

Interview with Max Levin

November 1997 - Thanksgiving

with Beverly Levin Copeland & Sean R. Copeland

My name is Max Levin. I just turned 85 on November 9th. I live at 5506 N Lincoln , that's in Morton Grove, Illinois.

This is Thanksgiving Day. Everybody should be having a good time with their families and enjoy their grandchildren.

I have two great grandsons. One is Colin and one is Evan, he'll be four. The older guy is seven now. They're getting to be big boys.

Hopefully, I'll be going to Arizona for the winter this year. I've been having a little health problem. Now I'm going to the dentist. I hope everything will be o.k. Hopefully , in a couple weeks I'll be able to head south with the birds.

BLC: What are your early memories from when you were growing up?

ML: I lived in Gary, Indiana; I lived in Wilmington, Illinois, and the west side of Chicago in the Jewish neighborhood. Douglas Blvd. and Hamlin. Of course the neighborhood changed afterwards. It got kind of run down.

I lived on the west side with my folks for quite a while. Then I got married in 1940. We lived on Douglas Blvd for two, three years. Then we moved to Berwyn, Illinois for five years. Then we moved to Oak Park. My daughter wanted to go to Oak Park River Forest High School, so we had to move to Oak Park. Then afterwards we moved back to the city, my wife and I, in 1959. We lived there until my wife passed away. Then I moved out of that big house into a condo in Morton Grove. I've been there ever since. That's where I am now, in Morton Grove. My daughter is also in Morton Grove, and my son-in-law. My grandchildren are all over the place. They moved out, then they moved in. My granddaughter is working for a big concern. Sean is working for a real estate office. I've been a widower for fourteen years, since 1984. I'm going to Arizona for the winter. I'll be staying with my lady friend there. She comes here in the summer and I go back there for the winter. Hopefully, I'll be able to get there pretty soon.

BLC: Do you remember your life as a boy growing up?

ML: We used to put on plays. I was involved in a couple plays. I don't remember the names of the plays, but they were school plays. I went to Clark School. I went to Gregere, that's on the west side.

BLC: How old were you then?

ML: I don't remember. We lived on Massachusetts Street. My dad was a shoemaker, a cobbler. He had a business there. I don't remember if we lived in Gary first, or Wilmington. We were out in the country in Wilmington. We lived there for a while. I used to go fishing there. I did a lot of fishing. I used to run around barefoot. We lived by a creek or a river there. My cousins came over from Chicago that time, my cousin Lawrence Marcus.

We were fooling around with tin cans. I threw a tin can and hit him in the head.

When I was in Wilmington, I fell through the ice. My dad was close by. They called my dad. I was there with a sled. Luckily someone was there and pulled me out. They got some blankets and covered me up.

BLC: Do you remember how old you were?

ML: I must have been ten or twelve.

BLC: Were you very friendly with Lawrence? Did you see him a lot?

ML: He was my mother's older brother's son. I think I was the oldest of the Marcus cousins.

BLC: You were the oldest cousin?

ML: Yeah. There was Uncle Sol, then there was Uncle Oscar, and Uncle Irving.

BLC: You were the oldest child?

ML: I was the oldest son. I was the oldest of four children. I had three sisters.

BC: Didn't you have another sibling? Aunt Frances was a twin.

ML: My youngest sister was a twin. The boy must have died.

BLC: You were the oldest of the nephews and nieces?

ML: I was the oldest one.

BLC: I remember hearing stories of when you worked for your uncle in the shoe factory.

ML: That was in Pontiac, Illinois. After I got married I went to Pontiac, Illinois and worked in the shoe factory there for about four, five years.

BLC: I was born in Chicago. You moved back to Chicago before I was born?

ML:Yeah. We lived on Douglas Boulevard. My brother in-law, Paul, used to take care of my daughter more than I did. He would stay up at night, and change her diapers. We all lived in an apartment up there; my mother-in-law, my wife, Betty. Paul wasn't married then. He got married afterwards.

SRC: What did you do for kicks: Did you go to ballgames, go to see concerts?

ML: Yeah, I went to ball games. We used to walk downtown. I spent some time with my family. We went to Navy Pier by bus, open-deck buses. We lived on the south side for a while, near Garfield Park, not Garfielddamn it!

BMC: Not Douglas Park

ML: Douglas Park was on the west side. When we lived near Douglas Park we used to go on boat rides, they had boats there. Garfield Park also had boats; Lincoln Park had boats.

BLC: Did you have much free time? I know you started to work at a pretty early age. How old were you when you started to work?

