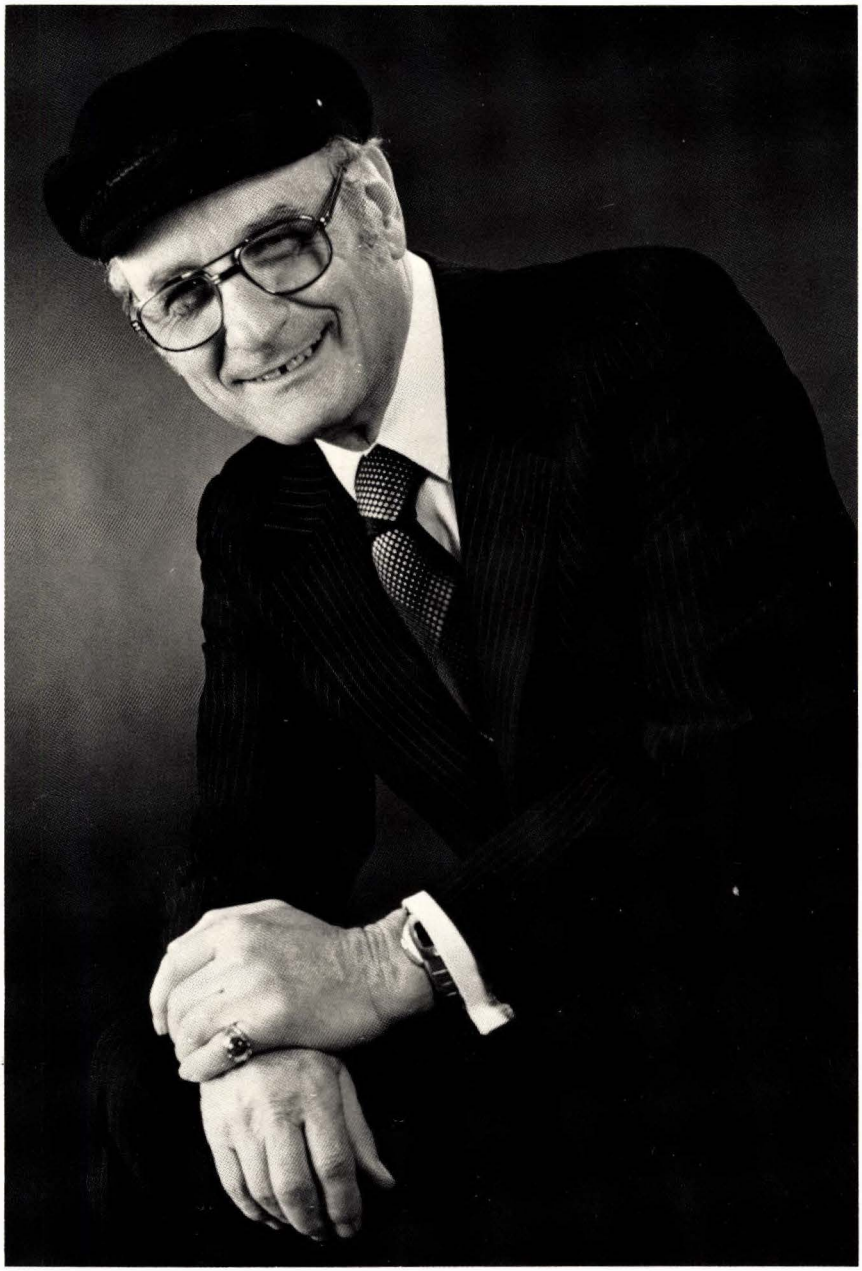
IF ONLY RIGHT NOW COULD BE FOREVER



Aaron P. Levinson

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If Only Right Now Could Be Forever

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Most of all, though, I wish to thank my wife Sonia. She is a very private person, for whom accepting the idea of my going public with our lives was tough. Yet, she has never stopped giving me encouragement and moral support, along with ideas, for my book.

Dedication

Writing one's memoirs means also telling the stories of those around us: associates, friends and most of all, family. This is very much their story too. Sonia, especially, has extended her patience and support, as I've related details of our life together. She and I have been blessed in many ways. Good lives. Full lives. The joys of watching our children and grandchildren creating their own histories. This book—my life—is dedicated to our grandchildren, in the hope that it will be fascinating to them, and that maybe some parts of it will inspire them in the development of their values as the lives of my parents and grandparents inspired me. Most of all, it's offered to them because they light up our lives.

Billions of right nows.

INTRODUCTION

Did you ever see the sun setting, or hear a bird chirping or a baby giggling? Did you ever listen to music you love and wish you could capture such moments of ecstasy? What else is there in life but billions of right nows? Each lasts only as long as it takes to say these two words—right now. Or as long as a click of a camera. Many become part of you for the rest of your life.

I will never lose the "right nows" of petting my dog Shep when I was two, of watching Grandpa Jim die when I was three, of picking Indian tobies from trees when I was eight, of hearing the cheers of the crowd at my first high school football game when I was fifteen, of slipping an engagement ring on Sonia's finger when I was twenty-three, of holding my son Jim a

few hours after he was born when I was twenty-six, or of sitting quietly at my kitchen table at 6 a.m. eating oat bran, sipping hot water and reading the morning Times at age seventy-two.

Who knows how many "right nows" are in a lifetime—maybe billions. And of those, how many are really meaningful? For me, there have been countless great "right nows," none more important than this one, culminating in, at long last, a title for my book.

Most wonderful "right nows" are enjoyed and forgotten. How often I have said to myself, *If Only Right Now Could Be Forever*. A handful really are—stored clearly in my mind for the rest of my life.

I have loved most moments of my life, endured some, and hated a few. I have picked a handful of memorable ones to share with you.

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You'll never die as long as you live.

EARLIEST MEMORIES

Looking back from this end of my life has given me a new perspective on my accomplishments—on the joys and sorrows of more than 70 years. So, it seems only proper that I set the stage for my recollections by recounting two landmark events—my retirement and my 70th birthday.

November 20, 1984. My 70th birthday, though I would not celebrate it for 10 more days. This day marked my retirement from 52 years on the job. My morning started with calls, presents and cards from my wife, Sonia, my two children and five grandchildren. The hours flashed by without time to catch my breath. Before I was really ready, it was almost 5:30. Levinson Steel and David Lloyd-Jacob, its new owner, were holding a retirement reception for me that afternoon at the Duquesne Club.

I had thought about this a lot. I was ready. Nevertheless, my nerves were tuned finely. My emotions were running high. A wild combination of calm, with a great release of energy. A day

for looking forward from the platform of one's past. A great day.

The retirement reception was a wonderful success. Employees, customers, suppliers, business friends, media people and community and political leaders turned out in droves. It was nice to know that I was going out with dignity and respect—but out only from one area of my life. I felt then as I had in the past. The employees of Levinson Steel and I shared loyalty to the company and respect for one another. I was particularly pleased with the respect and love shown me that day. And honored, as well, that it has continued, even though Levinson Steel has new owners, a new top executive and is no longer a family company. Those friends and I—plus many more friends who weren't there—shared important parts of our lives. We cared about each other.

Symbolizing the continuity of the Levinson name in the business, David Lloyd-Jacob had commissioned the Pittsburgh painter Minette Bickel to paint my portrait. It was unveiled at the reception to much praise for the artist, who was there. She'd done a beautiful job. Afterward, the work was placed near my father's and grandfather's portraits in the corporate boardroom. Not bad for a family which had arrived in Pittsburgh and started a hundred years ago as construction workers and junk dealers.

The next big event occurred on November 30th, when I finally got around to celebrating my 70th birthday. All day, out-of-town and local friends kept popping into our home. The Governor's wife, Ginny Thornburgh, arrived with an official proclamation issued in my honor by Dick Thornburgh. His father, once an official of Rust Engineering Company in Pittsburgh, had been a friend of my dad for years. Although active for decades in the Democratic Party, I happily backed and raised campaign funds for the Republican Richard Thornburgh for Governor of Pennsylvania.

Now Ginny was visiting with the family and sitting at the pi-

ano with my son Jim going through the program for the party and making excellent suggestions. My dear wife Sonia had been planning the party, taking care of decorations and working out menus for days. She did a fantastic job and remained calm and collected almost to the end. The day raced by.

The party was anything but small. There were 350 of my friends and family together at the Pittsburgh Athletic Club. It went beautifully. Everything seemed to fit: the decorations, the music, the program. There was laughter—and a few tears—all caught on a videotape that we have enjoyed many times. A proclamation in my honor was read by Mayor Caliguiri, and the party was ended by a prayer from my brother-in-law, the noted teacher, author and rabbi, Earl Grollman.

Still, the celebrating did not end. Out-of-towners joined us the next day for a private dinner at the Duquesne Club. That was Saturday. On Monday I was ready to do all the things that had awaited retirement. I had been working on this book and now hoped to complete it. There still was much to do.

I should have guessed that the fanfare was not over. I entered my office the first working day after official retirement to be greeted by piles of letters, telegrams and notices of contributions. There was something from the football player Franco Harris, and my neighbor, the television star Mr. Rogers, and, from Hollywood, Donna Reed, and something too from Governor Thornburgh, Mayor Caliguiri and more from Sonia. I was really touched by this outpouring. I said to my secretary Betty LeDonne, "Many of these friends and acquaintances were invited to no party, but simply read the article in the *Post Gazette*, and are sending along their good wishes. We have to respond without losing any time—and then we'll get busy with the book."

Still, the letters and telegrams and contribution notices kept coming, hundreds and hundreds of them. On top of that I had a few board meetings and other chores which needed my attention. Then there was a deposition in connection with some legal

matters for Levinson Steel that related to my time in management. Somehow I was not returning to this book project. Then, strangely, as I finally prepared to write on December 17th, I was felled by a bad cold and ear problem. And my back went into spasms. And I wondered if I was having problems with my memory.

Happily, the ailments lasted only a few days. Then Sonia and I left for ten days of vacation with our kids, first at Jim's farm in Massachusetts and then in Vermont with my daughter Eleanor's family. After a New Year's weekend in Pittsburgh, I was off to New York for meetings of the Family Firm Institute, which I had helped establish.

Then I got back into the routines I enjoyed so much—working on this book and other things in my office, being with family and friends, swimming every day at the Pittsburgh Athletic Club. Retirement from business and reaching the golden age of three score years and ten was a fitting time to review my career and my life. I've enjoyed looking back.

I came onto the scene on November 20, 1914, in Pittsburgh. My father was on the road selling for a grocery wholesaler. My mother walked the few blocks from our home on Dinwiddie Street in the Hill District to Passavant Hospital for my delivery.

The story of my life seems to really begin for me a few years later with my first lasting memories. I remember my grandfather's death in 1917, the piles of scrap on Pride Street, and the celebrations of the soldiers coming home from the First World War. From then on the flood of images and moments has never stopped.

I remember my father's father vaguely because he died when I was three. James Levinson was in his early 50s and left my grandmother, Rachel, with several children at home. I have a clear memory of his death. He lay in bed, just dead, surrounded by his disbelieving children. My dad leaned over the body, trying to bring him back to life. Everyone else had given up. All his

kids occupied different corners, crying. I sat on a little bed, watching. My grandmother stood beside my father, hoping that it was all untrue. That was in 1917.

My grandfather's family lived at the corner of Pride and Locust Streets, near the company office on Pride. The Uptown area and the Hill District then constituted the center of Jewish immigrant life. Other ethnic groups preceded the Jews there and still others would follow.

I remember my grandfather's horse and wagon. They conveyed all the junk that he could find—old tires and old brass bedsteads, pots and pans, metal of any kind. It all went back to the yard on Pride Street.

I remember the scrapyard distinctly. In one part of it were piles of old tires. In another part was a shear for cutting metal. Up and down, up and down, chopping scrap, frightening and fascinating me as a little boy.

An old Black man was a legend around the yard. He loved shearing metal into little pieces and paid no attention to measurements or anything else. This old guy used to say to my dad, like it was a rhyme with a real lilt:

"Sam, Sam, just like your old man;
You'll never die as long as you live."

A rag shop was adjacent to my grandfather's junk yard and a hospital a half block away. The Coffey Club, with its fine basketball team, was on Fifth Avenue where Pittsburgh Outdoor Advertising was located for many years, until replaced by Patrick Media. The faint smell of horses pervaded our streets. Vivid recollections, these. And in late 1918 or early 1919 I remember the soldiers returning from the war and celebrating at the Young Men's Hebrew Association. Uniforms, noise and excitement: both intense and hazy at the same time.

Mine was a startlingly alive city of narrow cobbled streets

that snaked along the drainages of steep hills and tangled hollows. The city occupied the valleys where two great rivers merge into a bigger one.

Pittsburgh and its people suited each other. I grew up among people from lands throughout the earth. My ears became tuned to the cadences of many tongues and musical sounds. My eyes viewed familiarly a thousand colors. I knew a universe of smells. Like the Monongahela and the Allegheny, which become the Ohio at Pittsburgh, its people converged to form a mighty current. It has always been an exciting stream in which to swim.

I have memories of a collie dog named Shep. But other memories are faded now. They return when I let myself drift, but only in the sepia tones of old photos. What did I actually see or what was I just told later by parents or grandmothers?

Many details of my grandparents' histories were lost with them. Still, I know much about who they were, what they wanted from life and how they lived. Family was always central to them. They passed along a rich heritage of hard work, courage, compassion and honesty.

Grandma Rachel greatly inspired her children, grandchildren, and everyone who knew her. She loved to make people laugh and often made herself the butt of jokes. To earn laughs, she called the comic strip "Tillie the Toiler" "Tillie the Toilet."

Until her death in 1961, I never saw her angry or cross with anyone. She pointed her finger at children or grandchildren when cautioning or lecturing them. But there was no anger. Above all, she was a peacemaker.

Grandmother Rachel had a difficult upbringing. Her mother died when she was small. Her father's second wife was mean and cruel and beat her. During one of the beatings her hearing was permanently impaired. As adults, we suspected that she heard more than she indicated. Some things she simply did not wish to hear.

If I remember her great cooking with nostalgia—memories of

her omelets, or *fienkuken* still make my mouth water—I, in my own later years, can appreciate her remark, "I am getting old. Everything hurts. I have never been this old before." Among the thousands of women I have known, Grandma Rachel still seems a remarkable woman and a patient, loving friend. And a fitting symbol of my earliest memories.

"When I finally got the horse to the point where he did not require any food at all, the damn thing up and died on me."

Misery, Romance & A New World

When the great wave of Jewish migrations from Eastern Europe started about 1880 there were already a quarter of a million Jews in America. Forty years later there were 3,500,000. All four of my grandparents were part of that relocation.

In Eastern Europe they and their ancestors had been persecuted, harassed and pauperized by special laws of residency, employment and taxation. In many ways their situation resembled that of black South Africans today.

Oppression finally drove away millions like my grandparents. Pogroms, bloody massacres of Jews by officially-incited mobs, were the last straw. Each wave of violence against Jews propelled emigrants to America. Sometimes children preceded parents.

It was miserable to stay, miserable to leave. People do not abandon ancestral homes for light reasons. Humans are stubborn and endure an amazing amount before reacting. Millions of non-Jewish peasants, peddlers and artisans also broke with the habits and habitats of generations to quit Eastern Europe. Entire villages gradually relocated to America.

While life in Czarist Russia was not easy, people made time for romance and serious study. In the large Lithuanian town of Vilna, the matchmakers paired Isaac Reuben and Nettie Saffron, my maternal grandparents. Both were Orthodox Jews. Isaac was a diligent and intelligent Jewish scholar, who would contribute greatly to the Pittsburgh Jewish community as a rabbi, and teacher.

Living in an important city provided advantages. Vilna was the provincial capital of Lithuania and a center of learning, commerce, religion and politics. Alternately dominated by the Poles and Russians, it provided its large Jewish population with the power of numbers that people lacked in the small villages. Pogroms there were less ferocious; fear, less severe. Its large Jewish community, was more literate and it valued new ideas more than the smaller Jewish communities in Russia.

Isaac and Nettie broke the glass (a traditional ritual in a Jewish wedding) in 1880. Nettie was sixteen. Isaac, nineteen. Family and friends encouraged them to leave the Pale of Settlement in which Jews were forced to live, for the promise of a better life in far off America.

They and their child, Annie Reuben, my mother's oldest sister, left in 1887—just a century ago, as this manuscript goes to press. Nettie Reuben was pregnant with Dora. It was no pleasure cruise to New York, after which they came overland to Pittsburgh immediately.

Kovno lay about 75 miles west of Vilna, along the route to Konigsberg on the Baltic. Kovno was smaller and less of a center than Vilna. My paternal grandfather, Israel Levinson was born there in 1863.

At 16 he was working to help support his family. But he yearned to find a home away from pogroms and persecution. He wanted his own business and to live in peace. In 1886, Israel's family paid his way in steerage to New York.

He passed through Ellis Island and made his way to Pittsburgh's Panther Hollow, where others from Kovno already had settled. He lived below what is now Schenley Park on the farm of Jacob Treelisky, a dairyman from Connellsville, Pennsylvania, by way of Kovno. The Treelisky family was important to many of their fellow villagers. Descendents of that family have remained friends of the Levinsons through the generations since.

People from one village or area often settled together in the United States. Strangers here, they expected to rely on one another as they had relied on the ties of family, clan, religion and place in Europe. Friends and relatives cushioned the landing and the lives of these and later immigrant generations. Coming from Eastern Europe, for Jews and Christians alike, resembled passing from the 18th or even 16th Century into the 19th Century. Profound changes were demanded of them—but they had their demands of this new world, too. They had to contend with a new language, new technology, new laws and with freedoms unimaginable—or only dreamed of—in Eastern Europe. Whatever the upheaval they experienced, few from Pittsburgh's Jewish community went back.

There were jobs available in an expanding Pittsburgh. After years of deprivation and sacrifice, it must have felt marvelous to Israel Levinson to find a job of his own choosing, finish a first day of work, receive his first pay and begin saving for a quite different future. Israel did not seek a job in the traditional Jewish trades, but joined a construction gang building concrete sidewalks for the City of Pittsburgh.

Was that choice of construction work an expression of his new freedom? Was it his way of returning to the time before his birth when laws had not yet banned Jews, among the earliest settlers in many parts of Eastern Europe, from being farmers, blacksmiths, coopers, herdsmen, soldiers, or engaging in other occupations? In Europe, his generation had been doomed to a

few commercial jobs and thus most often to poverty. I wish that I knew why or how he entered construction, especially as it significantly shaped our family fortunes.

Most in Israel Levinson's crew were recent Irish immigrants. They worked well with this young Jew and called him Jim, and Jim he remained always. The name has been passed to two grandsons and one great grandson, my son Jim.

Soon, this healthy, employed young man thought of marrying and raising a family. That there were more single Jewish men than women was the merest obstruction. Morris Caplan, another immigrant at the Treelisky farm, showed Jim a picture of his pretty sister Rachel, almost fifteen in Kovno. Morris introduced them in writing, and they corresponded briefly. Jim's savings paid her passage to America. A year later, they married.

My two grandparents' families, the Levinsons and the Reubens, grew rapidly. They improved themselves economically and meanwhile contributed to the betterment of the Pittsburgh Jewish community. The two men, Jim Levinson and Isaac Reuben, while friendly, were of quite different temperaments. Issac was a serious scholar and strictly religious. Jim was a practical joker, like me.

The Levinsons never were as seriously religious as the Reubens. Like the great bulk of Eastern European Jewry then, both families were Orthodox, but in different fashions. The Levinsons no longer practiced the strict rituals of my maternal grandparents—the daily morning synagogue worship of Isaac and the strict Sabbaths each Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. Everybody dressed up on Friday night and Saturday, unlike today's young people dressing carefully for school or work and wearing jeans or shorts on weekends. Like most families from the prevailing European tradition, mine enjoyed the usual *Shabbas* (Sabbath) dinner of chicken soup with *lokshen* (noodles), roast chicken, *tzimmes* (a mixture of sweet potatoes, prunes and carrots) or *cholant* (beef, potatoes and vegetables); potato *kugel*

(pudding) and a *glesel* (glass) of tea. It tasted better in a glass!

Before Friday night dinner they lit candles and blessed and they prayed the traditional *Kiddush* over the bread and wine. For *Shabbas* there was always a large *cholla* (white egg bread) and a white tablecloth. Prior to the Sabbath celebration everyone prayed in the *Shul* (synagogue) before sunset.

The very *frum* (strictly observant Jews) like the Reubens did no work until Saturday evening. There was no riding or lighting matches on *Shabbas* and often they hired a *Shabbas goy*, a non-Jew who came in to light the stove or do other religiously-prohibited work. The *Shabbas* dinner was prepared beforehand on Friday. All meals in both families conformed to a complex ritual of what or what was not *kosher*. People had two sets of dishes so as not to mix *fleishike* (meat dishes) with *milcheke* (dairy dishes). Today, probably no more than 20% of American Jews are Orthodox. Conservative Jews follow fewer of the traditions I have described, and Reform Jews, still fewer.

Eastern European Jews usually settled in the same neighborhoods. In Pittsburgh both the Levinsons, at 83 Spring Alley, near Penn Avenue, and the Reubens, on Tunnel Street, lived in the Hill district near downtown. In 1895, Jim, Rachel and their three children moved to 33 Pride Street. With differing interests and life styles and active careers and families, the Levinsons and the Reubens seldom saw each other.

In 1900, Jim, with help from brother-in-law Morris Caplan and a man named Glukoff, entered a partnership with an immigrant named Shub. Their new junk business led to Levinson Steel. Either before or after the business was formed, my grandfather peddled junk with a horse and wagon. Junk peddlers handled scrap steel, old copper and brass and used tires.

Grandfather sometimes lived in a hand-to-mouth fashion in those early hard days. Family lore tells of how he tried to cut overhead by training his horse to eat less. He said, "It took me two years and when I finally got the horse to the point where he

did not require any food at all, the damn thing up and died on me."

Jim lived with his work during the early years. He literally brought the job home with him. The Levinson home was the company office, and the junkyard was next door. My grandmother probably dreamed of moving her family away from the yard and its hard, nasty, dirty, sometimes dangerous work. Later, the Levinsons moved a half block away to Locust Street. The company remained at 33 Pride Street as Levinson Steel until 1950. Locust Street, of course, became the scene of my earliest memories.

He hadn't told me he loved me since I was a little boy.

MY FATHER SAM

My father Sam, born in 1890 only a few years after his parents immigrated, was the oldest of Jim and Rachel's seven children. He grew to resemble Jim Levinson in his intensity and concentration on making a living. He was to throw himself into building a successful company. Sam always expected that he must struggle to succeed. And that there were obstacles to face not of his making. Later in life, he wrote honestly of the virulent (as well as ever-so-polite) religious prejudice which dogged him for years and which cursed identifiably Jewish-owned firms.

My father graduated from Fifth Avenue High School at 16. He was working and on his own at 17 as a bookkeeper for Caplan Bakery. At 20 he was a salesman for Heller & Perrin, a Pittsburgh wholesale grocery company. He quickly proved to be an energetic, imaginative, often humorous salesperson. At Heller and Perrin, where most compensation depended on commissions, he made fast progress. In later years, as I listened to him rattle off a list of products, I understood how he had entertained

and attracted customers and made friends.

Humor seemed to play through most areas of his life. Selling groceries, Sam Levinson promised customers a coat hanger or cigarette lighter for orders over $5.00. If they chose the coat hanger, they received a nail; for a cigarette lighter, they were handed a match. Customers enjoyed these jokes.

My dad's sense of humor was endearing. Yet because he, like his own father, took life seriously, Sam Levinson often used humor to relieve tension. And though a proud man, he could laugh at himself. When asked how many people worked at Levinson Steel, he would reply, "About half of them." I've adopted many of his quips, such as "The doctor said I'll live—he just didn't say how long." In his final days, he joked, "My doctor says I'll have a complete recovery—if I live long enough."

Quickly progressing at Heller & Perrin, Dad soon wanted to marry and raise a family. Then he met pretty Rose Reuben at a basketball game. Neither was aware that their parents knew one another or how they might view a possible match. A long courtship ensued. They married on June 17, 1913, just before Rose Reuben's 21st birthday.

Interesting people, they were quite different from one another. Sam was outgoing, brilliant, keenly humorous, hard-driving. Rose exuded sensitivity, modesty, humility and a quiet dignity. She very much wanted to learn about everything. Their great differences made for difficulties in a marriage that survived—and could thrive—because of deeply shared commitments and common purposes. Their different qualities affected the personalities and temperaments of me and my sisters.

I was lucky to have such complex people for parent. I hope that I inherited or learned the best qualities of each. I know I got my sense of humor from my dad, and that both my parents taught me a sense of responsibility. Both parents still affect me in many ways. "My father has been dead almost 13 years," I

said in 1977 when receiving a National Conference of Christians and Jews Brotherhood Award, "and yet almost every day I think of some idea, some philosophy, some principle I learned from him."

My dad loved sports. As a young man he played basketball for the Zion Council and Young Men's Hebrew Association. In the 1920s, he played tennis and baseball and swam in the *loushy* (a dammed up creek) on weekends at the Summer Outing Association, near Cheswick, Pennsylvania. In a 26-mile marathon, Dad finished eleventh out of 200 at age 23. In his 50s and 60s, he became an avid golfer in a foursome of buddies Ben Raphael, Lou Palley, Sam Leff and sometimes Mike Sachs.

In the early 1920s, it was a several hour drive to the SOA camp in our fancy Lexington automobile. Dad sometimes took me with him on a Saturday afternoon. I went to bed early on one of the cots in the barracks and listened to him and his friends playing cards outside my window. I still think fondly about the breakfasts Hegley prepared Sunday mornings of fried eggs, french toast and pancakes. I could hardly wait for them. Many families arrived on Sundays. The babies played in the sandbox. There were baseball, tennis and swimming in the *loushy*. Then 150 people ate outdoors at long tables covered by a roof. Corn on the cob was a standard, as was Doc Brody coming around with a pitcher of milk for the kids.

And there were all Dad's other interests and hobbies—magic, crossword puzzles, photography and gardening. New things particularly made him enthusiastic. He had one of the earliest radios, a Freed Eisemann, chock-full of dials, levers and headsets and almost needing a mechanic to operate. He acquired one of the early fancy cameras. During Prohibition, he busily made grape wine in the cellar. Later, he became so intrigued by early television that some visitors were insulted because they could not pry him away from the TV set.

Dad's enthusiasms were frequently contagious. He inspired

and encouraged my love of sports. I remember him coming to my high school football games on Friday afternoons and how he once phoned the Allderdice coach, in spite of my protests, and raised hell that I was not put in the game. When my baby sister, Netta, was old enough, the two of them went on expeditions to identify the birds and flowers and to feed the squirrels in Frick Park. We really loved such attention.

My dad showed very great interest in the Jewish community, especially the Jewish "Y", now the Jewish Community Center. In the early 1950s, he and his brothers started to set aside $5,000 annually from company profits (in later years from the family foundation) to create a memorial for their parents. We were proud that on August 24, 1969, we could establish the James and Rachel Levinson Day Camp for the Pittsburgh Jewish Community Center in Monroeville, Pennsylvania.

In 1917, when my grandfather died, my dad left his job at Heller & Perrin, and he and his brother, Abe, took over the scrap business. As they built the business, they began to phase out of junk and into steel. Sam ran the office, and Abe, as tenacious as his older brother, supervised the yard and later the shop. In 1926, they incorporated the company, closed the Pride Street yard, which by then handled scrap iron and secondhand steel, and opened a new fabrication plant at 23rd and Josephine Streets on the South Side. By then, brothers Jack and Monnie were part of the firm. The four brothers made up the Board of Directors. My dad, as the oldest and with his natural business and sales ability, became the first president. He remained so until 1950, when I replaced him as president, and he became the first chairman of the board.

My dad was not only bright and quite knowledgeable about business. He had real street smarts and hated phonies. He was tough and resilient in a tough business. He expected to work hard and he knew he had to fight for everything he ever got. Furthermore, Dad was honest in an industry where competitors

sometimes ignored the business ethics, which very much concerned dad and his brothers.

He was always very conscious and proud of his Jewishness and acknowledged the anti-Semitism, often subtle but always there, which permeated Pittsburgh and the industry. My father taught his family and employees that a Jewish-owned firm started with two strikes against it. So it had to work better, faster and more honestly merely to stay even.

In 1926, when the brothers were incorporating the business, one of the attorneys suggested a company name change. He warned that a Jewish-named firm in the steel industry would never survive. Angered, my dad said, "We may or may not survive in the steel industry, but we are proud of our name and will never change it." His brothers and the generations which followed heartily endorsed that philosophy. Other Jewish-owned firms in the steel industry adopted names like Standard or Federal and eventually disappeared. The Levinson name and reputation survived more than 80 years.

It was important to my dad that Levinson Steel and his family maintain good reputations—and the two were deeply entwined. I remember vividly how during the terrible steel shortages of World War II, Levinson Steel had plenty to sell because of smart buying in previous years. My dad refused to follow other steel distributors into higher grey market and black market prices. Our prices remained as posted. Long before then, our customers knew that was how we operated.

Sam deeply believed that he should contribute to the local and Jewish communities which gave him and the Levinson family opportunities to build their name and business. He was always a proud Pittsburgher. He gave time, money, energy and ideas to organizations on the South Side near our plant. The company, the family and later the foundation supported countless worthwhile community projects. One of Dad's continuing interests was the Brashear Association, a South Side community recrea-

tion center. We all supported its summer camp, Claudine Virginia Trees Camp, where several cabins are dedicated to his memory. Dad received the Emanuel Spector Award from the United Jewish Federation and the Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. When I later received them, we became the only father-son team to have been honored by both awards.

Father Charles Owen Rice (now a retired Monsignor) frequently secured Dad's contributions to the St. Joseph House of Hospitality and other Catholic charities. His friendship with Sammy Weiss (later a judge) interested dad in Duquesne University, operated by the Holy Ghost Fathers. He and the family foundation contributed heavily to it. It is an association I happily continued after his death.

I have admired no person more than my dad. I grew up in awe of him. Some of his skills still fascinate me, like the speed of complicated arithmetic computation that he could do in his head. The ability that he and his brother Jack had to anticipate changes in the supply and demand for steel had much to do with early company growth. He became my model for making friends everywhere and in committing me to Pittsburgh and the Jewish community. He became my model for working hard to build the company and for creating respect and courageously sticking to principles. I'm still inspired by the way he lived and acted.

I'll always remember the day I began full-time as head of the shop office for Levinson Steel. My salary was $18 a week. I was very nervous and worried. At home the night before, my father asked me how I felt about entering the business world. "Scared to death," I answered.

"There's nothing to be scared about," he reassured me. "There are really only three things to remember, and if you never forget them, they will guide you through all the trials and tribulations with which you will be confronted in your business career. First, don't allow things to get complicated. Bring every prob-

lem down to its simplest common denominator and then just use your God-given endowment of plain old common horse sense. Second, surround yourself with good people. Be sure you have the best person on every job. Sometimes a dollar saved in salary is a thousand dollars lost in income. A really good person can sometimes earn his annual salary for you every month. Third, be a man of your word. Never break a promise, and be sure that this spirit permeates your whole company. You can buy a piece of machinery or the services of a good man, but you can never buy a good reputation. That, my boy, you must earn yourself. Don't ever lie for money; don't ever compromise the principles that are making this company great."

These ideas inspired me and many other people. But there was always more to our relationship than what I described so far, though I did not understand aspects of it until many years later. Dad was a complex man, and our relationship was complex. He could be a most feeling and responsive person to human needs. He also was often insensitive to those closest to him—his wife children, brothers and sisters.

Much of what happened in his life—witnessing the struggle of his parents, fighting alongside his brothers against great odds to build a business and to ensure its survival during the great depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, combating anti-Semitism—made him the tough and resilient person I knew. Significantly, it put a hard shell around him. He could be blunt to a fault. And he, like my own son, tended to paint people black or white, seeing them as either great or terrible. There could be no middle ground. I have never believed that. I find lots of grays in the world, and sometimes I find good in the worst character.

I look at some contemporaries in the Jewish community of Pittsburgh—men like Alvin Rogal, Lester Hamburg, Bill Stark, and Bernie Halpern—and see how each of us carried on where our fathers left off. It has been a different world for us, and our styles had to be quite different from theirs. They would not have

survived in business, I believe, without being tough fighters. We of the second generation had to learn to delegate responsibility. As companies became larger it was no longer possible for individuals to be involved in every detail. In our changing world, while not forgetting a fighting spirit, we could rely on mutual trust more than our fathers could.

For Sam Levinson, and thus for his family, his toughness and fighting spirit took their tolls. He often lauded his family and their accomplishments to friends but found it difficult to express love in words or gestures to his wife and children. I learned to be tough as I grew up, but that often was difficult because I was basically a sensitive person. My mother lavished love on me, but, I realized many years later, I also needed the love of my father.

Perhaps the most traumatic event in my life, relating to my dad, came to light many years later on a psychologist's couch. My psychologist at the time was Bob Morris. He had an office in the loft at the Unitarian Church on Ellsworth Avenue in Pittsburgh. It happened in the spring of 1963. I was 49 years old. My dad had suffered a stroke a few years earlier. Although with the help of a wheelchair he was able to get to the office for a few hours most days, he required round-the-clock nursing care.

Bob Morris subscribed to a theory popular among analysts that many of our problems are the result of suppressed emotions. Too many of us, he felt, swallow our anger and our hurts and our sadness because we are afraid to express genuine anger or fear or to cry about a genuine hurt. So Bob Morris tried to get me to feel comfortable about expressing some of these feelings. It took many months, but one day in his office I was lying on his couch and suddenly found myself crying freely. He asked me why I was crying and I said I didn't know.

"What are you thinking about?"

"My father."

"What about your father?"

Then it all came tumbling out from where it had been buried in my subconscious for 35 years.

I was right there again. A teenager. My dad had been away for a week. On the day he was coming home, I had football practice in Schenley Park for my fraternity football team. In the meantime, when my dad arrived home, my mother told him how I had aggravated her all week. I don't remember what I'd done.

When football practice was over, I was so anxious to see my dad I ran all the way home. When I burst into the house, instead of greeting me with a hug, my dad grabbed me, took me down to the cellar, took off his belt and proceeded to give me a whipping. It was the only whipping I ever got. When he was through, I went upstairs and lay face down on my bed. My mother came in. She was extremely upset. Tears streamed down her cheeks. She helped me take off my shirt. It was stuck to me where the oozing welts were clotting and drying. She put cold compresses on my back and sat silently with me. The hurt raged deep inside me, but I refused to let it show.

I didn't shed a tear, not for 35 years until I lay on the psychologist's couch. I still don't know why my dad did that. I only know I suppressed the hurt for a long, long time.

When I came home from my session with Bob Morris, my mother was visiting. I said to her, "Mother, do you remember when Daddy gave me a whipping?"

She replied, "Do I remember? I never forgave myself for that."

Then I told her that the incident must have had a profound effect on me, and I told her about my visit to Bob Morris' office.

A few days later I was visiting my parents. Only the three of us were in the house, and my mother called me over to my dad's bed. She asked him if he remembered giving me a licking.

With his face on the side and his speech impaired from his stroke, he said, "Yes, I remember."

My mother said, "You shouldn't have done that, Sam."

He looked at me and said, "I'm sorry, Aaron. I love you." He hadn't told me he loved me since I was a little boy.

He started to cry, my mother started to cry, and I started to cry. To this day, I can not tell that story without crying—the hurt feelings of the licking, the uncovering of those feelings 35 years later, and my dad on his death bed saying, "I'm sorry. I love you."

I didn't really understand these complexities when I entered the business as a young man. It was then that a different relationship, began to develop between my father and me. We had a new common interest, and it made us closer, but it was a business relationship, and that had its difficulties for me. I could no longer call him Daddy, and now I found it difficult and awkward to say Dad or Pop. I did not fear him or love him less but in that setting was embarrassed to say these words. I tried and failed to call him S.M., as others did in the company. Usually, I started talking without calling him anything.

When I finally became president of the company in 1950, and my dad became chairman of the board, he was very proud. I think he was also pleased with the way I proceeded to carry out the job of president. Although I never studied business in school, I did lots of reading and compared notes with many executives. I soon joined the Young Presidents Organization (YPO) which gave me more people from whom to learn.

I represented a different breed of corporate leadership. I knew we needed the best person for every job, we needed a clear definition of reponsibilities and authority and we needed financial controls. With those tools I could be a part of every major decision without being burdened with the details of every department. I could be an effective manager and still give middle managers the freedom to make many of their decisions. Fred Hertzberg, then associated with Psychological Services of Pittsburgh and later world-renowned for his theories of motiva-

tion, taught me a great deal about motivating people. I was also influenced by Douglas McGregor of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, famous for his "Theory X" and "Theory Y" of management. After he spoke at a YPO seminar, I read some of his books.

As the years went on, non-family executives like Mort Chatkin, Irv Levitt, Dave Zahniser, Cal Levinson and Ed Schuman were all of great help in providing the leadership and management every corporation needs. Talented people also came from the family. Jim Levinson was executive vice president for a number of years before he took over management of Autoclave Engineers. Lou Siegel was a great trader, like Dad and my Uncle Jack. Still other family members—Morry Podolsky, Harry Stein, Joel and Burt Levinson and Dave Cook included— made outstanding contributions.

My dad was pleased and proud of what I was doing for perhaps a year. Then, as he approached 65, it grew difficult for him, as for so many hard-driving, self-made businessmen, to be the company elder statesman—to sit back from day-to-day operations. I wanted him involved in the big picture, in corporate philosophy, corporate finances and planning. I wanted him to advise junior executives and represent Levinson Steel in the corporate and general communities. Seeing me lead the company as president grew difficult for him. As if to stop feeling useless, he soon jumped back into operations with both feet. He countermanded my instructions, made decisions without consulting me and held his own meetings with managers.

It was one of the most difficult periods of my life, and I could not just stand by. I confronted my dad constantly, saying, "I thought I was handling this. Now you've taken over. Do you want me to be president or chief clerk?" I even walked into a meeting in his office and asked, "Don't you think I should be part of this meeting?" This unexpected turn in our relationship was not untypical in a family firm, I learned as a member of the

Young Presidents' Organization. Many young presidents had similar problems with fathers who became chairmen of the boards or emeriti presidents.

In a chapter in my brother-in-law Earl Grollman's book, *What Helped Me When My Loved One Died*, I said, "Part of me was glad when my dad had his stroke in the fall of 1959. Then I really had to take over. Later I felt guilty that I had had such feelings."

Since my father's death, and as I have grown older, I have been able to see my father from a different perspective. It has been important to me to be able to say now what I wished I had been able to tell him when he was alive. All this has helped me appreciate Dad in fine new ways.

Let me share portions of one long letter I wrote him posthumously on Valentine's Day, 1979.

Dear Daddy:

You were quite a guy, Dad. Even though your body died 14 years ago, there's no way that great spirit of yours will ever die. Part of it has been transmitted to me, to your other children and to your grandchildren. I admired you when you were alive. I appreciate you much more now. When I think of you, I do not think of those last few years when you were incapacitated. I think of you when you were a vibrant leader in our company and in the community...

I know you would be pleased to know that in many ways, I've followed in your footsteps. I'm now 64, 10 years younger than you were when you died. I'm very well except for a slight case of cancer which robbed me of my voice. It's gone now (I mean the cancer). At least I hope and feel very positive about it. I'm chairman of the board as you were. I'm active in the community, as you were.

...you taught me the fundamentals of business, how to sell, how to buy, how to manage people, how to size up people. You taught me the importance of timing, the advantages of staying liquid, when and how to take a calculated risk and how very im-

about the prejudices in this world and that, as Jews, we had to work twice as hard, be twice as honest and be twice as effective to come out the same place. You taught me about the phonies in the world.

What a sense of humor you had. Half of my stock of jokes I stole or inherited from you, and I don't always give you credit.

Oh, you had a few faults. You were sometimes blunt and insensitive (even though you were generally great with people). I know you loved that beautiful and wonderful woman you were married to, but I don't think you ever fully appreciated her. That's a common failing of many of us. You should see her now (1979) so vibrant, so honest and direct, so loving and still beautiful with her red cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes. She is loved, respected and revered in the community. I don't know whether she taught you or you taught her, but surely you both taught your children the true spirit of charity. Yes, Dad, you had a couple of weaknesses. Who doesn't? But your strengths were so many more—and your wisdom is timeless.

I know it was always difficult for you to tell your children how much you loved them and how proud you were. But, I also know that you bragged to your friends all the time about your children and their accomplishments. I wish you would have allowed yourself the opportunity to get acquainted with your grandchildren. You missed so much. I know from first-hand experience. Your grandchildren are all fantastic and you would have adored your great grandchildren, all seven of them.

Much has changed in these past 14 years, Pop. ...Ed Schuman is president...the first non-family president since we started 76 years ago, and he is doing an excellent job. During your time, we were so proud of an annual volume of $5 to $10 million. Last year we did around $50 million, and next year, barring a strike or anything unexpected, we should do $64 million. We have a plant in Ambridge and two in Oklahoma, besides our fabricating plant on the Southside. Of course, as I said, a dollar is not the same as it used to be...

So many other things have changed. You wouldn't believe the language in movies and on TV and nothing is private, not even the most intimate sex. There no longer are locker room stories or stag movies. Everything is out in the open.

And there are 4 billion people in the world—a large number

of them don't have enough to eat and your grandson Jim is devoting his whole life to trying to do something about that. You wouldn't like many things that are going on today. But, the fundamentals haven't changed—love and integrity and hard work still stand for a lot—at least for some they do. There are still lots of prejudices. I guess there will always be. But the situation has changed. It used to be that a Black person had a hell of a time getting a job because of skin color. Now in many places, a Black person is given preference because of the color of his or her skin. In spite of that, Blacks still remain at the bottom of the economy. You and I had dreams of a color-blind world in which people are judged by their ability and what is in their hearts. We seem to be just as far from that dream today as we were when you were alive and active in the business and in the community.

Well, there it is dear Dad. But no matter how much the world changes and how complex it gets, some of us can value the simple things as you did. I do the same tricks you did (only better). Your values always made a lot of sense, and I do my best to embrace them.

How do I end this letter? Perhaps with lots of love—'til eternity.

Your son,
Aaron

I call your attention to the fact that this letter was written in 1979. Some of the comparisons today would be even more dramatic.

After his stroke, Dad spent the rest of his life in bed or in a wheelchair, with nurses around the clock. With the aid of hydraulic equipment and elevators, he came to the office for a couple of hours most days. Since my wife's and my home and that of my sister and brother-in-law June and Lou Siegel adjoined that of my parents on Forbes Avenue, we could visit them often.

It was only a few months before his death in 1965 that he and I had that very important renewal of our love for one another which my therapy—and Dad's deepest feelings—had allowed.

Not long afterwards, he had his nurse wheel him into my office. After she left, he painfully slurred, "Aaron, this is it. I can't take it any more. I'm going to die."

"Aw, Dad, you're just having a bad day," I answered.

He assured me that it was the end and had the nurse wheel him away. That was the last time I saw him alive. He died naturally in his sleep that night.

"You ask a foolish question, you get a foolish answer."

My Mother Rose Reuben Levinson

My mother was born in 1892 in Pittsburgh. She was one of ten children, two of whom died as infants. Her father, Isaac, was a rabbi and a teacher, whose salary at the Beth Jacob Synagogue in the Hill district of Pittsburgh was barely enough for Mother Netti to feed and clothe the children and pay the rent. From their earliest childhood, the children were taught about the Jewish religion. They learned the rituals; and they read and discussed the *Torah* (the five books of Moses) and other parts of the *Hebrew Bible* and *Talmud*, which encompass much of the literature, laws, tradition and teachings of the Jewish religion.

Rose was an ambitious girl who wanted to learn—wanted to do things—but in those days girls were supposed to learn how to cook and take care of the house. Other kinds of learning were for men. She asked her father to teach her Hebrew. This he would not do—such lessons were reserved for his sons, Harry, Irwin, George and Meyer (who later changed his name to Monte). Instead, he taught her how to *kosher* meat.

