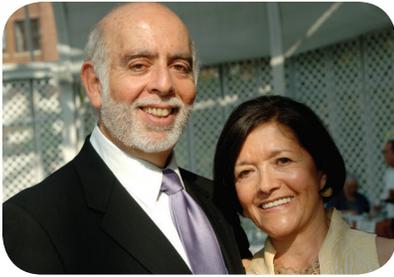


AUDIO TRANSCRIPTIONS

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≡ AUDIO CLIP 1 ≡

Mark Russ Federman and Maria Federman on the introduction of the ticket system

Annie: Tell us the story of how you...

Mark: Oh the number thing...

So there was traditionally R&D, historically there was never anything about taking a number. It didn't exist because no self-respecting Jewish customer would take a number. They knew which counterperson, whether it would be a Russ, their daughters, their husbands or one of the employees was going to wait on them... they had a relationship. So it was the "see you" system. The customer would come in and he or she was a "see you." They're here to see you, Anne or Hattie or Ida, or whatever. That was the system and then I came in to take over the business the beginning of 1978. Again were no numbers, there wasn't really a strong need for numbers. The Lower East Side was in a downward spiral and there weren't a lot of customers. It wasn't a super busy store like it was earlier or is now. Um but then I got to the Jewish holidays, my first Jewish holidays at Russ & Daughters and it was just before Yom Kippur, and Yom Kippur's the busiest time of year because every Jew within a thousand miles wants to get traditional Jewish appetizing foods from the traditional appetizing store, R&D. So I'm trying to run this and it's pure chaos. Pure chaos because the "see you's", these customers are showing up waiting for a particular counterperson and then when a counterperson became available and there wasn't a "see you," they would announce, "Who's next." That's a major mistake, it approaches being suicidal, because everybody's immediately yelling out, "My next." It's not

"I'm next," in the vernacular of the LES, it's "my next." So at some point two little old Jewish ladies are claiming "my next" and the customers are squaring off behind these ladies, and supporting their favorite little old lady, who's next, and business stops.

And I know I've got a ton of fish I have to sell and nothing is happening while the Gaza Strip is being drawn inside R&D. So at this point I have the brilliant notion of getting an empty pickle container, sour pickles, quart container, and I get an empty pickle container and I go in the back and I have index cards and I write—there's a 100 index card I write in magic marker 1 to 100, I stick it in the pickle container, I go out and I say "Everybody take a number this is your number and from then on it became a number system. When it became busy we're still using the empty pickle container and the index card and some point thereafter I went out and bought a number machine.

But still the old customers who felt proprietary about R&D, it's their store, and they had... they still were not going to take a number.

Annie: Maria do you think the number system helps?

Maria: Oh Absolutely, that was, that was the fight that really started...that was really a brilliant idea, I don't know why we didn't do it earlier.

Mark: That was my greatest idea at R&D: the pickle container with index cards. And that's a total break from the tradition, the way business was done, but sometimes...

Annie: But it happened organically.

Mark: It happened, right.

I was responding to the chaos and the heat of battle. It was a war scene in there.

Maria: And for Yom Kippur, when we went to open the store early, it was already a big line. But they were very organized. At one point when there were the numbers, and Mark would go out and distribute the numbers, but before they were just waiting in line.

Mark: Sometimes they organized themselves. That's the younger customers. The old ones, no way. It was their store.



≡AUDIO CLIP 2≡

Anne Russ Federman and Hattie Russ Gold on Joel Russ's entrée into appetizing

Anne: The sister brought him here

Hattie: The sister, yeah, the sister had..

Anne: She brought both her brothers here.

Hattie: Sister had an—I don't know if it was an appetizing store, or just herring...

Anne: A grocery. With herring. I don't know, must have been a grocery store with herring.

Hattie: On Hester Street. Now this goes back...

Mark: And this is Channah, Channah Ebbin.

Hattie: To 1910 it must be...And I'm 1913, no it was later than that...

Anne: How did she find her husband?