ML: I went to Washburn Trade School. One day I went to school, the next day I worked for my uncle. He had a fruit truck.. We used to go to Cicero, Evanston, Oak Park.. We'd go to the market and load up. We'd stop at different stores. We had a steady route. Go up to the door with a paper and pencil and mark down what they wanted. People used to buy apples and potatoes by the sack, especially for the winter. I remember I would take a sack and carry it on my shoulder and carry it up stairs.

BLC: How much did the sacks weigh?

ML: I think they weighed 100 pounds.

BLC: What year was that, do you remember?

ML:at the time we lived on Paulina Street.

BLC: Were you still a teenager at the time?

ML: I think so. Yeah, I had to go to school. I think I went to trade school one day. The rest of the time, Monday through Saturday I worked for my uncle.

BLC: Did your family need the money?

ML: On payday, I got paid in cash and I gave the cash to my mother.

BLC: What did you do when you had free time?

ML: I played ball, chased the girls around, went to movies.

BLC: Do you remember going to your first movie?

ML: I went to a lot of movies. Every day I'd go to the show after school. Everyday my dad would give me a nickel or a dime for a movie and I'd sit right in the first row. I saw all the old movies -Tom Mix, the western movies, and Hopalong.

SRC: Did you ever see any Vaudeville stuff?

ML: Yeah, I saw vaudeville that time too. That was later on. If I wanted to see real vaudeville I went downtown at the Oriental or the Chicago Theatre.

SRC: Who'd you see?

ML: I think we saw Eddie Cantor and George Jessel in person. There was a line four, five blocks long. Later on, when I got older I used to the Aragon, it was a dance hall. I used to go to Riverview. There used to be a place called White City on the south side. We used to go by street car.

BLC: Do you remember when you learned how to drive? Did some one teach you?

ML: Oh, yeah. My cousin. We lived in Wilmington. He had a car.

BLC: Which cousin?

ML: Uncle Sol Marcus's stepson, (Aunt Rae's son), Sidney. One day we went out to a corn field. I stayed at some woman's house during the week. I would come home for the weekend. I got room and board.

BLC: Is that when you worked at the shoe factory?

ML: Yeah. I worked at Uncle Sol Marcus's shoe factory. He had about 200 men.

BLC: Where you in the cornfield when you learned how to drive?

ML: First we started out with a model T Ford. You had to crank it up.

I bought a '32 Chevy from Mort Fischel (Aunt Lill's friend).

BLC: That was later on?

ML: I don't remember if it was before I got married or after I got married.

BLC: Do you remember how you celebrated the holidays? Did your family mke a big deal about the holidays? Did you go to temple?

ML: Oh yeah. On the west side. During the holidays the women would wear their fur jackets . It would be a hot day but they would wear their fur pieces. It was nice, we'd hear Cantor P_____. There used to be a lot of shuls there. On the west side there were four or five different shuls. When we lived on Douglas and Hamlin we had a shul right next door. At night we used to hear them singing during the holidays and on shabbas, Saturday.

BLC: That was in the forties, after I was born. When you were a kid....

ML: We also used to sleep at the park, outside. We had a porch on the third floor and on hot nights we used to sleep on the porch.. On a hot night we'd go to the park and sleep outside.

BLC: So your first job was working for your uncle?

ML: I think I worked first for my uncle Louie Rockoff. He had the fruit and vegetable store.

SRC: When did you live on Ashland Avenue? Did you live there with your sisters?

ML: We lived in back of the store. My dad had a shoe repair store there. On a cold night we had to all sit down by the stove. The rest of the house was cold.

SRC: South Ashland?

ML: Yeah. 5700 S. Ashland. We had aCousin Club too. We used to go for picnics and outings. When we lived in the country we had a cat.. I'd see the cat, I don't know why, I'd always hit the cat with a towel or a broom. One morning I had a hot pot of coffee on the stove,we were fooling around someone knocked the pot over. My whole leg got burned. I still got the scar. It took about six months for it to heal. They called the doctor right away I guess. We met a big family called the Russells in Wilmington, we got friendly with them. Finally we moved back to the city. We went to Chicago.

BLC: I want to ask you about the war years. When WWII started.

ML: I worked at Stone Container Corporation. They made corrugated boxes. My sister-in-law, Lillian Kohn, I guess she knew one of the owners of the factory. She told me to go down there and see if I could get a job down there. I started at 40 cents an hour, 50 cents an hour. It was around 1942. A lot of the factories were short of help. I went down to the draft board. I was put in 4F. Limited service. My eyes, or something was wrong. I was put in 4F.

SRC: Did you know a lot of guys that went to the war?

