

Ray Feldman

A lover of the law and human rights, anthropology, nature, and most of all *his wife Nancy*.

Chapter 01 - 1:30

Introduction

Announcer: The son of Latvian immigrants, Ray Feldman was born January 10, 1922, and grew up in Tulsa. After graduating high school and attending the University of Tulsa and the University of Oklahoma, he briefly served in the military during World War II. Feldman then completed law school at the University of Chicago, where he met Nancy Goodman. After they married in 1946, the Feldmans moved to Tulsa, where they became well-known social figures and civil-rights activists. As he began the law firm originally known as Feldman Franden Woodard Farris & Boudreaux, Ray Feldman supported Nancy in her civic crusades.

Using his legal expertise and desire to resolve conflicts, Feldman worked on the board of the Oklahoma Civil Liberties Union, helping organize its first Tulsa Legal Panel. He also served many other worthwhile organizations. Although Ray and Nancy were avid civil rights and social activists, their true passion was anthropology. The two traveled the world for several months every year to experience different cultures and nature, with their destinations including the Himalayas, New Guinea, Vietnam, and many locations in North Africa and Europe.

The Feldmans were inducted together in 1997 into the Tulsa Hall of Fame for their contributions to the city. Nancy was ninety-two when she died February 17, 2014. Ray died January 30, 2016. He was ninety-four. And now you can hear Ray Feldman tell the story of the Feldmans... and you can also hear Nancy and her story on the oral history website, *VoicesofOklahoma.com*.

Chapter 02 - 10:00

Ray's Parents

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is November 23, 2015. Ray, would you state your full name, please?

Ray Feldman: Raymond Guy Feldman.

JE: And your date of birth?

RF: January 10, 1922.

JE: Today's age is?

RF: Ninety-three.

JE: Ninety-three?

RF: If my math is as good as yours.

JE: Yes. Did you think you'd live to be ninety-three?

RF: No. When Nancy and I were born, the same year, we both came out of our growing up years when the life expectation was sixty-five. And lived with that until really the last ten or fifteen years of our life. So that when we hit the sixties, we figured we'd better start making some plans and do some thinking. We didn't feel old but we were in our sixties and supposed to be dying this time. Although we knew that people were living longer.

When we hit seventy, we started making serious plans with the family. By the time we hit eighty, we figured, "This is a gift. Something's happened here." This, to us, was really the death decade. And we were amazed to get as far as the nineties. No expectation.

JE: Yeah. Where are we recording this interview?

RF: In South Tulsa at our home.

JE: Where were you born?

RF: I was born in North Tulsa at my parents' home on North Elwood. Just for the record, our house was next door to the LaFortunes. And Jeannie LaFortune and I played together until I was six, when we moved to North Cheyenne. Lived a half a block from one of our former Tulsa commissioners, Sid Patterson. Then moved to North Main where I stayed until college years.

JE: Your mother's name?

RF: Was Gussie Feldman.

JE: Gussie Feldman?

RF: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: On the Feldman name, isn't there a story about Fell and Feldman.

RF: Well, I never got that clear with my father, but his brother was named Fell, and his sisters in Scotland were Fells until marriage. He said, kind of offhandish, that he thinks it was changed at Ellis Island. He came as a youngster, but not that young not to know. But he never commented seriously about it and we never pursued it.

JE: Your mother, Gussie, what kind of person was she? And describe her personality and where she grew up.

RF: Well, both parents were born in Lafia, did not know each other, separate villages, grew up with very similar backgrounds, and that is in what were called *stettles*, little towns of two

hundred to five hundred people. Agriculture primary for everybody, and just a very early life of helping with his parents, who were farming. My grandfather and my father's father, very Orthodox Jewish. My mother's family the same.

JE: Let's get your father's name in here too then.

RF: Robert. My mother lived in the stettle with a very large family. I think there were nineteen, all told, who lived very close together. She came to the United States when she was in her mid teens. She had a sister who was living in suburban Chicago, Maywood, and she worked as a seamstress in one of the shops there. But it was actually intended to be a short visit, just to be with her sister and family. And she had other sisters who had preceded her also, one who was living in Tulsa, it turned out. That became a pivotal point. And one other who was also living but in another community, and died shortly thereafter. So her visit concentrated on the Chicago stay.

JE: Your father, Robert, his story, before he gets to the United States?

RF: Well, Dad had a more adventurous story in my books because when he was a teenager, before he hit thirteen, his father wanted him to become a rabbi. And he was raised otherwise in the same kind of situation Mother was, the little stettle, et cetera, with family. He did not want to become a rabbi. And his father was open-minded enough to say that, "Well, go see the chief rabbi of the region. Whatever that rabbi decides, after each of us tells why our positions had been taken, we'll abide by it. That was agreed.

Dad presented his position well enough so that the chief rabbi agreed with him. He, at that point, prepared to and went to Johannesburg in South Africa, where there was a cousin. Not a close cousin, in fact, my dad didn't even know him. But he had a little jewelry watch repair shop, which my father trained in and learned the language of English, sold wristwatches and pocket watches to the miners. Gold and diamond mines were important at that time and prolific. Learned the trade quite well and sent money home, sent whatever extra money he had home. Brought all of his family, and that was a large number, at that time, to Glasgow, Scotland, because Scotland had the tradition of a very free country on religion as compared to most other countries of the world. And it was a relatively short boat trip from their home in Lafia, straight across the North Sea to Glasgow.

After he had lived seven years in Johannesburg, he arrived in Glasgow, fully expecting to stay there, be with his family, which he hadn't seen for all these years. And as the story goes, confirmed by his family, arrived on a Friday night, saw the poor economic conditions there were in Glasgow and left for the United States on Monday, never having thought of doing this until that weekend. Typical of my dad though, a man of decision.

He arrived in New York, spent one week there, decided that there were too many immigrants here for him to make a good living and he went west to Chicago. As luck would have it, lived in a little suburban town called Maywood, where my mother also lived. And

by chance, went to a wedding that he was invited to by a friend that happened to be the wedding of my mother's brother. They met, the love bug bit, I presume, and they married.

JE: Since he's in the jewelry trade, he brought that experience to Chicago?

RF: Yes. And he was a good enough jeweler—you'll be amazed at this—of all the jewelers who were in Chicago, none could repair the famous Marshall Fields clock, which hung at the major intersection in downtown Chicago. Nobody could get it repaired for a two-year period. And my father arrived, got permission to try to repair it, and did, getting some notoriety in the press. Because it was a great story, this immigrant boy.

He had enough business that he was able to pocket money. When the oil boom hit in both California and Tulsa, Oklahoma area, because my mother had a sister in Tulsa, the family, which included my sister, at that time, moved to Tulsa. Just continuing my father's sense of adventure and the very strong feeling that he could economically succeed far better in a smaller community where he could be a big fish. And sure enough, he did well.

JE: We might point out that the reason that they left Lafia—

RF: Well, Lafia was part of Old Russia. Jews were treated like dirt and were kept in actual boundaries and kept in these little towns. Never permitted to even own land.

While my mother was in the Chicago area, her entire family of nineteen, all nineteen of them were on one single day wiped out when a Russian Cossack group came riding on horseback, as the stories go, into the town. Lined up the Jews, took my mother's family, put them into the storage basement, which they had, and shot every one of them, leaving my mother and her sister and the one other sister in Tulsa, and brother, as the remnants of her family.

My father had no family there because, fortunately, all of his family had been moved to Glasgow. Those stories actually, that I've told, got Mother out of her plan, returned to Lafia. My father never had planned to return.

Chapter 03 - 6:00

Ray's Father in Tulsa

John Erling: The year then, that your father, Robert, came to Tulsa.

Ray Feldman: 1912. My sister was also born that year.

JE: And then you were born later.

RF: Yeah, I was the baby. Had a brother born in the middle, and I was born in '22.

JE: Tell me some of the things your father did then, when he came here for a living.

RF: Because he had enough money to do this, he had a building constructed for him on 1st Street, between Main and Boston, three-story brick building. He opened his jewelry and

watch repair store on the ground level. And had guests staying and office personnel occupying the top two floors. That was a successful operation for him. So he remained in the commercial real estate business from that point forward. Within, I think, five years or so he was out of the jewelry business and into commercial real estate entirely.

JE: So he really made a lot of money in Chicago, then, didn't he?

