TWO INTERVIEWS WITH MARGARET ANN "RANNY" RIECKER

Interview #1 – AUGUST 1, 2011

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 Margaret Riecker on August 1, 2011. Conducted by Susan Harrison Wolffis, consultant, interviewer for *Our State of Generosity*. Recorded at Dow Gardens in Midland, 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. Interviewee passed away and did not have the opportunity to add to or edit her answers in order to provide the most accurate answers to the questions. This transcript has been reviewed and edited by family members of Mrs. Riecker. For these reasons, the edited transcript may not exactly reflect the recorded interview.

Susan Harrison-Wolffis (SHW): I would like to hear about you first. Your childhood, how you grew up, what lessons you learned from your parents.

Ranny Riecker (RR): Actually, I grew up in Ann Arbor and I am a member of the silent generation, as you know. In the foundation world we talk about generations a lot, particularly in the family foundation world (that is sort of why I am throwing that in). But I have always thought that I was really much more a part of the World War II generation because World War II started almost right after my 8th birthday. My father was in a medical unit that the University of Michigan put together and so they left. When they left,

[00:02:00] they got in a train in Ann Arbor and nobody knew whether the train was going to go east or west, where it was going to go. Whether they were going to end up in Europe or Africa or in the Pacific and they didn't know where their husbands, and in some cases wives, were for probably three weeks until they arrived in England. That was almost four years of being the oldest child in a single parent family with three younger sisters and I think that that was, in many respects, transformative.

I told the story the other night about when I was ten, my mother took me to New York and we were having dinner with a friend of the family whose brother was actually my father's tent mate. That was when we were just beginning to hear about the Nazi atrocities and all of a sudden sister stopped and said, [00:03:00] "Margaret, you probably don't want me to talk to Ranny about this." Mother said, "No, you can say anything you want to in front of Ranny, she needs to know what is going on." That is just a total attitudinal… you are 10 years old but you have to be responsible. I think that is one of the things that made a huge impact on me, always, as part of that. This doesn't mean I was ever perfect, I still picked on my little sisters and didn't like to do things and all that good stuff.

(SHW): What kind of a child were you at ten?

(RR): Pudgy… horse crazy, all little girls are horse crazy. [Laughter] Probably, little girls [00:04:00] at ten are bigger than little boys at ten because also when I was ten my female classmates and I staged our first sit down strike. [Laughter] This is terrible. We had a teacher – probably very ADD because she was really a terrible teacher – but she was really into modern dance. The girls all had to take modern dance and the boys got to march twice a week. We had ROTC drilling right outside the school all the time; the boys got to do that kind of stuff. We had to do flowers and folding, great wonderful things like that and so we staged a sit down strike. Well, Julianna decided to cry and so everybody but one other girl and I got up, so she grabbed us and she pulled us up and swatted us and that was the end of our strike. [Laughter] So, I learned something about the effectiveness of strikes. [00:05:00] But that is the kind of little girl I was when I was ten.

(SHW): The reason I ask, when you brought up about ten because Morris Massey is a psychologist who has a theory that who you are at ten is who you are going to become as an adult.

(RR): I'll finish the story then because actually, I would have had the same teacher in the sixth grade. Mother went to the principal and she – this is the University Lab School in the University of Michigan – probably would hate it if they ever knew I was telling this story, but I think Deborah Wallace heard it. Mother had been a student teacher there but the principal said, "Well Margaret, you know we don't fire a teacher. We wait for her to realize [00:06:00] she is a failure and retire." So mother said, "Alright." She went to the dean of the ed. school and said, "I want Ranny to skip the sixth grade." So I started seventh grade when I was 10 years old. I took remedial math because part of the problem was that this wonderful teacher only took multiplication one day, addition one day, subtraction one day, division one day. I ended up working at the Farmer's Market that spring before I skipped so that I could at least learn to make change and count out plants and…

(SHW): And your parents, when your dad came home from the war… How did life change then?

(RR): It was an entirely different kind of disciplinary figure in our lives all of a sudden again. [00:07:00] I really do think women totally operate differently than men, in that we are much more consensual. My mother was strict and we did what we were told to do but it wasn't like when Harry came home. Then, there was also that wonderful person that I never had there saying, "And don't talk back to your mother." Dad never did that for me, no not really. Also, he really and truly became one of my best friends. My interests really are science and he was a doctor.

(SHW): And they taught lessons in philanthropy to you, or was it just something you picked up?

(RR): We talk about this but when it is something that is going on all the time, you don't really [00:08:00] have to talk about it. I can remember sitting, particularly when we would come to Midland and having lunch with my grandmother, and they would be talking about the different people who they were helping, our organizations. It was just dinner table conversation and you know, basically it always has been.

(SHW): Just part of life.

(RR): I will say one of the things I am going to do with my trustees – I have two new trustees and some new associate trustees coming in a couple weeks – and to talk about… Because my mother always told me that when she was growing up, that when they earned any money – and she babysat some of my cousins who were older than I am... My grandparents' family is almost split in two halves; so my oldest cousin is 93 right now [00:09:00] and then there is one who is probably close to 90 and then I am the oldest and that is a little gap in there between us… But if my mother earned any money, one fraction of it had to be reinvested into Dow Chemical Company, the same fraction had to go in the church plate, and the third part was hers. The funny thing is – and Dottie could tell you who the Rockefeller sister who used to be chairman of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund was – but she told exactly the same story about that is the way she was brought up.

(SHW): We are not brought up that way…

(RR): No we aren't, are we? I certainly didn't bring up my children to say you have to save, you have to give [00:10:00] in equal parts, and then what's left you may get. Although I have to say, they both do pretty well in their own way.

(SHW): I wanted to ask you, who is the silent generation?

(RR): The silent generation is those of us who were born during the depression. We, well my youngest sister is a baby boomer and as is my daughter, and my younger sister was born after World War II so…

(SHW): What are the characteristics of the silent generation?

(RR): I don't know. I think somebody thought we were silent, essentially passive.

(SHW): They were wrong.

(RR): I don't think so.

(SHW): I was wondering if it was that silent generation that was… There were [00:11:00] so many people of the World War II veterans, and so many baby boomers…

(RR): That we were quick squeezed in between and I think we sort of were. A lot of us actually learned to speak up for ourselves.

(SHW): How did this all work into who you are now? How does this work into what you have done with your life as a philanthropist, as an activist?

