tell me what you're taking with you – you talked about that a little bit from your Michigan experience and also as you're back now at Michigan, what kind of things you think, “Oh, I'm really glad I learned that. “ Or, “Here was a really great experience.” What kinds of thing come to mind?

(JFC): Being on the board of CMF, being given that great privilege to chair the board and actually I had a bad back, a lot was by phone but being able to have that experience – yes I felt like I went to school. It



was like working on my masters and my Ph.D in philanthropy doing that and also on the commission, really understanding the importance of volunteerism and service. Everything I've learned has come from Michigan. It doesn't matter where I live. I always – if people ask where are you from, [00:41:00] I'm a Detroit, and I always will.

You're asking me what particular values or skills or behaviors did I learn. The importance of collaboration, the importance of putting aside your own ego needs for the greater good. The importance of working for a goal and not giving up, trying to figure out *how can we do this*. Engaging all parties in that and listening, really listening to what people want. It's not enough for us to just decide we think that that's a good idea, but we need to hear what people want and bringing your grantees to the table as your partners. It's sort of I've learned perseverance, not to give up because things can happen. I really believe I've learned the value of [00:42:00] looking to other people to learn. I don't know everything, I can't know everything. I really also feel like that spirit of generosity. I look at Michigan as a big heart, the throbbing heart, and look at the worst economic times and they reach out and help each other. So, you know, perseverance, dedication, loyalty, I mean look at the people that have stayed in here, time after time. Some people go in and they fund something and *okay, that's it; I want to move on to the next great thing*. In Michigan, they don't do that, they stay in there, they build roots, and that's it.

(KA): Have you thought about doing, trying to do a lot of these things with your own grantmaking , deciding what the foundation will look like?

(JFC): Yes, exactly. As I spoke before about the family foundations, all those skills I learned at CMF, I brought to the family foundation. [00:43:00] Sort of that idea of looking for the greater goal and how can we put our own needs aside. We have that as our intrinsic mission, we actually call it our intrinsic mission. That's what Dad wanted us to do and actually, when Dad passed and he endowed the Fisher Foundation with a great deal of money. There's five of us in my generation to sit on this board – he wrote us a letter and he said, “You know I believe in all of you and your philanthropy” – my oldest sister is into Jewish causes, my sister Mary Fisher is an AIDS activist, my brother and I are into strengthening youth and families in need and my younger sister is an Egyptologist – he said, “The only thing I ask of you, is that you come to a consensus.”

(KA): Okay.

(JFC): One thing I've learned in Michigan more than anything is that this is a privilege to do this work and actually this is not our money. This is everybody's money, and hopefully, we'll measure up [00:44:00] enough to know that we've done the right thing.

(KA): We have trouble planning Thanksgiving in my house. So that's incredible [Laughter],

(JFC): Forgiveness is easier than permission.

(KA): Yes. I think that that's probably true. You talked a little bit about public policy already, that is one of the things in my list. A little bit about the fact that – and this is always amazing in these times in



particular – that CMF has remained to dealing in all the hardest social issues in the world, and you have these people from all over the state from all different levels of society, and it has remained amazingly nonpartisan in doing partisan work. Would you talk just a little bit more, do you have any idea how that has been managed – that somebody doesn't end up playing their Democratic card or playing their Republican card? You just never hear politics talked about.

(JFC): Well it's interesting too because I [00:45:00] remember one of the family foundations that was part of CMF actually broke up, and I'm sure you know who I'm talking about because half the family was very liberal and half was very conservative, but that didn't happen to CMF. Why didn't it? Because Dottie was in charge.

(KA): What did she do?

(JFC): Dottie had the ability to just sort of have people look at the goal and to say, "Listen, we're all in this together. It doesn't really matter what party you come from. I'm sure you want what's best for everybody." She had a way of doing that.

(KA): It really is quite amazing.

(JFC): We can use it today in the government.

