



**Mount
Sinai**

Call #:	INT 0200
Title:	Interview with Robert Newman, MD, MPH
Date:	March 28, 2018
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Interview with Robert Newman, MD, MPH

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

March 28, 2018

Nicholas Webb: All right. So, just to get the recording started, this is Nicholas Webb and I'm here with Robert Newman. It's March 28th, 2018, and we're here in the Archives office at Annenberg.

Robert Newman: Nice to be here.

Nicholas Webb: Glad to have you here.

Robert Newman: Thanks.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, so where to begin? You said you had something there from the board?

Robert Newman: Maybe I should just start -- if you want, I can start anywhere -- with Ray Trussell's coming to Beth Israel, and then his recruitment of me to Beth Israel. They're both interesting stories.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, that's a great place to start.

Robert Newman: In 1965, I think it was the end of '64, beginning of '65, Ray Trussell was completing a, I think it was, a three-year term as head of the New York City Hospital System for 23 different hospitals. He had temporarily given up his position as Dean of the Columbia School of Public Health. Did the hospital job for the city, then left the city in order to return to becoming Dean again at Columbia School of Public Health.

One interesting story about him that's always stuck in my mind. The day after he left the city's Department of Hospitals. He went back, and in those days they still had elevator operators. He went up the elevator just to clean out his office, and the elevator operator, according to Ray Trussell, as he got in the elevator, the elevator operator said, "You know, Doc, around here there ain't nothing as dead as last year's commissioner." And I always remembered that. When I left Beth Israel, I left Continuum, I never interfered with anything. I said, "Gee, there's nothing as dead as last year's commissioner."

Anyway, he went back to become dean. He was very seriously involved with the Chairman of Psychiatry at Harlem Hospital who was also a full professor at Columbia School of Medicine, Professor Elizabeth Davis. Absolutely wonderful person. She was as white as you and I, but she was completely African-American. Her father and grandfather were both bishops of the biggest church in Harlem. Ray and Beth were basically an item. One day soon after he returned to the Deanship, Ray is riding up the elevator at Columbia and one of the most senior deans of deans was in there. Some fellow from, I think, North Carolina,

and he was talking to a person on the elevator. Ray overheard him say, "You know, it's a sad day in hell when a Dean of Columbia messes around with black girls."

Ray Trussell, he repeated it to me many times. He got off the elevator, went to his office, handwrote a note saying, "I'm sorry, I'm giving up my position here effective immediately." Charles Silver who was President of Beth Israel at the time, heard about this, called Ray Trussell, and I don't think he ever even met him, said, "I want you to come and talk to me about becoming head of Beth Israel." Ray Trussell, without any instruction or anything else goes down and sure enough, he's appointed the first non-Jewish head of Beth Israel and stayed there 10 years. Ray, seven years into his tenure there, invited me to lunch. And we had had minimal contact, usually adversarial contact in terms of methadone treatment. I wanted private doctors and he didn't, and so on.

He invited me to lunch and he said he was going to retire in three years at age 65 and there was nobody at Beth Israel who was even a candidate to take his place, and would I come and be associate general director? I remember I said, "But Ray" -- we were on last name terms -- I said, "But Dr. Trussell, I've never had any experience whatsoever in a hospital. I've never worked in a hospital other than as a surgical intern and resident." I remember Dr. Trussell said, "You know, I've been worrying about this and thinking about this." He said, "I just can't think of anybody to ask." He said, "Dr. Newman, do you know anybody?" Of course I said, "No, no. I don't know anybody at all." His answer was, "You see?" And for that totally unflattering introduction I started first part-time and then full-time and I was there as the Associate General Director for two years. The board asked me to become a General Director, which was the [title of the] CEO at the time.

I was taken to lunch to discuss a contract by Harold Fierman of Fierman Hall. At lunch Mr. Fierman said, "Okay, now let's talk about the contract," immediately agreed on salary and that stuff. Then he said, "And what about the term?" My response was, "Listen, you know, it can be anything. It doesn't have to have a term at all. You just say at will either party ..." Then he put down his fork and then he said, "Why would we want to have it on term? We want you to be the CEO." I said, "Yeah, but maybe it'll turn out I've only been here two years in the number two position maybe you won't like me and stuff." He interrupted me and said, "Is there something about you that we don't know, Dr. Newman?" I said, "No, Mr. Fierman, I think you're going to be very, very happy." He said, "Okay. We want a 15-year contract." And sure enough...

I should have said probably, "Your board is so screwed up. I'm not going to go to work for you, a 15-year, no way out contract," essentially. They gave me this 15-year.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah.

Robert Newman: Anyway, it worked out well. I stayed there almost a quarter century, but it's unique. Number one, it's very flattering to me and it shows the conviction of the board. It's irresponsible. I mean, completely crazy. Anyway that was my introduction to Beth Israel. They were pretty unusual from then on. I brought you a whole bunch of [papers]. You probably have a lot of these.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, some of them we have, some of them we might not have.

Robert Newman: Anyway, whatever you want you can have. Again, if you keep anything, that's fine, just make me a copy of it. I can't remember, did you have in your timeline the contract with 1199?

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, the no lay-offs contract.

Robert Newman: The no lay-offs contract, which I hadn't remembered until I went through these old papers. We had that no lay-off contract, I think it was in February and starting in May or June the League of Voluntary Hospitals negotiated. I remember they were very unhappy with Beth Israel. What I didn't remember was that it made the newspapers and the hospitals were very, very unhappy about it. I'm leaving this with you [some papers]. They were really very unhappy. Again, it was typical of the relationship between the medical board, medical staff, administration, and trustees. Something as radical, unheard of. I remember it was a phone call. I had a meeting with the three top people in the administration. Had personnel, had finance, and operations. I quickly convinced them that this was a good idea to pursue. I got on the phone with Mort Hyman and Mr. Hyman immediately said, "Fine, sounds terrific. Go ahead and pursue it." Again, it's just unheard of that type of relationship.

Nicholas Webb: I know because even 30 years later talking to people who've been, who were just employees in 1199, that that loyalty that that generated is still very much there. They really felt, as employees, they were part of a community in a way.