(RR): I was a political activist before I was – if you take things chronologically, which is rather strange. A lot of this is my mother's influence. I did not go to the University of Michigan, by the way. I had had enough after 12 years or however many [00:12:00] and I went to Carleton College in Minnesota and I really was a zoology major. I, then, went to Mount Holyoke and did graduate work and like every other young woman in the 50s, I got married. My husband was in the army for three years after we were married and we were stationed at the Pentagon and three years of being a good officer's wife was… [Laughter]

(SHW): I like you.

(RR): No, you know, sometimes you play "what if," because John had a colonel who really tried to get him to stay in the army. He kept saying, "Well John, Ranny really likes dress blues and she wants to go to Alaska and I can guarantee you Alaska for the next three years if you will just stay in." [Laughter] Unfortunately we didn't do that, but we did start playing "what if" a few years ago... What would have happened if we had done that? We wouldn't have been 49ers [00:13:00] but we would have been 59ers.

(SHW): Did you like those dress blues?

(RR): I really did like the dress blues [laughter] and the women, we always wore elbow length gloves when we did anything formal. We wore hats and white kid gloves for everything we were doing, and that was the way it was in Midland when we moved here.

Actually my mother had been on the city council in Ann Arbor when I was in college and I thought she was absolutely crazy. I have always laughed about when John and I were courting, they would sit and talk politics and then mother would say, "Oh, I'm sorry" and she would go to bed. By then John would say, "I have to go to work tomorrow, Ranny." [Laughter]

When we moved to Midland, [00:14:00] it was the depression time or recession, 1958, and so Dow wasn't able to give John the job that we thought we had when we were coming; and so he got a job with

the State Senator from Midland. The first thing that happened was we came in May and by midsummer, realizing the Republican party was not going to give him the kind of financial or other support, that they just didn't have it. We all became involved in his campaign, we were the campaign. John wasn't a partner but the partner's wife, the partner and John.

[Personal conversation removed] [Resumes 17:55]

(RR): My mother had a masters from Columbia Teacher's College and she didn't like what they did with pre-kindergarten either, so she started kindergarten [00:18:00] that we closed when she died 60 years later. Actually, if you go to Ann Arbor now and you go down Forest there is the Towsley Children's House, which is a building the University built a year ago, but it is the site of where the two houses that she had for her nursery school ended up being.

(SHW): So you were active in…

(RR): So we began to become involved, well first of all obviously [00:19:00] fundraising because that was a big thing that the party had. Just the fact that because we were getting involved… We both got involved with the Republican organizations, not just the party. They used to have a breakfast club that met one Sunday of every month and they used to have women's clubs and getting involved in all off those things. Then strangely enough, before the 1960 election, JFK – yeah it was the '60 election – in '59 Dow and the National Chamber of Commerce sponsored an Action Course in Practical Politics. I was very fortunately invited to take the leaders course, which I did. [00:20:00] It was a fun thing because probably 100 people ended up in this community, which at that point in time was probably less than 60,000 people, actually taking the Action Course in Practical Politics; learning about what the law is, governing politics and everything else, and actually doing political organization and I loved it. I like organization and so I just keep on doing it. Then after the '64 election, Elly Peterson (who was a super lady)… You know that a biography of hers just came out within the last couple of weeks. I read the proof on it but I can't tell you…

(SHW): I will get it because I interviewed her when she was [00:21:00] stumping for the ERA.

(RR): Anyway, I had done a lot on the Goldwater campaign and so Elly called me and said, "Come on down to Lansing." She said, as the first woman chair as soon as she became the chair, she said, "I need somebody to do women's activities because there is not a first vice chair to do women's activities. I want someone who can work with the party women and the women's club and would you like to do it?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Alright, I think you should take a tour." So she took me to a map and she pointed out… I had never thought in terms of the whole state, the 10th Congressional District at that point was big enough. So, that is what I did. The whole idea was training women leaders and teaching them what they needed to know to be effective and increase the number of women [00:22:00] county and district chairmen and I loved doing it. Then I succeeded Elly on the national committee that again – I mean, talk about mentors. When she had gotten fed up with the national committee after two years she just said, "Okay, you are running for national committeewoman now."

(SHW): I did want to say to you, thank you for my generation who is just behind yours. Thank you. But I don't want you to think that I ever underestimate what you had to go through, the doors that were closed…

(RR): I don't think I thought it was that bad. It was okay but in part… I did an interview with someone else talking about the biggest influences on my life and I talked about my mother and Elly. What I finally said, the great thing about both of them [00:23:00] is they knew who they were and what they were doing and they were comfortable in their own skin. I truly believe that, I think that is just so much.

(SHW): And did you –You trained the leaders; you opened the doors for the leaders.

(RR): The law gave them the office, but it didn't empower them. They really needed to learn *how*.

(SHW): You didn't go into the elected political leadership, did you?

(RR): Well I was elected within the party but no, I never ran for public office. I seriously thought about it at one point in time but I really did have, I think about less than a year old and a three-year-old. [00:24:00] Peggy says she grew up working at Republican headquarters. You know the really interesting thing is that even when I was commuting back and forth to Lansing, I would be home by dinner time and I actually had some good help. This is another one of those things, that we grew up believing that families sit down and eat dinner together every night and our family sat down and ate dinner together every night. Obviously if I was gone for five days, I wasn't sitting down but John and the kids were; or if John was gone, we sat down at the dining room table and we had dinner.

(SHW): We all know the advantages of that, don't we?

(RR): It is just absolutely amazing. [00:25:00]

(SHW): So you were able to take all that leadership, all those things that you have learned, all those things that you did, and then turn that into the next stage after politics…

(RR): Actually I stayed… I think I stayed on the national committee through the first Reagan administration, so that wasn't until 1984. At the same time, we started CMF in the early 70s and in the early 60s. My mother started the Towsley Foundation I think in 1957 or '58, and my next three sisters and I all went on as trustees in '62. [00:26:00] Then my mother was a trustee of the Dow Foundation and she hated commuting to Midland. So she, finally after I had one year experience on the Towsley Foundation, suggested *strongly* that I should become a trustee of the Dow Foundation at the same time. So basically, actually I was in there as essentially – I had 10 years as a trustee before CMF but being involved in two family foundations. In both cases, really taking things very seriously, neither one was what we called a staffed foundation – we had clerical help but that was it – we really and truly, and that has been our tradition. I brought the first executive director into the Dow Foundation six years [00:27:00] ago.