(KA): We had people who are really leaders in their beyond party politics and yet were able to set it aside so – let's talk just a little bit more about the funding of ConnectMichigan Alliance. I am astounded that \$20 million was raised for endowment before an organization even existed. Can you tell me a little bit about making that sale? I mean you were on the committee [00:46:00] that made that happen and it's a miracle. I don't know how you guys did it. So, I need the story.

(JFC): Well, I remember going to some people knowing they didn't really understand it. I think some people were in because they knew the people, they trusted Bill Richardson (who was head of Kellogg at that time). They trusted Michelle and John [Engler] and they trusted CMF and they trusted the leadership of CMF, so that they knew that their dollars would be well spent – it wasn't for some just far off cause. I think some people supported it just because of that and not because they really believed in what it was supposed to do. One of the things I did when I went for the ask was to tell them the importance of engaging and supporting the volunteer infrastructure; I explained what the state was like in terms of we have these volunteer centers all over the state. [00:47:00]

One of the things I remember doing was to get 1-800-volunteer – that number. I really wanted that phone number because people – they didn't have computers at that time – could call in as they have the zip code, say this is so and so and they give you a volunteer opportunity. But they were few and far between and they weren't all of equal quality. So, if you can prove that you can with one – they talked about this with one AmeriCorps – you know it's like millions of dollars worth of support. Lots of people engaged. Millions of hours for things that government can't – doesn't have the funding to do. People start to understand it. It's a real business model, too.



(KA): Yes. And of course it has helped everybody else ever since and the fact that it's some [\[Crosstalk\]](#).

(JFC): People don't believe it. When I tell them this from other places, they are like, "You did what?"
[Laughter]

(KA): This wasn't given to you but I noticed that you were – and I knew this from before that you've been really active in Rollins Colleges Nonprofit Leadership Program. [00:48:00] So, can you tell me a little bit about why? I mean what's your sense of...

(JFC): I was involved only for five years and Rita, that was really Rita's leadership.

(KA): Okay.

(JFC): What struck me, I'll tell you why – because Florida is one of the places I live and you want to see a state in terms of philanthropic – now it's getting better, that was years ago – philanthropic coordination and working together. This is our state and that's theirs. I mean, Florida is really like three or four different states. You have Miami, which is very Hispanic and it's becoming a major business banking center for South America and whatever. And then you have sort of the more conservative parts of Florida, old Florida, the West Coast of Florida where a lot of Michiganders go. And then you have sort of South Florida which is sort of more New Yorkers and people that are [00:49:00] you know, sort of more aware. Then you have North Florida. So, you have very, very different places and the foundation sector was not really well organized. There weren't a lot of foundations anyway.

I mean for some – I heard a statistic and you can tell me if this is true, that Michigan has the most foundations per capita of any State. I had heard that. That wasn't the case. People didn't understand that because we educated them in Michigan about *you can start this; you can do this*. Florida needed that. They needed that leadership to try and bring the different foundation world together but what they ended up doing was engaging not only the foundation sector but also the nonprofit sector and it's been an important movement. They have an organization now, because change happens really. A lot of the funding change that we do too has to do with State of Michigan laws, and they didn't really have that; their RAG was from Atlanta down. So, [00:50:00] how do you even work with that? I think the foundation is coming together – and there were a few very large foundations, Edyth Bush and some of them – that would come together and solve problems, but it would only be for their area. Now think of that, it would only be for their region. Yet in Michigan, we do it for the whole state – and I don't think Florida is that much larger, it's a little bit larger in terms of land mass but at that time we had about the same population. Not now, but...

(KA): Yes, I mean one of the things that has been drilled into us during my years has been you don't forget the upper peninsula where they would be easy for people downstate to forget.

(JFC): Yes. Exactly.



(KA): So, good thinking. Okay. You're doing great, I think we're in good shape. This is what you told us some about but I want you to go back and talk a little bit – talk about the influence of your dad's philanthropy. How do you think they learned philanthropy?

