

## Maxine Zarrow

A story of family, philanthropy,  
community and commitment.

### Chapter 1 - 1:46

#### Introduction

---

**Announcer:** Maxine Foreman Zarrow was born June 16, 1925, in Wichita Falls, Texas. She attended the University of Texas where she met her eventual husband, Jack Zarrow, and moved to Tulsa when the couple married in 1947. The mother of three children, Maxine, like her husband Jack, was an active volunteer with a number of Tulsa area organizations. Among her many associations, she has served on the boards of The Center for the Physically Limited, The Mental Health Association of Tulsa and The Gilcrease Museum. Maxine and her family have been recognized for their active and generous commitment to the Jewish community, mental health, homelessness and social services. Jack Zarrow joined his father and brother, Henry, in the family business, Sooner Pipe and Supply. The iconic Tulsa firm enabled a great deal of the family's philanthropy and employed among other friends and family, the Zarrow's son, Scott, who passed away at age 54 in December 2012. Like his parents, Scott was active in Tulsa and the Tulsa Jewish community and his passing is a loss to the family and to Tulsa. Jack Zarrow died at 86 in February 2012. Maxine and Jack created their own family foundation and played a leading role in the formation of The Tulsa Jewish Retirement and Health Care Center located at 71st and Lewis. The family's commitment to fighting for the homeless is also celebrated thanks to their gift along with The Ann and Henry Zarrow Foundation of the land that is now occupied by The Tulsa Day Center for the Homeless. Maxine's story, while clearly dotted with tragedy and loss, is one of family, philanthropy, community and commitment. And thanks to the Zarrow Foundation, among other foundations, this interview is made possible. Listen to Maxine Zarrow and her story on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

**Chapter 2 - 14:56****Early Life**

---

**JE:** My name is John Erling. Today's date is June 11, 2012. Maxine, first of all, would you state your full name?

**MZ:** Yes, Maxine Foreman Zarrow.

**JE:** Does that mean, then, that you had no middle name?

**MZ:** That's right. My maiden name was Foreman.

**JE:** And, so, in school you had to fight that all the time, more than likely.

**MZ:** Well, not necessarily.

**JE:** Because they always wanted to know our middle name.

**MZ:** Well, it could have been "A" for anonymous, you know.

**JE:** (Chuckles) All right. Your date of birth?

**MZ:** 6/16/25.

**JE:** That would be June 16, 1925, making your present age?

**MZ:** As of today, 86. As of next week, 87.

(Laughter)

**JE:** Notice how she boldly said that, ladies. We're recording this here at Temple Israel before a vast audience. Let them know you're here, by the way.

(Applause)

**JE:** Maxine, where were you born?

**MZ:** I was born in Wichita Falls, Texas.

**JE:** Your mother's name?

**MZ:** My mother's name was Rebecca Levine is her maiden name.

**JE:** Where did she grow up?

**MZ:** She came over to this country when she was about six years old from the Ukraine area in Russia.

**JE:** The circumstances in Russia at that time were not very good, were they?

**MZ:** No, her father had come over earlier with a relative and he had to wait until he had enough money to bring my grandmother and the children over, but my mother was not able to come at that time. She had a boil on her head. They were afraid that if they examined her and they saw a sore or something on it, they'd send the whole family back, so she stayed with her grandfather in Russia for about two years. He passed away and then she came over with an aunt. My oldest sister said she came through Galveston because my grandparents were in Texas.

**JE:** And there were a lot of persecution of Jews at the time which forced them...

**MZ:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

**JE:** To leave that country.

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** What was your mother like? Describe her personality.

**MZ:** She was really very quiet and she thought a lot didn't talk a lot. She never really revealed much about her early life or when she was a child. I think she really wanted to forget, but she did say that she could remember that when the Cossacks would come through into these little shtetls where she lived in one that they would be forewarned and she said she can remember getting down in a ditch because they'd come through with horses and whips and anybody in their way would be knocked out. She never really wanted to talk too much about her childhood there.

**JE:** Your father's name?

**MZ:** My father's name was Joseph Foreman.

**JE:** Where was he born and grew up?

**MZ:** He also came from the Ukraine area out of Russia. He had lost both of his parents. He had a brother living in New York. He came over when he was twelve years old. It was in the late 1800's. He said that he that he had a bar mitzvah before he came to the States because they were fearful, that they didn't know what to expect here and they wanted to make sure that he was bar mitzvahed.

**JE:** Describe your father's personality.

**MZ:** Very outgoing. He loved people and he enjoyed everything. He was very active in the community that we lived in. He was active in the Democratic Party. As my daughter said in introducing us once, I was a yellow-dog Democratic, my father was a yellow-dog Democrat and his father in Russia was a yellow-dog Democrat.

(Laughter)

**JE:** What did your father do for a living?

**MZ:** He lived in New York with his brother and he worked in a shirt factory as a child, and then he went to St. Louis when he was a young man in his early twenties. He had a nephew there and he and another young man struck out for the boondocks. They had a horse and buggy. They had apparently materials and things that they were taking to the merchants in the hinterland and they wound up in Valliant, Oklahoma, and that's where my grandfather lived and had a store. My mother was there at that time helping him in the store. She was about eighteen years old.

**JE:** We should say when they came over, it was in the late 1800's, right?

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** So a lot of this is after the turn of the century that we're talking about. And so your father met your mother in that store.

**MZ:** You know, he and this—I don't know. There was another gentleman with him, another young man, possibly a relative or just a friend, and they were peddling. He saw my mother and he always told the story about seeing this little black-eyed girl in a calico dress behind the counter. He talked to my grandfather and thought he might like to buy the store and in his negotiations, he said to my grandfather, "Well, we'll make a deal if you'll throw that little black-eyed girl in with it."