Hattie: That I don't know...I never asked. Never interested in asking in how they got together. But he never took his...

Anne: He calls his grandpa [referring to Channah Ebbin's husband] a scholar

Mark: Yeah

Hattie: And we called him a man who did nothing but read and his wife worked like a horse just to take care of eight... to cook, work in the business. I don't know how they did it...

Anne: Support them. Feed them. Clothe them.

Hattie: That's why they died young."

Annie: And her brother, our father, used to go to her house all the time for advice."

Hattie: She took care of my father, he was the baby, he was the youngest. And she put him into the store on Orchard Street. I don't know if she loaned him

money to go into business, but he always said that his sister was instrumental in getting him into the appetizing business..."

Mark: And then so he gets into business, somehow, the herring business, through her.

Hattie: But more than that.

Anne: Smoked fish.

Mark: Right away?

Annie: I think so.

Hattie: I think so too. Yes, wasn't only herring. And you know what herring sold for then? A penny apiece and thirteen with skin for a dozen, just like a bagel,

Mark: And the herrings then are the herrings we know now, schmaltz herring, came in big wooden barrels, with head off? Those the herrings you were dealing with?

Anne: All the herrings had heads on.

Hattie: They all had heads.

Mark: In big wooden barrels.

Anne: And everybody had to buy it if they wanted to make your own pickled herring...and start from scratch.

Mark: It was straight herring from the barrel...you didn't soak it out, straight from the barrel?

Anne: No way, no way. And I remember, if you want to go a little further up, when I worked in the store, it was wintertime. And we wore two pairs of ski pants,

Hattie: Oh, my god, did we dress..

Anne: And three sweaters, and the herring barrels were outside and the customer would come over and ask for a dozen herring. Can you imagine? The herring are packed in salt. And your hands are freezing, and you're packing them into newspaper...And I'll never forget that.

Mark: And they don't take them from the top, either...

Anne: Most of them like to..

Mark: From the middle of the barrel...

Anne: But that was an experience...



≡AUDIO CLIP 3≡

Anne Russ Federman and Hattie Russ Gold on Joel Russ's expectations

Anne: I had occasion to find out that there was a boutique [food?] store for sale right around the corner from Park Avenue and I went and looked at it and it looked delightful. And I wanted to buy it. I was 18, mind you. I approached Papa and I told him about it and he pooh-poohed the whole idea....

Anne: Our father wanted his chicks all around him...

Hattie: Oh yeah.

Anne: He gave birth to children to fulfill his needs.

Hattie: [laughter]

Anne: That's the only expression I can think of.

Mark: Is that right? Do you see it the same way?

Hattie: I never saw it that way.

Anne: He was a typical European in that respect.

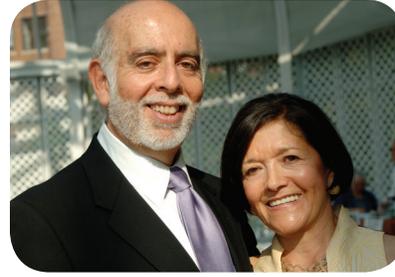
Hattie: Oh, yeah, that he was.

Anne: He never said, "Go fly the coop, and do what you want, you have my blessing...."

Hattie: Oh, no, no..[laughter]

Anne: No way.

Hattie: Listen to this, someone said, "You have three daughters." I don't remember if it was a customer or someone who did business with us. Papa said, "I would like six more..." because we worked in the store.



≡AUDIO CLIP 4≡

Mark Russ Federman and Maria Federman on entering the business

Mark: You know, what am I, I'm the transitional generation. I got the business from the first two generations that had the survival mentality.

Annie: But your generation was the key generation, it wouldn't exist..

Maria: Right, right.

Mark: We held on in tough times and at the same time we tried to move it forward.