ML: Yeah. Quite a few from the factory went. Two cousins and some friends of mine, the Kaufmans too, Louie Kaufman and Sam Kaufman were in service, and my cousin Art and my cousin Raymond were in service. Leonard Greenman, he was in the marines. He was from Champaign. We saw him in his uniform. He looked sharp.

BLC: Did you feel badly that you weren't able to go, or were you relieved?

ML: Being married and I had one child at the time, and with my eyes.....and my feet were flat, but I think it was my eyes.

BLC: But how did you feel about not going?

ML: I don't know. I don't think I felt bad.

BLC: Do you remember the rationing during the war? Weren't their food stamps or coupons?

ML: We had coupons for gas. I think we also had food stamps too. I'm not sure.

We were short of help at work so I was working double shifts. I'd go in Sunday night at 11 o'clock work til seven in the morning. Then I'd come back the next day at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I got a lot of extra hours in. That was when I lived on Douglas Boulevard. I worked for Stone Container. There were three boys, all Jewish fellows owned the company, Norman, Joel and Marvin. Now one of the sons owns it.

BLC: You worked for that company for a long time.

ML: Yeah. I worked there for twenty-five years. Then like a dummy I went and opened the plant in North Chicago. Then they kind of pushed me around. I had seniority. This way I had to start from the beginning.

BLC: What kind of work did you do there dad?

ML: Well I was working on the corrugating machine. Make the boxes. During the war they had a certain kind of chemical for the boxes. They'd come off hot. I had to pick them up and keep up with the conveyer .

BLC: I remember your hands used to get all cut up. And you used to work a lot of hours, overtime and double shifts. You worked hard.

ML: Start on Sunday night at 11. Eleven to seven, eight hours. The another shift a twelve hour shift. Some times I'd work sixteen. I'd be tired. Go right to bed. In a couple hours I had to go back to work. My mother -in-law used to live with us at that time. Sometimes I'd have to take her to the doctor. We used to get along pretty good, me and my mother-in-law. We didn't have too many arguments.

BLC: Did you have any arguments? I don't remember you having any arguments with mother or Bubi. Did you ever have arguments?

ML: Yeah. One time we needed some patio work done. Some Jewish fellow brought all this cement and piled it on the porch. I got home from work I gave him some money. I paid him before he did the job. It was a mess. I had to get a big dumpster and throw all that stuff out. I had to go to city hall and get a permit or something.

BLC: So you had an argument about that? That was an argument?

ML: Yeah. When I came home from work that time.

BLC: You seemed to get along very well. I don't remember any arguments.

ML: Yeah. Otherwise we never had any big fights. Just that one time.

SRC: Where were you when Kennedy was shot?

ML: I was working in North Chicago that time. 1964, Yeah. I started at Stone Container Corporation in 1942. I think it was. I even got a watch for 25 year service.

BLC: Did they shut down the factory? Did they announce it to the people that were working there?

ML: It was on the radio. I remember that day.....yeah.

BLC: Do you remember when the war was over? D Day.

ML: I remember D Day. We lived on Douglas Boulevard 1946, I think it was.

BLC: So what happened when people heard about it?

ML: Oh (laughter) they started celebrating. People running down the street, hollering and waving flags.

BLC: I kind of remember that.. It seems like I can remember a lot of people out on the street waving flags and jumping up and down. A lot of excitement!

BLC: Do you remember when we took our trip to Florida?

ML: We drove to Florida one year. That's right. (Laughter) We got three, four flat tires.

BLC: Do you remember the day we left?

ML: Oh yeah. A lot of snow. That's right!

BLC: We had a huge snow storm.

ML: You and I and mother?

BLC: You and I, and mother, and Lill, and Barry.

ML: Barry, too?

BLC: Yeah. Lony wasn't born yet, but Barry was. And we all piled into that car with all the suitcases and our winter clothes and stuff. What kind of a car was that?

ML: The little chevy car?

BLC: It was the first Betsy.

ML: The one I got from Mort Fischel or another one?

BLC: I don't know. It was a black car. We called it Betsy.

ML: I also got a car from Norman, my brother-in-law. It was a four -door. That was probably the car we drove, I guess. It was a coupe.

BLC: I remember we packed lots of food and it was a big snow storm. And we only got as far as Indianapolis the first day.

ML: Sure. Then we had that ice storm.

BLC: We had that big ice storm. We had to get dressed in the dark and pack all of our stuff up. There was no power in the hotel. Do you remember how long it took us to get there, to get to Florida?

ML: Around five days?

BLC: I thought it took about a week. That must have been hard. Did you drive by yourself or did Aunt Lill drive at all?