(JFC): Well, it's a Jewish value. My father is Jewish and he [00:51:00] is first generation of immigrant parents that came to Ellis Island and his father was a pushcart peddler that just started pushing his cart from Pittsburgh (I think that's where my father was born) and they ended up in a small town in Ohio called Salem, one of five Jewish families. But they always had the blue box, that's what they called it, and they always put money into this no matter how little they had. They always had enough to help. So that kind of ethic of service was really, sort of, very much part of what they call "tzedakah."

[You see in Hebrew there is no word that translates to "charity". In Judaism, it is felt that the act of "charity" can sometimes create inequities since it occurs between the powerful and wealthy and the poor and needy. This can create an imbalance or inequity of power. Instead we use the word TZEDAKAH which translates to righteousness, fairness and justice. Further, the person that gives is sacrificing and the person that receives is allowing the other into their lives-both are repairing the work or TIKKUN OLAM thru their generosity to each other.]

That concept of social justice and responsibility is what both my parents taught me thru their acts of generosity – you just took care of your neighbors and I think that's a lot of where it came from. Then my father really – he went to Ohio State on a football scholarship and did so well that he realized that he wanted to give back too. As I said before, he retired when he was 50 to do that. So he really felt strongly about that, and my mother the same thing. [00:52:00]

(KA): What were his philanthropic interests?

(JFC): He had an office was in Detroit until the day he died. He was loyal to Detroit. He was loyal first and foremost. He said "You can't help your nation – or you can't help anyone else until you help the people, the community you live in," and that's where it always started. That community was Detroit, that's why he helped start New Detroit after the riots, realizing there were problems, he helped start the community foundation, he started the first Torch Drive campaign, and the list goes – New Detroit Renaissance which brought together business leaders, *what could they do?* That's where it started.

Then he became involved in civic life. Politics and then he became – It's interesting because someone told them when he was really young, he said, "You want to have impact? Become a Republican Jew." I think he was the only one when he probably first started that. [00:53:00] He had the ability to work with other people, but he was a great listener too. I think that's where a lot of that came from. And my mother, she has a really big heart and she believes you can't hate a whole group of people, that everyone's deserving of care and love.

(KA): So you were observing these as kids, all of their activism.

(JFC): Yes. Right.



(KA): With your flame that you began to work on women's issues, tell me a little bit about that.

(JFC): Well I didn't – not necessarily. I would say children's issues. What happened is I moved away at a very young age and I ended up in Florida and I became involved with our women's division of Jewish Federation. When I was in my 20's I guess, I was the campaign director. I was head of the campaign which is very unusual; I always say it's because they didn't have many people down there. Then when I moved to a very small town in Florida, I had the honor of being head of our campaign for the United Way. It was [00:54:00] very much like Michigan, it was small, you could get things done, you know. Those two, the Jewish ethic of service and United Way, being a great model of how you raise money and bringing everyone into the fold have really helped.

Then when I moved to Michigan, I wanted to do something that would help children because – you know how you have these life-altering moments? I moved back to Michigan. I'd left, Coleman Young was there. Fifteen years later, I move back, Coleman Young was still there. I remember reading – now, today, this would not be extraordinary but then it was – and it said, on the front page of the Detroit News, it said, "49% of children live under the poverty level." Now if that's not bad enough, I'm reading the paper in a separate article not even connected to that. It said, "\$1.3 million with the WIC funds (which are the Women Infant and Children feeding money from the federal government) were returned to the federal government because they weren't administered." I got angry. There's nothing like a good [00:55:00] bit of anger and I realized children, they're all our children and they don't deserve to go hungry, that's a basic need.