Robert Newman: Yeah, and the ones who are still there still feel very good about those old days. When I go down there it's usually engineering and housekeeping, those people. They come up and they embrace me and I have no idea who they are. I go, "Oh, you look terrific, you lost weight." What can I tell you. Again, it's the relationship between the trustees and administration and I just never encountered anything like that in any other institution, hospital or anything else. Basically my job was to deal with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. I had contact with all of them. We went to lunch and everything else, but I never had any political discussions or trying to convince people of anything other than Mort Hyman. Usually I would be able to convince him, sometimes I wouldn't. That would be the end of it. When I'd convince him, then he would take care of convincing everybody else. The no lay-off clause, I discussed it with Mort Hyman and Mort Hyman broke the news. These big time Jewish businessmen, and it was just never an issue, so it was pretty unique.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, I know you talked about that in the Federation Review that it was -- and before Mort Hyman, obviously, it was Charlie Silver. He seems like kind of a larger-than-life character.

Robert Newman: He was, yeah. Charlie Silver used to make daily rounds with Mrs. Hauer, Rose Muscatine Hauer was the head of Nursing. He would make the rounds to all the private units and he would go in and say, "How are things?" He'd make small talk. He would just do it all the time. He would say hello to people on the way, but it just showed his devotion to the hospital. He would come in everyday and he was just devoted. He also has some great tales. I think it was Mr. Petrie who at one time was for many years was the head of Toys R Us which is now going belly up, but I think Petrie was very close to Charlie Silver because Charlie Silver somehow bailed him out when there was some kind of a clothing problem and Petrie was big into clothing. Petrie was very indebted to him.

They went out to lunch one day and I heard this directly from Charlie Silver. Mr. Petrie gave him a check for, I think, it was a half a million dollars. Charlie Silver just never got the check for a half a million dollars. He started to cry, Charlie Silver did. He goes back to the office and he finds a note from Petrie saying, "Half a million is not worth crying about. I'm sending another half a million to make it a million dollars." It just shows the relationship among the senior members of the board as well.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah. Obviously, Petrie in the '80s became -- I have my timeline here open, that he was the biggest donor. \$10 million, and the largest budget ever made?

Robert Newman: I think that was Phillips.

Nicholas Webb: Hmm.

Robert Newman: Was it Petrie? Yeah, it could well be. Yeah, because Phillips also gave \$10 million, yeah. Actually, the Phillips family gave a lot more than that. I think the 10 million dollar gift was for the naming of Phillips Ambulatory Care Center. I think that was Phillips. I might have mentioned it in the oral history. Just as a reflection of the Phillips family and the magnanimous, to me unique, generosity of that family. Larry Phillips, who is the son of Seymour Phillips and the grandson of one of the 25 founders of Beth Israel, he gave, as I recall, it was about a half a million dollars. Not a half a million. I think he gave 5 million. He gave a multi-million dollar gift. In order to allow us to recruit the -- it was 109 members of NYU, including Fred Epstein, who was one of the leading pediatric neurosurgeons anywhere. And also Max Berenstein, who was this brilliant endo, neuro, radiological interventionist. We brought them up to Beth Israel North over at Doctors Hospital. We just assumed that we would call it the Larry Phillips Neurological Center.

And Larry said the Phillips family has its name on enough things: the library, the ambulatory health center, the nursing school. He said, "This should be called the

Hyman-Newman Institute." I mean, who ever heard of that? A multi-million dollar gift, probably at the time the most prominent clinical service at Beth Israel. Larry Phillips did not make it the Hyman-Newman Institute, which is good. We had a celebration walking down at the top of the sixes. I remember when I had to say a few words. I said listen, "Hyman-Newman Institute is so large. My suggestion is we just compromise. We ought to take the first three letters of Mr. Hyman's name, and the last three letters of my name and just call it the Newman Institute." Actually, it was the other way around. I got a laugh, fortunately.

Anyway, it's again I just mention these things because they're in my estimation they're unique in the hospital world and it reflects on the environment that existed at Beth Israel. So what can I tell you?

Nicholas Webb: Let's go back to the beginning. When you were first recruited by Dr. Trussell in '75, so that was just as the Gouverneur affiliation was coming to an end.

Robert Newman: Yes, the Gouverneur affiliation had just come to an end, and Ray Ferrer, Ronaldo Ferrer, had been, I think the head of Gouverneur or he was the head of the liaison, and he was appointed by Ray Trussell to be some, one of the three, four top people in the administration. When I took over as CEO, almost immediately thereafter Ray Ferrer was recruited to be the Commissioner of Health by the New York City Health Department and served in that capacity with not such an easy term, but served in that capacity. That was the end of the Gouverneur relationship. We still had a relationship with Judson Family Health Center which was part of the Judson Church arrangement, especially under Trussell it's always been a very community-oriented place. By the way, Ray Trussell was distraught when that affiliation ended years ago.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, I've just recently been looking into the history around that, because it was a big community, kind of community issues with --

Robert Newman: There was something called LENA and NENA. There was a North East Neighborhood Association and a Lower East Side Neighborhood Association. Actually, my initial only contact with them was when I was creating the city's Methadone Maintenance Program. This was an ultra-radical group, young people, who wanted nothing to do with methadone. I remember, my wife's who was Japanese, who at the time had only been in the country for a couple years, spoke very little English. I happened to bring my wife along for some reason and we were discussing methadone. One of the people there said, "We don't want any methadone because methadone makes you like a zombie and you're zonked out all the time." I remember saying, pointing to my wife and saying, "Listen, if I told you that my wife before I married her was a heroin addict on the streets of Tokyo and that she has been on methadone for the last eight years. Now you look at her, talk to her. You tell me if she looks like what your vision is." They looked at her, they said, "No, no. We would never suspect anything."

I remember I walked out at the end of the meeting. My wife said, "What did you say? And what did you say, I should roll up my sleeves or something to show ..." (laughs). "Hey, don't worry about it, don't worry about it." I think it was years before I finally told her. They finally said, "Okay, you go ahead and do it." That was my only contact with them. I think it was NENA or LENA.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, obviously, I have my timeline here. Stepping forward to the early '80s, so that was when BI encountered AIDS for the first time and doctors encountered AIDS for the first time. I know that Donna Mildvan was really involved with that.

