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# The Forward Fifty — Jewish Leaders to Watch in the Year Ahead

THE FORWARD  
NOVEMBER 18, 1991

## EDGAR BRONFMAN

Globe-trotting ambassador for world Jewry, president of World Jewish Congress since 1980, head of World Jewish Restitution Organization since Iron Curtain's collapse. Billionaire CEO of Seagram's spends 50% of time on WJC affairs, meeting 57 heads of state on five continents in past decade, freeing Jews from dozens of countries, getting Russia and 10 former communist satellites to join WJC. Other exploits: Secret diplomacy helps cement Israel-Vatican ties, archive-scouring helps expose Kurt Waldheim's Nazi past. Subtle he's not.



## RABBI IRVING 'YITZ' GREENBERG

Teacher of tomorrow's federation elite, Orthodox preacher of Judaic pluralism, heretic to Orthodox rightists, president of National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership since 1974. Theologian-educator with radical impact on institutions: His 1963 triumph in battle with Yeshiva University over teaching pioneer course on Holocaust — YU thought it "parochial," too Jewish, would be "misunderstood" by graduate schools — led to spread of such studies across America. CLAL classes, seminars, lectures, retreats in 40 cities redirect communal leadership, transform federation priorities, focus on community-building, Jewish-identity nurturing, not mere fund-raising, social-action agenda. But intra-denominational line-blurring, bread-breaking with Reform makes him anathema to Orthodox rabbinate.



## BETH GILINSKY

Brainy Jewish firebrand, 30-something president and founder



## RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER

Liberal lion of Reform movement, inclusionist extraordinaire. Spiritual leader for 1.3 million Americans in 875 synagogues, president of Union of American Hebrew Congregations from 1973. Championed outreach to intermarried, conversion for non-Jewish spouses, enfranchisement — including rabbinical and cantorial ordination — for gays, lesbians. Drove Reform movement hard to left, published commentary on Torah, battled Orthodox monopoly on government assistance in Israel. Biggest controversy: Decreed patrilineal descent equal to matrilineal in interfaith marriages, causing rift in Reform movement. "Right problem," antagonists said. "But wrong solution." German born, like Reform itself, 69, Holocaust survivor, he no longer resembles flock in age, world experience; retires in 1996, American-bred baby boomer likely to take his place.



## ALAN DERSHOWITZ

Harvard professor as avenging angel, civil liberties attorney as defender of faith, scholar as warrior. "American Jews need morechutzpah," he argues. Turns courthouse into battlefield, defends Jonathan Pollard, then slams silence of Jewish leaders on spy; sues Cardinal Glemp for anti-Semitic defamation, then rips sycophantic behavior of Jewish establishment undercutting his case. Says Elie Wiesel, "A few people like Alan Dershowitz in the 1930s and 1940s and the history of European Jewry might have been different." But in the American context, just what are his politics?



CAROLYN COHEN

## MORTON MANDEL

"Morton Who?" No household word, yet Cleveland

## EDWARD KOCH

Three-term New York mayor, lifetime champion of Jewish causes, oneman communications conglomerate. Booted out of City Hall, he took to airwaves, tabloid columns to decry racial quotas, racial preferences, multicultural mania, black anti-Semitism. As first public figure to brand Crown Heights a "pogrom," as self-described "Voice of Reason," his tell-it-like-it-is style helped steer generation of once-liberal Jews in conservative direction for first time in their lives.



## MAX FISHER

Confidant of American presidents (mainly the Republican ones), Israeli prime ministers. A Jewish Agency founder, pillar of UJA, doyen of Zionist nation-builders. Gives half his multimillion-dollar oil and real-estate income each year to Israel or Jewish causes; yet when hometown Detroit federation revamped funding formulas, upping domestic spending at expense of overseas giving, his backstage backing made revolutionary shifts possible. When octogenarian dean of Israel-giving quietly signals support, other American federations follow, spending more charitable dollars at home. Autocratic personality sometimes rankles. With Republicans suddenly in the majority in the Congress, though, he may have the last laugh.



ROBERT A. CUMINS

## RICHARD PEARLSTONE

Young man in a hurry, alumnus of 1960s counterculture, first baby boomer to run United Jewish Appeal. Re-engineering UJA campaign themes, marketing



## RABBI AVI WEISS

Rabbi with rap sheet, scourge of Farrakhanites, Waldheimites, tormentor of Jewish establishment, president of Coalition for Jewish Concerns-Amcha. Champions causes before they become popular — Soviet Jews, Jonathan Pollard, Crown Heights — then organizes, agitates, demonstrates, poses for mug shots, then institutional Jewry joins fray. Almost alone put clemency for Pollard on Jewish agendas when other leaders nursed doubts on the issue or feared charges of dual loyalty; awakened America to NYC's failure to protect Eastern Parkway Jews when mainstream groups stayed mute. Would the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz still be there had he not climbed that fence, attracting global attention to the troubling symbol? Foes of confrontationalism, citing arrests from Bronx to Bergen-Belsen, brand him "Jewish Al Sharpton."



G. P. PRINCE 1990

## LOUISE GREILSHEIMER

Doyen of domestic dollars, stewardess of \$148 million treasure trove, president-elect of United Jewish Appeal-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of Greater New York. Sits at side of lame-duck prexy, Alan Jaffe, serving one-year apprenticeship, but after accession on July 1, pay attention. Federation-watchers predict reign will lead charity — kicking, screaming — to rewrite funding formulas posting \$7 overseas for every \$3 spent at home. Inexperienced on Israel, former chairman of UJA-Federation domestic affairs, her elevation deadlocked closed-door nominating committee, sparked fears she'll steer less to Zion, more to home front, taking biggest Jewish money machine in direction of Detroit, Milwaukee, Boston. If change defines leadership, she has the chance.





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## BETH GILINSKY

Brainy Jewish firebrand, 30-something president and founder of Jewish Action Alliance. Offers alternative, right-leaning voice for activist Jewry, grassroots appeal for many feeling unrepresented by elite Jewish establishment. Defining moment as young leader: August 1991. Yankel Rosenbaum murder paralyzes mainstream Jewish groups, JCRC and



ADL don't return phone calls; she plunges into leadership vacuum, an urban lone ranger crusading for justice. Rallies, protests help spark federal Crown Heights investigation; she wins Jabotinsky Foundation's Defender of Jerusalem Award. Was she but a drummer for Giuliani?

## DOV HIKIND

From firebrand, pious piper of black hats. Delivers daveners on Election Day. Just a lowly state assemblyman from Brooklyn? No, he epitomizes new political might — and swing to right — of Orthodox community. Suddenly Crown Heights, Borough Park are on national political map, politicians descend on Eastern Parkway, 13th Avenue; his impact sways three elections: Helps return Alfonse D'Amato to Senate, boot David Dinkins from mayoralty, usher Rudy Giuliani into City Hall, evict Mario Cuomo from Governor's Mansion, enthrone George Pataki in Empire State. King of Jews? Or has ego grown bigger than his district?

## ELIE WIESEL

Poet of annihilation, chronicler of Holocaust. Global conscience awakens world to butchering of Bosnians, Burmese, Cambodians, Rwandans. Winner, 1986 Nobel Peace Prize. Novelist of lamentations,



Group for anti-Semitic defamation, then rips sycophantic behavior of Jewish establishment undercutting his case. Says Elie Wiesel, "A few people like Alan Dershowitz in the 1930s and 1940s and the history of European Jewry might have been different." But in the American context, just what are his politics?



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## MORTON MANDEL

"Morton Who?" No household word, yet Cleveland industrialist is on White House short list of Jews-to-be-consulted-in-Oval-Office — or money-men-to-be-invited-to-Rose-Garden — on all Israel-oriented policy initiatives. No wonder: Have checkbook, will travel; generous to Bill Clinton, legions of Democratic candidates, past president of Council of Jewish Federations went even further, founding National Jewish Democratic Council in 1990. Still chairman of NJDC, his donkeys suffered blowout in mid-terms, yet his influence in political arena may still arrest Jewish defections to GOP.

## MICHAEL LERNER

Founder-editor-publisher-promoter-persona of *Tikkun* magazine, liberal alternative to neo-conservative Commentary. Sees mission as nothing less than to heal, repair and transform the world and reinvent liberal Judaism thinking for the 21st century. Veteran of Berkeley barricades, hard-left SDS militancy of 1960s, refused to ignore anti-Semitism on the left and developed into a unique embodiment of Jewish radicalism. His melding of Jewish renewal with social liberalism proves particularly seductive to alienated Jewry on left. Like all charismatic leaders, movement may prove inextricably bound up with his personality. Is Hillary still listening?



## BENJAMIN MEED

Enshriner of 6 million, guardian of memory. Warsaw Ghetto survivor, president of American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors since 1981. Driv-



at home. Autocratic personality sometimes rankles. With Republicans suddenly in the majority in the Congress, though, he may have the last laugh.

## RICHARD PEARLSTONE

Young man in a hurry, alumnus of 1960s counterculture, first baby boomer to run United Jewish Appeal. Re-engineering UJA campaign themes, marketing approaches, rattling its fossilized structures, ushering in change with simple credo, "Incremental steps are worthless!" Mission as national chairman: Raise \$730 million, lure Jews born after World War II to replace Zionist septuagenarians and octogenarians, abandon campaigns based on Middle East warfare and anti-Semitism, begin peacetime appeals using Israel to safeguard Jewish continuity in America. Brash, abrasive, tactless, risks offending aging contributors.



## STEVEN SPIELBERG

Conjurer of Holocaust, magician of genocide, creator of sharks, aliens, dinosaurs, "Schindler's List." Box-office king teaches saga of extermination to Burma, Benin, Bolivia, 134 nations, 96 million people, then pumps \$26 million profits to Righteous Persons Foundation, funding Jewish causes, survivor groups, Holocaust museums. Inspired by own opus, sets out to record, document enormity of Nazi horrors, creating Survivors of Shoah Visual History Foundation to videotape testimony from 150,000 survivors by year 2000. But Hollywood's definitive Holocaust hero is strapping Christian rescuer? Forward critic dismisses screen wizard for "at last finding his Jewish voice and summoning up nothing more original than a feel-good movie of Christian redemption and Jewish defeat."



## KENNETH BIALKIN

"We heard cries of 'Heil Hitler!' and 'Kill the Jews!'"

federation-watchers predict reign will lead charity — kicking, screaming — to rewrite funding formulas posting \$7 overseas for every \$3 spent at home. Inexperienced on Israel, former chairman of UJA-Federation domestic affairs, her elevation deadlocked closed-door nominating committee, sparked fears she'll steer less to Zion, more to home front, taking biggest Jewish money machine in direction of Detroit, Milwaukee, Boston. If change defines leadership, she has the chance.

## GARY RUBIN

Rising star of Jewish Arabists, dean of peaceniks, "Mort Klein of the left," executive director of Americans for Peace Now. Took helm in 1993 championing no-holds-barred outreach to Arab groups, peace advocacy more zealous than Laborites. Shook up established Jewry in March when joined hands with National Association of Arab Americans in unveiling unprecedented joint agenda: "Immediately remove all settlers" from Hebron, "remove all settlements" from Gaza. As ZOA fights dominance of Aipac, Presidents Conference from right, APN challenges hegemony from left. What price peace?