She grew up in a very devout orthodox Jewish home. Jewish tradition was important to her during her whole life. Although she got away from the two sets of dishes and some of the strict orthodox practices, her faith in God never wavered.

While my dad felt his Judaism strongly, he did not have that kind of orthodox background. His greatest belief was that if you are willing to work hard and fight for everything you get in life, that God might be there to back you up. And if, in the process, you still get your teeth knocked out, you have to find a way to get up off the floor and start punching again. It was a slightly different kind of belief, but the mixture of my mother's and my father's faiths made for an interesting home life.

Rose was only 16 when her father died at age 47 in 1908. Except for Annie, Dora and Harry, the children were still in school. On Netti and the three oldest children fell the burden of supporting the family. My mother was determined to remain in school as long as possible. She alone among the Reuben children finished high school.

She became a secretary to the purchasing agent at McBeth-Evans Glass Company after graduation. Her sister Annie was a salesperson at the Lewin Neaman Department Store. Harry helped the family through a variety of sales jobs. Dora helped at home and worked part-time in a local 5 and 10 cent store. As the family only scraped by, my mother obtained a second job as a night school typing teacher at Fifth Avenue High School. She taught two classes with 85 students in each one. Until she died, former students would hail her on the streets as "Miss Reuben."

My mother loved to learn as much as she loved to teach. She told the story of how one of her brothers wanted her to learn piano, so she took six lessons. Each lesson cost 60 cents. After each one, she went home, passed on what she had learned to her brother, and then taught others for 25 cents per lesson. Believe it or not, my mother did all of this with no piano in her home. She drew the keyboard with chalk on the kitchen table, which was

how she practiced and taught her brother. Whatever Rose Reuben Levinson did in her life, she did with dignity and with intensity.

From these modest beginnings emerged a dignified, down-to-earth but nevertheless elegant woman. My parents lived simple lives—not poor lives—and this background resulted in some funny stories we laughed about years later. Early in their marriage, they celebrated an event at a fancy restaurant. Mysterious bowls, finger bowls, were brought at the end of the dinner. "What are these for?" she asked the waiter. "To wash your hands," he replied. My father looked at her in disgust and said, "See, you ask a foolish question, you get a foolish answer."

During the last few years of her life she was bothered by a bad hip. On a couple of occasions this made her a patient at the Montefiore Hospital. She was no different there than she was at home and elsewhere; she was kind and considerate to the nurses, the lab technicians, the people who cleaned her room and brought her meals. The people who worked on the floor often commented to me what a wonderful mother I had.

That was my mother, proud, independent—and able genuinely to reach out to people. Those close to her were always made to feel loved and wanted. I believe that she had something of a sixth sense about all children. During the last 30 years of her life, she volunteered at the Home for Crippled Children (later renamed the Rehabilitation Institute). She loved these kids and was proud that they sent her letters after they matured and left the Home. Sometimes typed by individuals holding a stick between their teeth, they came addressed to Aunt Rose. She never told anyone at the Home her age. "If they knew how old I was, they wouldn't let me do all the things that I can do for those kids," she said late in life. Her major hope after a first heart attack was that she would improve quickly in order to return to her work at the Home. What had started, at my suggestion, as a means to overcome some personal frustrations, turned into a

happy 30-year form of self therapy...but much, much more for others.

Mother had countless interests. She never lost her love of music. During most of her marriage, she sang in synagogue choirs, including that of Beth Shalom conducted by my father-in-law, the Reverend Elias Zaludkowski. She rarely missed a concert at the Jewish "Y" or at the Pittsburgh Symphony. Mother enjoyed the "Y" health club. She went regularly for exercises and twice weekly for a steam bath and massage.

Rose Levinson never sought prominence as a leader in the Jewish community. Yet she participated in many Jewish organizations. I think she belonged to every local one, including Hadassah, the National Council of Jewish Women and B'nai B'rith Women. She gave money and time generously to these and many more groups. Although she didn't get the public recognition, her efforts were noticed by others. Ann Lowenthal, who was my parents' friend as well as mine and Sonia's, once said, "Aaron, you have a great father. He is a real community leader. Everyone loves him. But the one in your family I truly admire is your mother. In her own quiet way she does more things for more people than anyone I have ever known."

After her marriage and my birth, she became a serious mother and homemaker. She maintained a spotless home. And she studied nutrition and became a health nut for the whole family long before such ideas became popular. Mother never smoked and sipped a half glass of wine only at *Passover Seders* or during Jewish rituals. Caffeine or things she believed harmful to her health, she avoided, but not (like me) sweets. Her children and friends laughed over her machinations about sweets. In clubs or restaurants she always declined desserts. Once she tasted everyone's desserts, she had consumed more sweets than anyone at the table.

She and my dad wanted their adult children to live nearby. In 1942, they built a beautiful home on an acre of ground and

bought the adjoining land where they hoped some day my sister June and I would build homes—as we did, June and husband Lou in the early 1950s, and Sonia and I between 1955 and 1957. (My sister Netta was already living in Boston.) My parents so enjoyed the trees and flowers on their land that they added a greenhouse to grow flowers year round. They loved their home, and though on a busy street full of streetcars, buses and cars, it felt like we were out in the country once we entered the driveway.

She and my father lived frugally during the first two decades of marriage. Frugality was a lesson never forgotten from her poor beginnings—and neither were the lessons to be charitable and generous with whatever one had. Her frugality—and that of her sister Bess, who in 1922 married my father's brother, Abe—actually saved the early company from collapse many times. Faced often during the early 1920s with no funds for the payroll, Bess and Rose used their savings to pay the workers. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the women in the family dug deep to provide for their families. So being chided by her adult children about being overly-thrifty never fazed my mother.

Whenever she was in a position to help us, she would do so. She constantly prodded my dad that "we should do this for June, this for Aaron, this for Netta" or maybe "we should plan to take the kids to Conneaut Lake for a couple of weeks this summer."

My parents did not change their values as the business prospered and their own financial status improved. They never forgot their humble backgrounds; neither grew class conscious. They judged others by their strengths and skills. No one was judged by color, creed, nationality or station in life. These credos became important in my own life.

My mother and I had a very close relationship. When I was troubled, I could sit with her and draw on her comfort, wisdom

and love. Once I became an adult, she often shared with me what was bothering her. There was a great deal of mutual love and admiration between us. At a community dinner where I received an award, I used the old line, "I'm glad she's here because she is the one person who believes everything which has been said about me."

Some of the simplest and corniest things I did caused her to chuckle. One dumb song I knew always made her laugh. "Never throw stones at your mother," it began. "Remember, she is only a woman who fed you and put you to bed." It ends, "she is the best pal you ever had. So never throw stones at your mother, my lad, throw bricks at your old man instead." To be cute, I occasionally imitated my father by calling her Ro. When I did she just beamed.

My two sisters openly envied our relationship and complained to her that I was her favorite or enjoyed preferential treatment. In fact, we all were her favorites, we and our children. Mother and I talked often of how terrific both June and Netta were and how sad it was that some people were childless. We and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren were, to the end, part of her, as she and all my family are part of me. As she lay dying in 1981, Mother was ecstatic to see three-month-old Noah, whom my son Jim had smuggled in to see his great-grandmother. For five minutes the two cooed and made faces at one another until the nurse angrily shooed out father and child.

Hers was a sweet, generous nature, and behavior almost devoid of hostility. Mother was never a vengeful or vindictive person. A few years before her death, she nearly went blind because a Pittsburgh ophthalmologist had not diagnosed a glaucoma during visits over a two month span. Only the prompting of Netta brought her to Boston's Eye and Ear Hospital and an emergency operation the same day. When I asked her to consider a possible malpractice suit against the first doctor, she said, "Absolutely not. He intended no harm. Anyone can make a mis-

take, and a malpractice suit would in no way help my eyes."

Like her mother, she chose a peacemaker's role. No matter the difficulty, she remained cool. The harshest provocation elicited no show of anger. If family members argued or fought, and that included children and their spouses, she managed to bring them together to talk out their problems. She was satisfied only when they shook hands or kissed and made up.

During my parents' 51 years of marriage, they chose friends, as Sonia and I have done, without regard to religion or nationality. They established close personal relations with many Christian couples first known from business dealings. They both enjoyed the annual American Institute of Steel Construction conventions. Countless of their friendships began at these meetings and continued during visits to Pittsburgh. When Sonia and I took her to this convention a few years after Dad's death, Mother was pleased that so many people remembered her and made a fuss over her after her long absence.

With the happy times and the satisfactions in their family, there came tensions in this, as in many marriages. As I wrote in an earlier chapter, my dad seldom expressed his love. And though he was humorous—and my mother often enjoyed his jokes—he was a born tease. Sometimes the teasing was just too much for her. To company at dinner, for example, my dad invariably said, "Oh, I see we are using our new silverware" or "our new dishes." And this always embarrassed my mother.

Some tensions rose from differences in temperament, his, gregarious, hers, shy. At parties, Dad walked away from Mother at the door and within three minutes would be shaking hands, telling jokes and mixing comfortably with the party goers. Being left to her own resources at parties was not easy for her. My sisters and I heard the aftermath of such situations before we went to bed or at the dinner table.

As a widow, she greatly enjoyed even more than before having family and friends to dinner. At the table she regaled us with

tales from early in her marriage. Many were hilarious. It was then we heard about mysterious fingerbowls and about her failed efforts to make cranberry sauce when she repeatedly added water because the berries persisted in floating to the top despite stirring.

It was at that time that she developed a beautiful friendship with Sam Sherman, 10 years her junior. They often dined out together and returned to her home for cards. It was an important relationship for them both. Sam, heartbroken by her final illness, was to memorialize his friend by contributions to charities and planting trees in Israel before his death three years later.

Entering her 80s, mother, like many older people, seemed increasingly inconsistent in habits and in identifying her needs. She would insist on reimbursing someone for a newspaper bought the previous week. If one of her children owed her $1,000.00, she might say "forget it." She had far more patience with her children than we did with her. When her health began to fail, we futilely sought a companion for her. None would satisfy her. She admitted to nobody, not even herself, that she needed help. Upset, June and I would raise our voices in frustration, she would calm us down, and we would leave feeling ashamed.

She was truly a woman of substance. She had integrity, dignity, pride and a warm, generous heart. When she died, her children gathered around the attorney and listened to an interpretation of her will, but we knew that the principles by which she lived were a legacy worth far more than any of the material things she left.

"When we're out of them,
we also sell them three for a penny."

THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH

My world began in the boom time of Pittsburgh in the new century. Blast furnaces painted its skies red; coal dust blackened everything. The new world of Pittsburgh had awed my grandparents. I took it for granted as my own.

Experiences between 1917 and 1923 shaped me in important ways. Living on McKee Place in Oakland, near the University of Pittsburgh, I formed my first deep and enduring friendships. Willie Goldberg, who was a couple of years older, Lenny Harris and Howard Levine—they were my friends then and now, more than 60 years later. We were the "Oakland Band" and adopted the motto of *The Three Musketeers:* "All for one and one for all."

Howdy and I have been friends all our lives. In 1917, he lived next door; now he lives across the street from me. Though I lost touch with Willie Goldberg for a long time, my mother located him a few years ago and we have enjoyed two reunions and are looking forward to a third. As children, we had dis-

cussed our grandparents; now we talk about our grandchildren, and with the same excitement now as then.

A shy boy on McKee Place, and quite unsure of myself, I envied Howdy. He always had girlfriends. Watching him walk home from school with Evelyn Buck made me wonder if I could ever overcome my shyness. In my late teens, I did. It was overcoming that early bashfulness that has made it possible for me to encounter a world of remarkable and often wonderful people. For years people have known me as outgoing and gregarious and as somebody who goes out of his way to confront people and talk to them. I considered titling this book *I Talk To Strangers*. While I don't always have as much confidence as I show, most of the time I am very self-assured and relaxed with myself and others. It was not always so.

There I was: a proud and tough little boy, shy around people and still always curious. I was aware that my parents were just scraping by in those years, but I never suffered or lacked a meal or decent clothes. I knew how they put their children's welfare first. Memories of the warmth and love of my family have shaped my life and are as much a part of me today as my arms and legs.

What we might have lacked in material comforts must have been more than made up for by the warmth of the family. I have very pleasant memories from that period in my life. There were basketball games at the "Y", to which all the fathers who were on the team took their young sons. Once they took all of us little guys, dressed us in uniforms, and put us on the court during half-time. Comic relief for our dads. A grand and memorable time for us.

Many of those little guys, who were too small to throw a ball more than a few feet, turned out to be my friends at different times in my life. Frank Glick (now dead) once worked at Levinson Steel. Bill Skirble, who died in 1958, was a close friend for many years. Herbie Rosenthal still talks about the stories his dad

told him about those basketball games. And there was my buddy, Ralph Raphael.

As I think about my early childhood, so many things pop into my mind about family and friends—the basketball games, the Summer Outing Association and the unforgettable vacations—Conneaut Lake, Atlantic City, Bedford Springs, and when I was just 3 or 4, those memorable weeks at Matthews Farm near Ligonier with Mom, Aunt Ida, Aunt Bessie, Grandma Rachel and Great Aunt Lena. I sometimes got confused about names and hugged Aunt Ida, calling her Ida-Bessie. My mother told me that it was at Matthews Farm that I once fell off the porch when I was but a crawling infant. The best vacations happened when Dad stuffed us all into a car, and off we went for a week at Wildwood on the New Jersey shore.

Attending Holmes School before I was nine, we did the usual kid things, like roasting spuds and playing "buck, buck, how many fingers up?" We smoked the ends from Indian toby trees in the neighborhood, pretending we were not seven any longer. We mimicked our parents' politics. When Mackeral ran against Magee for mayor sometime between 1920 and 1922, Willie, Howdy, Lenny and I loosened our cry against Mackeral's billboard on Bates Street: "Magee, Magee, Magee's our man. Let's throw Mackeral in the garbage can." Mackeral duly lost.

Often we chose teams and played baseball in the street. If too few appeared for teams, we played the old English game of Rounders. If our ball rolled into the sewer, it had to be retrieved to continue playing. Off came the manhole cover, then two boys would hold a third by his legs upside down and lower him to find the ball.

We had a legend on our block, Chief Yellowhorse, who was remembered for his pitching on the Pittsburgh Pirate baseball team in 1921 and 1922. An Indian from Pawnee, Oklahoma, his real name was Moses J. Yellowhorse. During the 1921 season he was credited with five wins and three loses while pitching 48

innings in 10 games. His ERA (earned run average) was 2.98. The next year he saw more action but only was credited with three wins and one loss. For many years after he left the team, crowds would yell at faltering pitchers, "Put in Yellowhorse." That's what Howdy and I did. We went up to this nice guy's door, rang his doorbell and had him come out and play catch with us.

Other Pirate players lived on our street. Wilber Cooper was a local hero from Bearsville, West Virginia. He pitched for the Pirates from 1912 to 1924. He was a real institution. In four different seasons—three of them consecutive—he won 20 or more games. Cooper boasted a consistently low ERA. A right handed batter, he pitched left handed. It required far more nerve to ring his door bell than that of Chief Yellowhorse. Howdy and I finally did it. Mrs. Cooper answered. "We want to see Mr. Cooper." She giggled and called him to the door. Mr. Cooper graciously invited us in to cookies, milk and a thrilling talk.

Many of the Pirates were our heroes in the early 1920s. I still talk to other old-timers about the famous players and teams of our childhood. There are many I remember with great pleasure, men like Pooch Barnhart (third baseman), Buckshot Wright (shortstop), Skeeter Bigbee (outfielder), Skeeter's brother Lyle (pitcher), Johnny Gooch (catcher), Pie Traynor (third baseman), Boots Grantham (first baseman), Scoops Carey (outfielder), Gus Suhr (first baseman), Kiki Cuyler (outfielder), Rabbit Maranville (shortstop), Paul and Lloyd Waner (outfielders), Glenn Wright (shortstop) and Specs Meadows (pitcher).

At Holmes School the class was divided into three groups. Smartest were the Busy Bees; I do not remember what the rest of us were called. Mr. Cober was our principal; Miss Shugart, my first grade or kindergarten teacher. Miss McClain, Miss Martin and Miss Stambaugh also taught us. Going outside on the fire escape was a special honor for those deemed very good. There we cleaned the erasers, gazed down at the goats in the

yard (possibly there to clip the grass), looked out over the city and proudly peered through the windows at friends.

Students from Holmes, many of them Jewish, passed kids from a Catholic school at Willmot Hill, off the then-new Boulevard of the Allies. (At the bottom of the hill lay the insultingly named Hunky Hollow, since filled in.) Catholics would yell, "Jew, Christ Killer," as they passed. Fights between Jews and Catholics, one-on-one and in groups, were common. I encountered a few other anti-Semitic incidents later. Yet generally, when Jews and non-Jews rubbed elbows or played sports together, there was no room for fear and suspicion to fester and grow.

We moved to Phillips Avenue in Squirrel Hill in 1923, and I transferred to Colfax School. Many of my Colfax schoolmates became lifelong friends. Some of the guys became members of Theta Sigma Chi (so important in my life). Others played football with me at Allderdice High. Elkan Avner did both, became an intimate confidante and later married Sonia's sister Celia.

I became special friends with Ralph Raphael, thanks to my father's closeness to his dad Ben. They played basketball and golfed together. Sharing many interests, they went places together and arranged joint family outings. So I spent a lot of time with Ralph. We attended Camp Red Feather and Camp Stinson together. The two families shared vacations at Bedford Springs and Conneaut Lake.

Dominic's candy store tempted us across from Colfax. I took my nickel or six cents in spending money, and my friends and I studied and studied the choices. Sometimes we left with baseball cards; other times, with candy or a few marbles that we called mannies. I asked Dominic how much green leaves cost. "Two for a penny," he answered. "They are three for a penny at Cicero's?" I responded. "So, why don't you get them at Cicero's," came the expert reply. "They are out of them." Dominic smiled. "When we are out of them, we also sell them three for a penny."

When Ralph and I were growing up in the late '20s, his dad had The Raphael Electric Company on Fifth Avenue. My dad's office at Levinson Steel was on Pride Street only a few blocks away. We both had jobs on Saturdays in our dads' offices and we would often meet for lunch at one of those great Jewish restaurants on Fifth Avenue, not far from his dad's office.

The three restaurants that I remember distinctly were Caplan's, Weinstein's and Richest. When I recently had lunch at a local restaurant, I had a cup of soup, a salad and some hot tea, and I gave the waiter $6.00, which included the tip. Back in 1928 and 1929, I was jealous of Ralph—his dad always gave him 50 cents for lunch. My dad only gave me a quarter. However, Ralph always shared. We would just divide the 75 cents and both get the same thing. He was really proud of his 50 cents. He displayed it like one might display a $50 bill today.

On Phillips Avenue in Squirrel Hill, the Bernsteins lived on our right and the Silverblatts on our left. I was midway in age between the older Leonard Silverblatt and his brother Irwin. Of their two sisters, I took less notice. Leonard took me by the hand and introduced me to the neighborhood. The Bernsteins also became our friends. Mr. Bernstein, a craftsman, helped us with carpentry and other work in the house. I remember them as a kindly old couple. Sylvia and Helen were their daughters. Helen would marry Mort Chatkin, later a close friend, an officer of Levinson Steel and, because of his father's marriage to my aunt, my cousin.

Baseball occupied the big empty space across from our home on Phillips. I loved watching the Triangle Club team, featuring when I was about 11, that star third-baseman (and my hero), 14-year-old Lenny Silverblatt. Impressively, the Triangle Club wore uniforms, rare in that era.

We had the circus on our block, and I mean the Circus. Every year Barnum and Bailey (before its merger with Ringling Brothers) pitched its tents on those same empty lots on Phillips

Avenue. We kids ogled the elephants leaving the big trailers. Watching workmen drive stakes for the big tents fascinated us. We shook hands with the fat lady, snake charmer, sword swallower, midgets and other strange and intriguing circus folk and felt like their pals. Then, when we could stand the wait no longer, our parents took us to see the show under the Big Top. Finally, to their relief—given the mess the circus introduced into their lives and the annual destruction of their lawn—the show travelled onward.

"We killed your brother."

THE LEVINSON-REUBEN CLAN

Both my parents came from large families. Rose Reuben was one of eight; Sam Levinson, one of seven. They eventually resembled a clan after three from one family married three from the other. Abe Levinson married Bess Reuben, my mother's sister, and Ida Levinson married my mother's brother, Harry Reuben. So my sisters and I had six double-cousins, a normally unfamiliar term. The three marriages helped make the Reuben-Levinson clan very close—that and our being together in Levinson Steel.

In my parents' generation, Dad and his brothers Jack, Abe and Monnie managed Levinson Steel. Brother Hymie became a dentist. He was an exceptional athlete, especially as a basketball player at Fifth Avenue High School under Coach Briggs. Briggs, at retirement, called Hymie the best he had ever coached. Hymie graduated to play under the legendary Doc Carlson at Pitt. In those days, they had one person do all the foul shooting, and the ever-accurate Hymie was the Pitt specialist.

While a dentist, Hymie earned a few dollars playing for one

of the two Pittsburgh professional basketball teams, the Coffey Club. The Second Story Morrys was the other team. John Coffey, a Catholic, founded the Coffey Club at the old Montefiore Hall. The team he ended up with was all Jews. They played throughout the east and midwest, often three times a week, and were among the top teams in the United States from the late teens through the 1920s.

It was the beautiful Mary Chernuchin, a teenage secretary in my dad's office, whom my outstanding Uncle Hymie married. Her name was a source of endless friendly laughter for Dad. Hearing it for the first time, he said "Mary...Mary," like he was ready to sneeze and then sneezed "Chernuchin." I think that he always said her name and then sneezed, or at least until Uncle Hymie changed it.

Hymie shared this sense of humor. Instead of applying laughing gas, he talked entertainingly to patients until they forgot the pain. "I use drills in my work just as you do in your shop," he told his brothers, "and deal with plates and bridges just as you do." Hymie and Mary had two daughters, Joyce and Arlene. Late in life, after a heart attack in the early 1950s, Hymie quit dentistry to work for Levinson Steel. On December 4, 1958, he died at his desk from a second heart attack. Aunt Mary later married their close friend, a widower dentist, Dr. Weisberg.

All my aunts and uncles held special meaning for me. With Aunt Sadie I held heart-to-heart talks when I was nine. I worked in Uncle George's grocery store when I was 11. I watched Uncle Hymie star at Pitt and Coffey Club basketball games. Aunt Ida, whom I loved until her 1984 death, was my very favorite aunt. I fondly recall being held in her arms at Matthews farm when I was four, and she buoyed my spirits when she hugged me when I was 54 and she praised my work for Levinson Steel. Ida was a very private person and a superb mother. She would never do anything in the whole world to hurt anyone—she

would rather hurt herself first. She simply never stopped loving and caring. It was she who supplied much information for this book.

Although the Levinson branch of the Levinson-Reuben clan is the part of my family which was involved as stockholders in Levinson Steel, there were two members of the Reuben family who worked for the company in important positions for many years. My cousin Shirley Nayhouse, whose mother was one of the eight Reuben children, has been almost as close to me as a sister. And Gary Reuben, whose father was also one of the eight, has been like a son.

Cousin Natalie, Abe Levinson's daughter, also worked for the company. She married my school friend Morry Podolsky. This is how it happened: Around 1935, a couple of years after I started with the company, Uncle Abe wanted someone to work with me in the shop office. I tried to reach Morry, who I knew had been helping Maynard LaForge on his Good Humor truck because he was out of work. Morry was on vacation at Cook's Forest, but as it involved a job, his mother promised to bring him back.

Morry rushed back and heard me out. The first thing he asked was, "How much does it pay?" I can't remember if I said $8.00 or $12.00 a week. Morry responded by saying, "You mean you brought me back from my vacation for that kind of money?" Still, he took the job and eventually became plant superintendent. And, in one of the many romances within Levinson Steel, he married cousin Natalie.

June and Netta, my two sisters, have always been central in my life. They differ widely in age and in many other ways. June is four years younger than I, and Netta is 16 years younger. They have been alike in their toughness, resilience and adaptability and in acting as responsible wives and mothers who kept their families together. They are survivors, enjoying the good things, weathering the bad. Here are brief introductions to two

women who are very important to my life.

June

June was a sweet, lovely, delicate girl who grew into a very feminine, beautiful, tall and tenacious woman. She has the same strong sense of duty, especially to family, that our mother possessed. She became about the most determined woman I have known. As little kids, we fought often. I tried to avoid getting caught when I hit my little sister. If I slapped her (not in the face), I put my finger beside my nose and said "Shhh." I would continue, slap, shhh, slap, shhh.

June developed early as a ballet dancer and became quite an accomplished one. Miss Sexton first taught her and later the then-unknown Gene Kelly, who with his brother Fred operated a Pittsburgh dancing school. As a student at the University of Pittsburgh, June taught dancing. From age nine to about 18 or 19, I attended her annual kermis (dance school finale) almost as a ritual. When I was about 17 and she 13, we performed an adagio dance together at the kermis. I felt like I had two left feet, a real *klutz*, but June and our parents enjoyed our dancing.

Our parents had been far less happy when June came home one afternoon and told our mother that I was dead. I was about 12-years-old and had been playing in a pickup game of football. Our team lost, and I guess I had taken a real beating. Someone after the game off-handedly remarked, "We killed your brother" or "Your brother got killed," about the game results. June took it literally and sprinted home to tell our shocked mother.

Mother called Dad at once, and he and his brothers hurried home from the office. Then she called Beth Shalom synagogue, where I was supposed to be in Hebrew school. Her frantic plea brought innocent me to the phone. "I thought you were dead," she exclaimed and started crying. I misunderstood her, hearing "I thought you were bad. "I said, "Don't cry, mommy. I won't be bad any more."

My dad and uncles rushed to our house, which was being painted. Painters had covered the furnishings, including the mirrors, with white sheets—and it is Jewish tradition to cover mirrors when there is a death. Shocked, they started walking in a circle, intoning "Oh, my God. Oh, my God." My mother quickly told them I was okay. Then I hurried in. Everyone made a fuss over me. I was permitted to go bowling that night with my dad as a special treat. The family never forgot this incident, and June sang about it at my 70th birthday party.

June married Lou Siegel in 1942. A year or two afterwards, Lou joined Levinson Steel. He became a key manager as vice president of purchases and then a board member. He developed into the same sort of excellent merchant that my dad Sam and Uncle Jack had been. Lou knew the vendors and the market. He had a sixth sense about good deals on purchasing or selling steel, whether the transaction involved a few tons or a few thousand tons. He nurtured excellent relationships with mill representatives and important customers. Lou's social nature and business acumen paid off handsomely for Levinson Steel.

June and Lou have three children—Harvey, in his early 40s, Dan, a few years younger, and Jeanne, married to Holmes Miller and living with her family near my daughter, Eleanor, in New Jersey.

It was at Lou's and June's home in Youngstown, Ohio, early in their marriage that one of the funniest incidents in my life happened. On a hot summer Sunday afternoon, Sonia and I, Lou and June and maybe 20 others sat waiting for dinnertime. The men were in their shirtsleeves. Conversation was dull, and I was bored.

I left for a stroll. Seeing a drug store with a crowded soda fountain, I entered and ordered a root beer at the counter. The waitress prepared a small one for me. I asked the cost and was told a nickel. "How much is a large root beer?" "A dime," she said. "Would you mind making it a large root beer?" She poured

my glass into a larger one, fizzed more root beer into it and set it in front of me.

I saw a man enjoying an ice cream soda and asked its price. "Twenty cents," she said. I asked, "Would you mind making it an ice cream soda?" She looked at me disgustedly, poured the contents of my glass into a bigger one, added two scoops of ice cream and more root beer and sloshed whipped cream on top.

Before enjoying it, I reached into my pocket and, unbelieving, found not a penny. My billfold was in my jacket in the Siegels' closet. So I said, "I don't think I want it," and left. If that waitress is still alive, she's probably still talking to herself.

Netta

At 16 years my junior, Netta has always been more like a daughter than a sister. At times, I used her name interchangeably with that of my daughter, Eleanor. Before my marriage I loved taking Netta places with me.

Netta is tremendously talented. I consider her an authority on plants and horticulture. Her plant room is widely envied. She plays the piano and sings. I love her work as an artist. And I believe her to be an outstanding wife and mother. What she does, she does with excellence—and she never stops being the down-to-earth person I love. Strength and humility, that is Netta. She is married to an outstanding rabbi in Belmont, Massachusetts, Earl Grollman. He and his books have been of real importance in my life. Netta and Earl are a great team. They complement each other. Earl enjoys his rabbinical duties, his writing and his lecturing. Netta enjoys her gardening, her music and her art. But the thing they both enjoy most is their three outstanding children and their families. They love their kids and prove it every day of their lives.

Our sentimental Netta is the family historian. She likes pictures and other memorabilia of her childhood and our parents and grandparents. There are such reminders throughout her

home. Like our father, Netta is a great practical joker. At someone's dinner party, she secretly hid all the desserts in the cellar. At my 70th birthday party, Netta and June sang and talked about me. June wept as she spoke of our excellent relationship through the years.

I loved Netta when she was 1 and I was 17. I've never stopped loving her in the 55 years since. We never end a phone conversation without the words "I love you."

Playing hooky for the only time in my life,
I was thumbing a ride to a downtown movie
and got a ride with, of all people, my father.

MY HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

In September 1927 I was part of the entering class of the new Taylor Allderdice High School. This was actually at the beginning of seventh grade. It was very exciting. Philip Morrison, later a famous physicist and M.I.T. professor, was in our class, as was Eddie Andrews, who made his name as a stage and screen actor. On the first day, Mr. Deevers, the school principal, inspired us and pointed to words above the stage: KNOW SOMETHING - DO SOMETHING - BE SOMETHING. Then he taught us the newly composed school song, which we sang to the tune of *Frere Jacques* or Brother Jack. It ended with "Watch us grow, watch us grow."

Taylor Allderdice did grow to 3,600 junior and senior high school students by 1968, before shrinking to about 2,000 today. There were about 500 at the beginning. We were full of school spirit, and if the Fiftieth Reunion of my class of 1932 was any gauge, its former students and teachers retained that spirit. Seventy-six percent of our graduating class was alive and well for

the event that Johnny Ferber and I co-chaired in 1982. We knew long before then that we were a generation which largely maintained ties to one another.

But in 1927 our futures still lay before us. Many of us were meeting for the first time. How could we know the divergent paths we'd travel? We had so much to learn—from our teachers, from each other and from life itself.

On one of my first days at Allderdice the two Schmeltz brothers from the Greenfield area began to bully me. We agreed to meet after school, fought and, after I won, shook hands. They never bullied me or my friends afterwards. My Squirrel Hill buddies looked to me as a protector. Actually, soon we were all friends, and no one needed protection.

Allderdice organized a football team when I began the ninth grade in 1929. I was in its opening lineup for our first game. We had no older team members to match those playing for Carnegie High School. Eckie Thomas captained us, but our rough and tough star was Johnny Webb, later an employee of the Ambridge Plant of Levinson Steel.

I was so scared in that first game against Carnegie that my mouth was continually dry. I ran down the field after the kickoff—I am not sure that I knew what to do—and had my legs knocked from under me. Carnegie beat us 33-0. That season we won four and lost four, not bad with only freshmen and sophomores playing for us. Our exuberance outweighed experience. It was in that first season that I followed the coach's orders literally when he said to block opponents completely out of any play. After I completed one particular blocking assignment, I noticed that everyone on the sidelines was laughing, and looking at me. Then I realized that I was sitting on the guy, making sure he stayed out of the play.

For my first two years I played tackle. As a junior and senior I alternated between fullback and quarterback. I loved playing and had good rapport with Coach Bob Irvin. On retirement a

quarter century later, he told a newspaper that I had been among his three best players. "In your old age you're losing your memory," I wrote him.

The most traumatic event of my gridiron career occurred off the field. I ran into the eligibility rule that one had to pass so many courses to play sports. I passed with A's in all courses except typing, which I failed. I pleaded with the typing teacher to change my grade, but she said that she was sorry and would not alter it. I was devastated to be left off the team for that semester. I missed half the season.

Although I loved high school, I was more of an athlete than a student. I played football, ran track and made the freshman basketball team with my close friend Howdy Levine. Just before the season, I broke my leg in a non-Allderdice football game and could not play basketball. And Allderdice won the City Championship!

Howdy, a natural athlete, was the hero in many of these games. It was Howdy who scored the winning point in the city basketball finals with only seconds to play. Sid Simon, whom we called Schmulke (which is Yiddish for Sammy), was another born-athlete at basketball, as well as baseball. As a shortstop who caught everything, we nicknamed him the Gobbler. A few years ago he travelled from Uniontown, Pennsylvania to see me honored by B'nai B'rith. He also attended my 70th birthday party. For years, until his death in 1986, we exchanged birthday cards. Lenny Levy, later one of the coaches of the Pittsburgh Pirates, and Al Jones, who became a Koppers Company vice president, were on this championship basketball squad, too. Its guards were Johnny Kilpatrick and Mike "Beansy" Yalch.

A highlight of my Allderdice years was belonging to Theta Sigma Chi fraternity. Organized a year or two earlier at Wightman School, it had 25 Jewish members when I joined. The year I was secretary I could (and still can) rattle off members' names in alphabetical order from memory: Alpern, Avner, Cohen, Ed-

lis, Ferber, Fleishman, Goldman, Leff, Levin, Levine, Levinson, etc. We did many things together. There were fraternity baseball, basketball and football teams, all good ones. One year the basketball team won 24 of 26 games. We played at the Rodef Shalom temple. Our starting line-up was Howdy Levine and Sid Simon (forwards), Lenny Harris (center) and Jerome "Inky" Goldman and Ralph "Gaul" Weisman (guards). I starred on its football team, and it was during one such game that I broke my leg.

We met on Sunday nights. An experiment in constructive criticism of one another was a failure, so we went back to having fun. Our parties, dances and card playing were successful. Most of these friendships from fraternity days have lasted a lifetime. At my 70th birthday party I asked many of these old cronies to come up front during the program, and there they were: Howdy Levine, Bob Fleishman, Johnny Ferber, Sid Simon, Morry Podolsky, Gene Cohen and Lou Wiener. I now plan a real fraternity reunion.

I had particular fun with Bill Skirble, whose father and mine were also friends. In our teens, some of us bet the bright, slightly nutty Bill that he would not run down Forbes Avenue from Shady Avenue to Murray Avenue—through the heart of the Squirrel Hill shopping district—in his underwear. Bill bet heavily that he would. Down that crowded street he went, jogging up and back in his shorts. Only the kids who were betting paid any attention to someone who looked like a jogger.

It was because of Bill that I acquired my nickname. Some have called me Diney, derived from dynamite, for almost 70 years. Everybody thinks it came from my having been a good football player. I did not think it worth explaining that a guy named Miller called me Dynamite when I threw Bill Skirble in the creek at the Summer Outing Association after he gave me trouble. We were about five years old.

Sports was not my sole pursuit. I loved acting and belonged

to the Players Guild at Allderdice. I was always able to manipulate my emotions on stage. I easily turned tears on and off as the script commanded. I briefly toyed with becoming an actor.

Rose Hartz, our dramatics and English teacher, was barely older than her students. She had a great effect on me. In June 1932 she had me imitate the modern dancer Mary Wigam in a three-part *Le Danse Moderne*, for a school revue appropriately called Garish Gaieties. A football fullback performing ballet and female impersonation brought down the house. I still hear about it occasionally from old school friends unaware that I actually was a shy kid. I developed a life-long friendship with Rose Hartz. And before I lost my voice to cancer, I looked forward to doing a little acting during retirement.

Mathilda Johnson, my report teacher, was also important to me in high school. But I liked no teacher better than Cliff Jenkins. I remember how he handled my tripping a girl who was walking past my desk. Angry, he told me to stay in after school. I immediately apologized to the girl, professing that I did not know why I had tripped her. Turning to Cliff Jenkins, I said, "Okay, I'll stay after school." Three classes later, he approached me in the hall. He had obtained my schedule and looked for me. "I just wanted to tell you that you don't have to stay in after school. You're forgiven," he said.

It was great to enjoy the closeness of that first group to go all the way through Allderdice High School. We were a spirited bunch. My memories of the school years are mostly good ones, full of activities and friendships.

I attended all my schools in a diligent, or fairly diligent, manner. (Playing hooky for the only time in my life, I was thumbing a ride to a downtown movie and got a ride with, of all people, my father. He showed no anger but drove me to school and told the teacher that illness had made me late.) Still, I was not an exceptional student. In some periods I was ahead of most of the kids in the class; in others, I felt lost. I now think that the final

school years weighed heavily on my mind because during my 20s and 30s I repeatedly dreamed about them.

Now I remember those days with great fondness, enjoying any opportunity to renew the friendships I made then. Learning of the death of a classmate really gets to me.

In the spring of 1986, Ralph Raphael and I drove down to San Diego, where we visited Pat and Bonnie Hyndman. Pat was a school buddy and a fellow camper at Camp Porter when we were 15.

He asked if I knew that David Amsler—schoolmate, fellow camper and teammate—had died. I had not heard, and when I returned home I wrote a letter to his widow. In it I said I really loved David even though we'd lost touch in recent years, and that I planned to plant trees in Israel in his memory.

One week later David phoned me, laughing, to say that rumors of his death had been greatly exaggerated. It was his father who had died.

When David came to Pittsburgh to visit his son during the Christmas season, we had lunch together. I have to admit I was a little teary-eyed when we embraced. Needless to say, it was a highlight of the season for both of us.

A man asked me for a nickel for coffee. To his amazement, I reached into my pocket and handed him a cup of coffee.

MY HIGHER EDUCATION

Thirty years ago I was having drinks with Frank Rackley, president of Jessop Steel Company, and some others at the University Club after a Pitt football game. Frank said, "Aaron, I'd like to put your name up for membership in the University Club." I said, "Frank, don't be so goddamn dumb." He said, "I'm not dumb. I know there are no Jewish members in the club, but dammit, we Christians and Jews fought in a war together; we work together; we play together; and there is no reason why we shouldn't be in clubs together."

I waited until he had run out of steam and said, "Frank, I wasn't thinking about my religion. I just never went to college, and you have to be a university person to belong." Everyone at the table, including Frank, began laughing.

During my life I have attended numerous classes, seminars and workshops at various schools, including the Harvard Business School, University of Pittsburgh, Duquesne University and Carnegie Mellon University. I have received honors from differ-

ent institutions, including honorary degrees from Point Park College and Duquesne University. I served briefly on Point Park's board and have been a member of the Duquesne board for many years. Yet I never obtained a college education.

After one semester at Pitt during the fall of 1932, I was sure that college and I were not made for each other or that at least I was not ready for college. Before the final exams, I told Dad that I planned to quit. I explained, "I don't like it, and I'm not doing very well."

My dad said, "Oh, that's okay, Aaron. You're a grown boy. You can do what you want, but don't come to me for a job. I'm looking for college graduates." I responded, "Okay." I believe that he thought I would continue at Pitt. However, I knew that I was not going to work for him.

So I took my exams and received my grades. It was assumed that I would return for the second semester. I said nothing more about quitting. Secretly, though, Mort Harris and I planned to leave town the next morning. I wished to avoid a scene with my parents or their talking me out of our intentions. So, as not to arouse their curiosity about a suitcase, I packed clothes in a suit box tied with string and hid it in my closet.

At dinner that evening, my mom served pineapple upside down cake. It was my favorite, and I asked for a second piece. She said, "No, we're going to save the rest of it for tomorrow." With no home meal in sight then, I persisted: "Can I have another piece if I don't eat any tomorrow?" Again it was "No." She added that she knew that I would figure out a way to have a second piece tomorrow anyway. (Mother always remembered refusing me that second piece of cake.)

Excited and apprehensive, I could not sleep that night. At five I slipped away from the house. A note to my parents read:

Dear Mother and Dad:

I'm not going to worry you, but I'm leaving town. I'm not

running away from home—just leaving town. I'm going to Washington, DC. Don't you worry about me. I'll call you tonight.

Love,
Aaron

On a typical cold Pittsburgh winter morning, Mort and I began hitchhiking in the dark. Somehow we did not freeze and by evening were in Washington. From my dollar and a half I spent 85 cents to phone reassurance to my parents. We scurried from rooming house to rooming house, promising rent once we found jobs the next day. Pay in advance in full, we were told, but we lacked the cash.

The Helping Hand, which housed indigents, denied us accommodation because we were not Washington residents. Sent to the Transient's Bureau, we entered the worst flophouse I ever saw. We walked around all night to keep warm in preference to the beds offered us. The next day we earned enough doing odd jobs to rent a room; the price, three dollars a week.

Mort remained with me about six to eight weeks. We looked for work and bummed meals together and separately. Never was I refused, and never was I asked to do any work. I learned that people, at least during the Depression, responded to a hungry kid wanting to do any work.

In one restaurant I asked the counterman for something to eat. A customer sat me beside him and ordered a bowl of oyster stew for me. Revolted by the impending fare, I did not want to be ungrateful and knew that I could not say, "No thanks" or "I would rather have scrambled eggs." It was the only time that I forced myself to eat oyster stew, which I've always disliked.

In another restaurant I was sent around back and handed a package of leftovers and a paper cup of coffee covered with a lid. The cup was in my pocket, since I did not drink coffee. The food was going into me when, in the next block, a man asked

me for a nickel for coffee. To his amazement, I reached into my pocket and handed him a cup of coffee.

In the bottom of the Depression I was one of many unskilled men looking for food, shelter and work. By seizing every opportunity, I found enough odd jobs to survive. I solicited suits for a tailor shop but quit because people were unwilling to trust their suits to a strange kid. I sold Hoyt products door to door, enjoyed fairly good treatment and earned my room rent. I continued looking for better jobs. Food was meager. For 18 cents I bought a loaf of bread and quart of milk. Boiling a few vegetables from the produce market, I concocted soups.

After these struggles, I was hired by Rust Engineering for a construction project. Although my father knew Mr. Rust, I was hired without anyone's intervention as a laborer at 40 cents an hour. A six day week paid $19.20. I had it made.

That was in 1933. The Roosevelt Administration had just passed the National Recovery Act, under which a big gas storage project was being constructed just outside Washington in Maryland. My room at Sixth Street and Indiana Avenue was a long way from the job site. How was I to get there at seven the first morning with only $1.30 in my pocket?

Rising very early to a high wind and a temperature of between 0 and 10 degrees, I walked around until I found a coffee shop. Patrons told me where the job was but that no buses went there. Maybe I was dumb, but I felt gutsy and hailed a cab in downtown Washington for the Maryland site. "I don't know how to tell you this," I told the driver on arrival, "but I'm going to need your name and address. I'm going to give you $1.30, which is all I have, and the rest I'm going to have to mail to you because this is my first day on the job, and I don't have any more money."

I probably owed eight dollars, but the driver did not become angry. He said, "That's okay, kid. Forget it. Remember that someday you are going to run into another kid in trouble. When

you do, remember the cab driver in Washington who gave you a free ride to your new job, and reach out to this kid and try to help him."

That man's trust in 1933—never forgotten—helped to inspire me through the years to help countless kids in need, in trouble or just requiring a little fresh air. This sort of trust and aid can become wonderfully contagious, I believe. A few years ago, a man in his 30s introduced himself to me as Ron Smith at an Urban League dinner. He said, "When I was a kid growing up in the Hill District, going to summer camp was about the most remote thing from my mind. And yet, because of your help and a few other guys like you, I got to go to this fantastic camp out in the woods near Connellsville called Camp Achievement. I know you were the main person helping to raise funds and make that vacation possible for me and a lot of other kids. You were there often, and the kids got to meet you. I will never forget you for that, Mr. Levinson. And I will never stop trying to do things for kids because I know how good it felt when you did it for me."