(Laughter)

**MZ:** Of course, then my mother used to always say, "Well, you didn't exactly have a silk shirt on either." So, they married in about a year. She was about nineteen when they married and they lived in Valliant, Oklahoma, Indian Territory.

**JE:** Then they started a family.

**MZ:** Yes. My oldest sister, Sarah. Sarah Foreman Herman. She married and lived in Fort Worth all of her life. Then my second sister, Hannah Foreman Davis, was also born in Valliant. I think she was about ten or eleven years old and my other sister was sixteen and I was born in Wichita Falls but went back to live in Valiant for a year and then we moved to Vernon, Texas, when I was a year old.

**JE:** Sarah and Hannah are biblical names.

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** I don't know that I've read a Maxine in the Bible, but I could be corrected.

**MZ:** Well, actually, I think they think they thought maybe the third time would be a charm and be a boy, so I think that's kind of where that came from, but it didn't work out quite like that.

**JE:** In Vernon, were there any other Jewish families living there?

**MZ:** Well, I always tell the story—it was about two and half. The half being half said they were and half said they weren't, so that's where the half came in.

**JE:** How old were you when you left that community?

**MZ:** Well, I went off to college. That's when I left temporarily.

**JE:** Did you feel any discrimination there?

**MZ:** Not really. Not really at all. My dad was very active in the community. I was active in all school activities and had very close friends. One of my closest friends, we still are in contact and she lives in San Antonio now. That's who I used to go to Sunday school with. She belonged to the Methodist Church. We had no synagogue in Vernon. She used to invite me to go to Sunday school and I did that many Sunday mornings with her.

**JE:** So there was a synagogue but too far away, I suppose?

**MZ:** We have a synagogue in Wichita Falls which was fifty miles away. In those years, fifty miles was a pretty long way. I used to take the bus over to Wichita Falls. I had a cousin who lived there and I would spend the weekend there—go in on Saturday and then go to Sunday

school on Sunday morning, but my mother and dad kept the store open until late Saturday night and it was just too difficult for them to have to come pick me up then the next day, so I really never had any kind of Jewish education until I moved to Tulsa.

**JE:** So you were a Methodist, then, when you moved to Tulsa?

(Laughter)

**MZ:** Well, not exactly. She was a very close friend of mine and there was not attempt at any—everybody knew we were Jewish and I'm very proud of that always.

**JE:** Yeah. What was the first house you remember?

**MZ:** I was about three or four years old and we had rented a house. The folks had rented a house when they moved to Vernon. Then they bought their house—not that house but another one, and that's really the one that I have great reminiscences about. We lived right across the street from the school which I attended. We lived in that house until my parents moved away.

**JE:** Any special items in that house that you remember?

**MZ:** I remember the third bedroom was sort of like a little den and we had a radio. We all gathered around that radio to listen to Amos and Andy, and Jack Benny. My dad was just constantly on the radio listening for news. Any speakers or anything. That was what we listened to.

**JE:** Many said that living back then they didn...'t have plumbing or electricity and so forth. Did you have full...

**MZ:** Oh, yes.

**JE:** You had full services.

**MZ:** Oh, yes. Well, I think in our early days, I remember an iceman coming along with the ice truck and I remember he had a leather thing that he put the piece of ice in and bring it in, so that was before, I guess, we had a refrigerator, an electric refrigerator. And also I remember I was about six or seven at the time of the Depression, and I remember men coming around to the door asking for food. There was a train track not terribly far away. They'd come out into the neighborhoods and ask for food. That I remember very well.

**JE:** Let me ask you about some of the favorite things that you did for fun—movies, whatever—back then as I child.

**MZ:** We had two movies—movie pictures shows in Vernon. As a young child I remember playing games. My dad was a big baseball fan. We lived right across the street from this school and there was as baseball field right there. I used to play a little baseball. And this school had a big slide down from it. It was a fire escape from the second floor. That was sort of a playground, too.

**JE:** Your first school, then, you attended was right across the street?

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** From where you were.

**MZ:** Yes, and we had many kids that came from areas where they were really having tough times, and I can remember kids would bring their lunch to school in a brown paper bag. The closets had the roll-down doors and they would put their lunch sacks up there in the shelf and then when lunch time came, they'd get them. I think most of them had maybe a piece of cold cornbread and maybe a piece of fatback. Mother never knew how many people were coming home at lunch because I would take them home with me, and then they later on started a soup kitchen that they had there for the kids that didn't have any hot meals.

**JE:** Well, the clothing store must have been doing quite well at this time.

**MZ:** Well, it made a very good living for my dad. He was able to educate three daughters and send them to college. We always had a very nice car and our house was a nice, comfortable home, and he was an avid reader. He always subscribed to the paper that came from New York. It was *The Forward*, which was the Yiddish newspaper. It was in Yiddish and he read it. I can remember going to the post office with him and always he'd eagerly wait for that paper because that was how he got the news of the things that he was interested in.

**JE:** Can you describe a typical family dinner?

**MZ:** Well, my mother worked in the store with my dad, so we had help in the house that did our cooking. It was good country fare. We would always have well-balanced meals. My dad was diabetic so we really never had many sweets or anything, but we did have well-balanced, good food. To this day, I always buy collard greens at the grocery store and it's one of my favorite foods.

**JE:** Are there any recipes that have been passed down to you from family members?

**MZ:** Not really. I don't think my mother ever cooked by a recipe, but I can remember the taste of her food. She would cook on the weekends when the store was closed and she had an incredible ability to season. She cooked not fancy foods but good healthy foods and her seasoning was wonderful.