## MALCOLM HOENLEIN

Command control for American Jewry, designated voice of American Jewry, executive director of Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations since 1986. As "central address" for Jews, contact man for 50 groups in Conference umbrella, he brings consensual representation via diplomacy, eschewing arm-twisting, keeping leftist peaceniks, rightist hawks in fold. Maintains respect, finds strength, power in diversity, rarely papers over differences, seldom openly imposes discipline; yet Conference troubled by burst of "freelance lobbying" outside Aipac, conflicts before Congress, fears ram-  
bunctious Zionist Organization of America on right





Drinks from mayoralty, ushers Rudy Giuliani into City Hall, evict Mario Cuomo from Governor's Mansion, enthrone George Pataki in Empire State. King of Jews? Or has ego grown bigger than his district?

## ELIE WIESEL

Poet of annihilation, chronicler of Holocaust. Global conscience awakens world to butchering of Bosnians, Burmese, Cambodians, Rwandans. Winner, 1986 Nobel Peace Prize. Novelist of lamentations, master of mournful pen, articulator of inexpressible: "Why did God allow such catastrophe?" Access to White House permits dramatic staging: At South Lawn awards ceremony, 1985, on eve of President Reagan's trip to Bitburg, he spoke up, "That place, Mr. President, is not your place." At dedication of Holocaust Museum, 1993, he told Bill Clinton of old Yugoslavia, "We must do something to stop bloodshed." Passionate human rights crusader, he rose to fame, celebrity, illuminating horrors of Auschwitz, Holocaust, Jewish victimization. Is world tired of listening?



## MAYNARD WISHNER

Godfather of Jewish institutional politics, master at prodding unwieldy Jewish bureaucracies toward consensus, president of Council of Jewish Federations. Unapologetic champion of "big-tent" Jewish communal life, past chairman of National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and president of American Jewish Committee, his trademark wit, integrity, courtliness have kept diverse community within its folds. "Jewish life is full of fissures, rifts, fault lines," he muses. With gentle word, kindly smile, he minimizes institutional tensions. Non-confrontational style has drawbacks: CJF, NJCRAC often take weak-kneed, watered-down positions on crucial issues.



Jewish radicalism. His melding of Jewish renewal with social liberalism proves particularly seductive to alienated Jewry on left. Like all charismatic leaders, movement may prove inextricably bound up with his personality. Is Hillary still listening?

## BENJAMIN MEED

Enshriner of 6 million, guardian of memory. Warsaw Ghetto survivor, president of American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors since 1981. Driving spirit behind U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, Living Memorial to Holocaust in New York; created "Book of Names," listing 80,000 survivors, ensuring remembrance. Won showdown with sponsors of Salute to Israel parade this year when celebration was scheduled same day as Yom HaShoah commemoration. Survivors threaten to lie down on Fifth Avenue, block festive parade, preserve memorialization; parade date is moved. Was this last hurrah? Time, actuarial tables, lost witnesses taking toll.



## LESTER POLLACK

Bland bombshell of American Jewry, consummate institutional diplomat, chairman of Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations since 1992. Keeps semblance of order in 50-player, big-tent known for disorder, holds court at Park Avenue power breakfasts in Regency Hotel, where more Jewish business transacted than in Tel Aviv bourse. Financier was consensus choice at Conference, after firefight between AJCommittee's Alfred Moses, AJCongress' Robert Lifton. With 90% of Conference work behind closed doors, he labors quietly, effectively on rescue missions, pro-Israel agenda. But some question priorities, capacity for boldness: Met Bill Clinton day after president turned down Jonathan Pollard commutation bid; sat in Oval Office, failed to ask about Pollard decision. Why?

groups, Holocaust museums. Inspired by own opus, sets out to record, document enormity of Nazi horrors, creating Survivors of Shoah Visual History Foundation to videotape testimony from 150,000 survivors by year 2000. But Hollywood's definitive Holocaust hero is strapping Christian rescuer? Forward critic dismisses screen wizard for "at last finding his Jewish voice and summoning up nothing more original than a feel-good movie of Christian redemption and Jewish defeat."



## KENNETH BIALKIN

"We heard cries of 'Heil Hitler!' and 'Kill the Jews!' on the streets of Brooklyn." With chilling words, first establishment Jewish leader held first mainstream-sponsored protest against Crown Heights anti-Semitism. Alone among uptown's leadership, president of Jewish Community Relations Council, former ADL chairman, former Presidents Conference chairman, actually journeyed to Eastern Parkway during riots, bore witness, knew he had seen no mere flare-up of black-Chasidic tensions, but black anti-Semitism in epochal eruption. Manhattan rally drew 5,000, spread message, awakened sleeping leaders to dimensions of crisis.

## RONALD LAUDER

Ambassador, cosmetics scion, mayoral candidate, term-limits crusader, privatization guru. Forged new career after collapse of Iron Curtain — rekindling Jewish life in Eastern Europe, reawakening via education communities obliterated by Nazis and communists. Philanthropist extraordinaire, he returned Jewish schooling to Warsaw and Budapest, built a school for Russian Jews in Vienna, opened the first Jewish kindergarten in Prague since 1940, revitalized Jewish communal life, reversing legacy of stormtroopers and commissars. In spare time, bankrolled New York term-limits referendum. Polls show steep negatives linger with electorate from 1989 mayoral bid.



RONALD L. GLASSMAN © 1992

lot of Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations since 1986. As "central address" for Jews, contact man for 50 groups in Conference umbrella, he brings consensual representation via diplomacy, eschewing arm-twisting, keeping leftist peaceniks, rightist hawks in fold. Maintains respect, finds strength, power in diversity, rarely papers over differences, seldom openly imposes discipline; yet Conference troubled by burst of "freelance lobbying" outside Aipac, conflicts before Congress, fears ram-bunctious Zionist Organization of America on right, Americans for Peace Now on left, could undercut Jewish unity on Capitol Hill. Meanwhile, presidents, potentates, prime ministers, kings, even sheiks come calling; rescue of Syrian, Ethiopian, Romanian, Soviet, Yemenite Jewry follows. Thin-skinned.



## DEBORAH KAPLAN

Den mother for 385,000 socially active, politically liberal, pro-choice American Jewish women. National president of Hadassah since 1991. Steers America's largest, oldest Zionist organization, expanding role at home without diluting mission abroad, creating Curriculum Watch to comb school textbooks, ferret out anti-Jewish, anti-Israel passages. Social welfare, health, education, absorption, Israel *aliya* remain priorities; but graying of membership forcing sisterhood to turn inward, address assimilation, launch outreach to lure younger members. Suffered defeats in world Zionism, so opposed democratic elections to World Zionist Organization, winning special status so delegates no longer have to stand for election. "I'm elated," she says. Is Herzl — who called WZO "Parliament of Jewish People" — rolling over in grave?





# The Forward Fifty — Jewish Leaders to Watch in the Year Ahead

## JAY MAZUR

Son of cloakmakers, former union organizer for beltmakers, dressmakers. President of International Ladies Garment Workers Union since 1986, president of National Committee for Labor Israel since 1990. Ever-vigilant crusader-avenger for working man, antenna goes up wherever picket lines are walked: Israeli ambassador to United Nations, Gad Yaacobi, prominent Laborite, ready to cross line at Harvard Club; strikers hand ambassador letter from ILGWU chief, promising to tell newspapers if Labor representative defies labor unions; outflanked, ambassador backs down. Unrepentant, unapologetic, old-fashioned liberal, champions rights for immigrants, refugees, seeks full amnesty for undocumented workers, trots globe helping democratic labor movements take root. But Seventh Avenue is shrinking, Labor Day parades are canceled, unions get clobbered in fights like Nafta; membership, now 195,000, falls off every year. After 44 years at ILGWU, did he succeed too well? Or not well enough?



## WILLIAM KRISTOL

Professional contrarian, son of Irving, defender of Christian right. Impresario of Jewish conservative politics, chairman of Project for the Republican Future. Argues "watered-down suburban Judaism" of Reform movement fuels sky-high rate of intermarriage, preaches, "Secular humanism today is greater threat to Jews than evangelical Christianity." Stage-managed "family values" campaign, attack on cultural elite as Vice President Quayle's chief of staff; put lines from Talmud into vice presidential speeches, turned Hoosier into champion of Israel. Tangled with Abraham Foxman, walked away unmangled, when



© GERRY LYNAM

## RABBI NORMAN LAMM

Soul of progressive Orthodoxy, president of Yeshiva University since 1976. Man of faith, he writes extensively of doubt; and doubts now cloud bastion of Torah scholarship: Is nonsectarian school too religious? Or is spiritual institute of Orthodoxy not religious enough? Debate exploded over gay, lesbian clubs on campus, campaign by some YU students to ban them. So prexy, despite personal misgivings, weighed in, "To deny gay clubs right to function would be to deny YU right to exist." Crises navigation nothing new to rabbi-philosopher-teacher-author who rebuilt YU finances in early 1980s, rescuing school from brink of insolvency. Current firestorm roiling YU could imperil tenure. Board members debate if talmudic principles are being tossed out window in return for gay rights.



## RABBI DANIEL LAPIN

Mission Impossible? Steer generation of Jews from crusades of Franklin Roosevelt to principles of Ronald Reagan. Vehicle: Toward Tradition, new group in suburban Seattle seeking to unite Jews, Christians, in rightist political agenda, welcome God into town square, teach Judeo-Christian ethic as blueprint for conservative public policy. Messenger: South African-born rabbi, 47, preaching Jews should dump monolithic liberalism, embrace conservative political thought on economy, welfare, family, criminal justice. Unveiling: November in Washington at standing-room-only conference for rainbow coalition of right. Odds: Long. Rabbi is spellbinding, but neo-cons, paleo-cons, long since on board. How do you sell Democrats?

## LESLIE WEXNER

Billionaire benefactor, molder of lay leadership, chairman of Wexner Heritage Foundation. Pumped huge chunk of



## LETTY COTTIN POGREBIN

Co-founder of Ms. magazine in 1971, blender of Judaism into liberal, feminist politics. Author of "Deborah, Golda and Me: Being Jewish and Female in America." Never left the left, but unlike sisters in feminism, Gloria Steinem, Betty Freidan, who downplay, even muzzle, Jewish backgrounds, she incorporates Judaic dimension in teachings, writings: "Asking Jewish woman to play favorites between her two basic affinity groups is like asking to pick a favorite among her children, or choose between air and water; I'm both Jewish and female, so I need both Judaism and feminism." Epiphany: Copenhagen, 1980. At United Nations International Decade of Women Conference, anti-Semitism, anti-Israelism spewing from feminist hate-mongers was so virulent, she felt marginalized as Jew in women's movement, just as she once felt marginalized as woman in Judaism. Why can't others from old Ms. crowd see beauty of Deborah, Golda?



NADINE MARKOVA, 1991

## LENORE MILLER

Liaison between Judaism and trade unionism, president of Jewish Labor Committee since 1990. Advocate, resource center for both labor, American Jewry, keeping historic bonds intact. In best tradition of labor street fighter, she monitors trade-union rights in Arab countries, counterpunching International Labor Organization for posting quick-to-condemn delegations to monitor trade-union rights of Palestinians in territories. As representative of labor movement to Jewry, of Jewish community to unionism, she publishes journal arguing talmudic teachings recognize sick pay, disability pay, right to prompt payment, limit hours of work. Runs AFL-CIO's Civil Rights



## RABBI MOSHE SHERER

Mister Orthodox, policy dean for *charedi* world, president of Agudath Israel of America since 1963. Political genius. Both David Dinkins, Rudy Giuliani sure they enjoyed his support for mayor; both Mario Cuomo, George Pataki sure they had his support for governor. Both Ted Kennedy, Newt Gingrich listed among his closest friends. Leading Jewish crusader for rights — and tuition tax credits — for non-public-school children. Organizes low-key, hugely successful voter-registration drives among Orthodox, largely benefiting GOP. Mayor Giuliani thought so. At inauguration, rabbi sat by his side, ahead of Cardinal O'Connor on protocol list, delivered invocation. Arrogance, haughty style sometimes unnerving; in 70s, health uncertain, succession question looms.