So a cab driver in 1933 affected my attitude toward kids, and that attitude, in turn affected Ron Smith's attitude toward kids. The cab ride had a more immediate effect, of course. It brought me on time to my first day of construction work. The hard work there did not bother me. I still had an athlete's capacity and was accustomed to working hard in the Levinson plant for Uncle Abe. He made my new bosses seem undemanding by comparison. I felt on top of the situation. I enjoyed the irony of repeating my grandfather Jim (Israel) Levinson's experience of a half century before: I was the only Jew on the construction crew.

At first I was a curiosity because of my religion and lack of construction experience. Like many working people I have known, they called themselves and others, without hostility, "Dago" or "Swede." On the job I was nicknamed "Jew." Not meant as a slur, it signaled my acceptance and even my being liked by them. But there was all manner of prejudice against

Black workers at the site and that really bothered me.

Ending my first day on the Maryland job, I began searching for a room closer to work. I remembered a neighborhood a few miles away, Brookland, close to Catholic University and the Franciscan Monastery. I'd previously gone door to door there looking for odd jobs. At one home a man had come to the door when I knocked. "Is there any work I can do around your house for something to eat?" I had asked him. The guy yelled upstairs, "Evelyn, come down and fix some eggs for this kid."

A few minutes later I was eating in their dining room and talking with Clarence and Evelyn Booker. Asked how I could repay their hospitality, they said, "Come on upstairs and read to our 13-year-old daughter, Gladys. She's going into the hospital tomorrow for an appendectomy." I happily did so and two days later brought a 33 cent box of candy to the hospitalized Gladys.

Hoping for help again from the Bookers, I headed there at quitting time the first day. Where could I find room and board, I asked them. "Right here, Aaron." For the next six months I was not just their boarder but practically a family member. For years we stayed in touch until, reaching a disconnected number, I erroneously thought them dead.

That year in Washington was unforgettable. I maintained close contact with my family and visited them every few months. And I met Ollie Epstein, whose parents owned Epstein's Restaurant in downtown Washington. They provided nice Sabbath meals to me at discount each Friday night. Before Mort Harris had left Washington, he introduced me to a relative working for Loew's Corporation. So I had a free pass to the weekly movie and stage show at the Loew's Fox on 14th Street. I think that was when I first heard *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes.* It remains my favorite song.

By June 21, 1933, I had been on the Maryland job four or five months. That day was brutally hot, and I had been carrying hot, heavy reinforcing bars for hours when I passed out. I was

hospitalized the remainder of the day and part of the next one. Then I hurried back to the job. It was hard work, but I was a strong and thriving 18-year-old.

Not an indestructible one, however. One day I worked at the top of a 40-foot, straight-sided excavation wrestling down stubborn reinforcing bars to a man, who handed them down again. I had to tug out the U-shaped bars from a tangled pile. As I stood with my back to the edge of the hole pulling on a bar, it suddenly came loose. I tottered backward toward the brink with all that concrete and steel bars below. Just barely, I caught my balance and avoided falling to my death. For three days, I shook whenever I thought about the near-miss. It was the closest I ever came to being killed.

Friday nights were for crap games after receiving our pay. Once I caught a guy using loaded dice, and when I grabbed the dice to prove it, he pulled a razor and swung it at me. Fortunately, I turned my back. The wound on my back healed in the sun but left a scar.

Jack Hewitt, the job superintendent, discovered that Mr. Rust knew my dad and invited me home for dinner one night. In a crib lay Jack, Jr., future president of Eichleay Corporation, for 40 years located next door to Levinson Steel. The general contractor, Bartlett Hayward (now a division of Koppers), hired me after I worked for Rust Engineering at the Maryland gasholder project. On the rigging gang I belonged to the same international union which Levinson Steel had in its plant after 1938.

Before I left Washington, Rust transferred me to their Central Heating Plant project at 13th & "C" Southwest. What I learned on those two construction projects gave me an insight into the feelings and thoughts of working people which no formal education could have provided. There is no doubt in my mind that my success in labor relations—and in handling people—had its roots in that Washington experience.

After my year in Washington, my father decided to hire me

despite my lack of college education. I thought about it and decided to return to Pittsburgh and work for the Levinson Steel Company. I remained in touch for years with the Bookers. Sonia and I visited them several times. I took my young son ,Jim, to see them. The disconnected phone broke off our contact for years. About eight years ago, I longed to reestablish my relationship with someone among the Bookers. My secretary, Dotti Bechtol, successfully located not only Gladys but also her parents. Evelyn and Clarence Booker were in the same house as 50 years before, but with an unlisted phone number.

I went to visit them all. Gladys and her husband, Philip Darby, now had grandchildren. We remained in close touch, and when Evelyn Booker had a stroke and entered a nursing home, I flew to see her. "Fifty years ago this lady gave me something to eat when I was hungry," I announced to her nurses. It was on this visit that I finally met Karen, Gladys' and Phil's daughter. She threw her arms around me and said, "Diney Levinson! I've heard about you all my life. I have always loved you and now, finally, I get to meet you." The next time we met was at Evelyn's funeral. I invited them to my 70th birthday bash, this wonderful family. Gladys told the story of our connection in song. More than a half century after I read to her, she sang to me.

"You can't fire me.
I work for the telephone company."

THE BROTHERS & ME & LSC

In 1933 I went to work in the shop office under Uncle Abe. My dad and uncles had it in mind all along that I was to devote myself to Levinson Steel Company, college graduate or not. By then, it was a firm my grandfather would not have recognized. Four of his five sons ran it, including Monnie who quit pharmacy school and joined the business. Each specialized. Their individual personalities, temperaments, interests and aptitudes made them gravitate to particular jobs in the firm. Sam, Abe, Monnie and Jack did exactly the right jobs in the early days of Levinson Steel.

Monnie ran the office. Jack oversaw buying. Abe was in charge of production. My dad was president and the out-front guy for customer relations, corporate policy and corporate finances. He knew that profit was the bottom line for any business. For the brothers, it remained a successful division of labor for years. It was an organizational chart effectively accommodating the key people in a small company.

Following exactly in their fathers' footsteps did not always work well for the next generation. Harry Stein started in the plant because his father-in-law worked there. He proved better for sales and eventually transferred to the Sales Department. Jim Levinson's father was the purchasing agent, but from the beginning Jim obviously belonged elsewhere. He eventually became one of our top executives in sales and marketing.

When I took over, I tried to make use of peoples' natural talents (family members or not) and structure the organization chart to match the skills and temperaments of the people. Those with natural leadership and managerial ability, like Ed Schuman, were given departmental responsibilities. Some people were more effective as one-man operators, like my brother-in-law Lou Siegel. Lou was a natural entrepreneur and merchant. There was no point in burdening him with lots of people management. Each time personnel changed, we changed the organizational chart and realigned duties and responsibilities to fit the new person or persons. We did away with the old-fashioned notion of matching people to fit the charts, I am happy to say.

The histories of our family and Levinson Steel have been inseparable. When I joined the firm, company image and direction had been largely shaped by my dad and his brothers. Together, they were Levinson Steel. They remained in close accord about the family and the business. Otherwise, their personalities and temperaments differed marvelously. It made them seem like men from four different families. All had a great influence on my career at Levinson Steel, each in a different way.

UNCLE JACK

Quiet and sensitive (not like my dad), Uncle Jack knew the steel buying business intimately. He had friends among all the steel producers, and if he had fewer friendships that his brother, Sam, they were deeper and more enduring ones. This fine human being, Uncle Jack, showed me a great deal, perhaps more

than he realized.

Jack was an outstanding high school and college athlete. A football star at Central High School, he made the All State team. With George McLarin, who played for Fifth Avenue High School, he was the outstanding Pittsburgh high school player. The sports page bannered "McLarin vs. Levinson" when their teams competed. At Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University), Uncle Jack broke his collar bone on the first play of the first game against Army. He transferred to Penn State his second year, where he starred in football and was a 10-second man in track. After college, he was an Army lieutenant during the First World War. He married Marion Friedman. Their daughter, Lois Heyman, lives with her family in St. Louis. Their sons Burt and Jim differ in temperament. Burt is a quiet, sensitive, deep thinker, like his dad, and Jim is outgoing and gregarious, like my dad.

Uncle Jack's buying acumen was one reason why the company did especially well at anticipating changes in the market far in advance of competitors. The brothers worked together as a team. They were often farsighted. For instance, the company expected before the beginning of World War II that there would be a steel shortage. To obtain as much steel beforehand as possible, we had to borrow money heavily. Under the Lawrence program, firms borrowed based on current inventories. So we bought all that we could, borrowed on that inventory, bought some more, and so forth. We filled our plant. We rented space and piled up more steel. When the shortage came, we were in excellent shape.

These big steel holdings paid off heavily in company growth. And, unexpectedly, the government began allocating wartime steel to companies based on usage in the period just previous. Now entitled to a considerable share, we built our volume of production, as the country's need increased. Our profits also grew steadily during that period; much of it we plowed back into

buying new equipment and expanding the plant.

War creates immense opportunities for profit—and for profiteering. The Second World War brought black and grey markets in many products, steel included, despite federal price controls during some of those years. We were proud that Levinson Steel charged no excessive prices. Many outfits scalped customers, selling at outrageous margins. They thereby took advantage of buyers, sometimes illegally, and contributed greatly to wartime inflation, harming the desperately struggling nation. Despite constant wartime steel shortages, and even though Levinson Steel often had the only immediate supply, the company maintained fair margins and fair prices. As Levinson Steel's reputation as a dependable, reputable supplier grew nationwide, the company grew in size and in stature as a steel distributor. Uncle Jack played a major role.

UNCLE ABE

Abe was a rough-and-ready, colorful character, eight years younger than my dad. His personality was quite different than those of his two older brothers. He talked the language of the plant, knew all its jobs, dressed for its roughest work. When young he had welded, operated a burning torch, bucked up rivets and operated a crane. Every skill needed to fulfill a structural steel contract was his, and he knew every contract detail. Without an engineering education, he often identified an error in layout or fitting. And in the shop, Uncle Abe continued to burn steel and perform other basic jobs. He was comfortable only in work clothes; suits he called monkey suits. In his later years, we had to persuade him not to don work clothes every day.

Uncle Abe knew all the guys in the shop. And he knew their families and their problems. He enjoyed fishing and hunting with his men. But at work, he definitely was the boss. He never asked a man to do a job he couldn't or wouldn't do himself. He built a team which maintained excellence in production. And his

men loved him.

I remember when some of them gathered around Abe for a birthday. Freddy Pfeffer, from the layout crew, sheepishly shoved him a crudely wrapped package covered with greasy finger marks. "This is from the boys." For a long moment of silence, Abe fingered the package, then tore off the paper. Inside was a beautiful Browning shotgun. Abe looked at the gun and looked at them and said, "You bastards." Everyone grinned ear-to-ear.

No one had more effect on many of us in the second generation. On me, the effect was profound and lasted a lifetime. As I grew older, I often felt guilty if I indulged myself with fancy clothes or at fancy resorts. In the back of my mind, or maybe in my subconscious, Uncle Abe was always watching me. During summers in high school he set me to riveting in an atmosphere much like army basic training. If I walked slow, he threw a red-hot rivet at me. If I walked fast, he would yell, "Run." Evenings, I had to cool off in a cold bathtub before collapsing into bed. He called me a sissy when he saw me at 18 wearing white pants at a country club.

Abe was tough on me, not mean, believing one needed toughening to arrive at manhood. I was supposed to become his idea of a "man's man." With his help I was supposed to acquire the right attitude toward work, becoming, like him, tough, single-minded and dedicated to the company with a capital C. Only two areas of life were truly important to him: his family and his business. Neither came first; they were the same to him.

I saw how he drove to make every minute count and to make sure that people worked as hard and as well as he did. He felt a special mission to instill his values in younger members of the family, as if we were not acquiring them already. But Abe thought only of boys coming into the business. Since his first two children were girls (Natalie and Judie) and his son (Joel) was not born until Uncle Abe was 36, I found much of his train-

ing directed at me.

I remember his driving me at age eight or nine to the Summer Outing Association and hearing "If you were my boy, you'd get a whipping." Silently I gave thanks, "I'm so glad I'm not your boy." I was frightened of him, but fascinated too, even then. Only years later did I understand that underneath Uncle Abe was soft as butter.

Uncle Abe's formula for business success was "Be smart and work hard." Being smart mainly meant out-guessing other people whom he thought he knew all too well: An employee who cheated on how hard he worked, or who went too often to the bathroom, or who remained home from work because he drank too much but said his grandfather died. He knew about men who bought his scrap and tried to cheat on the weight and about salesmen who tried to overcharge him for paint or oxygen. Abe just was not fooled. He had a way of frowning and looking out of the corner of his eye that said, "Don't horseshit me." People liked him and even enjoyed these little games.

When I was learning how to supervise employees, Abe advised, "Aaron, our men really are pretty smart if you give them a chance. If a new man isn't doing his job right, it's usually your fault, not his. New men are sometimes ashamed to tell you if they don't understand." Then he proceeded to tell me how to be certain that they did understand.

Abe worked beside the men, burning steel and performing all the other basic jobs. He understood the business from the bottom up. The terms "organization" or "division of labor" meant nothing to him. He and his brothers operated basically as entrepreneurs, as owners, not as the managers the next family generation preferred to be. They did the buying and selling, the hiring and billing. They ran the shop and employed a bookkeeper, but they looked over his shoulder at every detail. Uncle Abe believed everyone worked for him, which created some funny incidents.

One day Abe walked into the office and saw a man in work clothes sitting and filling his pipe. No one loafed around Abe. He just stood there watching the man pack tobacco in his bowl, figuring that the fellow would notice him and return to work. The man was not uncomfortable under the stern gaze. He methodically tamped, fired and repacked his tobacco. After awhile Abe asked, "When are you going to finish filling your pipe?" He replied, "Oh, in a few minutes, Mr. Levinson." And he continued working at his pipe. Five minutes passed before the order came, "Look, cut out that stuff and go back to work." The reply was unflustered, "I will, Mr. Levinson, as soon as I finish with my pipe."

By then, Abe was angry. "Damn it, either you get back to work, or go upstairs and get your check." The man grinned and said, "You can't fire me, Mr. Levinson." Abe bellowed, "Why not?" The pipe packer calmly answered, "I work for the telephone company."

Abe's contract called for his retirement at age 70. A few days before his birthday I went to his home and told him we really didn't want him to retire. He was pleased, but it really made no difference. Nothing could have stopped him from coming to the plant each day—until his health failed a few years later.

At Abe's funeral in 1969, there was an overflow crowd of personal and business friends and family—and scores of those who had worked in his shop, even men long retired. Like me, they were remembering him with love and admiration. His memory will always be an inspiration to those who knew him.

UNCLE MONNIE

Monnie, born in 1906 as Emanuel, was the baby of the family. Sixteen years younger than my dad, he was only eight years older than I. Like Hymie, he was a fine athlete. He played basketball at Fifth Avenue High School, and became a terrific handball player and ardent golfer.

In the company, Dad looked at the entire picture. Uncle Monnie was the stickler for detail, depended on to prevent anything from slipping through the cracks. When there were important decisions to be made, Dad, his brothers and I would meet as the company board or in a staff meeting. Once we decided on a policy or action, we all usually expected Uncle Monnie to implement it. Before a meeting ended, he had listed 20 or 30 questions, and before we left, everyone was assured once again that Uncle Monnie would permit no detail to be overlooked,

An employee or customer might become irritated with Dad, Uncle Abe or me, but never with Uncle Monnie. He had a warm smile and a hearty handshake for everyone, and he still does. He served as an officer of the company until his retirement in 1976. Everyone came to his huge party at the Concordia Club. Uncle Monnie has been loved and respected by all who have known him.

These, then, were the brothers who directed Levinson Steel so successfully, transforming it from a Pride Street junk yard to a major Pittsburgh steel business. And these were the men who influenced me over the years. It was they who prepared the next generation to take up the reins. But it wasn't easy, and it didn't happen overnight.

In 1926 the company had moved from the original Pride Street location to a plant on the South Side of Pittsburgh on 23rd and Josephine. The fabricating business was developed and carried on there until 1936. Actually, we began fabricating in a small way even before moving there. We stayed in that business until 1980, when it became a losing proposition to continue.

Before 1926, the Levinson brothers began to phase out of the scrap business into handling secondhand steel. That sometimes got them involved in demolishing buildings to salvage steel beams. One of their earliest demolitions to obtain steel was of an old Mellon Bank building in Pittsburgh. They proudly advertised the contract in the newspaper under the heading

"LEVINSON WRECKING THE MELLON BANK"—until the bank asked them to change the wording.

Gradually, with the barest of knowledge, they began to fabricate steel in the scrapyard. To ensure accuracy on an early contract, they put up part of a building—like a giant erector set—to make sure it fit. Then they took it down and shipped it to the customer. Only later did they begin to do engineering.

By the time I came to work, Levinson Steel had matured considerably. My dad and uncles were ready to expand even more. As anyone who's seen a small business over the hurdles of growth can attest, it can be pretty scary.

It required courage in 1936 for them to buy the huge Eichleay plant, owned by the Hillman interests, which was only a few blocks from the small plant in which they were operating. Our net worth was less than quarter of a million dollars at the time. Handled right, the new plant could propel the company into the big leagues of the American fabrication industry. Its largest fabricating job until then was a 500-ton contract for the McSorley brothers' Royal York Apartments. (They were friends of Dad's, and John McSorley, of the next generation, is my friend.) The new plant would enable Levinson to undertake large commercial and industrial jobs requiring thousands of tons.

The new property, with no equipment beyond a few broken-down cranes, would cost around $180,000, a hell of a lot of money to a small operation run by four young brothers. Who would help them? Dad remembered once meeting J.H. Hillman, so he audaciously called the prominent industrialist-financier and offered to buy his Eichleay plant. They talked. Hillman liked Dad and considered the brothers gutsy. He could and would help them with the plant and with obtaining a loan. The Hillmans controlled large interests in various Pittsburgh companies, including the Peoples Pittsburgh Trust Company (today Pittsburgh National Bank). J. H. Hillman used his influence with the officials at People's to be sure the brothers got the proper financing.

Another generation of Hillmans, Henry and Elsie, are my friends, and Henry was one of my sponsors when I applied for membership in the Duquesne Club.

The move into big-time fabricating did not happen easily. Putting together this kind of a financial package was a new experience and big challenge for the family. And it was a massive physical undertaking to take down the big overhead cranes, dismantle all the presses, shears and punches (all with large concrete bases) and install everything needed in the new plant. Sam and Abe also had to find inexpensive secondhand equipment required for a much larger facility. They scoured the region.

An historic flood struck Pittsburgh shortly after this process began. Next to the Monongahela River, the Eichleay plant was endangered. The water stopped short of the plant but flooded the basement of the adjacent brick building (the Levinson Steel office from 1950 to 1982). It knocked out the plant generator, and we had no money to buy a new one. So, aided by electricians, the brothers (mainly Sam and Abe) labored to dry it and restart it. For weeks, they devoted every possible moment to working on it. Every day of lost production threatened any plant opening, and the company itself. Abe and Sam never entertained the idea of failure. The generator had to be saved—and they saved it.

At that time, the Jones and Laughlin Steel Company was preparing to build a huge new strip mill on Pittsburgh's Second Avenue, in the Hazelwood district across the Monongahela River from our new plant. My dad's friend, Fred Lewis, was sales manager at J & L. To show his appreciation for all the orders Levinson Steel had given J & L over the years, he suggested to J & L's purchasing department that they seriously consider Levinson Steel if we were qualified. Levinson ended up fabricating 2,500 tons of steel for the giant steel plant. That was 25% of the steel required. Ft. Pitt Bridge Works provided another 25% and the Keystone Works (which was owned and operated by J & L) supplied 50%.

J & L furnished the raw material. Levinson fabricated and shipped it to the job. The negotiated price for the fabricated structural steel, almost a half century ago, was the unbelievable amount of $27 per ton. Today it would be in the hundreds.

As Levinson fabricated the steel for the J & L strip mill, and as the J & L purchasing people gained confidence in Levinson's ability to meet specifications and deadlines, they continued to place small orders for fabricated steel with our company. This flow of orders continued long after the completion of the strip mill job. As a matter of fact, from the time that job was completed, until well into the 1950s, there was never a time when Levinson was not doing some work related to J & L's maintenance or expansion programs. J & L had a permanent inspector assigned to our plant. Much of the work was done on a cost-plus basis and it turned out to be an excellent working relationship for both companies.

An interesting side note on all of this is the fact that the Keystone Works ceased operation many years ago. Levinson's fabricating division closed in 1980. Fort Pitt Bridge closed its fabricating operation in 1982. And J & L closed the entire strip mill and sold the property to a real estate developer in 1979.

By 1938, I had gone through a series of job changes, all of which constituted my on-the-job training. It was in that year that I suggested to my dad that we go into the steel distribution business as a logical supplement to our fabrication activities.
Sam liked the idea. He discussed it with his brothers, who comprised the board of directors, and they agreed. I became the first manager of that department, which was called our warehouse department (eventually referred to as the Service Center Division).

My job was to coordinate the purchasing with Uncle Jack, the steel storage facilities with Uncle Abe, the billing and record keeping with Uncle Monnie and to take full charge of the sales and promotion activities myself. So, my daytime activities con-

sisted of all these things, plus knocking on countless doors of industrial companies, mine and mill supply companies, other fabricating companies, etc., trying to drum up business.

Whatever my early doubts about a career with Levinson Steel, by this time I was fully committed. Like my dad and my uncles, I was shaping the future of Levinson Steel and it was shaping me.

After I became vice president in 1945, I still remained close to my baby, the Service Center. And I involved myself in corporate planning. In 1950, at my father's suggestion, I was elected company president and made a member of its board of directors. I was 35. I had full confidence I could do the job, but it was a new experience, and I needed people to talk to—sounding boards.

Fortunately, there were others in the same boat. Al Rockwell, head of Rockwell International, invited me in 1951 to be among the handful of young corporate presidents forming a Pittsburgh chapter of a new national group, Young Presidents Organization (YPO), which Ray Hickock of Hickock Belt Company had formed. Murray Rust, president of Rust Engineering, also attended the founding meeting. Al Rockwell became chapter president, and I became an officer.

YPO and its "graduate groups," for those reaching age 49, became important in my business career and in my life. I now belong to the Pittsburgh 49ers and nationally to the Chief Executives Organization. YPO and CEO afforded me invaluable meetings, forums, seminars and educational opportunities, including meetings at the Harvard Business School. Through them, I developed a corporate philosophy and had the opportunity to compare notes with other executives facing similar problems and dilemmas.

YPO and CEO literally took me all over the world and helped me develop many important friendships. From these shared experiences, Don and Twila Peters sang and talked at my 70th

birthday party about my temporary illness in Cuba, a near plane crash in Peru and a funny story about my golfing, or rather my lack of golfing exploits, at Lake Placid, New York.

The golf story had made the rounds of our friends many times. Don came up to me after we'd gotten settled in our rooms and said, "Let's play golf tomorrow." I said, "I didn't bring my clubs." He said, "I have enough clubs for both of us." "I don't have any golf balls." He replied, "I have enough for both of us." "I don't have any golf shoes," I lamented. He said, "You can buy or rent them." So, Monday morning, sure enough we teed off.

It was October. The fairways were thick with leaves. They also happened to be narrow. By the time I got to hole #6, I had lost ten balls. I got to the hole, teed up the ball, hit it and sliced into the woods. Without looking up, I reached out to Don and said, "Give me another ball." He did. I hit it into the woods, too. Again, I reached out and said, "Give me another goddamn ball." By this time, I had lost an even dozen. Don was getting exasperated. He said, "Look, Aaron, these balls cost money." I finally looked at him and said, "Damn it, Peters, if you can't afford the game, you shouldn't be out here."

The Pittsburgh 49ers and the CEO continue to enrich my life in retirement. They help me to learn more about business and introduce me to new friends while renewing older ones. And all the talk is not about business, for we discuss life, families, the world—all the subjects which have always been important to me.

To successfully manage a family company, one must be two different kinds of people—and that ain't easy.

THE DYNAMICS OF A FAMILY BUSINESS

There are millions of family businesses in America. They range in size from the mom-and-pop stores to giants like Ford Motor, which operated for many years as a wholly family owned corporation. While there are no two family companies exactly alike—as there are no two people exactly alike—family businesses do have distinctive characteristics and problems which are different from those of other types of business establishments.

There are a number of legal and financial considerations to which participants in family companies should address themselves and which can create problems if neglected. However, by far the most profound problems facing family companies are the "people" problems. Of course, there are politics, jealousies, power struggles, personality clashes and a variety of "what makes Sammy run?" kinds of tensions in all kinds of businesses. But they pale in comparison to the feelings and emotions

when members of the family are in business together.

When I was chosen president of Levinson Steel in 1950, it became evident to me that, while my dad and his brothers comprising the board had unanimously elected me, there were mixed feelings. Perhaps they had thoughts of themselves or their own sons eventually gravitating to the presidency, or maybe they thought I was too young or inexperienced. I was very sensitive to their feelings and worked with them as my senior advisors. I became aware early in my presidency that profits alone could never ensure the survival of a family company. At least at Levinson Steel (and I believe in all family companies), the objectives had to be "peace and profits."

It didn't take long for ensuing events to drive that point home. Three years into my tenure, we had our first and only major family fight.

Let me tell you how it began. After the death of their father, Sam and Abe came into the business and Sam took charge. As the other brothers joined the company, Sam felt and acted like the father of his brothers and sisters. It was a natural thing—one which their mother, Rachel, endorsed and the brothers and sisters generally accepted. This father-figure concept of the eldest son after the death of a father was common with families in those days. My dad not only took charge of the business, but looked out for the financial interests of the members of the family.

As time went by, Sam involved the family in many real estate deals, a situation the family also accepted, especially since the deals were successful. However, as the brothers and sisters (particularly the three brothers involved with my dad in the company) started to marry and raise their own families, the acceptance of my dad's paternalism changed. The brothers needed a sense of independence. My dad was unaware of these changes.

These changing attitudes, combined with my election to the presidency at 35 years of age, precipitated an explosive revolt. It

had been growing quietly, becoming more and more volatile. It didn't take much to ignite the resentment. Actually, a disgruntled attorney, who was on the company payroll until I fired him, caused the fight. He talked with the brothers and the explosion occurred. I don't remember the details, but I do know there were harsh words, and the issues had nothing to do with profits or mismanagement. They all related to personal things—salaries, expenses, company paid club dues, cars, etc.

The real issues—my dad's paternal attitude and my election to the presidency—never came out, at least not until many years later.

The fight lasted six months and almost destroyed Levinson Steel. It ended when I talked with Uncle Abe and we decided to get things back on track—and we did. There were a few new ground rules and lifetime contracts for the four brothers and me.

Even after the hostilities ended, my dad continued to be insensitive to some of the underlying tensions. I tried, however, to be as responsive as possible to the feelings of the members of the family. It was also important to me, and to the company, that we find a formula that would keep family tensions to a minimum and, at the same time, increase the chances for the success of the business. Although I knew it would not be easy, I felt the fairest and wisest course of action was to try to operate like a public company.

It wasn't easy, but eventually both family and non-family management accepted this philosophy. Positions of responsibility were filled with concern only for competence and without regard to family membership or stock ownership. Compensation was determined with help from outside consultants. The criteria were the importance, the responsibility and the value to the company of each job—not family relations. This objectivity ensured that salaries were fair in relation to each other. Lew Fait, a retired executive of the Jeffrey Company, joined our board in 1955; Sam Salem, Executive Vice President of General Tire, a

few years later. They were both brilliant businessmen who had the ability to help us make decisions and still were able to separate themselves from family matters. Joe Katz of Papercraft Corporation, Gregg Kerr of Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, Mike Krueger of the Hercules Corporation, and Stanley Gumberg of the J. J. Gumberg Company, were all effective outside directors in ensuing years. The board had a compensation committee and an audit committee. Annual stockholder meetings were attended by a large number of stockholders. The board was not stymied in determining corporate philosophy and direction. Management had the freedom to manage the company, and the stockholders had every opportunity to voice their pleasures and displeasures.

Family companies with active family members rarely attempt to elect an outsider president. As a matter of fact, when non-family members are considering taking management positions in a family company, they face the fact that there is a limit to advancement in any family company. The top jobs (chairman and president) are usually reserved for members of the family. The fact that we were successful in electing Ed Schuman as president in 1975 without causing a major problem was indeed an accomplishment. And a wise decision. Ed, who was with the company for 18 years before his election, has been an effective president. He worked well with members of the family and had an especially good working relationship with me. As I write this in the spring of 1987, he is still president of the company under the direction of David Lloyd-Jacob, the new owner.

When the stockholders suggested that a couple of fourth-generation people be on the board, the other members and I thought it was a good idea and a committee of outside directors selected Steve Freedman, then a marketing executive at Coca Cola Company and my son- in-law, Jeff Peris, then a marketing executive at Merck Pharmaceutical. Operating like a public company, with professional management and bottom-line objectives, was the only way that members of the family could be sure that

their investments were secure.

My ideas of operating like a public company worked, but not without some continued resentment and tension within the family. The objective in any family company is not to eliminate emotional upheavals, but to minimize them. There is a management term which relates generally to corporate CEO's. It is referred to as the "isolation at the top" syndrome. That kind of isolation can be far greater in a family business. I know that heading up a family company would be a lonely job for anyone, and was especially for me. I was sensitive to all the nuances and all the irritations among members of the family and members of management. On balance, however, the people problems at Levinson Steel were neither more nor less than one might expect in a family company with as many family people as we had. There were bound to be irritations and resentments. Whether they were minor or major depended almost entirely on whether I was able to handle them in stride and keep them under control.

One group had an annual meeting to prepare for stockholder meetings. While there were no real confrontations, there were definitely adverse feelings among members of this branch of the family. These surfaced at stockholder meetings. One member of the group came prepared with a seemingly endless list of questions, and his group was quick to criticize when the answers were not to their liking. President Ed Schuman, Senior Vice President and Treasurer, Cal Levinson, and I gave straight answers. We really had nothing to hide.

Sometime prior to the sale of the company, the young man who did most of the questioning and who was then executive vice president and is now president of another company, faced similar types of questioning and criticism from one of his stockholders. When he realized how difficult it was to be in that position, he had a heart- to-heart talk with me, assuring me that none of the questions or comments by his branch of the family over the years were meant as personal criticisms of me. I tried to as-

sure him that I did not take them personally, and that having active, interested stockholders definitely tended to keep management on its toes and that could not be bad. The fact is that, while I handled questions with no expression of hostility, it wasn't always easy not to take some of them personally. It's interesting that in the few years since I met with this young man, we have become better acquainted and a mutual respect has developed. I think it would be safe to say that we like each other.

While cousin Jim Levinson was one of my real boosters, he sometimes took it upon himself to confront me with family attitudes about various things that were happening in the company, telling me that members of the family were thinking this or saying that. At one point I really had it with Jim and said, "Goddamn it, Jim, we have 65 family stockholders. When you talk about what the family is saying, who the hell are you talking about? If others have complaints, why don't they tell me about them? If they are members of the board, why don't they bring them up at a board meeting? If they are not, why don't they bring them up at a stockholders meeting?"

Jim had no response to my outburst, partly because he thought he was being helpful to me and partly because such outbursts by me were rare. Jim, now in his 50s and a grandfather, once told me that when he was growing up he sometimes heard condemnations at the dinner table of my dad and me. The fact is that Jim is one guy who was never affected by those family dinner conversations and was always a close friend of mine. He was also very close to my dad. They loved and respected each other, just as my Uncle Abe and I did. Jim and I continue to be very close friends, and I have served as a member of his board at Autoclave Engineers for a number of years.

One of the most difficult things I ever did was to fire a member of the family. This was another one of my cousins. He just plain wasn't producing, and he was goofing off. I called him in and said, "I don't know what to do with you. What would you

do if you were in my place?" He was quick to answer, "I'd fire the son of a bitch." I said, "That's exactly what I am going to do if you don't start doing your job." Six months later, when nothing had changed, I fired him. The repercussions from his immediate family were quick; they retained an attorney to get legal advice about scrutinizing the company's books and records to find some irregularities. After a few months of this, and finding nothing (there was nothing to find), we sat down like human beings and talked things over and the hostility ended and we became family again. However, my cousin stayed fired.

As June, Netta and I were growing up, we discussed everything imaginable at the dinner table—everything except Levinson Steel. "Those discussions," according to Sam, "were for the office, not the home." He also asked his brothers to refrain from talking about business problems at home. "Women have a different mentality," he claimed. "They don't have the business backgrounds. They know nothing about the steel industry, or the management of our company. Get the women involved, every wife looking out for the interest of her husband, and you are asking for trouble."

My dad was convinced that we would not have had the one big family fight we did have were it not for the women. In his opinion, when men bring their business problems home, the problems get distorted, often blown out of proportion. Business problems become emotional issues.

My dad's feelings represented the prevalent point of view of managers of family businesses in those days. It's probably not so today. Or, at least, it's improved. In any case, the theory is simply unsound. In good marriages, husbands and wives share problems—all kinds of problems. Let's face it, no one has the right to instruct other people what to discuss in the privacy of their homes. Besides, women can be as objective and unemotional as men. All they need are the facts.

Another problem associated with family companies is that

somehow there gets to be a formal board of directors and an informal one. At many family gatherings, especially among the men who work for the company, the conversation inevitably turns to the business, and often touches on matters of corporate philosophy and strategy.

While these kinds of discussions sometimes are annoying, they are mostly harmless. However, many times members of the family have suggested that there be regular family meetings to talk about the company. I totally rejected this idea. We didn't need two boards of directors, and family stockholders had plenty of opportunities for discussions of anything about the company at stockholder meetings. Furthermore, the people in the Levinson family have never been bashful, and my office door was always open.

There are always going to be tensions and resentments in a business, and this is especially true in a family company. I lectured at the Yale School of Management in 1984. After hearing about some of the tensions at LSC, one of the students asked me why I stayed on, why didn't I quit? My answer was, "Every job has its difficulties. Mine had its rewards and its penalties. In spite of the tensions that were sometimes created, I really loved my work and felt dedicated to the family and to the company. Besides, if I had quit, what guarantee would I have had that my next job would be an improvement?" This is a question I'm sure many people ask about their jobs every day.

Barbara Hollander, the prime mover in the Family Firm Institute, with which I'm affiliated, was given permission to use Levinson Steel as one of the models for her graduate school dissertation on family businesses. When she asked one member of the family how the family felt about my father, she was told, "We admired him, we respected him and we resented him." I don't doubt that there were similar feelings about me.

Perhaps all of that is to be expected. But in spite of these feelings, everyone acted constructively for 31 years after the

family fight until the company was successfully sold. Now that the company is sold, I'm hopeful those resentments will slowly disappear because underneath all of the mixed feelings that members of the family have had as part of a family business, there was always a great deal of love.

I should point out also that the attitudes of family people who were part of management or who were members of the board were not all negative. One of the heartening things was that several members of the family approached me about the time of my 68th birthday in 1982. Knowing that there was a built-in retirement for me at 70, and with no prospect at that time for selling the company, they felt we should consider revising my contract so that I could continue to oversee the company after my retirement. This, to me, meant that even though there was some resentment, there was also confidence in the kind of leadership I had given to the company over the years.

Peter F. Drucker, the well-known consultant, writer and professor in the field of business management, once made the statement that expecting different levels of management to see the company the same way is wishful thinking. It would also be wishful thinking to expect all the management participants in and out of the Levinson family to view Levinson Steel the same way. I do not doubt that if each of them were given an assignment to write about their experiences and feelings in this family company, that each would portray a different picture.

During my 52 years with Levinson Steel, before the sale to David Lloyd-Jacob, and especially during my 33 years as president and chairman, there were many rewards as well as many heartaches. The emotional toll of running a family company is great. There is an important contradiction in what qualifies one to manage a family company like ours, with so many branches of the family and so many different personalities with which to deal. There is a greater chance of survival if the person is tough and resilient and can take criticism in stride. Yet, to be success-

ful, one must also be sensitive in order to understand the feelings of family members and keep peace among them. Thus, one must be two different kinds of people—and that ain't easy.

Many people over the years have asked me our formula for ensuring peace and profits at Levinson Steel, with up to 65 family stockholders, and anywhere from four to 14 family people working in management. The guidelines for operating a successful family company are as varied and complicated as the families and companies involved—each is a unique undertaking. But one thing can be said for all cases: when a large number of family people are involved, making every effort to operate in a professional way is the proper approach, although it is sometimes easier said than done.

I think an important ingredient, when there are more than two family members involved, is to establish some ground rules. At Levinson Steel, we probably would have averted our one big family fight if my dad had sat down with his brothers and come to an agreement on how the company was going to be run, how the key management people would be selected, how salaries were going to be determined, which kinds of expenses would be paid for by the company, who would attend company-paid conventions, whether there would be any company-paid club memberships and which family members would have access to those clubs, whether there were going to be company-owned cars and which family members would have them, etc., etc....

The fairest, and most effective way to establish ground rules is to do it as though the company were not family owned and to make the decisions on the basis of what makes the most sense for the business. After all, if the business succeeds, everyone wins. If it fails, everyone loses.

Important to the success of family businesses (or any enterprise) is communications. Talking a language that everyone understands is basic, especially among entrepreneurs who participate in family companies. I recently attended a meeting of the

Family Firm Institute with a group of young professionals and consultants at which I heard a lot of phrases: multi-disciplinary organization, focus groups, network, programmatic functions, societal significance, integrative vehicle. I made the comment that if we are going to attract some family firm entrepreneurs, we better "clean up the language" because most people I know who are running family businesses would not know what the hell we are talking about.

My Uncle Abe, for example, was a damned good manager. He ran a terrific shop, but even terms like "organization," "job description," "responsibilities and authority" had very little meaning to him. When I discussed those kinds of things with Uncle Abe, I used language like, "We have got to tell each guy what his job is, who his boss is, and what he is allowed to do and what he is not allowed to do." That language he understood. Of course, when I said such words to Uncle Abe, I was only repeating things he'd told me years before.

While I have emphasized the problem areas in family companies, I have not yet mentioned the big plus—the one big advantage that family companies have over non-family companies—commitment and dedication. Family members often fight for their rights and their fair shares, but the company belongs to them and, with few exceptions, they do their jobs as though they're in business for themselves. Levinson Steel would never have made the progress it did in the 1930s and 1940s had not my dad and his brothers knocked themselves out to make the company go, sometimes without pay. Saturdays and Sundays were no holidays to them if there was work to be done. They never for a minute entertained the idea of failure. The progress the company made during those years would have been unlikely in a non-family organization.

Nevertheless, participants in a family company should face the fact that emotions run high in families, and that problems are often compounded. Therefore, every family member should be

aware of the emotional pitfalls, should be prepared to make compromises, and should deal with the problems as they arise and not allow them to fester. Furthermore, everyone should understand that there is no right side or wrong side. The only way a family company can survive is for everyone to be devoted to the success of the business and try to have empathy for the feelings of the other family members.

Sonia was everywhere—behind me pushing or beside me helping me walk with my head erect, and sometimes in front of me pulling.

SONIA ZALUDKOWSKI & DINEY

During those first few years with the company I enjoyed being a bachelor. I felt that the progress and development of Levinson Steel would be closely linked with my own development, especially if I worked hard and made a meaningful contribution to the company's success.

I had a variety of jobs—manager of the shop office, traffic manager, sales manager, manager of the new warehouse department and finally president. By the time I was sales manager in about 1936, I still wasn't married, was doing lots of traveling and meeting many women.

To the best of my recollection, it was Saturday, February, 20, 1938. I was visiting a girlfriend in Youngstown, Ohio for the weekend. This was the third weekend I'd done that. My dad was in Florida with some of his friends. My sister, June, was away at college, and my mother was home alone with Netta.

My mom was lonely. So, on this particular Saturday, she

called up my very good friend, Elkan Avner. She said, "Elkan, why don't you get some of your friends and come over and have dinner with me?"

Elkan said he would, and a little later he showed up with four or five other young people, who had dinner and spent the evening with my mother. One of the people he brought had just moved to Pittsburgh. She'd graduated from Hunter College in New York, and her father had come to town a year earlier to be the *cantor* (the clergyman who sings the Hebrew prayers) at Beth Shalom Synagogue in Squirrel Hill. She lived next door to Elkan.

When I returned from Youngstown on Monday, my mother told me about this beautiful new girl in town who had visited her with Elkan and some of my other friends.

I believe that 20 minutes after my mother told me about her, I was on the phone. I said, "This is Mrs. Levinson's little boy. I was away in Youngstown. My mother told me about you. I'd love to come over and meet you."

She said, "Not tonight. My sister just arrived today from Palestine. She's been there a number of years. Besides, we're in our pajamas, and this is a bad night."

I said, "I don't mind if you're in your pajamas. I still want to come over."

She said, "It's a bad night."

I said, "I'm coming anyway."

She said, "I guess you're irresistible. We'll put on our clothes. Come on over."

I did. And when I first saw her, thoughts of the woman in Youngstown and other women I knew left my head forever. She was beautiful and she sparkled. It was love at first sight. I do remember, among other things, that first night with Sonia that I drank a lot of water, because I had played handball that afternoon. Sonia finally got tired of bringing me glasses of water and brought me a pitcher and a glass. Before the evening was over, I

said, "How about going to the movies with me tomorrow?"

She said, "I'll be glad to if my sister's invited, too."

I said, "Of course she is."

A little bit later I said, "How about going to a Carnegie Tech basketball game with me Saturday night?"

She said, "Make up your mind. Do you want me to go with you tomorrow night or Saturday night?"

I said, "Both." So, I took Sonia and her sister, Celia, to the movies the next night. On Saturday night we went to the basketball game with my uncle Monnie and his wife, Julie. Then we went dancing at the William Penn Hotel.

When I drove her home I said, "You're going to marry me, aren't you?"

She said, "Of course, if you just don't step on my toes when we dance."

Three months later, on May the third, Sonia's birthday, I put an engagement ring on her finger. And six months and six days later, on August 28th, we were married at the Beth Shalom Synagogue.

As it turned out, Elkan Avner married Sonia's sister, Celia, whom he hadn't yet met when he brought everyone to spend the evening with my mother.

But the coincidences went even further. In a conversation with my sister June's boyfriend Lou Siegel, a few years later, he told us that when he met June he had been dating another girl from his home town of Youngstown, but that after he met June he stopped seeing this other young lady. When he told me her name, I screamed, "Oh my God, that's the same girl I was dating when I met Sonia."

After we got married we lived at 2135 Wightman Street, in a building which the Levinson family owned with Mr. Sachs and others. We rented our apartment for $62 per month. But we didn't live there very long. After a year or two we moved to a place on Tilbury Street, near Taylor Allderdice High School.

A lot of years have been shared by Sonia and me. A lot of ups and downs and all arounds. Our children are fond of pointing out how different we are. And it's true. Something tells me we both knew it when we met. It was part of the attraction. Mystery. Mystique.

I think the first time I met Sonia I was impressed with her beauty and her fierce sense of independence. She was warm and sweet and lovable, but not quiet, shy or bashful. She had ideas and she expressed them readily, and she was quick to express her ideas whether or not they were different from mine. There was an immediate attraction—a spark. Her sister, Celia, who was 14 months older than Sonia, was with her that first meeting and it was obvious to me that it was them against the world. It was always that way. When they were together, they often just babbled on and on in Russian, completely oblivious to other people around them.

Those two sisters were like twins, and there were times during our first years of marriage when I was a little jealous of the attention she gave Celia. On the other hand, if there were times in our marriage that I felt that way toward her sister, there certainly was one time when Celia had a right to resent me, and that was the night I met Sonia—when I intruded on their reunion after several years apart. I must have been somewhat insecure because, like many sons-in-law, I sometimes felt like I had to compete with her parents for her attention, especially after we lost the first baby (which I'll get into later).