Robert Newman: Donna Mildvan, yeah. I always knew that Donna Mildvan played a key role nationally, internationally, in identifying HIV. I was struck a few years ago at the New York Historical Society. They had an exhibit dedicated to AIDS. And I would say -- I remember sending Donna a notice -- about a third of that exhibit focused on Donna Mildvan as an individual. It was really extraordinary and we had no connection with the New York Historical Society, but it was recognized that she was one of the key people.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, I've talked to a couple people who said that that was pushing, because, obviously, back then people didn't know how yet how it was transmitted or anything else.

Robert Newman: Absolutely, absolutely.

Nicholas Webb: Just the fact that you were taking these patients in and willing to treat them was already, that was --

Robert Newman: We did a couple of things. Number one, we had an outpatient service for them. Number two, we created an inpatient unit dedicated to HIV-AIDS. I'll never forget, there was a Puerto Rican man with AIDS who was clearly near death and he had been living with a Puerto Rican partner for many years. They had a kid who was eight or nine years old at the time. One day they came down to see me. They said, "Listen, we'd like to arrange to be married on the unit for if my future husband dies." I said, "Absolutely no problem," and I said, "We'll arrange for a priest to come in." I remember the woman saying, "Priest? No, we don't want a priest. The Jewish Rabbi is going to do it." I said, "The Jewish Rabbi?" I said, "But you're not Jewish." She said, "no, no, no, we're Catholic, but the Jewish Rabbi, the chaplain, has been so wonderful to us and so supportive. He's the one we want to." Again, it just reflects the attitude and stuff.

Then, of course, we created the Mapplethorpe ... I don't know what we called it.

Nicholas Webb: A residence?

Robert Newman: Yeah, a residence for people who could not have independent living, but really didn't want to go into some big nursing home. They might have had a problem getting into a nursing home. That was a lot of problems because the building

directly across the street was the Dvorak, they called it the Dvorak House. It had a plaque and what it really was it was a brownstone and 100 years earlier on the top floor Dvorak had a room. In that room he apparently composed the New World Symphony. That was the Dvorak guy. We said we'll put up a plaque that's three times as big, and whoever heard of Dvorak. The community really went completely nuts about that and we prevailed with the Landmarks Commission and it turned out all right. Very soon after the merger with Sinai it was closed, I guess the feeling was it just wasn't necessary anymore.

Nicholas Webb: Do you happen to recall the name of that rabbi who was-

Robert Newman: Yes. Oh, Jesus. I'll think of it. I know exactly the person. [Nava Hall?]. I don't know if you know the name, [Nava Hall], but she was a patient representative. I'll get the name. He was a chaplain for 20 years, 30 years. I remember we used to have an annual Beth Israel gala dinner and the Rabbi would make some kind of benediction or something. I'll never forget, I was sitting with one of the trustees and after the Rabbi finished he said, "That was the longest speech we're going to hear tonight." I just can't remember it, but I'll think of it and I'll send it to you.

Nicholas Webb: One thing I'm curious about actually because I know that there had been -- so the Bernstein Institute had been at the Lying-In Hospital, and then the early '80s that building was sold and you bought the New York Infirmary that was next door. Was that just because it was a more modern building that had come on the market or was it --

Robert Newman: No. Well, first of all, it lent itself to being attached to the main building. The head of the New York Infirmary was a Mrs. [Kreske?] and she decided to give up the New York Infirmary because they created Beekman Downtown Hospital. The logical group whom she approached to consider buying it was Beth Israel. I can't remember what the terms were, but that had been the New York Infirmary. So Beth Israel took it over, and then when we had it connected, we no longer needed the Bernstein Pavilion so we sold that.

There was something, I don't want to create problems among descendants, but the son who died in this accident, and I'll never forget it. There's a gas station where you turn right on, I think it's 23rd Street or 19th or something, that there's a gas station right at the river. But there was something about that accident which was unsavory. You didn't come across that?

Nicholas Webb: No, I mean I know --

Robert Newman: I'm trying to think of what the hell it was.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, the version I've heard --

Robert Newman: Was it suicide?

Nicholas Webb: -- is that he was a resident and it was on an emergency call on something or other, and whether it was an ambulance accident, or --

Robert Newman: That's a hell of a lot more favorable than the account that I heard. We'll forget about mine (laughs).

Nicholas Webb: Yeah. I don't know that he did. If there's other versions of the story, I don't know them.

Robert Newman: There is a story about the Bernstein Institute. Charlie Silver, I think he probably just told it to me, he arranged to purchase New York Infirmary -- no, not the infirmary, the Bernstein Institute.

Nicholas Webb: Manhattan General.

Robert Newman: That's right, and he said he called, I think it would have been Ray Trussell. He said, "Dr. Trussell, what did you tell me to do about Manhattan General?" According to Charlie Silver, Trussell's there and says, "well, I really urge you to look into buying it." "Thank goodness because I just bought it." I couldn't remember what to do, but I just bought it. It just shows the way things were done, really.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, because you told that story in the Federation interview that Trussell had back, when he was commissioner of hospitals, had written a letter to the board saying they're doing great stuff here. It should be part of the voluntary --

Robert Newman: I think I got a copy of that letter, too.

Nicholas Webb: They did it because he said, it was like, New York needs more services like this.

Robert Newman: Vince Dole, at the time -- I had a four or five-year-old son and I said to him, "The best friends you have in the world are coming to dinner." And his immediate response, "Oh, Vince and Marie?" That's how close we were. Vince told me that at Trussell's urging Dole arranged to meet with the board at Beth Israel in this big, imposing boardroom. He went in there and all these elderly Jewish prominent businessmen. He said he was just sure that they would say "thank you very much" and send him out the door. He finished his presentation about methadone maintenance, which at the time the first paper had come out six months earlier. It was Seymour Phillips who got up at the end of the presentation, without discussing anything with anybody, Seymour Phillips said, "Dr. Dole, I'm sure I speak for the entire board when I say, just tell us what you need and you can have anything you need."