(SHW): Until then you were doing it…

(RR): I was or my predecessor, as president, was doing it with their secretaries. I am still there mornings and afternoons and I have to be, in evenings. I have to be but just because when I am no longer here, there will not be a family member running the foundation on a day-to-day basis.

(SHW): Your daughter… You have two daughters?

(RR): I have a daughter and a son.

(SHW): They have other interests?

(RR): My son does all sorts of strange things and lives in Texas and my daughter happens to be living in Grand Rapids. She is an associate Dean of the Michigan State Medical School. [00:28:00] She is a trustee of both those two foundations.

(SHW): How does it change the fabric of the foundation for it to be family-led versus staff-led? Knowing that is it not right or wrong, but why did you prefer to do that? What was the philosophy?

(RR): There is no rational thought involved; this is our responsibility. We were given the privilege of having this huge foundation and it is our responsibility to make sure it works right. It is responsibility and this is our privilege [00:29:00] and we really serve it. It is hard for trustees to understand, we really serve at the privilege of the Congress, as a matter of fact, and they are scary. We are all getting into why CMF started really.

(SHW): I need to hear this to have you set the scene…

(RR): I think that this really is true of many of us who have been involved for a long, long time, that we recognize the fact that we have a very great privilege and that this is true. Some of the other people who are not family members but who are leaders in the independent foundations, that it is a privilege and it also is a tremendous responsibility and no one else is going to. The other thing: it is not a substitute for our personal philanthropy.

(SHW): I was going to ask you about that. [00:30:00]

(RR): Absolutely not. That even though we may do matching funds and match… In fact, at the Dow Foundation we started with matching grants for our staff before we started with our trustees. This is the first year we are giving our trustees the opportunity but they have to give by our guidelines which is going to be interesting; they don't all live in Michigan and it has to be grants and gifts in Michigan. But no, it is not a substitute for personal giving.

(SHW): Did you ever want to walk away and just say, "Just let me go be a person?"

(RR): No. What would you do? How boring! [Laughter] Good heavens. This is fun; it is exciting. [00:31:00] You meet so many absolutely wonderful people with wonderful ideas and sometimes they really do have the capacity to carry them out and sometimes they don't and you can be helpful. I think we particularly at the Dow Foundation, well all of the bigger foundations, our role is not just giving money; we do a lot more. We do a lot of convening and facilitating. I don't like people trying to reinvent the same wheel all the time and so the more I know, probably the more frequently I say, "Do you know so-and-so who is trying to do the same thing? Would you like to talk with them? Maybe you should get together."

(SHW): I really want to hear how this all segues into CMF. Maybe you could talk to me, too, at some point about some of the favorite things that you do, that speak to your heart… [00:32:00]

(RR): I also think we all evolve in the things that we are interested in, and our boards of trustees evolve actually, particularly in a family foundation. The younger people obviously are much more interested in children and early childhood and things like that and as we grow older, we even start worrying about problems with the aging. Those are the obvious examples, but going back to…

In 1968 and '69, I can remember this actually being an election issue in some parts of rural Michigan, but the whole topic of the offenses, or alleged offenses of particularly the big foundations like Ford and Rockefeller. They were unduly influencing [00:33:00] the political scene and they were doing all sorts of "horrible" things and foundation-type philanthropy just, you know, it was *evil* and a lot of people in Congress, I think, truly believed that what we were doing was bad. I can't give you specific people's names. I can tell you, because I heard more from the conservative side, about how evil philanthropy is. You give to your church but that is all you give to, and if you have all this money and you are using it to buy votes or take voters to the polls or whatever you are doing…

Anyway, Congress started a big investigation and it was Senator Packman and a few others. [00:34:00] Dottie is giving you better history than I am. Finally they passed what was called the Tax Reform Act of 1969 and that is when we first were given a mandatory payout. Right now we are required to pay out 5 percent of our total asset value. At that point in time it was a floating target that was set, I think by the Secretary of the Treasury, so we really didn't know how much we had to pay out. I am not positive whether it was TRA '69 – but I think it was – that you could not [00:35:00] own a controlling interest, which is 2 percent essentially, of a major corporation. I mean, now you think about this and it really sounds strange that Kellogg, Mott, Kresge all had huge problems. Well, as would we have because we were nothing but Dow stock, only we didn't own a major percentage of the stock. We have never owned 2 percent of the stock and this kept us out of being – even though in those days we were proudly the fourth largest foundation in Michigan – we didn't have that particular problem; we were under the radar.

So Russ Mawby (and I almost know about this more secondhand than firsthand) decided to call a meeting, and it was [00:36:00] Russ, and Stanley Kresge (who was still alive), and Harding Mott from Mott, and Herb Dow and Harry Towsley were invited. Herb and Harry decided they wanted to take John Riecker to this meeting as well so they would have their own lawyer there, I think. I think those were all of the initial participants, the first meeting's initial participants – or at least the first meeting I knew about. [They] came back with this wonderful idea – we really didn't know whether we were starting CMF or we

were starting anything – to get the major foundations to work together to essentially save the lives of philanthropy.

The outcome of this with the sliding payout and everything else would have been, first of all, the others had to diversify [00:37:00], fast, and it got better but also you didn't have paying out. You'd have a limited lifetime rather than existing in perpetuity, which basically all the owners of those foundations want them to exist in perpetuity, the ones I am talking about.

So the first conference was organized – and we were called a conference of foundations – and two days in Ann Arbor at the Marriott, I think. Actually, wonderful speakers but also wonderful breakout sessions because it was people who really and truly cared about what they were doing and really had a stake in the whole thing. Essentially, well Russ might have been at Kellogg, [00:38:00] for instance; he was so close to the whole thing and caring so much. With Harding Mott and with Stanley Kresge and some of the other people really were still family members... And also, we had some educational sessions. The decision was made, and again I think it was at that first meeting, that we were a conference and we would have a conference again the next year. Meanwhile, we had our marching orders for various people; Harding Mott is the one I think of most. When we reached a certain significant size, we would then perhaps become a council and that probably, actually it happened faster than we thought it would in '75, so that is very fast. [00:39:00] It became very apparent that there was a lot of interest in the field in Michigan to do that and so we actually became a council, had an office. The first office was in Grand Rapids and believe it or not Dottie was not the first full-time staff, someone else was and it is almost – We haven't looked back since then. Because I was involved in politics, I think even early on, I at least knew my own congressman and I knew my own state legislators, which most people don't unfortunately. So I was really interested in becoming involved in the whole public policy [00:40:00] part of this thing.