So there's lots of things that still go on today that we transformed. I mean we made a caviar business out of it, we made a catering business out of it, we made a shipping business out of it. But all of that was trying to keep each and every customer, which required me, for the large part, being behind the counter. [background noise from 5th generation Russ!] Which is not a great way to run a business. But having a Russ there, you know people think differently if an owner is there at least walking around and slicing the fish.

[Maria asked about how she discovered R&D]

Maria: Well, I didn't know anything about the store but then I met Mark. And he taught me all about the store. That was in 1972. And then we started going there, we were going there usually on a Sunday. So his parents, usually his mother, took care of us. Give us the best that they had there. But the aunt was there, Aunt Hattie. And especially her husband.

Mark: Uncle Murray

Maria: Uncle Murray, and he tried to give us the ends, the leftovers

Mark: The ends, we weren't paying, so...

Maria: So that's my [first] recollection of the store.

Mark: That's quite a recollection. What comes to

mind, getting screwed by Uncle Murray.

[laughter]

Mark: So the way I sort of put this into one phrase is that we were a Jewish store, in a Jewish neighborhood, selling Jewish food, to Jewish customers. And we were a Jewish family doing it. And that's from the beginning, 100 years ago, 105 years ago. But over the years everything changed. So if you were to parse that sentence now, with respect to the customers, who were once Jewish and spoke either in Yiddish or Yiddish-inflected accents, that turned into, the Yiddish accents became British, or French or Spanish, from all over the world. People would come in and so that part of it, the customers changed. And the customers who were speaking Yiddish or Yiddish-inflected English, they were moving out quickly.

On starting to work at the store

Maria: I went after Niki, I didn't go back to work. I never had a job after Niki. And I took a long leave of absence, but didn't go back. And then later when they were going to school, and they were in pre-K or something. So I would go for a few hours. Just to... and little by little I started going more. And then when they started at PS 321 they were at full day, and I would go 4-5 hours a day.

Mark: We sucked her in..

Mark: Little by little I got more involved.

Annie: And what did you do?

Maria: I was mostly in charge of the candy side and ordering, and keeping the inventories, I would do the books and the payroll.

Mark: And I can't be bothered by paying bills...

Maria on starting gift shop

I remember at one point somebody came and they wanted to order like fifty [gift baskets.] Your mother was there. And I said, "Yeah, I can do it." And Mark's mother said, "What are you going to do, you're crazy?" And I said I'm going to create [baskets]..So I went out and I was in Brooklyn and they had baskets, I picked some up, and of course I picked the wrong, the baskets had to have a dip...But anyway, Nevertheless...I came out there with the idea, and the basket, and somebody told me you have a

seal. It was work and I learned it on my own and that was the first order and your mother was impressed.

Mark: Yeah, it took a lot to impress my mother, right?

Maria: And then after that, little by little, I was doing a lot of business.

Mark: Yeah, people come in order 100, 200 baskets, to give as gifts for the holidays.

Mark on customer service

Mark: There are people that have been working there long enough and they know that's our style. And the new people that come in and they learn that this is the Russ & Daughters experience. You know your customer, you're engaged with your customer, you try to please your customer, that's what Russ & Daughters is about. It's a very special relationship."



≧AUDIO CLIP 5≦

Niki Russ Federman and Josh Russ Tupper on choice extending the Russ & Daughters experience

Niki: What we've done in the last 10 years has really been organic, and in a way, it's all sort of the store speaking to us and telling us, sort of, what is the missing piece.

Josh: Or what's the next step

Niki: What's the next step, and we look to the store as our reference point and when we did the R&D café, we always sort of envisioned it as an extension of the store and the challenge was how do you bring the 100 years of the soul of the store, and the feel and the look, but we don't ever want to the create a carbon copy of the shop. It's singular.

Josh: Yeah, more like we're doing this other thing that's going to reference the original, but will never

replicate the original.