Actually, Sonia's parents were fine people—wonderful people. They shared a deep family loyalty. They commanded great respect in the community, and Sonia's father and I developed a close, loving relationship in the few years we had together before his death. I know that early period in our marriage was tough on Sonia. The differences in culture (hers European, mine American) were difficult for her. She had a close allegiance to her family, and my occasional son-in-law's jealousy of them

made her needlessly uncomfortable.

Sonia was born in Warsaw, Poland, to Elias and Mania Zaludkowski, and spent her early childhood in Russia, in the city of Rostov on the Don. Her father, Reverend Elias Zaludkowski, was a world-famous *cantor*. He was a graduate of the Berlin Conservatory of Music. He was a composer, a musician, a conductor and possessed a beautiful lyric tenor voice. After World War I, he was the leading tenor of the Russian Opera in Rostov.

In Poland and in Russia, Sonia's parents were aware of the various types of oppression of Jews, including the ghettos and pogroms. Many of her cousins, aunts and uncles ended up in concentration camps or died in the gas chambers during World War II. Nevertheless, because Sonia's father was a clergyman, he and his family were looked upon with respect wherever they lived. They were considered Jewish aristocracy. They were, however, constantly aware of the dangers, and when Sonia was six years old, the family left Russia illegally, never to return. Although Sonia was in Kiev, a Russian city, for one day during one of her later European trips, she is reluctant to travel in Russia for fear of not getting out.

After leaving Russia, the family spent one year in Liverpool, England, where Sonia's Uncle Jack lives with his family. They finally travelled to the States, where Sonia's father accepted a position with a synagogue in Detroit. After five years, they moved again, this time to New York, where the he had accepted another position in upper Manhattan. Sonia attended college at Wayne University in Detroit, including one year of law school. In New York, she attended Hunter College, receiving a degree there before joining her family in Pittsburgh, where they'd moved several months before.

As a clergyman and musician in the U.S., Reverend Zaludkowski and his family continued to be a part of Jewish aristocracy. By comparison, my family worked its way up from peddling junk, and no matter what my station in life, I was never class

conscious and was always able to develop a rapport with people of every economic level, whether they be corporate executives or bootblacks.

Our differences are only partly our backgrounds. A large part is temperament. Sonia is a very proud and private person. I talk to strangers. I make friends with waitresses and busboys. The adjustment, which such differences have demanded of each of us, has not been easy. Yet, our 49 years together have been ones of growing respect and maturing love. It's a long time, and there were lots of "honeys" and "sweethearts," as well as occasional differences.

During our marriage, we have been friendly with many couples who were married a long time, and we learned that no matter what the front to the public, there is no marriage that doesn't have challenges and problems. We had our share, but fortunately they pale when compared to the things which we have going for us. Mainly, we are both tough. Tough in different ways, but tough. We know the meaning of commitment. Then, of course, there are children and grandchildren. Children and grandchildren like ours make one really hang in there.

Besides all that, I think Sonia and I not only have love for each other but also admiration. In the last decade cancer tried to get both of us, but we each beat it. It was partly luck, I'm sure, but I also feel that our mental attitudes played an even bigger part. We are both survivors and that has a lot to do with keeping a marriage together.

Our first major trial happened early in our marriage. It was the loss of our first baby. We were so looking forward to that child. We had an idea it would be a son. We even had a name picked out for him. We were both deeply disappointed that he was born dead. During her 60 hours in labor, the family feared for Sonia's life and prayed that she would survive, so even in the sadness at the loss of our first born, there was relief. After that ordeal, Sonia wanted to go to her mother's home to recuper-

ate, something I had a tough time dealing with. I thought she should come home and that I would get a nurse to take care of her.

All that passed, and three years later, on June 2, 1942, Jim was born, followed by Eleanor on August 12, 1947. In the 1940s and 1950s, when our children were very young, Sonia's parents died, and with that came a greater dependence on me and the kids. When her sister, Celia, died in 1969, that feeling was even stronger. We were her family. She had so few others—an uncle in Israel, an uncle in Liverpool, a cousin in Haifa, two cousins in Boston—and we became a close-knit family.

Jim was much like me in his social values. Eleanor had a little of both of us. And while I was the peacemaker in the big Levinson family (the aunts, uncles and cousins involved with the business), Eleanor was the peacemaker in the nuclear family.

But in spite of problems, I'd say that Sonia and I have come through admirably. Much more mature. Perhaps wiser. And we did it together.

After 49 years of marriage, I think I know Sonia very well. Her temperament and personality sometimes seems like a contradiction. She is sweet, beautiful, and very feminine. At the same time, she is probably the toughest and most tenacious fighter that I have ever known: take the way she coped with cancer.

I can remember it so distinctly. I had been called back from a meeting of the Chief Executives Organization in Florida when Sonia was rushed into the hospital for an emergency laminectomy. Sonia, however, seemed to be doing okay until a few days after the surgery when she discovered that she wasn't able to lift her leg. Dr. Selker knew immediately there was something wrong, and took some tests. My first inkling that Sonia had cancer was when Dr. Bob Selker called me at home and asked me to come into his office. He said, "I'm sorry to tell you but it looks very much like Sonia has some form of cancer and it may have already metasticized."

If there was ever any question about my love for Sonia, it was dispelled at that moment. I felt a sudden, sinking feeling. I wanted to cry. Dr. Selker couldn't tell me anything more about it. He had to do more tests. But, after all the testing, Dr. Selker walked into Sonia's room when I was there, and in a very gentle way he tried to explain that Sonia had cancer, that it was treatable and that we could be hopeful that we caught it in time. He couched his language so beautifully, that when he left, Sonia said to me, "What is he trying to tell me, that I have cancer?"

I said, "Yes."

She said, "We beat it once, we'll beat it again." Her courage gave me courage. Nevertheless, there was a lesion in her pelvic area. It was treated with radiation. She also had chemo-therapy treatments. They are not easy, but she had a special nurse, with special skills in administering chemo-therapy. Her name was Ann Welch. Her gentleness and encouragement, as well as her skill, helped a great deal. Sonia was in the hospital for two solid months and when she came out she wasn't able to walk. For two years she was in a wheelchair and then for one year walked with a walker and then with crutches, and then with a cane. Finally she threw the cane away. Her courage was absolutely amazing.

Sonia is extremely dedicated to more than just her own survival. She is a fighter on behalf of the State of Israel. Knowing her background and the fact that many members of her family died in the gas chambers, one can easily understand. She sometimes acts like a one-person crusade. She's unflinching and unyielding in her support of the Zionists in fighting for the rights of Israel and fighting for it's continued independence. In November of 1981 Sonia and I were honored and received an award from the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) at a banquet at the Hilton Hotel, attended by almost a thousand people. In February of '86, we were honored again—this time by the Jewish National Fund, the organization which has been acquir-

ing land in Palestine since 1901 and planting trees in Israel since it became a state. I'm not sure I deserved these awards. I'm absolutely sure she did.

Sonia and I did a good job together of raising the kids. Though she endorsed and helped me with my personal philosophy about raising kids, she had her own ideas for raising them. Her formula was a mixture of encouragement and prodding, and I honestly believe that it was that formula that had a great deal to do with Jim's progress in music and Eleanor's interest and excellence in the field of education. I know that Sonia was one of the people who encouraged her to do her graduate work in educational psychology after her marriage and while raising her children.

While many people think of me as the one who can speak the language, especially my business friends, Sonia can relate at least as well as I. As a matter of fact, we make a good partnership. In the early part of our marriage, most of our acquaintances were the result of our activities in the Pittsburgh Jewish community. However, as our business and community activities broadened, so did our fraternity of friendships. Sonia's energy and sparkling personality have also had a great deal to do with our wide range of close friends from every segment of the community both in and out of Pittsburgh.

When I first met Sonia I was really just a kid—unsure of myself. February 22nd, 1987, was exactly 49 years since we met. Through all the laughter and tears, the one thing she gave me was self-confidence. They used to say that behind every successful man there's a woman. More recently they say that beside every successful man there's a woman. In our marriage Sonia was everywhere: Behind me pushing, beside me helping me walk with my head erect, and sometimes in front of me pulling. Always encouraging. Always speaking up for me. She helped me in business. She was my partner in countless friendships. And she accepted and encouraged me in my community activities

(sometimes, she thought, too much).

Sonia has, at times, in looking back over her life, regretted the fact that she did not pursue a career beyond that of being a homemaker and helping to raise the children. Before we met she had spent one year in law school and had also done some teaching. There is no question in my mind, or hers, that she would have been effective in either kind of a career, and perhaps, with a little encouragement from me, she would have been as effective as a teacher or an attorney as she was a wife and mother. If the changing attitudes about women had come earlier, this would have been more likely to happen. Sonia, however, has no reason to second-guess her life. She has been honored by me, by her children, by her grandchildren, and by the community.

A marriage requires teamwork. That means more than one person working at it. I'm happy to say that Sonia and I have been a team that works.

What is remarkable to me is that in spite of our sharp differences, we never stopped loving one another.

MY SON JIM

Bringing up kids is no easy task. But before I tell you about our children, Jim and Eleanor, let me talk a little about the general subject of child rearing.

Although, there's certainly a better chance of success if parents have a few principles to guide them, we should face the reality that no two children are alike and that raising each child is a custom job. I also concluded long ago that part of how kids turn out is luck. Some parents do all the right things and their kids turn out bad. Some parents do all the wrong things, and their kids turn out good. Evidence of this is how children can vary when raised by the same parents in the same environment. Nevertheless, we can reduce the risk substantially by having some guidelines.

The formula Sonia and I have followed is simple. There are four things we have tried to keep in mind. I know they helped.

1. We genuinely love our children. We have demonstrated our love by words and actions. We have never hesitated to say the words "I love you." Our love manifested itself in a variety of

ways. By encouragement, a pat on the back when a child did something well, a squeeze of the hand or a kiss on the cheek or sometimes just a great big hug. Also by having a genuine interest in everything our children do. The same love we have shown our children, we show our grandchildren.

2. We always treated our children like individuals. We allowed them to make their own decisions from when they were quite young. Of course we'd never let them fall off a cliff. We were there to stop them if they were about to make really bad mistakes. As they matured, we allowed them to find their own callings, to choose their own spouses, to live their own lives. We even gave them the freedom to fail, because only by experiencing personal failure can people learn and mature.

3. We were always there when our children needed us. Our determination to treat them like individuals in no way diminished our responsibility to give them guidance. Often the advice was no more than this: "You do what you want to do but my experience has been such and such."

4. Probably the most difficult of all is to set a good example. I don't know how we can possibly expect our children to grow up to be honest if we constantly lie about their ages to get them tickets for movies and travel at half price.

There it is. Very simple. In a business or in a family, no one develops other people. All development is self-development. It's made a lot easier by people who understand this. The other thing is that a few inner convictions that young people develop for themselves are a thousand times more effective than all the rules which parents try to impose upon their children as they grow. Inner convictions become part of who the person grows up to be. Rules prepared by parents are soon forgotten. Apparently this formula has worked because Jim and Eleanor are truly fantastic people.

I am immensely proud of both our children. But they are quite different. My relationship with Eleanor has been quite

straightforward, especially since she became an adult. My relationship with Jim, however, has been highly volatile and extremely complex. That is not to say that our love for each other has ever been in question. Not for a moment.

Our relationship has taken all of Jim's 45 years to grow. I've enjoyed it immensely. It has been a steady stream of "right nows." If only they were forever. Let me share a few.

One of the most difficult and funny episodes (for me, not for Jim) was our talk about sex. He was 7 or 8 years old when Sonia said to me, "Jim's getting to be a big boy. Don't you think it's time you told him about the facts of life?"

Rather than worry about it, I decided to do it right that minute. So, I said, "Jimmy, do you know how babies are born?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "How?"

He said, "A man puts his penis in a woman's vagina and she gets pregnant and has a baby."

I asked, "How did you find that out?"

He said, "Mommy told me."

I thought to myself "that doublecrosser!" I was completely at a loss for words. I asked, "Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "What?"

Jim said, "Do you think Duquesne can beat St. Bonaventure?"

The other story happened when Sonia was pregnant with Eleanor. It's probably happened like this for lots of parents. She called Jim over, took his hand, put it on her stomach and said, "Feel the baby."

He giggled and Sonia felt he got the message. Hours later Janet Klineman, our next door neighbor, called, laughing. She asked what Sonia had told Jim. While he was visiting Joanne, Janet's daughter, he said to her, "Put your hand on my tum-

my—feel the baby."

When Jim was quite young he showed an interest in music. He could hum a tune before he could speak a word, as his son, Noah, did later. He loved to punch keys on the piano, and so Sonia and I decided when he was 7 to start him on the piano. His teacher was Lincoln Maazel, father of Lorin Maazel, the famous symphony conductor. Lincoln was a fine inspirational teacher, but with Jim he didn't deal with the fundamentals quite enough.

Jim was catching on to a tune and playing the music without learning properly how to read notes. In fact, he would play something on the piano and then say, "Look Mommy and Daddy, I can play it a different way" and he would transpose the piece into a different key. It was remarkable considering his age and that he could not even read music. We discovered later that he has the rare gift of perfect pitch. I am sure he inherited much of his musical talent from his maternal grandfather.

Sonia took matters into her own hands and said, "What Jim needs are lessons in music fundamentals." So she signed up with a Mrs. Fuchs, who taught Jim to read notes. Jim became an outstanding pianist, and music is as much a part of his life as breathing.

While Jim was a student at Harvard in the early 1960s, I attended a seminar there and we had dinner together. I knew he was making a serious choice about his future and, as usual, I hoped he'd talk about what he was thinking.

Over salad we told each other about our day's activities. Then, in the silence left by the departing waitress, Jim asked, "Dad, do you want me to come into the family business?"

I said, "I want you to do what you want to do."

He said, "Dad, you're not answering my question."

I said, "Okay, I'll give you an honest answer. If you want a place in the family business, you're a very able guy and I'm sure there'd be a place for you. But if I had my druthers, I'd really

rather you didn't come into the business."

He asked, "Why?"

I responded, "I can't imagine, since you have so much on the ball, any place where your talents would be less appreciated than with a bunch of second and third cousins you don't know in a fourth generation family company."

He said, "Well, that's good enough for me. I'll just prepare myself for another kind of career."

It was with the Harvard Krokodiloes (a singing group similar to the Yale Whiffenpoofs) that he planned to spend the summer after graduation in India, under the auspices of the Experiment in International Living, before beginning studies at Michigan Law School. Instead, he stayed in India under special contractual arrangements and worked for the U.S. Foreign Aid Program (A.I.D.). At the end of one year he entered the foreign service, stayed another four years and never did get to law school.

In his fourth year in India he met and fell in love with Satinder Singh, who we call Sati. Her father, Joginder, is a retired general and was Chief of Staff of the Indian Army Western Command in the war against Pakistan over 20 years ago. We have been able to get acquainted with Joginder and his wife Juswant during our visits to India and their visit to the States.

When Jim first wrote us about falling in love with Sati, I was pleased. Sonia had mixed feelings. I wrote him and told him I was happy that he and Sati found each other. In my opinion, there were only three questions that each of them had to ask in determining if a marriage made sense: Is he or she a person of good character? Is there genuine love for each other? Is there a reasonable chance of having a successful marriage?

Sonia was perhaps more realistic than I and she said to me, "Diney, you and I know that, under the best circumstances, having a successful marriage is not easy. You and I have been married 30 years. Even though my early childhood was in Europe and yours was in America, we both had the same Jewish up-

bringing. There has been a commitment on both sides and yet, we have had our trying times like all couples. Jim and Sati come from different backgrounds, and they start with two strikes against them." Actually, it turned out that we were both right. Jim and Sati were married for about eight years, and I am sure neither one of them would have traded that experience for anything in the world. But, finally, the differences in their temperaments, probably much more than those in their backgrounds, made the marriage unworkable.

But getting back to India: During Jim's last years there he was involved in the nutrition program, ending up as Chief of Nutrition in the U.S. Mission. He was quite unorthodox, but he was well liked because he got results. When he and Sati got married, Chester Bowles, former Governor of Connecticut and then U.S. Ambassador to India and his wife Steb had a beautiful reception for Jim and Sati at their official residence. Sonia and I were privileged to attend that party. We were especially struck by the beautiful floral arrangements. When Sonia remarked to Mrs. Bowles' secretary how wonderful the flowers were, she replied, "They were very expensive, but that's for Jim. Jim is a favorite of the Bowles'." He gave a number of piano concerts for them.

It is customary when a foreign service officer marries a native of the country in which he or she is serving that the officer resign. Chester Bowles refused Jim's resignation.

Jim's interest in combating malnutrition in developing countries led to his three years at Cornell, where he received his doctorate in agricultural economics. It was while Jim was there that Mira was born to him and Sati.

Upon finishing his dissertation (published by Cornell and MIT) he joined the faculty at MIT. During this period there were signs that his marriage was in trouble. Shortly after he and Sati split up, Jim met Louise Cochran, a librarian at MIT and, coincidentally, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister from

Pittsburgh. They were married in 1976. Louise subsequently became a student at Harvard Divinity School and received her Master of Divinity degree in 1981.

Like all else in Jim's life, his divorce from Sati was unique. They accepted the fact that their marriage wasn't working, but shared a deep concern about how Mira would handle the divorce.

My sister Netta is married to Rabbi Earl Grollman, a leading authority on divorce (also on death related grief). He understands the loss that children often feel when someone close dies or when parents divorce. Since Earl lives in Belmont, just a few miles from Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Jim and Sati lived, they spent many hours receiving counsel from him about the do's and don'ts of divorce as it relates to children.

That advice, added to the fact that Sati and Jim never stopped loving each other, never stopped being considerate of each other, and never stopped being friends (very close friends—almost like brother and sister) made the adjustment a lot easier for Mira. Her development as a student, as a musician (cellist) and as a beautiful young woman has been a matter of great pride and comfort to her parents, to us and to her other grandparents. Sati has remained close to the entire family. She calls Sonia "Mom" and me "Pop," and she will never stop being our daughter.

In recent years Jim and Louise have decided that there is no more important issue facing humanity than the threat of nuclear war, and they have devoted themselves to trying to prevent it. In 1984 they moved from Haley House in Boston to Noonday Farm in Winchendon, 75 miles away, which was purchased by Haley House (in part with funds which Jim donated) to grow food and provide care for the homeless and the elderly. Jim and his family operate the farm with other people; they pray and learn together. But his humanitarian and peace activities don't end there, in 1984 Jim joined a group on a peace mission to Nicaragua. When he returned, he spoke on the Central American sit-

uation before many organizations in Boston and Pittsburgh.

Several acquaintances have said to me that Jim's course—his turning away from working within the accepted norms of our society—is a cop-out. That couldn't be further from the truth. How has he copped out? Jim is not someone who was unable to succeed on society's terms. In fact, he has been a success at everything he's done. He has not turned away from responsibility. He may have made choices which others find unacceptable, but he has never retreated from his principles. In their quest for world peace, Jim and his family have found their own inner peace. I admire them and I love them.

After reading my manuscript, Jim felt that the 44 year relationship, including our unusual correspondence, should not wait, and he wrote that book himself. He hopes to have it published or rewritten and produced as a play. In it he talks not only about the love reflected in our letters, but also about the conflicts—the family company manufacturing 105 mm shells for the Vietnam war, and my involvement as a member of the board of a company which makes valves for the Navy's Polaris submarine—all of which has become increasingly disturbing to Jim.

Writing about the dynamics which exist between us is to tell as much about me as about Jimmy. Our attitudes about peace, love, integrity and responsibility are intimately linked, no matter how differently they might be expressed. We have always shared our thoughts on these things, never shying away from confrontations over differences. I believe it has made for a unique relationship between a father and a son.

I think Jim's greatest strength is also his greatest weakness. In his personal life there is lots of give and take; it is in his mission to make the world a better place in which to live that I think he often stands too rigidly on principle. As I said, he refuses to compromise his beliefs. That is a real strength, but Jim and I have a basic difference of opinion about just how much can be accomplished in this world without some compromise.

On many basic things about which we feel strongly, we should not compromise our convictions. However, I'm enough of a pragmatist to know where to draw lines for myself. Jim seldom draws such lines.

As he was growing up, Jim loved our discussions and he always wanted me to tell him about my philosophy relating to building character—the importance of being an honorable person, of not breaking promises, of building a reputation for integrity. I used to tell him how many people play games and that he'd achieve a great deal if people knew him as one who did not.

I told him that many of life's decisions are not nearly as complicated as they first seem. Wise decisions can often be made by first being sure to have the facts, by weighing them carefully and by applying some mature judgement and God-given common sense. These were easy sermons for me because they were much like those my dad gave me.

Jim and I talked about many other things. Things relating to making our lives stand for something. He loved the stories I told him about Albert Schweitzer and Larimer Mellon, who devoted their lives to helping poor and sick people in Haiti and Africa. I told him that the people who have real richness in their lives are not those who devote themselves to looking out for number one, but those who reach out and care about other people. His grandmother, Rose, was living testimony to that; for more than 30, she was a volunteer teacher at the Home for Crippled Children.

Jim took those messages seriously. Sometimes I think too seriously, but certainly, those ideas are what made his life different. As you might guess, neither he nor I subscribe to the fallacious theories of recent books with titles like *Looking Out for Number One* or *The Art of Selfishness.*

For various reasons, ours has been a relationship documented by serious correspondence. Sonia and I didn't know, when he went away to Deerfield Academy (a college prep school) at 16, that he would never return to Pittsburgh to live—that even

his summers would be occupied with travels related to music. But fortunately we wrote each other often from the beginning.

Jim and I continue to have a fantastic correspondence. I wish there were space to include all of our exchanges—my letter to him when he went away to Deerfield, our correspondence when he attended Harvard and while he was in India, and especially our letters since he abandoned more traditional mores and moved his family to Haley House.

In 1973 I presented Jim with our compiled correspondence—13 leather binders inscribed with *Correspondence with My Father*. Some of our most profound exchanges, however, have been since those volumes were completed.

In January of 1982 I wrote him a long letter, the essence of which was "...I think you know that Mommy and I not only love you dearly (and your family) but we are also pleased that you care a great deal about people and the entire human race and that you are determined to do something worthwhile with your life. It is only the matter of how you do it that Mommy and I are concerned about."

In February he replied, "I know that sometimes it is difficult for you to accept who I am or, more accurately, who I am becoming. It is a big change and an important one for me. Some of this is upsetting to you and I am sorry for that. I can't ask you to support me in this or fully accept me, but I do continue to need your love in the struggle. I need you to continue to find it in your hearts to accept my love the way I give it."

In August of '82, in an attempt to understand Jim's motivation, I wrote to him, "It has occurred to me that perhaps your parents (especially I) have been smothering you with our ideas, our activities and our philosophies and that deep down these changes are simply a rebellion against us (maybe a subconscious one) and an attempt for you to establish your own identity."

One week later I received this response:

As I've often said to you, my greatest teachers have been

your words and your example. And so it is in our work to try, in whatever way we can, to avoid the supreme folly of nuclear holocaust. Let me try and be specific about these teachings:

1. You taught me to act with love toward all people: rich and poor, black and white, Christian and Jew. You always have done so. You have taught me to think of all people—not just Americans, not just those with whom we agree politically—as my brothers and sisters. And so it is that I cannot help but feel deep sadness about the men, women and children in the Soviet Union at whom our nuclear missiles are aimed, and at the innocent in Beirut who are being killed with our arms.

2. You taught me to stand up for what I believe, as you always have even when it placed you at some risk, even when it was most unpopular to do so. And so it is as I put myself at risk—knowing that to do less is, somehow to be less human.

3. You taught me to remember always that I'm a Jew. I think of little else when I'm standing in front of Draper Laboratory. I think of little Anne Frank who, when she was in hiding, was the same age Mira is now. I think of Anne Frank, and of my own relatives, murdered by a death machine which, like Mark 12-A missiles, had no purpose other than to kill the innocent—and yet which also was justified as being legal, as being a defense contract, as being for national security. And I also remember asking you as a child how grown-ups in Germany were able to explain to their children that they knew of such things and yet did nothing.

So yes, you have been my teacher in all of this and will be always. And yes, let's keep working for peace together, each in our own ways. Keep writing letters to the President. Keep the pressure on the Jewish community and the business community to wage peace and to do so with conviction and integrity. And keep supporting me in my outrageous deeds of civil disobedience (divine obedience) and war tax resistance, however, seemingly impractical and ineffective (and so they also surely seemed for Gandhi and Martin Luther King). I'd much prefer trying to explain these to my kids than that I did less.

Love,
Jimmy

In his quest for peace, he was arrested for trespassing when

he was distributing leaflets at Draper Laboratories, designers of guidance systems for nuclear missiles. He served eight days in jail for that offense. He emulates the activities practiced by the Berrigan Brothers and Pittsburgh's Molly Rush, and tries to pattern himself after the philosophy of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, who advocated civil disobedience.

I wrote the following letter to the judge who found him guilty, with a copy to the judge who sentenced him to jail. I received no reply.

October 7, 1982
Dear Judge Lack:

On September 27, 1982, my son, Jim, was sentenced by Judge Murphy to eight days in the Massachusetts Correctional Facility at Billerica because he refused to pay the $25 fine you imposed for trespassing at Draper Laboratories.

I have been told that you are a most understanding judge and that you had no desire to have my son serve any time in jail. I understand also that you are not responsible for our criminal justice system and that we cannot have a society where each person has the right to decide with which laws to comply. I do think, however, that there ought to be alternative kinds of punishment for people who are no threat to society and whose motivation is beyond reproach.

My son has spent his entire adult life caring about other people, most of it with the State Department trying to combat hunger and malnutrition in places like India and Bangladesh. Jim's interest, and the interest of hundreds of thousands of protestors and demonstrators all over the world, is to prevent a nuclear holocaust. How could anyone argue with that objective?

I know, Judge Lack, that his methods are different than yours. The fact is, they are also different than mine; but no one can question the dedication of Jim and his associates. I just think it might be worth considering alternative kinds of punishment, which, as you know, is being used in other types of non-violent crimes. If Jim had paid his fine, the State would have been $25 richer. Not having paid his fine, the State will be several hundred dollars poorer for having to support him in jail during that

period of time. I think you will agree this makes no sense. It would make more sense to have these people serve the State in some capacity equivalent to the amount of the fine rather than to incarcerate the person.

I want you to fully understand that this letter is in no way a protest or criticism of anything you have done; but just something for you to think about regarding the entire judicial process.

Sincerely,
Aaron P. Levinson

In spite of our great love and admiration for each other, we finally—I guess it was inevitable—had a shouting match over the telephone. The next day I phoned to ask him why we did that, and before I could open my mouth, he said, "Dad, I am glad you called. I am really sorry for the things I said. I love you more than words can say."

In Jim's book he discusses how upset Sonia and I have been about what we consider his radical approach to preventing nuclear war. Finally, his book contains my letter to him which I prepared after reading his manuscript, and which I reproduce here:

Chautauqua, NY
July 18, 1986
Dear Jim:

Reading your book was not always easy for me, but I found your retelling honest and forthright. It is indeed our story, and it brought back many poignant memories.

I don't know if I ever told you that the day you were born may well have been the happiest day of my life. Our first son was born dead two years earlier. I first saw you just a few hours after you were born, and I remember well my first words to you, "Hello, Mr. Levinson. You've been a long time coming."

I had thought long and hard about my first child. I was determined that we would be close. Communications with my own dad were often very difficult. He could tell others about his admiration for me, but he was not able to tell me that he loved me

until just a few weeks before he died.

You and I were very close. We had long talks when you were a little boy, and then there was the steady stream of letters. In my determination to give you guidance, I passed along to you much of my philosophy and ideas. You listened well, but as you reached manhood, you began to have your own ideas, and they often were different than mine.

You and I are both strong-willed people. We listen, but we know where our convictions lie—and ours often have been in conflict.

What is remarkable to me, as I read through the story, is that, in spite of our sharp differences, we never stopped loving one another. It's possible that down deep our objectives may always have been the same—love of family and friends, and peace and justice in the world. By now we've both accepted the fact that our means toward those ends have been different. Though this is a lesson we had to learn the hard way, many fathers and sons never learn it at all.

A friend of ours, who knew something about the nature of our relationship, once commented that the strongest bonds are those which are well exercised. We have, indeed, kept ours well exercised, and it has been worth it.

Love,
Dad

In the fall of 1986, Jim took on some assignments relating to world hunger for the United Nations after a hiatus of seven years.

In April 1987, Jim invited us to the farm and then took us to a synagogue in nearby Athol, Massachusetts where, to our amazement, he was serving as the cantor. Jim had, in fact, been spending a good part of the previous year studying Hebrew liturgical music with the young rabbi of the Athol congregation. This service, a commemoration of Yom HaShua, the day of remembrance for the victims of the Nazi Holocaust, also marked a continuation of what had been 14 generations of cantors and rabbis in Sonia's family, the 14th being her father, Elias Zaludkow-

ski. At the service, Jim marked this tradition by wearing his grandfather's prayer shawl and singing some of the prayers composed by his grandfather 50 years earlier.

Although I had some inkling of what was going to happen, it was a complete surprise to Sonia. I don't think I would be straying too far from the truth if I said that this was one of the happiest days of her life.

"What kind of Jew am I, Catholic or Protestant?"

MY DAUGHTER ELEANOR

Eleanor was born August 12, 1947, five years after Jim. He was a tough act to follow. By the time Jim was in seventh grade he was already a straight A student and showed promise of becoming an outstanding musician. He made friends easily, was a leader among kids in his class and was a good athlete.

Sonia and I were afraid that the sibling competition would be too tough, that Eleanor would give up. There were times as she got into her teens when she showed signs of doing just that. Like many young girls she went through an awkward age of not being comfortable around people, or not knowing what to talk about at a party or with boys. She showed no interest in music and school seemed to be a grind for her.

Sonia and I thought that a private school would help build her confidence. We arranged for her to go to high school at Winchester Academy in Pittsburgh. She responded beautifully and began to show the kind of self-confidence she lacked before.

For some reason during Eleanor's adolescence, she did not

feel comfortable with me. When I embraced her she felt ill at ease and communications were difficult. Jim never had that problem with me. He and I talked about everything all his life. About the time Eleanor started at Winchester, apparently she and Jim had a little talk. Among other things Jim said to Eleanor, "You really should get to know Pop. He's great. He's taught me a lot." She took his advice seriously and our communications have improved steadily.

By the time she was 17 and a senior, she blossomed—and how she blossomed. She was beautiful. The boys liked her and she too was becoming a straight A student. At 18, in college, she was an outstanding student and had a steady boyfriend—the man she married—Jeffrey Peris. By then we had no fear of competition with her brother. The fact is, there was no competition. She has always been her own person.

For many years my grandmother, Rachel, lived across the street on Shaw Avenue with Aunt Ida's family. She called Sonia one day and wanted to know where Eleanor was. She said, "There's a little girl walking up and down the street in high heels wearing makeup and her mother's clothes and it looks like Eleanor." Sonia thought Eleanor was taking a nap, but she wasn't in the bedroom. Sonia ran outside and sure enough, there was Eleanor with high heels, wearing Sonia's hat and gloves, carrying Sonia's pocketbook with lipstick all over her face. She was three years old at the time.

A couple of years later, while attending kindergarten at Colfax School, she demonstrated her naivete about religion and prejudice. She came home from school and asked, "Daddy, what kind of Jews are we? Catholic or Protestant?"

Her musical interest was singing and one of her great talents was swimming. By the time she was 12, she was swimming competitively on the YMHA team. When she started high school, she went through the testing program and the teacher told us that not only did Eleanor have a high IQ, she also had no

hangups. Her even temperament is manifested today in the marvelous way she handles the emotional ups and downs which every family goes through—always with patience and calm.

While Eleanor's self-confidence really developed after her relationship with Jeff began, the one place where she was in her element, was at the girls' camps she attended in Maryland, Maine and Massachusetts. There she excelled in all sports, was one of the best swimmers and developed excellent relationships. She found this easier, in part, because she was with the same people day and night.

During the spring vacation of her last year at Winchester Academy, Eleanor traveled to India by herself to be with Jim. Up to that time, she really didn't get many chances to be alone with her brother. It was an unforgettable experience for her. They did lots of traveling. She remembers riding on country buses, participating in village work camps, living with Peace Corps volunteers, and joining them in their poultry project by debeaking chickens, and even visiting the Dalai Lama high in the Himalayas. When we asked her why she spent practically none of the money we'd given her, she told us, "Jim is a rich man. In all his clothing and in all his drawers, there are rupees." Sonia and I came to the conclusion that it wasn't so much that he was rich, but that he was poorly organized.

After high school, Eleanor entered Jackson College (part of Tufts University) in Boston where she was on the swimming team and also participated in Jackson's synchronized water ballet program. After one year at Jackson, she transferred to Chatham College in Pittsburgh to be closer to Jeff (they were already serious about each other).

While she was never conceited, there was something about her relationship with Jeff which made her feel like a complete person. She certainly was a woman in every sense of the word. Her development since her marriage has been by leaps and bounds. Shortly after her marriage she taught school in

Pittsburgh for about a year. From everything I've heard, she was sensational. Her students not only learned a lot but they also fell in love with her. I mean little kids, eight or nine years old. Many parents called or wrote Eleanor to tell her how much their children liked her and what a great influence she was. She just had a natural ability to communicate with kids and when she had her own children she put that ability to work most productively.

Marshall, Jonathan and Rachel are well-mannered, excellent students, fine athletes and well-adjusted. Jeff has always been somewhat of a disciplinarian and Eleanor a natural child psychologist. She says that her role is much like the one I played in our family—the more lenient parent—while Jeff's role is more like Sonia's was. The combination seems to work.

When I was thinking of writing about her, I asked her to write about herself and she talked about the influence that her parents, grandmother, husband and children had on her. She especially admired her grandmother, Grandma Rose (my mother), because she was strong enough to create a life for herself after her husband's death and she knew how to take care of herself. Eleanor, much like her grandmother and her Aunt Netta, has always been a down to earth, unpretentious person. In fact, she is so much like her Aunt Netta that I often get the two of them mixed up in my mind and call them by each other's name. This could partly be because for so many years I thought of Netta, not as my little sister, but more like my daughter.

Eleanor felt that my greatest influence on her was my genuine concern for other people and my ability to get along with others. She said she learned from her grandmother and me that if one is physically fit, mental and emotional health follow.

Of all the people in her life, she says, her mother has always been there to share every experience. To quote Eleanor, "She has been my sounding board and has never stopped encouraging me to go on with my education and to make the right decisions."

She says, "From both of my parents I learned to be a survivor and have a positive outlook on life."

"My husband," she says "I've known for more than half of my life. He provided me with the love and security that helped me build my own self-confidence. His constant praise and adoration have helped me to know my own self-worth. My children influence my life because they're terrific and because terrific kids help to make a good family and a good family makes my life complete."

While Eleanor was raising the children, she was getting her masters degree at night in educational psychology and is now the school psychologist in Rahway, New Jersey (the same town in New Jersey where Jeffrey's office is located). I recently asked Eleanor how much of what she applies every day in her work is related to what she learned in graduate school and how much of it was her own common sense and her natural feel for kids. Her answer was quick and sure. "Ninety per cent of what I do relates to my own natural feeling for kids. Most of what I learned in graduate school was academic 'crap'."

When Sonia and I have problems (I don't mean problems with each other, I just mean any kind of personal problem) we talk to our kids. They have been excellent counselors. Eleanor said that the way you know that you've reached middle age is that it's the time of your life when you help your kids and your parents as well.

There are no better examples than her prodding me to see a doctor when I had cancer, and her support when she came to Pittsburgh to take charge when I was having my partial laryngectomy.

There's something about being around her that makes me feel completely relaxed. Visiting her is like a vacation. I consider her one of my most important confidantes. We can talk about anything. Eleanor is one hell of a woman. I'm so proud of her and really love her and I'll never stop telling her so.

"What does God want with a dead cat?"

MY GRANDCHILDREN

Margaret Mead once said something about the phenomenon of grandparenthood. Essentially, she said that even though, by the time we've become grandparents, we've raised our own children and watched at close range hundreds of other children growing up, it seems like there were no children before our grandchildren arrived. We know for certain that ours are a group apart—unmatched by any children ever born, and that as they become adults, they will continue to be unique, outstanding and special. We have six grandchildren, and as I write this, there is no doubt that they light up our lives. So, this chapter is for grandparents—or you who will be someday. Those of you who don't like kids can....

MARSHALL DAVID PERIS

It was September 11, 1970. I had gone to bed early, as I usually do, at Blue Mountain Lodge. There were no distractions. No one was calling me about a business problem or a communi-

ty problem. There were no reports to read, no TV to watch. There were, at that time, no phones or TV. sets at the lodge—only a two-way radio to Austin Airways at Sudbury. My dream (or was it a vision?) was clear. No change in setting. I was lying in bed at Blue Mountain Lodge and a phone next to my bed rang. It was my son-in-law, Jeff. "Oh, Dad" he said, "I'm so glad I got you. Eleanor had a little boy." "How is she and how is the baby?" I asked. "They're both fine. Eleanor had some problems, but thank God she's fine." That was it. That was my dream. I knew Eleanor was expecting, but I thought she had a few more weeks to go.

I came to breakfast the next morning and said to everyone, "Congratulate me. I became a grandfather last night." Sam Caplan said, "You're nuts. How would you know that?" "I spoke to my son-in-law. He told me." "Now I know you're crazy," Sam said. "I'll bet you a bottle of booze your daughter did not have a baby last night and another bottle that if she did, it wasn't a boy." "You're on," I said, and a half-hour later we were out on Bell Lake fishing. Later we portaged to Balsam Lake, fished some more, had our usual shore lunch, and headed back to the lodge. As we approached, I said, "Sammy, you lost one of the bets." "How do you know that," he asked? I replied, "There are the people from the lodge waiting at the dock with champagne glasses."

Before we got to shore one of the girls from the kitchen yelled, "You were right! You became a grandfather last night. Your daughter had a boy."

That was how Marshall entered my life. The next day we took a sea plane back to Austin Airways at Sudbury and it must have taken me all of three minutes to get to a phone and call Jeff. He said, "Boy, did I want to talk to you when the baby was born, but there was no way I could get through." I said, "How is the baby?" He said, "Fine. Eleanor had some problems, but thank God she's fine now." The same words I heard in my

dream.

I was home that night, and it was evident that Marshall's birth on September 11, 1970, was an exciting day for the whole family. Marshall's dad was employed at the time as a biostatistician at Upjohn in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the telephone lines between Kalamazoo and Pittsburgh were buzzing for two solid days until we and Marshall's other grandparents (Pittsburghers Bernie and Sylvia Peris) flew to Kalamazoo to visit our children and meet our new grandchild—the first for Sonia and me. I immediately nicknamed him "Doc" because his initials were M.D.—a nickname which did not stick. Now at fifteen he is thinking that he might go in for medicine, so "Doc" might return some day.

We stayed in Kalamazoo for about a week so we could attend the *bris* (circumcision), a ceremony which combines surgery and religion eight days after the birth of a Jewish boy, and then rushed off to Ithaca, New York, where Mira, grandchild number two, was born.

Marshall just about doubled all our aspirations for him—straight A student, great athlete, plays the clarinet and saxophone in the marching band, tall and handsome, somewhat reserved but assertive when he has to be, especially in sports. He likes the girls. His girl friends say he's always a gentleman. He's very popular. Some of his parents' friends say he's the type of boy every mother hopes her daughter will marry. He enjoys the way I speak to women, and after he and Jonathan and Rachel did their song at my 70th birthday party Marshall said, "If any of you guys have girl problems, talk to my papa. He's had 70 years of experience."

He has a deep love and protective attitude toward his little sister Rachel—almost like a father. It reminds me of my relationship with my sister Netta. Now, let me list his faults. Actually, I can't think of any. I'm sure his parents or teachers could list some. I know of none.

MIRA STEPHANIE LEVINSON

There was no less excitement when we got the news of Mira's birth on September 18, 1970, just one week after Marshall's. Mira's dad had finished his five year stint in India and was a student in Cornell's Graduate School of Agricultural Economics. Marshall and Mira—in one week—were more than grandparents should hope for, and now, 16 years later, we are doubly blessed because they're such outstanding people.

Mira, in spite of normal growing pains, has emerged as a bright, beautiful, sensitive young woman. As I've said, Mira's mother and dad came from different cultures, and when Mira was four years old, Jim and Sati divorced.

There is never any friction or argument about where Mira spends her time, and she seems to divide it pretty equally between both parents, although her home is with her mother. Very often Mira and Sati will visit the farm together. Jim, Louise and Sati are quite close. Being brought up by parents with different cultural backgrounds is not always easy for a child, and having parents divorce is inevitably painful. Fortunately for Mira, her parents never stopped being loving and supportive of her and each other. Even so, it wasn't easy for Mira. I remember so vividly the first time she broached the subject to me. The two of us were driving somewhere, and she said, "Do you know my mother and dad are going to get a divorce?" I said, "Yes, I know." She said, "Grandpa, that makes me very sad."

Mira always excelled in her studies. She attended a Quaker school (Cambridge Friends School) where there was a great deal of freedom and where students were encouraged to develop at their own speeds. She also spent many summers at a Quaker camp in Vermont called the Farm and Wilderness Camp. Inspired by her dad's interest in music, Mira has become an accomplished cellist. The three Peris children love music, but do not have the musical aptitude of Jim's kids. By the same token, Mira did not have the natural athletic skills of Eleanor's kids,

and had to work harder at it, but nevertheless became an excellent swimmer and loves to canoe.

One weekend when Mira and Marshall were about 11, I visited Marshall at his camp in Massachusetts and then Mira at hers in Vermont. The contrast was interesting. Marshall's camp was fastidious—not even a piece of paper on the grounds. Keeping the bunks and grounds looking neat was the responsibility of every camper. The kids had a good time, lots of competitive sports and every hour of the day was scheduled. Mira's camp was just the opposite. I went into the cabins where the kids slept and the beds were not made. There were practically no competitive sports—the emphasis was on nature. Kids learned about the birds and the trees. The schedule was quite flexible. There was a very relaxed relationship between the campers and the counselors, and there was a substantial mixture of races. At Marshall's camp there were two Blacks—the rest of the kids were white (95% Jewish). I am not sure what all of this proves. It was nonetheless interesting.

During early childhood Mira related well to her grandmother but sometimes felt awkward with me. Our telephone conversations were difficult. She never knew exactly what to talk about, and it always ended up with a question and answer session. All of that has changed. Mira has blossomed into a mature, self-confident young woman. I don't have to ask her anything—she is always full of stories and wants to share everything with her grandparents.

Mira has traveled a lot more than most young people. She and her mother make periodic pilgrimages to visit her other grandparents in India. Mira also travelled frequently to Dacca, Bangladesh when Jim and Louise were living there.

Jim tells a story from one of Mira's visits to Dacca. The cook in Jim's and Louise's home bought two live chickens to cook for dinner. Mira saw them in the garage and came running up to Jim and Louise saying that someone had brought her two new

pets, which she immediately named Sam and Willy. Jim said they had something else for dinner that night.

Mira is a very socially-conscious young lady and works with her dad in the peace movement. During her last year at the Cambridge Friends school she chose to work with Greenpeace, an active and creative environmental group. One of the projects of Greenpeace while she was there was stuffing a huge cork into a pipeline discharging industrial waste in Boston Harbor. Mira had the responsibility of providing information on the action to the media.

Just as Marshall sometimes feels and acts like a dad to Rachel, Mira feels and acts like a mother to Noah and to Dora.

Mira is now a student at Northfield-Mt. Hermon School in Massachusetts. Still an excellent student, she is in the school orchestra, a member of the inter-faith council, and also a member of STOP (Student Teacher Organization to Prevent Nuclear War). When we visited her school, it was evident that she had many friends and was well liked by the faculty. She is the kind of young lady grandparents dream about—warm, loving, and enthusiastic. During her 1986 spring break, Mira accompanied her grandma to meet relatives in England and Israel, and to observe the cultures of her heritage. The trip was a treat for both.