RF: He did. He was very successful there. Costs were not as high as they are now to build a building, but he found that he was able to operate a legitimate place on 1st Street. I say legitimate because we all have grown here know that 1st Street ultimately became a place of high prostitution. He always had a sign in his upper level that said: We only rent space, there is no rental of rooms for just a short visit or for a prostitute to hang out. There were other places for that, but not my father's buildings.

JE: So he actually had many buildings?

RF: Right.

JE: Six buildings, maybe?

RF: Yeah, he ended up with over six buildings, I think it was.

JE: Including the Bank of Oklahoma building?

RF: Including the old Bank of Oklahoma building. It was on 2nd and Main. It was a five-story building, which he purchased, occupied a half a block, and a movie theater that was adjacent to it. It was just part of a successful, commercial real estate business until the Depression in the '30s.

JE: The Stock Market Crash was in '29, the Depression continues until till '32. Did he lose then all his buildings?

RF: Lost everything. He lost everything he had, back rental for the offices upstairs weren't being paid, which is why he lost the building. And everything else, no payments from his tenants.

But the ground floor then became, basically, Feldman territory. My mother supervised a beauty shop that was taken over by Mother and Dad. A restaurant, which they had on the ground floor, which they occupied for back rental. There was a printing shop on the lower level, which they occupied for back rental. And there was an office on the upper level, which they also took over because of back rental, in exchange for a farm up in Kansas, which the only barter that that tenant had to pay us back rent.

So we ended up with this whole group of businesses. And I and my brother got to go free into the movie theater that they had, which we loved. And we ate some meals in the restaurant. But primarily we ate at home.

JE: Could those businesses be surviving in the Depression?

RF: Yes, but they survived because they had no rent to pay. And there was no landlord who was insisting.

JE: When they say he lost the buildings, who did he lose the buildings to? Was it the bank that—

RF: Oh the bank mortgage.

JE: Right.

RF: Yeah, mortgage was foreclosed.

JE: But the bank let them stay in on the main floor, even though it was not their building?

RF: Yeah, yeah, well, he had nothing to pay to the bank anymore because the bank paid of its mortgage through foreclosure of the building.

JE: So there were several businesses then that they got into and your mother was very much involved in that?

RF: That is correct. And it ended up that with the farm, my brother was enamored by this whole experience when they went up to this quite luxurious farm. It was a guest farm, built as that, and cattle. With the farm and my brother deciding to live there, again, like other things that the family touched, it was successful.

JE: During that period you were then about thirteen or fourteen years old?

RF: Yes, definitely it was during that period.

JE: You're right.

RF: But the meals were on the table, and we certainly experienced the poverty and the Dust Bowl that hit Oklahoma at that time.

JE: You didn't feel it, you said?

RF: We didn't within our own home.

JE: Right.

RF: But we experienced it in the way that others did who had the ability to help. People came to our backdoor almost nightly, with an empty bowl in hand. We were aware of the Depression but there was food on the table and my father, being the kind of person he was, there was always a smile. None of his business drains or problems, we managed.

JE: So losing all those buildings, did he seem to take that in stride? Do you remember him agonizing about all that?

RF: It was concealed from us. We knew what was going on, of course, but Dad was very optimistic and upbeat. Mother and Dad had to move up to the farm and live on the farm for about two years. It was fortunate that my brother, who had married, was already there and had a grandchild for them. So they had a home.

But my mother was totally displeased, having to live on a farm. My dad was happy because he always said he wanted to live in a house without a door. We had an eight-bedroom house there on the farm, which was a very nice home. It had been built for guests.

Chapter 04 - 5:30**No Bar Mitzvah**

John Erling: Let's talk about your education. Your elementary—

Ray Feldman: Well, elementary was, again, kind of unusual in that my brother had Scarlet Fever at the time I entered kindergarten. In those days, any home or any place that had Scarlet Fever was quarantined so that nobody could come or enter. The milk was left outside, the ice was left outside. Nobody could come into the house.

I learned everything that I would have learned in first and second grade during that period of quarantine. So when I went to school I was able to skip first grade and even second grade. So that I was always the youngest in my classes.

I continued living in Tulsa, north side, and lived there until my high school years. I was sixteen when I ended up going to college. And because of my youth, Mother and Dad wanted to keep me in Tulsa. Went to TU.

JE: Let me just stop you here because I want to ask you, your brother actually taught you to read, to write—

RF: Yes.

JE: ...to understand math?

RF: Yes.

JE: So he was your teacher and he was the one who helped you advance in school as fast as you did?

RF: Very much so.

JE: And your brother's name was?

RF: Herman.

JE: Yes.

RF: He also out-rated the print shop, as I mentioned to you, once those properties were lost.

JE: And the grade school you went to was?

RF: Emerson. A very different Emerson than Emerson today.

JE: Then your sister, and your sister's name?

RF: Sally. She actually was Sarah but she went by Sally. Everybody called her Sally. She was determined to become a concert pianist. Studied and ultimately went to Chicago Conservatory of Music, away from home, when she was a teenager, ten years older than I, but I worshiped her.

JE: More than likely she taught you to play piano as well.

RF: Yes, and I played well enough to win some state contests and that kind of thing.

JE: So at the age of thirteen, fourteen, this is coming of age, bar mitzvah time, how are you embracing all that?

RF: I didn't take to rote. And, for me, my education learning Hebrew, going to the *schul*, or synagogue. Which, by the way, was the result of my father's efforts in building a separate synagogue on the north side of Tulsa. But I went, I just didn't take to it well. My brother, differently, went through a bar mitzvah. I was successful in being able to dissuade my parents. And I did not have a bar mitzvah, which was a difficult decision in the family because of my parents being Orthodox.

At Sunday school, I was the valedictorian of our Sunday school class. The rabbi came over, he said I had to go through this. We couldn't have a valedictorian who wasn't going to be bar mizvahed.

I used my father's story of his being able to dissuade his father from forcing him to becoming a rabbi. Dad supported me in front of the rabbi here in Tulsa. And I was never confirmed and never had a bar mitzvah.

JE: You think that was upsetting to your dad?

RF: Oh yeah, it was very upsetting, but my father took the lead on that. Mother never approved of it but he took the lead on it. I was able to really go forward that way, not to in any way leave the Jewish religion. I am Jewish and I've never suggested otherwise to anybody.

Let me back up and say I did actually do things for the younger Jews in Tulsa because one of the things I noticed was the Jewish kids on the north side never got acquainted with any Jews who lived on the south side of town. Except for one family that had rented from my father, the Clarrs, I didn't know any Jew who lived on the south side. My parents didn't.

I decided that this just wasn't right. And with a little bit of help from a wonderful lady who lived on the south side, I got acquainted with, I started an organization called the Hebrew Youth of Oklahoma for all the state of Oklahoma. And got about 200, 250 youngsters to a convention in Tulsa. Came from all over the state. Both Orthodox and Reformed. Paid no attention to north side, south side, whatever town they came from. We all got together, came back to Tulsa, and I became acquainted with the south side a little bit. They still were basically isolated. But I got acquainted enough so that I had a life that included all the Jews in Tulsa.

JE: How many Jews do you think were living in Tulsa at that time?

RF: Oh I think there were only about five hundred. The population of Jews in Tulsa has lingered in the two thousand range, most of my life. Not a large part of the community.

JE: Even today?

RF: Close to that.

JE: In 2015.

Chapter 05 - 3:00**North and South Tulsa Jews**

John Erling: The breakdown of the Jews north and south, was there a difference?

Ray Feldman: Most of the Jews who came to Tulsa, those who lived on the north side entered into pipe supply, junk, which primarily included oilfield junk business, and developed their future economic lives by starting as either peddlers on the street or peddlers in a small store that they would set up, if they had the means.

People on the south side came as a much more educated group of people. Still immigrating, some second generation. They had their own synagogue and Temple for the Reformed Jews. They lived basically, at that time, south of 15th and 21st Street.

JE: Which synagogue, then at first, did you have any association with?

RF: With the north side, as a child. That's the one that was called Tulsa, it wasn't called a synagogue, it was—

JE: But I thought you had an association with Temple Israel.

RF: Oh that came when I was a teenager and I could drive a car. When I was still in Sunday school, at thirteen, I developed, for a youngster, a definite affection for one girl whose family lived on the south side. The only reason I got to know that family and others from the South at that time is that they were doing a repair job to the synagogue on the north side. And the children joined our Sunday school.