ML: I don't think she drove. I don't know.

BLC: Remember when we got to Florida, you got a flat tire like a block from Uncle Paul's house. Some kind of a street with a circle.

ML: They were in Hollywood that time? Where did we stay?

BLC: We stayed at their house on Hollywood Boulevard. 1320 Hollywood Boulevard.

ML: The Veseckey's owned that place, his in-laws owned that house. Also, we also used to go to.....

BLC: We used to go to Mrs. Hudsons. Talk about Mrs. Hudsons. Remember Mrs. Hudsons?

ML: Oh yeah! That was another thing. There was something else before.....I don't remember what I was going to say.

BLC: Before Florida?

SRC: The Veseckey's?

ML: Pistakee Bay. They had a summer home in Pistakee Bay. We went fishing there.

We went to the sand dunes, Mrs. Hudson's. We had room and board there. Molly Fischel was out there and Norman and Lillian. They used to serve the food family style. they used to say "Pass it to Maxie."

BLC: You had a reputation for liking to eat. They used to ring this great big bell when it was time to eat.

BLC: Do you remember when you met mother?

ML: Oh, yeah! (Laughs). Uncle Paul wrote the letters (I would think it was from mother) writing the letters to Wilmington.

BLC: Who would write the letters to who?

ML: Uncle Paul would write the letters to me for mother.

BLC: Oh, really? Uncle Paul would write the letters to you?

ML: I'm pretty sure he wrote them. That time she was going with Joe Peskin.

BLC: So how did you meet?

ML: Uncle Paul, I guess.

BLC: I thought it was through Aunt Ruth.

ML: No.

BLC: The story that I remember was that Aunt Ruth and mother were friends, and she didn't know that Aunt Ruth had a brother because you were living away at that time.

ML: That was during the holidays, during Passover. I went to the restaurant, but Betty wouldn't go, so we went.....I used to be out in the country and Betty would be.....Ruth told her she had a brother who worked out in Wilmington.

BLC: I thought it was Aunt Ruth.

ML: Maybe. It could have been.....

BLC: Did you know Uncle Paul before you knew mother?

ML: I don't know.

BLC: What was your first date? Wasn't it during the holidays?

ML: I wanted to go out for coffee and she wouldn't go because it was Passover.

BLC: Was it Passover or the High Holidays?

ML: Passover, I think.

ML: When I worked in Pontiac, I'd come in during the winter months I had no heater in the car. I'd be half froze and I'd have to go to work the next day.

BL: How long of a ride was it from Pontiac to Chicago?

ML: There used to be a place called Streeter, Illinois. We'd go there for chicken. 15 cents for a quarter of a chicken.

ML: When we first got married they had a shivaree. They had a horse and wagon and they took us on a ride through town. I had to buy everybody beer. It was a big thing.

BLC: You were married in Chicago. Where were you married at?

ML: A night club, like , on Roosevelt Road. Aunt Ruth would have known. Ruth was married there and so was Sylvia and Meyer. What was the name of the night club?

BLC: Was it a night club or a banquet hall?

ML: A banquet hall, yeah.

BLC: So after your wedding you went for your honeymoon to Pontiac, Illinois. That's where you did the shivaree?

ML: Yeah. We rented an apartment. My mother-in-law came out and stayed with us for a few days.

BLC: Do you remember when I was born?

ML: Oh yeah, sure! I worked at Stone Container at the time. They called me about 11 o'clock at night. Then I went home and I had to go back two or three times before you were born. Aunt Florence took us to the hospital. Then I had to take milk from one hospital to another.

BLC: Wasn't I born at Franklin Boulevard Hospital and then they had to move me to Michael Reese Hospital?

ML: Yeah, you needed an incubator. They had incubators at Michael Reese. Them were the days!

BLC: What are your best memories when you think back over your life?

ML: My best memories? What we just mentioned, living in the country.....

BLC: Anything else that you want to talk about?

ML: I think you covered everything as far as I know.....

SRC: Now your're on tape.

BLC: Now you're on tape!

Memories of Max Levin born November 9, 1912

recorded in the Copeland family living room,

on Thanksgiving, 1997

by Beverly Levin Copeland (daughter) and Sean Russell Copeland (grandson).

Interview with Beatrice Levin Goldberg

January 10, 2001

BC: What are some of your earliest memories.

BG: I remember things from way back, when I was 2,3,4 years old. Little incidents. When I lived in Wilmington.

BC: Talk about that. My dad talked about that. How old were you then?

BG: About three years old. Frances was a baby. That's when your father almost drowned. Did he tell you that? And Ruth and him had an argument and she threw something at him, hot coffee, scalded his leg. He still has a big scar. Did you notice it? Those things I remember.