This was at a time when even alcoholism was considered to be a problem that didn't affect Jews. Drug addiction, in 1965 -- another group of people. But they came in. And Beth Israel had one of the first comprehensive alcoholism

programs, of course, the addiction program, the maintenance, and the detox program and 150 detox beds.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah. I know someone I'm really interested in hearing more about because I've been trying to find out more about him and there's not much there is Harold Trigg. He had been at Manhattan General, if I understand correctly, before it was bought and was in charge of the inpatient service there.

Robert Newman: God, I wish I could remember more about his background. He was a very impressive guy. He had this office on the second floor. He had this great big photograph of himself in this long coat, and just a classical picture of a pimp. You look at that and you say, "Oh, that's a very good-looking pimp." He had it there and he knew exactly what it -- when he was interviewing people or talking to people, he would sit there and generally he would be knitting. He's a prominent psychiatrist, leader in the field of addiction treatment, key member of this academic -- and he'd be sitting there knitting. Again, 1965, '66, '67, whoever heard of that?

Trigg was terrific and it was really a sad ending for Trigg because he decided to retire. I've always been a big fan of retirement. And within, I think it was two or three weeks of his announced retirement, he was diagnosed with having metastatic cancer. I remember we said, "Listen, we're going to rip up your retirement papers so you're going to have all the insurance and all the other coverage forever." And he did, but he died pretty quickly. I don't know about the pre-Beth Israel days what he did, but I know that he was "the" key clinician. We also had an internist, Mort Davidson, who was --

Nicholas Webb: Yeah. I did an interview with him.

Robert Newman: Oh, you did? Okay. Well he was the medical director of the detox unit. I can't remember how he related to Harold Trigg. I know there was never any friction among any of those people, but I always thought that Harold Trigg was the head of the detox unit. Maybe Harold Trigg was on the maintenance side. He worked very closely with Marie and Vince, who had nothing to do with the detox. I think that was Mort Davidson. How is Mort? I haven't seen him for while.

Nicholas Webb: He's doing well, he's living down in Florida.

Robert Newman: Is he in Florida? Yeah. He and Alice, Alice Davidson?

Nicholas Webb: Yeah.

Robert Newman: They used to have a home right at the northwest corner of Connecticut where I have a home. We were five minutes apart right there. He was a really lovely guy.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, he's doing well. I had a good chat with him.

Robert Newman: He was, I think, the son-in-law of Sam Hausman, right?

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, he was.

Robert Newman: Gee, that goes back a ways, too. I'm always amazed what I remember. Not nearly as amazed by what I forget.

Nicholas Webb: I was down and visiting a couple weeks ago and I saw the boardroom and the big picture of Sam Hausman.

Robert Newman: Yeah. It's also a great picture of Sy Phillips, and it's a great picture of Mort Hyman over there also.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, so moving on. One thing I'm really interested in is the acquisition of what became Beth Israel North in the Singer Division, Doctors Hospital. Because I know in the '80s and '90s there were two proprietary hospitals that you guys bought. There's Doctors and then there's Kings Highway.

Robert Newman: Kings Highway we bought. Again, it was a physician, he must have been in his 80s. I think he created Kings Highway. He was the one who approached Beth Israel to buy it and we did. I can't remember his name, but that was a purchase. Beth Israel North is completely different. Beth Israel North was a, I'm almost certain, I think it was a nonprofit hospital. It was created right at the beginning of the Depression of 1929. I think they had to stop construction for a while because they just had no money. Mort Hyman was born at BI North, the old Doctors. I remember when we first had a tour of the place, they had these archives, much, much more primitive than your archives. I remember there was a guy, you know, in a typical clerical outfit with a little hat with a visor, sleeves -- and Mort Hyman said, "Listen, could you check and see if you have any birth records by a fellow named Hyman, Baby Boy Hyman?" Christ, within three minutes he comes up with it! Nothing was digital. That was very impressive.

Doctors Hospital for whatever reason decided that they should get out of the business and they should become part of a large academic medical center. They had no house officers and I don't think it was a proprietary.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, I'm actually realizing. Now I'm remembering. We actually have some archival records from them. We have their board minutes going back to the Depression. You're right, they were a voluntary hospital and it was controversial in the '30s because they were all private beds.

Robert Newman: Of course, yeah, yeah.

Nicholas Webb: They didn't take any kind of [charity].

Robert Newman: That's right. It wasn't proprietary.

Nicholas Webb: It wasn't proprietary. It was voluntary and it was actually --

Robert Newman: Do you remember the name of the CEO, Donald something?

Nicholas Webb: Not offhand.

Robert Newman: No, Don Hoskins was the medical director.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, I couldn't tell you offhand. We'd have it on paper somewhere.

Robert Newman: Okay, so anyway they decided they should explore becoming part of a big academic medical center. As I recall, they approached Montefiore, Columbia Presbyterian, and Beth Israel, and it sounds like a strange trio. Why not Mount Sinai which is right around the corner, or New York Hospital? But anyway, it was those three. And either Montefiore or Columbia responded by saying, "We're very interested, but we have to have due diligence and we can't make any commitments, even tentative. We need at least six months to have, you know, whatever, auditors, everything else." One of them said that. The other one said, "We got to think about it," or whatever. Doctors Hospital at the time said, "As an expression of good faith and that is really a desire to maintain this hospital facility, we would like a commitment of whoever we sign it over to, a commitment of \$12 million dollars to be invested into modernizing and expanding," or whatever, "the facility." They said that to all three people that they approached, the hospitals that they approached.

I'll never forget they invited Beth Israel to a meeting of -- it was about a half dozen of the Doctors Hospital board members and the CEO at the time. It was some fancy office building down in the Wall Street area. Mort Hyman went, and I went, and Tom Hayes, who is the Chief Financial Officer at the time, went. They made a presentation of the hospital. We made a little presentation about Beth Israel. Then what Hyman said, "Look, just to show you that we really have total confidence in Doctors Hospital, we have a total commitment. Tentatively, I've asked Tom Hayes, our financial officer, to bring along a check made out to Doctors Hospital in the amount of \$12 million dollars. You take it, and if you decide you want a different partner, just return the check. But meanwhile this is the check."