When I was fourteen and could drive, I was working both on the project that I had for the state of Oklahoma, and having already left Sunday school, I went to a post confirming class that was offered by the Temple Israel Sunday school. It went into the discussion of politics and the kinds of things that I was genuinely interested in.

To give you an idea of how separated we were, the girl that I was going with, being Orthodox, had to get on the floor of the backseat of our car any time I went over and parked in front of the temple in order to run in and get something that I needed. It was part of my statewide project, our Temple post confirming class.

If her father, she said, would of seen her in front of the temple he would have just absolutely forbidden her to ever see me again. It just gives you an idea of just how strict the separation was.

JE: She was Jewish?

RF: Oh very much so, Orthodox.

JE: Right, Orthodox.

RF: Remained my girlfriend until I was in law school, and remained Orthodox, as did her father.

JE: Hmm (contemplative sound).

RF: Whole family, very.

Chapter 06 - 2:55**Reformed Jews**

John Erling: So at sixteen, you graduated from high school. And that is?

Ray Feldman: Central High, the only high school in Tulsa. The only white high school. Like I think most Tulsans would generally say, "The only high school." Most white Tulsans. However, a friend of mine, married to a girl from California, she wanted to teach here and inquired of me about the high schools. I said, "The only high school."

She was furious because I had not included Booker T. Washington, the black high school. We didn't even think about it. It was in a separate part of our world.

Although as a youngster, my brother being three and a half years older, my brother and I would go to revivals on Greenwood, and mix and meet with the black community there. We were the only whites that we ever saw there. My parents had no objection. But also, this gives you an idea how safe and problem-free our family felt about our mixing with blacks. And how comfortable we were with the black servants we came in contact with.

Other than the revivals, this was my total contact with the black community. It was a very separate community.

JE: It's interesting that you would be interested enough to want to go there, you're curious. I guess your faith, the Jewish faith, never resonated with you? Is that true?

RF: The Jewish faith? No, I would not say that's true. The beliefs of Judaism are ones that I think are healthy today. I have no quarrels with the faith. But the Orthodoxy of Judaism in those days was sufficient to just keep me away from a synagogue. I felt as though my drift was going to be toward the temple and the Reformed movement.

My parents being Orthodox, I didn't feel as though I would ever join the temple while they were alive, and I didn't.

JE: For you to go to a Baptist revival, I suppose, in north Tulsa?

RF: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: That was kind of interesting in that you were real open to attending that and—

RF: Right. My beliefs were different from the Orthodoxy of Judaism then as it was practiced, which separated Jews from non-Jews, separated the Jews from a social life with blacks. I found no reason to separate my life just because the north side Jewish community separated its lives.

Chapter 07 - 2:10**16 and in College**

John Erling: So sixteen years old, you graduate from Tulsa Central.

Ray Feldman: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: What year did you graduate?

RF: 1938. And I was too young, according to my parents, to go away from home, so I went to the University of Tulsa. And in '39 I went to the University of Oklahoma.

JE: So how does—

RF: And stayed there.

JE: I want to ask you though, here you are, were you sixteen then, when you walk onto TU campus?

RF: Yes, and small.

JE: Okay, and small. Tell us a little bit about that because these kids were two to three years older than you, which was a big difference at that age.

RF: Yes.

JE: How was that working for you?

RF: I had no difficulties with faculty or with students. I was small all my life until I was a senior. Until I went to high school I was the smallest person in any class that I was in. And I suddenly started growing. I grew ten inches my first year in high school. And played all kinds of different roles in the theater productions because of height. I was able to be a child, almost, and then a teenager, as I grew, during those same years. It was just a major body change for me. I wasn't the smallest student in high school by the time I was a senior.

JE: So you grew to what height?

RF: I grew to five-eleven and a half.

JE: Oh?

RF: And that was might height until I started shrinking.

JE: So then you went on to OU. That would have been—

RF: That was in the fall of '39. I joined a fraternity, Pi Lambda Phi. A Jewish fraternity, and mixed with both Orthodox and Reformed Jews at the fraternity. I certainly had no difficulty with the student body or faculty at OU.

JE: Even though you were younger than everybody.

RF: No difficulty. I was a good student and just had no difficulty socially with anybody, male, female, whatever.

Chapter 08 - 3:30
Honorable Discharge

John Erling: You're in school, and December 7, 1941—

Ray Feldman: Yes.

JE: You're nineteen years old.

RF: Yes.

JE: Do you remember that day?

RF: I remember it vividly. I tended to listen to music when I was studying. I was listening to the New York Symphony production on Sunday afternoon at my desk and heard the announcements of Pearl Harbor. It's just emblazoned in my mind what I was doing. Everything about it. I just put my hands on my face and just cried. I was just shocked by what had happened, and remained so. Just a horrible, non-civilized thing to have done. I understand war but we weren't at war.

JE: Did you congregate with others?

RF: Yes, I certainly talked with people about the war. I was in ROTC at OU, and understood that I would complete my ROTC training, which I was going to be doing the following year. And I would go into the military direct from school, as did all of our ROTC class. I wasn't alone in that. So I entered the military direct from law school at that point. I finished one year of law school and entered the military at that point. Came back to OU when I was discharged.

I had an honorable discharge because of my physical disability, which involved my feet. The arches of my feet were poor and there was a total breakdown of the arch through the exercises and things we were doing. I lost circulation in both of my feet and was hospitalized for a nine-month period. And ended up both wheelchair and then ultimately crutches and then ultimately a corrected shoe that made it possible for me to walk. I left the army at that time with an honorable discharge.

JE: Where were you then when it was discovered?

RF: It was discovered before I was sent overseas. We were still in Fort Sill. Our whole class was. I saw my class go overseas several months after I was hospitalized and spent my time at Borden General Hospital in Chickasha.

JE: In Chickasha, Oklahoma?

RF: Oklahoma, yes.

JE: How did they choose that hospital? With the military?

RF: Well, military, it's a veterans' hospital. I think it still exists as a General Hospital. It was chosen because of the proximity to Fort Sill. There were others there who had already gone to Fort Sill and were in that hospital.

JE: But your physical disability was this, more than flat feet, wasn't it? Didn't you have a back problem?

RF: I had a back problem since I was a child, but it was not severe pain, it was simply a low-grade pain that I would experience into the back. My back problem became severe when I was already in law school in Chicago.

JE: I comment on that because, to this day, you obviously have a problem with your back.

RF: Oh, oh, much more than anything else.

JE: But does that all go back to the disc problems and so forth that you had as a child?

RF: Oh yes.

JE: So—

RF: My back problem is related totally to my bone structure. It goes this way and this way.

Chapter 09 - 4:45

Ray Meets Nancy

John Erling: Then back to OU again. Your class there had to be smaller than before the war.

Ray Feldman: When I went, my freshman class was 150. When I came back, the entire school had, I think it was thirty-five or something like that, students for the entire law school. And my class was sixteen or eighteen. All of the boys in the class were seriously handicapped. One had only one leg. One had an arm cut off at the elbow. One was a giant, literally, about seven foot something and very thin. One was a midget. Anybody who looked normal, as I did, was a freak, kind of, because we were male and ought to be in the military. And I wanted to be, but limited service officers were a surplus at the time I got my medical discharge.

JE: Were some people wondering why you weren't in the service?

RF: Yeah, lots of people, particularly women. I have one story that is unlike me, but I love it. I worked to help pay my way through school from the time I went to college. Did some work to help.

I was coming home from work one afternoon, sitting on a bus, and a woman got on the bus and sat next to me, started talking, and then she said, "Young man, why aren't you in the service?"

I said, "Well, lady, I'm just all eaten up with syphilis and they wouldn't keep me in."

And she got up and moved, with a horrified expression on her face. I just loved the story and have not used it again. It just slipped out of me.

JE: After OU, when you did your undergraduate work, then you applied to some law schools.

RF: Well, while I was at law school, when I got out of the military I went back to law school—

JE: At OU?

RF: At OU. Had my small class experience in Norman, and recognized that because of the reduction of size I wasn't getting the students' interaction that I depended on as do all students in getting educations. I talked with the dean, applied to seven of the top-rate law schools. My resume would justify my being able to go to any one of them. I was admitted to all. But because I already had a year and a semester of law school, and wanted to keep going and it was summertime, the summer offerings at all the law schools I applied to, with the exception of Chicago, were all so scaled down that their offerings were repetitive. With the exception of Chicago.