A friend of mine who had sat on the Ruth Mott fund saw how small amounts of money on the grassroots level can make a big difference. So we came together and we formed Lovelight, which really was to help at-risk youth and their families. I really felt that people wanted to help but they just didn't know how, you know. In the early 90's, we had become very disconnected from seeing the person we help. Today that's not the case, but then it was, and I really felt like people needed that heart connection. I really felt if we educated people (and I didn't want to ask them for any more money because I was sick of asking people for money, I felt they'd go in the other direction) if we educated, if we fund the programs, we could have fiduciary control over that they would help and they did. So, that's what we did and we did a lot of great work and [00:56:00] we realized the power of collaboration at that time. We realized how to put our egos aside. Working in Detroit was a very interesting experience. I really had a lot of – I feel like I got my Ph.D in community organizing, but people do want to help. I was just – they didn't go below 8 Mile.

(KA): What was your favorite grant? The one that stands out for you.

(JFC): Oh my gosh, there were so many. I guess it was our first grant, which is still going, and that was to – So we wanted to start with children and hunger as an issue, and we couldn't find anything. Well, we found out that the public schools were supposed to have a breakfast program, but they didn't administer it in all cases. We didn't want to attack the public school system so we found an organization in Wayne County called Starfish Family Services, and they were a very wonderfully, community-based [00:57:00] organization. My friend had had a lot of experience, as she is a chef and a gardener. So, she thought *let's*



teach kids how to grow. Let's not just feed them. Let's teach them how to grow. We also knew that in the summer, the moneys ran out from school feeding and we didn't want these kids to go hungry, and we had done all these research and we found out that they would. We started a summer camp called the Grow and Learn Summer Camp. I think at the time, there were 60 people and my mother, she asked me what I was doing and I told her and she gave us half the money and that was just really nice. We started this program and what we found was these kids didn't know where carrots were grown, right? And we brought in all these different organizations to help them with the activities, but their favorite time was in the garden. That whole thing started and now, I think, there are 300 to 400 kids going to this camp. It was very exciting because as it went on, [00:58:00] they taught them sort of life skills and anti-bullying programs and everything. But in the beginning, that was really worthwhile to see that that could work. One other program – I have two others. Can I tell two others?

(KA): Sure.

(JFC): One is this. So we're at the school. We got into a school in the City of Detroit. The Mayor got us in there and I was sitting at a table, as my life is – I'm sitting at the table. I was on the Children's Hospital Board of Michigan, I'm talking to the dentist across the table. So I said, "Dr. Delaney, tell me what dental care is like in the City of Detroit." He goes, "You don't want to know." He goes, "This 25% of the population has 75% decay." He said, "It just cost the hospital \$240,000.00 for three cases. One had an abscess. I had to take out her eye. The other one ended up with a brain tumor and the other one, I had to take out all the permanent teeth. Now you can do that and get them dentures, but they're going to grow out of them and not have teeth. And he said, "I just would like to get in there and to see all their teeth." [00:59:00] I said, "I can't believe you can't do that." He said, "Oh, well you know, I can't find a school to do this," and he said, "I got the middle school but you really need to get them in the earlier." I said, "We have a school, let me ask the principal, but we have a school."

So we ended up doing a model dental program where they bring a mobile dental unit in there. They use dental students and they would screen their mouths and seal their teeth. It has been shown it was \$15.00 a mouth to do that. You know how much it cost? We didn't have all the funding for this program. So, we went to Kellogg. They gave us funding, and so did Blue Cross Blue Shield. After this program – we did three years of this program – we did all 800 kids in the school and we did, sort of, dental caring for the parents too and after this was over, I said to Dr. Delaney, "Dr. Delaney, isn't this great? It's not even that expensive. We can get this done. What we need to do is go and embarrass the healthcare organizations [01:00:00] in Detroit to help us do this." He goes, "I didn't want to tell you." He said, "We had 60 healthcare organizations around the table." And he said, "We had all the money but nobody who could agree who would be the fiduciary." And so that was a little upsetting. Those kinds of experiences were wonderful.

(KA): Yes, and the other one?

(JFC): If you don't mind.

(KA): No, I don't mind.