## IRVING KRISTOL

Trotskyite-turned-neo-conservative godfather. Co-editor of Public Interest magazine, fellow at American Enterprise Institute, living proof that ideas matter: His translated into tax cuts, budget cuts, deregulation, guillotining of social programs in Reagan years. Hubert Humphrey Democrat in 1968, veered rightward in face of counterculture hedonism, New Left anti-Americanism, Black Power anti-Semitism, ruination presaged by George McGovern, becoming Nixon Republican in 1972, swaying more Jews than anyone bothered to count. Famous quip that "neo-con is liberal mugged by reality" defined movement; shift of intellectual gravity from New York to Washington followed own move to Potomac in 1987. One of last of great City College intellectuals. His political apostasy still triggers disgust on left. Son — William — also rises.





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Professional contrarian, son of Irving, defender of Christian right. Impresario of Jewish conservative politics, chairman of Project for the Republican Future. Argues "watered-down suburban Judaism" of Reform movement fuels sky-high rate of intermarriage, preaches, "Secular humanism today is greater threat to Jews than evangelical Christianity." Stage-managed "family values" campaign, attack on cultural elite as Vice President Quayle's chief of staff; put lines from Talmud into vice presidential speeches, turned Hoosier into champion of Israel. Tangled with Abraham Foxman, walked away unmangled, when ADL ripped religious right for assaulting tolerance, pluralism: "Anti-Christian bigotry!" he roared, charging partisan politics driven not by Jewishness but by liberalism. Democratic establishment worries that, at 41, he's attractive, palatable face of GOP Jewry.



© GERRY LYNAM

## SAMMIE MOSHENBERG

Liberal who knows how to count, Washington operations director for National Council of Jewish Women. Savvy coalition-builder with good relations on right, helped stage-manage fight for Religious Restoration Act, "Yarmulke-in-the-Army" act, litany of civil rights, social justice acts. Latest epic battle: killing proposals from federal immigration commission for national ID cards for 250 million Americans. Modus operandi: Walks into Orthodox Union, seeks support for abortion resolution, sells it as women's health-care resolution, walks out with support. But what happens to last of old-line liberals and their social action agendas after GOP conquest of Capitol Hill?

## NEAL SHER

Avenger of Shoah-turned-pro-Israel-lobbying-king. Director of Office of Special Investigations, premier Nazi-hunting unit in America, for 11 years. Built OSI in face of controversy, fought on Capitol Hill, in Justice Department, to preserve funding, tracked



from crusades of Franklin Roosevelt to principles of Ronald Reagan. Vehicle: Toward Tradition, new group in suburban Seattle seeking to unite Jews, Christians, in rightist political agenda, welcome God into town square, teach Judeo-Christian ethic as blueprint for conservative public policy. Messenger: South African-born rabbi, 47, preaching Jews should dump monolithic liberalism, embrace conservative political thought on economy, welfare, family, criminal justice. Unveiling: November in Washington at standing-room-only conference for rainbow coalition of right. Odds: Long. Rabbi is spellbinding, but neo-cons, paleo-cons, long since on board. How do you sell Democrats?

## LESLIE WEXNER

Billionaire benefactor, molder of lay leadership, chairman of Wexner Heritage Foundation. Pumped huge chunk of fortune from Limited, Victoria's Secret, Abercrombie & Fitch, Henri Bendel into sponsorship of courses, seminars, retreats, two years of intensive studies in 23 American cities for future reformers of federated system. Why? Upon meeting aspiring, young Jewish leaders, next generation of Jewish communal stewards, he was "dismayed by minimal level" of their Jewish knowledge. Set out to remedy that by endowing education, taking place alongside world-class philanthropists Bronfmans, Tisches, Reichmans, Lauders, Perelmans, Safras.



## NORMAN PODHORETZ

Neo-conservative idea factory, Reaganite ideologist, editor of Commentary magazine since 1960. Transformed mainstream journal — published by centrist American Jewish Committee — into neo-conservative bible, welcoming Elliott Abrams, Jeane Kirkpatrick, William Kristol, Suzanne Garment, Nathan Glazer, to its pages, propelling neo-conservative armies into three Republican administrations, forcing public-policy changes, repudiation of



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## STEVEN GROSSMAN

Seven-hundred-pound gorilla of congressional lobbyists, president of American Israel Public Affairs Committee since 1992. Accession marked sea change: In Reagan-Bush-Likud era, Aipac headed by wealthy Republican businessmen friendly with Likud, hawkish; but in Clinton-Labor era, prexy is wealthy Democratic businessman more simpatico with Labor, dovish. Former chairman of Massachusetts Democratic Party, vice chairman of National Jewish Democratic Council, steered Aipac leftward, gung-ho on peace process, supported Israeli policies some Aipac fund-raisers, board members, senators, distrust. Result: Upstaged by Mort Klein, who birthed Specter-Shelby, sparked congressional vigilance on Palestinian compliance violations. Post-Election Day prognosis: glum. In lobbying trade, where influence is everything, how much will liberal Democrat have with Jesse Helms, Strom Thurmond, Newt Gingrich? Yet as fund-raiser, glad-hander, politician, he can't be beat.



GAYE HILSENTHAL ©1992

Co-editor of Public Interest magazine, fellow at American Enterprise Institute, living proof that ideas matter: His translated into tax cuts, budget cuts, deregulation, guillotining of social programs in Reagan years. Hubert Humphrey Democrat in 1968, veered rightward in face of counterculture hedonism, New Left anti-Americanism, Black Power anti-Semitism, ruination presaged by George McGovern, becoming Nixon Republican in 1972, swaying more Jews than anyone bothered to count. Famous quip that "neo-con is liberal mugged by reality" defined movement; shift of intellectual gravity from New York to Washington followed own move to Potomac in 1987. One of last of great City College intellectuals. His political apostasy still triggers disgust on left. Son — William — also rises.



## JACK SHEINKMAN

Who was that Jewish leader hauled in by the police with the Rev. Jesse Jackson? Union man in anti-union era, chairman of last union bank in America, unvarnished liberal in anti-liberal times. President of Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union since 1987, past president of Jewish Labor Committee. Battler for civil rights, workers' rights, free trade unions abroad; comfortable on barricades: Arrest with Jesse Jackson came during old-style sit-in against unfair labor laws at National Labor Relations Board. Doubles as banker, but not of pin-striped variety. His Amalgamated Bank of New York has unique sidelight, low-interest lending to immigrant, unionized taxi drivers, many of them Russian Jews. ACTWU, his home since 1953, is shrinking; 280,000 members when he took over, 226,000 today. When will it merge with ILGWU?



PACH BROS., NY

## RABBI DAVID SAPERSTEIN

Dean of Washington Jewish lobby, director of Reform movement's Religious Action Center. Only Jew, white remain-





helped stage-murder fight for religious restoration Act, "Yarmulke-in-the-Army" act, litany of civil rights, social justice acts. Latest epic battle: killing proposals from federal immigration commission for national ID cards for 250 million Americans. Modus operandi: Walks into Orthodox Union, seeks support for abortion resolution, sells it as women's health-care resolution, walks out with support. But what happens to last of old-line liberals and their social action agendas after GOP conquest of Capitol Hill?

## NEAL SHER

Avenger of *Shoah*-turned-pro-Israel-lobbying-king. Director of Office of Special Investigations, premier Nazi-hunting unit in America, for 11 years. Built OSI in face of controversy, fought on Capitol Hill, in Justice Department, to preserve funding; tracked, prosecuted, deported scores of Nazi war criminals, hunting Mengele in Paraguay, Waldheim in Austria, Demjanjuk in Ohio: Death got Mengele first, his probe banned Mr. Waldheim from America, his team accused of deep-sixing Demjanjuk evidence. Stepped down in March to be executive director of American Israel Public Affairs Committee at age 47. Profile low-key at Aipac, no resonant voice yet. What's he waiting for?



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If you ever got sent to prison for life, this is the sister you'd want. Sister of Jonathan. Abandoned career in hospital administration to work full-time for spy's release, executive director of Citizens for Justice. Organized extraordinary grass-roots campaign designed to press brother's case not only with federal authorities and press but Jewish organizations, too. Even after President Clinton denied commutation, she didn't quit. Reminds of another heroic sibling, Norman Rosenbaum, brother of Yankel, also fighting for justice. In both cases, threw into sharp relief failure of established leaders to seize important issues.



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## NORMAN PODHORETZ

Neo-conservative idea factory, Reaganite ideologist, editor of *Commentary* magazine since 1960. Transformed mainstream journal — published by centrist American Jewish Committee — into neo-conservative bible, welcoming Elliott Abrams, Jeane Kirkpatrick, William Kristol, Suzanne Garment, Nathan Glazer, to its pages, propelling neo-conservative armies into three Republican administrations, forcing public-policy changes, repudiation of federal quotas, diminution of governmental social engineering. Remains the most important figure employed by AJCommittee even after it ceased funding his magazine. With President Clinton ascendant in the White House and Prime Minister Rabin in Jerusalem, rightist redaction went into opposition. Leftist challenger, *Tikkun*, gained cachet. Then came the rout of the Democrats.



## RABBI AARON SOLOVEICHIK

Orthodox sage, one of world's great talmudic scholars, heir to Lithuanian rabbinic dynasty. At 76, weakened by stroke, still takes leadership positions on *halacha* and women, civil rights, dissent, academic freedom. Lively sense of outrage, antenna for balderdash. When woman at Chicago Theological Seminary claims sexual harassment against Christian professor for telling talmudic tale of roofer who falls from building, inadvertently penetrating naked, recumbent woman in courtyard below, Soloveichik defends professor. "Sexual harassment by the Talmud?" he demands. "That's libelous to the Talmud! Everything is so strange these days." If only more of our rebbes, lay leaders, had this much common sense.

## CYNTHIA OZICK

Warrior of words, fictional fighter against Holocaust deniers. Novelist, essayist, playwright. Short-story



American Israel Public Affairs Committee since 1992. Accession marked sea change: In Reagan-Bush-Likud era, Aipac headed by wealthy Republican businessmen friendly with Likud, hawkish; but in Clinton-Labor era, prexy is wealthy Democratic businessman more simpatico with Labor, dovish. Former chairman of Massachusetts Democratic Party, vice chairman of National Jewish Democratic Council, steered Aipac leftward, gung-ho on peace process, supported Israeli policies some Aipac fund-raisers, board members, senators, distrust. Result: Upstaged by Mort Klein, who birthed Specter-Shelby, sparked congressional vigilance on Palestinian compliance violations. Post-Election Day prognosis: glum. In lobbying trade, where influence is everything, how much will liberal Democrat have with Jesse Helms, Strom Thurmond, Newt Gingrich? Yet as fund-raiser, glad-hander, politician, he can't be beat.



GAYE HILSEN RATH ©1992

## RABBI SHARON KLEINBAUM

Rabbi of "new Marranos," shepherd of pink triangle within Star of David, spiritual leader of world's largest gay and lesbian synagogue. Stages "commitment celebrations," gay marriages, at Greenwich Village pulpit, radically redefining Jewish family, braving obscenities from yeshiva students, taunts of Orthodox who call homosexuality an "abomination." Educated Orthodox, raised Conservative, ordained Reconstructionist, employed Reform, she entices all four movements to Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, melding traditional with revolutionary, tending AIDS-ravaged, guiding 1,200-member flock at age 35. Rabbinic, biblical bans on homosexuality pose question: What place for her in Judaism?