So by a luck of the draw, I went to Chicago for my summer school law school offerings. And walked into what was the basement of a building, which was labeled Law School, but it turned out it was the total law school building now because the law school building was occupied by the navy, still at war.

In the basement, all of the students were having their classes, the library, everything. There to my luck, at the librarian's desk was a young girl. I introduced myself, and it turned out that this was going to be my future wife.

JE: And what was her name?

RF: Nancy Goodman. Nancy K. Goodman.

JE: So you introduced yourself to her, then what? Was she taken with you?

RF: Well, no, she was nice. It turned out we were both staying at a dormitory building, which was International House. In those days, boys on one side and girls on the other. We weren't men yet, but we considered ourselves men. With the two of us again, by luck, living in the same housing. There wasn't much graduate housing available because the navy occupied all buildings, practically.

So there we were, it had a dining room. We ate together because of my being a second-year student, she was a little behind me, and we had only some classes together. But did do studying together. Eventually, the chemistry started following because of various circumstances at school. Very positive.

Chapter 10 - 4:15

Nancy Visits Tulsa

John Erling: Then you graduate?

Ray Feldman: I graduated in the fall of '45, and Nancy graduated in the spring of '46. When I graduated, I went to several cities in our region to see whether or not I would like

practicing in Dallas, Kansas City, Denver, and Tulsa. I got job offers in each of the cities, but decided to stay in Tulsa. Which, my father-in-law, you came to be my father-in-law the next year, said was predestined because he knew I would never go away from Tulsa. After he had met me, he could tell that.

JE: How did you get Nancy to come out here and visit you?

RF: We weren't engaged, I never proposed, but we were obviously very serious. I was in practice as an associate. Her parents said that they felt that she should come out and meet my family, knowing how serious our conversations had been.

She came on the train, and had, for her, just a totally unexpected experience in that when she got to the Missouri border, she saw that all of the blacks that were sitting in the same car with her got up and moved to another car. These were the days of Jim Crow. Blacks were not supposed to be sitting in the same railroad car as the whites.

When she got to the railroad station, she found that there was a Negro waiting room, a Negro toilet, a Negro water fountain. Since I wasn't there because of the train being a little early, she elected to go into the Negro waiting room and wait for me. And if I didn't find her there, she was definitely going to take the next train back to Chicago.

Well, I got into the station, didn't see Nancy, so I knew just exactly where she would be. Because we knew each other very well by that time. So I went right into the waiting room, found her, and instead of showing her all of Tulsa and meeting with everybody and friends and what-have-you, we spent the weekend discussing what life in Oklahoma might be for her as she just could not see living in Tulsa, with the blacks not being able to associate with the whites in the same way.

So we talked and we talked, and finally, on Saturday night I said to her, "Why don't you just marry me and change it?"

She didn't even think for a minute. She said, "Okay, *but* we'll have to move in one year and you'll have to agree to that, if I'm not happy."

So I said, "No question, we'll do it." We got married in the spring and I took the Wisconsin bar examination so that we could practice in Wisconsin. Fortunately, she ended up staying in Tulsa with me because of good circumstances, which she was able to produce for herself.

JE: Why Wisconsin bar?

RF: Both of us went to Madison, Wisconsin, a few times while we were in law school. It's fairly close and we knew of it as a very nice town. It was a city, but it was a very small city, at that time. So we would go up on a drive on a Sunday. It was a very easy thing to do.

We did it a couple of times and just liked it. Didn't think of it as a place to live or not live, but enjoyed our weekend there.

JE: So you took that Wisconsin bar exam in case it didn't work out here in Tulsa?

RF: Yeah, so that I could be ready to move.

JE: And you would have moved to Madison, Wisconsin?

RF: That was the plan. I wanted to live up to what I had promised and I couldn't do it in a year if I hadn't taken the bar and been ready to move.

JE: You were married when?

RF: March 2, 1946.

Chapter 11 - 3:15

Nancy Becomes a Professor

John Erling: So then the year comes along and are you sensing that she's getting involved? That she's beginning to—

Ray Feldman: Well, she came here in the spring when we were married and started interviewing immediately, at were then the large offices of Tulsa, consisting of anywhere from about seven to about fifteen attorneys. There were five women practicing. They were all graduates of TU Law School. Had all gone to night school there to get their degrees and had been secretaries to the lawyers for whom they were working when they ultimately graduated. And were all practicing domestic relations or probate law.

Nancy's expectation as a top graduate from the University of Chicago Law School was to be able to practice what she chose. And that was going to be labor law. There wasn't any labor law practitioner in Tulsa. We didn't have specialists in practice in those days. If we did, they were very few. The large firms were small, as I mentioned.

After interviewing some six, seven law offices, she left the last office that she visited, furious. And without my knowing it at all, called the dean of the school sociology at TU and got an interview. And the rest is history for her. She started part time and stayed for thirty-seven years. And wanted me to come teach, she was so happy.

But I was too happy practicing law.

JE: And I'm happy to say that we have her interview on our website, voicesofoklahoma.com., and she talks about that. I think she could have gotten into many law firms in Chicago.

RF: By agreement, between the University of Chicago and the top law schools, the top law graduates, the top ten graduates were to be given jobs with firms in Chicago, just by an understanding. So she had been offered a job already.

JE: She also seemed to say that when she came here, the only thing that she could join a law firm for as a secretary.

RF: That's right, not as a lawyer. You know, the legal secretaries, now lawyers, who were women, were just as nice could be to her. She had to take the Oklahoma bar and did

so and passed it. They wanted to help her in knowing what she needed to study. They explained that they had been able to get a room just for the women to take the bar exam, separate from the men, because they wanted to type theirs, as they knew typing well. And they sat in their room typing.

When Nancy took the exam and was the first person to get up and leave, they all expressed their concerns. You know, "Is there a problem?"

And she said, "No," she was finished. She was like that. She was very quick. Stayed a friend of the women lawyers and made friends with men lawyers during the years that followed.

Chapter 12 - 2:05

Ray Opens Law Office

John Erling: Do you have children from your marriage?

Ray Feldman: Yes, we had three children. And our daughter, who was the middle child, died when she was thirty-seven. But the two boys, not that one ever fills the hole, but the two boys are wonderful. Living out of town.

JE: Their, their names are?

RF: Eldest is Richard, living in Encino, California. Just outside of Hollywood. The other is John, and he lives in Chicago. Suburban Chicago.

JE: Then you're beginning your law career, what law firm do you join?

RF: I joined and practiced with John Poe. I was the sole practitioner with him, which I liked. Because I got direct help from a senior lawyer, one who was very well recognized in the bar. I enjoyed my time with him, but shortly after, I think it was about a year and a half, two years, at most, I opened my own office. This is what I wanted to do, I was ready to go.

JE: That law firm that you started, that grew then?

RF: Yes. I hired my first associate within a year after I started and all through that first year I asked people who come into the office, "Where did you hear from me?" Because I wanted to know. I had no advertising, as lawyers, we didn't advertise. And it was all by word of mouth, not specially from any friends or adults whom I knew from earlier years. It's just from things that I started doing in the city. I became active.

JE: It was general law practice then, that you had?

RF: Very general, and remained so.

JE: Where was your first office?

RF: First office was in what is now also a non-existing building, the Daniels building, which was on 3rd between Boston and Cincinnati.

JE: So this was in 1948?

RF: That is correct, '46, '47, I was working with John Poe, who was in the McBirney building.

Chapter 13 - 2:00

Downtown Tulsa

John Erling: Downtown Tulsa, that was a pretty busy place?

Ray Feldman: Downtown was a wonderful place. It was a small downtown. There 120,000 people living in Tulsa, I believe, when I first started practice. The downtown was basically 1st Street to 6th, and extended from Cincinnati to Cheyenne. The center of that is about a two-block concentration for both retail and office buildings.

JE: Some of the stores that you might remember from back then?

RF: One of the stores was Siddenbacks. Got acquainted with the Siddenback family, which was a pleasure in every way. The Brown Duncan Department Store, which I think along with Vandever's, were the two largest of the department stores. I think we had a downtown drugstore, but never a grocery store, to this day. And a number of specialized stores. Renberg's another very nice downtown men's store.

JE: Clarke's Good Clothes? At that time?

RF: What?

JE: Clarke's Good Clothes, at that time?

RF: Clarke's Good Clothes, yes, definitely.

JE: Gary Clarke.

RF: Yes, definitely. A few jewelry stores, Gray's, Clarr's, everything that one might have wanted. I'm not thinking of all the little specialized stores. The office buildings were, well, what is now the Bank of Oklahoma.