(JFC): Also a part of Lovelight, we involved our children in Lovelight kids and we tried to do it in a way that was equitable because you didn't want this like, "Oh, we're the rich kids giving to the poor kids." That creates all sorts of problems and it's not the value we wanted to have. We wanted to do programs of service where they would serve together, we did community cleanups. We were in the school cleaning up around the school, a very decimated area. There were no social services within walking distance, 67% of the kids had single parents. It's just really bad statistics. So we're in there with the kids in the neighborhood [01:01:00] cleaning up and weeding and painting the bathrooms, whatever. I said to the assistant principal, I said, "What if you could have anything for the school?" – because we have done the in-class collections for books and everything. She said, "What I'd like is a playground." She said, "When I was a young child, my mother worked as a maid. I was living in Harlem and my brother was in trouble and my father was on the railroad so I never saw him, but my favorite time was on the swing," and she said, "These children have never seen a swing. There are no playgrounds left in Detroit." And I said, "Okay. We'll build it."

What we did is we worked with another organization, the Pistons-Palace Foundation. They came in and helped do community building because we found that, the more research we did, we realized that if the community does not embrace the playground, it is destroyed. So, we worked with the school system, we worked with [01:02:00] Pistons-Palace Foundation. The parents planned the playground. They said, "We want a walking track with the baskets and playscapes so they can get healthier and everything." And so, that's great, now we're going to get the land. All this vacant land behind the school, all abandoned. So I went to the City of Detroit and said, "We'd like to purchase this land from you. How much will it cost?" "Oh, we can't sell you that land." "Why not?" "Well the land is going to be used for a community building." We knew that would never happen. My husband got them to lease the land to us for a dollar a year for 10 years and we built the playground. The model of funding we used, I really wanted to do this model of funding where the families had to support it, the local community, business, foundations and the private sector, and that's what we did. The basketball team went – let me just say this, too. I didn't explain that these kids played outside in the cold, and there was one basketball net outside, but it had [01:03:00] a graveled court – you know how long that would last. These kids went on to become regional champs. That park is still there.

(KA): Is it still there?

(JFC): Yes.

(KA): How fun. Those tangible ones are really fun because you can point to them and say that which makes it really good.

(JFC): Right.

(KA): You started to talk about this. Tell me a little bit about what you hope that your kids have – you observed your parents.



[Side conversation]

(KA): I wanted to ask you about, Julie, is you all learned philanthropy from your mom and dad and their model and observing them and even when they talk to you about that they talked to you about it. What are you hoping that your children have learned from watching you and your husband and your family and the family foundations? How are you going about making...

(JFC): Well, I started at a very young age to the point where Caroline – and I think she was like 12, her 12th birthday. [01:04:00] She said, “Mom, I don’t need anything. Let’s collect cans of food for Detroit.” So it should be so ingrained hopefully that it’s not something we do, it’s who we are. The other thing is it can be fun and service, that’s why I think service is a great leveler of society, everybody can do service. A blind person can give service, a person who has nothing can, and it’s very empowering. I see it most dramatically with middle school and high school children who really are sort of searching for their way and not feeling apart of anything, if they’re involved in a service movement, right away they have leadership. This we most dramatically saw with some of the work we did with the league and now GenerationOn, is especially in these at-risk communities where these kids feel, *oh my God, I can have a difference on people’s lives, and a positive one*. So I hope that my children will see the value of that and [01:05:00] hopefully it’s deeply ingrained enough and that it’s something that they make part of their everyday life. Sort of, *how can we be of service?* It is a compassion or generosity – you call it the “state of generosity.” It’s just something that you do. I mean it’s just who we are.

(KA): Do they have specific interests?

(JFC): They do. My daughter Caroline is now – we turned Lovelight Foundation into a private women’s fund now – she’s chairman of it and she also serves on the Fresh Air Fund board. She serves on Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club board in New York City. My son, our eldest son, Casey, helped build a private high school. He does a lot of work in Stuart, Florida where he lives. Tony is also involved in the environment. So I think as they come along, we’re dying to do this but I will give you a story.