I remember talking to Mort Hyman before that, and I said, "You know, Mort, this is a no-brainer. Okay, if they go with another partner, they'll return the check, and if they go with us, on day one if you wanted to, you won't, but if you wanted to, you might as well say we're going to take the \$12 million back and we're going to use it to build a whatever." Of course, we invested big time. Thanks to the Phillips family, in part. Because very soon thereafter we recruited this NYU team. There's 109 NYU staff members. We had physicians, nurses, anesthesiologists, social workers, 109 of them.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, just brought the whole team over.

Robert Newman: The whole team, yeah, it was pretty extraordinary. We had just purchased, again, purchase isn't the right the word, we just acquired Doctors Hospital when we made this deal with the NYU folks. Doctors Hospital was a totally non-academic place. It didn't have the greatest reputation because people were, you know, is it proprietary, is it voluntary? All private beds there. I remember meeting with Fred Epstein and Berenstein, Alex Berenstein. I told him, "Listen, go have a look at the Doctors Hospital facility. Then go have a look at Roosevelt Hospital." This is '97 we just had the [merger]. "No questions asked, you can pick whichever one you want." We just assumed that he would pick Roosevelt. A long tradition, pretty new building, not a 60, 70-year-old building. And they said, "No, we like Doctors Hospital." They brought residents and fellows and everything else. It worked out well.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah. I know that eventually they did end up moving to Roosevelt after Doctors closed.

Robert Newman: They did, yes, when they closed, yeah. That was after my time. I guess there was just the attractiveness of the offer to buy the place was just extraordinary. I think it was \$185 million dollars or something like. It was some unbelievable amount. At least for me it was unbelievable.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, how about Kings Highway? What was the story there?

Robert Newman: Kings Highway, we were approached by this old Jewish doctor who owned the place. He said he was thinking of selling it and we said, "A lot of Jewish people in that area, and Beth Israel had a large Jewish following from Brooklyn, so this makes a lot of sense." Then there were was this whole Russian Jewish community on Coney Island and in the south Brooklyn area, and so it made a lot of sense and we bought it, we acquired it. Did great things with the emergency room. We tried to acquire Community Hospital, but as I recall it was 12 blocks or something away, but they were not interested. They ended up hiring a wonderful Chinese-American fellow who had been head of Beekman Downtown Hospital. I know him from those days. I think he's still part of the Mount Sinai empire, isn't he?

Nicholas Webb: Yeah. Possibly yeah, absolutely.

Robert Newman: I think it's Community Hospital – although, no, I'm sorry. He was at Community Hospital, Beekman, New York Infirmary, and then to Community and then Sinai appointed him as head of the Kings Highway Division. I think he might still be head of the Kings Highway Division.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, I have to look into that. I think you're right.

Robert Newman: I have one thing that is not in your timeline and I've been trying to document it with Google, and I'm usually pretty good at that, and I just haven't been able to. But I'm almost certain that in the early '20s or 1915, '20, something like that,

there was another huge number of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. And a significant proportion were denied entry to America because they were found to have trachoma, an eye disease.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, there's actually I think --

Robert Newman: And Beth Israel, I've been told, going back 40 years now, that Beth Israel was instrumental in finding and applying the treatment for trachoma. Have you come across that?

Nicholas Webb: I've heard that story, but I haven't found any of the primary sources confirming it.

Robert Newman: I have a very, very good friend that spent the last 50 years at New York Eye and Ear in ophthalmology, a classmate of mine from medical school. I'm going to ask him if he can -- somebody who's familiar with that type of eye disease.

Nicholas Webb: Yes, that's something I --

Robert Newman: But I just couldn't find it --

Nicholas Webb: -- yeah, if there's factual documentation, I'd love to know more about it. Like you said, I've heard that story, too, but we don't know.

Robert Newman: There's another thing that I have to go through my personal files, but years ago I was in Warsaw and there's a Jewish museum in Warsaw. I remember walking through and they had on display several photographs of maybe the original nursing class of Beth Israel. I can't remember why it was hanging there or what -- but anyway, one of these days I'm going to find out and send it along.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, that's great. That's something that's really -- that they maintained that commitment to the Jewish community and to the Orthodox community and the really religiously observant community. The cafeteria was kosher. I saw what you said in the interview when Rabbi Schneerson was there. He put mezuzahs on *all* the doors because --

Robert Newman: They put them there (laughs). Yeah, Rabbi Schneerson was a demanding patient, but they were very, very happy and they were enormously grateful. It worked out well. The Jewish commitment, I don't want to create trouble with our new partners, but the story I had heard and it may be in the initial few years of the board minutes, was that Beth Israel Hospital was originally conceived and implemented by -- the story was, 40 Jewish businessmen who each gave a quarter each. That might be apocryphal, but I don't know. That the reason for it was at the time, there's some reference to it in your video, no immigrant to New York would be accepted by any hospital in New York City until they'd been here for one year. One of the hospitals that refused to accept them was what had been called the Jews Hospital and then was called Mount Sinai Hospital. It

was this refusal to accept the new immigrants that led these leaders of the lay community in the Lower East Side to say, "We've got to have a hospital to take care of these people," and they did. It's an interesting historical perspective. Nobody's going to criticize anyone for what the policies were 150 years ago.

Nicholas Webb: I've definitely heard versions of that story. I've been meaning to look into them.

Robert Newman: I think you had indicated something in the '20s.

Nicholas Webb: In the '20s. The board was visited, so, obviously, at this point it's long before Medicaid, but the city would pay for charity patients. There was a rule saying if you were an immigrant who has become a charity patient in a hospital you will be deported because you're a strain on the city budget. A social service worker came to the board at Beth Israel and said, "We want to find out what your policy is in these cases," and she was told that any immigrant patient, they will pay for them and not report them to the city to avoid their being deported.

Robert Newman: Again, that's a board, let's say in the '20s. Then in the '60s [sic] AIDS. In the '60s addiction treatment and alcohol. I remember when Vietnam, that whole Southeast Asia area fell apart, we had Cambodian immigrants. And we had an interpreter, a Cambodian-English interpreter. What's Beth Israel doing with -- we did more circumcisions, I think, than all the other hospitals. Because all the Russian and Polish immigrants -- and this was in the '60s. This responsiveness to needs, even if they were not related to Judaism. Taking care of Eastern Europeans Jews is one thing. Taking care of Cambodian? We hired as a I recall the first sign language interpreter, full-time sign language interpreter at Beth Israel. It was over the decades so it was really pretty extraordinary.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, I was thinking there was something I wanted to ask about that. Actually, going to back something I've seen references to and just little clippings we have, but don't know much about, is that at some point in the '70s and '80s there was a program at Beth Israel for Soviet Jewish emigre doctors to get them acclimated to the US healthcare system so that they could practice.