JE: National Bank of Tulsa?

RF: National Bank of Tulsa.

JE: NBT.

RF: NBT, National Bank of Tulsa, First National, that kind of gives you a picture. The residential neighborhoods started on Archer, along with some other small stores going north. Going south, everything pretty much stopped at 6th Street, at that time.

Chapter 14 - 2:13
Community Service

John Erling: You said earlier that people were coming to your law office and you didn't know why they were coming, but you didn't get involved. You served as Chairman of the Tulsa Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Ray Feldman: Yes. That didn't happen in the first year, but I started with Red Cross. Became Chair of the services for blood donors, then became Chair of the committee for emergency and specialized relief. So the department handled floods, that kind of thing. And, fortunately, was Chair of that committee when Tulsa had its biggest flood.

JE: What year was that?

RF: I think early '50s. I then became Chair following that. But that was a fun experience because there were a lot of friends of mine, who knowing what I was doing, came over just for relief. Helped serve coffee and do the things that were necessary. Helped lay sandbags because it really was a flood that affected the residential and some business areas.

JE: A lot of your service in the community, Nancy and you complimented each other.

RF: Yes. Our interests were so similar in everything that we enjoyed doing in life. I started doing work with Banaybreyth, organized a new Banaybreyth Chapter because the old one had closed during the war. I felt we should have one. I was active in the YMCA while she was on the YWCA committees at that time. She was not a board member, she was committee, but a very active and effective committee member. Helped get the Arts and Humanities Council started in Tulsa. I was not on the original board. There were four persons on that original board committee, but I was one of the fifth, sixth, whatever, who helped in the very beginning. And counseled on the whole thing.

JE: And she also worked on behalf of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

RF: Very definitely. Nancy was extremely active in a number of other organizations. I believe that you probably have that from your earlier interview.

Chapter 15 - 4:13
Jingle Feldman

John Erling: Together you established the Tulsa Arts and Humanities Council's annual award, made to individuals who excel in the arts.

Ray Feldman: Well, that came later. When our daughter died, that was one way that we felt that we could give continuing recognition to her, by having an annual award, called the Jingle Feldman Award, which was for people who were doing some unusual or creative thing in the arts. Several of our recipients, I'm happy to say, are extremely important in the arts community today. One in ballet, I think of one in Indian culture art who had an exhibit in Tulsa just this past week.

That was one way we gave expression to our daughter's life and commemoration by the building of a sort of refuge for the hikers and the bikers on Riverside Drive, down around 57th Street, that is still in use.

JE: She died when she was?

RF: Thirty-seven.

JE: Jingle Feldman?

RF: Jingle was a nickname that Richard gave her, our eldest son. Her actual name was Elizabeth. But in fourth grade, she came home and wanted to know what that other name was that she had. And we told her it was Elizabeth. She had never heard Elizabeth, in fact, had no idea what her other name was. She was always Jingle, and she was a real jingle.

JE: What was it that took her life at such an early age?

RF: It was, and I'm sorry, I block on this from the day it happened, but the heart muscle contracted and she did not get to a doctor early enough. And died within four days after she had called us and said that she needed a doctor. She had never gone to one in Albuquerque suburbs where she lived.

So we were fortunate in being able to get a doctor. But before she got to the doctor, she was dead. Quick, quickly died.

JE: So you and Nancy had to work your way through that. That would be tough.

RF: It, of course, was tough. We had our memorial service in the Albuquerque area where her home was. Came home to Tulsa and people just flocked to the house to get with us and talk with us. And the condolences were more than we could handle, going through telling everybody of her death, the nature of her death, and surprise to everybody. And so we decided we couldn't handle it.

Having been to the Himalayan Mountains in the past on a wonderful hike, we decided to go to the Himalayas. Found a group that was going immediately, and within four days after we got home, we were en route and were in Nepal for a three-week mountain trek. It was absolutely the right thing for us, because we had already developed a strong feeling about the mountains. This gave us a privacy, which we requested the group to provide. We just said that we'd had a personal matter that had occurred that we would appreciate it that they would accept our privacy that we needed. Which they did, very nicely.

She just had our own mountain trip with guide and quiet participants.

JE: How long were you gone?

RF: We were gone three weeks. It was just what we needed. Our feelings for the mountains had already developed in a very strong way, by that time. We found, in this case, solace and a place in the universe, which was so small and so unimportant that we had to be able to take our grievance and live with it and handle it. And live a life that was just going to be a different life than it is.

Of course, the hole remains.

Chapter 16 - 5:15

Team Feldman

John Erling: You were involved as a founder of the Simon Estes Education Foundation?

Ray Feldman: Yes. That I was, and stayed on the board for probably fifteen plus years. Was active there. As an active member, Simon asked us, it was just one more way of my doing what I could do within the black community. In the same way I was doing in the very first thing that I did as a volunteer, which was through the YM, and that was to work with a young group of boys who lived on the west side of Tulsa, in extreme poverty, with difficulties as far as school was concerned, everything.

Got a little club going for them and did that. I thought it would be done with help from the club, the YM club, but it turned out that they didn't last. But Nancy stepped in when we were married. I had already started it before we were married. But when married, she came in and helped. And the two of us continued doing it for about three years.

It was, again, doing something that I felt that I could do, helping a group of youngsters who didn't have many privileges, if any.

JE: The Tulsa Global Alliance dedicated to connecting Tulsa to the world. Nancy was one of its founders.

RF: Yes. Before it existed she had already started working in that kind of program. And then it merged into Tulsa Global.

JE: There are many things that she did—

RF: Oh, oh so many.

JE: ...in 1957, she founded what is now the Center for Individuals of Physical Challenges, really known as the Tulsa Center for the Physically Limited.

RF: Definitely, yeah.

JE: And so some of these things, you were probably working with her.

RF: From the very beginning, when Nancy started teaching sociology. This was a decision that she made by herself, without my knowledge, and came home from having walked to the

university and back, and told me. From that point on, I would say that the two of us, on everything that we did in the community, would have been shared. Because everything was a shared interest.

We'd talk about any given organization in which she was active. She would come home at the dinner table. I'd say, "Well, how was your day?"

And she would tell me the conversation, included everything she was doing in her teaching and so forth, organizations.

When she would ask me what I was doing, I would say, "Oh, I had a fine day. Everything went well."

"Anything that you could tell me about?"

"Well, not really," because it was all pretty much private conversation. As a lawyer, I'm pledged to keep my services, even who my clients are, private. I'm not to share that kind of information. I respected that.

So being interested in her work, our conversation at home centered around her work. And I helped, not just talked about. But she was the active person in the community.

And as my practice grew, as a sole practitioner and as a head of a law firm, my practice grew to the point where I stopped doing the community things that I had been involved in. And got my great satisfaction from working totally behind the scenes with Nancy. And by behind the scenes, I mean, talking with at home, going to social functions, going to meetings with her that I could go to that were not work meetings for the organizations. Because I did not have the time or the desire to make that choice.

JE: But let me just list some things that you did find time for. Some of them I may have mentioned. As we said, Chairman of the Tulsa Chapter of American Red Cross, University of Chicago's Law School visiting committee. You were President of Concert Time, Chairman of Human Rights Commission for City of Tulsa. Vice Chairman of Human Rights Commission of the State of Oklahoma. Board members of Tulsa Arts and Humanities Council. Organized and served our first Tulsa legal panel for the Oklahoma Civil Liberties Union, board member of Oklahoma Civil Liberties Union, board member of Community Service Council of Tulsa, Chairman of Volunteer Bureau, and board member of United Jewish Federation of Tulsa.

So you did have some time that you—

RF: Well, yes, but she gave all of her time except for teaching, which meant the class hours that she taught, plus her research and preparation.

I was starting a practice. I spent full time every day and by the time I was three years into my practice, I was bringing work home and had to bring work home. From that point forward, practically.

Nancy thought I was a workaholic. I disputed that. I said I just, "I've got to get the deadlines for my day taken care of." And I was fortunate in being able to build a practice quickly.

Chapter 17 - 6:10**Tulsa Race Riot**

John Erling: In my interview with Nancy, she talked about how she taught the Tulsa Race Riot at TU. What is your remembrance of that?

Ray Feldman: I was born in '22, the Race Riot was in '21. But my parents told me about it. Living north, we knew the black community as a community and were exposed to it very differently than any of the youngsters that I ever met who lived on the south side. We were close to it. We had live-in help during that general period of time.