BC: Talk about your parents.

BG: My father was a shoemaker. We lived in the country for two, three years in a house, an old country house. I think it had outdoor plumbing. There was another family. The man was Jewish and the wife was gentile. They had a load of children, about twelve. When I got older we used to take trips out there. I stayed over at their home. We'd walk on the railroad tracks. We'd go here; we'd go there. The oldest one was a boy, he was around my age, a couple of years older. We'd go out together. He bought me a ring. I was about 18 years old. I didn't realize too much about getting married and that. After a while, I gave him back the ring. We broke up. They used to come out to Chicago and stay at our place.

BC: You were back in Chicago then?

BG: Yeah. We were back in Chicago.

BC: Where in Chicago did you live?

BG: Springfield and Spaulding. Right near Roosevelt Road. 1243 I think, at that time. 1243 Springfield. I went to The World's Fair with him a few times.

BC: What did you think of that?

BG: It was nice. We saw a lot of interesting things. Of course, we had to take a street car.

BC: What year was that?

BG: 1933, 34. That's when I was grown up already.

BC: You lived in Wilmington until you were how old?

BG: I don't know. Four or five maybe.

BC: Why did you move back?

BG: In the beginning, we moved to Wilmington. Frances was a premature baby and she was getting rickets or something.

BC: She was a twin.

BG: Yeah, but the twin was born dead. She was a seven month baby, two and a half pounds.

BC: The twin was a boy?

BG: Yeah. He was born dead. The doctors recommended that she drink cows milk straight from the cow. So I guess that was the reason they moved to Wilmington. She straightened out. We had company in the summer, aunts and uncles and cousins came by and stayed over. Then I think we moved to Paulina Street on the east side of Chicago. Ruth and Max went to school in Wilmington, but I didn't. When we moved back here I started school. I never went to kindergarten, I went to first grade. We lived on Paulina Street for four years and had a lot of fun there.

BC: Do you remember your address there?

BG: 1050 South Paulina. Ashland and Taylor. Not far from Roosevelt Road. There were movie shows there, we'd go to the shows. In the winter it was cold in the house, we had a stove. In the summer it was hot. We were on the third floor.

BC: What did your father do in Chicago?

BG: He was also in the shoemaking business. He was working for an uncle.

Frances and I, when we were older would wait for him on the corner to come home from work on the streetcar. Us young people would sit outside in the summer, not just sit - we'd play, we'd jump rope. In the summer time we'd jump rope all evening. My mother couldn't get us to come in. Of course, it was very hot sleeping upstairs on the third floor at that time. And there were three girls, all sleeping in the same bed. Your father slept on a cot in the front room. that they put up and took down.

BC: So you only had two bedrooms?

BG: Yeah. My mother and father had theirs. And that's what we did on Paulina Street.

BC: Did you have chores to do around the house?

BG: Nah. We were kids.

I was about ten when we moved from there. There were four grammar schools that I went to. I went to Gregere, Clark. when we lived on the east side on Paulina Street; Holland, was on the west side already; and Henderson. We had moved, my father opened up a business on the south side, also shoe-maker. We lived there for four, five years. I think 6600 South Ashland Avenue. I went to Henderson School. It was a Gentile neighborhood, so you had gentile friends, but we got along nice. There were a few Jewish families, that we got real close with. We used to go to the beach together.

BC: What did your bathing suits look like?

BG: Our bathing suits! I have pictures of them. If I had time I'd show you pictures. Skinny little girls on the beach.

BC: You had pajama parties. I saw pictures of them.

BG: We were older, we were teenagers already. We lived on the west side. We lived at 1243 during the World's Fair. We lived in one apartment, then we moved to another apartment down the street. at 14th and Springfield, then we moved to 16th and Springfield. I got married when we lived there. Ruth got married when we lived on 14th.

BC: Do you remember how my father met my mother? I thought it was around the holidays. Aunt Ruth was friends with my mother. I thought that was how he met her...

BG: There were three, four girlfriends that your mother was friendly with - and my sister. I wasn't with them too much because I was four years younger in age. Your mother used to come to our house before they were married. We'd go out on picnics and things like that.

BC: Did my father date a lot of girls before he got married?

BG: He wasn't home too much. He was living in Pontiac and working for Uncle Sol.

BC: Do you remember how old he was when he moved out there?

BG: I imagine that he was in his late teens or early twenties.

BC: I think he went to high school, but he didn't finish.

BG: No. He went to a trade school. Then he went out there to work. I didn't see him too much when he was younger. He had boyfriends..... I imagine he had a lot of girls.