**JE:** Are there any special heirlooms, photos, bibles or other memorabilia that have been passed down?

**MZ:** No. You know, my parents when they first decided to move to Tulsa after I was married—my sister lived here, Hannah Davis, and I lived here, so they had two that lived here. My other sister lived in Fort Worth. They decided that they would move to Tulsa with two of us here. My dad sold the store the first time to my uncles. My uncles had a chain of stores throughout Texas at that time and some into Arkansas and Louisiana. They decided after they moved here, Daddy was not really happy and they went back and rebought the store and they stayed about three to six months and then came back to Tulsa again. They had some

beautiful pictures, as I remember, of themselves when they were young and they left them in the basement of the store. Every time I'd go back to Vernon for a reunion or something, I'd go into all these antique stores in the main district. I thought, well, maybe I'll come upon them or something, but I never did. My son has my father's papers when he became a citizen, but we didn't really have any kind of heirlooms or anything. You know, in that day, as my mother said, she never really wanted antiques. She and Dad were the only antiques she wanted.

(Chuckles)

**JE:** Remember medicines or remedies back then?

**MZ:** Oh, yeah. I had asthma, and in those days they really didn't have anything for asthma except a medicine called mustard roll. And I can to this day smell it. That hot water bottle with the things that they used at that time. There were no shots and no other kind of medications for it. In fact, when my dad became a diabetic, he was in his, I guess, maybe late thirties, early forties, and insulin had come into being just a few years before. In Vernon, the doctors didn't know what was wrong. They put him on a diet of lettuce and he wasted away. Then we went to Fort Worth to the doctor and they just—he had diabetes. That was kind of one of the things that we have that is an heirloom, if you want to call it. Two of us had it.

**JE:** How old was your father when he passed away?

**MZ:** I think Daddy possibly was—I don't exactly remember—but I think he might have been around 82.

**JE:** And your mother?

**MZ:** About 88.

**JE:** Was there a saying that your mother repeated to you or father that come back to you?

**MZ:** Well, there's a lot of them, but I wouldn't repeat them here.

(Laughter)

**JE:** And that's your answer and you're sticking to it, right?

**MZ:** It's my answer.

(Chuckles)

### **Chapter 3 - 9:04**

#### **World War II**

---

**JE:** Let's move you into high school, which would have been about 1938 that you started high school.

**MZ:** Mm hmm.

**JE:** Tell us about that experience.

**MZ:** You know, I had a great experience in high school. I was real active and I was editor of the high school newspaper. The football team had a pep squad, so they needed new uniforms and they asked me if the store would be interested. They didn't want a regular uniform, but everybody was going to wear the same thing, so my daddy took me to New York that summer and I went up and I picked out three plaid blazers and some skirts in the colors of the school and brought them home. They sent them out. They chose the style they wanted and then the store ordered them and everybody got their pep squad suits at the store.

**JE:** What was the name of the store?

**MZ:** Foreman's. "Foremost for Values"—that was the logo.

**JE:** Your family was kind of a hero, then, and you were, too, then.

**MZ:** (Chuckles) Dad was very active in all the civic organizations. Chamber of Commerce. The Lions Club.

**JE:** You said you were editor. Did you think of journalism to be something that you were interested in?

**MZ:** Yes, I did. I didn't know whether I could do the math courses required for a degree in journalism, so I went into elementary education.

**JE:** Let me come back, then, to that important date, December 7, 1941. Do you remember that day or your father...

**MZ:** Yeah, I remember.

**JE:** Talking about it?

**MZ:** Yeah, I remember, you know, it coming on the radio. My brother-in-law, who lived in Tulsa, Elliott Davis, was in the Reserves. He came out of college—he was in ROTC. We knew most likely that he was going to be called and Barry was, I think at that time, not quite two. They had just built a home here, so they rented a house out and my sister and Barry came to Vernon and my sister thought she would just be there until my brother-in-law was stationed somewhere for training and then they'd join him. Well, it so happened we got a phone call one day from him, and at the time, you know, maybe the big cities had airports, but there were no airports around, so he had arranged for Hannah to come to Amarillo, Texas. There was an Air Force plane going out of there to go to San Francisco, because he was going to ship out. She took Barry, who was just a baby at the time, and they went out to San Francisco and were there about a week, then he shipped out, and Barry never saw his dad until he was six and a half years old. He was gone the entire time. He was in the South Pacific and went through all the battles. Guadalcanal, all of the others.

**JE:** You would have been sixteen at the time. Do you remember, then, boys, men, young men, signing up and they were leaving?

**MZ:** Oh, sure. Very well. Very well. And then the year I went to OU, the whole campus was practically by the end of that first year taken over by the Navy. They had a big naval base

there. At that time, OU had one girls' dormitory. Everything else had been taken over by the Navy. I was living in a sorority house, but there were so few girls there that were coming back that we wouldn't have been able to keep a house going or have a house mother, so my mother said, you know, "Why don't you go to Texas? You're going to get a teacher's certificate. Might as well get a Texas teacher's certificate." So I and about six others migrated to the University of Texas in Austin. And that was an adventure because going from Norman, Oklahoma, to Austin, Texas, was like going from Podunk to New York City, but it was a good move for me.

**JE:** About the war and rationing, do you remember not being able to get certain things?

**MZ:** Yes, I remember very well. Nylon hose had come out, but there was a great shortage of nylon hose. In the store we carried silk hose. We got very few nylons. Nylons were sort of like—you kind of treasured those because there were such a few around.

**JE:** The reason that there was a shortage of nylons that they were used for parachutes and ropes and that sort of thing.