(SHW): Legislator….

(RR): We had a legislation committee in Michigan and I chaired that – well Bill Allen chaired it first. Absolutely wonderful person, and then when Bill was gone, I chaired it. By then Dottie was our executive director and then president and we were much more formal but one of the things that [changed], and I have to say this, we were much more board driven than staff driven. It is not because Dottie wasn't a driver, but because Dottie was one of us. All of the people who were on the board, that original board, were truly – or the original three or four boards – were truly passionate about the field and passionate about our mission. We would talk about lobbying to save our lives, [00:41:00] that we could do that legally. It sounds funny to actually use that kind of language. We weren't being extremists, but that was the definition of how we could lobby, was to save our lives, not for other valid issues or candidates.

(SHW): And by our lives, you mean the foundations…

(RR): For organized philanthropy.

(SHW): To the average person sitting out in the world right now, I don't expect that they think about philanthropy and politics necessarily coexisting.

(RR): Well, the average people might not, but the Congress a couple of years ago started all over again rehashing a lot of these same arguments and what was going to go on.

Dottie Johnson **(DJ)**: Ranny, as you know the House Ways and Means Committee has a lot to do with the laws that are passed pertaining to private foundations. You were [00:42:00] so active and so much a leader in the whole regional association movement. Explain…

(RR): The House Ways and Means Committee does have a lot to do with this and actually I was being involved in it. I have also been sort of a mentor to a couple political figures in Midland, and one of them is Dave Camp who is now chair of Ways and Means.

(SHW): I hear he has an interesting history in your life.

(RR): He actually was not a yard boy; Bill Schuette was the yard boy, who is the attorney general. That probably ties into the public policy part of it, as well. They were best friends and actually next door neighbors. When Michigan passed the Age of Majority law I went out and recruited these 18-year-olds to be precinct delegates. [00:43:00] I mean, why not? Sometimes they do turn out to be pretty good, and they became delegates at county conventions and worked campaigns.

(SHW): Training the next generation..

(RR): And they have done very well for themselves. It has helped actually to have Dave's ear and it has helped all of us in Michigan because… We were actually in Washington meeting with our members of Congress the day that Dave was elected to the Ways and Means Committee. He was so excited he took us out to lunch and he picked up the tab. We were supposed to pick up the tab but he was so excited, he paid for it.

(SHW): How has the face of Michigan changed because [00:44:00] of what you did with CMF? Because you were able to do what you were able to do with your foundation because of the Tax Reform Act? How has it changed, how has history changed, how has the present changed?

(RR): I think you can look at some of the simple things, certainly some of the bricks and mortar things that have happened because of foundation philanthropy, but also individual philanthropy. This is the other thing that we really do stress: individuals are still the single largest source of philanthropic dollars. Foundations, corporations and community foundations really only amount to about 15 percent of the total philanthropic giving [00:45:00] in the United States, which always shocks people. But that takes it again. Your foundation does not replace your personal giving. Certainly a lot of research things that have been foundation supported that never would have been supported if there weren't that extra money. We went through – and I think for a lot of us in a foundation feel still – why would we support state universities? That is up to the taxpayer to support state universities. It is a great story (and I can't speak to every one of the 15 campuses about the difference between what the state support, general fund support does and what

their endowments that they are building, now all of them do), but [00:46:00] the simplest would be with just state support they would be just basics, we would not have any world class universities.

Having said that, I will say (since a lot of people like to talk about privatizing the University of Michigan since they have such a huge endowment) it would take an additional 9 billion dollars in undesignated endowment to replace the State of Michigan general fund contribution; which gives you a pretty good idea, I think, of how important the state still is. It truly is a hard story to tell sometimes because, not Michigan's public educations but another university, I know of a trustee person who said, "Why would we give to somebody whose endowment [00:47:00] is larger than ours?" And it is an interesting question.

(SHW): You have to really get into your conscience. Did I give you enough time to talk about the political side of it?

(DJ): Talk about how CMF, the CMF philanthropic mafia, how we organized even in the House and the Senate in the State of Michigan.

(RR): It is interesting. One of the things that I have to say appalled me when I went on the Council on Foundations' National Board and went on their Legs and Regs Committee is the thing, one of the things that makes Michigan unique truly, is that we actually [00:48:00] organized on congressional district levels and have someone in every congressional district who was a foundation leader. It was the leadership. Probably board leadership, even though staff might have been involved, but it was board leadership who was truly appointed to be liaison with their particular member of Congress. To a very great extent, we tried to do that with both the State Senate and State House as well. One of my frustrations when I chaired Legs and Regs on the national level is when the foundations would have what we in those days called RAGs on the Hill (or Regional Association of Grantmakers), and they would have one staff person come. The staff person, frankly, isn't the person who gives the Congressman, or takes him or her out to dinner or lunch or whatever, and has their ear [00:49:00] and can pick up the phone and get in; that is just not how you are effective. You've got to have an ongoing relationship and it more than just the donor relationship. So, trying to teach people that you have got to do that kind of thing again.

Again, when we would go to Washington, we have three or four people calling up, set up appointments, agendas, we know exactly what we are going to talk about, handouts. One of the things that Dottie had us doing – I think they still do it, I haven't been able to go the last few years – is to take a printout of all the grants made by foundations within a member's district. There was one who never wanted to talk to us until finally he got that printout and then all of a sudden he did, I think probably so he could get the printout again the next year. [00:50:00] That is the kind of effective things and – actually Dottie Johnson probably deserves the real credit for really getting us organized, having a very specific legislative plan of work on the national level every year.

You know, we still have interesting things like IRA rollovers that we keep going back and forth on as they happen and don't happen or expire. Right now some of the things that CMF is working on is pretty esoteric, but Dottie really laid out that whole plan and she would not claim credit. But when you interview

Dottie you can… She was the person who said it is there [00:51:00] and every year we would adopt a plan of work, a whole legislative plan as a board to make it happen.

(SHW): What advice would you give to this next generation? Not only individual philanthropists, but of the leaders in the group?