Robert Newman: Maybe, but my personal knowledge has to do with the German Jewish immigrants from Nazi Germany. The reason I'm particularly attuned to that is there was a physician, a surgeon, named Helmuth Nathan. Nathan was in Berlin and he happened to have been a friend of my folks. He and his wife became clients of my parents who were into restitution law. Nathan, in addition to being a surgeon, and he was initially at Beth Israel. That was the first place that took him. Then he went and the rest of professional career was at Einstein. In addition to being a surgeon, he was also a sculptor and an artist, and really very, very... and he sculpted a bust of Einstein, bronze, and there were four of them that he made. One of them is at Princeton where Einstein was. Another one is at Einstein, Albert Einstein College of Medicine. One of them is in the home of the Nathan family. And one of them is hanging in my computer room. And this fellow got his start at Beth Israel. I don't know what we did with -- the Russian

immigrants, maybe the Hungarian immigrants in '56, it certainly would be in tune with Beth Israel's general orientation.

Nicholas Webb: The Einstein connection that I know about is that I. W. Held, who was medical director for many years, he and his brother --

Robert Newman: They hold a lecture. I know more about that from reading your stuff or watching it than I do from anything else.

Nicholas Webb: He and his brother who was the editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward* worked closely with Einstein for emigre relief in the '30s for German Jews.

Robert Newman: Yeah. I don't think Einstein had any direct involvement with Beth Israel, but-

Nicholas Webb: No. The impression I get as I tried to research this is that everyone, every doctor who was associated with Einstein at any point in his career, for the rest of life said, "Oh, I'm Albert Einstein's doctor."

Robert Newman: (Laughs) Yeah, whether he was or wasn't. "I just read about him in the newspaper. He has funny hair." Yeah, I had a couple comments on your timeline, but what I'll do is I'll just type up some notes when I go home. I do have in the '30s, helped Jewish emigre doctors, for instance, Helmuth Nathan. Anyway, I'll make some notes in case it sheds any additional light. Some of these are just interesting old publications from Beth Israel, when we were big initially in advocating for HMOs. We thought that HMOs were really going to be wonderful. A lot of them didn't turn quite that well.

Nicholas Webb: That was New York Healthcare in the mid-'60s [*sic; meant 1980s*].

Robert Newman: That was New York Healthcare, that's right. You came across the Japanese?

Nicholas Webb: Yes, we wanted to show you this. This is something we have. That's the invitation that was sent out.

Robert Newman: My God, 1990, Jesus. I don't think I have this. Could you make a copy of this for me?

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, happy to.

Robert Newman: I'll just briefly give you a story on that. It may have been in my oral history, but my wife's Japanese. Everybody knew my wife was Japanese. It started off when I was still Associate General Director. Somebody came up from the emergency room, a doctor, and said, "God, I got this patient driving me crazy. She's a Jap." I remember saying, "Listen, you don't know me. You don't know my family, but Jap is not a word that I like to hear in my office." The guy says, "what's wrong with JAP, 'Japanese [*sic*] American Princess.'" I said, "Oh!" Not Japanese, "Jewish American Princess." I said, oh, gee. That's okay, not Japanese... (laughs)

Anyway, one night in the middle of the night, 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning I get a call, waking up, from the emergency room at Beth Israel. "We have a Japanese woman here. We think she's crazy. We think she has to be admitted, but nobody can talk to her because she's Japanese." I said, "Oh good." I gave the phone to my wife and I went back to sleep again. The next morning my wife said, "You know, you really should have a Japanese practice here. So many Japanese in New York, you ought to have a Japanese medical practice." Very quickly I went to the Chamber of Commerce. First, I went to the UN Japanese Delegation here. They sent me to the Chamber of Commerce. It was some Japanese branch of it, and they sent me to Tokyo Marine. They said, "If any group might be interested in this, it would be Tokyo Marine." Three months later they give us a one-million-dollar gift to create the Japanese medical practice, and at the same time we created this Japanese residency program, which still exists. I understand that four applicants to the program have just been admitted by Sinai Beth Israel for the year beginning this July. I'm really, really very pleased and appreciative that that's going to continue.

I don't know if you know, but I, two or three years ago was given an award with the impressive title, something -- from the Emperor of Japan. It was this unbelievable -- the last American that I know got it was Clint Eastwood, who was honored for making a film about Iwo Jima from the Japanese perspective. This award, I got this wonderful picture of it, was for me and my role of bringing Japanese medical practice and the Japanese residency program to Beth Israel. I gather it's still going strong and hopefully it will continue to go strong. I'm especially glad that -- it's the Order of the Rising Sun, with [a] neck emblem and gold something or other. It's a hell of a title. It's impressive and that was because of what we did at Beth Israel.

Nicholas Webb: Conclusion of the story here, so I know that the Continuum merger obviously happened in '97-

Robert Newman: That wasn't so easy because at first we approached St. Luke's-Roosevelt. They were very interested and they said, "We have to consider it." Then they came back a few weeks or a month or so later and they said, "No, we don't feel that there's a *cultural* affinity between *Saint* Luke's-Roosevelt and Beth Israel." So they decided to pursue becoming part of Columbia Presbyterian. It was a year later that they contacted us and said, "Listen, we decided that Beth Israel would be a much better partner." We created it and it continued.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, then you became CEO of Continuum for a couple years before you retired.

Robert Newman: Yeah.

Nicholas Webb: I know, obviously, just as there are today back then, a lot of changes were going on, and just administratively, and in the practice of medicine. So what had been the motivator, ultimately, behind SLR's decision to reach out to you rather than-

Robert Newman: I don't know who reached out to whom, but we had contact earlier because, and again, it's extraordinary on the part of St. Luke's-Roosevelt and on the part of Beth Israel. We had a Radiology chairman who -- the department was not a particularly good department. He left and then the problem was who can we recruit to run the department? I had a medical school classmate who's still alive and well named Ron Ablow, and I had approached him. He had been at Yale, wonderful, brilliant guy. Had been at Yale. When I first got to Beth Israel, late '70s, I said, "Why don't you come and become chairman at Beth Israel?" He said, "Well," he said, "I've already started negotiating with St. Luke's-Roosevelt and I don't feel it's right." I said, "But yeah, you haven't signed anything. What's the big deal?" He said, "No, no. It's a matter of principle." So he took the job at St. Luke's-Roosevelt.