**MZ:** That's right. Well, also, I remember the Lucky Strike cigarettes when they said, "The green had gone out of Lucky Strikes." I don't know, I guess for the green of the army and also they took away the foil, the tin foil.

**JE:** Yep.

**MZ:** I definitely remember the rationing cards and the gas rationing and tire rationing. It was very difficult.

**JE:** Tires were tough to get ahold of?

**MZ:** Yes. Very tough.

**JE:** Because it was used for obviously the tanks and jeeps.

**MZ:** That's right.

**JE:** Sugar, too?

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** There just wasn't enough to go around. Over ninety percent of the sugar in the United States was imported.

**MZ:** That's right.

**JE:** We just didn't have enough.

**MZ:** That's right.

**JE:** And as you've said, gasoline.

**MZ:** Yeah, you had ration cards.

**JE:** Tell us about that.

**MZ:** Well, you had a ration card and ration stamps. They gave you so much for a certain length of time and that was it. That was it. I don't ever remember feeling in any way deprived, no. There were so many other things to worry about that that was really minor.

**JE:** I would imagine shoe repair stores were big back then.

**MZ:** Oh, yes.

**JE:** They'd do half soles and that type of thing—that repair?

**MZ:** Oh, yes. Yeah. In those days when you lived in a small town, my dad used to go to market. I think he would go to Saint Louis once a year. That was a certain market. And then he'd go to New York another time a year. That was one of the times that I went up with him. We had traveling men that came through and there would be people with their shoes or their dresses or whatever. We had two hotels in Vernon but one that had sample rooms where the salesmen would always take their wares. One day the Presbyterian minister was in the store. He conducted a Sunday school class up at the hotel for the men who were from out of town. He was standing at our pattern stand. We sold patterns at the store. And he said to Dad, "That's what I need for my Sunday school class for a lectern." So Dad had one made and sent it over to the hotel. They'd asked him to come to the Sunday school that Sunday and when he got there, he asked him to say a few words. So Daddy got up and he said, "Well, many years ago, one of our boys gave you this book and now I'm giving you something to put it on."

**JE:** As the war moved on and you were sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, do you remember hearing anything about the German concentration camps at all?

**MZ:** Not really. Not really. Even after I was married, there were things that were occurring then I don't remember. But at that time, of course, I lived in Tulsa. I don't know that a lot of the things were that publicized. Of course, we knew the atrocities of Hitler. Of course, coming to Tulsa, that was a whole different life for all of us as far as our Jewish life. At home we celebrated Passover and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Those really were the holidays that I knew. My mother always had a big Sadr during the wartime. They'd have all the boys from all the camps around. After I married and came to Tulsa and Jack would come home, every other day there was a holiday. You've got to be putting me on. I never heard of these holidays. There were so many holidays that I'd never heard of.

**JE:** Remember hearing presidents on the radio like FDR?

**MZ:** Yes. Yes.

**JE:** Tell us about what you remember.

**MZ:** You know, it was a very dramatic and traumatic time to hear the president and, of course, he was in poor health.

**JE:** Franklin Roosevelt?

**MZ:** Yes, uh huh. My daddy idolized him. We didn't know that he had not opened the doors to let this whole ship of kids that came, you know—were in, I think, the Boston Harbor, and they turned them away.

**JE:** I'm not sure I know what you're talking about.

**MZ:** There was a ship that came to the United States with these refugee children. I don't know whether it came from Germany or if it came from France or where it was and they were turned away and they were sent back. And Roosevelt did not speak up. He didn't speak up early enough. There were a lot of his cabinets that were isolationists. They didn't want to get mixed up in the war.

**JE:** So the politics talked about around the table, then, in your family and your father led that conversation.

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** Did he talk about it at the table?

**MZ:** Oh, yes.

**JE:** So you didn't even know there was a Republican Party, then, at the time, did you?

**MZ:** Not really. Not really. We even had Democrats in Texas at that time.

(Chuckles)

## Chapter 4 - 6:20

### Maxine Meets Jack

---

**JE:** You've already talked about going to OU and you described that, so then it was in 1943 and '44 when you actually went to the University of Texas.

**MZ:** Right.

**JE:** Correct?

**MZ:** Mm hmm.

**JE:** And then your major then was education?

**MZ:** Yeah, elementary education and I later served on the board of the education school at the university.

**JE:** University of Texas.

**MZ:** Mm hmm.

**JE:** Was that a career that most young women would go into?

**MZ:** Well, I had a sorority sister who was a journalism major and was very active in the political scene and in politics in Austin. There were, you know, a lot of different avenues that women took.

**JE:** Your parents—they did not have much education?

**MZ:** No. No, they were more or less self-educated.

**JE:** From eight and twelve when they came here, they may not have had much education.

**MZ:** No, they didn't. They didn't.

**JE:** For them to be able to send you three daughters to college, and here you are graduating, how proud they must have been.

**MZ:** It was exciting for them. My sister Hannah Davis graduated from the University of Oklahoma, and my sister Sarah Herman, the one who lived in Fort Worth, after she married just lacked a few hours graduating, but she got married and she never finished. She just lacked such a short time. She later on was very sorry that she didn't go ahead and finish those hours.