My parents had the whole family then of their maid, who lived with us until things were okay. My parents told me about it. There were no secrets about how terrible it was and what they told me and what others were still talking about when I was seven, eight years of age. It was still very much a topic of conversation. And I heard about it from the time I was understanding anything about black and white.

JE: What can you remember they said actually happened?

RF: Oh, well they spoke of it, and I saw the destruction that had happened to the whole Greenwood cultural and living section. It was just destroyed. They would go over there as something that was a point of interest for me to see, for our family to see.

My sister, at that point, was ten years older than I, and I was very close to my sister. I worshiped her. She told me about it.

My brother, three years older than I, he told me about it, so from an early age I learned that this was a destroyed community. The differences that existed between black and white and how terrible that was.

My uncle had taken the blacks, almost as a taxi, from Tulsa to Muskogee through the days of the rioting. And taken them covered up in the backseat of his car. So these were family told stories. We were very aware.

JE: And your parents, you said took the maid in and her family?

RF: Oh yeah, yeah.

JE: Because they were rounding up blacks at that time.

RF: That's right. We had a basement in the house where we lived at that time. They stayed in the basement and Mother took care of feeding them because they couldn't emerge until it was over.

JE: Eight, nine, ten people maybe, do you remember?

RF: I think it was more than that. I think it was closer to fifteen.

JE: Otherwise, they would have been rounded up.

RF: Conceivably.

JE: Right. Let's also talk about the fact how it seems like the Tulsa Race Riot was covered up and not talked about, even though in your circle it had been talked about but it didn't become common knowledge to a lot of people.

RF: I wasn't aware of those who didn't have knowledge. In school we were very well aware of what had happened, by the time I started school, which would have been when I was seven, let's say. The kids knew about it. I went to school at Emerson, which was very close to the edge of the black community.

So black/white was something that we were all very aware of, talked about, kids had different opinions on the subject. When I was my youngest, starting at the first grade where I was aware of students, we knew about it and the Jewish kids knew about it and talked about some of their family experiences together. Just the way my family was helpful, other families that I came to know in the Jewish community had been helpful through Sunday school and through early years in public school. We knew about it, no question.

So Nancy's experience, years later, was a big surprise to me.

JE: So When Nancy was teaching sociology to you she wanted to talk about the Tulsa Race Riot. And what was she met with there?

RF: Oh she was met with a blank wall. None of the students had ever heard of it, and most of the students at TU, at that time, were from Tulsa or its environs. There were some out-of-towners, of course. But she was so surprised that she couldn't believe they had not heard about it. And told them to go home and talk to their parents and ask them what had happened. Which they did, and none of them, not one had ever heard of it.

So the students came back and said, "My parents told me they had never heard of it." The next student, "Never heard of it." Next student, "Never heard of it."

Very shortly thereafter, she was called in by the dean. The dean said, "Dr. Feldman," she was called Dr. Feldman and she did not want to be called Dr. Feldman, told the dean that. But the dean said, "At TU we're proud of our doctors and we want you to accept that."

So against her wishes, she told the students they could call her Doctor, or hey you, or whatever. But she was to be called Doctor in the classroom.

He said, "Dr. Feldman, you are not to speak of the Race Riot in your classrooms."

She couldn't believe that she was being censored that way but accepted it. Disgusted with the dean.

And he said, "I understand, but we just don't talk about it."

She accepted his position and did not. She was disciplined pretty severely.

JE: Disciplined—

RF: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: ...because she'd done it on her own—

RF: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JE: ...going up?

RF: She was disciplined.

Chapter 18 - 3:05

Black Power

Ray Feldman: Now there was one other thing that happened and the dean called her in. Oh, that's when she was disciplined over the trial of one of the Black Power men here in Tulsa.

During the Black Power period of time, Black Power was a movement in the nation to really be quite destructive against any of the strong movements of white people who would endanger the black communities. There was a good deal of violence that came during that time.

One of the men in Tulsa, who was a member of Black Power, had used very foul language at a meeting called on the TU campus. He was arrested for the use of improper language in a public place on a school campus.

Nancy was spoken to by the leaders of Black Power to come in and, in some way, defend what he had been doing and the nature of the meeting. Well, as a sociologist she was familiar with how the term [beep] had come to be. And it was during the Civil War years when there were plantations. The women who lived on the plantation were pretty much the property of the plantation owners. Many of them, including some of those who worked for the President of the United States, were persons who fornication with the owners on the property. And so everybody spoke of the men who perpetrated these acts were [beep], they were just called that. And that was the derivation of the word. So it was used commonly by the blacks.

John Erling: So then when Black Power spoke that way they wanted Nancy to come in and—

RF: And help with as a defense witness to describe how the word was used and that this was just something that was not being or considered to be improper language in the black community.

Well, that was not enough to get him off. But she felt that she should give the testimony. She was called as a witness and she gave the testimony, and the dean censored her severely.

JE: What kind of punishment?

RF: Oh it was not a punishment.

JE: To censor—

RF: By censored, I'm speaking of how he spoke to her, in terms of what you can say and cannot say on the campus. It was important for the students not to be speaking in defense of words that were, in turn, offensive, whether they were legal or not, but were offensive. She was just not to put herself in these positions.

Fortunately, in terms of her work, because she was not going to abide by a decision like that, if something came up that troubled her.

Chapter 19 - 2:30

Oral Roberts

Ray Feldman: She'd been asked by Oral Roberts to teach. I was asked to be his treasurer. I was, at that time, doing quite a bit of, not particularly complex tax work, but enough tax work to have gotten a reputation of being able to handle things. I had an accounting undergrad degree. And I knew Oral Roberts quite well through Saul Yeager, who was sort of a mentor of mine as an attorney. A man who had my thoughts and beliefs. We both got in trouble with the FBI because of those beliefs.

Anyhow, he was the attorney for Oral Roberts. So I got to know Oral Roberts. Nancy got to know Oral Roberts. And he asked me to be his treasurer. I thanked but declined.

Probably thirty years later, Oral, and Nancy and I were both at the funeral of a mutual friend. We're talking in the lobby of the Temple afterward, with a group. Oral turned to the group and he said, "This is the only man who ever has said no to me."

John Erling: Oral Roberts said that?

RF: Oral Roberts said that. Some thirty years later. I was amazed that he remembered it but obviously was an offense to him.

JE: What was your observation of Oral at that time?

RF: Oh, I had very favorable feelings about him. And his attorney did. He was Jewish. Went to Israel with him, knew his feelings well, I think, about any and every subject. He said Oral was just not a person who hated Jews in any way, and never preached anything against Jews. It was a subject of the community that, you know, Oral Roberts was thought to be a very prejudiced person by the community as a whole. Just by the fact that he was an evangelist.

But Saul certainly, and I, and Nancy never had any reason to feel that his prejudices carried him to a point of the kind of prejudice that a man like Gerald L.K. Smith, who was truly a hate-monger. Oral Roberts was not that kind of a man.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

RF: I think he was a gentleman.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 20 - 5:35

FBI

John Erling: You did say something about you were in trouble with the FBI.

Ray Feldman: Oh.

JE: Is that something that we should explore?

RF: Well, it's not too serious except that it brings to light two things. The man who was also involved is Saul Yeager. He was president of and helped organize, as did I, a Tulsa Chapter of Southern Poverty, still exists, it's a national organization based on the problems of racial prejudice. The FBI had put the organization, unknownst to us, on its investigation list.

At one point, while I was in my early practice as an associate with John Poe, a man came into the office. I was the only person in the office at that point. He asked to speak to my boss. I told him he was out of town. "Anything I could do?" I wanted to see if I could preserve whatever the purpose of the visit might be.

And he said, "Well, I wanted to find out something, if I could, about Raymond Feldman.

So I told him that was my name. Then he started asking me a variety of questions about myself. I told him and I gave him full answers. I asked, "If Mr. Poe had been here, would you have been speaking to him about me, without my knowledge?"

He hesitated, briefly, and said, "Yes."

So I gave him my own opinion about doing that. While the investigation continued, the organization had some problems locally, not nationally, but locally over its continuance. And Saul terminated his services as president and then folded.

JE: So that's why they were investigating you because of your association with that group?