Five, six, seven years later I approach him again. I said, "Listen, I know you got this shortcoming of loyalty, but I'm willing to overlook that. But why don't we talk to your administrators and I'll talk to my board, and why don't you become chairman of both, St. Luke's-Roosevelt Radiology, and Beth Israel Radiology." Zero connection between the two. They had their affiliation with Columbia, we had an affiliation at the time, I think, it was with Einstein already. Somehow I managed to convince him and his wife, which wasn't so easy. Then I went to see Gary Gambuti, who was the CEO at St. Luke's-Roosevelt. I remember his response was, "Well, will you take over \$300,000 of his salary?" I said, "Absolutely, no problem." Gambuti was perfectly happy with that.

Then I met with the fellow who at the time was chairman of the medical board at Beth Israel. Very nice internist who was a pretty religious Jew, not Orthodox. I remember saying, "Listen, I got a somewhat unusual suggestion here. There's a wonderful guy and I've know him since medical school and he's great. He runs a great department there and we really need all the help we can get." I assumed that this guy was going to say "you're going to have somebody *share* the..." He said, "Let me ask you one question. Is he a Jewish fellow?" I said, "But of course he's a Jew." "Okay." That was the end of that and we recruited him. (Laughs) It was unbelievable. It worked out very -- he ran a magnificent department.

Nicholas Webb: Was he the guy who set up the filmless radiology lab?

Robert Newman: Yes, and he's the one who, first at a meeting that I arranged him and Mort Hyman and me talking about it and got Mort Hyman and me so excited about it. They had some preliminary program in Vienna, the University of Vienna. We'd get there every two weeks. Mort Hyman and I would call this guy, "So when the hell are you going to get started with it?" He'd go, "I'm ready, wait, wait, wait." The funny thing with Ron Ablow was, I had a meeting in his office. He finally agreed, everything was set. He said, "I want to introduce you to the guy that I want to bring over as my number two person." Brought this fellow into the room. He was a nice guy, but there wasn't anything really striking about him.

When he left I said to Ron Ablow, who was the chairman, I said, "You really think that he's going to be the right guy?" I never forget this guy's name. "You

want me to take on an impossible job, a job that everybody's going to think I'm a total nut to accept. The most important decision I make is who's going to be my number two, and you question it?" "Ron, anybody you want to bring over is fine." Of course, he turned out to be a super terrific chairman, that's Michael Berry. He was absolutely terrific and he created this network clinic, network of radiology.

When we joined with St. Luke's-Roosevelt I really desperately tried to be geographically neutral. I'd spent 25 years at Beth Israel so it was tough. I gave up the CEO position at Beth Israel and we appointed, I think, it was either Peter Kelly or Matt Fink or somebody. I tried my damndest to be neutral, but 20-some-odd years of my life at Beth Israel, you can't just forget about that. It worked out okay.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah. I have my notes here and make sure... this is going all the back to the very beginning when you first started. It's something I'm curious about and I actually just found out about it this week as I was going Gouverneur research. Did you know Howard Brown at all?

Robert Newman: Yes.

Nicholas Webb: He had been head of the ambulatory service-

Robert Newman: At Beth Israel?

Nicholas Webb: At Gouverneur that Beth Israel, on Beth Israel's behalf.

Robert Newman: I know the name. I don't remember.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, and then he went on from-

Robert Newman: He wasn't from HIP, was he?

Nicholas Webb: He might have been actually, because he went on to be Commissioner of Health. He was recruited by Mayor Lindsay from BI to be Commissioner of Health.

Robert Newman: That must have been early on, because when I got there, Mary McLaughlin was Commissioner and a fellow named Gordon Chase was the overall health czar, of everything, hospitals, health, mental health, everything. Mary McLaughlin was followed, I think, by Pat Imperato, who went to Downstate. He was followed by Lowell Bellin, who was a wonderful, wonderful guy, public health fellow. Had been Dean at Columbia Presbyterian. Howard Brown must have come before Mary McLaughlin.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, this would have been in late '60's maybe.

Robert Newman: That's right, because I got to the health department in 1970 and it was already Mary McLaughlin.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, I just found this-

Robert Newman: He came from Beth Israel?

Nicholas Webb: He came from Beth Israel, but he was one of the first American physicians post Stonewall to come out of the closet.

Robert Newman: Is that right?

Nicholas Webb: In '72 or '73.

Robert Newman: You'd think I'd know that, but I --

Nicholas Webb: He had been recruited --

Robert Newman: Before he was recruited?

Nicholas Webb: After he was recruited. This would have been in the '70s after he had left as Commissioner, but he was recruited as Commissioner on the strength of his work running Gouverneur's outpatient program for BI.

Robert Newman: No kidding. Sounds familiar, but I don't think I ever met -- we did have, I think, the first ambulatory gay and lesbian health program, which I think ended up being entirely a lesbian health center. It was sort of part of the OB/GYN and primary care.

Nicholas Webb: Actually, I didn't know that. When would that have gotten started?

Robert Newman: It was when we first got Phillips Ambulatory Care Center going. Gee, I just can't remember. It must have been in 1996, '97, something like that.

Nicholas Webb: Do you know offhand any names of the who the administrators or the doctors were that --

Robert Newman: It was a woman who left us and went down to Florida. I got some young colleagues that are much better. It was a woman GYN who -- and she opened this center for us at Phillips. I don't know if I covered it in my oral history, but, again, just as a tribute to Beth Israel, in the early '80s, AIDS was already a major issue, but it had nothing to do with my setting up a meeting at the Beth Israel boardroom, it was about 1984 [*sic; date was 1982*], in the Beth Israel boardroom and we invited the gay and lesbian leadership from New York and maybe even beyond that. [Ginia Puzzo?], I don't know why I remember the name. She was with the state health department. She was one of the leaders of the lesbian movement and a number of other -- we had the board, about 20

people there. I welcomed them and I said, "Listen, the reason you're here AIDS of course is a concern. We just want to know what can Beth Israel do to support the gay and lesbian community? Whatever problems you have, AIDS, of course, but whatever problems you have."