JONATHAN STUART PERIS

I've met lots of kids in my life, but no one quite like Jonthan. He sparkles. There is an excitement about him. He possesses a sense of drama. I think half the time he pictures himself in a movie or a play. He's had the world as his stage since he was born on October 28, 1972.

He is a straight A student, president of the student council and an outstanding athlete. His indomitable spirit permeates everything he does. His sense of rhythm makes one grandmother say that he is going to wind up as a professional dancer. His sense of humor makes his other grandmother say that he is going to be a stand-up comedian. His dramatics make many feel he

is going to end up on the stage, but his appeals to his parents and his logical arguments to get permission to do what he wants to do make them think he's destined to be an attorney. The way the girls react to him and the phone calls he gets every night makes us wonder if he is going to be a movie star. His enthusiasm for sports has us all wondering if he could some day be another Franco Harris or Mickey Mantle.

I think Jonathan could be anything he wants, and even in his early teens, he knows the meaning of excellence. He finds and enjoys the challenge in everything he undertakes. He recently wrote a paper for school about his heritage, and when I read it, it was hard for me to believe that someone so young prepared it.

While he sometimes argues with Marshall, he is basically a loving young man. He once wrote a birthday note to Rachel and said something like, "I apologize for teasing you all the time, but it's so much fun when we kiss and make up. I love you."

When he's around my friends, he sometimes takes them off to a corner and tells them jokes which make their hair stand on end. That's our Jonathan!

RACHEL ELLEN PERIS

Rachel was born April 11, 1977. At 9 she had the maturity of someone 19. Once, when Eleanor and Jeff visited her teacher in school on Parent's Day, the teacher said, "Rachel is the kind of student every teacher dreams of." Like her brothers, she is a fine student and athlete—plays basketball, volleyball and soccer—but the sport in which she is best is swimming. She loves it. She works at it, and she is a champ. When she was in the seven-eight year old group, in almost every meet she finished first, second or third in the free style, the back stroke and the butterfly. In the breast stroke, she was always first.

One story, particularly, illustrates her maturity. In October '84, when she was 7, Sonia and I visited the family in New Jersey, and attended a county-wide swim meet. We couldn't wait for the breast stroke event, because we always love to see her

swim. Lo and behold, the breast stroke race for her age group took place, but Rachel was no where to be seen. We all looked at each other, wondering what had happened.

Five minutes after the race, Rachel walked over to the stands laughing. She said, "Can you believe it ? My coach forgot to put my name down for the breast stroke. I'm going to swim in the butterfly race instead." I know of no other child that age who would have laughed instead of crying. The fact is, Eleanor, Jeff, Sonia and I were almost ready to cry when we didn't see her, but to Rachel, it was a big joke. What a lady!

One day, during the Jewish High Holy Days, Jeff attended the children's service at the temple with Rachel. After the service, he asked what she was praying for during the silent prayer. She said, "It's a secret." Jeff said, "It doesn't have to be a secret, like making a wish on your birthday. You're allowed to tell if you want to." Rachel said, "I prayed that some day I would be a member of the U.S. Olympic swimming team." And she probably will be.

Once the Peris's had a cat. When the cat died, all the kids were crying. Jonathan, who was about eight at the time, sobbed, "Mommy, why did the cat die?" Eleanor answered, "I don't know, sweetheart. Maybe God wanted her." Rachel said, "Mommy, what does God want with a dead cat?"

Rachel is everything—mature, responsible, an excellent student, a good athlete, and lovely. I just hope and pray that Sonia and I are around when Rachel gets into her 20s. I predict that she is going to really set the world on fire.

NOAH EMANUEL COCHRAN LEVINSON

Noah was born March 3, 1981. He has three dominant characteristics—he is beautiful, he is precocious, and he has a mind of his own.

Jim says he is extraordinarily musical. At two, he sang a song about his apple juice to the tune of Beethoven's *Ode To Joy*. Before he was four, he studied Suzuki violin. In three

weeks, he picked up the basic bowing techniques, but the violin playing ceased when he insisted that he had his own way of playing and refused to be guided by the teacher.

Once, when he was three, Louise called the farm. He answered the phone—he is very articulate. After asking him how he was, she asked, "Is Daddy home?" He answered, "No." She then asked, "Isn't anybody home?" He replied, "I'm home. I'm talking to you." Until he was three and a half, he lived at Haley House—a group-living situation with a soup kitchen. Noah's parents said that many of the homeless and elderly people who came to the soup kitchen developed a special relationship with Noah. One elderly woman called him the "light of her life." One homeless man said that seeing Noah every morning was the only thing keeping him alive.

Just remember the name Noah Emanuel Levinson. You will hear about him one way or another—by age 21 (maybe 16).

DOROTHY ELIZABETH COCHRAN LEVINSON

Dora was two years old on February 15, 1987. I find her truly irresistible. With six grandchildren, the youngest, who we have hardly had a chance to know, would not likely be competition for the other five, but anyone who thinks that has never seen Dora.

Jim and Louise brought her along on a fishing trip to Blue Mountain Lodge in August of '85. She was only five and a half months old, but Sonia and I fell in love with her. I think partly because she fell in love with us and was constantly reaching for us and hugging us and trying to bite our ears and our noses. Someone in the boat caught a baby bass and was holding it, ready to throw it back in the lake. Dora lunged for the fish with her mouth open, ready to swallow it whole. I wish I had a picture of that.

Even as a baby, Dorothy Elizabeth Levinson has won the hearts of her grandparents.

"I'm just as ashamed of it as you are."

LABOR RELATIONS ARE HUMAN RELATIONS

Naturally, over the years, there have been many interesting or funny stories involving the employees of Levinson Steel. Some can't be told, but there are a few which deserve to be shared. Let me begin with one which still makes me laugh.

THE RAISE THAT WAS

Years ago, when salaries were a lot lower and jobs were not too plentiful, we were hiring young women fresh out of high school who knew how to type but didn't know how to take shorthand. We called them clerk/typists, and we paid them $175 per month, which was the minimum wage at the time.

On this occasion I was responsible for hiring. The young woman was Sally Connelly. Of course, I had no idea at the time that she would stay with the company and do well. When I interviewed her she was a young lady, anxious to enter the world of work. I was pleased to offer her a job.

We had a policy of reviewing new personnel after six months, and since I'd hired Sally it fell to me to talk to her about her performance. When she came into my office I said, "I want you to know you're doing a terrific job, and I want you to keep up the good work." She seemed pleased, so I went on with the rest of the good news I had for her. "You've been here six months and we're going to raise your salary to $200 per month." Then I cautioned her. "But, Sally, not everybody's getting a raise, so it would be good if you handled it discreetly."

Sally looked at me and said, with utmost seriousness, "Mr. Levinson, you don't have to worry about me, I won't say anything. I'm just as ashamed of it as you are."

THE RAISE THAT WASN'T

In the early '50s, my secretary, June Schulberg (now Bowers, and a practicing attorney) asked for a raise. I said, "No, business is lousy, you haven't been here long enough, and you haven't really proven yourself yet." She said, "If you don't give me a raise, I'm going to tell everyone you did." Two weeks later, she sent me a postcard from her vacation with the words, "Thanks, thanks, thanks for the raise." The mail clerk quit her job.

EL PRESEDENTE

Another amusing episode involving June happened after my dad's death. Uncle Abe suggested that I move into Sam's office. The night before the move I thought of little else except being in his big, elegant office, which had only recently been modernized. The next morning I was filled with a feeling of self-importance. I dressed in a dark blue pin stripe suit. My shirt and tie were new, conservative and matching. My shoes were shined. As I passed my secretary's desk, I whispered a stuffy good morning, walked into my office, looked at the mail, and pushed the buzzer for June to come in. I said, in an almost con-

descending tone, "Take a letter, please." I dictated a few sentences, put my chin in my hand, my elbow resting on the edge of the desk. As I concentrated on formulating my next sentence, my elbow slipped off the desk and I almost broke my chin.

June then said, "Okay, El Presidente, now you can start being Aaron Levinson again."

My big-shot fantasy lasted less than one hour and never returned.

ARMED IN THE ARMORY

For several years during the late '60s, we operated the Hays Army Ammunition Plant, next to the Mesta Machine plant, just a couple of miles up river from the company offices and our South Side plant. When we began, there was no public outcry about the war in Vietnam, let alone a massive anti-war movement. When the war became unpopular there began to be a hue and cry about our defense plant. The objections came not from the public, but from some of the young people in the family who were stockholders. When our contract expired, we made no effort to renew it. The ensuing story has nothing to do with that, though.

Most people in business, especially corporate leaders, have to ration their time carefully. As a result, they sometimes don't look into things as carefully as they might, and some injustices result. When this incident occurred, we had about 2,000 members of the United Steel Workers of America under contract at the armory, and labor relations were a big deal.

There was a Black guy named Henry Pegeron who walked into the plant at the beginning of his shift and was stopped by a guard, who asked him, "Do you have a switchblade?" Evidently, someone had told the guard that this guy carried a knife. No one else was being asked.

Henry said, "Yes." and the guard asked to see it. Henry pulled it from his pocket and showed the guard how it opened. The guard told him to stay right there, and proceeded to call the

personnel officer, who came down and fired the guy on the spot. The rule was strict: Anyone caught with a lethal or illegal weapon in a defense plant is automatically dismissed. A switchblade was illegal.

The union committee realized that they had no legal case for defending their member, so they approached me in person, requesting that an exception be made in this case. Would I listen to his side, they wanted to know? I said, "Sure, I'll listen, but I'm the guy who's gotta hassle with the Army, and I don't want this to become any sort of precedent."

They told me they would guarantee it, so I said I'd talk with the guy. The committee went out and sent Henry Pegeron in. Now, one needs to imagine this scene: the committee, all white, going to bat for Henry, who is Black, after he was caught walking around with a switchblade.

When he came through the door I looked at him and said, "I don't believe it. You, of all people." I used to walk into the cafeteria and talk with whomever was there. That's where I met Henry. I'd never learned his last name, but we'd become buddies. I hadn't realized until that moment who I'd been discussing with the union.

I asked about the switchblade. He explained that he picked it up in Italy when he was in the Army. "Why carry it," I asked?

"Never thought about it," he said. "I just always carry it around."

I then asked him a lot of questions about himself that I hadn't learned from our talks in the cafeteria. After he left, I did some research. I talked with his supervisor, who was white. He told me that he wished everyone was like Henry—honest, gentle, steady. I talked to his co-workers, who told me what a terrific guy he was. Everybody liked him. They all had seen him use the knife dozens of times to cut fruit or wire—the same as I'd use a pen knife. He wasn't being secretive or threatening. According to the personnel department, he had a perfect record. He even

had a perfect record at the last place he worked.

So, I called in the union committee and said that I'd see that he got reinstated. I told them I would deal with the Army if there was any flack, and that there wouldn't be any penalty beyond the three days he'd been off. I had them put in writing that this didn't set a precedent. We all felt good.

The whole thing just kind of said to me, "Don't be so smug. You may think you know all the answers, but you never know what you'll find when you look. You can go by the rules, but sometimes you have to look behind them or beyond them."

It would have been a terrible miscarriage of justice if I'd fired Henry Pegeron. I learned again that you just don't make snap judgments about people.

FRAMED

More recently there was another incident in which justice was looking the other way. Only this time, it didn't directly involve the company or the union.

In August of 1980 Pat Nigro, then director of personnel at Levinson Steel Company, called me and said that Charley Turner was up on a narcotics charge, that he said he was being framed and would I talk with him.

Of course I would talk with him. Charley's a fine guy in my book. I'd known him well for many years. He had been with the company for most, if not all, of his work life. His father and grandfather were with Levinson Steel before him.

A few days later he came into my office—a truly frustrated guy. He was in a bar. The place was raided while he was in the men's room. They found narcotics in the men's room and said it was his. He said he had nothing to do with the narcotics. He had an attorney, who wasn't helping him much. It boiled down to his word against the agent's and Charley said, "What chance has a Black guy got when it is his word against the agent's?" He said he was being framed and asked if I could help.

I called Gregg Kerr, a senior partner at Eckert, Seamans, Cherin & Mellott, who was a member of the Levinson Steel Board of Directors. I asked him who the best criminal attorneys were in town. He told me that in his opinion, the best were Manifesto, Doherty and Love, and so I arranged for Charley to see Bill Manifesto. He took the case. By June of 1981 Bill Manifesto had developed enough evidence to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Charley's claim of being framed was correct and that the District Attorney really had no case. The DA dropped all charges and Charley Turner was a happy man. He came to see me and kissed me three times—on the forehead and on both cheeks.

THE OLD MAN

During the three or four years that we operated Hays, we really did have to deal with a lot of government regulations. We were pretty attentive. Once in awhile I'd put on a hardhat and walk through the plant.

One day I stopped about half way through my tour at the nurses' station. There were several nurses there, all busy. Since I was standing right beside the phone, I answered it when it rang, rather than interrupt one of them. The voice on the other end said, "The old man's in the plant. Pass the word."

I said, "Okay, I'll pass the word." Then I turned to the nurses and said, "The old man's in the plant. Pass the word." We all started to giggle.

NEGOTIATIONS

We had a good relationship with the union there. I'd like to mention George Radulovich, who was president of the local. He was a professional and he was tough. George and I had an unusual relationship, and he says that in all his years in union activities, he never had another like it with an employer. He liked and trusted me. I felt the same way about him. There's usually a

lot of mistrust between union and management people.

We started a procedure which was new and intriguing to George. Usually, after a "knock down, drag out" negotiation, you write up the agreement, put it in a file somewhere, and look at it only when you have some sort of legal hassle with the union. We didn't do that.

When we wrapped up a contract, we got all the union stewards and all the shop supervisors in a room together for a whole day. We would go over the contract and discuss how to make it work successfully. We talked about the interpretations so that we would have practical guidelines to work with. George Radulovich says he never saw that happen anywhere else. In fact, he was so impressed with it, that I was invited to speak at a meeting of the United Steel Workers in Pittsburgh. He told me that it was the first time an employer was asked to speak at a USWA meeting.

We followed the same practice with our employees on the South Side, who were members of the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers, Local 527—the old American Federation of Labor union.

NOW, SOME STRIKING AND NOT SO STRIKING COMMENTS

For awhile we had a plant in Greenville, Pennsylvania, which is north of Pittsburgh above Lake Pymatuning. There was an independent union there—not part of an international. The employees in the plant ran it. Now, this is strange, but when they worked out a contract with us, they included a grievance procedure that read that the final step is arbitration by Aaron Levinson. They agreed to that.

In all the years we had unions, we had three strikes. In most games, three strikes and you're out. We were still in there swinging. The number of strikes a company has is a poor gauge, however, of how effective its employee relations are.

I believe that there really are two sides to the bargaining table, and to pretend you're on the same team is a mistake. However, once you've negotiated a contract—and this is one of the reasons we had a minimum of problems—it's time to cooperate to make everything work for both sides.

A number of years ago there was a strike, which was eventually lost, by a group called FASH (Fraternal Association of Steel Haulers). They were independents—guys who owned and operated their own trucks. Many of them delivered to our plant, but our own drivers were Teamsters. They weren't on strike, but were afraid that the FASH people would not make the distinction. They thought there might be violence, since there had been problems on the Ohio Turnpike. I decided that if they were willing to drive I would go with them. They called it "riding shotgun."

They loaded the truck at seven one morning and we headed out. When we got to the group of FASH picketers, they stopped the truck. The driver asked what they wanted. I got out of the truck and said, "Look, this guy works for me. I'm the president of the company. We have no problem with him and he's satisfied with us. He's not on strike, and we'd just like to go through because we have orders to deliver."

I suppose they could have been violent, but they weren't. They stepped aside and let us go. I rode along all day. When we came back, they were still there and stepped aside so we could go back into the plant. That was something that really impressed our men—that I'd go out like that.

That doesn't mean there's always harmony and good feelings. When the issues are tough, negotiations can get equally rough. Most of my experiences were with the union in our old plant, Local 527 of the Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers. Bill Model was the representative from the International who was responsible to the guys in our plant. He was tough and rough.

One of the strikes occurred at a time when we weren't just negotiating for ourselves. There were a number of plants negotiating together. After it had gone on for awhile and nobody was getting anywhere in the meetings, Bill called me and said, "Let's you and me go out and settle this."

I said, "I can't speak for the rest of the employers."

He said, "I can't speak for all the other people on the union committee, either, but we can sell something we agree to."

We stayed out until five in the morning, drinking and talking. Finally, we agreed on something, shook hands, went back and sold it. The strike ended.

After being through a number of negotiations, I learned that you just can't lose your sense of humor. When things really got rough—when it was down to shouting—I'd try to come up with something to lighten things up. Whatever it took to get everybody calmed down again. Maybe we'd all go down the street together for a beer.

GOOD HELP ISN'T HARD TO FIND

There are some businessmen I know who will tell you, "Boy, the help you have to put up with. You can't trust 'em." I have never accepted that cliche. I told one guy, "Look, you shouldn't complain about your people. You hired them. You trained them. You set the climate in the workplace. If they're lousy, it's your fault."

My dad told a funny story from when he and Abe still operated the office and yard on Pride Street. Some guy walked in off the street and asked my dad for a job. He looked big and tough and like he might be a good worker. So my dad said, "My brother Abe is looking for men. Just go over to the yard and tell him I sent you and he'll put you to work."

The guy kind of half-heartedly said, "Thank you, Mr. Levinson." He started out the door, then turned around and asked, "How much you goin' to pay me?"

My dad said, "Don't worry about that. We'll pay you what you're worth."

The guy slowly looked up at my dad and said, "No sir, I ain't workin' for that kind of money."

I've always been proud of the fact that our people were good. I think it had a lot to do with the general morale in the company. I believe that there should be an atmosphere of trust, and if you select people carefully and give them opportunities to use independent judgement and make decisions, then you will have effective, loyal employees.

Most of my fellow businessmen have said to me that you can't really allow yourself to get too close to your employees. That may be true of most executives, but I've been kind of lucky and have been able to separate the business and personal aspects of my relationships. Over the years, countless Levinson Steel employees have become personal friends and in no way has it had an adverse effect on our working relationships. I've even had to dismiss two close friends, and yet I was able to handle it in a way that was not too painful to them and not at all embarrassing—and, believe it or not, in both instances the friendships continued after they left the company.

SAD TIMES

One of the hardest things I've ever had to do was tell our employees that we were shutting down the South Side facility—the home of Levinson Steel. That was in 1980. It had simply become a losing proposition. It was hard enough dealing with my own emotions about it, but imagine how it feels to tell all the people who will be losing jobs. It was awful.

Those changes were traumatic for all of us in the company. Fortunately, we've always leveled with our people. There are many companies which go out of business making a big mystery of it to their employees. Basically, they're afraid everyone will leave before the last contracts are finished.

We've had to close several plants over the years. We have always told our people what was going to happen as soon as we knew. We figured that if we were straight with them, they'd be straight with us.

As soon as we began considering closing South Side, we called everyone to a meeting and told them about the possibility. No decision had been made yet. We talked with the union about it. We wanted them to know how things stood. When we finally concluded that we'd have to close the fabricating plant, we immediately held a meeting with everyone in the office. Then I went down to the plant and called everybody to a meeting.

There I was facing all of them. There were guys I'd known for 20 years—people I considered friends. I'd worked with or known the fathers of many of them. The plant had that eerie hollow sound—the din of metal against metal was missing already. I choked up and couldn't speak for a moment. I explained why we were shutting the facility. I told them how I felt about them. I told them that no company was as lucky to have so many terrific people. There had always been loyalty on both sides.

I promised that we'd sit down with each of them and help him analyze his own situation. If a man wanted to find another job in the industry, we'd help him. And we did our very best.

Changes are seldom easy. Of course, the changes in the steel industry relate very closely to the changes in the city of Pittsburgh. It's not just the steel industry, however. There have been some significant changes in the attitude of many employers (and not for the better). Many managers and employers no longer feel a moral obligation to be concerned about their employees—certainly not as much as they used to. I know that there was a time when, before a company closed its doors, there were a number of factors which it considered: How it would affect the stockholders. How it would affect the management. And how it would affect the employees.

And when it did affect the employees, companies considered

what they could do to lighten the burden on the employees and make the transition easier. They were interested in retraining and having people transferred to other places. They were interested in all sorts of things that would be helpful to an employee. Certainly some employers continue to be concerned about the fate of their people, but too many seem to be cold and disinterested. The attitude of too many top corporate executives seems to be only what they consider the bottom line for stockholders and the security of their own positions with their companies.

"Just call me Herman."

A GREAT DAY FOR THE RACES

One of the proudest episodes in my life was working successfully to integrate the hiring practices of the major downtown department stores in Pittsburgh. Sonia and I worked on this with our friends K. Leroy Irvis (currently Pennsylvania's Speaker of the House) and his first wife, Kitten.

Today there has been some progress in race relations, but back in the '40s and '50s, Pittsburgh wasn't very progressive. Sonia and I, like our parents, were sensitive to those issues because we faced discrimination as Jews. There is no necessity to reiterate the oppression and atrocities directed against Jews all over the world for centuries, but in the United States, anti-Semitism was nothing compared to the discrimination, prejudice and bigotry directed against Blacks.

Pittsburgh may have been a northern city, but after the Civil War supposedly resolved the issues of Black citizenship, it was among the last cities in the country to grant Blacks the right to vote or own property. Even then, discriminatory hiring policies

effectively kept Blacks out of decent jobs. Poverty and second class status were almost guaranteed. And this was true even after World War II. As Leroy wrote for this book, when he and Kitten moved to Pittsburgh, "Black people could not eat in any downtown restaurant and they were not welcome in the downtown theatres. They had no jobs with what is currently called the Port Authority, it was then a private transportation company. They did not work in anything except the most menial positions in the department stores or, in fact, any other place. They were limited in their housing to certain areas of the City."

Furthermore, Leroy continued, "we knew practically no one, and looking around at the dreary circumstances of the city with its smog-filled air and its lack of imagination, we both decided we would spend no more than two years there. (Kathryn Ann died in 1959, having spent 14 years there, and I am still there committed to the City and its people.) One of the reasons we became so committed was because we met Aaron and Sonia Levinson. They were both approximately our age. We were in our early to mid-twenties, and they were three to four years older, but that made us compatible... We found we had certain things in common. We objected to the way people were being treated in and around Pittsburgh, especially Black people." It was at that time that "the four of us decided we were going to try and change those things about how Pittsburgh Blacks were treated."

Leroy had come to Pittsburgh from Baltimore to work for the Pittsburgh branch of the Urban League as public relations secretary. Sonia and I met him and Kitten through my work with the League. We became fast friends. At the time, Leroy was intense on the entire matter of racial discrimination. He demanded justice and respect and fair employment immediately. Many members of the Black community were unwilling, at that time, to go so far.

It was evident that something more than polite requests was called for if the racial barriers to hiring were to be broken. We'd tried all that to no avail. That's why we decided to mount a pub-

lic campaign of letter writing and picketing at the downtown department stores, where Blacks were systematically denied jobs as clerks. We chose the Christmas season for obvious reasons. Our inter-racial coalition really worked. We confronted the stores with about 15,000 post cards. We distributed over 30,000 leaflets and we got quite a few sympathetic people to cancel their accounts with offending merchants. None of this was easy for me because I. D. Wolf, the man who ran Kaufman's, and other store owners and executives were friends.

As Leroy writes, "Aaron and I planned, with the help of our wives, the first picket lines in the United States ever to be seen surrounding a downtown business. That was in 1947. My wife and I led the picket lines, and I was the chief negotiator between the department stores and the Black community."

At that time Pittsburgh's mayor was David Lawrence. As the campaign mounted it became clear to him that his city was going to get a lot of adverse publicity, so he offered to mediate if Leroy and his group were willing to meet and negotiate with the store officials. By this time it had been announced that picketing was going to take place on Monday. Leroy agreed to hold back the pickets if negotiations were productive, but he'd made arrangements with Kitten to signal her from a courthouse window if talks broke down. And that's what happened.

The mass picketing attracted the attention of the national press. Reporters from the radio networks, *Time Magazine* and others swooped down to get the story. The combination was too much for the store owners. By Wednesday the stores had agreed to hire Blacks, and by the end of December they'd signed a statement to the effect that there would be "no discrimination in employing and upgrading Negroes from this day forward."

What a tremendous victory it was! Unfortunately, Leroy found himself in trouble with his own organization. Maurice Moss, director of the Urban League, bowed to pressure from the offended white business community and fired Leroy.

"Things got very rough for my wife and me," Leroy remembers. "At this point in our life, there were many so-called friends who decided it was unwise to be associated with us. We were surreptitiously labeled as Reds or Communists; and, in fact, some of my so-called friends would not even speak to me when they saw me in the street. Aaron Levinson was not cut from that type of cloth. He and Sonia remained our close friends and ardent supporters. When we needed money to buy our first furniture, it was Aaron Levinson who lent me the money. When I needed a job, it was Aaron who secured one for me in a steel scrap yard where he had some influence. When my wife and I opened our little hot dog stand, our own business, it was Aaron and Sonia who were among our first customers."

"Aaron also helped argue my case with the Urban League and encouraged me to fight the dismissal, which I did. I won my case and was rehired at 9:00 a.m. one morning, and at 11:00 a.m. I quit because I did not want to work for an organization which really did not, at that time, represent the interests of my people. Note, I said at that time, because Aaron was correct. He said he was going to stay with the Urban League, I believe he was a board member, to improve it. I said, 'the hell with them' and quit. But they did improve thanks to the efforts of Aaron and other people like him."

We cooperated in still other inter-racial first steps. Let Leroy Irvis tell the story of Mrs. Daisy Lampkin, Field Secretary of the NAACP. To Leroy, she was Aunt Daisy by adoption rather than by blood ties. "She had fought many battles to get Black people through doors which had been closed to them," he writes, "but my wife and I discovered that in spite of these battles, Aunt Daisy had never entertained a White person socially in her own apartment."

With Sonia and me, the Irvises "evolved a plot whereby we tricked Aunt Daisy into a situation where she had to say to Aaron and Sonia, 'Won't you come in for a few moments?" ...I re-

member to this day the look on her face when Aaron said, 'Sure, we'll come in. We have time.' Thus, we integrated the household of one of the great Civil Rights fighters."

While all this was happening I was executive vice president of Levinson Steel. Although my dad had always supported my efforts in the field of race relations, the company's office staff was still lilly white. I naturally felt that if I was fighting in the community for racial equality and fair hiring practices, Levinson Steel had to be a model. So, before the campaign downtown, I talked to my dad about this.

I walked into his office one morning and said, "Dad, you know we've been different than other companies. We've been pioneers in this business of good race relations. And I see no reason why we shouldn't break the color line in our office."

He thought it was a good idea. Neither of us was naive about the possible problems. Very few, if any, private companies in Pittsburgh had done such a thing. We knew we had to be afraid of the reaction of our other employees, so we planned everything carefully.

I wanted to start with someone extremely well qualified. That someone was available and actively looking for work. I found her through Lou Mason, who had moved to Pittsburgh in 1945 as the assistant industrial relations director for the Urban League. I was on his committee, and we'd struck up a close friendship from the beginning. Lou had already come to me and asked for job leads for his wife Dorothea. I'd offered my suggestions. Then it dawned on me that she was the perfect candidate to come to work as a clerical or secretarial employee at Levinson Steel.

Dorothea Mason not only had the skills to do the job; as Lou's wife she was aware of the issues and the problems she might face. I decided to hire her as a member of our stenographic staff.

When we were ready for the move I invited a few key mem-

bers of the office staff into my office and said, pointing first at myself and then at others, "Look, I'm Jewish. You're Italian. You're Croatian. You're Polish. You're something else. We have a lot of different backgrounds here. You know—all of us know—about prejudice from personal experience. I believe that the color of a person's skin should not be a factor in our hiring practices, and when we do hire Black people for office positions, we should go out of our way to make them feel comfortable. They all agreed. After all, putting it that way, how could they disagree?

Then I told Dorothea what I'd done and that I thought it was just as I had informed my staff—I expected them to get along with her and that it was equally important for her to get along with them. Dorothea remembers that because she "thought it was sort of a half way meeting point that worked out very well," and that "it was a very sensible way to approach a new problem, because it was a new problem."

A short time after that we hired Dorothea. It went smoothly. Years later she said of her experience, "It was a first at Levinson Steel and perhaps in corporate Pittsburgh. Aaron Levinson and I broke the ice. I was somewhat nervous—not at all about my ability to do the work, but about the general acceptance by certain other employees. The fact is it worked. I saw no sign of resentment. As a matter of fact, everybody went out of their way to be nice to me. I worked at that job for three years, and it was one of the nicest experiences of my life. Sonia and Aaron Levinson never stopped being our friends when Lou was alive and mine since his death."

It was an excellent experience for everyone. It was a first step, and it may seem rather small. But as the saying goes, every journey begins with a first step.

The Masons remained good friends through the years and through a lot more steps on the journey toward racial equality. Lou went on to become active in city politics, where he became

president of the city council. Before he fell ill he was in line to be the first Black mayor of Pittsburgh. He died in 1984. I miss him very much. Dorothea attended my 70th birthday party in November of 1984.

Of course, over the years following Dorothea's employment, Levinson Steel increasingly hired and upgraded people on the basis of their qualifications and skills (not their religions, races or ethnic backgrounds).

Nathaniel Thornton, Jr., a close friend all my adult life, started working for Levinson Steel by running a gas station next to our Pride Street office, and ended up as one of the top supervisors in our plant. Lester Grant was recommended to me by a dear, old friend, Mal Goode, of the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Lester ended his career as office manager. Through the years, many other Blacks were to grow with the company, benefitting from those early struggles and contributing enormously to wealth of human talent which made Levinson Steel the fine example it was.

Like most people, the kind of parents I had influenced my attitudes and my philosophy, including my deep feelings that people should not be judged by the color of their skin. In our society it's rare that a white person can avoid some racist feelings about Blacks or other darker skinned people. Hell, even Black people have the problem. I remember being really surprised when I was working in Washington, D.C., about the exclusive society of the city's light skinned Black people, which discriminated against darker Blacks. There's an excellent book, *The Big Sea*, by Langston Hughes that deals with this. Anyway, I was luckier than most because my upbringing left me with fewer negative prejudices to overcome. My parents weren't devoid of prejudices, but held fewer than most families. They really didn't teach me to hate. I didn't learn in my home that Black people were better or worse or different.

But something which happened when I was quite young, I

think, got me interested in the whole field of race relations. When I went to Holmes Grade School—I was seven or eight—there was a Black boy (back in those days they were referred to as "colored") in my class. I didn't call him a Black or colored boy; he was just my friend. His name was John Wright. He used to come to my house after school to play. One day I went home with him.

We were playing happily in his house when his mother came in and asked me, "Do your parents know that you're here?"

I didn't understand what in the heck she meant. I told her I didn't know if I'd told them or not.

Of course, what she meant was did my parents approve of me being such a close friend with a boy who wasn't white. But I didn't realize what she meant until some years later, when it dawned on me. What's surprising is that her question stuck somewhere in my memory all that time. As young as I was I must have felt something wasn't quite right, even though I couldn't figure it out then.

It was that later realization about what John Wright's mother meant that was the beginning of my thinking on race relations. By that time John and I had gone different directions. My family had moved. We entered different schools and different lives. We lost track of one another. I wish I knew what happened to John, because he was a fantastic guy. I loved him.

I might say that I've tried to be color blind, but I don't believe it's possible. Rather, I've tried never to judge others by the color of their skin. But, because the world around me does so, I've had to be anything but color blind.

That awareness of race and color and religious belief and roots and what they all mean has been extremely important to me. It's led me to get involved in important causes and it's probably been responsible for introducing me to some of the most valuable friends in my life.

Besides my parents, I was inspired by many of my friends

and other Pittsburghers involved in the fight for racial justice. Along with Leroy and Kitten Irvis and Lou and Dorathea Mason there were Florence Reizenstein, Al Snyder, Ann Lowenthal, Jimmy Duggan and others. We shared not only friendships but goals. Another person who helped me establish my interest in race relations (although he had no way of knowing it) was Howard Fast. His books, *Citizen Tom Paine* and *Freedom Road,* really affected me. I read *Freedom Road* 40 years ago, and have been a fan ever since.

There are many people in the world who are so busy just managing the economic problems of their families that they can't afford the luxury of being active in politics or in causes about which they feel strongly. Fortunately for me, I have been lucky enough to be able to find the time. I was able to participate in many organizations, like the Urban League, the NAACP, the United Negro College Fund, Operation Dig, the Brashear Association and the Centre Avenue YMCA. I have great memories from all of them, but working at the YMCA gave me some special opportunities. For awhile I was chairman of its lecture series and had the opportunity to bring to Pittsburgh such people as A. Philip Randolph, Roy Otley, Walter White and Langston Hughes.

I have also been active in the Jewish Community Relations Council, the Anti-Defamation League and the National Conference of Christians and Jews. All of these organizations have been involved not only in the fight against anti-Semitism, but in the fight against bigotry and prejudice wherever it occurs. Through these and other groups I have been able to work with people of all ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds. (I go into detail about some of my activities in the general community and Jewish community elsewhere.) I'm on the side of any organization that works to end bigotry, ignorance and violence. There are no other problems as corrosive to human relations.

As a result of my economic good fortune, I've been able to

devote considerable time and money to the cause of better race relations. Along with an end to the threat of nuclear extinction, fighting racism is one of the most important issues of my life.

In all my activities in the field of race relations I think that helping kids has given me the most satisfaction. It's the childhood years that make all the difference in someone's life. Poverty and discrimination can destroy the wonderful potential in any of us. That's why I got involved with Camp Achievement.

It was back in the early 1950s. Mrs. Alma Illery came to me with stories of kids trapped in the ghetto and talked about getting them away for a week or two in the country. My heart went out to them. How could I say no? I really gave myself to the project, which took years to complete. I became chairman of the board of Camp Achievement.

It was a real challenge. We started from scratch. There was money to be raised. And there were people to convince that it was worthwhile and possible. We began with a piece of land near Connellsville, Pennsylvania, which already had a very primitive camp. We set to work. Little by little we built a beautiful camp. I worked hard to get a lot of people interested. I must have approached every friend I had in business in Pittsburgh. The response was wonderful.

Dominic Navarro, of Navarro Construction, loaned equipment to clear roads to build the camp. Don Peters, head of Mellon-Stuart, helped build the main hall. Ed Ryan, of Ryan Homes, built the cabins. My good friend, Ray Talbert, was also active in a major way. By the time we completed the project I'd involved nearly the entire building construction industry. We formed the "Friends of Camp Achievement."

I remember that in October 1957 there was a picture in one of the Pittsburgh papers of all us corporate leaders wallowing hip deep in the mud. It was raining and we were pushing a truck which got stuck trying to get up a hill. I lost my shoes in the mire. Despite such minor inconveniences (which were funny lat-

er on), I believe that everyone involved with the project benefitted. What a marvelous sense of accomplishment we felt when the first group of inner city kids arrived at the camp for a couple of weeks of summer in the country.

I thought that Mrs. Illery and I spoke the same language, and that we complemented each other. She was the prime mover. She had a deep interest in people, and especially children. She had no problem communicating with the kids or their parents. I was helpful in raising the standards of the physical facilities and the caliber of staff. For the first time, the camp was approved by the American Camping Association. I thought, to use today's vernacular, that we were really "on a roll." But one day I received a formal letter from a law firm representing Mrs. Illery which, in essence, accused us of taking over the camp. It could be that, in our enthusiasm, we became insensitive to Mrs. Illery's original intentions. I am not sure exactly what the legal response was, but I know that in a short time, we simply backed off and gave the camp back to Mrs. Illery.

All of us who were deeply involved were disillusioned and let down. There was no doubt, however, that there was a communications problem, and I guess my buddies in the construction industry and I were too insensitive to know it.

Nevertheless, there were lots of kids who enjoyed the results of our labor for many summers. One of the nice things about living long enough is that you get to see some of the results of the efforts you make when you're younger. I've already mentioned the occasion, a few years ago, when Ron Smith came up to me at an Urban League banquet to introduce himself and thank me for the chance to go to camp when he was a kid. It made me remember all the struggles involved and reinforced my feeling that they were worth it.

Twenty years ago I got into a conversation with a Black man who had been shining my shoes in my friend Nick's barber shop for years. Confused by an ever-changing terminology I

asked him, "Do you want me to call you colored or Negro or Afro-American or Black?" Without hesitating, he said, "Just call me Herman."

Originally, this chapter was entitled "Black Christmas," a reversal of the title of an article I wrote in the 1940s for the *Pittsburgh Courier,* the city's Black newspaper. That one was called "White Christmas." It was a dramatic presentation of how good jobs, education, medical care and housing are reserved for white people. It was true then, and despite many important changes it's true now: Christmas is a "White Christmas." There is still so far to go. And it will continue to take all of our efforts to get there.

In November 1983, I was one of thirteen people in the community to be recognized by the Urban League of Pittsburgh for contributions in the fight against racial discrimination during the past 20 years. And in May 1981, I received the Homer S. Brown award (Judge Homer S. Brown and his wife, Billie, were inspirational leaders and close friends, as is their son, Byrd) at the annual banquet of the NAACP, also for my work in this field. Seeking awards has never been my motivation, but I appreciate them at this time of my life.

"Is there any place I can get a cola for my wife?"

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Someone once said there is no such thing as true altruism. Most people, down deep, have some personal—or let's say selfish—reason for every act of valor. Volunteer community service certainly falls into that category. On the other hand, in *The Prophet*, Gibran says that true giving is giving of one's self—even more than of one's means. I see no particular contradiction in those statements.

The extent to which our giving is selfish is a matter of degree. For some it's merely a matter of self-gratification. For others it's recognition. Still others are looking for blue ribbons and awards, and for some it's good P.R.—which they can perhaps translate into dollars some way—someday. To me it doesn't make any difference as long as the community service is sincere, dedicated and gets the job done. I receive a great deal of satisfaction—and sometimes recognition and awards. I'm not a bit embarrassed to admit the gratification, but recognition and awards are not what motivate me. Seeing people suffering is motivation

enough for me to give both time and money.

I've been lucky that the time and resources were available for me to donate. I'm also lucky that I had the example of my parents. Their charity began at home. Reaching out to family members when they needed a hand was important. But their notion of family was pretty broad. It included the Jewish community, the Pittsburgh community and a sense of being part of the whole human community. My dad always felt that the Pittsburgh community is where he and his brothers were able to build a business, and that they should invest part of their time, money and energy back into the community.

The needs in the Jewish community have been great. First and foremost the support of Israel, then local Jewish needs and institutions: The Home for the Aged, the many facets of B'nai B'rith, including the Youth Services and the Anti-Defamation League; The American Jewish Committee, The Jewish Community Center, the Montefiore Hospital. I could go on and on.

If Levinson Steel was my major career, then my family and my involvement in human relations have been my other great interests. I've always tried to balance these three aspects of my life.

My son and I are alike in that respect. I told him that the people who get the most from life, who have real richness, are those who live as unselfishly as possible. People who spend their lives indulging themselves, or just making money, or pursuing their own pleasure—playing—have lives that are relatively shallow. People like Albert Schweitzer will be remembered long after their deaths for their devotion to others.

My friend, Art Cowles, says, "Aaron, I'm going to insist on being at your funeral, because it will include the craziest collection of people ever assembled in one place—corporate CEO's, janitors, associates from Levinson Steel, Blacks, whites and people of other races and religions, probably 500 waitresses I have personally seen fall in love with you. And most of all, there

will be children."

My life has been enriched because I've been involved in so many kinds of activities with so many different kinds of people. My friends run the gamut. Walking through downtown Pittsburgh, I find myself shaking hands with the chairman of United States Steel or being embraced by a Black woman who lives in one of the projects.

Before I joined Levinson Steel, I had grave doubts about whether I really wanted a business career. A part of me preferred to run a children's camp or work for the Jewish Community Center or do counseling or something else in the field of human relations. I knew that my earnings would be substantially less in any of those careers. I had to ask myself how important money was to me—and the answer was that money is as important to me as it is to most other people.

Some members of my family and many of my friends love to talk about investments, business, the stock market and various and sundry other subjects related to money. I do too—but only up to a point. Too much of such discussion bores me. I also love to talk about politics, the Pittsburgh Steelers, crime and punishment, sex, race relations and I like to tell jokes. If I'm going to get into a long intellectual discussion, I would prefer that it be about the separation of church and state or how to stop the nuclear arms race or how to eliminate some of the bigotry in the world.

Now don't get me wrong. I don't find fault with friends who have a great interest in money matters. No two people are exactly alike. I enjoy the security and comfort that my degree of financial independence affords me. I know that I was very upset some years ago when I had major losses in the stock market. But money is important to me for another reason: I enjoy being in a position to be charitable, not only by giving of myself, but also of my means.

Aside from my interest in human relations, I had other

doubts about joining the family steel business. Sometimes, when I listened to discussions between business people, I got the impression that the only way to succeed in business was by doing a lot of shady things, and that is not what I wanted my life to be about.

However, I found that you really don't have to do those things. You can build a reputation for integrity. You can be fair with your employees. You don't have to cheat. Thank God my family and business associates agreed. That made life a lot easier for me. In some corporations, executives would have been let go if they got involved with unpopular or controversial issues. I never had any such problem.

In other chapters I write about my activities in race relations and in the Jewish community. In this chapter I want to discuss some slightly different types of community service. First, public commissions and authorities. Second, support for the arts. And third, charitable foundations.

From 1970 to 1975 I was on the board of the Pittsburgh Housing Authority. For two of those years I was its chairman. It was an experience that I would never wish to repeat. I was told when I went on that board that it was a thankless job. That didn't bother me. I didn't need thanks—but I also didn't need to have my teeth knocked in unjustly. Clearly, though, when one takes a public job, one must be prepared to take the heat.

In the case of the Housing Authority, I was not ready to take the heat. The scandal that swept over those of us on the board was like a prairie fire. It raged out of control, then was over as suddenly as it began, leaving much damage behind.

For years I just wanted to forget the whole affair. But I think it's important, now, to discuss it. Perhaps there are some lessons to be learned. I know that the experience left me with some pretty cynical feelings about the press and a lot of second thoughts about accepting appointed public positions—no matter how uncontroversial they may be.

Early in 1970 the mayor of Pittsburgh, Pete Flaherty, asked me if I'd like to serve on the Pittsburgh Housing Authority. I told him that I'd give it serious thought. I was involved in other voluntary efforts at the time, and I wanted to be sure that I could really contribute my time, if I accepted. I also wanted to get the reactions and opinions of some of my closest friends.

As I've said, most of the feedback was that taking a highly visible and controversial position would be a real thankless burden. In spite of such counsel, I decided to serve.

It was hard work. Because the Authority has been, and is, such a handy political football, everybody was watching and trying to fit every move we made into their pet theories. We lived in a glass house. Still, I felt very good about what we were accomplishing. Improving conditions in the projects is tough. We were responsible for handling Federal funds, and there was never enough money to do everything we'd have liked—or that the residents wanted. Hard decisions had to be made about the allocation of all resources.

Before I joined the board I made a few personal pledges. First that I would always do an open, honest job—no shenanigans—nothing under the table. Second that I would never take one cent out of the agency. In the course of my duties, especially after I became chairman in 1973, I incurred lots of expenses and had to do some traveling on behalf of the Housing Authority. I refused reimbursement for my expenses.

In late 1973, at the same time that Watergate was going on in Washington, we were subjected to a severe attack by the press. There were investigations and public hearings lasting over a year. A Federal grand jury investigated, too. Nothing was found wrong. It really was a tempest in a teapot.

To begin with, the mayor appointed a new administrator. He was Churchill Kohlman, a Black man who was popular in his community and familiar with the city owned housing. Churchill was raised in the projects. While serving as the Authority's first

Black boss, he was elected president of the Pittsburgh NAACP. Many Blacks saw him as a potential candidate for higher political office. In an agency as controversial as the Housing Authority, he certainly had no reason to make the sort of gross errors of which he was later accused. Neither did any of us on the board.