RF: With that group. Then I had a second, later in my practice, as a successful practitioner, I had an audit of my tax return. A normal enough thing to do. The next year I had an audit of my tax return, not particularly normal. The next year I had an audit of my tax return. My position politically was a very positive one against Nixon, who was then President. And I believed, because it was rumored generally, that persons were having their personal tax returns audited if they were in open opposition to Nixon. I had five audits in a row.

JE: President Richard Nixon. And you had five audits in a row?

RF: Yeah, and none since, ever. One thing was found, in all of the audits, one thing was found, and that is that I'd received fund one year from Frisco Railroad, it was then called, when they merged with Burlington Northern. The dividend as declared by the offices of the railroad company were not taxable because of the certain circumstances involved. The government, in a lawsuit, found that tax was going to be owed. That was why I had to pay tax.

JE: Where you in major opposition to Richard Nixon or—

RF: Oh yes, I'm a strong Democrat.

JE: How major, in opposing the President, were you to be put on a list to be audited?

RF: No more present than any other verbal Democrat who's active in the Democratic party. I've never even held an office in the local Democratic party because I've not chosen to spend my time that way. I've had to buckle down and work at my desk pretty steadily through the years to be the lawyer that I was. It's a major reason why I stepped away from serving other than as a member of something that I believe in. And making contributions financially to them. And supporting Nancy in any and all of the things that she was interested in.

The second big reason being that I enjoyed my work, let me give Red Cross as an example. Or any organization I was active in, I would immediately start getting moved to a presidential position. And I enjoyed my work in the committees in which I was working for that same cause because I had a specific direction as a committee that we were going to be taking. And I could hone in on that and get something done.

As a chairman, it's not baby-kissing, but it's being asked to chair meetings, go to things that keep me from, spend my time with that organization's activities, doing things that were not specific, and in my opinion, bringing some benefit to the community as a whole.

As committees, you know, our actions came before the board as a whole. I was on the board, but I didn't have to spend time with all the other things. I think anyone who has served in an organization understands what I'm saying. Didn't like it.

Chapter 21 - 13:07

World Travelers

John Erling: As well-known as you became in Tulsa for your law work and work with Nancy, everybody talks about Ray and Nancy as being world wide travelers. You became well-known. So did you discover when you were dating? How did that all begin? Where did this begin planning?

Ray Feldman: Oh, you're asking a funny question because it was a surprise to both of us. We had managed to save while I was in private practice, two thousand dollars. Nancy had her earnings, I had mine. She actually earned two thousand dollars a year during that period of time. We said, "What should we do? We've got some savings here."

With her having spare time in the summer, we said, "Well, why don't we take our summer trip someplace?"

"Where?"

"Europe."

"Great! Let's go." So we started biking from downtown Tulsa, where we lived, 9th and Main, to Jenks. Every night when I came home, she'd have an orange mesh bag ready for me and we'd go to Jenks on bicycles that had no special gears in those days. And build up our muscles for this bike trip in Europe that we were going to take. And we felt prepared.

We got to Europe. It was to be an eleven-week trip with thirteen countries visited on bicycle. We started outside of London in Eaton, rented two bikes that also had no gears. And we're to bike to Oxford. We were one hour out when it started bucketing rain. We were on what are called the *Ups of England* because it's continuously up.

We decided, "This is crazy. Let's hitchhike." And we were able to hitchhike, with our bicycles, on a flatbed truck that had a cement bag load on it. We got our bicycles and us on top of the cement bags, holding on as best as we could. And ended up going two-thirds of the distance that remained to get to Oxford.

Our goal was to spend our vacation time at no place where the accommodations called for more than three dollars a night. Because that was the max for us getting through this period of time. And we succeeded with one exception. And that exception was because we thought it was three dollars, but it was three dollars per person. That was how the money part went for accommodations. The rest was for whatever else was needed. But no luxury.

We did everything we wanted to do. I believe, that for both of us, what we did on that trip and the countries we saw, the experiences we had are more indelibly imprinted than any other trip that we've taken where we remember individual experiences, but not all of the individual experiences that we had. We loved it.

There were two ways you could send correspondence home, which we did. And Nancy's person, who were inclined to travel quite a bit, wrote back to us. And we picked up our mail one day to find that they were going to be in Paris. And they knew that we were going to be in Paris at the end of our trip, because that's our point of departure. We knew nothing else about where we would be at any given day or time.

So they met us in Paris, and my father-in-law actually met us in the lobby of the hotel, said, "Get to your rooms before you see your mother and before we have any further discussions."

We were so dirty. And I had lost ten pounds, and I don't know what Nancy had lost. But it was sparse living and dirty living. Anyhow, we had a great time.

JE: So that was the spark. Is there any one particular country that you went back to that became your favorite?

RF: Well, there was no country that was a favorite. There were many countries. For those that fit the definition of going to Western countries, Italy and England. We went back a number of times to both of those countries, more so than others. But we visited most of the European countries.

For countries in other parts of the world, South America, Africa, Asia, what would be a favorite for us I would have to classify as a country that had remarkable mountains. Nepal was our seven Himalayan trips, and eight trips in total, was definitely our favorite mountain area.

Then I would start classifying other countries by how the continents provided what we were looking for. Always, always we were looking for cultural differences. Because on our first trip we learned very quickly that cultural differences gave us the largest possible experience that in some way would help us understand the people. And that meant getting out into the country.

On our very first trip, we would take bus rides into the country, countryside, I'm speaking of. And mingle with people of more limited backgrounds. This was just a part of all of our travel from day one.

As we traveled more, and Nancy was more involved through her sociology courses with not just cultural differences, but differences that grew out of culture on top of culture on top of culture. So that it was not just something of recent derivation, but gave us pleasure to get with people who had been the way they were from historic past.

That got us started going to regions where we were with primitive people, staying with primitive people and finding that this is a way that we could get to understand them. Whether they were headhunters twenty-five years before we got there. We felt safe. That was twenty-five years ago. And it was safe.

But it produced a different experience than going to a country where civilization, as we know it in our Western world, has existed for hundreds of years. So that dictated how we traveled and the pleasure that we got out of travel.

JE: Did you ever think that your life was in danger on any trip?

RF: We had dangerous experiences when we talked about were told could be life-threatening. But we never felt life-threatened. Our mountain trips, we didn't feel our lives were threatened.

JE: The altitudes you were going to, is that—

RF: The altitudes and the terrain. Just the simple crossing of a roaring stream beneath you, on a single log, about twelve inches wide is dangerous and is life-threatening. Nancy and I had no trouble balancing in those days. Now I couldn't balance on the street today.

And going to countries within a year after they had been in conflict, one way or another, either in war or a way of life that endangered life. We had experiences in those countries and just didn't feel our lives were going to be in danger. We had a little angel that we kept on our shoulder.

JE: And both of you were equally as adventurous? She right with you?

RF: Oh by all means. When one was questioning, "Should we?" because there were many times we had that question, even to take the trip, the other could very well have been the balance that said, and pushed, "Let's go." So that it was always, always, always a joint decision. But it took some persuading sometimes.

So we would go. And then we would get there. Our daughter was the only who didn't worry. And her statement always was, "You guys, if you get on a mountain and you fall off, you'll fall doing what you want to do and that's fine with me."

Our eldest was the one who was always the most worried. And had reason to be.

We'd tell our friends where we went. And one of our friends said, "I just want to know where you've gone so that I'll know where not to go." And it was that kind of travel. Yes, and we understood that.

JE: Did you go to Israel many times?

RF: Twice. Nancy went to speak once, and we went first to see the country. Then she went to Haifa and spoke. She was invited to speak through various coincidences. And then people knowing her here would tell someone in Israel. You know, that kind of thing.

To England, we went twice because of her having speaking engagements. Both of which led to and contributed to our sense of travel. Our first trip to England together with Nancy speaking, put the burden on me of finding a place or something that we could do when she finished her speaking engagement, or involvement with the school where she was speaking for a period of time. Find some place where she could go and relax. Because she got kind of tired from people and involvement.

I found in England, public ways where ingresses and egress had been dedicated in almost every town we were in. And were told that was true throughout England. And we certainly experienced it.

Several times I was able to find things to do that involved our walking. Wonderful walks. One time into a five-acre field of golden blooming daffodils where the cows were pasturing. We tippy-toed in and then thought, "Well, the cows are rolling in it." And we started skipping and jumping and eventually running and playing in this field of daffodils.

We came home, and just happened to be up a hill before we got to it. And we started thinking about just taking walks. We didn't do walks at home. So we're in bed talking about it. "We like to go walking. Well, what would be better than the Himalayas? We've never done a mountain climb in our life."