Niki: I think the, actually opening a restaurant, opening, you know, a Russ & Daughters in the Jewish Museum uptown, starting our own bakery, opening in Brooklyn in a way was actually born out of a desire to maintain and expand the community because we realized more and more that people were coming to the original store and they wanted to be able to eat R&D at R&D, they wanted to be able to linger, they wanted to come with a group of people. And that little tiny shop on East Houston Street couldn't support it. People would, increasingly, we would get calls every single day, people assuming we had a place for them to sit down. And they'd call, I'm gonna come, five people, can I have a table for six? Or they'd walk into our kitchen...

Josh: ...looking for tables ...where are you going?

Niki: They'd assume... looking for tables..

Niki: We had to send them to our two benches, on the street, in the middle of the winter. So our first expansion with R&D café, was to extend the experience, extend the community, So in a way we gave people a place to sit down, bring families together. That was the driving force.

Niki: I remember, and this really like solidified for me why we needed to do this café. There was a guy, who was double parked, in his car, at the steering... in the driver's seat, and he took our shopping bag and he tied it around his neck like a bib. And he was eating pickled herring cream sauce out of the container. Propping it up on his steering wheel. And I just remember watching this man, oh my gosh, thinking we need to give this guy a place to sit.

Annie: Do you remember the conversation when you told your grandmother that you were coming back to the store?

Josh: I don't think that I do. [pause] I can basically recount it without actually remembering it. She was sort of still resentful of the store and basically it would have gone something like...

"Hey grandma I'm going to move to NY and start working in the store."

"Oh really? Oh, that's nice."

At that stage in 2002 that would've been the extent of her...

"Don't you think that's wonderful?"

"Yeah, it's great."

But as, and even at that time Mark was on Martha Stewart or whatever, but I don't think she really really was so proud of what she'd done until quite a bit later.

Niki: But I remember the conversation we had with Grandma when we told her we were going to open a restaurant. And it was such a refreshing change from my father, who had been sort of the, you know, he was risk averse. He was very concerned and saw all the potential problems, of which there are many. And kept pointing out that we had no restaurant experience, and how will you know how to do this.

And we called our grandmother and she just said, "You two are smart, I think this is great, if anyone can do it you can, and this is a wonderful thing." She was just so supportive and she just was such a champion of us, and that was really great.

On Russ & Daughters meaning...

Josh. I mean the connection to all our customers' families and one of the things we talk about a lot is that the store is that the foods—whether they are sold here or given over the counter—are often eaten and enjoyed among family, for significant moments in life. Maybe it's just a regular Sunday brunch, maybe it's a shiva or bris, maybe it is a wedding reception or a bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah and those significant moments are extra meaningful and the tradition of having these foods in these moments, means a lot.

I cannot have a single conversation in which Russ & Daughters comes up and the other person does not share a story with me. It's an instant vessel of transmitting story and feelings. And that to me is just as important as the food tasting the way it does...you say R&D and they say, OMG I went with my father when I was a kid, and I used to go there when all I could do is afford a bagel, and that was 60 years ago.

Countless stories, the way in which it inspires people to tell a story and inspires memory is very rare, I don't know of another place like that.



Anne Russ Federman and Hattie Russ Gold on Joel Russ's learning, high holidays, and being "cultural Jews."

Anne: He came from a religious family because when we went to shul Papa did not have to open the book to daven [pray]. He knew

Hattie: He knew...

Anne: He knew every word by heart.

Hattie: And so he must have gone to heder [school] at the age of fiv., and they put them in heder at the age of 4 even.

Mark: The heder meaning the Hebrew school, the religious school

Hattie: The religious school where they had a what do they call 'em

Anne: A shames?

Hattie: A melamed, a teacher, no a shames, is the one who takes care of the shul, not a rabbi..a teacher.

Anne: But he was so well-learned.

Hattie: Yeah, he knew every page..of the Bible, and he was so irreligious, he says it's written words, he says,

Mark: So he was never religious?

Hattie: No, we never saw him religious.

Anne: No, Papa didn't like the idea that you had to the store open on Saturday

Hattie: But he went to shul Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, we all went to shul...

Anne: He was a secular Jew, like we are....