## NATHAN LEWIN

Barrister of black hats, legal wizard for Orthodox, Chasids. Chalks up spectacular defeats, as well as triumphs in Supreme



Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union since 1987, past president of Jewish Labor Committee. Battler for civil rights, workers' rights, free trade unions abroad; comfortable on barricades: Arrest with Jesse Jackson came during old-style sit-in against unfair labor laws at National Labor Relations Board. Doubles as banker, but not of pin-striped variety. His Amalgamated Bank of New York has unique sidelight, low-interest lending to immigrant, unionized taxi drivers, many of them Russian Jews. ACTWU, his home since 1953, is shrinking; 280,000 members when he took over, 226,000 today. When will it merge with ILGWU?



PACH BROS., NY

## RABBI DAVID SAPERSTEIN

Dean of Washington Jewish lobby, director of Reform movement's Religious Action Center. Only Jew, white remaining on board of National Association for Advancement of Colored People, keeps seat in statement of inclusionist, prophetic mission. Despite lifelong bridge-building on black-Jewish relations, he became prime target of Nation of Islam after penning letter to Martin Luther King anniversary march organizers, urging them not to invite Louis Farrakhan; his opposition, executive membership in Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, led to exclusion of minister. Backlash was furious: "Your days of running black people are over," NOI told rabbi; members circulated his home, work phone numbers at march. Undaunted, he keeps fighting for black-Jewish harmony. His is humanist, secular liberal agenda, steeped in Jewish religious traditions, peddled on Capitol Hill by small lobbying army. Message, policy positions resonate to liberal Jews.



## SEYMOUR REICH

Rescuer of fractious nation-builders, president of American Zionist Movement since 1993. Took helm of newly created 21-group umbrella, beefed up funding, curbed feuding, reined in hostilities with federa-





in Paraguay, Waldheim in Austria, Demjanjuk in Ohio: Death got Mengele first, his probe banned Mr. Waldheim from America, his team accused of deep-sixing Demjanjuk evidence. Stepped down in March to be executive director of American Israel Public Affairs Committee at age 47. Profile low-key at Aipac, no resonant voice yet. What's he waiting for?

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## MICHAEL SCHNEIDER

Executive vice president of American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Eyebrows raised amid disclosures his salary — \$310,805 a year in 1992, plus \$7,750 in benefits — made him probably highest-paid executive in Jewish organizational life; people say he's worth it, especially after helping orchestrate rescue of 3,800 Jews from Damascus, Aleppo, after President Assad first opened door, a crack, in 1992. Breathtaking secret efforts freed the entire Jewish population of nation; only 230 — by choice — remain. Thin-skinned after salary flap, he refused even to disclose his biography to Forward.

ing no magazine. With President Clinton ascendant in the White House and Prime Minister Rabin in Jerusalem, rightist redacteur went into opposition. Leftist challenger, *Tikkun*, gained cachet. Then came the rout of the Democrats.

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## CYNTHIA OZICK

Warrior of words, fictional fighter against Holocaust deniers. Novelist, essayist, playwright, short-story writer, op-ed page polemicist. Unlike many PEN club colleagues, she's unashamed, unembarrassed to speak up for Israel, swift to pierce rhetoric of fashionable left. Uncompromising, unsentimental in fictional portraits of Jewish life; doesn't shrink from Judaism but embraces it as literary birthright. Latest work: "Blue Light." Play tackles diabolical nature of Holocaust denial, fusing historical awareness, fierce outrage at denial, literary treatment of demonic assaults on Jewish identity. Followers are readers; one-woman proof that words still matter.



JULIUS OZICK

## NATHAN LEWIN

Barrister of black hats, legal wizard for Orthodox, Chasids. Chalks up spectacular defeats, as well as triumphs, in Supreme Court casework: Lost bid to halt racial gerrymandering; but a generation later high court reversed gears on maximizing black vote, adopted some of his arguments in landmark *UJO v. Carey*. Lost again in case of soldier who wanted to wear yarmulke on duty; then drafted legislation passed by Congress overturning court decision, permitting headgear. This year, court rebuffed him, too, striking down state-supported school for handicapped students in Satmar village of Kiryas Joel; but it was election year, Governor Cuomo did legislative end-run on court, village keeps its state support.



RIKKI GORDON LEWIN

vancement of Colored People, keeps seat in statement of inclusionist, prophetic mission. Despite lifelong bridge-building on black-Jewish relations, he became prime target of Nation of Islam after penning letter to Martin Luther King anniversary march organizers, urging them not to invite Louis Farrakhan; his opposition, executive membership in Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, led to exclusion of minister. Backlash was furious: "Your days of running black people are over," NOI told rabbi; members circulated his home, work phone numbers at march. Undaunted, he keeps fighting for black-Jewish harmony. His is humanist, secular liberal agenda, steeped in Jewish religious traditions, peddled on Capitol Hill by small lobbying army. Message, policy positions resonate to liberal Jews.



## SEYMOUR REICH

Rescuer of fractious nation-builders, president of American Zionist Movement since 1993. Took helm of newly created 21-group umbrella, beefed up funding, curbed feuding, reined in hostilities with federation fund-raisers; transformed measured successes in cash-flow, organizational peace-keeping into raison d'être for AZM's red-white-and-blue Zionism. Past chairman of Presidents Conference, president of B'nai B'rith International, enters history books as one of few Jewish leaders ever to quit institution he heads on point of principle: Resigned, 1991, as chairman of International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations — world Jewry's representative on interfaith issues — to protest visit to America of Poland's Cardinal Glemp. Last year called for clampdown on Russian Jews coming to America, move aimed at boosting emigration to Israel.





# Portrait *of a* Philanthropist

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

MORTON MANDEL  
DISCUSSES PRAGMATISM,  
OBLIGATION AND THE  
VALUE OF TIME.

BY

DAVID PATTERSON

**W**HEN YOU HAVE MONEY, IT'S EASY TO GIVE money," says Morton Mandel, "but we all have the same amount of time."

Mort Mandel is chief executive and co-founder of Premier Industrial Corp., the Fortune 500 distributor of electronic and electrical parts, and industrial maintenance and repair products. Mort and his brothers Jack and Joseph co-founded Premier — which today has 4,300 employees worldwide — in 1940. He and his family have long been among the most generous supporters of charitable endeavors in Cleveland, yet Mandel maintains that those contributions are simply part of being a good citizen. And not even the most important part.

"We are all equal when it comes to giving time," he says. "It's harder to give time."

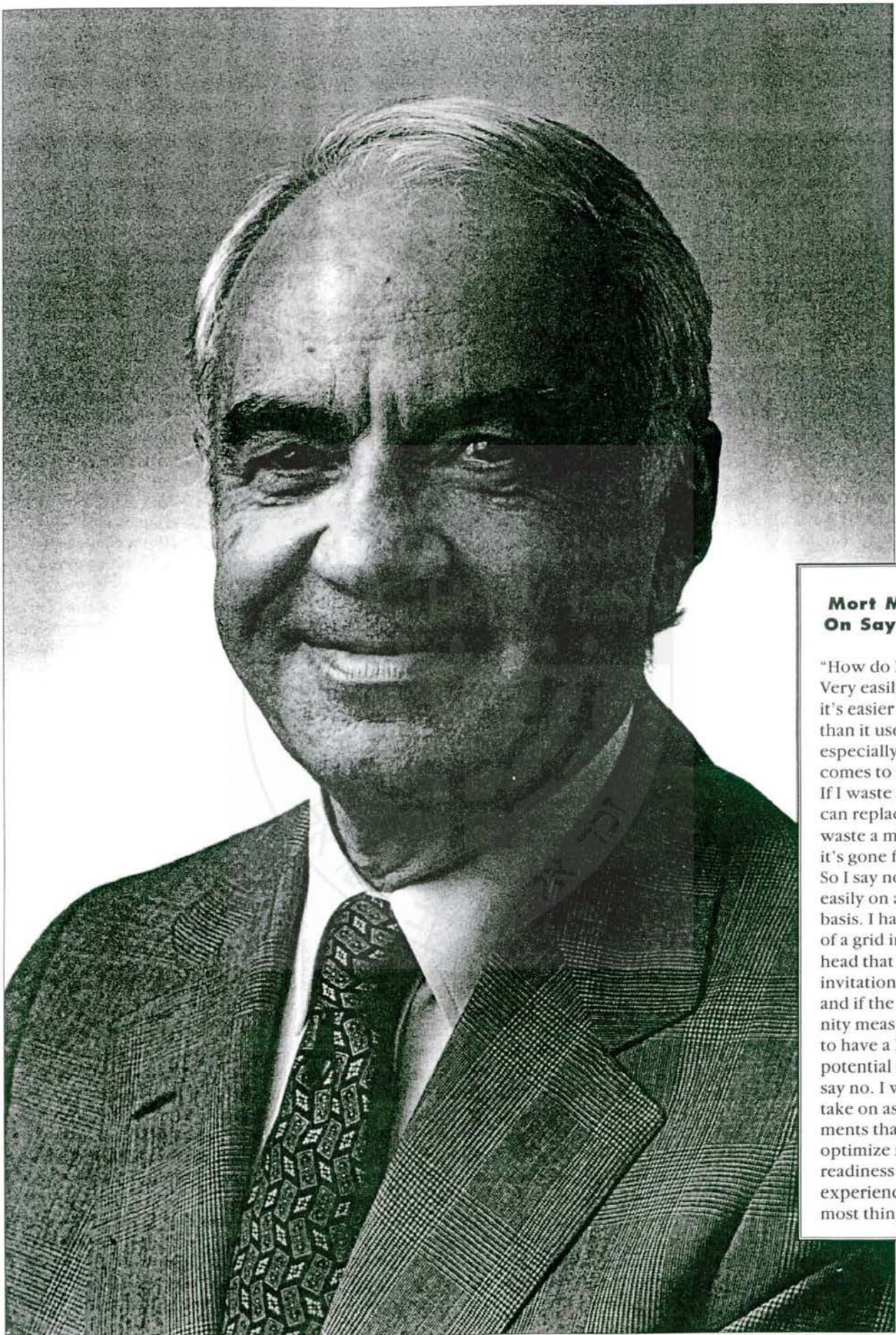
For the past 30 years, Mandel estimates that he has given an average of 25 percent of his time to community work. He has been active in

a major way in more than a score of organizations, often heading or founding them. Ask him why he has made service to the community such an important part of his life and the 73-year-old businessman gives you a three-legged answer involving the legacy of western culture, the pragmatism of attracting capable employees and the process of self-development.

"I think people who get a familiarity with the great ideas that have been developed and explored through the centuries have to find some way to relate to a larger society," Mandel begins. "Certainly among the people I associate with there is this sense of obligation growing out of the tradition of western civilization and religious background."

Altruism, though, is only part of the motivation Mandel sees for community service. "It can also be enlightened self-interest," he says. "The kind of people I want to have working at





**Mort Mandel  
On Saying No**

"How do I say no? Very easily, and it's easier today than it used to be, especially when it comes to my time. If I waste money, I can replace it. If I waste a minute, it's gone forever. So I say no very easily on a priority basis. I have kind of a grid in my head that I lay an invitation against, and if the opportunity measures out to have a low potential yield, I say no. I won't take on assignments that don't optimize my time, readiness and experience. That's most things."



Premier want to live in a community with strong resources — educational, medical, cultural. They want to live in a community that's whole, or as whole as one can make it."

Finally for Mandel, there is personal growth to be gained from community service. "Involvement in volunteer activities is a very important learning experience, and its lessons can be brought to bear in the business environment," he explains. "In the volunteer community, you have other volunteers sitting around the table. You don't have hierarchical power. If you are chairman of the board of United Way, for example, which I know I was, it is not the same as being chairman of the board at Premier. I know I speak with a voice at least slightly louder than anybody else's around the Premier table. At United Way I didn't. I was maybe first among equals. I did not govern by who I was. In the volunteer sector, you govern by consensus."