**JE:** An MRS degree, I guess, we call that.

**MZ:** Yeah, well, no, her husband's name was Abe Herman and she said she got her AB instead of her BA.

(Chuckles)

**JE:** Somewhere in here you met a young man.

**MZ:** Yeah. Jack Zarrow.

**JE:** That was then at the University of Texas.

**MZ:** Right. When I graduated high school, Texas only had eleven grades. Oklahoma had twelve, so he was a year behind me. He was waiting to be drafted and didn't re-enroll in school, so he wasn't called and time was going on, so he decided, well, he'd enroll and if he got drafted he'd leave. OU was just on a two-semester time and second semester had already started. I think he tried the Colorado School of Mines and several others. He wanted Petroleum Engineering. Then he decided he'd try the University of Texas and we were on a tri-semester program, so they'd just started the second semester when he came down to Austin.

**JE:** Do you recall the moment you first laid eyes on him?

**MZ:** Yeah.

**JE:** You do?

**MZ:** Yeah.

**JE:** Tell us about it.

**MZ:** Well, it was nearly noontime and my cousin who was my roommate and I were up at the Hillel. That's why Hillel has always held a warm spot in my heart. The Hillel was up over a drug store on the drag at the University of Texas. It was just a small area. We would say we would walk upstairs backwards so people would think we were coming out instead of going in. (Chuckles) But we walked in and there were not too many people there, but we see these three young men. There was a real blond-headed guy and this good-looking black-haired fella and another fella. They had just pledged at one of the Jewish fraternities. So it was about lunchtime and my cousin who was my roommate had just gotten a new car. Cars were very hard to get and she had a gray Plymouth convertible with red leather upholstery. She asked the fellas if they'd like a ride back

to the fraternity house, she'd drop them off, so they did. We dropped them off at the house and we went on back and then I mentioned to the girls, I said, "Golly, the Phi Sigs have pledged these three guys and there's a black-haired one that's the best-looking thing I've ever seen. So about maybe a week later, I got a phone call and he asked me out. I thought he'd made a mistake because my cousin was the one that had that gorgeous car. So after I accepted I thought, "What if he comes here and he really meant Rosemary and not me?" Anyway, that was the beginning and we dated some that year, and then the next year I was a senior and we started dating a little more, and then we pretty much dated fairly steady the last part of my senior year. Then I graduated and he had another year to go on to school and in those days, you didn't get married when you were in school. You waited until after you were out of school. I would go down to Austin. I did some substitute teaching. Not too much, but some. I would go down for all the formals and things in Austin. So then he gave me his fraternity pin which was engaged to be engaged, you know. Then the summer after he graduated, we got engaged and we were married in August '47.

**JE:** Nineteen forty-seven?

**MZ:** Yeah.

**JE:** What was Jack telling you his future was going to be?

**MZ:** When he graduated he thought, well, maybe he would like to go to med school. He always had problems with his eyes and he would like to go to med school. And I said, "Well, okay. I'll teach school and we'll make it somehow." I said, "But I want to tell you one thing. Nobody ever died of a broken heart and I'm not going to sit in Vernon waiting." And that was it.

**JE:** So then what happened?

**MZ:** We were married. (Chuckles and laughs)

**JE:** You took charge. Where did you get married?

**MZ:** In Wichita Falls.

**JE:** What memory stands out from your wedding day?

**MZ:** Well, it was kind of a family tradition. Both my sisters married in the same hotel. We had the same florist, the same lady that sang at their weddings sang at mine. And there was a rabbi in Wichita Falls. In fact, someone here tonight was at my wedding. Dave Sylvan.

**JE:** Wow.

**MZ:** And Barry Davis. He was in the corner crying because his dad has just come back from the war and he was dancing with his mother. (Chuckles) He was really upset. (Chuckles)

**JE:** And we point out that he's in the audience as well.

**MZ:** Yes.

**Chapter 5 - 4:17****Jack Zarrow**

---

**JE:** How would you describe Jack? What was it that you liked about him?

**MZ:** It was just unreal. I mean, he was so different than any of the other fellas there. He was so humble and so kind. All the fellas felt the same way. He just was a—it was just kind of unreal. He was so different than anyone else I had ever dated or known. He was always kind and very thoughtful. In those days at most of the sorority and fraternity dances, the house mothers would come to chaperone and he would always ask the house mothers to dance and that was the light of their evening, you know. Nobody ever asked them to dance. He was just a kind, sweet, gentle person.

**JE:** How many years were you married?

**MZ:** Sixty-five.

**JE:** Your children and their names?

**MZ:** Gail Zarrow Richards.

**JE:** She's here this evening.

**MZ:** She's here with her husband, Kip Emmett. Kathy Zarrow's my second daughter. And then I have a son, Scott Zarrow who's married to Hillary.

**JE:** Wasn't it sometime that Jack had an automobile accident that lingered with him?

**MZ:** Yeah. My second daughter was about four months old and Jack was going out to a well and he was on a farm road near Perkins, Oklahoma. A farm truck was ahead of him and he was starting to pass it. It turned left in front of him and he turned left to avoid hitting it and hit a culvert and he turned over, I don't know—he was thrown out of the car. The ambulance driver said, "That man sure must have had his Maker with him because there's nothing left of the car." In those days, I guess he was very fortunate they didn't have seat belts so he was able to be thrown out. The rest of his life he had back problems and I think that was one of the main causes that he suffered. He got arthritic as he got older and had a lot of health issues.

**JE:** When is it, then, that you moved to Tulsa?

**MZ:** Right after we were married. We moved here immediately.

**JE:** Okay. What did Jack do in Tulsa?

**MZ:** He went to work with his father and his brother in the—actually was scrap junk business in those days.

**JE:** His father's name was...

**MZ:** Sam.

**JE:** He was also in business with...?

**MZ:** Henry, his brother.

**JE:** Henry Zarrow.

**MZ:** Yeah.

**JE:** In the used pipe business.

**MZ:** Yes. Scrap.

**JE:** Scrap business.

**MZ:** And used.

**JE:** And that continued on for some time?

**MZ:** He really was more interested in getting into the oil business, but their main thing was in the supply business. And they went from the used business to the new business.