(RR): I truly believe that it is very hard to lead, or anything else, effectively if you don't have legitimate factual information. We are seeing a lot of people right now on the public scene [00:52:00] who have no more substance than slogans and I really and truly don't know what they are talking about. I think there was one who didn't realize that Freedom of Speech was part of the Constitution. [Laughter] It is just absolutely unbelievable, the lack of information, or the proliferation of incorrect information, and I think this is an increasingly great challenge. How do elected officials get information on any topic and even though they have policy staffs, where is the policy staff getting their information from? [00:53:00] And frequently, well, who chooses the witnesses to testify before Congress? It is as simple as that. I think this is truly a problem that needs to be addressed. That is probably the first one and then I am tying this in with politics and this is the one place where unfortunately, in politics, too frequently the price of leadership is not to be able to really lead.

(SHW): Why?

(RR): I guess in part, for a legitimate reason that you are trying to build consensus but on the other hand a truly insignificant minority can wield enough power to, if they just want to be in transit, to stop anything from happening… Unlike when I tried my sit-down strike. [00:54:00]

(SHW): And the girl who cried.

(RR): The teacher was the one who cried.

(DJ): Very active both with grantees, now MNA (Michigan Nonprofit Association). Talk about your role with that.

(RR): I have been very lucky. I haven't had to have a role in MNA other than to be a significant friend, very much of a friend and a funder. This is one case where I really have had a staff member who is on their board all the time, who is their advocate. Working with MNA, working with the Johnson Center, working with CMF and I guess my concern is always… They all play very significant roles in the whole philanthropic world and each of them brings something [00:55:00] unique to the table. I think this is very important and why we really need to keep supporting what all of them are doing, that no one group can actually do the whole job and make it work.

(SHW): I am relatively new to this world. I am just learning all the acronyms. You have seen from the national scope for these organizations work well together, the foundations to work collaboratively. Can you give me your view of why it works here?

(RR): Why does it work here? It doesn't always work [00:56:00] here *but* I really think that we are more comfortable in our skin, we are not competitive. Too frequently, if you put a group of nonprofits in a room together, one of the things they are going to say is they are competing for the same dollars. Well, I don't believe they are competing for the same dollars because I think the dollars are there if what they are doing brings value to our communities and if it doesn't bring value, it doesn't matter whether they have a competitor or not.

So, for instance, one of the things that the Dow Foundation did – and then Dow Corning did some of it – the last MNA conference we made a donation. Kyle was very nice and said we could send as many people as we wanted, if the executive director and the board chair or a board leader would go to the conference together; sit in the same meetings, hear the same description of what each [00:58:00] of them was supposed to do, and talk about it and bring it back to their board…we'd pay for it. Actually Dow Corning picked it up and extended it I think into Saginaw and Bay, as well. I am finding that I get more and more frustrated right now with a lot of boards who… And yet you understand it. Again, the executive director wants a board that is not going to ask questions but who share their belief in the mission and they totally cease to be able to meet their mission if they get too internally centered simply on a mission.

(SHW): Internally centered…very interesting. [00:59:00] When you were thinking of us getting together today, what had you anticipated talking about that we haven't touched on?

(RR): Well, we can go back to what we were going to put off until the end, what are our favorite things right now. Where are we going because we actually, and this is sort of fun, we now have… There are two of us in my generation; we are the cousin's generation on the board. There are two nonfamily members, [01:00:00] which means that there are eight other people or there is the potential to be eight other people and they are either our children's generation or in some cases grandchildren of our generation who are now coming on as trustees. We asked the Johnson Center last, I guess it is almost a year ago now, to actually do a questionnaire, a survey, whatever you want to call it and whether it would…

[Interruption] [Resumes 1:01:45]

When Dottie decided to retire, as you know, our gift to Dottie and her passion for Grand Valley was to raise money for the initial endowment that [01:02:00] went to the Johnson Center, as well as CMF gave virtually their entire library to the Johnson Center. I am not going to be the person to talk about the Johnson Center, but it really is supplying some extremely unique services to the philanthropic world. A lot of the demographic things that they do and the mapping are absolutely fantastic.

For us at the Dow Foundation, one of the things we asked them to do was to put together a survey of our foundation, our trustees, and all the people who have been members of our associates program. To explain that, every year we have representatives of the six branches of the family, representatives of the three branches who are next generation [01:03:00] and the generation after that to come to be with us as a year for associates. They can participate in discussion but they aren't supposed to vote – or their vote isn't supposed to be counted because frequently they vote anyway. So all of our trustees and our associates received this survey which, in and of itself had some funny things happen, like the people who said, "If

you'd send it to me electronically, I would be happy to do it." Yes, we tried, five times and we don't have a current address for you. [Laughter]

We actually got pretty good response on it and it is interesting because we had thought, "Well maybe we really and truly do need to go into a strategic planning mode." The interesting thing [01:04:00] is that most of them were reasonably happy with what we were doing right now, but I think in part it is because we really do try to be responsive to what is going on in society today. We talk a lot about donor intent and for the Dow Foundation donor intent is for the benefaction of the people of Midland and the State of Michigan. That is virtually our entire limitation – because Grace Dow gave to every faith-based organization in Midland County, we continue to make a small grant every year to every faith-based organization; but beyond that we really have had the opportunity to stay relevant.

We, for instance, have been much more concerned about perhaps career and technical education and an educated workforce. [01:05:00] In Midland, long before this state became… And then the role of community colleges, long before the state became that interested in them and that is just one example. Right now probably our big interest – And I am getting away from the survey obviously, but part of the reason is I think that we have tried to stay relevant. Certainly there are some really terrific suggestions and technical, but I think our general grantmaking has stayed relevant to a much greater extent than if we said "For the next five years all we are going to do is universal preschool." That, hopefully by the end of five years we are going to have universal preschool taken care of, in fact I hope we do [01:06:00] pretty soon anyway, but at least within our grantmaking range.

(SHW): I would think that would take pretty strong leadership to keep the board on tasks, to keep things relevant and not complacent. Am I assuming some things?