Many of us were convinced that the source of the accusations, falsehoods and distortions was Al Tronzo, a disgruntled former administrator who felt he had been treated unfairly by the authority. That theory was reinforced when Mr. Tronzo appeared at a public hearing to make vicious attacks against the authority, Kohlman and members of the board.

From then on it was a nightmare. Suspicions and rumors took on the legitimacy of truth. It was like the party game where everyone sits in a large circle and one person begins by writing down a statement and putting it away after whispering it to the next person, who passes it on until it completes the circle. The final statement is then compared with the original, which it almost never resembles. That's what this was like—except that it was real life and not at all amusing. It began through some reporters who acted irresponsibly and was compounded by backup editorials. On September 27, 1973, I wrote to John Troan, editor of the *Pittsburgh Press*, to let him know my feelings about the negative role his paper was playing, as well as to give him the facts as I knew them.

The attacks continued. In fact they escalated, with every politician who had an axe to grind trying to get a piece of the action. People who wanted to step on a rising Black politician saw an opportunity to stop Kohlman. Those who had disagreements with the Authority or with public housing saw a chance to discredit the agency. Political enemies of Pete Flaherty thought they had the mayor in a corner, and went so far as to dub the debacle "Housing-gate." Although Pete remains a friend of mine, I never quite understood why he didn't give any of us one iota of support during this very difficult time, either publicly or privately.

When one joins a public agency it is natural to accept some of the established procedures. One of them had to do with sending out for sandwiches if we were in the middle of a meeting. I never gave it a thought. It came out of some special funds which we were told were set aside for this purpose. The amounts involved were peanuts—yet this was among charges made by the papers.

The brunt of the attack was directed against Churchill Kohlman, who later resigned, but each of us on the board was pilloried in the press before it was over. I'm not suggesting that neither Kohlman nor the board made mistakes. However, they were mistakes of judgement.

As it turned out, Churchill Kohlman was not the best person for the job. He understood the problems of poor people who needed housing, but lacked administrative skills. There was no doubt that he had political aspirations. I believe that he acquitted himself poorly in the course of the various investigations. His attempts to use board members as scapegoats for his own mistakes—including going so far as to accuse others of wrongs which weren't committed in order to draw attention away from himself—was a sad commentary on his integrity. But none of us did anything dishonest, and neither were we careless in our handling of public funds. Of course that only came out after the damage was done. Meanwhile the whole thing got blown more and more out of proportion.

The *Pittsburgh Press* somehow got hold of an internal, preliminary copy of an audit done by HUD (at Churchill Kohlman's request) and turned unverified information into more "ammunition" against the Authority. Again, when the facts were finally released, the problems exposed were relatively mild and minor. But before there was any proof of wrong doing, the press had tried and convicted us. It was really frightening.

Sometime during my Housing Authority term, Churchill Kohlman told me that Richard Mascaro had applied for the position of personnel manager. His resume indicated that he had, at

one time, been employed in the Personnel Department at Levinson Steel. Kohlman wanted to know if I would recommend him. I told Churchill that I did not have much direct contact with him and suggested that he call Gary Reuben, who had been his direct supervisor. Gary undoubtedly gave him a good reference, because Richard was hired as personnel manager of the Housing Authority.

The worst day of the entire ordeal was the Sunday morning I went out to get a *Pittsburgh Press*, and there, on page one, was the headline, "ALL IN THE FAMILY," indicating that friends or relatives of Housing Authority commissioners were employed at the agency—really no big deal in a close-knit city like Pittsburgh, especially if they were doing their jobs. But right in the middle of the story it was reported that Richard Mascaro, personnel manager, came from Levinson Steel—an innuendo completely untrue. Richard left Levinson Steel several years earlier, and had most recently been employed at H.J. Heinz Company.

Some fine people served with me. I'd be the last to say that we all liked each other or agreed on everything, but we got things done with a minimum of conflict. Several real friendships were worthwhile rewards for the hours of meetings and travel and thought and writing and all the rest. All of us were hurt by the attacks—some more than others, like my friend Harold Tweedy, who is one of the most honest and conscientious persons I've known. All of us were on that board for one reason: to help improve the housing situation for low income families in the City of Pittsburgh. We did that.

I believe we all learned from the experience. Countless friends of mine in the business community told me that, as a result of my experience and the experiences of others who have served on voluntary boards of public agencies, they would never consider accepting such positions. That's sad. I know that my respect for the press was diminished. I saw how the power to

inform can be perverted into an instrument of malice, vengeance and terror. That was an eye opener.

Many years later Dick Thornburgh, who became Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and at the time was the U.S. attorney who conducted the Federal Grand Jury investigation, told me that the entire episode was unfair, especially to the commissioners. I don't remember his exact words, but something to the effect that the entire matter was blown out of proportion or was a miscarriage of justice, or a tempest in a teapot. In any event, the grand jury found no evidence of wrongdoing.

After telling such a horror story I want to end this rehash of the Housing Authority controversy on a lighter note, with an incident that still brings tears to my eyes and a story that still makes me smile.

In the middle of all this, when I was feeling lowest and bluest about it, Ed Schuman, president of Levinson Steel, walked into my office followed by about 25 employees. They said, we know this has been a difficult period for you and we want you to know we love you; we know you didn't do anything wrong, that you're an open and above board guy. They handed me a certificate signed by every employee. I cried. I just cried. It was a beautiful thing.

Now for the funny story.

Ruth Pittrell is a Black woman I served with on the board. She's a wonderful person. She lived in one of the Housing Authority communities in public housing with her family. One particular Saturday morning during the summer we had a board meeting. Afterward I said, "Ruth do you want me to drive you home?"

She said that would be great. She got in my car. I was driving a Cadillac. Because I was almost out of gas I pulled into a Gulf station on the Boulevard of the Allies. While we were waiting Ruth said, "Boy am I thirsty."

When the attendant walked over to the car I rolled the win-

dow down and asked, "Is there any place I can get a cola for my wife?" He just stared in at this white man dressed in an expensive suit and this Black woman in a simple house dress. He never answered me, and Ruth said he turned green, or white or blue or something. He just walked away, so finally I drove off.

Ruth started to giggle. She said, "You devil." It's the Ruth Pittrells of the world who make life a joy.

My first thoughts on public service after this difficult, painful experience with the Housing Authority were that I would be reluctant, at this stage of my life, to serve again on any public authority. But, a poem passed along by Dr. Karl Menninger convinces me that in spite of the bad experience if, by accepting a public position I can still reach out and help people, I probably would say yes again.

ANYWAY

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. They'll lie and sneer and do you dirt if they can.
Try Love them, anyway.
If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.
Do good, anyway.
If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies.
Try to succeed, anyway.
The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good, anyway.
Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.
Be honest and frank, anyway.
People favor underdogs but they follow the top dogs.
Fight for some underdogs, anyway.
What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.
Build, build again, anyway.
Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.
Give the world the best you have, anyway.

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My other activities in the Pittsburgh community have been varied and exciting to me. I have been part of the board of the Pittsburgh Public Theater since the very beginning, and have enjoyed watching it grow into an important cultural resource these past 11 or 12 years.

I also served, for several years prior to its termination, on the board of the Pittsburgh/Allegheny County Cultural Alliance (PACCA—a coordinating activity for the arts in the Pittsburgh community). Two other organizations which have been close to my heart are Duquesne University (I have become increasingly active and interested in recent years) and the South Side Hospital (I was chairman of the board during the construction of the new facility and am now chairman of the South Side Hospital Foundation). A great by-product of these activities has been the opportunity to get acquainted with many facinating people—Father Donald Nesti, Father Henry McNulty, Bill Capone, Carl Grefenstette, Jack Nelson, Walter Sapp, Jane Roesch, Buz Anderson, Mike Marcu, Tom Murrin, Margaret Rieck, Joan Apt and many more.

I have also been involved with other activities. Perhaps the one which I have enjoyed most is the James and Rachel Levinson Foundation, begun by my dad and his brothers. The Levinson Foundation was the family's way of contributing to the Pittsburgh community. A fitting memorial set up by the Foundation, the family, and the Levinson Steel company was the James and Rachel Levinson Day Camp in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, which I've mentioned elsewhere.

In the fall of 1986, just 35 years after the brothers established the Foundation, the trustees faced the reality that without contributions from the company, there was no point in trying to continue, and voted to terminate it. The Jewish Community Center was embarking on a major new project—the relocation of the center from Bellefield Avenue to the Squirrel Hill section of Pittsburgh. The Foundation, as its final philanthropic deed, con-

tributed $500,000 to that project and made a substantial contribution to the United Jewish Federation.

As a board member of universities, hospitals, cultural organizations or charitable institutions of any kind, perhaps the thing I do best is add some objectivity. I never stop asking the questions, "Why are we in business? What is our mission?" Far too much money and energy are expended on minutia or on projects unrelated to the goals of institutions and organizations.

Martin Buber once said that "there is real responsibility only where there is real responding." And George Santayana said that "real unselfishness consists in sharing the interests of others." I had never read those things when I chose the course of giving as much of myself as possible to the people and communities which are a part of my life—a part of me. But that's what I believe community service is about. There were times in my life when I was frustrated because I couldn't do enough, but the important thing is to be able to reach out wherever there is a real need and make even a small contribution to relieve suffering, to relieve drudgery, or to enrich the lives of other human beings anywhere on earth.

"If you expect to get any new members that way, you're crazy!"

ON BEING JEWISH IN A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

Dealing with prejudice. Awareness of the Jewish community. God and worship. These closely related things are central to my Judaism. To many Americans, a person's religion is just a part of one's profile—like age, sex or occupation. Being Jewish is different. We Jews are conscious of religion almost all the time, and when we're not, it's just below the surface.

Jews have been an oppressed people all over the world for centuries. It was the murderous pogroms, which swept through my grandparent's homeland, which forced them and many others to leave. Too many of those who could not or would not leave died there. Later came Hitler and the Nazis. The insult to the human race, the almost inconceivable tragedy which we now refer to as the Holocaust, left a deep, indelible impression on Jews everywhere.

Certainly, Sonia and her family were deeply affected as they received the news of family and friends disappearing, usually

forever, into Auschwitz and Dachau. No Jew can be conscious of all of the atrocities and oppression to which the Jewish people have been subjected for centuries all over the world without being conscious at all times that he or she is a Jew.

Fortunately, I've faced comparatively slight discrimination and prejudice. My father and his brothers overcame the "stigma" of a Jewish name in the steel industry. They endured the early prejudice, and the Levinson name soon was associated with quality, service and integrity. Nevertheless, I know that when people talk about me or other Jewish people they sometimes find it necessary to add the phrase "he's Jewish."

That doesn't usually happen with Baptists or Presbyterians. It also doesn't happen with close personal friends. When there is mutual respect and love, matters of race, religion and ethnic background are quickly forgotten. I know damn well that Art Cowles, Don Peters, Carl Barger and Carol Brown think of me as Aaron Levinson—not as Aaron Levinson, their Jewish friend. When people open up and give themselves opportunities to know members of other races, religions and cultures, most prejudices diminish quickly. If only everyone would or could do this.

Then there are the unintended abuses and slights. Because America is an overwhelmingly Christian culture, most Jews know quite a lot about the customs of different Christian churches. Christians ordinarily know little about Jewish culture and belief, and even less about our differences and sensitivities.

For example, when corporations have luncheons or dinners, Jews are often seated at the same table or in one area. Some Jewish people appreciate it. I don't. Should all Blacks, Hispanics, Japanese or women be seated by groups? Another case is the priest or minister at non-sectarian functions who ends an invocation with the words, "in the name of Jesus, our Lord." I believe there is no better example of insensitivity to the Jewish community than Ronald Reagan honoring the memory of the

Nazi SS soldiers by placing a wreath at Bitburg.

While prejudices against Jews, Blacks, and other ethnic groups continue, the manifestations of those prejudices are slowly diminishing. Although a large number of Jews are involved in their own family businesses, there are many who must find jobs elsewhere. While the situation has improved, Jews have had difficulty finding employment among America's larger public corporations, and getting into executive positions has been even harder.

A few years ago there was considerable discrimination in certain colleges and universities, and especially medical schools. Quota systems were used to determine how many Jews would be admitted. The word "quota" has created some controversy with the Black community. To Jews it has meant maximum—the most who will be allowed. To Blacks it means minimum—a guarantee of more than before. Therefore, Jews object to the word, while Blacks insist on it.

Most of the private clubs in Pittsburgh (and elsewhere) had discriminatory membership policies against Jews and Blacks. Some discouraged bringing Jewish or Black friends as guests. My friend, Ned Mellon once said to me, "I would like to take you as my guest to the Rolling Rock Country Club but, damn it, they don't like us to bring Jewish guests. If I had any courage I'd quit the damned club, but I guess I don't have that much courage."

The first evidence I had that some clubs were changing policies was a call I received from Ray Ehrman, perhaps 34 years ago, inviting me to join the relatively new Downtown Club. It was then located in the Carlton House Hotel (and more recently in the U.S. Steel Building, where it closed its doors in March of 1987 after 35 years of important service to Pittsburgh business people). I asked whether they were opening their membership to Jews or whether they were only selecting a few of us. He said, "We're not entirely opening up our membership, and we are in-

viting a few carefully selected Jewish people in the business world to join."

I said, "In that case count me out."

He said, "Diney, don't be so hasty. As you know, most of the other private clubs in town exclude Jews entirely. The Downtown Club is taking a step. Don't slam the door in our face."

I thought about it for all of one minute, realized he was correct, and said, "Ray, I didn't think of it that way. You are absolutely right. You can submit my name for membership."

The Pittsburgh Press Club and the Allegheny Club are the only private clubs I know in the Pittsburgh area which have always had open policies. Even the Jewish club, Concordia, which has some Christian members, has yet to admit Blacks. However, most clubs have slowly begun accepting some Jews.

The Pittsburgh Athletic Association (PAA) for many years had only one or two Jewish members. A. Leo Weil and his brother Ferdinand, of the Weil, Christy and Weil law firm, were the only Jewish people I knew about who were members. A few years after the club opened its doors to other Jewish members, my friend Joe Katz, who was then chairman of the board of Papercraft Corporation and a member of my board at Levinson Steel, suggested that I join the PAA. I accepted and rarely miss a day at that club for a swim, a massage and on some days a haircut or a shave.

The most prestigious club in Pittsburgh is the Duquesne Club. I became a member of that club a few years after they changed their policy. I now belong to five private city clubs, which is a far cry from when I resisted all clubs (or they resisted me). During the days when Jews were excluded, I had a recurring dream about it, in which I walked into one of the clubs as if I were a member, went to their health club where someone came over and whispered in my ear, "You're really not allowed in here." After years of exclusion followed by years of member-

ship, it is still sometimes a strange feeling.

A funny incident happened at the Duquesne Club back in the '40s (almost 40 years before I joined) when I attended a luncheon with executives of some other steel fabricating companies. Among them were Lou Klingelhoffer, then president of Pittsburgh Bridge and Iron, John Jackson, who headed Pittsburgh Des Moines Steel, and Austin Paddock, then president of American Bridge. While serving my soup, the waiter had a little trouble because somehow a fork had gotten underneath the table cloth at my place. Half the soup went on my trousers. I jumped up in mock anger, and said, "What the hell are you doing? If you expect to get any new members that way you're crazy." The others at the table didn't know whether to laugh or cry. That story was told around Pittsburgh for a number of years.

About 30 years ago I was president of the Pittsburgh chapter of the Steel Service Center Institute when its annual dinner was held at the Duquesne Club. It was a truly strange feeling for me to welcome 300 guests to that club.

A few years ago the Pittsburgh Athletic Association rejected about ten Jewish applicants in a row. I sat down with Harry Leech, then president of the club, and asked what was happening. He was very candid and said, "There's been no change in club policy, there just happen to be a couple of people on the membership committee who have prejudices. Besides, there were too many Jewish applicants coming at one time."

I said something like, "I had hoped the PAA had reached a point where religion wasn't a factor and people were accepted or rejected on the basis of what kind of people they were." I asked, "Is there a similar problem when many Catholics, Methodists or Presbyterians are submitted at the same time?"

He said, "Aaron, you're living in a dream world. I am a realist. We haven't made that kind of progress in the PAA or any other club. Maybe some day, but not yet. Prejudice exists. No matter what the policy of any club it will from time to time raise

its ugly head."

We all know about the stereotypes—the cut-throat *Wop*, the dumb *Pollack*, the shiftless *Nigger* and the loud *Kike*. Sometimes ridiculing one of these mean images is fun. Shortly after my surgery left me with only a whisper, I ran into Henry Pearson at the PAA. We were good enough friends to say anything to each other. He asked me, "What the hell are you doing here?" I said, "I'm a member." He said, "How the hell did you get to be a member?" I whispered back, "Since my surgery, I'm no longer one of those loud Jews!"

Of course, there's a lot more to being Jewish than whether or not you can join a private club. For me, being Jewish means being a part of the Jewish community—of Pittsburgh, of America, of the world. There is a closeness among Jews in every community, almost like family. But it goes beyond that.

When Jews meet any place in the world, there is an immediate bond, a kindred feeling. The philanthropic efforts of the world Jewish community to help establish and sustain the state of Israel and for the sustenance of Jewish community enterprises have been described by *Time Magazine* as the philanthropic phenomena of our time. There is a feeling among Jews that when Jews are in need, anyplace in the world, other Jews will come to their rescue. There is no better example than the recent successful airlift of thousands of starving Ethiopian Jews to Israel—a program financed by special fundraising in Jewish communities worldwide.

When I was growing up, there were only a few times when I had to deal with anti-Semitism—the fist fights between the kids from the Catholic school and the Jewish kids going to public school when we lived in Oakland prior to 1924, and the fist fights at Allderdice High with the boys from Greenfield who tried to bully me.

But let me tell you a story about adults. As the song from the musical *South Pacific* says, "children have to be taught to hate."

However, grownups should know better. A few years after Sonia and I married, my sister June was dating a guy from Youngstown by the name of Lou Siegel, whom she later married. They wanted to go on a weekend together and asked us to chaperone. We went to Chautauqua Lake in New York for the weekend.

Chautauqua Lake is beautiful almost anytime. It had a lot of romantic attraction for all of us. The drive from Pittsburgh is quite a haul, even today, but it's beautiful country; the road winds through mountains, forests and fertile river valleys. We laughed and sang and argued about life and all the other concerns of those days.

When we got to the lake and tried to find accommodations we were turned away from one place after another. We knew there were empty rooms. We were hit by anti-Semitism everywhere we went. One woman, thinking she was being helpful, told Lou that we could stay if we registered with names that didn't sound Jewish.

That was the last straw. Lou exploded. We were afraid he would do something rash or violent. Which we'd have understood, but losing control would accomplish nothing. We drove on and eventually found a proprietor who didn't ask, or care, about our religion. The rest of the weekend was a delight. Ironically, during the summers of '85, '86 and '87 (some 40 years later), Sonia and I rented an apartment in Chautauqua for the entire season, without any fear of discrimination.

Occasionally, attitudes about Jews result in humorous situations. The following incident happened in the early '60s when Sonia and I attended a convention of the American Institute of Steel Construction at the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

I had brought my golf clubs, which were whisked away to the clubhouse as soon as we arrived. A porter there took care of everything with great attention to details. He cleaned and

polished my clubs after every round, storing them for me and having everything laid out and ready to go when I was scheduled to play. He brushed my shoes and actually dusted me off when I came in from the course. And on the day we left he brought all my golf gear to the limousine that was driving us to the airport.

I was already in the car when I realized that I hadn't tipped him. I jumped out and gave him a 20 dollar bill (a damned big tip in those days). He said, "Thank you, Mr. Levinson," then added, "You Jews didn't kill Jesus, you just worried him to death."

Recently I had lunch with Mort Chatkin, whose father was married to my mother's sister before her death in the early 1920s. Mort worked at Levinson Steel for years, leaving the company in 1953. After our luncheon he sent me some things that he had kept about the company all these years. One of them was a copy of a 1944 issue of *The Fabricator*, the company newspaper, in which there was an article by my dad entitled "I am a Jew." Since it expresses many of my feelings more eloquently than I have been able to, I offer excerpts here.

Dad announced at the outset that he was as proud of being a Jew as Catholic and Protestant readers were of their religions. He was born into the world a Jew as God decreed others to be born Christian or Moslem, "and because our parents professed a certain creed we naturally follow the same creed, and we rarely change from that creed."

He related differences in theology and then pointed out some inconsistencies in the attacks against Jews. "We have been charged with being penny-pinchers and again charged with being spendthrifts. We have been charged with being communists and in the same breath charged with being capitalists."

He dismissed intermarriage as a way to lessen anti-Semitic prejudice and oppression. Six million Jews were being murdered by the Nazis of a Germany with, until Hitler, the highest

intermarriage rate in the world. He also praised Pope Pius III for giving refuge to Jews escaping slaughter and wanted it to be "an inspiration to faith, courage, and fortitude" to all "right thinking people the world over, regardless of their religious beliefs."

He wrote that most Jews become good citizens. Then he boasted of Jewish contributions to society, naming such contemporary Americans as Julius Rosenwald, Louis D. Brandeis, Henry Morgenthau and Bernard Baruch and the refugee Jew Albert Einstein. And "we have contributed notably in the field of art, literature and science, from the days of Moses to the present."

Dad said that nobody claims that all Jews are angels. Gangsters, cheats and other unsavory characters exist among Jews as among other groups. No one, he stated, should condemn all Jews when one Jew is convicted of a crime.

He concluded, "I've taken it on the chin a-plenty during my life, inadvertently and otherwise, because I am a Jew. I've had to fight my way through life a little harder and have had to do a better job to get anywhere. I've had people tell me to my face that I couldn't get their job under any circumstances because I was a Jew. I've had customers who have since seen the light of day, tell me honestly that for a long time they never opened the envelope of my bid but threw it into the waste basket. I've had non-Jewish friends suggest that we change the name of our company to some fictitious name so that it could not be identified as a concern owned by Jews, but of course my answer was always 'NO.' I could not and would not at any time conceal the fact that our customers were dealing with a concern owned by a Jew. I've fought my way through life with that handicap and I hope that my brothers and my son continue to do likewise when I'm gone. I know that there is plenty of business that we lose because of creed, but I shall continue to fight for that principle and its merits."

Like my dad, all my adult life I fought against anti-Semitism

and other forms of prejudice and bigotry. A few years ago we sought to encourage such efforts by others by establishing the Sonia and Aaron Levinson Community Relations Award. For the past five years the Community Relations Committee of the United Jewish Federation has selected the recipients. They were Ed Grinberg, Nicholas Lane, Fred Frank, Joanne Spiegel, Louis Kushner and Barbara Burstin. All have been outstanding contributors in this field. I feel very lucky that my family and I have been able to live in this community virtually free of the kinds of discrimination and oppression that have affected Jewish people in all lands for so many centuries. The award also comes from that good fortune. And it again announces how proud we are of our heritage and religion.

There are many influences on one's life. Nobody had a greater effect on me than my father. He was deeply involved in the community. Another important teacher was the late Sammy Weiss. He and my dad did things together. It was their influence which got me started working with Duquesne University, most of our meetings are in the Samuel H. Weiss Boardroom.

I'm not going to bore you with all my activities in the Jewish community. Way back in 1958, my dad and some of his contemporaries decided to step back and let the next generation take over. It was in that year that I served as general chairman of the United Jewish Federation Campaign. With others from around the country, I went on a mission to Israel and met its president, prime minister and other leaders. Since then, I've been deeply involved in the Jewish community and have received a number of awards. It's been an exciting experience, mainly because I've worked with some really dedicated people on something shared and believed in.

The Jewish community of Pittsburgh impresses me as unique. The leaders are looking for results. The Yiddish word for it is *tachlas*. The leadership has never been motivated by a need for blue ribbons or testimonials. They are a pleasure to

work with.

If I have one criticism of some Jewish community leaders, it is that they are active only in Jewish causes. One of the things I learned from my dad and Sammy Weiss is that a truly religious person cares about all people. When people are persecuted and discriminated against, when people are hungry, when people are out of work, it really makes no difference what their races, religions or ethnic backgrounds. A person of conscience, a person who cares, will reach out wherever there is a need.

I have tried to live by that credo. All Jews should understand that Judaism is concerned not only about Jews, but God's children everywhere. In the Haggadah on Passover, when ten plagues are mentioned, some of the wine is removed from the cup. Our joy is diminished because Egyptians, our brothers, were drowned. Adam was created from the dust of the four corners of the earth, so no one can say, "My ancestry is better than yours."

Judaism is a religion, but it is far more than that. The Jewish people includes everyone with a Jewish heritage. It includes the Orthodox, the Conservative, and the Reform Jews. It includes even those with little or no religious feeling. I have a very close friend who calls himself an atheist, but he is also a dedicated Jew when it comes to helping Israel or Jews in trouble anyplace in the world. So, Judaism is a religion, it's a people, and to those in Israel, it's a nationality.

For generations, people have been trying to define the word "Jewish," and in Israel, the debate goes on. It is interesting that Jews have been thought of as excellent business people and good money managers—certainly not as great military leaders. Yet, in Israel, just the opposite is true—great military people, but as money managers, not too good. Jews are generally conceived as hard-headed business people, yet they are also considered a highly-emotional people. Like most groups they simply defy definition through stereotypes.

However, the Nazis had no trouble defining a Jew. If there was a trace of Jewish blood or any observance of the Jewish religion, they belonged to the group that was persecuted, placed in concentration camps, and killed in the gas chambers. The Nazi definition was broad, indeed.

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, which is based on a story by Sholom Aleichem, Tevya looked up to the heavens and said, "Dear Lord, I know we are your chosen people—but couldn't you sometimes choose somebody else?"

Formal religion has never played an important part in my life. I happen to be Jewish. I identify closely with the Jewish people in every way. My parents belonged to a Conservative congregation, and they paid a great deal of attention to the Jewish traditions. However, I was not too observant and only attended the synagogue or temple on the High Holy Days and other special occasions.

Yet, underlying my philosophy is the feeling—not a formal dogma or doctrine—that there's a God. A spirit. A superbeing. It seems logical to me that this fantastically complex order—the human body, life itself, the relationships between organisms and all the rest— couldn't happen accidentally. So, I believe in God.

However, I have never speculated on just what or who God is, whether he or she is black or white, is in human form, is up in the sky or floating around in space. Somehow, though, after I developed cancer, things changed a little.

Constantly, while I was fighting the disease, my friends held my hand, phoned me or wrote me letters. They said, "I'll pray for you": Ruth Pittrell, a Black woman who served with me on the board of the Pittsburgh Housing Authority; Father John Ayoob, a dear friend I got to know in the sauna at the European Health Spa, who is a priest of Lebanese extraction; my brother-in-law, Earl Grollman, who is the rabbi of a Reform congregation in Belmont, Massachusetts; Nick Failla, my barber and friend for more than a generation, who's an Italian Catholic;

Jean Harter, a wonderful friend who works with me in community projects, and her mother, Mrs. Armstrong, with her thick Scottish brogue; and, of course, my own dear mother.

Those friends, and many others, prayed for me. Different religions, different prayers, different ways of praying, different names for God. They wore different colors of skin. They thought in different languages. They knew the many sides of Aaron Levinson, and they all told me sincerely that they were praying for me.

Prayer became important to me, partly because it was a wonderfully warm, helpful feeling to know that people cared so much about me. And partly because somewhere in the back of my psyche, I was feeling that prayer had to help. Although my belief in God is still somewhat abstract it has been fortified since I contracted cancer. It is a comforting feeling.

Several years ago I attended a convention of the Chief Executives Organization on the island of Hawaii. While at a prayer breakfast at the Maunekea Hotel, I told about the early stages of my cancer and my new feelings about prayer and God. Ever since, I have received letters from friends who attended wanting to know how I was and reassuring me that their prayers were with me. Oddly, this cancer, which could destroy my body, lightened my soul and brought me closer to God and people.

I have little talks with God. When the load I'm carrying gets too heavy, I talk with God about why things are the way they are. I guess, to many people, I seem like a guy who's happy most of the time, or damned well ought to be. My family was fairly well off. I stepped right into a family business. No reason to have major problems or worries. It just isn't so.

I've had a full measure of conflicts, problems, and mental agonies. I sometimes feel that I had more than my share. I guess that's normal. Probably everybody feels that way.

Anyway, my talks with God happen when I'm having one of my major problems: when I had cancer; when Sonia had cancer;

when I took a big loss in the stock market; when a major business venture Levinson Steel was running went sour and nothing I did set it right. At such times, I confer with God, in the form of very clear thoughts, Dear God, why must I constantly be burdened with one problem, with one conflict after another?

God answers: Every time you have a problem, a conflict, a challenge, and you face it and deal with it, you emerge a little bit stronger, a little better able to cope with the next one, and you have a little better understanding of life, the world, and human relationships.

And I answer, Dear God, I hear what you're saying, but I'm getting old, and I've had so many trials, so many problems to face. Don't you think, at this stage of my life, I'm strong enough? I don't need to be stronger, and I need to have some time of just total peace.

And God answers: You'll never be strong enough, and you're the kind of person who has to be tested always. You'll have your moments of peace and exuberance, but you will always have trials and tribulations.

And I probably will.

I told them straight.
I had cancer and I was going to beat it.

CANCER

I awoke early on the morning of December 10, 1976. Even if I hadn't, the nurse would have made sure I did when she stuck a thermometer in my mouth at 6:00 a.m. I wasn't in the hospital because I had the measles or appendicitis, so I don't know why she wanted my temperature. The doctor suspected cancer of my vocal chords.

I guess I should have been on edge. I wasn't, though. As soon as they allowed her into my room, Sonia joined me in the wait for my doctor to report the results of the tests he'd done the day before. When Dr. Sidney Busis entered the room, he interrupted two grandparents casually discussing our favorite topics: Marshal and Mira.

Maybe the reason I wasn't anxious was that I was pretty sure I knew the verdict—the results of the biopsy. I had been in the hospital for three days simply because the first time they wheeled me to the operating room to take a tissue sample and stuck a needle in my arm, my whole system went "kafloowy."

They should have known that happens when people stick needles in my arm.

Dr. Busis looked grim. "I guess we're going to have to start a series of radiation treatments," he said. I looked at my wife, and I could see she was handling it okay. I knew immediately that if she could handle it, I could, too.

In barely a whisper, because by this time my voice was almost entirely gone, I asked, "Do you mean I have cancer?"

He said, "I'm afraid you do."

I quickly said, "I'll beat it."

Dr. Busis said, "I know you will."

Of course, I wasn't sure I was going to beat it, but I was certain from that moment that I could handle it. I walked over to the dresser and picked up a pad of paper and handed it to Dr. Busis. The top two pages were full of questions I had written out in advance, knowing that I wouldn't be able to do much talking and strongly suspecting the results of the test.

Dr. Busis shook his head in mild disbelief and said it was the first time anyone had prepared the questions in advance. He answered them. Then he walked over to me, looked me in the eyes, shook my hand and said, so sincerely that I thought he would cry, "I'm sorry I had to bring you this kind of news. The radiation techniques are excellent."

Even as Dr. Busis walked from the room, I felt strong, and I knew that whether I lived or died, I could face this illness with strength and dignity. I repeated to Sonia that I had no intention of caving in and that I wasn't going to make a mystery out of my illness. My friends and family were waiting for the results of the biopsy, and I was going to give it to them. I told it to them straight. I had cancer, and I was going to beat it.

Although in the past, like most people, I was only partly aware of my own mortality, there is no doubt that after this experience, I understood and accepted it. Apparently, I also could deal with the news that I had cancer. Maturity, maybe. But actu-

ally, I'm not sure the ability to deal with this kind of news has anything to do with maturity or age. I was to see young children handle cancer with courage equal to any adult.

There have been times in my life when minor things have sent me into a tailspin. November 20, 1974, was my 60th birthday. A few weeks after, I put down on paper my feelings about being 60. One of the things I wrote was: "In my twenties and thirties, every problem I faced seemed like a Greek tragedy. At sixty, I suffer less. I handle things in stride; I can be a little more philosophical; and I know that the world won't come to an end if I do make a mistake."

From the moment the biopsy results came back, my life changed. I looked at each day and each person in a different way and, while I might have imagined some of it, it seemed that people looked at me differently, too.

On December 15th, Sonia accompanied me to the Department of Oncology at Pittsburgh's Presbyterian University Hospital. My senses were on full alert. I was anxious to know how the staff talked to cancer patients. My emotions were mixed that morning. I was anxious, apprehensive and scared, but also curious—the juices were flowing.

As I sat in the waiting room, I realized that I was indeed on the edge of my chair. I reflected that it was a slightly different kind of excitement than going on the roller coaster called the Pippin at Kennywood Park when I was 13 or different than holding Goldie's hand after a party at my cousin Shirley's house on my first date when I was 12.

While I waited, a little girl walked in with her mother. The receptionist said, "Good morning, Sherry. How are you?" With the maturity of a grown woman, Sherry smiled and said, "Good."

I later found that Sherry was always "good" when asked about her health, and she always had a smile on her face. I soon fell in love with her. She was only 9, but had faced surgery

many times and now radiation. She had so very much courage. I could tell her mother instilled confidence in her. Confidence and courage are contagious among people who are sick. Later, Sonia and I sent a contribution to Children's Hospital in her name. Her cheerfulness and her courage were an inspiration to everyone who met her.

That first day I got acquainted with the many sensitive members of Presbyterian's staff. They really didn't treat people any differently because they had cancer, but everyone was caring and understanding.

Before beginning my radiation treatments, Sonia and I met Dr. Melvin Deutsch, my radiologist. I think we liked each other the first time we met. He showed sympathy and empathy. He took plenty of time to explain what was going to happen and to answer questions. I discovered that he was always accessible to his patients, even though he was a busy guy. I was especially impressed by his procedure at lunch time. He pulled a chair up to a little table in the waiting room, opened up his brown paper bag and ate his lunch while talking to patients and watching TV.

After our visit with Dr. Deutsch, I was ushered to the radiation area where I was told to take off my upper clothes and put on one of those hospital shirts that are used during radiation of the upper part of the body. As I sat there, I overheard a nurse mention the name of Randall DeBolt.

There was a Randy DeBolt in my life. We were on the high school football team together from 1929 to 1932. I was quarterback and Randy was one of the halfbacks. A number of years later he worked for a while for Levinson Steel as a foreman in the Shipping Department. However, I hadn't seen Randy for a dozen years.

I excused myself for eavesdropping and asked the nurse if Randy DeBolt was a guy about my age. She said he was and that he was also there for radiation treatment. The nurses went to get him so we could say "hi" to each other.

He was with his wife and son. He was very thin and his throat was badly scarred from surgery and radiation. When I saw him, I smiled and said, "Hi, Randy."

He mumbled, "Hi, Diney" without changing the hopeless look on his face.

I squeezed his arm and said, "I have cancer, too. I'm taking my first radiation treatment today. I'm going to be all right, and so are you."

He faked a smile, which said to me, "You hang in there, I know I'm not going to make it."

His wife and son wanted us to continue. They said, "Talk to him, Diney. He needs that kind of talking to."

I don't recall what I said next, but I don't think it did any good. The whole experience may not have had much effect on Randy, but it really shook me up. It was only a few minutes later that they called me for my first treatment. I was scared.

When I walked into the treatment room, I was stunned by the cold, barren atmosphere. The floor was bare. The walls were white. The room was empty, except for a long, very narrow table covered with a sheet. Looming over it was some ominous looking machinery hanging from the walls and the ceiling.

Bob was the technician—warm and understanding. There was a friendly, efficient young woman helping him. She asked me to lie down on the table. I did. There was a little extension on the table for my head. Instead of turning on the machine, they started taking measurements and photographs. I wondered if the procedure was something like that of the pathology department or the morgue.

When they were ready, the treatment took only a few minutes, and it didn't hurt. Before I knew it, I was out of there, dressing, saying goodbye to all my new friends and telling them I would see them tomorrow.

When I got to my office that day, I told my secretary about my experience and later called my brother-in-law, Rabbi Groll-

man, and related it to him. He asked me to write it all down. I wanted to, but I couldn't—not then.

Each day I went through the same experience. Walking into that barren room with the bare floor and the sterile white walls, nothing in it except that narrow table with a sheet and the sinister machine. I was to have 31 treatments, five days a week except weekends and holidays.

The seventh time I walked into the radiation room, I asked, "Bob, what have you done to this room?"

He said, "What do you mean?"

I told him it had changed entirely, and he said he didn't know what I meant.

"Bob, there is carpeting on the floor. The walls are not white; they're blue. There's a picture on the wall. And there are other things besides just the table and the machine in here."

He told me that was the way it had always been. I couldn't believe it! What I had seen for the first six treatments was not what I was seeing that day. I had imagined the way a radiation room should look. The anxiety and apprehension had played tricks on my mind.

Each day I felt more comfortable about the whole process and each day I got acquainted with other patients, some sad, some resigned, some scared, and many courageous. I found you can be scared and courageous at the same time. As a matter of fact, the truly brave person is the one who faces his problems and deals with them in a positive way in spite of the fears.

Following the ninth treatment, Dr. Deutsch said he wanted to take a look. He put that wooden stick on my tongue and had me make all kinds of noises, while he looked down my throat and said, "It's gone!"

I looked at him curiously and he repeated that there was no sign of cancer. Of course, I had to finish the 31 treatments; and as I was to learn later, it didn't mean I was cured. It simply meant that there were no visible signs of cancer at that moment.

In fact, there were no visible signs during the rest of my radiation treatments and for the entire year that I was being checked each month by three different doctors: Dr. Busis, who discovered my cancer, Dr. Deutsch, the radiologist, and Dr. Myers, the chairman of the otolaryngology department at Eye and Ear Hospital.

After my last treatment before Christmas, I was riding the elevator to the first floor with an elderly gentleman in a wheelchair who was accompanied by a nurse. In my very raspy voice, I asked, "How are you feeling?"

In an equally raspy voice, he replied, "Not good."

I did the same thing then that I had done with Randy. I walked over to him, squeezed his arm and said, "I'm getting the same treatments you are. I'm going to be okay and so are you." Tears began to run down his face as he looked up at me and asked, "Do you really think so?"

I told him I knew we were both going to be all right. The nurse game me a smile that spoke volumes. As I left the elevator, I didn't know just how much effect I had on that man but I knew the experience had a profound effect on me. It gave me renewed confidence; and during all the months that I was in contact with other cancer patients, each time I was able to reach out and feel I was being of some help to some other person, I knew it was doing wonders for me.

Toward the end of treatments there was a boy about 12 waiting for his first treatment. His family was with him, sitting a few chairs away from him. They probably figured that the rules were that they were not allowed to sit in that section of the waiting room. I said, "How are you?"

He looked up at me and said, "Okay." His eyes were red and he quickly looked away and I could tell that he was scared to death. I almost wanted to cry. And, as I write this, I want to cry again. If I was 63 and scared, imagine what was in his mind. All I said was, "I want to show you a trick." I started to do my

corny coin tricks for him and suddenly, for moment, he forgot his fear and enjoyed the tricks. As I passed his family, his mother thanked me.

At no time did the radiation treatments cause any pain. For about a week I had a stomach disorder. However, I have no way of knowing if that was caused by the radiation treatments. My guess is that it was not. So, the effects weren't physical, only the psychological ones I described.

In December of 1977, in a routine checkup, Dr. Myers said he saw something in my throat which wasn't here the last time. He wanted me back in the hospital, and that is what led to my surgery.

When my life ends,
the whole thing will seem like a dream.

SURGERY

When I told Dr. Busis that Dr. Myers had scheduled another biopsy on December 9th, he looked at his calendar and told me something that neither Dr. Myers nor I realized when we worked out a mutually satisfactory date for the procedure. "Would you believe that your second biopsy is one year to the day after your first?" So it was.

Then, in that same hospital room, on December 10, 1977, one year after I was first told I had cancer, the scene was reenacted. Only this time, besides Dr. Busis, there were Dr. Myers and members of his staff telling me that I had cancer again—or, perhaps, still.

Because radiation apparently failed, surgery was indicated. I was scared. But somehow, again, it became a challenge. A very big challenge—not only facing cancer for the second time, but also facing the prospect of surgery. I had often wondered if some day the test of surgery would confront me (this brave guy who faints when his finger is pricked for a blood test). All kinds

of thoughts and memories flashed through my mind. Countless times doctors and nurses have had me lie down as I grew faint from a blood test. What would this ordeal be like?

I recalled when, at about age 10, my daughter Eleanor got hit on the head with a swinging golf club. After Sonia phoned me at my office, I drove to Montefiore Hospital and waited for 45 minutes at the emergency entrance while Sonia drove the 25 miles from Westmoreland Country Club. As the car pulled up, I could see that Eleanor was covered with blood. I picked her up, carried her into the emergency room, laid her down and made sure a nurse was taking care of her. Then, I walked over to the emergency room clerk to fill out the papers. The clerk looked up to ask me something and said, "Oh, Mr. Levinson, where did you disappear to?" I didn't hear her though. I was on the floor. Out cold, in reaction to my bleeding daughter!

By the time of my surgery my daughter Eleanor had three children of her own. She came to Pittsburgh to be with me for the operation. When Sonia, Eleanor and I walked up to the admissions desk at the Eye and Ear Hospital the afternoon of December 13th, I thought about my first signs of cancer in 1976.

Eleanor and her children were visiting with us at the time. I mentioned I had some hoarseness which didn't seem to come from a cold, she said, "Make an appointment to see Dr. Busis."

I said, "Oh, Eleanor, it's nothing." However, she insisted, and each day, for a week after she returned home, she phoned me at my office to ask if I had made the appointment. Finally, to get her off my back, I went to see Dr. Busis. As it turned out, Eleanor's persistent prodding and Dr. Busis' immediate suspicion of cancer may well have saved my life.

I had the same mixed feelings (only in greater measure) when I entered the hospital for surgery as I had when I went for my first radiation therapy. I was anxious, worried, frightened, curious, excited and extremely interested in the details of what was going on. Yet, I was joking with the people in the admissions

department and there was almost a holiday spirit. I don't think I fooled anyone, though. I think everyone knew very well that my jolly mood was a great big phony front. My predominant emotions were fear and apprehension, and maybe even a little anger.

Although I had visions of my two week hospital stay in a beautiful room with private duty nurses, I only got to spend the first pre-surgery night in one of those rooms. But that day, December 13th, was one to remember forever.

In times of crisis, there is nothing so comforting as having your family rally around you. My wife and daughter right next to me and my son, Jim, reaching all the way from Bangladesh where he was a foreign service officer with the State Department.

Sonia, of course, had been with me holding my hand through both biopsies and during both times that I was told the results. She was there for my first radiation treatment, as well. Most of us may not fully appreciate our spouses until we are in trouble, but Sonia is the kind of person who rallies in periods of crisis and that, to me, is of infinite help. Moreover, it's a quality I've grown to appreciate even during the easy times.

The one who took over at the hospital, though, was Eleanor. I think she is a frustrated doctor. Her husband got his Ph.D. in the public health field and has been a marketing executive—now an executive in human resources—at Merck, the pharmaceutical company. Eleanor reads everything she can on medicine. By the time she came to Pittsburgh, she knew almost as much about cancer of the larynx as any doctor; and she began giving instructions to me and to the nurses, never in a pushy or authoritative manner, but in the kind of polite take-charge way she does everything.

One of the things she did was to talk to one of the nurses in 5-E about the postoperative procedure. Eleanor planned to stay for a day after the operation before returning to New Jersey to her husband Jeffrey and her three young children. Eleanor's

love, concern and attention were more helpful to me than I can ever express. When the nurse in 5-E finished her discussion with Eleanor, I said kind of jokingly, "Would you mind going back to New Jersey and taking care of my grandchildren for a few days so Eleanor can stay here and take care of me?"