**JE:** Did they open stores?

**MZ:** Yes. That was one of the things that they had to do in order to go into the new business, because the suppliers like U. S. Steel and all the other suppliers would not put their product into a used business. The first store they opened was in Pawhuska.

**JE:** And this is important, I think, because of Jack's interest later on. He became involved with Native Americans and Indian lease sales.

**MZ:** Well, the first store, as I said, was opened in Pawhuska. It so happened that that day of the Indian lease sale there. The Osages would sell leases. Jack's dad was a wonderful sweet man. Very friendly. Never met a stranger. So he went up to the lease sale and he was so friendly and he was waving to everybody and somebody came back to the store and said to Jack, "You better go get your dad, you're gonna own every lease there."  
(Chuckles) You know, they thought he was bidding.

**JE:** He got out of that, didn't he?

**MZ:** Yeah. Yeah.

**JE:** They formed a pipeline company then? What was the name of that?

**MZ:** Well, that was Bigheart Pipeline. They were pulling old pipelines up and selling it for scrap. Jack thought that there was a future in pipelining and rather than pulling the pipe, they formed a business and they collected oil from the lease owners. That's when they got into the pipeline business.

**JE:** They collected oil.

**MZ:** They'd go around to different people's leases and they bought the oil from them. Then they used the pipeline to go into the refinery—the one in Cushing, I believe.

**JE:** So that was the Bigheart Pipeline Company.

**MZ:** Yeah. Yeah. They had trucks that collected the oil. They had a fleet of trucks.

**Chapter 6 – 3:17****Native American Art**

---

**JE:** Isn't that when Jack developed a love for Indian art and memorabilia?

**MZ:** Well actually, yes, he was very interested. Pawhuska was, I think it's the head of the Osage Agency. He was always interested. You know, he'd have people drop in the office with artwork and he's always buy pieces and then one day—this was at a later time—he came home and he said someone had asked him if he would be interested in going on the Gilcrease board. He asked me what I thought about it and I said, "I think it'd be the greatest thing on earth for you. It'd give you a whole new aspect of something that you never ever had before." He was asked to go in through the city, you know, the city has or did have a member on the board. So that's when he started his time with Gilcrease and it was an interest all of his life and he loved it.

**JE:** But he had been a collector before that.

**MZ:** Yeah, in a small way. A small way. We used to have families that practically would camp out on our front yard when somebody needed something or someone had a baby, they'd bring their artwork up to the house and he'd never refuse them.

**JE:** I think that he also made sure that he bought these pieces at a fair market value.

**MZ:** Oh, yeah. O, yeah.

**JE:** He could have taken advantage of them.

**MZ:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**JE:** But he paid them what it was worth.

**MZ:** And, you know, he felt like that was a part of our heritage here in Oklahoma and that was necessary that we understood it and enjoyed it. The Indians, you know, live their art. Their art was their clothes, their shoes. It was a way of life with the Native American.

**JE:** I would imagine you attended your fair share of powwows, then?

**MZ:** Yeah, we did. We didn't miss too many. We used to go to Tahlequah. They had beautiful art shows there, and to Muskogee. The college there has turned out wonderful artists. Some of the most famous of all are Native American artists that come from Muskogee, from the school in Muskogee. One day we went in—I think it was during the summer term—and we met this artist by the name of West, Dick West, whose son happened to be the first director of the Indian Museum in Washington, part of the Smithsonian. Anyway, he was head of the college in Muskogee. We saw these beautiful paintings on the walls and Jack asked if they were for sale. He said yes. Jack said, "Well, who's the artist?" He said, "I am." Usually when we bought, we would buy three. We'd buy for the kids and

then one for us. It was fun meeting and knowing Dick West. There were many others like that and he's quite a famous artist in Oklahoma art circles.

**JE:** So you obviously grew an appreciation for Native American art as Jack did.

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** The two of you kind of learned it and bought it together.

**MZ:** Yeah, we did it—we usually did everything together.

**JE:** And as a result of that, then, maybe through your foundation, you began to get involved in Native American issues and support?

**MZ:** That came at a later date. We've always felt that—from always the Indians were the most maligned people ever. They really got a bad shake. We certainly wanted to help in any way we could, whether it was by purchasing their art or in other contributions of support for them.

**JE:** Didn't you have some support for the Indian Health Center? Were you involved in that in some sort?

**MZ:** Yes, over on Sixth Street?

## **Chapter 7 - 5:12**

### **Mental Health**

---

**JE:** You also became interested in mental health issues and the Mental Health Association.

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** Tell us why.

**MZ:** That was a very personal reason. My second daughter has schizophrenia. She developed it at a young age and we really didn't understand it and nobody understood it in those days. That was like another world. The doctors didn't understand it. The medicines were medieval. We became advocates and we tried to learn a little bit about it. We attended some meetings in New York trying to find, I can't say a solution because there's really not a solution, but something that would perhaps help in giving those that were afflicted with that a better life, and eventually that came around. There are good medicines now and people do understand it and people don't hide from it. It's certainly nothing to be ashamed of. That was our one goal to really try to do what we could do, either as advocates or whatever.

**JE:** You're talking about Kathy now.

**MZ:** Kathy, uh huh.

**JE:** Without getting any further details, was that something you discovered at an early age?

**MZ:** Even as a small child, I thought she was a little more fragile than my others. She had fears that the others didn't have. She was fearful at night to sleep, you know. She was afraid, and I used to pay Gail to go in her room and sleep with her in one of the beds. It really manifested itself when she was maybe fifteen, sixteen, and she just got through high school by the grace of God. She's been sick most of her life. I mean, she struggled. She's doing well now and we see her often. She comes home. She lives in Topeka. She was at Menninger's for years and then Menninger's left Topeka. She's in this community residence house there and it's a lovely facility. These are groups that she's practically grown up with.