So we said, "Great, let's go." And we went. We arrived and Nancy was in tears after the first day. We had not taken one, single, little exercise class to prepare for this. Everybody else had spent at least three months, and most six, preparing. So we took this crazy trip. And, fortunately, the second in command, a Sherpa native who carry the baggage and the camping gear.

He took us aside and asked if we wouldn't mind his teaching us how to walk in a mountain. Because it's walking we were doing, trekking. We were not doing technical mountain climbing, and never did technical climbing.

So he taught us how to do mountain walking and trekking. We were forever thankful. Tried to thank him again to thank him but never could. Nancy asked on every trip we went in Nepal. Just loved it.

Chapter 22 - 6:45

The Final Trip

John Erling: You're ninety-three now. Nancy passed away February 17, 2014. She was ninety-two. Do you recall the last big trip the two of you made and what age you would have been?

Ray Feldman: We were both ninety-one. We were just within nine months of each other in birth. I teased my in-laws and said that when I was born that they learned about this kind of wild person that had been born in the West. And that they got very busy one night and conceived a daughter just for me. Nine months, almost to the day. So we were both ninety-one at the time.

And we took a trip to five different Greek Islands, which we had not visited before, with one exception. And we'd been to the Greek Islands four times. But these were on the western side of Greece. Thoroughly enjoyed it.

And had planned and took a separate trip, because we spent long times on our travel during the winter months. And took a separate trip going down the coast of Africa on a boat. We took the trip, largely because it was going to end up seeing a full solar eclipse, which we had never seen. We had seen partials but never a full.

And we were seeing countries in Africa that we had also already seen, but never from the coast. Because we weren't taking boat rides in the prior years.

When we hit ninety, I think it was, that we started boat-riding instead of hiking and trekking. We were fortunate to be in good physical condition and to be able to really enjoy nature. And not the Himalayas, we weren't hiking the Himalayas in those days, but we were going to places where there were mountains.

We can say, there's Turkey Mountain in Tulsa. And there are the Himalayas. And somewhere in between we could find a number of other mountains that we walked that had beautiful topography, nature and topography gave us the satisfaction and the challenge of the walk.

The last trip that we took was a boat trip. We went past the various West African countries that we had been to, walking and biking, in fact. And there we were, on an island off the coast of Senegal, where the solar eclipse, according to this particular company, would be best viewed as any place on planet Earth.

And the eclipse was a remarkable experience. When we got on the ship and heard that there were thirty or so passengers who were scientists, some of them had been as much as seventeen total solar eclipse trips, I thought, "How can you do anything like that and be satisfied?"

You know, one time, we knew would be enough for us. Well, we took the trip and one time was not enough. It was an incredibly interesting, very, very brief minute or two-minute experience.

Came home at the end of November of 2013, with Nancy not feeling well. And we weren't sure whether it was just kind of seasickness maybe, because several of the people had gotten seasick on the boat trip. She felt, "Not on the boat, why would I be seasick now? But maybe that's what it is. But I'll go see the doctor."

That's when that started and she died in February. It was cancer of the uterus.

I do want to put in a plug for Green Country Hospice Care. It made an incredible difference in what kind of care we would have gotten, we believe, had we been anywhere such as at home, at a hospital, or wherever, without hospice. We had that excellent care. It's only a twenty-five-, thirty-year-old program that started in England, we understand. It's something that if one can handle it, in our case it was a without charge service. They survive totally on contributions.

JE: And that name of that hospice again is?

RF: Green Country.

JE: Green Country. In her interview, she said, "When I got this cancer, I can't complain. I have had ninety years of the best life of anyone I have ever known." It's the way she accepted that.

RF: She did, and she was dry-eyed. I was in tears, and trying to control my tears. I think her strength through all of those days, which were fortunately so few. And I say fortunately because death was said to be inevitable. And we were prepared for death, I think from the time we hit the sixties and understood that our lifespan was supposed to be ending.

By the time we hit the eighties, we figured anything and everything that we had from that point forward was a gift. We continued to live it as we had, and that was a gift, because of our health, and friends, and all of the pluses that existed in our lives. So when

it ultimately hit, and we had no idea when it would end, the doctor was giving us some encouragement that it would be six months. But no way of really knowing.

So I say fortunate that it was short and that the hospice program controlled it. Because that is what they are supposed to do—provide comfort. And they provided comfort.

JE: Yeah. In my interview with her I asked her, “What was a key highlight in her life?” And she said immediately, “Marrying Ray.”

RF: Well, I have to say the same in reverse. Our marriage was just remarkable.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 23 - 6:15

“They are a real couple.”

John Erling: How would you like us to remember her?

Ray Feldman: As a catalyst for the starting and for the continuance of the numerous causes that she was associated with.

JE: How would you like us to remember you?

RF: Nancy’s husband. Remember as a good lawyer in Tulsa and a fair one. As a person whose compassion and beliefs caused him to devote spare time that he had beyond family to his community. That he was a person who did commit an important part of his entire life to the well-being of the Tulsa community.

JE: That is the way we will remember you. What advice might you have to young visitors who are coming to our website and they listen to your stories and others as they are beginning to embark in the world?

RF: Um (hesitation noise), find a wonderful wife. As I was successful in doing. Use your life productively and to the extent that you are able to, give of your time to your community. To your family first always, where your obligations are primary, and it’s not just obligations, it’s the joy and the pleasures that you gain from it for yourself. And to use that time, once you have it, in a way that betters the lives of others who are less fortunate, in whatever that way might be.

And in order to make your marriage the successful marriage that you *hope* it’s going to be when you initiate it, one in which you have first come to know your future wife’s values. Knowing those, be certain in your own mind that you’re going to give her, as a woman, and as a person, the freedom to fulfill *her* objectives in her life, as fully as you would seek to achieve your own. And as you are a person who lived up to your goals.

JE: Nicely said. Well, Ray, thank you. I’m glad I had the honor to interview both you and Nancy. The remarkable lives both of you did.

RF: Thank you.

JE: And you know? When people talk about people who are married to each other, not everybody says, "They're a real couple."

RF: That's true.

JE: Tulsa—

RF: And Tulsa says that about us.

JE: Tulsa says that about Nancy and Ray Feldman.

RF: This is something that's happened to us, in whatever we've done—let me just digress for a brief moment after England, all of our trips, we included nature and walking. It introduced us to a trip that was totally different from our first trip, which was a trip to see the capitals of the countries that we visited. And all the cities, what cities offer, what urban life meant from 2000 up and from 1600 up and from 800 up. And then ultimately, to see the remote villages and the kinds of things that people did in these other lives that they were living. What they got out of them.

So we saw this, and this is what got us into having trips that always would have a segment of nature, maybe not a mountain in later life, but nature and urban life too. And to the extent possible, remote experiences.

JE: You started talking about that when I said everybody said, "They are a couple." Did you notice that when you traveled?

RF: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: People—

RF: Yeah. We often got applause while we'd be at a meal or something near the end of a trip. We'd get applause when we came down from hillside. Always it was down, because up we were slow as hell. Always were, even when we were younger. But when we were coming down, we went fast. We were sure-footed and we went and we would get applause at the bottom of the hill. The others would have come down.

We were the slowest at the top because we were looking at things. We carried a little pocket scope with us. We looked at lichen and we looked, we saw. Most people on treks are not nature explorers. So we would get applause, which was surprising to us.

Then, they would say at the end of almost every trip, what we hear at home, "You are an inspiration to us. You're such a marvelous couple. Oh, you are such lovers." You know, we'd get this kind of comment. And we get it at home all the time. The inspiration. Nancy got it alone and we got it as a couple.

JE: Yeah.

RF: I didn't get it alone. When I would walk out in the world any given morning, or come home at night, I hadn't heard the word *inspiration*. Nancy would have heard it. She was, she was just this remarkable person.

JE: Yeah, well, you were a remarkable couple.

RF: Well, we grew from each other. As she often said, I was her Gibraltar. I understand that. I am. But I also found, as did she, this totally unexpected adventurous side that was inspired by this one article that she told you about. The quiz, rather.

JE: Yeah. Well, thank you for sharing with us.

RF: Oh, well.

JE: On VoicesofOklahoma.com.

RF: I thank you for doing it.

Chapter 24 - 0:33

Conclusion

Announcer: This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time, on *VoicesofOklahoma.com*.