It was during that meeting in the boardroom, my office was right next to the boardroom, when a former employee walks into my secretary's office. She goes, "Barry, how are you? It's been so long." He left about six months earlier. He said, "Oh, I'm fine. I just wanted to briefly see Dr. Newman." My wonderful secretary says, "Well, he's chairing this meeting in the boardroom, but I'm sure he'd like to see you. I'll call him out." This guy said, "No, no." He said, "I got some business over on 14th Street in the finance personnel department. I'll go over there first."

He goes over there and he has a duffel bag with him. He pulls out this machine gun and boom, boom, boom, boom. He ends up hitting two of the people. Didn't kill them. Hit one of them in the arm and one... The head of personnel, Jim Stark, the number two person in finance, Naj Pervez, and he ended up having a list of people that he wanted to kill that day. At the top of the list was my name and I was the only one in the administrative offices. So I would have been an easy target, I was the only one. There he had about six different names in finance because he had worked in finance. I've always said that if there's a God in heaven, she was watching out for me because as a reward for having set up this gay and lesbian health thing, otherwise, I would have been dead. There's just no question about it, he would have killed me. It's a proud history, serendipity for sure.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah.

Robert Newman: He ended up being a victim in the 9/11. Did you know about this -

Nicholas Webb: No, I didn't know about that.

Robert Newman: Jesus, he ended up being declared insane. They sent him to some psychiatric hospital. Then they released him to the hospital on the island, whatever it is now, Manhattan State. I was on the Board of Visitors actually at the time. He was there for a couple years and then they released him to Brooklyn. One day I get a visit from the FBI and they said, "Oh, do you mind if we talk to you about this guy, Barry Simowitz? What can you tell us about him?" I told them the story. I said, "Why are you asking about him?" He said, "Well, he works for the post office department and he has an office in the World Trade Center." He's sitting in this big, open office with about 12 desks. By chance, 11 of the 12 people are African-American and he's the only white. His name is Simowitz. Apparently, he almost everyday starts singing at the top of ... "Thank God I'm a white man in America." Several of the people reported it and said "this guy's going to get killed." They didn't know anything his history of trying to kill other people! He had some kind of injunction and all that stuff. He ended up dying in the World Trade Center.

Nicholas Webb: Is that the '93 bombing or 9/11.

Robert Newman: In the 9/11 one. Stan Brezenoff, was, I think, head of the Port Authority at the earlier, in the '90s. That bombing. He was the head of that and became head of Continuum. Then he became head of Health & Hospitals. Interesting story. Listen, I'm going to send you some of the comments or some of the questions I have. They're all trivial and it was a good learning experience and I'm delighted to have met you.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, pleasure meeting with you. Glad I could get you to sit down and tell – you know, I see all this stuff looking at the documents, but then actually hear from someone who was there --

Robert Newman: It's really fascinating. Again, I got, I think in this stack, a letter that's very similar to the letter that Ray Trussell sent to the board when he stepped down. He said, "I'm not going to join the board because it would be added pressure on Dr. Newman. I think he's terrific, but I don't want to add to the pressure." I have a memo of somebody who asked me for some kind of assistance after I stepped down from Continuum. I said, "Listen, I made it a principle never to interfere in anything, not even to give advice." That's why I get along so well in my retirement with Beth Israel, with Continuum. I learned from him.

Robert Newman: Anyway, listen, very, very nice to see you, and I can't tell you how pleased and grateful these colleagues of mine are. There are about a dozen. We get together every year or so, and we're just so grateful that Sinai cares enough about Beth Israel to have an archivist devoted to [inaudible].

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, obviously, it's been great working with all of you.

Robert Newman: Chalmers died, I guess.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah.

Robert Newman: Do you want me to sign something?

Nicholas Webb: I'm afraid you took my pen.

Robert Newman: Oh! (Laughs.)

Nicholas Webb: Yes, so we have-

Robert Newman: 2,000 years of my genetics, sorry! (Laughs.)

Nicholas Webb: Sign and date here. This is just the permission form and then -- so what we're doing with these oral histories is, if you want we can put it online. If not, if you'd rather just the transcript be in the Archives, but not be on Google, that's totally - - you can do that as well.

Robert Newman: You can do anything you want with it. Actually in the last two days I visited the archival center at – when possible, any time. I guess that means any time, right?

Nicholas Webb: Yeah. We don't have all the technical end of putting them online up yet, but at some point in the next year or two, that's going to happen.

Robert Newman: Anyway, I visited the archival center which is very impressive at the American Jewish Historical Society down on 16th Street, and they have a copy of -- we have an oral history of my mother, which we put into a wonderful book. They have that and they have it digitalized as well. I imagine that they might well be interested in what you might be willing to share with them in terms of Beth Israel Hospital [inaudible].

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, actually, I know one of the archivists there. I could reach out to her. I know because they have all the Federation records.

Robert Newman: That's right.

Nicholas Webb: So they've got tons of stuff on the ...

Robert Newman: That's right.

Nicholas Webb: I haven't been down there yet, but I want to it at some point to see from the Federation side some of the controversies like the Jewish Maternity Hospital.

Robert Newman: That's right, yeah. It would be interesting. Of course, the Federation, their hospitals had these annual, actually, twice-a-year meetings, off shore meetings, insurance meetings. Got to know a lot of the other members of the Federation and family. Mount Sinai, Montefiore, Maimonides, the guy who developed, not Splenda, but -- the sugar substitute. He was the head of the board of Maimonides.

Nicholas Webb: Hold on one second. Let's finish up here and stop the recording. Yes, it's been great talking to you.

Robert Newman: Thank you very, very much.

Nicholas Webb: If you have any questions, feel free to get in touch.

Robert Newman: Yeah, and same here if you have anything that with my lousy memory I might be able to share with you, I'd be happy to. I will give you the name of the rabbi.

Nicholas Webb: Yeah, great.