"That's become an important style element at Premier," he continues. "We like making decisions by consensus. The volunteer community is where I learned how to achieve consensus, and it's where many of our managers at Premier have learned it and continue to learn it."

Mandel was in his early 30s and just beginning his heavy involvement in United Way when he was taught the meaning of consensus by a man who was something of a mentor to him.

"I was in the Unit Plan, a small business division of United Way, and had just taken over the chair from a guy named George Baldwin, a lawyer. He came to the first meeting I chaired, and when the meeting was over said, 'There were some wonderful decisions, some great conclusions for United Way. But you know, it would have been a lot better if when those people left the meeting they had thought those ideas were theirs instead of just yours.' I have never forgotten what he said. It changed my life— how I think about getting things done. No matter how wonderful an idea is, you're dead if the group involved doesn't feel ownership for it. That was an important lesson to

learn."

The values which led Mandel to community service were learned long before his association with United Way. He was raised during the Depression, and money was always tight.

"My parents were very modest in terms of income," he remembers,

#### Mort Mandel On Consensus

"We govern by consensus at Premier. We have a group process. I don't mean that it takes a meeting to get everything and anything done. But when it comes to major thrusts, I want a consensus."

"If the disagreement is nine for and one against, I have consensus. If it's eight for and two against, I have consensus. So now let's say it's six to four or five to four, it's not consensus and I don't do it. If I've got a five to four, the situation is screaming at me. I do not in my business ever go with a decision that's five to four."

"If I don't have a consensus in favor of action, I don't do it. But you have to understand what consensus is. Consensus isn't the agreement of everybody. It's the agreement of a strong majority."

"but I grew up in a privileged environment because they stood for things and taught me to stand for them. Their values still hold water with me. The response of their children to communal needs would make them very proud, and not just because we've given money. That would not impress them, particularly my mother. What would impress her is the work I have done, the Sundays, the Saturdays and evenings."

For Mandel, like many other top business leaders, the satisfaction derived from his community service has grown over the years. And that's because what he is able to accomplish has grown.

"It's like golf," he explains. "Golf is more fun when you shoot 70 than 120. There is no question my impact today is 20 times what it was when I was 30 years old. When it comes to community work, I'm a low handicapper now. I've got the shots. My Rolodex is 50 times bigger than it was when I was 30, and I know how to use it."

Today, Mandel uses that Rolodex to launch new projects and tip the balance in favor of ideas he deems worthy. Describing himself he says,

"I'm a founder. I like to produce change. There are a lot of places where I have seen a vacuum and have caused a process to begin or to be completed, leading to the creation of a thriving institution. I'm proud of that."

Some of those places include Midtown Corridor, Operation Move, Cleanland, Cleveland Tomorrow, the Center for Non-Profit Management and the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences. That last organization is particularly revealing about how Mandel thinks and operates in the volunteer sector.

"We have given substantial sums of money to the social work school at Case Western Reserve — our name's on it — and we did it because we concluded a long time ago that investing in one social worker is better than helping 10 families," he explains. "It's not that we wouldn't like to do both, but invest in a social worker and you've got a 25- to 35-year person who is out there fixing our larger society. We've tried to look at things in that macro kind of way and make moves that would strengthen a process. That makes it very important to invest in people, which means social work education was a greater priority than simply helping one, or 10, or however many families."

The School of Applied Social Sciences will certainly be a part of the Mandel legacy, but when asked how and for what he would like to be remembered, Mandel's response is conceptual.

"I hope I have been a catalyst — a catalyst for systemic change, for improving our society, and that [the family] will be remembered as having cared. That we tried to build institutions necessary for a dynamic, healthy and thriving community. That the notion of community was very important to us and we worked to support it. That we tried to strengthen the community." ■

*David Patterson, former communications director of the Cleveland Foundation, has owned a small publishing company and is a consultant to nonprofits and small businesses. He has written extensively about business in Cleveland.*



# Buckeye Billionaire

"It's really right to kill yourself for your customers," says Mort Mandel of Premier Industrial.

by Lore Croghan



YOU COULD SAY THAT THE MANDEL FAMILY fortune, worth well over \$1 billion today, is built on nuts and bolts. Actually, Premier Industrial, in which the Mandels have a controlling 62% stake, distributes more than 200,000 parts, from electrical and electronic components to automotive specialty products, fasteners and fire-fighting components, as well as industrial lubricants and chemicals.

"God is in the details," Mort Mandel likes to say. He has been Premier's CEO since 1958 and at 73 he habitually jogs up the three flights of stairs to his office. Unremitting devotion to every little thing that could please his customers or keep tight control on costs, he says, is the strategy that has brought success to Premier and to the Mandels of Cleveland.

Early on, the Mandel brothers decided to go after high-margin niches in the parts-distribution business and to make themselves indispensable to customers through superior service. Mort puts it a bit more forcefully: "Deeply built into this organization is the notion that it's really right to kill yourself for your customers, that that's the standard, not the exception."

At Premier, this strategy means offering hard-to-find parts that other distributors won't keep in stock. It means superfast delivery, usually overnight but within just a few hours if the customer has an emergency. It means virtually never sending an order late—and phoning to apologize to the customer before he can call to complain if something does go wrong.

For a look at how the people at Premier manage details, pay a visit to Newark Electronics. It's the largest of the four business divisions in Premier's electronics group, which together generated \$534 million in operating revenues and \$116 million in operating profit in fiscal (May) 1994.

Newark sells its wares through a catalog that is the ne plus ultra of catalogs. It weighs almost four pounds and has more than 1,500 pages filled with pictures and technical descriptions of more than 120,000 products from more than 285 manufacturers.

The catalog gets mailed to 1 million

**Joe, Mort and Jack Mandel  
of Premier Industrial**



people over the course of its 18-to-24-month life cycle, says Jim Spotz, a vice president. Then a new version is printed with revised prices and product lines, and parts from manufacturers that have recently joined the lineup.

Being the attentive-to-detail company that it is, Newark doesn't just wait for people to call in, catalog in hand, to make their orders. Its telemarketers also phone regular customers to check up on their needs.

Newark's products are not big-ticket items. They're just hard to locate. And customers usually don't buy very much of anything at any one time. The average order rings in at only \$150, Spotz says. But thousands and thousands of orders are processed every day.

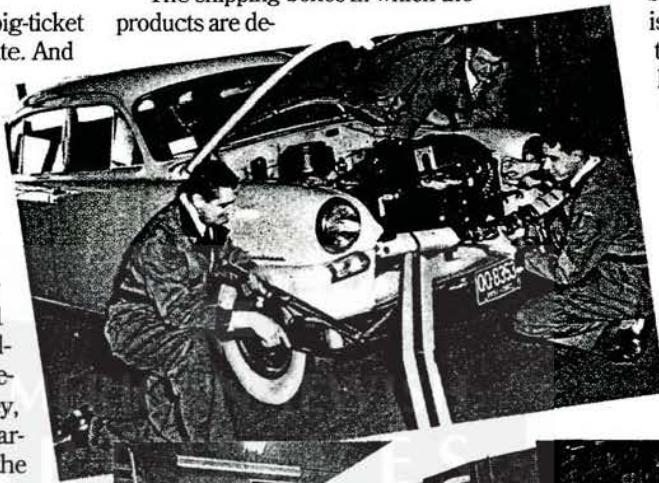
To handle the huge order volume efficiently, in early 1991 the company built an ultramodern, \$12 million, 180,000-square-foot distribution center in Gaffney, S.C., 50 miles southwest of Charlotte. It's right off Interstate 85, the Dixieland artery that runs down to Atlanta. Gaffney has substantially lowered Newark's cost of delivering orders, Spotz says. The distribution center is designed with a flow system like a manufacturing plant's that routes products efficiently and breaks down the job of packing an order into narrow, specific tasks performed by different groups of workers. So orders get filled faster at lower labor costs. The reason the Gaffney facility is more efficient than Newark's decades-old distribution center in Chicago is that at Gaffney, the work flow-through was designed first and the building to house it was designed afterward, Spotz says. If you take a vacant building and put a distribution center inside it, invariably there's a pillar in the wrong place or the ceilings are too low—some architectural impediment gets in the way of efficiency.

One key to smooth, swift, accurate distribution is the computer system, which directs the actions of the people picking and packing the products. The other key is what Mort preaches: an obsessive level of detail. Consider, for example, the careful handling of static-sensitive parts that go into computers.

To minimize the chance of exposing

these products to static electricity, workers who handle them wear special bracelets attached by cords to rubber floor mats on which they stand. Their workstations are also outfitted with ionizers that reduce the static in the surrounding air. In addition, they wrap the sensitive products in static-shield bags and cover the packaging with warning labels so recipients know to handle and store them with care.

The shipping boxes in which the products are de-



livered are cushioned with styrofoam "peanuts" that are pink to indicate they are antistatic. All the packing peanuts in the Gaffney plant are the pink kind, so packers don't have to take time out to choose between regular and antistatic peanuts for each box they handle.

Customers who object to styrofoam because it's bad for the environment get crumpled brown paper in their shipments instead. It too is antistatic.

The crumpled paper pleases environmentally conscious customers because it's recycled. At the same time, it

pleases Newark management because it isn't any more expensive to use than peanuts and it allows the packing line to move just as fast, says Spotz. This is the kind of solution that Newark likes best. "There's a high attention to detail of filling the customer need but also doing it profitably," Spotz says. "And it shows the two can be married up."

The time is coming when the myriad of finely managed details will no longer be Mort Mandel's concern. He is preparing for the day when there will no longer be any Mandels working at Premier, which the family founded nearly 55 years ago.

Don't misunderstand. No hostile board or irate investors are saying they think the Mandels have lost the energy and ability to lead. Far from it. It's just that there aren't any younger Mandels coming up the ranks to assume Mort's mantle of power. That was a decision Mort made with his brothers Joe and Jack at the outset. (Jack, 82, and Joe, 80, retired from daily duties as company officers about a decade ago but still serve as board members. Jack is chairman of the finance committee, and Joe is chairman of the executive committee. The two participate in every major company decision.)

Back in the late 1950s, when they were planning to take Premier public, the Mandel brothers decided the best way to attract topflight talent was to nix nepotism. None of management's kids, spouses or siblings would be allowed on board.

"We wanted to build a meritocracy," Mort says. He and his brothers felt it would be easier to convince employees they could truly rise by merit if they didn't have to clamber over management's family members on the way up.

With typical forthrightness, Mort discussed his decision with his three children when they were in their early teens.



"I didn't want it to be anything that might indicate rejection," he says. He told them he would be a ready and willing partner if they needed him to make a financial investment to further their careers.

His son, Tom, took him up on the offer. In 1988, after years of building his career in radio, Tom bought Rubber City Radio Group with his dad as an investor. The younger man is president and principal shareholder of the group, which operates three radio stations in Akron, Ohio. Tom, 39, says things have turned out great. He was never interested in working in his father's business, which he found boring.

As for the other Mandel children, Mort's two daughters and Joe's two daughters stayed home to raise kids.

With the help of board members and long-standing close advisers, Mort and his brothers have picked a date for Mort's retirement. Mort won't say when that will be or who will step into his shoes. These remain secrets for now to all but the planners. But he talks readily about how momentous the transition will be to him. "The biggest test I'm going to have to pass is how well my successor does," Mort says. "And you don't know for five years."