**JE:** At first, clients back then were placed in institutions and not in housing.

**MZ:** That was before our time, thank God.

**JE:** Okay.

**MZ:** That was not even in our thoughts. At one time she was in Boston at the hospital that was the teaching hospital for Harvard. She did very well there. Then there was no follow-up care. They didn't have any after-care for her. That's when we went back to Menninger's. They had just opened this program, this community residence program, and these were—at that time they were kids, practically. These were kids that had been sick a long time and the medications were not good either in those days and, of course, now the medication is so much different. Now, you know, everything is based on recovery and working, but they didn't have the medications in her early life, unfortunately.

**JE:** But even those institutions that they had, they started finally closing them.

**MZ:** Oh, yeah. There's nothing.

**JE:** So, it was finding housing then with a program, I supposed.

**MZ:** Yeah. Menninger's was wonderful. That's what she went into was this community residence program and they built these homes, beautiful houses. They had about twelve people in them and had great help and social workers. They had great doctor care and it's still maintained that way. Even though Menninger's is not connected with it.

**JE:** Because of that personal experience, then, you're foundation started permanent housing here in Tulsa.

**MZ:** Well, that's my daughter. I have to give her credit for that because she's the one that really has stepped in and done all of that. She and Judy Kischner.

**JE:** Her cousin.

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** Aren't there about twenty apartment houses?

**MZ:** I don't know. Gail would probably know how many houses there are now, or how many apartments. Gail?

**JE:** Okay. Yes. There are about twenty apartment houses that house six hundred?

**MZ:** Yeah. Well, they built that beautiful one out on Yale and I don't know how many it houses. It's a wonderful facility. They just bought another—they're scattered all through the city. They're all through the city. It's been a wonderful thing. Tulsa's really sort of become the model for the whole country in the way that they have provided the right kind of facilities for people who've had some mental health problems.

**JE:** Interesting how those things develop. Here is a personal experience and now look at all the great work the foundation is doing in that area and still advocating, both Gail and Judy are doing that in our state legislature and all.

**MZ:** They're gonna have a national conference here with many of the agencies from Washington that'll be here. That takes place in September.

**JE:** And it's coming here because of what you just said, the kind of work that you've been doing here.

**MZ:** Well, the Mental Health Association.

**JE:** Mm hmm.

**MZ:** They run that program. One great thing about Tulsa is all the cooperation between all the agencies. The Mental Health and then there's Family and Children's—they have a program there for women in recovery rather than sending them to prison. They have a wonderful program there where they teach them skills and then the Mental Health, then, has the apartments for them to go into because, you know, unfortunately, most people that have been in prison are considered felons. I mean, even if they're mentally ill, they can't get places to live. Some of the housing also is low-income housing, which is greatly needed.

## Chapter 8 - 7:02

### Discrimination

---

**JE:** Let me just take you back here because this is history in the sixties when John Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. Are there some remembrances of that day and were you taken with him as a president?

**MZ:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We were in Arkansas fishing. We had been in a closed-in fishing dock. It was cool. We were leaving to have lunch and the gentleman there said, "The President's been shot." So we got in the car and we turned on the radio and we went back to our cabin and got our clothes and drove back home. Listened to the radio all the way and, of course, I think by the time we got home he'd already passed away and Johnson was preparing to take over. I think everybody knows where they were the day that happened.

**JE:** And the music they played on the radio at that time was just very somber. When they weren't talking, it was just very, very...

**MZ:** That's right.

**JE:** Somber...

**MZ:** That's right.

**JE:** Kind of music.

**MZ:** That's right.

**JE:** Then we had the assassination in '68 of Doctor King.

**MZ:** Yeah.

**JE:** And then Robert Kennedy in '68.

**MZ:** It all seems like a bad dream. It nearly seemed like an epidemic of hate.

**JE:** As you came to Tulsa in the 50's or 48's or 50's, race relations here and blacks and whites. Did you feel or notice any of that?

**MZ:** The year before I got married I had done national sorority work and I had the Southern chapters. I had the University of Alabama, the University of Georgia and Louisiana and OU. I was pulling into Birmingham on a Pullman. I was going to Tuscaloosa to see the chapter there. Desegregation had started or was being talked about. We were talking and I said, "Well, I certainly believe that all rights should be the same at the schools." There was a gentleman sitting across and he turned to me and he said, "Young lady, you're in the South now. You better be careful what you say." But as far as here, everything was segregated.

**JE:** Remember seeing the signs?

**MZ:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** In the stores downtown?

**MZ:** Well, not only in the stores but I remember the railroads and the fountains. In the little town I lived in, the movie theaters. It was really unbelievable.

**JE:** Everything segregated, you mean, is what you're talking about, right?

**MZ:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

**JE:** What about the movie theaters?

**MZ:** I know there was segregation but I don't ever remember—maybe in the balcony, maybe—that was—I don't really remember that.

**JE:** The blacks may have sat in the balcony?

**MZ:** Yeah. I think so.

**JE:** Remember stores downtown?

**MZ:** Oh, yeah. Definitely a problem when it came to trying on clothes and everything. It was just terrible. You know, Gerald L. K. Smith was pretty active here.