(RR): We know that the interest is there and it is much more there than it is in higher education; but really it is particularly because a large number of them, a continually larger number of them don't live in Michigan. It is easy to say "let's do something…;" but if you don't know what is going on in that particular area, how do you make grants if you don't know anybody who is doing anything? They need to know community needs – and [01:07:00] I define community, the radius on my circle could get as large as it wants to just so it stays within the boundaries of the State of Michigan, which is sometimes a little hard on some people. We really do spend a lot of time, a lot of involvement, both my executive director and I, still both of us serve on more committees than we should. It is wonderful. It is really not to be controlling, it is the best way we have of actually being involved and knowing what is going on in the field, within the state, and also within our community itself.

(SHW): You don't need somebody from the outside coming in [01:08:00] and telling you what you need…

(RR): Sometimes you do need somebody to come in from the outside and say, "Have you thought about doing whatever." On the other hand there are also a lot of very creative people within Michigan. One of my favorite examples is when Maura Corrigan was Chief Justice of Michigan, she actually went around Michigan and this happened to be one of the places she came. Our probate judge set up a meeting of

virtually all of the service agencies and the foundation leadership and local government leadership to hear her. Out of this actually has grown a committee called Midland Kids First (but when Justice Corrigan [01:09:00] was here it started just talking about some of the problems from the Supreme Court they were seeing, particularly problems dealing with youth). We became (the Dow Foundation) very much involved, first of all with helping to start a program of multi-systemic therapy [MST] for troubled youth, teenagers, adolescents which is in about its fourth or fifth year now. [It] has terrific response but… MST is involving the whole community (starting with the child and its family and then moving out to the school, the peer groups and involving everybody in it). After we have been doing that for about two years, the probate judge came to me [01:10:00] and she said, "Could we start doing this with sex offenders, teenage sex offenders?" Yes absolutely, and they have gone into that. Part of the success of this has been very publicly recognized, first by Justice Corrigan to the legislature and last year by then-Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly, again reporting on what was going on in Midland.

Another part of what we are sort of involved in, but not as closely, is baby court. Which, this is interesting and I think they do it in Genesee County but I think we are the only two counties in the state. Abused and neglected babies, there are lots of them unfortunately, and the courts have taken the baby away from the parents but then what happens? Because the baby is in limbo, basically. [01:11:00] So first of all, trying to teach parenting skills to the parents and if the parents aren't willing to learn anything about parenting skills, it sounds terrible when you actually say getting them to terminate parental rights is a success story in some cases. Then that baby has a chance for a future and so this has been one of the fascinating things that we… In other words, we have done quite a bit with the probate court recently. Actually it started, we do have a juvenile correction center in Midland and about half of the residents are Midland kids and about half are from other parts of the state, I gather.

(SHW): Those might be two programs that I could learn a little bit….

(RR): Well I think that there is that something that is one of the most unique things that we have going on in Michigan right now [01:12:00] and that is why I brought that up.

(SHW): I also want to ask what is the legacy and also what is ahead?

(RR): I think this is some of the most exciting stuff that we are doing right now.

(SHW): What else would you like to say?

(RR): I would just go back to one thing because I obviously tend to become involved in these things. I mean, at least emotionally involved in them and sometimes it is very hard to explain, "No this isn't my project, this is somebody else's project." I spend a lot of time so [01:13:00] I'll know enough about it to say, "Yes, this is a good project." That is one of the things that I think is one of the hardest things to explain to trustees who don't live in the area, who may find out about a project when they receive their board packet if it is a new grant request for the first time. Even when you try to do site visits, it doesn't always work that you get the people that you really need to get.

(SHW): I always think of it as bringing the words off the page, bringing the project off….

(RR): Making it three dimensional for everybody. We have so many challenges and we really do have to reinvent society to explain that we can't afford to do it all. [01:14:00] Taxpayers can't afford to do it all, that we as individual citizens have to take responsibility for meeting a lot of these needs.

(SHW): We…

(RR): It is not just the foundations; it is we as citizens in our communities.

(SHW): We can't do it all, but together we can.

(RR): Together, we really can.

(SHW): We are really in a new, old time.

(RR): Yes we are and I don't believe that some of the things that worked in 1900 are going to work in 2000. We live in a global society nowadays and people are much more mobile moving in and out of our communities than [01:15:00] they were 100 years ago; they moved in but they never moved out. People sat down and took a job and stayed forever and ever and ever and ever and raised a family and that doesn't happen anymore. In this community, we have people who come in for three and four years and then they are gone. Some come back and some don't; they are all over the world but we still have basic needs. We want the best possible school system. We want the best possible recreation. That is why we plant flowers. What are the other things we can do to help keep this community a welcoming community, not only people who grew up with English as their first language but people who are coming in with different cultures?

(SHW): Is that part of Dow, part of your foundation or is that you as [01:16:00] Ranny, a citizen?

(RR): Well, this is Ranny saying this as a citizen, but part of our foundations role is to obviously… When I came on the foundation it was to make Midland the best possible community to live and raise a family. Now, I have to add, the best possible community for singles who would rather be in Chicago or New York or San Francisco or Shanghai or Hong Kong or Singapore….

Interview #2 – NOVEMBER 28, 2011

A second interview with Margaret Riecker on November 28, 2011. 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.

Kathy Agard (KA): Can you tell us a little bit about how the Dow Foundation has worked with the Johnson Center?

Ranny Riecker (RR): Well, the really exciting way we work and the only way we've really worked (as opposed to making a grant), is we asked the Johnson Center to do a survey of all our present and past trustees and associate trustees and basically find out what they really thought of us and where we should be going. I have to say it was fascinating. I mean first of all there are the silly little things like the people would say, "Well if you would do this electronically we would've answered sooner" and they turn out to be the ones for whom we had no current e-mail address sort of thing; but that's part of being a family foundation [00:02:00]. We really did, I think, get some tremendously valuable information. The interesting thing is, I think that pleased us, basically and fundamentally – and this is over three generations actually – they're satisfied with the directions we tend to be taking, how we are doing it. Certainly they've got some wonderful suggestions and we are trying to follow those about more detail, more metrics maybe, interesting things. I think this is not really generational, I think part of it is how we have all changed and that we are much less willing to accept just "you're a good guy here's a bunch of money" and we really do want the metrics. I think working with the younger people and the Johnson [00:03:00] Center has helped us to see this. They really are asking for those questions to be answered.

(KA): Can you talk a little bit about your experience of being the first chair. You are here today for the Johnson Center Leadership Council. It is the first time the Johnson Center in 20 years has had outside advice and you are the founding chair. Maybe you could talk a little about the group.