When Mort took over as CEO, he had nearly two decades of experience at Premier, which he and his brothers founded in 1940. Then 18 years old, he had dropped out of Western Reserve University (now part of Case Western Reserve University), pooled \$900 with Joe and Jack and bought the assets of Uncle Jacob Mandel's defunct auto-parts business. Another uncle, Conrad Mandel, gave them a boost by sending them \$3,000 worth of auto parts on credit from his auto-parts distributorship in Chicago. The parts arrived in shiny yellow boxes with Conrad's trade name "Premier" stamped in blue. With his permission, they took the name for their company.

World War II was tough on the fledgling business, because many of the raw materials for auto parts were diverted to military use. Businesses such as Premier survived partly by selling make-do parts. For example, Mort says, for steel car grills they substituted wooden grills painted silver.

In the 1960s, Premier acquired its way into electronics distribution. Today, its electronics division generates 72% of the

company's total sales. Typical customers are in repair and maintenance, with a few engineers who are building prototypes tossed in. The other 28% of sales comes from Premier's general products division, which offers an array of goods that includes auto parts, industrial lubricants, electrical cord and cable and

rule against ordering plane tickets for business trips less than two weeks in advance, so travelers can get the cheapest tickets possible, says Assistant Vice President Bill Evanson. "Nothing is too small to challenge," says Vice President Howard Frank.

This penny-pinching would get tiresome for the staff were it not for the fact that so many officers and employees are stockholders. "You won't find gold-plated hardware" around Premier, says Vice Chairman Phil Sims, who has been at the company almost 39 years. "Our net worths are riding on the line." Premier's austere headquarters buildings are brightened only with framed art posters that Mort selects himself.

All of this makes Premier a reliable money-maker. The company has delivered record earnings in 33 of its 35 years as a public company. And this fiscal year should be the 34th record setter, Sims says.

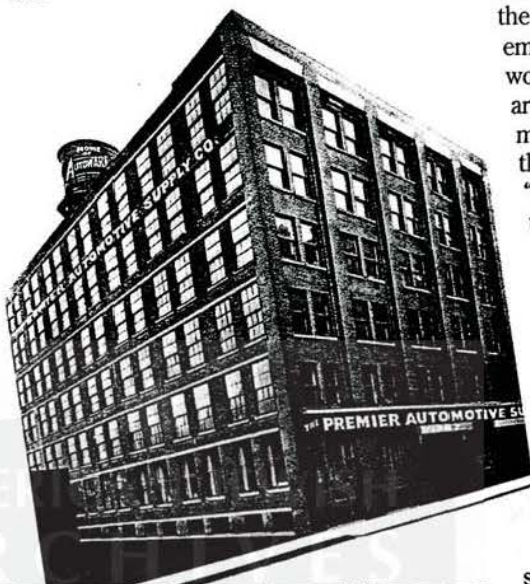
Per-share earnings growth has accelerated to 15% for the first half of fiscal 1995, almost double the 8% growth of fiscal 1994. Mort says the company should be able to sustain that pace for the year as a whole.

Going forward, Premier's earnings should enjoy a compound annual growth rate of 11% at least through the end of the decade, says Abhishek Gami, an analyst at Duff & Phelps in Chicago. He expects \$1.25 a share this fiscal year, versus \$1.10 for fiscal 1994, and \$1.45 for fiscal 1996.

Premier should continue to grow because it has no nationwide competitors in the repair

and maintenance market. (Other big national electronics distributors like Avnet and Arrow cater to the original equipment market and don't maintain large inventories of older or less frequently asked-for parts.) Gami has a 12-month price target of 27 on the stock, which recently traded around 23½, 19 times estimated fiscal 1995 earnings.

To keep a close eye on Premier's mo-



firefighting equipment.

As a matter of policy, Premier makes only 10% of the products it sells, so it ties up most of its capital in inventory rather than in building manufacturing plants.

Conservative money management is a watchword. Long-term debt is a scant \$6.5 million, less than 2% of the company's total capitalization. Careful control of expenses includes things like a



mentum, Mandel spends half his work time traveling to company outposts. Out in the field, he sometimes calls on customers with sales reps, who introduce him as "Mort Mandel from Cleveland." That way, he says, he can ask the company's customers questions and get candid answers.

Employees concede that it is not always easy to work for a demanding boss like Mort. "He is a taskmaster," Spotz says. "There are some days you want to reach across the table and strangle him, but that's probably what makes a good CEO too. Because when you calm down and you sit back, you say, 'If I were CEO, I'd probably do exactly the same thing.' He pushes us to the edge of the envelope."

Mort is equally intense about his devotion to philanthropy. For 30 years now, he has devoted 25% of his time to civic and philanthropic activities, he says.

"Sometimes we see people in the waning years of their lives decide all of a sudden to become community-involved—with Mort, it's an absolutely integral part of his life," says Chris Johnson, the executive director of MidTown Corridor, a community development organization Mort launched 13 years ago.

Mort learned about generosity from his mother, who had no money to speak of but always managed to take care of other people. She'd buy a dress for someone who was getting married, or hand over cash to clear up someone else's unpaid bills. "When our values were being formed, we understood that helping somebody who's hurting is part of what you do if you can," Mort says. "I don't want to sound corny, but I believe that, as do my brothers."

The three men back that belief with their personal wealth. They plan to leave much of their approximately \$1.2 billion worth of Premier stock to a network of family foundations when they die.

Again, do not misunderstand. Mort is not philosophically opposed to passing on wealth to his heirs. He has put about 2.2 million of his Premier shares, currently worth around \$52 million, into trusts for his family members. But the rest is earmarked for a higher purpose: "We've made so much money, based on my standards, that it's just a great opportunity for us to improve the world," Mort says.

The Mandels seek to bring about social change through specific, focused programs. Mort's favorite causes include center-city neighborhood renewal, higher education, professional leadership development and the Jewish community.

Accordingly, Mort founded MidTown Corridor to rehabilitate the neighborhood around Premier's Euclid Avenue headquarters, which deteriorated in the early 1980s. The organiza-



"When our values were being formed, we understood that helping somebody who's hurting is part of what you do if you can," Mort says. "I don't want to sound corny, but I believe that, as do my brothers."

tion has gone a long way toward turning the neighborhood around by attracting 250 member businesses that have poured \$325 million into the area and saved or created 4,000 jobs. Yet Mort's support doesn't slacken. "He continues to challenge and make you look for the next step, and that's important—there's a lot more to do," says MidTown's Johnson.

Mort was also a founder of Cleveland Tomorrow, an organization that deploys CEOs to work on the city's behalf in rebuilding Cleveland by raising venture capital and encouraging investment in the city. In particular, he spearheaded

Cleveland Tomorrow's effort to create Neighborhood Progress Inc., which raises and allocates money for neighborhood redevelopment.

"There are other companies in town that have bigger revenue, but Premier is always in the top 10 in giving, and always one of the first to write the check," says Joe Roman, Cleveland Tomorrow's executive director.

The Mandels are also financial supporters of Case Western Reserve University, where the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences is named after them. The school, which offers advanced degrees in social work, has an avowed mission of promoting social justice. One of its programs, the Mandel Center for Nonprofit Organizations, provides management training for executives of nonprofit entities.

Mort is an inspiration to Darlyne Bailey, the dean of the social sciences school. "He's a very bright man who puts his bright ideas out in a very simple way," she says. "He's been around this world in ways that I have yet to be, partly because of his age. There's a lot for me to learn from and with him."

In Israel, Mort is chairman of a Ministry of Education project that provides advanced training for the leaders of the country's educational system. And he supports Jewish cultural education in the U.S.

Mort says he has gained as much from his philanthropic work as he has given. "I learned to influence people to do things because they believed in it, because they thought it was right, not because I was the chair and therefore I had the absolute power," he says. "All of those skills shaped me in the way I run my job. I get consensus."

Philanthropy has been his hobby, taking the place of sports and other diversions. "Family, work and the work that I do in the philanthropic area—they're sort of the cornerstones with me," he says. "I feel successful in all three. And that's what gives me my own sense of well-being, I guess."

To some, it may seem that being Mort Mandel would be exhausting. To Mort, however, it has been marvelous fun. "I've had a ball," he says. "The world doesn't owe me a thing." ■



# C POWER PLAYER

BY FRANK BENTAYOU



SUN  
PRESS

SEPT. 1995



# MORTON MANDEL: FAMILY AND PHILANTHROPY

**T**alk to Morton Mandel about his personal life or his business. Talk to him about politics or the money he gives to institutions and causes from Cleveland's inner city to the State of Israel. Talk to him about any of these things and he'll steer the conversation back to the subject that seems to preoccupy him: family, and the qualities it mysteriously bestows on people as they mature.

In fact, Mandel, chairman of Premier Industrial Corp., the more than \$800-million-a-year manufacturing and distribution company that he and brothers Joe and Jack founded here in 1940, can shuffle almost any serious question so the answer relates to his childhood.

The reason is simple, he maintains. His childhood days — back when he, his brothers and parents Samuel and Rose lived together on Cleveland's East Side — was the critical period during which he absorbed just about everything that would carry him through the next six decades-plus of his life. Those were the days that made him and his brothers among the Top 10 wealthiest people in town.

"Hey, I really believe that," says the fit and well-preserved 73-year-old with an exaggerated shrug. "People learn all their values by the time they're 10 or 11. Oh, you learn *skills* after that. But what I'm saying is, by the time

you're around 10 years old, you're who you're gonna be."

So, who is this Morton Mandel, many of whose qualities were absorbed at such a tender age? With just a little thought, he can lay out a list of values that he says he absorbed from his parents "without ever knowing that's what I was doing."

He counts the list on his fingers.

"You got respect for your neighbor," he says. "You got honesty, kindness, that every person has a responsibility for every other person. There's this responsibility you have to help people who are hurting," he flips

another finger. "There's a deep commitment to justice."

Many in town agree that those genuinely are values they've witnessed in Mandel. For one thing, he and his brothers, staggeringly successful in business, have been among Cleveland's most generous givers. Years ago, they formed Mandel Associated Foundation to help them find good uses for the extra money their company earned them.

"It's a very thoughtful process," he explains. "It's taken lots of conversation and lots of self-examination." There's even a full-time staff of three that investigates who and what might become recipients of this philanthropy.

What the foundation gives away, of course, is big chunks of the fortune that the Mandels have

*Continued on page 12*

**For this  
rags-to-riches  
protagonist,  
success is literally  
'relative'.**



"Hey, I really believe that. People learn all their values by the time they're 10 or 11. Oh, you learn skills after that. But what I'm saying is, by the time you're around 10 years old, you're who you're gonna be."

*Continued from page 10*

made distributing and manufacturing auto parts, electronic components, machine lubricants, brass firehose nozzles and other fittings. They've given away millions of dollars, all very methodically.

He won't reveal how much, but the family's philanthropy, Mandel says, "consists of two piles." Recipients of the first include higher educational institutions like Case Western Reserve University, which boasts the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences. Giving of this sort, Mandel believes, can help cultivate leaders who'll make a difference in the world.

In addition, the first category focuses on neighborhood renewal, most conspicuously along Cleveland's Midtown Corridor. Mandel took it on as a special project in the early 1980s, hoping to reverse the area's decline from its one-time grandeur to the broken ruin it had become. Now, the area houses renovated buildings and several new businesses, including Pierre's Ice Cream.

Then there's the second category. "We're committed to being a generous supporter of communal causes," he says. "The United Way, a new building for vocational guidance services, the museums and cultural assets of Cleveland. We have a responsibility to be a good citizen in the community, both Premier and the Mandels."

Mandel gives time, too. He estimates that, since his 30s, he has put a quarter of his 60- to 65-hour work week into what he calls communal causes. "I think my business sense has made me a better communal leader," he says, "and my communal involvement has made me a better business leader."

