

Gift crowns Durkheimer's devotion to community

BY PAUL HAIST

Jewish Review

When Stuart Durkheimer was about 23 years old, which was about 58 years ago, a leader in Portland's Jewish community asked him by for a conversation.

He wanted to tell Durkheimer, just getting started in business after finishing at Stanford University, that he should consider his responsibility to the Jewish community, that he should consider helping wherever he could, giving back.

Durkheimer took the advice to heart. Active in the Jewish community all his life, he recently took steps to cap that life of volunteerism and giving with a crowning gift.

Just recently, Durkheimer, now 81, turned over nearly a million dollars in the assets of a private family corporation to the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation.

The corporation was a sort of holding company for Durkheimer's share of the sale of Coast Distributing Co., which he operated for many years in Portland. The company was sold in 1990 when Durkheimer retired.

He took his share from that sale and invested it mostly in tax-free Oregon municipal bonds, itself a financial decision that reflected Durkheimer's commitment to giving back.

"The state of Oregon was good to my company," he said. "And I liked the concept of not gambling. I'm not a gambler," he said.

Now, the OJCF is liquidating those assets and bringing the funds into the community to be managed by the foundation for the community in accordance with Durkheimer's wishes.

OJCF Interim Executive Director John Moss called Durkheimer's gift "extraordinary."

"Stuart has consciously wanted to be a model," said Moss. "What he is, is a mensch."

Being a model for others is important to Durkheimer.

"I do believe in giving and I do believe that people need to be reminded that the community needs funds," he said.

Like the man who took Durkheimer aside more than half a century ago to counsel him about supporting the Jewish community, he too has

passed the message on to others.

"A few years ago, I was speaking at lunch with a man about the importance of giving. A couple of weeks later, he made a rather large gift. It was a complete surprise," said Durkheimer.

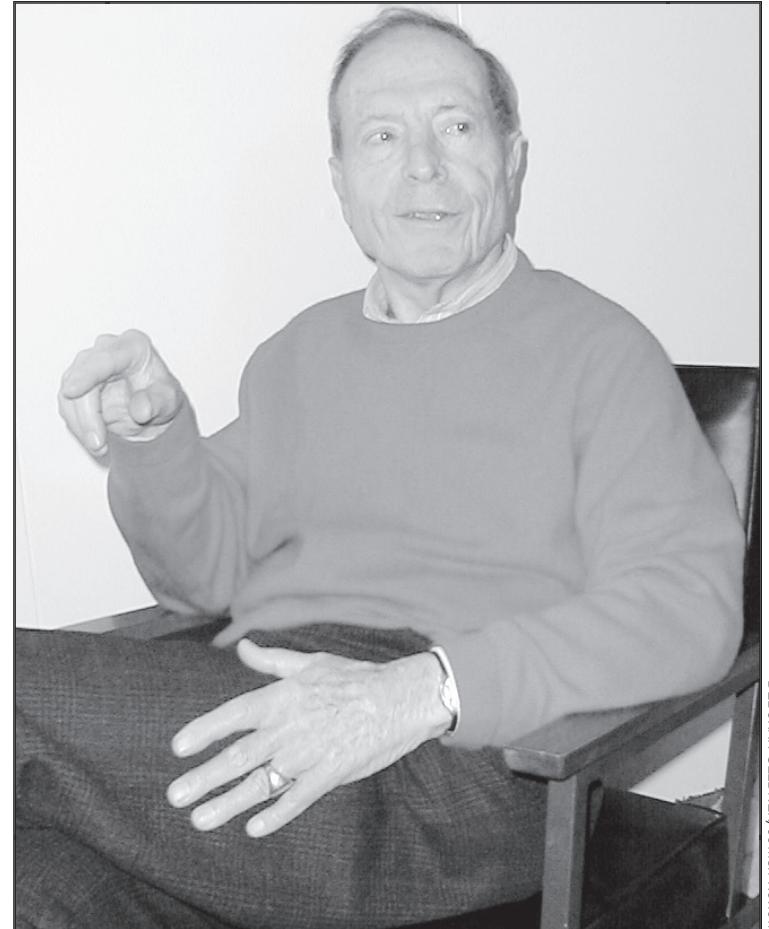
He couldn't say whether the man acted specifically on his advice. But he did say, "Every so often, we need some stimulus for our people who have the ability to give."

Of his most recent gift he added, "I hope this will be an example for others and that others will be inspired to give."

His choice of the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation was in keeping with his fiscal conservatism, his commitment to husbanding his resources, and his desire not to be a gambler.

He previously gave funds to the Oregon Community Foundation, and he chairs the OJCF's Development Committee. He knows how these kinds of foundations work.

"I believe in that type of giving," he said. "I have confidence that in the future the monies will be properly managed and distributed."



STUART DURKHEIMER