There was one nurse, or perhaps she was a nurse's aide, Brenda Knight, who took care of me during my two visits to the hospital for biopsies. It was difficult to be sad or depressed around her. She was a bright, cheerful woman whose mood was contagious.

My phone kept ringing that evening as family, friends and people from the company called to wish me well. From the San Francisco Bay area there were three: One from my life-long friend Ralph Raphael, the others from Brad Vinocur and his sister Terry. Brad's and Terry's dad, Dave, was a close friend who often talked about his children. I finally met them at their dad's funeral, and we have been friends ever since.

During that evening, Dr. Deutsch, my radiologist at Presbyterian Hospital, stopped by. Although he was not involved in my surgical treatment, he had a genuine interest in me and made a special trip to the hospital to look at my throat and to talk with me.

Shortly after Dr. Deutsch came, Dr. Skolnick, one of Dr. Myers' assistants, asked me to come into an adjoining examination room. He took a perfunctory look at my throat and then proceeded to tell me what I should expect when I came out of surgery. As he described the tube coming out of the windpipe in my throat, through which I was to breath, and the other tube going up my nose and down into my stomach through which I would eat, and the needle in my arm for the intravenous, I felt faint, blacked out completely and had to be revived. The next day was not one that a normal person would be looking forward to and that night I was normal as hell!

At 7:00 the next morning Sonia and Eleanor were by my side

as they wheeled me out of the room. At 9:00 a.m., Pittsburgh time, that same morning Jim was writing me from Bangladesh. This is what he wrote:

Dear Pop,

I'm afraid. For the first time in a long while, I'm afraid. This is a time to feel brave. But, I don't feel the least bit brave, or self sufficient, or very strong. There's so much of you wrapped up in me, so much of our relationship, that I can't bear the thought of losing you—of not having your caring, your counsel, your love; or not having my daddy to go to when I fall off the horse, or get into a fight, or to say he's behind me when I set out on my own.

I think of all those memories...of going into the ocean together in Atlantic City after you bought me a sailor suit with a whistle, of your holding me as I got on my two-wheeler for the first time, and showing me how to go out for a pass in Frick Park, of our appointment at the dock, of all our birthday talks, of your taking me to Camp Lenox for the first time, and presenting me, in your capacity as an old camper, with the Honor Scroll award.

And then I think of our conversations, and your letters to me when I went away to school, and then again at all those difficult, scary junctures; staying on in India, marrying and then separating from Sati, meeting and marrying Louise, leaving M.I.T., and going off again to Bangladesh.

There's so much that I cherish in those memories, and they've so molded my life. Maybe all of this will go on for years and years, and we'll get up to Volume 25 of our letters. But if we don't, we'll know that there was richness and caring—and beyond that a lot of very special love. And we'll know that the memories will live on—forever and ever—amid the tears and the emptiness.

I love you, Pop
Jimmy

I have been honored by the Jewish community, the National

Conference of Christians and Jews, the Pittsburgh Jaycees and the American Technion Society—to mention a few. Yet, there is no honor to match that bestowed on a person by his own children. I read Jim's letter when it arrived just after I got home from the hospital. I cried without shame, as I feel sure he did while he was writing it.

When I came out of surgery I was not brought back to my fancy room on the seventh floor. I was transferred to a section of the hospital called 5-E, where all the nurses were specially trained for my kind of surgery. For one day I was kept in a four bed, semi-recovery room with a nurse on hand practically all of the time to take care of the patients. Somehow I knew that all those tubes which were described to me the night before were every place they were supposed to be, but I thought if I kept my eyes closed I could handle it better. It seems like I kept my eyes closed for two days although I know I didn't; and even though I fainted at the prospect of the post-surgery ordeal, the fact is I adjusted quickly to the reality of the situation.

I opened my eyes long enough to glance around this room. The only other patient was an old guy who alternated between some of the worst cussing I ever heard and repeating the Lord's Prayer. While he was cussing, he cursed God, the doctors, the nurses and his mother. Though I couldn't talk, during his calmer moments I waved at him, but he either didn't notice or wasn't interested and didn't respond.

The next day, I was wheeled into my own room. I had paper and pencil and a clever gadget with all kinds of stock questions and answers that you can flip to: I am hungry; I am in pain; I have to go to the bathroom; Hi; Get the hell out of here; etc.

The morning after my surgery, Dr. Myers came in with his chief assistant nurse and a couple of interns. He said, "How are you feeling?" I wrote, "Great." He didn't even bother to respond, just laughed, because he knew it was a lie.

That same day, December 15th, Levinson Steel was having a

board meeting at the Concordia Club, just a couple of blocks from the hospital. Afterward, the entire board visited me one at a time. It was a bit taxing, but it was really helpful to know that they all cared. Just a few days earlier, we had completed a transaction to sell a sick subsidiary company in the automotive parts business. This business problem had been plaguing me for a long time; and when Steve Freedman, one of the board members asked me how I was, I wrote, "Great. It's wonderful to get rid of two cancers in one week."

For some reason, when I entered the hospital before my surgery I was sent to the audiology department to have my hearing tested by Chris Walker, the audiologist. I got into a conversation with her and discovered we had mutual friends in Erie, Pennsylvania, her hometown. Before I left, she gave me her extension number and said if there was anything I needed in the hospital, even someone to run an errand or get a magazine, to feel free to call her. I said, "Okay," forgetting I wasn't going to be talking for awhile. Chris stopped by the room to visit me, though, and so did Nancy, Barbara and Maureen from the Radiology Department at Presbyterian.

I had lots of company. Brenda Knight, the nurse on the seventh floor, visited every day. Even one of the girls who checked my blood stopped by on her coffee breaks to see how I was doing. Sonia and the nurses were doing their best to limit the visitors, but I managed to thwart their efforts. They put a big "No Visitors" sign on my door, and I added, "Except for friends, relatives and hospital personnel."

Every nurse, nurse's aid, practical nurse and orderly on that floor was exceptional, but one stood out: Sharon Nagy. She had an ability to be all business and, at the same time, to inject a little humor and compassion into a basically unpleasant situation. My last night in the hospital was Christmas Eve and there was a new nurse on the floor, Denise Zbozny, pretty, cheerful and efficient. Before I went to sleep, she invited me to have some cookies

which her grandmother and sister had baked. Such little things were very important.

On December 25th, I left the hospital. Ten days after surgery. By then, I was able to barely talk in a whisper. Prior to my surgery, we had invited about 200 people to stop by our home on New Year's Eve. The doctors allowed us to have our party, provided we did not permit smoking. There was also a sign which said "Do Not Kiss Aaron." I did a little cheating. It was a great party, attended not only by close friends, but also by people I work with, as well as the doctors and residents who had attended me at the hospital.

A few days later, with Sonia, I visited Dr. Myers at the hospital. During our talk I asked, "Dr. Myers, just how much trouble was I in while I was in the recovery room?"

He said, "What do you mean?"

"You remember, when I was hemorrhaging."

"How did you know that?"

"I heard everything that was said. Dr. Skolnick and Dr. Froman were saying things like, 'The bleeding is not superficial. It could be serious. We can't seem to get it under control. Let's get Dr. Myers in here.'"

He was amazed that I had heard that. They were worried for a little while but they were able to successfully control the bleeding with a certain type of packing. The interesting thing was I wasn't able to ask about it until that day in his office. I'm not sure whether it was complete faith in the doctor, faith in God, or the fact that I was still under the influence of the anesthetic—or a combination of all three—for during those moments of my hemorrhaging, I felt no apprehension. I was letting others take over completely.

The transition between life and death during those moments seemed natural and unperturbing. I had the strange, almost mystical feeling that when my life ends, the whole thing will seem like a dream.

If I lost my hands I'd really be in trouble.

WHISPERS

Going through life each day able only to talk in a whisper takes quite an adjustment, especially for someone like me who speaks to everyone. But the reactions to my whisper are a study in human nature. Sometimes, when I say "hi" to strangers on an elevator or in a waiting room, they answer but the looks on their faces ask, "What is he whispering about?" Ninety per cent of them, however, don't express their curiosity. Once in awhile, someone says, "What are you whispering about?" Or, I'm asked if I have laryngitis.

Talking on the telephone is strange. I can tell from the pause after I ask for someone that the operator is wondering if the call is for real or not. I handle the call as though I was talking in a normal voice. Often people whisper back and only two people I can recall were extraordinarily insensitive. One was a telephone operator in a New York bank who taunted me even after I pleaded with her not to make fun of my disability. The other was an attendant in a health club in Toronto. When I asked for an ap-

pointment, he started to laugh. I hung up.

At least a hundred women have hung up on me because when I first speak, it sounds to them like an obscene call. The strange thing is that now that I have been whispering for so many years, I'm not conscious of talking any differently—most of the time. I remember one Sunday morning a few summers ago when we had house guests. My wife and our visitors were asleep. I was on the telephone talking with my brother-in-law, Earl Grollman. Subconsciously, midway in the conversation, I was thinking that the reason I was whispering was that I didn't want to wake up the people in the house. Suddenly, I said, "What the hell am I whispering about?" At that, we both laughed.

I love being with people and so have refused to avoid cocktail parties or other occasions where there are a lot of people. It can be extremely frustrating, though. Being gregarious, I often have something to contribute to the conversations around me. Yet, in a noisy, crowded room, it is frequently impossible for anyone to hear me. Under such conditions I do one of three things: write a note; lean very close to someone's ear and speak as loudly as I can; or just forget it.

Whispering in someone's ear can be quite pleasant when the person I am talking to is a lovely woman, but I find that occasionally a person will flinch when I attempt to speak that close.

Some of my conversations are indeed bizarre. For instance, I asked a friend, "How did you enjoy your trip to Hong Kong?"

He answered, "I think so."

Or, seated next to a woman at a banquet, I turned to her and said, "Excuse me, I have to go wash my hands."

She said, "I'll be glad to have the next dance."

I got angry in my home over a series of incidents one evening and in exasperation I wheezed, "Oh shit!" Sonia said, "Gesundheit."

Shortly after my surgery there were several occurrences

which illustrate that people don't listen well. The first happened at Pittsburgh's Heinz Hall during the intermission of a concert. It had only been a few weeks since my surgery. The late S.J. Novin embraced me and said, "Aaron, how the hell are you anyway?" He spoke with a bit of an accent.

"The doctor says I'll live." I spoke loudly and closely enough for him to hear what I said, but he wasn't listening.

He replied, "Oh, Aaron, don't pay any attention to those doctors. They don't know everything."

The next day I was in a bakery shop and the cashier asked, "Why are you whispering?"

Again, loudly enough to be heard, I said, "I had surgery."

She responded, "It's going around."

With the recent emphasis on environmental issues, we have all become aware of that ugly thing called pollution. Pollution to me has always been fog and smog, dirty air and cigarette smoke. Since my surgery, I've become aware of another kind of pollution—noise. It becomes impossible when I am walking down the street trying to carry on a conversation and suddenly a noisy bus or truck passes. At those times I must simply wait until the noise has passed before I can continue talking. The same thing occurs when I try to converse or conduct a meeting in my office and a hydraulic lift which handles the trash bin begins to operate outside.

Shortly after surgery, as I was leaving LeMont Restaurant, which overlooks Pittsburgh from the top of Mt. Washington, I walked through the waiting room to reach the sidewalk. The room was crowded with people entering the restaurant or waiting for their cars to be delivered to the door. In my usual friendly manner I said, "hi" as I passed, directing my remark to a group of people standing near the doorway. One of them, an attractive woman, responded in an exaggerated whisper, "Hi, yourself, why are you whispering?"

In view of the fact that there was some noise in the room, I

leaned over to her, intending to say, "I am not talking this way because I want to; I can't speak any louder." But as I leaned over she must have been afraid that I was making a pass at her and she said, "Don't touch."

I pulled back and started toward the door to get my car when she spoke up, "Don't leave; what were you going to say?"

Then I did say, "I am not talking this way because I want to; it is because I can't speak any louder."

She then said, in the most apologetic tone I ever heard, "Oh, I am sorry." She looked like she was on the verge of tears. A few minutes later I was outside waiting for my car with Sonia and my mother when this woman came out of the restaurant with her party. She walked over to me, put her hand on my arm and said, "I am really sorry, sir."

I said, "Forget it. You had no way of knowing."

The fact is that people really have no way of knowing and respond in whatever ways come naturally to them. They don't mean to sound like they are taunting or mimicking me, but sometimes I can't help feeling that they are. And when a lot of those kinds of feelings build up I have a tendency to just clam up, which is another kind of frustration for me. One I try to avoid.

Perhaps the most thoughtful, intelligent comment from a stranger happened on a plane one morning. As I was getting seated the flight attendant and I said a few words to each other. When I sat down a woman sitting next to me asked, "Is your voice problem a temporary one or a permanent one?" I then explained my situation. She probably had been trained to ask logical questions, being a law partner in one of the large Pittsburgh firms. But besides any amount of training she was a sensitive human being.

For a brief time, about a year following my surgery, it seemed I might get my voice back—or at least part of it. Dr. Meyers told me about a Teflon implant which would require

only minor surgery. As the doctor explained it, the one vocal chord I have touches nothing as it vibrates, thus the whisper. The idea behind the implant is that by placing something solid in my larynx, my vocal chord would have something to vibrate against and I'd be able to speak in a raspy voice.

When Dr. Meyers told me about his I really brightened up and asked, "Will I be able to sing?"

He said, "I don't know why not."

To which I replied, "That's funny, I could never sing before." Unfortunately, the transplant didn't work out and I've continued to whisper. I still can't sing.

Many times since my surgery I have found it necessary to speak before large groups. I remember my apprehension the first few times. I started with the kick-off dinner for Richard Thornburgh's successful campaign for governor of Pennsylvania, when I made a toast with the help of a microphone. The second time, I was presented an honorary degree from Point Park College and responded before 2,000 people in Pittsburgh's Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall. I found that with adequate amplification and a quiet audience, that by speaking slowly and distinctly I could be heard throughout the auditorium. Since then it has been easy. Besides, as Dr. Myers said at my 70th birthday party, I'm like E. F. Hutton, the stock brokerage firm. When I speak, everyone listens.

Several years ago I spoke to a group at an affair given by the Women's Auxiliary of the South Side Hospital. I was partly compensating for a lack of voice by using my hands extensively. I realized what I was doing and said, "It didn't bother me too much to lose a vocal chord, but if I lost my hands I would really be in trouble."

One of the funnier things which happened a few months after my surgery happened when I stopped at Dr. Myers' home. I had not met his wife, Barbara, who answered the door. I asked, in my clear, distinctive whisper, "Is the doctor home?" She whis-

pered back, "No, come on in." She was joking, of course.

Despite the humor, no one can experience the trauma of cancer without deep reflections on life. To add to my trauma, my wife, Sonia, contracted cancer a few years later (and I'll get to that). So I ask, "What's my life all about? Where have I been? Where am I now? Is there a tomorrow?"

As early as the first day my diagnosis was made, I was determined to put it all down on paper. More than a decade has passed since then. I've consolidated my notes, written it all, and will soon send it to the printer. I've told it all many times in what is now a part of me—my whisper. I only wish I knew how to write it in a whisper, too.

If you think they're beautiful, wait 'til you see their pictures!

I TALK TO STRANGERS

While reflecting on my life for this book, I toyed with various titles. *I Can't Scream* was one, but so far I have not had to scream. I quickly gave up the whistle I carried for emergencies, because I did not need it. I considered *I'll Tell It in a Whisper.* Another title captures another basic characteristic: *I Talk to Strangers.* I have four trademarks: telling jokes (my next book, perhaps), talking to strangers; corny coin tricks performed for everybody; and pictures of my grandchildren in my pocket.

Once when we were together with Eleanor's family at the seashore, an elderly lady said, "Mr. Levinson, your grandchildren are so beautiful." I said, "If you think they are beautiful, wait 'til you see their pictures!"

About 99% of the strangers I speak to answer me or at least smile. Sometimes, I merely say hello as I pass. I do the opposite of what some parents teach children: Never talk to strangers. I tried to instill in my children the importance of using good judgement in saying hello as about anything else. I believe that

talking to strangers, under the right circumstances, is all right. Better, it is very nice.

THE EYES HAVE IT

I must admit I use a trick to get such a high response from strangers. I watch eyes. I don't say "hi" unless their eyes meet mine for at least a second.

Some people do not have the capacity to meet another's eyes—especially a stranger's. They always look away. Sometimes I violate my own rule just to shock one of these people into action: If there are two people waiting for an elevator and they can't meet my eyes, I say "hi" and force them to make contact. But that's the exception.

Then there are people who make eye contact and immediately look away. They do this because they don't realize you are also looking at their eyes. Eye contact is embarrassing to them and they have to look away. In terms of keeping my batting average up I'm usually a little afraid of such people. Not that I care that much; it doesn't bother me if someone doesn't respond. But usually, the exciting new encounters are with people who respond, and they are the ones who will meet your eyes and continue to meet them—or smile. That's when I say "hi." Of course, I've already had my answer before I even open my mouth.

One person I remember most distinctly is Valley Keith, who's a wonderful friend living in San Diego. I've known her about 20 years, since I was in an airport waiting room and she was waiting to have her ticket validated. I was standing on a ramp, looking out over the place. Almost by accident her eyes met mine. The instant they met, her face lit up with a great big smile. I noticed when I got on the plane that the seat next to her was empty, so I took it. We became friends. She's delightful. Then she was going to the University of Colorado. She's now the mother of a lovely daughter. We still correspond.

One day I got a letter from her; it read: "Dear Aaron, half an hour ago my father died and I had to talk with you. I called you on the phone and couldn't reach you, and writing is the next best thing." That's how close we became—just from meeting eyes.

JOKER WILD

I enjoy watching people realize they're being kidded. Sometimes they don't figure it out, which can create some unusual situations. I don't intend to upset anyone, but occasionally my humor backfires on me. Most of the time, though, the payoff is enjoyment for me and them.

I was walking on Forbes Avenue awhile back and noticed a woman cop writing a ticket for a car parked overtime. I decided to play. I walked up behind her and said, "Hey, that car belongs to my cousin."

Of course, it didn't, but I wanted to see what reaction I got. She turned around to see who was giving her a hard time. She looked at me for a moment. Then she put her arms around me and hugged me. She said, "Aaron Levinson, I haven't seen you in 10 years. How the hell are you?"

At that point I was more surprised than she was. I hadn't recognized her in the uniform, and 10 years also made a difference. But it was sure a pleasant reunion. Sometimes it turns out that a stranger isn't a stranger at all.

AN ELEVATING EXPERIENCE

One day I was in one of those super fast elevators in the United States Steel Building. An attorney was with me and we were talking when the car stopped to let on a young woman.

I said, "Hi." I was just being friendly.

She said, "Oh, hello, Mr. Levinson. I'm surprised you remembered me."

"How could I forget," I answered. But to this day I don't remember how I knew her—or who she was.

WHEN YOU GIVE, YOU GET

For quite awhile my daily routine included swimming 50 laps at the health spa on Bigelow Boulevard. After showering I always relaxed at the juice bar, where I usually struck up a conversation with someone.

One day there was an elderly Black woman there. Since we were the only ones in the place, I sat down beside her, said hello and asked her name. She told me she was Mrs. Henderson.

I guess the name is pretty common, but back in the 1960s I was one of the judges when the Urban League gave its secretary of the year award to a young woman named Marion Henderson when she graduated from high school. She was bright and personable, and I tried to hire her, but got beaten to the draw by someone else. However, we became friends, and she later came to work for Levinson Steel while we were operating the Hays Army Ammunition Plant. After she left I lost track of her, although I know she played piano and sang in night clubs, and I'd heard she worked as a producer or assistant at one of the local radio or TV stations.

I told this Mrs. Henderson my name and she exclaimed, "You're not **the** Aaron Levinson? I'm Marion Henderson's mother."

I'd never before been addressed as "**the** Aaron Levinson," and I replied that I didn't know if I was "**the** Aaron Levinson"—but I didn't know anyone else by that name in Pittsburgh.

I told her how much I liked Marion and asked how she was doing. Mrs. Henderson told me that Marion was doing well, but that she was trying to raise enough money to go to Pitt. I asked if it would help if I loaned her a hundred dollars. She said it would be great, so I got Marion's address. The next day I made out a check and sent it to her.

Three months passed without a word from her. I told my secretary that I was surprised that Marion had not kept in touch.

I sometimes loan money to people and never get it back, but this was particularly disappointing.

Then, after six months had gone by, I received a nice letter saying, "Mr. Levinson, I just can't begin to tell you how much that $100 helped. I was able to go to Pitt and I've finished my first semester. I appreciate the loan." Enclosed was a check repaying the money.

But that wasn't the end. Marion later returned to work for Levinson Steel, remaining with the company until late in 1981.

OUT OF THE HABIT

John Ayoob and I met, of all places, in the sauna at the Bigelow Spa. We would see each other from time to time, either there or in the steam room. We started talking and the friendship just developed naturally from there. However, we'd never seen each other anywhere else—only in the spa, nude or wrapped in towels. And for some reason we had not bothered telling each other about our jobs. Instead we talked about things like war and peace and race relations and politics.

One day somebody walked into the sauna, nodded to John and said, "Hello, Father."

I said, "Oh, my God, you're a priest. What dirty jokes have I told you? What swear words have I used?"

He giggled. Then one of the other men who was sweating with us said, "Aaron's the head of a company."

Father John said, "Oh, my God, what did I say about the evils of profits?" He's a very liberal guy—a little left of center.

Regardless, we became good friends. His heritage is Lebanese, and he has some very definite and strong feelings about the Middle East situation, including some negative feelings about Israel. Yet some of his close friends are Jewish. He once asked me, "Why is it that whenever I say something negative about Israel to my Jewish friends, they think I'm anti-Semitic?" He's a sensitive guy.

One time, though, we got into a discussion about the Middle East and, believe it or not, wound up shouting at each other for the first time. So, we decided we'd stay off that subject.

Father Ayoob had very mixed feelings after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982. It looked, for awhile, as though it might have an adverse effect on our friendship. I do believe that we are back on track now. The fact is I, too, felt that that was a sad and unfortunate chapter in Israeli history.

Four days after our argument he asked me to lunch. We talked openly, and it wasn't too bad. I love the guy, and I think he loves me. My son, Jim, is crazy about him too.

One time Jim was in town and said, "Let's call Father John." The two of them are both hooked on music and sports—especially pro football.

We called him. It was during the play-offs, and Jim asked him if he was going to watch them. Father John said, "No, I have to take confessions."

Jim said, "Why don't you take a transistor radio into the booth with you?"

John thought about it before replying, "I know what would happen. Someone would say, 'Father, I have to confess I committed sins last week. I had extra-marital affairs,' and I would say, 'Hooray!'"

HOORAY FOR STRANGERS

Well, I'd like to say hooray, myself. Hooray for all the wonderful people I've met—all the terrific friends I've made. That's what I get for talking with strangers.

I'm certainly a far different person
than I was 25 or 30 years ago.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

RESCUES AND CLOSE CALLS

No one gets through life without a few close calls, those near misses that leave the blood full of adrenalin—the heart pounding wildly and the ears singing. At such times one thanks the higher powers for being spared, and life seems even more precious and fragile. When we narrowly escape disaster or even defeat, it's bad enough, but it's even more harrowing to witness someone else's near miss. And for sheer after-the-fact fright, there's nothing like saving someone else from disaster. Especially someone you love.

I faced that situation several times. There's no way to prepare for it. When it's over and I've calmed down, I can't imagine how I managed to react so quickly, without thinking, to save someone from physical danger.

One of the first times it happened was when I was a kid, living on Phillips Avenue. There was a long stairway from the sec-

ond floor of our house. It bottomed out just inside the front door. As every parent knows, stairs are made for kids to fall down. My sister Netta was quite small, so I suppose all of us were unconsciously looking out for her safety all the time.

I was downstairs, not far from the stairs. Netta was upstairs, probably in her bedroom. I heard her walking to the stairs, preparing to descend. Somehow she lost her balance and fell headfirst down the steps. Instantly I knew something was wrong. Without hesitating, I dashed over, wedged my back against the door and caught Netta on the fly. I may have saved her life.

Years later, I was similarly tested by a situation involving my son, who was about 12 years old. My dad had won a Tennessee Walking horse in some sort of a raffle. He gave the horse, named Manor Rose, to his grandchildren, and during the next few years Jimmy rode the horse every chance he had.

I was at Milt Selznick's stables, leaning on the fence, watching Jimmy ride around the ring with a bunch of other equestrians. He was on somebody else's horse, which shied. I turned just in time to see it rear way up on its hind legs. Jimmy lost his grip and fell, but his foot caught in the stirrup. This frightened the poor horse even more and it started to gallop, racing past the other horses and riders.

There I was on the outside of the ring. Without thinking about it, I vaulted the fence. As Jimmy and the panicked horse came by, I made a diving tackle and got him loose. My tackle could have resulted in a broken leg for Jim. Fortunately, it did not. But, if he had continued to be dragged, he could have fractured his skull or been killed.

Besides my sister and my son, I had occasion to rescue my wife—at the very least I kept her from getting a hit on the head.

Sonia and I were flying back from the Orient in June of 1983. I was seated across the aisle and slightly ahead of Sonia. Approaching Pittsburgh, the pilot turned on the signs telling passengers to stop smoking and buckle their seatbelts. We got

strapped in, ready for the landing, our minds on getting home and relaxing—always one of the pleasures of a vacation.

The landing wasn't particularly rough. We'd experienced worse, but the initial impact and the sudden deceleration as the jet's engines reversed was enough to shift all the luggage in the overhead rack. Somebody had put a folding steel baggage carrier with wheels in the rack directly above Sonia's seat. Suddenly the thing got dislodged and began to fall. It was going to hit her right on the head. And I was strapped in.

I managed to get unbuckled and get over there to catch it before it hit her. Most of the passengers near us saw this and couldn't believe I'd gotten there in time. Besides that, they didn't know it was my wife I'd saved. People were saying, "Oh you're a hero. That woman should be grateful to you." Even a member of the flight crew came down the aisle and said, "Thanks! That was fantastic."

It was great getting all those congratulations. It was even better to know that Sonia had escaped injury. And it was especially nice to get our feet on the ground again. Home safe.

The fact is, I've had a few close calls myself and I'm glad I'm still alive to tell about them. I've mentioned nearly falling down the 40 foot shaft when I was working in construction in Washington. Two other incidents involve plane rides.

In 1953 Sam Caplan, Al Snyder, six other guys and I went off to Blue Mountain Lodge in Canada. We flew to Toronto on a commercial plane. From there we made arrangements with a bush pilot to fly us to Sudbury. There were two planes. One for eight guys (my plane) and the other for one man and all the fishing gear and luggage.

Unfortunately my pilot didn't bother to check the weather before leaving Toronto. When we reached Sudbury we spotted the seaplane base from which we would fly into the island where Blue Mountain Lodge is located. For some reason, 15 minutes elapsed, and we were not getting to the airfield. One of us went

to the cockpit and asked the pilot what the hell the delay was. He was visibly shaken. He said, "I can't find the airfield and we're getting weathered in. We're going back to Toronto."

One of us asked, "Do you have enough gas?"

He responded, "I think so."

Someone shouted, "I think so, hell. Find a god damned place to land this plane."

He started back to Toronto while the rest of us unsuccessfully scoured maps and the ground beneath us for a place to land. Then someone saw an expanse of open land which looked like someone's farm. We said set the plane down there.

He said, "I'd rather try to get back to Toronto."

We said, "Bullshit. We don't want to run out of gas over a lot of buildings. Set it down here."

So he tried to land. He touched down, but was headed for a tremendous haystack, so he lifted off and made another approach. This time successfully. By then we were all so scared, some of us got sick. We seemed to be a million miles from no place. We did, however, see a building a half mile away.

We trudged over to find that it was a home for the elderly. We were almost ready to ask for beds, but instead we told one of the people who worked there about our problem. He called a couple of taxis and the rest of the trip to Sudbury was by cab.

When we got there, we learned that we'd been reported missing, and that there were planes looking for us. Our other plane also had weather problems and landed at North Bay. Needless to say, we did not pay the pilots and we were most happy to be fishing the next day.

The other incident happened in Peru in the late '60s or early '70s. Sonia and I had attended a Chief Executives Forum meeting in Lima, and took some side trips after the meetings. One was to the Amazon River. On the return to Lima we travelled by a domestic airline. As we approached the Lima airfield, the entire hydraulic system went out and the pilot could not control the

brakes properly. As a result, after we landed, he braked too suddenly and one of the motors caught fire. The sudden stop caused things to fly in the plane—baggage, pillows, and just about everything except people. When that happened, and we saw smoke coming from one of the engines, some of the passengers started to scream. A few passengers got out, climbing down a ladder from the cockpit.

An emergency truck with a ladder pulled up, but the driver feared an explosion and drove away. The rest of us were trapped for about 20 minutes while the fire engines put out the fire. Fortunately there was neither explosion nor injuries—just lots of shattered nerves.

In 1984 I received a call from Bill Young, a friend for more than 20 years. He was a clerk at the time in the Common Pleas Court, and once brought Robert Nix to my office so that we could get acquainted (Nix was running for Judge and is now Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court). Bill and his family had been to our home. Lovely people. When he phoned, he was feeling desperate. He had received terrible news. I'm reprinting (with his permission) parts of a letter he wrote me in July of '84.

Dear Aaron:

How does one say thanks for possibly saving his life. As you know, recently my Dr. called my home...and very rudely told me that I was a victim of "Liver Cancer." ...I got myself together and asked him why he could not have been a little more compassionate in the way he related this information to me. His response was that, unfortunately, he knew of no other way to handle this matter.

I sat...for an hour or more thinking of the pain and suffering I would be going through in the future and of course, death....a friend of mine...took his own life two years ago via hanging... The reason for this was advanced liver cancer and he could not endure the pain any longer.

I must admit...I thought very seriously of committing a sim-

ilar act. I am not suicidal, but I'm not sure what might have occurred if I had not thought of you. Knowing you to be the great humanitarian that you are, and of course I was aware of the many fine things that you have done to help people in the city of Pittsburgh and beyond, I took a chance on calling you. I have thanked God and of course also you, for you gave me your time by way of comforting counsel. This conversation that we had not only comforted me, but gave me a chance to regroup my mental facilities. I can only say thanks, thanks, thanks.

Fondly, Your Friend,
Bill Young

Bill died on September 17, 1985. On October 12th, at the memorial service for him, I said, "I was proud to call Bill Young my friend. Bill and I held each other's hand when we each had cancer. We shared friendships and families. I will never forget him. I know our friendship helped him in his lifetime. It certainly helped me."

A completely different set of circumstances surrounded a rescue I accidentally made years ago. My friend Ralph Raphael and I had our share of escapades and good times in our late teens and early 20s. I remember distinctly a night in 1934 when we spent an evening at Danny Vegus' bar and restaurant on Grant Street.

We were talking to two attractive women at the bar on the second floor. One of them suggested that we go to their place in East Liberty. We agreed, knowing that we were going to their apartments to spend some time with them for a fee.

When we got there, Ralph went with one of the women. The other, who was younger, led me into her place. We talked for a few minutes, then she said, "This is going to cost 20 dollars."

I reached into my wallet, pulled out the 20 and handed it to her, while we kept talking.

She said, "Look, I don't have all night. Start taking off your clothes."

I said, "I'm not quite ready. I want you to tell me why you're

so uptight."

After evading the issue, tears welled up in her eyes. She said, "I've never done this before."

I said, "For Christ sake, what the hell are you doing it now for?"

She said, "Because I need money. I haven't been able to get a job and my friend said it's easy and that I could go out with her and do it."

I said, "That's ridiculous. If you're upset about it don't do it."

She said, "Here's your money back."

I said, "The 20 dollars is yours. And here's ten more. If you need a job let me help you find one."

She said, "Oh my God, would you do that?"

I said, "Of course."

It took about three days, but I helped her find a job at (of all places) Dun & Bradstreet, right next door to where she lived. She couldn't believe that I got her a job and helped turn her life around.

Several years later I was in the William Penn Hotel bar when she walked in. As I recall, she was wearing a Navy Waves uniform and was with a well-dressed, fine looking gentleman. When she saw me, she made a bee line for my table and threw her arms around me. Then she introduced me to her friend—her fiancee. She said, "This is Mr. Levinson, the man I told you about—the man who saved my life."

That was one of my proudest moments.

Probably the greatest rescue of all was rescuing myself from a lifetime of tension and bad habits. I have been told that while physical and chemical changes in people take place all the time, a person's basic personality and temperament never changes. I wonder! I think of myself.

When I was younger, even into my early 40s, I was very insecure. From age 18 to 35, I smoked too much—three packs a

day. Even after I quit smoking in 1950, I went through periods of drinking too much. I got very heavy.

I was president of Levinson Steel and I took my responsibilities seriously. Every hint at criticism by my dad or family stockholders was devastating. I loved my dad, but after I joined the family company I seemed constantly to be in competition with him. During those years, every problem became a Greek tragedy.

Then, in my late 40s, things started to change. I drastically cut down on my drinking, and finally quit. I lost weight. I had already stopped smoking. I started to exercise and to feel better physically. But, these were all partly symptomatic. Lots of things seemed to be happening at this stage of my life, and they all seemed to have a settling effect on my nervous system, my temperament, and my habits.

It was all part of the maturing process. My dad's illness and death made me take stock of who I was. As my children reached high school age, they needed lots of direction and, more importantly, a good example. This had a sobering effect. My dad's illness had increased my sense of responsibility to my family and the company stockholders. I had also begun taking on major responsibilities in the community. All of this became a challenge to me, and the acceptance of the challenge brought about wonderful changes. They made it easier for me to get hold of myself physically. Getting hold of myself physically made it easier for me to get control emotionally.

Although I continued to take my responsibilities at Levinson Steel seriously, I was able to discuss the company's problems most of the time without becoming defensive and without personalizing. I was able to take criticisms in stride. I was more objective and could see that there was growth and progress at Levinson Steel and that, on balance, the results were excellent. This made me a more effective manager.

Today, I think I am a different person. I can handle problems

and criticism. I enjoy people more. I am no longer frightened. People who have known me only during the last decade find it difficult to believe that I drank and smoked excessively, weighed 50 pounds more, and was neurotic. People do change. I'm certainly a far different person than I was 25 or 30 years ago, and most importantly, I have achieved a great measure of peace—perhaps God's most valuable gift.

THE KIDNAP PLOT

I suppose that by some standards my life has been pretty quiet—or else I just have my own ways of getting the heart pumping faster. I'm not afraid of things getting rough, but I don't like surprises and situations that are out of my control. There have been a couple of frightening experiences that I'd just as soon not repeat.

On November 1, 1976, I was on the phone in my office when a secretary walked in and handed me a note: "Mr. Joe Porter of the FBI is on the other phone—urgent!" I immediately ended my business call and got on the line with Mr. Porter.

He said, "Mr. Levinson, I have a matter of great urgency which I must speak with you about immediately. The matter is too sensitive for me to come to your office. Can I meet you somewhere?"

I said, "That won't be necessary. I'll be glad to come to your office."

He said, "I would suggest that you come immediately and tell no one where you are going." He gave me the name of the head man in the Pittsburgh office of the FBI and said he would be waiting for me.

I stayed calm, but was mighty curious as I drove downtown to the Federal Building, which houses the Bureau in Pittsburgh.

When I got to the private office of Mr. Vincent Ruehl, he was very cordial, called two of his men in, and then said to me, "Mr. Levinson, I don't want to alarm you, but we have reliable

information that you are the target of a kidnap plan."

Kidnap plan? Why would anyone want to kidnap me? I couldn't think of a single reason except ransom, and being kidnapped for ransom was about the last thing that I could imagine happening to me. I wasn't sure what to say or do next, but I did ask, "What more can you tell me about it, and what do you suggest I do?"

They could tell me nothing about it because there was an informer whose life would be in danger if word got out that either the FBI or I knew about this plan. I was given specific recommendations about what I should and should not do, where I should and should not go, and who I should and should not talk to. I was permitted to tell this only to my wife and to the president of our company, and I had to swear them to secrecy in order to protect the life of the informer. It was suggested that I have a bodyguard to drive me every place I went.

They said that there was, at the moment, no danger to my family but that they might later have to insist that I leave town. My entire life was disrupted, as was Sonia's. They said I should change my daily routine, especially my early morning walks in Schenley Park. I couldn't explain to anyone why these men were with me all the time. And I couldn't go anywhere alone. It was indeed frightening.

Sonia had plans to visit Eleanor, our daughter, so she left town a couple of days later. A few days passed before the FBI called again and suggested that I go away for a week or two. I joined Sonia, but both of us had to return to Pittsburgh for a retirement party for my uncle, Emanuel Levinson, who had been with our company for 51 years. There was just no way for me to explain not being there.

The FBI gave us instructions about what to do when we got back to town. We had guards inside and outside our house. I was really frightened when I got home. Then the phone rang, I answered it, and after a few seconds the party on the other end

hung up. That shook us up even more. As soon after the party as we could, we left again. Needless to say, the entire matter was a nightmare. It lasted about three weeks, before the FBI told me that everything was okay, that I no longer needed protection and could stay home and resume my usual routine.

When I got back, I was told a few more details. The man who planned to kidnap me was on parole for a federal violation. He was also charged in a recent murder, where he literally beat a man to death. The coast was clear for me because he'd been arrested by the FBI for the parole violation, and a judge had sentenced him to 20 years in a federal prison.

Sonia proved again what a truly great person she is. She was strong and supportive every minute. But that was only the beginning. During this whole frightening experience, which should have been enough excitement for awhile, I noticed that my voice was becoming husky. Just five weeks after I got the call from the FBI, my doctor sent me to the hospital for my first biopsy.

THE HOLD-UP

One of the most frightening experiences of our lives took place during the summer of 1980, about one year after Sonia's cancer. She was still in a wheelchair. My mother was still living, and on this particular weekend my son's first wife, Sati, was in town with our granddaughter, Mira. We all went to the Pittsburgh Athletic Association for dinner.

Because of Sonia's wheelchair I usually drove behind the house, where I'd rigged up some steel railings which helped her into the house. While we were driving home it started pouring rain. Lots of thunder and lightning. I pulled into the garage instead. I could have closed the garage door with my automatic closer, but I left it open because I was trying to figure out how we were going to get Sonia out of the car.

I heard what I thought was more thunder. It was two shots.

Suddenly a guy with a stocking over his face was waving a gun at me and telling me to give him money. I jumped out of the car and ran around it to where he was, by Sonia's door, yelling, "Don't touch that woman. She's crippled. Look, here's her wheelchair in the trunk."

He said, "Just give me your wallet."

Normally I carried a billfold. I didn't have it, so I handed him my notebook, which he put in his pocket. He was nervous and I was nervous. So, I took out my gold money clip, which I got for my 50th birthday. It held all my folding money. He grabbed it, then walked to the door and said, "Lay down."

I had a brand new suit on and there was grease on the floor. I was probably dumb to do it, but I just said, "Go f— yourself." He didn't shoot me. He just ran away. And I didn't realize how nervous I was until I got in the house and tried to dial the police.

These experiences gave me an understanding of how a victim feels. There was a real sense, in both episodes, of having my privacy invaded—or of being violated. Helpless and frustrated. It left me feeling extremely angry, but with nowhere to direct my rage.

"I can't believe it," he screamed.
"It's my granddaughter."

IT'S A SMALL WORLD

In this last quarter of the 20th century—sometimes called the space age or the computer age—the world has shrunk and there seems no limit to the speed of communications. While the world was shrinking through communications, however, it was multiplying in population, and I think you will agree that some of these small world stories are, indeed, remarkable.

THE ISRAEL CONNECTION

Sonia and I visited Israel in 1961, following a trip to England to visit some of Sonia's relatives. It was a wonderful trip—five weeks long. From England, we went to France and Italy, leaving two weeks for Israel. 1961 was a special year for Israel—its 13th birthday, the *Bar Mitzvah* year. There was to be a major celebration. When we arrived we hired a car and driver to take us to Jerusalem, where the festivities would take place.

After the celebration we were to go to the King David Hotel. If you're not familiar with the King David, it's almost a symbol

of Israel itself. It's more than one of the world's finest and best known hotels. It's been in the midst of the struggle since shortly after the fighting began in the '30s. The Irgun Organization, (sometimes referred to as Freedom Fighters) including Menachim Begin, left bombs in its lobby in 1946. More recently, Begin and Sadat made peace between Israel and Egypt there. It's one of the places to see when you're in that part of the world.

When we arrived in Jerusalem the crowd was everywhere. It was gigantic. The driver told us that he'd never be able to get us near the King David. He suggested we go to the Holy Land Hotel where we could have some lunch. There was nothing we could do about the situation, so we took his advice. He promised to get us to the King David after the crowds thinned.

At the Holy Land Hotel, we ran into a bunch of Pittsburghers on an organized tour. Two of them were Maurice Davis and his wife. I knew others, too. Someone asked me, knowing that I was in the steel business, if I'd be interested in meeting a retired Christian steelworker from one of the United States Steel works near Pittsburgh. He was part of this group.

I said, "Sure." The guy was evidently already on the bus, but someone went and got him and brought him into the hotel so we could be introduced. He had a bit of an accent, which I didn't recognize.

We passed the usual pleasantries for a couple of strangers from the same place meeting half way around the world. Then he said, "Maybe you know my son-in-law. He's a businessman in Pittsburgh and so are you."

It seemed highly unlikely that I'd know this guy, but I asked his name.

"Richard Wright," he said. He looked at me like he expected me to say I'd never heard of his daughter's husband.

I almost shouted, I was so surprised. "Dick Wright! Here, I want to show you something." I pulled the photos I always carry out of my pocket, sorted through them until I found the one I

wanted, and I handed it to him.

"I can't believe it," he screamed. "It's my granddaughter!"

Dick Wright happens to be a good friend. At the time he owned Penn Machine Company. He and Vi have been wonderful friends, and Sonia and I attended their kids' weddings. Dick sat at the table with Sonia and me at my 70th birthday party and participated in the program.

Who would expect that, out of the clear blue, by accidentally winding up at this Jerusalem hotel, I'd run into a stranger and have a picture of his granddaughter in my pocket.

TAXI IN PARIS

While Sonia and I were in Paris, on that same trip, before we went on to Israel, we experienced the usual problems of tourists who don't know the language. I had a pocket dictionary to help us get by in French.

We got in a taxi and I needed to change my film, so I wanted to ask the driver how long it would take to get to where we were going. I looked up the words and asked my question. He didn't know what I was talking about. As a matter of fact, I did such a lousy job that he thought I was speaking Russian. So he answered me in Russian, which Sonia speaks fluently.

They got into a conversation. She received all the answers we wanted, and he turned off the meter and kept on driving us around because he wanted to talk with my wife.

LONDON BET

Sonia and I celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary in England on August 28, 1978. We had other excuses for being there, too. Eleanor was there with Jeff and the kids. Jeff's company, at that time Merck Sharpe and Dohm, had sent him for six months to introduce some new drugs to Great Britain.

We spent several weeks with Eleanor and a week with Sonia's relatives in Liverpool, where she'd lived for a year be-

fore moving to the States. We went to a *Bar Mitzvah* with them in an old fashioned synagogue, where the men were downstairs and the women upstairs.

After visiting, we went to London. I made a bet with Sonia that during our four days in the city, we'd run into somebody we knew. By the afternoon of the last day it looked like she would win. So, I said, "Do you want to double the bet?" And she said, "Absolutely."

That night was our anniversary. We had tickets for the musical, *Annie*, which was playing in London at the time. Eleanor and Jeff joined us for dinner and the show. I'd begun wondering if I'd win our bet. I needn't have worried. At intermission, who should walk down the aisle near us but Dorothy and Joe Feldman. Joe used to handle Levinson Steel's public relations. He was a friend, and we once went fishing at Blue Mountain Lodge with Bill Eckert and Ray Talbert.