BC: Why did he go out there?

BG: At that time work wasn't too..... he didn't have a trade, so my uncle suggested, or someone suggested. His cousins, I don't know if you remember, Lawrence and Sidney and Ralph. I think they were all out there at the time.

BC: Who did they stay with?

BG: I don't remember. I was much younger.

BC: How much younger?

BG: about six years.

BC: How did you celebrate the Jewish holidays?

BG: When my mother and father went to shul, we would go in and visit them.

BC: Do you remember your grandparents?

BG: Grandma Marcus lived with us later on when Aunt Esther moved to Wisconsin Dells. Grandpa lived with us too.

BC: What were their names?

BG: Bessie and Ben. They had a bedroom and us three girls shared a bedroom and my parents had a room. Your father wasn't home most of the time. I really didn't know him too much at that time, because when he was home, he was with his boyfriends. We really got closer together when we were older, after your mother passed away. We went out to Arizona and got closer at that time, and have been since.

BC: Do you remember the war years.

BG: I met Julius at a dance, my husband.

BC: What year was that?

BG:We married in February of 44 and I met him a couple years before at a dance.He was called into the army. So we used to corresponded. Then he left.....He was stationed in _____. He was gone two years or so.I married him before he left. He came home for a furlough when he was in the states and we made our date for the wedding.We had a nice wedding in a rabbi's home. After we were married he went back and I went to stay in Texas, near the base.

BC: All by yourself?

BG: Well, he'd come in at night , or on weekends.Then I thought he was going to go overseas, so I didn't go with him. But then he got notice that he wasn't going overseas, so I went out there to stay with him.

BC: Did you have a job there?

BG: I got a job at a store. But then I was able to collect unemployment compensation.

BC: So you lived in Texas for most of the war?

BG: No, no. I went out there when I first got married, for about three months. Then he was going to go overseas again, so I went back. This happened again and I went back there again. When he was going to go overseas, I went back to Chicago to live with my mother and father. He was there a couple of years, he was a first class corporal and a sergeant. He was in charge of ammunition, food, and all that stuff. He had a big job there. When he came back a few years later we moved in with my mother, because at that time we didn't have a place to live and in those days you lived with your parents.

BC: Do you remember food stamps?

BG: Oh yeah, there were stamps for sugar and meat and gas and whatever. I don't remember all that stuff.

BC: Do you remember D -Day and VJ -Day?

BG: I remember the dates, but I don't remember anything special.

BC: You don't remember people out in the streets screaming and yelling?

BG:No. There wasn't any screaming and yelling that I can remember. There might have been in certain places.Then I became pregnant and had Barry.

BC: How old were you when Barry was born?

BG: I was 28. Around that. We lived with my mother for a few years and then Julius's brother got married, and he moved out, (they were living with his mother). so then Julius wanted to move in with his mother, so we did. Not that I wanted to. But it had to work out that way. We lived there until his parents died and I had Leonard there.

BC: How old were you when Leonard was born?

BG: About 32. We lived there until the black people started moving in.

BC: Where was this?

BG:Near Roosevelt Road on the west side. You lived out there....

BC: We lived on Douglas Blvd.

BG: Then we moved to Foster and Sawyer near the college. We lived there for 17 years

BC: When your father died, your mother came to live with you?

BG: My mother lived with Frances and Sam when they lived on Monticello. Then they bought a house in Skokie.

BC: What did your dad die from?

BG:His heart. He had a heart problem, I believe.

BC: Didn't he die of lung cancer?

BG: He smoked so much but I never heard that mentioned.

BG:How old was he when he died? What year was that?

BG: 1966. Or did my mother die in '66? I had it all down pat, but now I can't remember.She died about seven years later.

BC: What did she die from?

BG: She had cancer. She had a breast removed and then later on about seven years later.....

BC:You were always close with your sisters?

BG: Always.We were always close and got along very well.

BC: Talk about the Cousins' Club

BG: We had the Marcus Family Club and we had the Levin Cousins' Club.

BC: Do you remember when they started?

BG: Your mother would have been good at that, because she started it. Somewhere around 1941.

I wasn't married yet. Frances got married, Ruth got married, I got married.....

Somewhere in that time.

It went on from there. We had all these parties and meetings. Chanukah parties - Uncle Oscar gave the children silver dollars, real silver; Purim parties. We met in different places. We had picnics, in the summer time we'd go to different places for picnics. We had lunches. We had a nice time. Also, we brought, like we did later on, everybody brought something and we had a real nice gourmet dinner, lunch, whatever.

BC: You worked in a Bakery at one time?