(RR): It is a very interesting group and we are very much in transition and I have to say because obviously we're working with a different director, different people. I think we are a very broad-based group and we have our partner organizations CMF and MNA both on [00:04:00] the board, as well as having not just foundation members but people in government and public service. I think it continues to evolve but I think it is truly vital because that kind of broad-based board participation that we have is going to keep philanthropy relevant through the Johnson Center.

(KA): You probably have more experience than anybody I know working with different kinds of CEOs, being a board chair, being a board member, things that worked, things that didn't. What is your rule of thumb when you decide to go on a board or your sense of a relationship with the CEO?

(RR): [00:05:00] I think the first thing is I think, and I'm sure I haven't always done it this way, but to look at a board and say, "is this really going to make a difference to the world in which we live and do I really have something that I can give to that board?" I'll stop right there just for a minute and say, "and if the board is set up in such a way that the board members really are there to rubberstamp somebody else's opinions then it's not a board for me." And I don't see why any mature adult would waste their time on that kind of a board because I think one of the keys to making boards work and one of the reasons for non-professionals in the field being board members is to bring that broad-based experience of the world and it's much more broad-based probably than the person who is [00:06:00] the day-to-day chief operating officer, regardless of title, of that nonprofit.

(KA): I have been always impressed with the CMF board in just observing, that people would really address real differences in a very civil way. Can you chat a little bit about how that happens that you end up with the serviceability that we are not seeing maybe anywhere else in the world right now?

(RR): Frankly, I wonder how it happens. You know, I think we started out with such a very clear mission and very clear direction of why we were doing it, that whether we disagreed on nitpicking little things or not, our goals were always all the same. First of all that whole dealing with TRA '69 but also the increase of philanthropy, passing on philanthropic tradition, [00:07:00] our whole heritage. And so it has been very important that those are the things that go forward and much more important than personalities or egos and certainly those first boards were pure personality and ego and wonderful, wonderful people to work with because we really shared those goals so totally and we also had an awfully good first president with Dottie, yes.

(KA): Tell me about how you would prepare for a legislative visit. So I'm the brand new board member of a family foundation up in Charlevoix and you would come in and talk to me. How do you prepare that board member to begin to be a public policy advocate on behalf of philanthropy?

(RR): Well I suppose you could go two different ways. [00:08:00] I think it's a good idea first of all if you find out who the, no I'll go the other way first. You really want work on the issues first; you really want to know why you're going, and what are your top priorities. And we get, CMF has always given us wonderful crib sheets, it's great, but you've really got to have it all in your head and understand what's there. And the other thing is and this is what I think has been part of Michigan's leadership in the whole government affairs thing, is you've got to know the people you're talking with whether it is your Congressman, your U.S. Senator. You have got to know a little bit about them, where they're coming from and hopefully they should know that the people who are coming in to see them aren't just another lobbyist, [00:09:00] that they truly are people who may vote for them or may not vote for them but they are their constituents and their community leaders in their communities coming in. This is always one of my complaints with RAGs on the Hill that Michigan would take 10, 15, 20 people down and every district we had the right people and the members came back to Washington to meet with us. I can

remember Carl Levin flying in from Detroit to meet with us and that's fantastic and other people would just send the president of the local regional organization and not worry about having people who are community leaders that they were going to recognize. I think that's very key when you're doing anything more, you might as well hire a lobbyist.

(KA): [00:10:00] From your experience, if you were to identify – say you were teaching a course at Grand Valley as a guest speaker and one of the students asked you to identify the qualities that they should develop to be a good philanthropic or charitable leader. What would you say to them in terms of the kinds of qualities that they should develop?

(RR): Be a good listener. Don't approach problems knowing "I know the answers" because you probably don't. I wish I did know the answers. Listen to what people have to tell you about what they're doing, what they think their problems are and then try to work with them to find a solution that works for them.

(KA): Do you go on site? How do you make people not afraid of you [00:11:00] Ranny, not afraid of the foundation?

(RR): I love to do site visits. I like to take all my trustees on site visits and that gets a little harder but the other thing is truly trying to be accessible and trying to spend time talking. We spend a lot of time frequently, particularly on major grants, we may spend a year before it comes to the trustees because we are trying to work out what is going to be best for all of us and we try to keep it, it's not confrontational. We are not going to tell you how to run your organization, usually. Once in a while it happens that you really do have to say "Hey you've got some problems."

It is not fun, but I think it's the willingness to take time and be accessible. The only problem with that is that it increases anticipation and sometimes you [00:12:00] just can't, it doesn't work because no matter what you try.

(KA): Tell me about your perspective on the development of these infrastructure organizations and their working together. Maybe tell me the story from your perspective of how they developed.

(RR): CMF, and we've talked about that, how we came together really with a specific goal in mind. As I recall MNA, we [00:13:00] had worked with the parent organization which was another organization to start with I think the Michigan League for Human Services, and through that evolution I think, first we started with grantmaker/grantseeker mutual conferences so we were in the same room together and then it tended to evolve into what has now become the Michigan Nonprofit Association. We all want to solve the same problems. I continue to be impressed and I will say I'm also sometimes confused about who's job is it really to do A, B or C? Is it CMF, is it the Johnson Center, is it MNA, is it Campus Compact? Who's job is it really, who's the best person to do the job in the circumstances? I think the fact that the lines are [00:14:00] a little vague is good but it is probably also very confusing for people coming from the outside and wanting help and not really knowing where to go.

(KA): Was there a conversation at the time about whether the mission should be extended to cover nonprofits or whether CMF wanted to change its nature?

(RR): You know the closest, at least when I was active on the board, would've been the discussion of who was eligible for membership in CMF and I at least have no memory of ever talking about bringing in other nonprofits. In fact, we had a lot of discussion about operating foundations; for instance, because they were raising money at the same time they were spending it [00:15:00], whether they were really part of it.

(KA): What is the role that CMF plays in giving protection, a place for all of you to talk to one another. Can you talk about that?

(RR): I think we try, but very honestly, we used to really keep vendors out except if they were doing a presentation on a specific issue. I think we have probably have more vendors than we really need who are attending supposedly as specialists, but the way they work people over after we go home, I have a problem believing that [00:16:00]. It really does change the nature of the relationships.

(KA): Is that fairly recent?

(RR): Yeah, I think it is and it's in specific fields and it's almost as if CMF were endorsing certain people who do certain things and I really don't think that is CMF's role.