My mother has set [01:06:00] the most dramatic sort of example for this. A couple of years ago, she wanted the entire family to get together. I think there were like 40 of us, the youngest is my grandchild Mac, who’s six all, the way up to my mother. She wanted them to get together and she wanted to have a family meeting; she wanted them to hear how we do our work, or not, [Laughter] and she wanted them to go on site visits of some of our projects in Detroit because, and rightly so, she didn’t feel that they had been there and seen that. And they hadn’t – even kids living in Detroit. She wanted to speak to them about the importance of service.

The other thing she did, which was most dramatic, is she said, “I believe enough in them that I want to give them \$100,000.00 that any child 18 and the eldest who is 50 can decide how to give away that money [01:07:00] based on our four giving areas and they can do it any way they want.” They do such a great job and they meet every year, they’re very serious about – excuse me, every month. They actually, I think, do more calls than we do. My daughter and David Sherman, who’s my eldest sister’s eldest son, are really involved, all the kids, a lot of the kids. They come in and out, but they’re really serious about this



because they feel that so much of how they related to their grandfather too and my mother. My mother is very engaged in her philanthropy, too, so that's something that is already starting to travel down.

(KA): And as you said before, it doesn't matter the zeros. People could do it with \$20.00 with their kids.

(JFC): That's it.

(KA): Yes.

(JFC): My mother always says, "Be flexible when you're giving." She always gave us the ability to understand what it was like to live in someone else's shoes. That's how you learn. [01:08:00] If I'm saying to my kids that would I like them to learn to be bold in their giving, to be collaborative, and I always say, "Do what you can." There's a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt that I love. It says, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." So, anyone can do it, to really look at this is part of who you are and how you would live your life.

(KA): When you were thinking about this flying in and driving over, what would you like to make sure is on the record in terms of our state of generosity in Michigan? What you've learned, what's here, what you'd like to share, what you think is important to share.

(JFC): I think as we were talking earlier – The time that I was really most active in this and Michigan was what I call "the golden age of philanthropy and service" – and that was only because of all the foundation laid by people like Ranny and Kellogg and Joel and my parents and all those wonderful people, [01:09:00] Dottie Johnson. For some reason, they're such big-hearted people that they were able to see that we needed to ensure that all people had the benefits that we did, that had access, that had the skills, that had – however you want to say it.

I think it's really important for Michigan to be seen as this model. We've had a lot of history to do this. I've been to other places and it takes years to build this kind of support, and I'm not sure it's possible anywhere else. I mean I also want to say that we have a way of thinking creatively in this State. We don't care how it gets done. We want to think creatively. One of the things we did which is remarkable is we thought, "How do we get government to work better, to help people? Maybe if we put a foundation liaison in the governor's office and attorney general's office." I mean these are the things that are now being done around the country, but it's that kind of creative thinking of how [01:10:00] can we get to the solution we want. The new thing that's coming up is hopefully what I'd say is this social impact giving, which my brother is very involved in – that place between public-private partnership in businesses to *how can we have philanthropy, how can we fund these organizations that we're trying to help with maybe* – you know, sometimes there might be donor fatigue, *this could be based on a business model.*

[There is a new model of giving that is evolving and will continue to evolve where there is a realization that no sector alone can solve societal issues. There are not enough philanthropic dollars to do that. Witness the Gates Foundation and how they are trying to do this. There are not enough government dollars nor corporate dollars But together, these sectors can create innovative solutions...the new social



economy (i.e. social impact bonds, the government funded Social Innovation Fund, and others)] Those three sectors coming together – philanthropy, business and government – I think it’s going to be the future. Because we have a responsibility. It’s not like it’s their children in Detroit. These are our children. These are our family.

(KA): Brilliant.

(JFC): Thank you. [Laughter] Oh, God I miss it.