BG: I worked in a bakery, around the corner.

BC: How old were you then?

BG: Oh, I was married and had children. The bakery was Simon Brothers Bakery on Lawrence Avenue. I worked there part-time, when the kids were young, for about four years, or so. I lived down the street from there, about three, four blocks, so I was close to home. After that I didn't work for awhile.

BC: Do you remember when you first got your period?

BG: Oh G-d! (Laughter)

BC: Maybe you don't want to talk about it?

BG: Yeah, I can talk about it. You want to put that in there? (Incredulous)

BC: It's interesting. Girls never really talked about it in those days.

BG: I lived on the south side. I was about thirteen years old.

BC: Did you know about it ahead of time?

BG: No. Mothers didn't tell you anything. Terrible.

BG: It was a Saturday morning I remember the day I got it. Frances and I went to a show, (we used to go Saturdays to the show). Ruth, I think was working at some department store. I went to the show like that. I didn't say nothing - I was nervous, I was scared. I didn't know how to tell my mother - so finally at night, I took off my pants, and showed my mother and I said, "Maaaa look!" (Laughter) So what - she gives you a rag and you fixed yourself up. You know. I was never told how to do it or anything.

BC: Aunt Ruth never said anything about it?

BG: No. Ruth never told about it either, no. I knew about it because the girls would get periods and that. Usually they say that you got a slap on the face, but I didn't get a slap. (Laughter) Frances, I think got it.

BG: Did you tell Frances about it, since she was the baby?

BG: I think I mentioned it to her, I'm not sure. So, it went on like that. Parents didn't talk about it too much. Hush, hush. My G-d! You didn't talk about sex. You didn't talk about it. Everything was hidden. My parents didn't make any like love in front of us - hugging or kissing. Whatever they did was in the bedroom. At least I didn't see it. It was kind of a scary time, until you got used to it. Then when you had to go in and buy sanitary napkins it was embarrassing.....

BC: Did they sell them then?

BG: Oh sure they did. Ruth was older, so she started in with them and then later, we started. Those belts you used to put on to tie them up and all that. So you go into a drugstore and here there is a MAN! that you've got to ask for sanitary pads and you're embarrassed, you know! (Laughter). About thirteen, fourteen years old.

BC: I remember the packages of pads were wrapped in brown paper, so no one would know what you were buying. (Everybody knew anyway)

BG: I don't remember brown paper.

BC: So they were available when you were using the rags?

BG: Sure they were, but you were poor and they cost money, so you used rags. Then you have to soak 'em and wash 'em and use 'em again. (Laughter) Real sanitary! That's what it was - three girls and my mother.

BC: Did you still sleep in one bed?

BG: We did when we were younger, like on Paulina Street.

When we first got our period? Yeah, we slept in one bedroom. Frances slept in a smaller cot and Ruth

and I slept in the bigger bed. We got along. You didn't know anything better. That was the life. We walked to school, about eight blocks. No car rides.

BC: Did you finish high school?

BG: I went two years.

BC: What did you do after that?

BG: Selling jobs mostly. It was a poor time. Nobody made too much money.

BC: Was this during the depression?

BG: The depression was when we lived on the south side on Ashland Avenue. Uncle Oscar used to come by quite often. He had worked himself up.

Sol was the oldest brother. My mother was the oldest. Sol was next, then Oscar, and then Irving and Esther.

BC: They both had their own businesses?

BG: Sol was in the shoe business. Oscar had the paint business, and Irving, I don't know when he was younger, but when he got married to Eva, he was working for Don and Company.

Uncle Oscar, he was more generous. He used to come in the winter time and buy us coal, when we lived on the south side during the depression. He'd order in a couple bushels of coal. He was very he bought us our first pair of roller skates, Frances and I. I learned how to skate and I fell down a thousand times, but I survived.

BC: Do you remember when your Marcus grandparents died?

BG: They were living with us. First my grandfather died. They weren't old, but they were "old." My grandmother died when we lived on 16th Street. I knew Julius at that time. She passed away there. She might have been in her sixties.

BC: Did you get a bigger apartment then when they lived with you?

BG: We had three bedrooms at that time.

BC: And one bathroom!

BG: ONE BATHROOM!

BC: How did you manage?

BG: Knock on the door and wait. (Laughter) HURRY UP, I GOT TO GO!

BC: Things were a lot different then.

BG: Sure. We managed. We didn't know any better.

BC: No air conditioning -

BG: No. Oh my G-d, no. We didn't have air conditioning until we lived on Sawyer. But not right away, quite a few years later. We lived there 17 years. Julius finally got us a couple of air conditioners.