(KA): Can you talk a little about the strategy of the public policy work at CMF? How was the public policy agenda set? And can you talk about a couple of the successes, like the tax credit?

(RR): I think [00:17:00] that our legislative agenda was very much a part of our plan of work, the President's plan of work for the following year. We would review the past year's plan of work and the successes and failures and go on to what other things that we didn't make it yet on and what are the things we've done that we've done satisfactorily and what's the plan of work for 2012. We dealt probably in the early days much more, very specifically, with issues affecting philanthropy. I think now we tend to become involved in public policy issues that are not necessarily only philanthropy [00:18:00] and we were much more concerned about whether somebody would decide we were lobbying and we practically carried flags. You can lobby to save your own life and that's what we were doing, whether it was family foundations or community foundations or corporate foundations, that we were really doing the issues that involved our ability to operate effectively.

(KA): Did you ever give up on an issue?

(RR): I can't remember an issue we have given up on and some of them we repeat and we get it for a year or two and then we go back. Well, you know, the legislative process is such that if it's a piece of another piece of legislation and [00:19:00] that gets vetoed or gets voted down you got to start from the beginning even if you had 100% support.

(KA): What has been your sense of how much the public policy members understand about the field?

(RR): I think there are all degrees of understanding, not only about the field but about how to be politically effective. I don't know why, I'm just saying, this is foundation people who are on public policy committees. I think that most people if they ever knew how it operates, this is the Ranny being very cynical today, effectively in the whole area of public policy are having real problems right now and it doesn't hurt to compromise. That's how you solve problems.

(KA): [00:20:00] Can you talk a little about the tax credit? Both the internal conversations at CMF. That is a case where both the private foundations supported their community foundation colleagues.

(RR): I think that that we all realized that one of the ways we were going to increase philanthropy and increase people's interest in philanthropy was through the community foundations. Anyone can be a philanthropist. You don't have to have $100,000 or $1 million. You could do it with $10,000 or $20,000 or probably even less and the community foundations were good and it wasn't just the tax credit. I mean with the stimulation from Kellogg and Kresge and Mott with all of the matching funds, it certainly urged people to go out and start raising money. [00:21:00] But the idea of actually having a tax credit up to $100 a person for what you gave to a community foundation made it a free gift. That was a really exciting, wonderful way to start people who had never really thought, other than perhaps tithing to their church, about giving any kind of money and maybe giving to their college, I think that has to go in. I think it was great and I think it did a wonderful job. I think right now the most important conversation we have to have in organized philanthropy is now we've got to change our story. We've got to face the fact that we can't afford entitlements anymore, and for who knows how long, but right now we certainly cannot. So, why do you really give, why do you give of your time, talent and treasure? [00:22:00] Kathy, I have to say you probably know more about it than I do because I truly believe until we could start talking and not about guilt, but about giving to make change, to make the communities in which we live better places, to create opportunity, positive things and it's got to be a very positive conversation.

(KA): Instead of just saving my 30%.

(RR): Exactly. I don't care. You know, I don't give for what I get for a deduction. It helps, I can give more.

(KA): What concerns you about the charitable sector right now and the world of philanthropy? What is on your mind that you would like the next generation to pick up and run with?

(RR): I think that really is, basically what I said. [00:23:00] I think we all have to learn, why do we give? We change, generationally, as we age, our core values probably don't change but the things we think are important do, and figure out why we give and we all give for different reasons. That yes, giving back to your alumni fund or to the hospital that saved your life whatever, is wonderful, but there's more to giving than just giving for something I've already received. It's giving, to me, the most important thing is to make change, make positive change in society. This is going to be a personal thing for every single person but we've got to talk about it that way [00:24:00] and we've got to talk about, we are all going to be

different, we are all going to have different reasons and it is still valid and it doesn't matter whether you get a tax deduction or not. You know, you have got that discretionary money. You don't have to put it all on your back. You might get something a lot more fun if you did something else.

(KA): You were on the Council on Foundations for a while. Can you talk a little bit about when you were there, looking back on Michigan, what was the national perspective on the Michigan scene.

(RR): Very frankly, they recognize Michigan as being the innovators as a regional association and they were thinking much more in terms of regions [00:25:00] or regional associations. We were very definitely the innovators, not just, I think, in our political activity but in our whole approach to creating philanthropy, teaching philanthropy. Again the acts, the whole school program, we were the innovators. We were the people who started that stuff and that was the period when I was on that board.

(KA): Is there anything else that you thought of that you wanted to make sure we included in this?

(RR): I'm not sure. I am not sure I can think back that far. [00:26:00] One of the things that I think truly, I don't know whether we would be here, whether we would be here as we are here, if it weren't for Russ and then for Dottie and then Kathy, frankly, for you. That the three of you have done so much [00:27:00] but Russ' leadership on practically every organization, his fingerprint is there someplace and it's truly phenomenal.

(KA): Dottie and Russ' partnership in setting things in Michigan…

(RR): It is a partnership, but it was an evolution. Certainly Russ was the mentor, was the mentor for Dottie, was mentor for me, was the mentor for many of us, but unlike some mentors Russ also accepted equals and still does. I shouldn't put him in the past [00:28:00] tense. I think that's what's important because he really, in working with Dottie, recognized her skills and ability at a very, very early age, like the first meeting we ever had, as I recall, and pushed her to perhaps go farther than she ever would've thought of going at that point in time and I think that constant support there. It's so easy to be a negative instead of a positive if you started out being a mentor and to constantly be a positive form of support is truly a great art.

(KA): Everybody was so young.

(RR): We were. It's [00:29:00] amazing how young we all were.

(KA): John was what, in his 30s?

(RR): I was less than 30 when I became a trustee of the Towsley foundation and actually 29 when I became a trustee of the Dow Foundation. Most of my trustees, at least, would look at it and say, "Well, they are a little young, let's give them a few more years" and we were there. The nice thing was that the people, who were older than we, treated us like adults and I think we treated them like adults. We didn't worry about age.

(KA): [00:30:00] Anything else? Was it Herb that went to the first meeting and dragged John along with him?

(RR): Herb and Harry Towsley both went and they both wanted their lawyer. He [John] always stayed in the nonprofit and foundation in the legal point of view but because he was doing lots more than just the Dow Foundation and Towsley Foundation probably because I was the one who liked [00:31:00] being an activist.