**JE:** I'm sorry, that name again?

**MZ:** Gerald L. K. Smith.

**JE:** Tell us about him.

**MZ:** He was probably one of the worst anti-everything in the country. He was anti-Semitic, anti-Black. He was like a cancer and he was very active around Tulsa. I'm surprised you've never heard that name.

**JE:** No.

**MZ:** Yeah, he was prevalent here.

**JE:** He wasn't from Tulsa. Did he live here?

**MZ:** He lived nearby but he was here a lot. He was here a lot. I remember he was coming here to speak. He had these very inflammatory speeches that he made. We went and then he never showed up. I don't know whether he was a member of the Klu Klux Klan, but I do know that he was very, very anti-Semitic and anti-Black.

**JE:** Did he seem to have a...

**MZ:** Following?

**JE:** Following?

**MZ:** Oh, yeah. You had asked me earlier if I'd ever really had any kind of an incident of discrimination. When I moved here and I had done this national sorority work, we did have an alumni group here and they felt we should join the PanHellenic here. PanHellenic is made up of sorority girls from colleges. The PanHellenic rules the college sororities. There is a national PenHellenic that rules all the PanHellenics. These are alumni groups that are in different cities and the different sororities belong, and there was a PenHellenic association here. So I called the woman who was the president of the group. I told her who I was and what sorority it was and I said, "I'll mail you the information." We were established in 1929 and how many chapters we had and so forth and so on. I sent her all that information and I never did hear back from her. So after a few months I called her back. I said, you know, "I haven't heard from you. Is there any further information that you'd like?" She says, "No." I said, "Well, I haven't heard from you." She said, "Well, you don't qualify." I said, "Well, I don't understand. We were established in 1929." We had I don't know how many chapters. And she says, "You don't qualify." So I hung up and I called back to our national and it so happened we had a member that was on the national PanHellenic board. When they heard that, then they contacted this woman and she said, "They don't qualify." So they disqualified this chapter. There were a lot of people moving into Tulsa, people whose husbands were engineers and things and they had been in other schools, not Southern schools, but from schools from Ohio and Iowa and all up in through the Midwest. When they heard what happened, they had a fit. One of the women called me. You know, I didn't need them socially. I wasn't interested in that anyway. I was just doing it because I'd been

asked to do it. She called me and said that a whole new group had taken over, that it was terrible and that they wouldn't have ever joined had they known that that was the thing that existed there. And at the time when this was going on, I mentioned it to Rosalyn Guzman, who was in another sorority, and apparently she knew. She says, "It'll be a cold day in July." I couldn't believe it, but that's what happened. You know, it was there. There was a lot in Tulsa. A lot of the community was not open. It was not open. Country clubs.

**JE:** You're talking about the Jews now?

**MZ:** Yes.

**JE:** So country clubs weren't open?

**MZ:** Yeah.

**JE:** The Southern Hills was not?

**MZ:** I don't know. Maybe other country clubs. I don't think many of them were at that time. Then I think others did open.

**JE:** So then you did begin to feel some of this anti-Semitic feeling here in Tulsa, Oklahoma?

**MZ:** Well, it was here.

**JE:** Yeah.

**MZ:** It existed. It existed.

**JE:** Do you think it does today?

**MZ:** I don't know. You know, I'm not that active. I don't know. I imagine that there's still some. I think that it's a hundred percent better. I think that people understand each other and tolerant. I definitely think that it's better. I was just at this thing for the John Hope Franklin.

**JE:** You're talking about the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Program.

**MZ:** Yes. Yes. It's a very interesting group and there's a lot to be done yet.

## **Chapter 9 - 2:37**

### **Regard for Fellow Man**

---

**JE:** Couldn't you describe the Jewish community in Tulsa as being so involved and being so supportive of this community, yet people are surprised what a small community of Jews that live in Tulsa and how this small community has been so effective and has done so many, many good things.

**MZ:** Well, we appreciate that. I think that when you're on the other side you appreciate a little more of what the other person's going through. You can certainly be tolerant.

**JE:** To repair the world?

**MZ:** Well, try.

**JE:** Of all the things you learned from your parents, which do you think you value most?

**MZ:** Their regard for the fellow man. I remember we had a little blue box and at the time, other religious people would come to the little towns and they'd distribute these blue boxes which were charity boxes. Anytime anybody took a trip and got there safe and came home safe, my mother, she'd always deposit money. It was just sort of a way of life, I think that it's sort of in the bones of a person that you inherited from your parents even though you've not gone through what they've gone through, you can certainly still have the same feelings.

**JE:** Yeah. As you reflect then on your life, some of the accomplishments that you've been most proud of?

**MZ:** I think marriage to my husband and my children and grandchildren and great-grandchild. Those are my greatest accomplishments.

**JE:** What is the one thing you would want people to remember about you and Jack?

**MZ:** That we tried to do the right thing.

**JE:** I want to thank you for this. I know you believe in what we're doing here this evening. I think you did another interview in New York?

**MZ:** Yes. Yeah.

**JE:** And so you felt that preserving the stories is important for our future generations.

**MZ:** Yes. That was done by a foundation in New York. It was during these—from different parts of the country and I represented the Southern Jewish grandmother.

(Chuckles)

**JE:** Is there some unique, special characteristic about the Southern Jewish grandmother?

(Chuckles)

**MZ:** I don't know. They needed a Southern Jewish grandmother, so that was me.

(Chuckles)

**JE:** Thank you, Maxine...

**MZ:** Thank you, John.

**JE:** For doing this.

(Applause)

**JE:** Thank you, audience, for being with us tonight.

**MZ:** Thank you.

**JE:** We do appreciate it very much. Believe me, we do.

**Chapter 10 - 0:29****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](http://VoicesOfOklahoma.com).