BC: Do you remember when you got a telephone?

BG: When we were young we used to go to a neighbor or something. We had a telephone you put nickels in and a guy would come up and collect the nickels every month or so.

We lived on the south side behind the shoe repair store and one Sunday we went to the west side to visit the grandparents, we used to go there almost every weekend and somebody broke into our place while we were gone and stole some of my father's supplies, leather goods, and whatever, and the telephone, they pulled out of the wall, and your father's leather coat.

BC: He had a leather coat?

BG: He had a leather coat.

BC: Did your father make the coat?

BG: No, no. I guess your father must have bought it. He was working at that time. At the time we had a big vase, a flower vase. We used to throw pennies in it. The robbers didn't see that. I had a couple of nice presents that I got for my birthday, and they stole that. I was very aggravated about it.

BC: How old were you?

BG: I was probably in my early teens.

BC: I remember seeing some very intriguing pictures of your pajama parties. Talk about that.

BG: Pajama parties? They were baby doll parties!

BC: Oh, I'm sorry!

BG: Yeah. We all got dresses made short and put our hair back, fixed ourselves up with a bow. We had baby bottles, and drank from that. We took pictures of us. We had a photographer come in and he took pictures. We had a nice time. We enjoyed it, there was quite a few of us.

BC: I saw the pictures.

BG: Did you see them? I was going to see if I could find them now, but it takes time.

BC: They were great pictures, very cute! How old were you then? You were in your teens.

BG: We were older, we were in our teens, or young twenties.

BC: Did you have a sleepover?

BG: No, no.

BC: Was it for a birthday?

BG: No. We just decided to make a party, and get together. We had fun. We had suckers, and all these baby things, and sucking on the bottles. We all pretended we had stomach aches, and we'd all be rubbing our stomachs, for the pictures. Now when we look at the pictures we enjoy it.

BC: Anything else you'd like to say? We are almost to the end of the tape.

BG: I went through Paulina Street, the west side, the south side, school,..... work, babies, marriage. I think we went through most of it.

Addendum:

She started talking about my father again.

BC: My father was making a scooter?

BG: It was in Gary. We lived in Gary, Indiana. I forgot about that. Is it on?

I remember when he was a young boy, he made himself a scooter from the wooden boxes and the roller skates. I still remember that in my mind.

BC: Did you ever go to any of the live stage shows?

BG: I was kissed by one of the Ritz Brothers! I went with my boyfriend. We went downtown to the Chicago Theatre and the Ritz Brothers were there. I was laughing so loud, he came down and kissed me. I was embarrassed! I said, "GO WAY! GO WAY! (Much laughter).

I saw Danny Thomas at the 5100 Club. I went to the black clubs. Julius used to like to go over there. He worked in a black neighborhood. What was the name of the club? Club Delia, I think it was. We used to go to quite a few movies, Julius and I.

BC: You had to get all dressed up in those days.

BG: Yeah, You couldn't go out - you had to have gloves, and high heel shoes, hats, stockings, girdles and garters and all that stuff. Not like now, they go out in jeans, and they're out on the town. It's much easier. WHAT AM I GOING TO WEAR? WHAT AM I GOING TO WEAR?

BC: The women looked very glamorous then. When I look at the old pictures - they were always all-dolled up.

Morrie has come in.

BC: What do you think Morrie?

BG: We are now interviewing my dear friend, Morrie Shapiro, and I am a lot older now.

MS: A lot of water has gone under the bridge. People in my age group have experienced many things in life. But I'm still glad I'm here.

BG: And he was married for 61 years to the same woman.

Memories of Bea Levin Goldberg

were recorded by Beverly Levin Copeland (niece), in the living room of Aunt Bea's apartment at Park Plaza, a retirement complex in Chicago, IL. We were alone initially, but were later joined by Morris Shapiro, Aunt Bea's dear friend and companion.

A TOAST TO MAX & MYRNA

They charmed us and made us chuckle, Max & Myrna.
Myrna at 92, still cute, still petite, still shy,
still living alone in her house -
still baking, and enjoying the holidays and her family.

Max at 88, still tall and good-looking, still living independently, still driving,
and enjoying his family and the holiday celebrations.
Still with an eye for the ladies.

It's the Fourth of July, 2001 and we are at the Chromans.
Myrna and Max are sitting around with a bunch of their childrens' friends,
on the Chromans' patio,
Max turns to Myrna and says, "You have nice legs."

Their children and their childrens' friends smile.

Max and Myrna, on this Fourth of July, 2002 -
We toast your youthfulness.
We honor that special memory of the two of you.

Bev Copeland