Mandel admits to another angle in his philanthropy. "It's a real angle, too," he smiles. "This is how I add meaning to my life. That's the angle. No question about it. I wouldn't feel the same about myself without that. And I attribute so much of that to the way I was brought up."

"I was programmed," he says. "And I benefit from that, from my parents' having programmed me to care." Hence, Mandel tips the conversation back to his upbringing, to family.

#### **ALL IN THE FAMILY**

Mandel refers to his family as having been rich, but he insists on enclosing "rich" in quotation marks. In fact, the Mandels' standard of living during his boyhood in the '30s was considerably below middle class. And that, Mandel speculates, is what urged him and his brothers to choose careers in business, where they could make lots of money.

"If I'd grown up in a middle-class family, I'm sure I would have been a social worker," he says at one point, later saying he might have been a politician. "But I grew up in a poor family, so I went into



business to make money."

Mandel's father, an accountant, was too ill during most of Morton's young life to work and died in 1942. His mother lived another 16 years, long enough to get a glimpse of her three sons' success.

Mandel not only credits many of his values to his early family life, he also acknowledges that being a Jew, not far removed from the Europe of Adolph Hitler, helped forge many of his views and attitudes. Among the causes about which he feels most strongly are those benefiting the State of Israel — not uncritically, but with no ambivalence.

"Look," he says. "I had family that was wiped out, murdered, in World War II by the Nazis. I know that. I grew up with that. I was an adult already when that happened.

"How could I not respond?" he says. "How could anyone Jewish not respond, anyone who lost relatives to the Holocaust?"

Nevertheless, Mandel, who established the Mandel Institute of Israel with his brothers, does see fault in the nation. "I don't like every single thing this new country is doing, but," he says, pausing, then smiling, "give them a couple hundred years and I think they'll be more civilized.

"It's like your kids," he adds. "Do you love everything they do? No. But do you still love your kids? See. They're mutually exclusive."

Mandel also has an interesting take on his own children, two daughters and a son. Premier's three founding brothers decided early that they wouldn't weave their family lives any further into the business than they already were. Jack's, Joe's and Morton's children would not work at Premier.

"There certainly are companies that have gone the other way," Mandel says. "Ford Motor Co. comes to mind. But we wanted Premier to be a meritocracy. People would advance on their merit, not because their name was Mandel."

Mandel characterizes his daughters as full-time mothers now. His son, Tom, runs Rubber City Radio Group and its Akron FM radio stations, WAKR-AM, WONE-FM and WQMX-FM, which Morton bought last year.

Meanwhile, under Mandel's leadership, Premier just completed a stunning business year. It increased net earnings by 16 percent with a net profit after taxes of \$108 million. Those certainly are numbers that any businessman could crow about, if he had the urge.

But Mandel, who says he learned what it means to be a success, a man, a mensch, simply by living under the same roof with his parents prefers to crow about his family.

*Free-lance writer Frank Ben-tayou is the former managing editor of Cleveland Magazine.* ■

"(Philanthropy) is how I add meaning to my life. That's the angle. No question about it. I wouldn't feel the same about myself without that. And I attribute so much of that to the way I was brought up."



# Mandel's Millions to Give Jewish Mandate to Hebrew U.

## Zuckerman Likely to Join Board Amid Debate on School's Direction

FORWARD STAFF

JERUSALEM — An American millionaire is pumping millions of dollars into an effort to restore Hebrew University's Jewish character and mandate — an effort that some here are resisting.

Philanthropist Morton Mandel, who is based at Cleveland, Ohio, created the Mandel Center for Jewish Continuity last year with an \$11 million pledge to restore the Jewish mandate of Hebrew University here. That mandate will be among the matters discussed when the university's board of governors gathers herethis month. At that meeting, the board is expected to

elect real estate mogul Mortimer Zuckerman as chairman, replacing Alex Grass.

The emerging debate here about the Jewish mission of Hebrew University echoes a general tension within Israeli society about whether Israel should move in the direction of being a state of its citizens rather than the state of the Jews. At Hebrew University's 1925 inauguration ceremony, the poet Chaim Bialik hailed the beginning of a university for the Jewish people. Since then, the university has strayed from that mission while beefing up its secular academic credentials. The struggle for the soul of

Hebrew University mirrors a similar debate within American academia as to whether Jewish studies departments should retain their secular and academic character or take a more activist approach toward furthering Jewish continuity and engagement.

"My chief concern is not whether we are reaching out to the Jews of Denver but how to keep this place alive," the chairman of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at Hebrew University, Ezra Mendelsohn, said. Mr. Mendelsohn cautioned against efforts to "develop the university of the Jewish people at the expense of

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FORWARD  
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June 4, 1999

## Mandel's Millions Give Jewish Mandate to Hebrew University

*Continued from Page 1*

having a university for Israel." The university should focus on attracting more Arab students, he said, adding, "Israel isn't only Jews."

While 99% of the world's Jews lived in the Diaspora when Bialik made his rousing speech, "Since then, something has happened. We have a state and a population of...6 million," Mr. Mendelsohn said. He said, however, that he supports efforts to bring foreign students to Hebrew University — both Jews and non-Jews — and added, "If Mr. Mandel wants to give a billion dollars [to a university program of his choice], I'm all in favor of it."

From its inception, Hebrew University was intended as more than just another ivory tower to educate its population, the director of the Mandel Center for Jewish Continuity, Alan Hoffmann, said. "There was always...an additional strand in the mission. Beyond being a great general university, it would also be what they called the 'University of the Jewish People.'" In recent years, Mr. Hoffmann said, the university's leaders have begun to ask themselves, "Given the huge assets that we have in Judaica...on the one side, and on the other side given these critical

issues that are facing Jewish life in Israel [and the Diaspora]...how can the Hebrew University become more engaged?"

The Mandel Center strives to bridge the gap between Hebrew University's resources, including "several hundred" faculty members whose work incorporates Jewish studies and the needs of the world Jewish community. "I think that the Mandel Center in a certain sense signals a kind of shifting gear in the university, and a sense that the university needs to be more proactive and engaged in Jewish life," Mr. Hoffmann said.

To that end, the Mandel Center is creating a four-year master's degree program, in which top students will be recruited for training as Bible and Jewish studies teachers in the Israeli school system. Also on the agenda is a program to send Hebrew University professors to America, where they will both teach college classes and serve as emissaries in Jewish communities. In a pilot project, a set of pamphlets has been printed bearing the perspectives of professors on the Torah portion of the week. If the project is adopted, the pamphlets will be distributed among the student body and beyond.

The dean of the faculty of humanities at Hebrew University, Yair Zakovitch, who is working in coordination with the Mandel Center, said that in the past, "the university did not do enough and did not care enough about what's being done beyond the walls of the ivory tower." Mr. Zakovitch said he hopes the university will spark a more widespread revival of Jewish textual study, which Israel's secular elements — Mr. Zakovitch himself is secular — largely discarded in the past 30 years. "It's clear that we as a university...will become more and more involved in the lives of Jews all over the world. We feel it's our mission, and we feel we can deliver," he said.

Not everyone agrees. As in America, some here argue that activist approaches undermine academic integrity. And as in Israeli political life, there are questions about whether the country and its institutions should strive to be and do more than their counterparts in other areas of the world.

"For me, [Hebrew University] is a modern, ordinary academic institution in the Western, liberal, modern tradition," said a professor emeritus of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Yehoshua

Porath. The vision of a "university of the Jewish people" is an "empty slogan," Mr. Porath said, adding, "I reject it in toto.... A university [should have] no ideological mission."

It's "marvelous" when donors want to give money to the university, but they should consider giving money to efforts like advancing scientific research, Mr. Porath said. "I don't think those who contribute money should decide the future of the university....To change the character of the university in order to satisfy the private appetites or tastes of donors? No. We have never done it. I hope we [will] never do it," Mr. Porath said. He added that he doubts that the new teacher-training institute will succeed in recruiting the crème de la crème of students to train as Jewish studies educators, since "the graduates of computer science and business administration...get much higher income and salaries."



**M E M O**

To: Mandel Foundation Colleagues  
From: Nessa Rapoport, Director of Communications (nrapoport@mandelny.org)  
Date: 10/4/99  
Re: Attached article from *Inside Business* (July 1999)

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We thought you would find this article of interest. It offers a compelling portrait of the philanthropic partnership of the Mandel Brothers.





PREMIER PHILANTHROPIST MORT MANDEL

# INSIDE BUSINESS

February 1998

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TEAM RAHAL'S  
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Volume 1 • Number 7



# Giving In To Charity

**After being summoned out of retirement to help rejuvenate Premier Farnell, Morton Mandel has once again stepped beyond the CEO role he knows so well into one that is familiar and fulfilling.**

BY FRANK BENTAYOU

ARCHIVES

**P**rofit or philanthropy, what's it going to be? Or can a guy handle both? For decades, those questions have been central for Morton L. Mandel, a man whose name reminds Northeast Ohioans as much of his and his siblings' charitable giving as of their astute business acumen — which earned them a fortune.

How big a fortune? *Forbes* magazine has featured the Mandels — as recently as October 1998 — as among the 50 wealthiest families in the United States. Beyond that, the Foundation Center, which tracks philanthropic institutions, considers them among the most generous families, too.

Now, finally, since he's arrived at *une age certaine*, Mort Mandel has managed to sort out a key objective in the lifelong pursuit of his two main public enterprises and their sometimes-conflicting values. He has acknowledged (almost reluctantly) that he's ready to put behind him his decades-long role as boss, CEO of what was the Cleveland-based multibillion-dollar parts and supply company he and brothers Joe and Jack started more than a half-century ago.

Following through on that decision means he has a lot more time and energy to do what he says he really wants: to continue giving away chunks of the estimated \$1.3 billion he and his brothers amassed during their years in business.

After all, the witty and erudite Mandel says, rubbing his chin, "I wouldn't want to

be my age and CEO of a publicly held company." Quickly, though, he adds, "Even though I think I'm as good as I ever was."

The reason he's willing to concede at all to age has nothing to do with his energy level. Trim and fit, Mandel claims to be as full of juice as he was when the brothers started Premier Industrial Corp. Family and business associates fervently support him. It's more his sense of the way shareholders might respond. "It just doesn't look right to me, to be 100 years old and CEO of a publicly held company in which people have invested their money." He rolls his eyes at this exaggeration and launches an ironic smile.

He has good reason for irony. A year ago Mandel was roaring around England and the Continent — at age 76 — as the acting chief executive officer of Premier Farnell plc. The company is not only publicly traded but has international scope and stature.

The Wetherby, England-based distribution giant that resulted from the 1996 merger of Premier and British company Farnell, one of Europe's largest electronics-components distributors, summoned him out of retirement in January 1998. The board said: Put your retirement on hold, get over here and set things straight.

Why would the amalgamation of two of the principal electronics- and automotive-components distributors in the Western World need to have things set straight? Therein lies a tale.

**W**ithin months of the 1996 merger of Cleveland-based Premier Industrial and Farnell, bad news began roiling to the surface. Quickly it became clear that what the deal's architects had hoped would bring an economy of scale and a high level of Anglo-American synergy to the industry was turning into an ugly mess.

First, Farnell's British shareholders staged a near revolt over the \$2.8 billion then-CEO Howard Poulson paid for Premier. And the deal went downhill from there. Within two years sales had declined by half-a-billion dollars. Securities analysts and brokers on both sides of the Atlantic all but wrote the company off as a viable medium-term investment, in part because of its failure under Poulson to integrate the two companies' vastly different cultures.

Analyst Robert Damron follows the electronics and semiconductor industry for the Milwaukee brokerage firm, Cleary Gull. He says that at least part of PF's descent may be cyclical. Excess production, according to Damron, formerly with McDonald & Co. in Cleveland, dragged the whole industry down over the last three years. Market pressure, he says, "has kept earnings flat" or, as with PF, caused declines. In short, the stock might have suffered anyway, but an ill-executed merger added a tremendous burden. In the two years following Farnell's purchase of Premier, the stock value plum-





**THE GIVING THREE: MORT MANDEL (CENTER) STILL MEETS REGULARLY WITH BROTHERS JOE (LEFT) AND JACK TO TALK ABOUT EVERYTHING FROM FAMILY PHILANTHROPY TO "MARK MCGWIRE. OR WHATEVER," MORT SAYS. "WE'RE BEST FRIENDS."**



meted some 60 percent from its post-merger high of more than \$25 a share to around \$11.

And, of course, the precipitous drop in share price meant a huge hit for the Mandels. Mort and his brothers, who have remained heavily involved in philanthropy for years, meting out tens of millions to higher education, neighborhood development and Jewish causes, retained a 25 percent stake in Premier Farnell. That stake and, hence, the Mandels' fortune, declined in value as the company slid. Not only were shareholders holding their breath — and there are many in Northeast Ohio, since the Mandels so generously shared stock with Premier employees — but so were hopeful institutional recipients of Mandel charity.

Early in 1998, PF's board of directors met in near despair to jettison Poulson, who had called Farnell's marriage to Premier "the opportunity of a lifetime" and negotiated payment of those billions for the U.S. company. That's when director Robert Horton, an Englishman who lived in Cleveland for years while running BP America, urged the board to ask his old friend to come aboard, put his knowledge of the industry and fabled management and communication skill to work to turn the merged company around.

"As soon as we accepted the CEO's resignation," Mandel, a director himself, recalls, "they asked me point blank: What would you think of coming in?" The board offered him compensation at his previous salary — "which was very nice," he points out, but eventually, "I accepted the job with no pay."

Salaried or not — and well past the age when most executives call it quits and move to Palm Beach (where he and his wife, Barbara, often vacation) — Mandel leaped into his new assignment. On Jan. 28, one day after the board meeting, he made his first CEO-style visit to a Premier Farnell facility, talking up the merger to employees and managers. For the next six months he tramped from London to southern England factory towns to France across to the United States and back to Britain, visiting company installations and chatting up the future to employees — and the press.

One role he set for himself was to pep-talk middle managers and meet with sales executives to urge them back on track, "killing themselves for their customers. That's what we always said at Premier Industrial," Mandel says, "and that, absolutely without a doubt, was the key to the company's success."

Another task was to charm business writers, who, for the most part, harbored deep skepticism about what the press considered an overpriced trans-Atlantic merger gone sour. Ultimately, his audience in this effort was big investors as well as brokers and analysts on Wall Street and in "The City," the London financial district, both of which shared the business press's skepticism.

Because of all his traveling, Mandel refers to his efforts as "shoe-leather management" and tells cheery stories about the experience, making it sound like a grand adventure instead of the mind-numbing drudgery it might have been. "I toured plants. I said hello a lot. I met all kinds of people and different levels of management, very senior managers in one room, other management in another. I just told them what I knew about the business," he says with a shrug. "Much of it was telling Farnell people about Premier Industrial Corp. They hadn't gotten a lot of information. And in these small groups, I said, 'Look. What changes would you want us to make? What's bothering you?'"

Meanwhile, he also charmed reporters from Cleveland's Superior Avenue to London's Fleet Street. Susanna Voyle, a tough business writer for the London *Financial Times*, was so taken with Mandel that she dreamily characterized him as "a slim, white-haired grandfather with the energy and drive of a man half his age" and noted that he emerged "from semiretirement" to become chief executive. The headline above one of her generous articles read, "Determined, energetic grandfather [steps] in to hold his former baby." Such bubbly write-ups, repeated over and over, eventually had some effect. In time, the stock inched up, though nowhere near where the market had valued it at the time of the merger.

Once the board hired a permanent CEO — John Hirst, formerly an executive at Imperial Chemical Industries, the international paint and specialty-chemicals company that had bought Cleveland's Glidden — Mandel returned to a calmer life at his Shaker Heights home. The stock, however, slipped again after his departure and has been languishing this year some 70 percent off its January 1996 level.

Mandel still insists that the "synergies between these two companies" could have very positive business consequences for Premier Farnell, and he remains a board member. As such, according to his son, Tom Mandel, a radio executive in Akron, he still travels to London regularly

on company business. "Not nearly as much as he used to, though," Tom says.

By far, he explains, his father's first order of business now is philanthropy.

That's clear at Mandel's office on Euclid Avenue in Cleveland's MidTown. There, receptionists answer the phone, "Parkwood ...," the name of a private corporation run by Mandel, whose role is to manage what he calls "the financial assets of the Mandel family, which, considering what I had in mind when I was 11 years old, are very considerable."

A big portion of what Parkwood handles is the Mandels' charitable giving, particularly from three Mandel foundations, which, endowed with some \$350 million of the family's money, support numerous causes both in Northeast Ohio and around the country. Mort's job is CEO, but he's quick to point out that Parkwood is no publicly held company. And he runs the organization with a foundation staff and the help and regular advice of brothers Joe and Jack.

"We discuss every donation," Mort says. "And, really, we always agree on what to do before we do it." He pauses a beat and adds: "Well, we don't *always* agree, but that's why we each have our separate philanthropic causes we support. On the big things, we agree."

**W**hile youngest among the brothers (their older sister, Miriam Cole, was not involved with Premier Industrial), Mort took control from the beginning of management and operations in the auto-parts business the Mandel boys threw themselves into following World War II. "I don't know why," he says, again with the shrug. "I've always had a knack for that sort of thing. And I learn from *everybody*. I read all the time, and I'm a very good listener. So I became the operations guy. I managed."

Tops among his teachers may be Peter F. Drucker, the California management guru and author of best-selling books, including *Management Challenges for the 21st Century*, *Concept of the Corporation*, *Peter Drucker on the Profession of Management* and *Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices*. During the '60s, he met for a series of full-day consulting sessions with Drucker at the author's New York office, mostly one-on-one but occasionally in group tutorials. "He helped me think clearly. Helped me with certain basic principles that I could read, but I was not able to *internalize*," he says. He calls the



Drucker connection "one of the transforming experiences of my business life."

Drucker, whose throaty voice and accent almost perfectly match those of Henry Kissinger, says he remembers the sessions as if they were last week. "There are three things about Mort that always stick with me," he says. "The first is the absolute integrity of the man. Secondly, he's the *only* person who knows how to do an acquisition successfully. Ninety percent of acquisitions misfire, you know. But 90 percent of Mort's work in acquisitions has been successful." The reason: "He knows what to acquire and how to acquire — and then how to run it after the acquisition."

"The third thing is that he and I hit it off, so to speak, with our mutual interest in the nonprofit world," Drucker says. One of his — as well as the Mandels' — fascinations has been the development of leadership in this realm. Drucker has written seminal books on the subject. In fact, he says that for the half-century he has been a consultant, "I have split my interest with profit and nonprofit organizations. We, Mort and I, very quickly came to realize that we shared this interest. And he has been exceedingly successful with his social programs, his nonprofit work."

The Mandels launched a significant demonstration of their support for bringing professionalism to this often-forgotten realm in 1984 when they donated millions toward establishment of the Mandel Center for Non-Profit Organizations at Case Western Reserve University, an institution that functions as both a graduate education program and think tank. Drucker adds that he has followed the center's progress and feels "it has been exceedingly successful, too."

Now, in his post-corporate life at Parkwood, Mandel, still "the operations guy" he was at Premier, can spend far more time deciding whom to give money to. He's had plenty of practice. Under Mort's philanthropic guidance, the foundations have been spinning off seven-figure donations for a long time. In fact, of late, they have donated between \$15 million and \$20 million a year.

Their executive director, Mark D. Gurvis, says he serves as an administrator and "point person, connecting with community and educational leaders." Clearly, though, Gurvis says, his boss

sets the agenda.

"Mort uses language around, 'We want to change the world.' And, yeah, he and his brothers are serious about that." Over the long term, Gurvis says, "their philanthropy has focused on what they think is the best bet — which is people. So they very consistently focus in on how we can attract and help develop and nourish the



"We, Mort and I, very quickly came to realize that we shared this interest [in philanthropy]. And he has

been exceedingly successful with his social programs, his nonprofit work."

— MANAGEMENT GURU AND BEST-SELLING AUTHOR PETER F. DRUCKER

best human resources. Whether it's in Jewish education or rebuilding neighborhoods or in the area of nonprofit, very consistently, their cut on the issue is around developing leadership."

So naturally a lot of family generosity has been toward higher education — especially CWRU. Aside from their financial role in the Mandel Center, the brothers' donations also spurred development of the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences there. Plus, they have endowed both a scholarship program for the Weatherhead School of Management and the Mandel professorship for nonprofit management.

"Another area of very great concern," Mort says, "is urban neighborhood renewal. We grew up in that."

He means that when he was a kid, his family, of quite modest means, lived in the Cleveland Glenville neighborhood near East 91st Street and St. Clair Avenue. "I had a wonderful childhood," he says. "I didn't know I was poor." His father, Sam, was too ill to earn a living during part of Mort's childhood, so the youngest son began contributing to the family's financial security when he was 13, selling soft drinks at Cleveland Stadium and bringing home the change he made to give to his mother, Rose. "Now imagine, at 13, what that must have done for me to help like that, to be a man. It was a wonderful opportunity."

The help the family now provides to neighborhood organizations is much more than the \$1.50 Mandel says he used

to make selling Cokes. It's serious money and has helped in the establishment of Neighborhood Progress Inc., an umbrella organization for community-development corporations and neighborhood groups, as well as MidTown Cleveland, which until recently was called Cleveland's Mid-Town Corridor, a successful urban-revival effort along Prospect and Euclid avenues.

Mandel doesn't mention it, but other community leaders credit him with co-founding Cleveland Tomorrow (an advisory organization of area CEOs that played a critical role in the city's comeback during the 1980s). Plus, he's served as president and chairman of his hometown's United Way Services.

And finally, he says, "Our religion is Jewish. We're very much into Jewish education, which has been neglected." The Mandels, indeed, have given millions to Jewish community federations, schools, temples and other institutions over the years, according to documents (forms 990-pf) filed with the Internal Revenue Service. In fact, the Mandels maintain three "supporting foundations" aimed specifically at helping Jewish federations financially.

As a consequence of all these philanthropic activities, Mandel says, he still feels he has his hands full, even though he's not running a corporation. "I love what I'm doing with Parkwood and philanthropy. Those are my hobbies," he says. In addition, he still travels for business and with Barbara for pleasure, and they spend time with their grown children, including his daughter in Palm Beach, another in Boston and his son, Tom, as well as their four grandchildren. "Being busy is my therapy."

Plus, the "operations guy" still meets regularly with brothers Joe and Jack, who remain active in family philanthropy. Though he serves as CEO of Parkwood, Mort says, he consults with his brothers. When they're all in town, they have daily lunches at The Cleveland Play House restaurant or at a café on Euclid near the Parkwood office.

"We talk about, I dunno, Mark McGwire. Or whatever. We talk about the world. I'm very proud of this: We're best friends. We've had this partnership that's been very rewarding. It has not been free of disagreement. But it never got to the personal level."

"And, oh yeah. We talk about philanthropy," Mandel says. He smiles. "After all, philanthropy, that's my job now, you know." ■