We were glad to see each other. Sonia didn't even mind losing the bet. We told them we were celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary and Joe said, "You won't believe it, but we're celebrating our 50th today." So, after the theater the six of us had a drink together.

NEW YORK CITY CONNECTION

About 15 years ago Sonia and I made a similar bet in a New York theater. We were seated well before the curtain went up, and to my right were two women in their 50s. I asked Sonia, "Would you like to make an easy $5?"

She wanted to know what I had in mind before she bet. I said, "I'll bet that the woman to my right will know someone in common with me."

Sonia said, "You've got a bet."

I turned to the woman and asked her where she was from. She said she lived in Providence, Rhode Island. I asked if she knew Edgar Fain, a business friend of mine and my father's

who was once president of Tower Iron Works in Providence.

She said, "I played bridge with him just last week."

CHAUTAUQUA

During the summer of 1985 Sonia and I rented an apartment at The Chautauqua Institute in New York State. It was its 112th summer season of providing the members, as well as people in the community, with concerts, lectures, religious services for many different denominations, plus a refreshing charm and informality.

A couple of days after the season opened, planes full of people from Washington and Moscow arrived to exchange views on roads to world peace, child care and philosophies of life. About 2000 people listened and asked questions. There was also a cultural exchange with poets, musicians and dancers from the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

A major dialogue on the world situation took place between Mark Palmer, deputy assistant secretary of state, and Oleg Sokolov, charge d'affaires of the Soviet embassy. They stood on the same stage where William Jennings Bryan once proclaimed his pacifist messages. The list of other predecessors at Chautauqua includes Presidents Grant and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Leo Tolstoy, George Gershwin and Karl Menninger.

During the question and answer period, I asked a three-part question: "I have been told that there are enough nuclear weapons in US and Soviet arsenals to destroy the human race many times over. If that is true, in what way does either side strengthen its bargaining position by manufacturing more nuclear weapons or what other purpose is served by doing so? Secondly, do you gentlemen feel that these arsenals will serve as a deterrent forever? Thirdly, when are the U.S. and Soviet negotiators going to finish positioning themselves and sending signals to each other and get down to the serious business of defusing this

world from the danger of nuclear war?" I believe I was the only questioner who got applause from the audience. The response from the speakers was something to the effect that it was a good question, that the public should keep asking such questions, that there is a sincere desire to reach an agreement and that it is not easy. Nothing concrete.

Afterward I worked my way near the speakers. The crowds were generally being kept away by the secret service and the Chautauqua police. But when the speakers headed for their living quarters, I got close enough to Mark Palmer so that even in my whisper he heard me ask,"Mr. Palmer, when you served in the U.S. Embassy in India, did you happen to know my son, Jim Levinson?" He stopped his entourage, walked back smiling, and extended his hand. He said, "Jim and I were good friends. Please tell him I asked about him." And he asked if Jim was still in Boston. When I related the story to Jim, he was so pleased. He had no idea about Mark Palmer's job, but he said when they were in India together from 1964 to 1969, they were both eligible bachelors and did lots of double-dating.

As it turned out, there were no fewer than three other speakers at Chautauqua who knew Jim in his work over the years: Doug Bennett, President of PBS, who worked with Jim in India; Francis Moore Lappe, author of *Diet for a Small Planet*, who met Jim during his international nutrition work; and Robert Coles, the famous psychologist, who is involved with Haley House.

BUSH PILOT

As I've mentioned, one of my favorite spots is Blue Mountain Lodge between Sudbury and Kilarney in the province of Ontario in Canada. I've been there almost every summer or fall since 1950— sometimes with a bunch of guys, sometimes with two or three other couples, sometimes with my family.

Now there is a road from Sudbury to the lodge, but in the

early days we could only get in by portage or seaplane. We always had Austin Airways fly us in, and still do, though it's now Ramsey Airways. But Rusty Blakey was the bush pilot who flew us in for 35 years, until his death in 1986. Those were the only times we saw each other, and we always had lots to talk about.

Once when my son was along, Rusty introduced us to his son, Dick. Jim and Dick looked at each other and then they broke into fits of laughter, shaking their heads and saying "I don't believe it." They had been together through four years at Harvard and were good friends. Rusty and I had known each other for at least 20 years, and never made the connection about our sons.

LOST IN MARS

In 1982, Bill and Olga Stark picked up Sonia and me at our home to drive us to the home of Bill and Betty Schenck in Mars, Pennsylvania for a Christmas celebration. Bill Stark was sure he knew the way, but three-fourths of the way there, he got mixed up. I finally said, "Bill, stop the car and I'll ring the doorbell at that house and ask them how we get to Mars."

Bill stopped. I walked up to the house, rang the doorbell, and a man about my age answered. He looked startled and said, "Diney Levinson, what the hell are you doing here?" It was Grey Weller. We went to school together.

Of all the doorbells to ring, 30 miles from Pittsburgh, it really was a coincidence. But an even greater coincidence was that Grey's late wife was Betty Schenck's sister.

INDIA STORY

Perhaps the most amazing coincidence happened in India in 1965 during Jim's first year with the Agency for International Development. He was travelling by train from New Delhi to Bombay during a time when he and others in the Agency were

trying to contact some of the young Indian leadership. Among them was one man in particular, a guy in his 30s who Jim had not been able to reach.

Before reaching Bombay, one of Jim's companions told him that the man he'd been trying so hard to find was on the train. Jim immediately sought out the guy and introduced himself. The guy apologized for not answering Jim's letters, then he added, "I know your dad."

"You don't mean my dad; you mean my father-in-law," Jim said. He was then married to Sati, the daughter of a retired Indian Army general.

"No, I mean your dad."

"How could you possibly know my dad?" Outside the window, the striking sprawl of Indian urban poverty was streaming by.

"I attended a luncheon of the World Affairs Council when I was in Pittsburgh, and sat next to him. He never stopped talking about his son in India."

Jim was floored. On a train, in a country with around six hundred million people, he runs into someone he's been looking for—and, against all odds, the guy knows me. The man's name was Venketaramanan, presently secretary of finance to the Government of India.

It really is a small world.

THE MAGIC TOUCH

This is more of a coincidence story than a small world one. In the summer of '83 Sonia and I took a cruise on the Royal Viking Star, with interesting stops in China, Japan and Hong Kong. The ship is of Dutch registry with an international crew. The management and crew were both excellent. There was no stone unturned to make the trip pleasant for all the passengers.

I enjoyed talking to crew members as well as other passengers. One day as I was walking through a hall there were a man

and woman pushing a cart, which I assumed was filled with towels or bedding or something else used on the ship. I stopped them and said to the young lady, "May I ask you a question? How did you get so cute?"

She and the man giggled and started to go off. I said, "Just a minute, let me show you a little trick." I did my corny coin tricks. They acted amazed and pleased.

The man asked me if I were a magician and I said that it was just a hobby. He said, "That's nice, it's a good trick."

I asked him what his job was. He smiled and said, "I'm the ship magician. This is my wife. She's my helper."

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Early in 1984, I heard a voice which sounded familiar on the radio. Ernie Tannen was the announcer. His name also seemed familiar. I traced him to a Philadelphia station, where I phoned him. Yes, he was the Ernie Tannen I had known 26 years before in Pittsburgh, and yes, I was the Aaron Levinson he had known. We arranged to meet again when he stopped in Pittsburgh on a trip to Ohio. Sonia and I had dinner with him.

At dinner I asked him who else he knew in Pittsburgh back in 1958. He said he must have known Ray Talbert because he received a note from him just a few weeks before. I asked if he'd had any communication with Ray prior to that, and he said no. I said that it was really remarkable, since Ray had introduced us to each other. Now, after 26 years without contact, both Raymond and I independently reestablished communications with him.

Ernie was far more than an announcer. He was dedicated to the cause of the United World Federalists. He dreamed of some day becoming secretary general of a world federation of states with the power to end the threat of nuclear holocaust. A speech he was delivering throughout the country interested me, and I shared it with many friends.

Ernie reappeared to speak about peace at a reception for out-of-towners the night after my 70th birthday party. He planned to return to visit, but, unfortunately, he died the following February. On the day he died, even as our connection broke, my family made another connection: grandchild number six, Dora Levinson, was born into this small world.

May Ernie Tannen's dream of peace survive to become a reality for Dora and all my other grandchildren—and yours.

"I'd like you to meet my friends,
Mr. Mellon and Mr. Rockefeller."

From Golda Meir's Bedroom To Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood

Today, there are few heroes and fewer hero worshippers. When I was a little boy, if I shook hands with someone famous, I didn't want to wash my hand for a week. I've never lost that awe toward people I consider famous. Sometimes the feeling remains after I meet them; sometimes contact rubs the shine from the image. My impressions of such people probably say as much about me as them. Some are simply interesting stories.

GOLDA

In 1958, the year I was campaign chairman for the Pittsburgh United Jewish Federation drive, I went on a mission to Israel with other Jewish leaders from the United States. While there, we met many Israeli leaders.

In those days, phone service between Israel and the United States was slow and poor. It often took days to complete a call, only to have a bad connection. I found this out when I tried to

phone Sonia in Pittsburgh. I initiated the call, then had to wait.

Several days later, we were to have dinner at the home of Golda Meir, then Israel's foreign minister. When we rang her doorbell, she personally opened the door and before we even got in the house, she asked if there was an Aaron Levinson in the group. I raised my hand.

She said, "Your call to the States is coming through right now. You can take it in my bedroom." She then had someone show me to her bedroom where I picked up the phone. Sonia was on the line.

"You'll never guess where I'm calling from," I said.

"Where?" she asked.

"Golda Meir's bedroom."

Though I saw Golda Meir many times after that, I will always remember that call to my wife from Golda's bedroom.

RONNIE

During the '40s and '50s, I participated in the Aaronsburg Assembly. Aaronsburg is a small town near State College, Pennsylvania, named for Aaron Levy, a Jewish immigrant from Holland who gave land to his Pennsylvania Dutch neighbors for their churches, schools and burying grounds more than 200 years ago. There was a movement to make Aaronsburg a national center for brotherhood.

In June of 1953, there was an assemblage of famous people—governors, mayors, movie actors, clergymen, authors and industrialists—at Aaronsburg to discuss brotherhood. Many of my friends in the Pittsburgh civil rights movement were involved.

Among the guests were Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, who stayed overnight in Pittsburgh at the Levinson Steel suite before travelling to Aaronsburg. We greeted the Reagans and, with 10 year old Jim, we were photographed with Ronald Reagan. At that time, he was as liberal as he is conservative today. No one

hearing his Aaronsburg speech would believe that this man was the same Ronald Reagan who occupies the White House today.

LYNDON

I had three brief encounters with Lyndon Johnson. In 1961, Sonia and I were visiting Paris and through an introduction by Congressman Jim Fulton, we were invited to a reception for Lyndon Johnson at the home of then Ambassador General James Gavin. It was exciting to meet the ambassador and his wife and to have the opportunity to meet the vice president of the United States.

The Gavins had a big beautiful collie. Johnson was petting the dog, when Sonia walked up and said, "That's a beautiful dog, isn't it?" Lyndon Johnson didn't reply. He just walked away.

During his presidency I was with a group of Jewish community leaders invited to the White House. While Johnson was in Congress, one of his close friends was Congressman Sammy Weiss, a good friend of my dad's. When I finally shook hands with the President Johnson, I said, "I've heard so much about you from Sammy Weiss in Pittsburgh." Again, he did not respond. Just moved on to the next person.

In 1968, the last year of his presidency, I implored him to get behind Hubert Humphrey who was running against Richard Nixon. Even though Lyndon Johnson was not responsive to Sonia or to me when we met him in person, he wrote a long personal letter in response to mine and assured me he was backing Hubert Humphrey all the way.

DICK

In the '60s, after Richard Nixon finished his term as California's Governor, and before he ran for president in 1968, I attended a reception for him given by the late Frank Rackley, then president of Jessop Steel, at Pittsburgh's Duquesne Club.

Frank's guests were almost all industrialists.

During the question and answer period, Nixon was asked what "we" were going to do about the terrible labor unions in America. Nixon proceeded to give the questioner the kind of answer he wanted, talking about the evils of the union movement and "what we have to do to stop labor" in America. I knew that, as a politician, Richard Nixon would give an entirely different speech if he were talking to working people, and that made me feel that he was dishonest. He also seemed to enjoy the sound of his own voice. He went on and on, on every subject and, in my opinion, he was boring.

When I got home, I told Sonia my impressions of the man, adding, "I hope he never runs for President of the United States."

ANOTHER RICHARD

This one I admire. Dick Thornburgh finished his second term as governor of Pennsylvania in January 1987. I was co-chairman of his initial kick-off dinner in Pittsburgh when he first announced his candidacy nine or ten years before. Dick was a practicing attorney and a U.S. attorney in Pittsburgh prior to his election. He will soon be taking on a major assignment at Harvard. He might some day be president of the United States. He knows the meaning of excellence. He also knows the meaning of integrity. That's a great combination for anyone in public service. Dick and Ginny are our friends—friends we are proud to have.

FROM THE STATE AND THE SCREEN

I've met many famous movie actors and actresses. Gene Kelly was my camp counselor. He was also my sister June's dancing teacher. Once, when I visited Hollywood, he arranged for me and my friend Gene Mapel to visit the MGM studios, where we spoke with Debbie Reynolds and Nat King Cole.

On a trip to Las Vegas, the bellman picked up Nat King Cole's bags at the same time as mine, giving me a chance to tell him how great I thought he was. He's still my very favorite male singer.

Eddie Andrews (who died in 1985) never attained fame, yet his face became familiar to millions through movies, TV ads, broadway shows, and TV serials. We were high school friends and played football together.

On a trip to Maui, I was sitting at the counter of the hotel drug store. A UCLA/Notre Dame basketball game was on the radio and a guy sitting a few stools away said, "I have mixed feelings about this game. I went to UCLA and I played the coach in the movie about Notre Dame." He was Pat O'Brien. I later met his wife, and Sonia and I joined them while they celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. He was an easy guy to be with.

Another time I had a luncheon date with the late Senator Jacob Javitz of New York. We were to meet in the Senate Office Building cafeteria and he was about 15 minutes late. He finally came dashing over out of breath and said he was sorry he was late. He had an unexpected visitor and was it okay if she joined us. His visitor was Helen Hayes who had come to see him about setting up the National Endowment for the Arts. I also met Helen Hayes several years later at a reception I attended for Carlow College at the Pittsburgh Golf Club. She remembered our prior encounter. She's a warm, friendly woman. Meeting her was a thrill.

In June of 1983, Sonia and I, along with some family and close friends, went on a cruise to the Orient, which I've mentioned. Among our fellow passengers were Donna Reed and her husband, Grover Asmus. We became friends on the ship. They invited us to a little party they had aboard, and we corresponded after the trip. I received a beautiful letter from her when I retired, which was shortly after she became a member of the cast of "Dallas." I found her to be the warm, lovely, easy-to-know per-

son she portrays on the screen. She was active in the peace movement, something close to my heart. Sonia and I were saddened by her death from cancer in 1986.

Recently, I attended a Pittsburgh Public Theater production starring Sylvia Sidney. She was one of my idols. Sonia and I met her at a reception after the theater. I told Bill Gardner, the art director, that I had written her a letter complimenting her on her performance and inviting her to call me if she needed anything while in town. Bill predicted that she would not respond. She didn't. He agreed that she's a great actress, but what he said about how easy she was to get along with was not quite as flattering.

One day I received an unsolicited photograph of Eli Wallach in the mail. He wrote on the bottom "Best wishes to Aaron Levinson" and autographed it. He attached a note: "Every time I come to Pittsburgh, somebody tells me how much I look like Aaron Levinson, so here's my picture." In December of 1985 I sent him a note wishing him a happy 70th birthday. A lovely two-page handwritten letter came in the return mail.

SPORTS FIGURES

I lose track of the years, but I guess it was during the '50s that I was a customer in the Schenley Hotel Barber Shop. My barber, then and now, is Nick Failla. One morning, after my shave, I walked into the coffee shop and heard a couple of guys having difficulty with the language. It was the opening day of the baseball season. I tried to help them and, as a matter of fact, had coffee with them. One of them was Roberto Clemente. It was his first day with the Pirates. Roberto was from Puerto Rico.

I have many photos with Steeler stars from those great football teams of the '70s, including Franco Harris, Mean Joe Greene, Rocky Bleier, Dwight White, Randy Grossman and Greg Hawthorne. Franco, Dwight and Randy and their families

have become close friends. In my opinion, they are all far more than just good football players. They are all successful businessmen, responsible family people, and they know the meaning of friendship.

OTHERS I ADMIRE

There are many other people I admire. To me, they are all in my collection of heroes. Twenty-five years ago, I had an opportunity to meet and talk with Norman Cousins on a plane to Europe. Everyone knows his outstanding work as the editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*. His book, *The Anatomy of Illness,* focuses on the value of a positive attitude and laughter in combating any type of sickness. Of all his contributions to society, however, those I admire most, are his humanitarian gestures toward victims of Hiroshima and his deep involvement in the peace movement. I hope some day to meet him again.

Among the industrialists with whom I became acquainted during my business career, perhaps Fletch Byrom, who was chairman and chief executive officer of Koppers, is the person who has impressed me the most. Fletch could have been almost anything he wanted—senator, writer, clergyman or industrialist. He had an objectivity about business and life which is rare.

MR. ROCKEFELLER AND MR. MELLON

Ned Mellon and I were friends for many years. His real name was E. P. Mellon III. He was chairman of the board of Mellon-Stuart Company. One reason we got along well was that he was a bit of a character—and I'm sure he thought the same of me. We had some good times together. And I'd like to share an amusing story from our association.

For years, I was on the board of the Urban League of Pittsburgh. During some of those years, Winthrop Rockefeller was on the national board. We once invited him to speak to the annual meeting of our chapter, and I volunteered to chair the re-

ception committee.

We also offered to put Rockefeller up in our company apartment in the Carlton House Hotel, which once stood across the street from the William Penn Hotel. I went with a few guys to pick him up at the airport. He flew in from WinRock, Arkansas, where he owned a huge cattle ranch which his son still operates. He wasn't governor of that state yet. We drove him back to the Carlton and had a few drinks before leaving him to rest before his speech. He was charming.

Earlier I'd asked Ned Mellon if he'd be on the reception committee with me. He wanted to know what that entailed, and I said, "Ned, all you have to do is come with me to the Carlton House and we'll walk him across Grant Street to the William Penn Hotel, to the luncheon."

Ned said, "Hell, if that's all, I'll be glad to." So, shortly before the event, Ned and I walked over to the hotel to meet Mr. Rockefeller. When we got to his room he already had a bottle and was several drinks ahead of us, though his demeanor and speech weren't effected.

We took him in tow and headed for the William Penn. As we crossed Grant Street I saw an old buddy, Myron Leff, who's now dead. I'd gone to school with Myron. We were good friends for awhile, but I hadn't seen him in years. We hugged, and he said, "Diney Levinson, I'm so glad to see you. How are you?"

I said, "Great, Myron. I'd like you to meet my friends, Mr. Mellon and Mr. Rockefeller."

He gave me a strange look and stepped back. "My God, Diney, you haven't changed one God damned bit."

I said, "Come on, Myron, you're embarrassing me. This really is Mr. Mellon, and this is Mr. Rockefeller."

"I give up," he said, and turned his back and walked away.

Meanwhile, Mellon and Rockefeller were laughing themselves sick. They couldn't stop.

That's how I came to know Winthrop Rockefeller, with whom I corresponded from time to time after that. Ned and I promised to spend a few days with him in Arkansas, but never did. However, I'm sure that both of them had as much fun telling that story as I have.

MR. ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD

The other close friend who's famous is Mr. Rogers. We go to the same barber shop, we swim in the same pool, we visit each other's home, and whenever we see each other, we embrace. Sonia and I love Fred Rogers and his wife Joanne. And, for what it's worth, I live in Mr. Rogers' neighborhood.

We operated a family company for 81 years, and that says a lot for the kind of people who are members of the Levinson family.

SELLING LEVINSON STEEL

After 81 years, the family sold Levinson Steel in December, 1983. I am still reflecting on what it meant—I know it meant a lot. I had been deeply involved in this family company for half a century.

I summed up my thoughts and feelings about it all at a party at our home shortly after the transaction was completed. I invited all of the former stockholders—the whole family—and some long-time employees to meet David Lloyd-Jacob, the buyer, to celebrate and to hear some of my thoughts.

It was a joyous occasion. I think all the family felt so, because we had received a fair price for our stock. They also were relieved that the sale was behind us. For some time, a number of family members had wanted to sell the business. There were several reasons for this.

At one time we had as many as 14 family people working for the company. When we sold to David Lloyd-Jacob we had four. I was only one year away from retirement. The family just

wasn't involved that much. That was one of the reasons. My grandfather started the company. Four of his sons helped in its development. Many third generation people, at one time or another, joined in the management of the company. However, our children, who made up the widespread fourth generation, had no interest in coming into the company, and none of us in the third generation insisted.

At this party at my home—after we all had a few drinks and before we had a buffet dinner—I said:

"You know from my letter that one of the reasons I wanted us all to get together is to have an opportunity to meet the man with whom we entrust this name—this family name—which has been so important to us all these years. We're very fortunate to be able to turn the company over to a man like David Lloyd-Jacob. Just in the short time I've known him, I can say three things about him: He's an honorable man, a decent man, and he's an ingenious businessman. And I can't think of a better combination in a person to whom we turn over this important family company.

"I've also wanted to say a couple of other things. We operated as a family company for 81 years. That's a lot more significant than any of you realize. Many family companies last only three or four years. Some last 20 to 25 years. Fifty years is a phenomenon. Only a handful of companies in this entire United States have survived as family companies anything like 81 years. And that says a lot for the kind of people who are members of this family, and for the management, and for the two generations of family and management that preceded us.

"And during those 81 years we built a terrific reputation for integrity, a reputation for being good citizens, a reputation for knowing our business and delivering a quality product. And that too says a lot for the kind of people who are members of the Levinson family, and for the management and the family and management which preceded us.

"The fact that we're now selling the company does not wipe out this 81 years of history as a family company. That is something which will never die. It will be passed on from generation to generation, and I brought a few mementoes which I put on posters downstairs and which I want you to all look at—old pictures, old company newspapers, and so forth.

"The other thing is that the fact that we sold the company does not change the fact that we're a family—maybe only closer than ever because we operated as a family business together. We sold the company together. And to operate as a family company with something like 70 family stockholders with almost total peace says a lot for this family."

That was my speech. That was one of the things I wanted to tell about. Here's another. Although we had been advised to change the name of the company years before, because it was a Jewish name, it turned out to be one of the most valuable things we had to sell. David Lloyd-Jacob intends to build Levinson Steel into a large national corporation.

So much for background. How do I feel about it all? Many of my friends have sold their business and retired. Some adjusted quickly—some never adjusted. The key in almost every case was simple—was there balance in their lives or were their lives too wrapped up in their careers or businesses? Besides my work, I have had a deep interest in the community. Sonia and I have always had a close relationship with our children and grandchildren. I enjoy taking pictures—especially of them. And there's my daily swim. All of these things helped to make my adjustment easy. I won't say that stepping aside as the chief executive officer of Levinson Steel wasn't emotional, but I can say that it was far from devastating.

During most of my years as CEO of the company, and particularly since the death of my father, I was confident of my leadership abilities. And I know that I've done a creditable job for this family. During the five years before the sale, there were family

members who criticized me because I wasn't more aggressive in my efforts to sell the company. But I had a plan, and I felt the only way that we would get a decent price was by not being too anxious to sell. If we had a low profile, I knew that we could do better. And we did.

When I'd talk with interested bankers or prospective buyers who would ask me if Levinson Steel was for sale, I answered, "No, we're not for sale; however, I think that at the right time and at the right price the members of the Levinson family could be interested, and I'd be glad to talk with you and glad to listen, but we're certainly under no pressure to sell this company."

It was only that attitude that kept the price up. If I had pushed the panic button, I know that the result would have been different. That's part of what I feel good about. Also, that we took all the right steps. We could have been a lot more dynamic if we didn't know that our objective was to sell the company. But you don't get dynamic by buying new operations and taking on new lines when you know that, in the foreseeable future, you're going to sell or liquidate. We did just the opposite by getting rid of our one big loser.

Our timing in going out of the fabricating business was exactly right. It was something I pushed hard for. I knew there was no future for us there. I knew also that one reason family companies go under is that family members are reluctant to make the tough decisions for sentimental reasons, and I was not going to allow sentiment to keep us from making the right business decisions.

I know that some of the older family members were upset that the plant we'd operated since 1936—with the big Levinson Steel sign on it—was going to be torn down. I sympathized. But I knew also that it was the correct decision. We led the pack. After we sold the company, many other companies in the same industry followed suit.

The other wise decision was suggested by real estate man

and board member Stanley Gumberg—to turn the property into a shopping center. That transformed a losing operation during many of the years into something that developed a steady income for the company and enhanced its market value tremendously. It put us into an excellent cash position, without which we would never have made the deal with David Lloyd-Jacob.

Next, I insisted that the two top non-family people in the company get employment contracts. I'm talking about Ed Schuman and Cal Levinson—the president and top executive vice president. The only way I could ensure their help in selling the company was to have them feel relaxed and secure about it. They had to know that whatever happened to the company, whether we kept it as it was or sold it or liquidated it, they would come out okay. I had a few problems with our board in obtaining an agreement that they would endorse, but we did end up with employment contracts for both of them. And Ed and Cal were a great help in selling the company.

So I have no misgivings about the job I did for the members of the Levinson family. I received a few plaudits. Not many, but at least my two sisters, my two children and my cousin Jim appreciated my efforts. My brother-in-law, Lou Siegel, who is very discriminating in dispensing praise, said, "I didn't think it was possible."

I can now see the rest of my life rolling out in front of me like a carpet. As long as I have my good health it does look beautiful, but there's a certain trauma in knowing that I'm in the final stages of my life. My friends say, "Aw come on, 72 is not that old." But I know that it's older than 71 and certainly older than 18. I know that at least 75 or 80 percent of my life is behind me.

I'll continue to follow the industry closely. It's part of me. Of course, it won't be the same. I can sit back, get above it all and watch with interest—and, I believe, with admiration. I think I can be objective about progress.

I think the biggest single adjustment in all this had to do with Dotti Bechtol. She started as my secretary on April 11, 1977, the day my granddaughter Rachel was born and the date that Dick Caliguiri became mayor of Pittsburgh. A few years later she was promoted and became my administrative assistant.

Dotti was invaluable to me. She's an outstanding human being, a fantastic woman. She was my secretary before being promoted. I relied on her. When David came in as CEO I told him, in fairness to him and fairness to Dotti, that he'd be making a big mistake if he did not make use of her talents. He took my advice and is doing so. She became David's assistant and is now a vice president of Levinson Steel.

Interestingly, Dotti was one of four of my secretaries who married executives of Levinson Steel who they met on the job (her husband is now a partner in Pittsburgh's largest law firm). Many women jokingly have clamored to become my secretary—not because they wanted the job, but because they were looking for husbands.

Dotti and John Bechtol are friends and she was of great help to me from the day she started in my office. My new secretary is Betty LeDonne, who, when she started working for me, said, "Dotti is a tough act to follow." But no one could have helped me bridge the gap better than Betty. In my changed world (writing my book, being active in the community, managing my personal affairs and sometimes arranging visits to grandchildren), Betty has been an invaluable assistant. Adjustments are not always easy, but the people with whom you work can make a world of difference.

Death is nature's way of warning
people to start taking it easy.

RETIREMENT... ARE YOU KIDDING?

The day I retired I felt a peace and freedom I hadn't felt since school let out for summer vacation in 1931. When summer vacation came, there was a hootin' and a hollerin' and a release of energy which no other event could precipitate. I almost recaptured the same feeling of freedom and a release from responsibilities when I went fishing at Blue Mountain Lodge (my Shangri La)—but only fleetingly because my problems and responsibilities were merely set aside for awhile.

The sale was closed six days before my 69th birthday. My contract said I retire at 70, but David Lloyd-Jacob didn't call on me to do much during the last year of my employment. I arranged a reception at the Duquesne Club, attended by many customers as well as community and political leaders in the Pittsburgh area. I also arranged many private meetings so that I could introduce David to some of the top corporate leadership in the area—including many with whom Levinson did business.

Other than that, and responding to some requests for contributions and representing the company in the community, there were few actual chores. So most of what I did in the office related to personal matters, community matters, some work on my book and miscellaneous activities.

I had long ago decided that when I retired I would continue to maintain an office and a secretary. I'm active in many community projects. I'm a member of a couple of corporate boards. I'm one of the incorporators of the Family Firm Institute. In addition to managing my personal affairs, I had hoped to continue writing. So, for months before my retirement, with Betty LeDonne's help, I looked for an office. I wanted something closer to my home and the Pittsburgh Athletic Association (PAA), where I swim each day.

Shortly after David Lloyd-Jacob had taken over the company, he invited me to stay in my present office after my retirement. However, Sonia strongly suggested that because of the inconvenience of the distance and the fact that I had to face the reality of my retirement, I should find an office closer to home. But, by the time of my retirement we still had not found an office, and David again invited me to stay on until I did.

So the day I retired nothing really had changed. I continued coming to the same office each day and continued doing the same things I had done before my retirement.

Nothing had changed, and yet it seemed like everything had changed. A few weeks before, I had a call from Jim McKay, one of the business writers for the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. He had heard I was retiring and wanted to interview me for a story. He came to my office with a photographer a day or two later prepared to do a business story. I think it took him all of five minutes to realize that my retirement was more a human interest story than a business piece.

When the article appeared, it told about my nickname "Diney" (short for dynamite), which many people associated

with my football days at Allderdice High. The headline was "Aaron Levinson Caps a Dynamite Career." The article covered my 51 years at Levinson Steel and my 33 years as president and chairman and talked about the generations before me. It also mentioned some of my awards, that I was listed in *Who's Who in America,* and it told about my hailing a cab to go 20 miles to my new job in Washington, DC, when I had only a few cents in my pocket more than half a century ago.

The reaction to his story was gratifying. It seems that everyone around Pittsburgh read it—and the comments were glowing. Until the article appeared, my nickname "Diney" was used only by my wife, friends of long standing and a few nieces and nephews who called me Uncle Diney. Afterward, especially after my new license plate also said Diney, countless people started calling me Diney, and somehow a new image of Aaron Levinson began to emerge.

A few weeks after my party I received a call from Father Nesti telling me that I had been selected to receive an honorary degree from Duquesne University. As I have mentioned, I had several years earlier, received an honorary degree from Point Park College which was very meaningful to me, but somehow, an honorary degree from Duquesne, which had always received enthusiastic support from my father and the entire Levinson family, was one of the most exciting things that has ever happened to me. This was just one more building block in the development of my new image.

At about the same time, I was honored to learn that the Pittsburgh chapter of Peace Links, a group started by wives of U.S. Congressmen, started the Aaron P. Levinson Audio-Visual Library.

My Levinson Steel retirement reception and my fantastic birthday party (both mentioned in the first chapter), plus my sudden awareness of my three score and ten years, caused me to feel differently about myself and what I was doing. People's

feelings about themselves often reflect their perceptions of how others feel about them, and all of this attention couldn't help but have some effect on my own self-image.

You can be sure, however, that I have no illusions. After more than 70 years, if a man doesn't know who he is or what he is, it is indeed sad. I know myself pretty well. I know my strengths and my limitations. I am not carried away with a sense of my own importance. I have never been smug, but I do have a good self-image—certainly a lot better than when I was 30 or 40.

Dr. Abraham Twersky, a noted psychiatrist and Pittsburgh rabbi, once sent me one of his books, *Like Yourself and Others Will Like You, Too.* I like myself most of the time, although sometimes I can't believe some of the dumb things I do. There is another equally important adage: one must find at least a degree of peace within one's self before he or she can successfully reach out to other people. And that I have. One thing for sure, I have an increased awareness of the things around me (good and bad) and my feelings and values about everything, even life and death, have sharpened.

On one of those days shortly after the parties, I was at the sauna at the PAA talking to a man in his 20s. He asked, "Mr. Levinson, how old are you?" I told him, and he said, "That's remarkable. I hope when I'm 70 I look half as good as you." I said, "Don't sweat it. You already look half as good." That remark gets repeated to me almost every time I visit the PAA.

One week later, on December 17th, Sonia and I left for ten days of vacation with our kids, first on Jim's farm in Massachusetts and then in Vermont with Eleanor's family. I had expected to take the material for my book with me, which meant lugging a couple of loaded brief cases. I had trouble picking up my feet with the shoes attached, let alone any extra baggage. We got back from Vermont in time to spend the New Year's weekend in Pittsburgh and then on to New York for some meetings of the

Family Firm Institute.

All of that, however, was a blessing in disguise. It caused me a great deal of frustration, but it taught me a lesson, which I pass along to anyone entering retirement. First, don't put off until retirement lots of things that you had hoped to do some day, because they can become overwhelming. Secondly, go easy on yourself as far as scheduling is concerned. When you reach retirement, it is good to stay busy with interesting, challenging things, but it is the time of life when you should stop giving yourself the deadline treatment.

When I got home I decided: to work on my book when I wanted to; do the other things I wanted to do; and refuse to be frustrated if things went slowly. I think I have earned that right, and so have you, Mr. Retiree. I know people who stop too soon. I know others who never stop. Everything they hope to do some day becomes an obsession, and half the things they do they don't enjoy. I sometimes want to ask them whether they think death is nature's way of warning people to start taking it easy.

Now that I have some practice at being retired, I realize there were two retirements—one for my mind and my body and one for my spirit. Even so, there was continuity. Many important people in my life continue reaching out to me in many different ways, and I continue finding ways to respond.

Fortunately, I've been able to take my own advice. For years I've offered my prescription for staying young the rest of your life: never stop laughin', lovin', learnin' and livin' one day at a time.

Right to the end, life is one of the most interesting experiences I've ever had.

EPILOGUE

They say crazy things happen to nutty people, and I must be in that category. In March of 1985 Sonia and I boarded the cruise ship Stella Solaris in Florida with other members of the Chief Executives Organization. A few celebrities were scheduled to join the group. As each couple boarded ship, a photographer took their picture. I wasn't aware that, as our picture was being taken, somebody was standing a half step behind us. But immediately after the photographer snapped the picture, the guy standing at my heels squeezed my arm and said, "I'm sorry, Sir, I think I ruined your picture." I turned around, and the guy was so close that there was no question about his being in the photo, but I could hardly believe my eyes. Standing there, with a big grin on his face, was Jimmy Carter. I collected myself quickly, smiled back and said, "That's okay, Mr. President, any time."

Well, my life has been full of strange little things like that, and somehow good things keep happening. There is an old Jewish superstition that if things are going well and you discuss

them, the evil spirits will make them all turn bad—unless you say the magic words, *kein ein horah* (evil eye) or unless you spit three times. So, as I tell you how very lucky I am, I say *kein ein horah.*

I do feel very lucky right now. In spite of our cancers, Sonia and I are both in good health. Our children and grandchildren are all terrific people. I am so fortunate that I am able to make major adjustments in my life easily—the adjustment from president of Levinson Steel to chairman of the board; the adjustment of selling the family company after 81 years as such; the transition from being chief executive officer and head honcho to becoming vice chairman of the board and a figurehead; and the final adjustment to retirement and moving out of the Levinson Steel offices.

I know that such adjustments are not easy for many people, but somehow I have been able to take them in stride. I am lucky in many other ways, too. What wonderful luck to have a wife who never ceases to give me strength and encouragement. There are enough exciting challenges to make each day gratifying (not counting those days, of course, when everything goes dead wrong). Add to that having enough money to have my own beautiful office near my home, and an outstanding woman, Betty LeDonne, to help me with my chores. I can afford to take a few trips to visit friends and family—and favorite places. But the most gratifying thing of all, other than family and friends, is my physical and financial ability to reach out and to be of help in my community, especially to people less fortunate than I.

One of the blessings which often comes to older people is the time and the frame of mind to reflect—on the past, on the present, on our lives, on the human race.

Among the things I have been thinking about is freedom. As we go through life, many of us struggle to rid ourselves of the shackles— the constraints—put on us by employers, parents, spouses, and society. For me, most of the shackles are gone. I have no corporation to answer to. I have no parents to answer

to. My wife makes very few demands, and my time is my own. Ultimately, of course, I must answer to myself.

But, I have discovered that freedom, too, has its price. Sometimes, when Sonia and I get back from a trip, there is a built-in need for me to kind of report in, because all my life (until just a few years ago), the minute I would step into my house from any trip, I would pick up the phone and call my mother. But now, there is no mother, and that's a strange feeling.

Just recently, I walked into the supply room in my office, picked up two pads of paper, and said to Betty, "May I take these home?" She replied, "They're yours. You paid for them. You can do with them what you like." I said, jokingly, but yet reflecting something inside of me, "I know, Betty, but it's bad business taking supplies home from the office."

There are times when I take a day off from working in my office because I don't feel well, or because I have things to do at home, or maybe because I just feel like goofing off. I feel like I want to call my boss and ask if it's okay.

It appears that, at this stage of life, the things we always thought of as shackles are really anchors. Throughout our lives, we need someone to report to. We need order in our lives, and too much freedom creates almost a feeling of loneliness.

I love the freedom, but often I get a guilty feeling because I am doing things without permission. I guess that's what growing up in a very structured society does to us.

Often, as I read newspapers or magazines or listen to the news on TV, I become troubled about terrorism, nuclear arsenals, and man's inhumanity to man. While it is true, as I wrote when I turned 65, that all together life is not futile, there are probably some things about life which are futile—mainly trying to change human nature. However, I have never stopped writing to my congressmen, writing letters to the editor and contributing time and money to organizations which are trying to improve

things. I must be content that there is not much more I can do about the evils of the world, and so I enjoy the good things—the loving people, the acts of human kindness I see around me, the love I share with family and friends. Maybe it's wishful thinking, maybe it has something to do with my religious training, but I have faith that the human race will survive, and I have the ability to relax and enjoy my life and not allow the headlines to get me down for long.

Most of all, my reflections are on people I love. I have written about many of them in this book. Each of us has strengths and weaknesses, and I learned a long time ago to either accept people as they are or walk away from them. I never try to change anyone's philosophy, values or lifestyle. I accept them as they are, and sometimes, I repeat Mr. Roger's famous words, "I love you just the way you are."

There are some pretty special people in my life, besides those family and friends you've already met. When I first drafted this book I dedicated a chapter to them. In fact, I even asked several of them to write short pieces for that chapter. Then some of them were persistent in telling me that I should condense or eliminate that section. I finally agreed, but there is no way I'll give up completely, and say nothing about my best friendships. Those who know me know that there is nothing in my life more important than my family and friends.

Actually, I incorporated some of what my friends wrote in the contexts of other chapters. For instance, some of what Leroy Irvis wrote fits nicely into my chapter "A Great Day For The Races." And I quoted Art Cowles in another place. But that's not enough, so I'm going to quickly tell about each of them.

Leroy Irvis and his wife, Kitten, were close friends back in the early days of my race relations work in the '40s and '50s. Kitten died a number of years ago. Leroy's present wife, Katherine, is equally sensational. He is now Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. A dear friend.

Ralph Raphael and I were the second generation of best friends. His dad and mine were extremely close. Ralph and I enjoy opposite lifestyles, but our temperaments are similar, and when we are together, we never stop laughing—mostly at ourselves.

Ray Talbert and I first met at the Pittsburgh Sales Executives Club. We worked together to help develop Camp Achievement for underprivileged children, and there was something about our chemistry that destined us to be good friends for life.

Earl Grollman, my brother-in-law, is more like a brother. He's always been there when I needed him. Since we first met, we have truly loved each other.

Art Cowles and I were board members together at the Pittsburgh Public Theater. He is a retired vice president of Koppers Company in Pittsburgh. When I was asked to pick a close friend to make a presentation for me at the Anti-Defamation League (a Jewish organization), I chose my non-Jewish friend, Art. I couldn't think of anyone who could say it better than he.

I don't know if Howdy Levine is my best friend. I do know that I never had a better friend, or a closer one. We were born just five weeks apart. He likes to tell the true story that our mothers took walks together when they were pregnant with us. We lived next door to each other when we were babies, and we live across the street from each other now. If we are not on the phone with each other at least three times a week, we make up for it the next week. He was part of the Oakland Band I write about in "Days of My Youth." A picture of the entire gang and my sister June is in the photo section.

Bob Fleishman has been a close friend since grade school days. I told him in a recent letter that he really knows the meaning of friendship. If I have a problem and Bob knows about it, he doesn't wait for me to call him. He's by my side immediately, wanting to know how he can help.

You may recall Don Peters from the golf story mentioned in

an earlier chapter. My friendship with Don dates back to the early '50s when we both became members of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO). We liked each other from the beginning. We laugh at the same kind of jokes, our values are similar, we have often compared notes on business and financial matters, and we trust each other. Equally important, Don's wife, Twila, and my wife, Sonia, also like each other.

Through our association with the YPO and the Chief Executives Organization, the four of us have travelled together in the Caribbean, South America, the South Pacific and many other places. Besides that, Don and I have fished together in the Everglades, elsewhere in Florida, and in Norway. Don is the retired chairman of the board of Mellon Stuart. Although we sometimes did business together, our friendship was a personal one. When we met, we were in our mid 40s. Our friendship, respect and admiration for each other has grown steadily since.

A new, wonderful friendship has also developed with Dennis Stovall, the research man and my prodder on this book—also my editor and publisher. He and his wife Linny now live in Portland, Oregon. He is young enough to be my son, but he has the wisdom of a man much older. The better we get to know each other, the better we like each other, and he is now truly one of my best friends.

While Howdy, Bobby, Ralph, Ray, Leroy, Don and Dennis are very close and special, I also feel close to many others. To name a few: Meyer Berger, my confidante and co-worker in many community ventures; Norman Berger, who might pick up the phone at any hour, dial my number and start right in with a new joke; my cousin, Jim Levinson, who worked with me at Levinson Steel and on whose board I served for many years at Autoclave Engineers, who has been a lot more than just a cousin all of his life; Johnny Ferber, who was a buddy since I gave him a bloody nose at Camp Lenox when we were ten years old, and who died on May 15, 1987 as this book was about to go to

press; Al Lowy, our family physician for half of my life; Nick Failla, my barber for the last 30 years; Nat "Rivers" Thornton, who ran a gas station for the Levinson family in the '40s, was a foreman in the Levinson Steel plant and a bartender at my parties for almost half a century; Drs. Lionel and Florence Young, our new close friends across the street; and Dick Wright, industrialist, entrepreneur, golf enthusiast and long time friend.

The list goes on and on. Alvin and Bea Rosensweet, Hazel Franz, Carol Brown; Jean Harter, Frieda Shapira, Agnes and Joe Katz, Paula and Ralph Atlas, Sam Salem, and many friends at Levinson Steel, including David Lloyd-Jacob, Ed Schuman and Dotti Bechtol. Then there is Carl Barger, who has been my attorney, my advisor, my confidante, and the guy I automatically call when I have any kind of problem. There is no real end to the list, because I'm still making new friends. Three hundred fifty people showed up at my 70th birthday party—many who were invited couldn't come and some good friends were not invited because there simply wasn't enough room.

I want them all to know I love them. That I am a lucky man to have them as friends. They are a part of me.

So, with all my good luck and the time and desire to reflect on this and many other things, I feel very fortunate about my life, and, at the age of 72, I say *kein ein horah*, I spit three times as I try to live one day at a time, and I thank the good Lord for all my blessings. Without hesitation I can say that life is one of the most interesting experiences I have ever had—rich with "right nows" I wish could be forever.



This photo was taken in 1915 and includes my grandfather and grandmother, their children, my mother and me. Beginning with the top row, left to right: Uncle Hyman, Aunt Ida, Uncle Jack, my mother Rose, and Uncle Abe. In the second row: Grandfather Jim (Israel), Grandmother Rachel, and my father Sam. Sitting in front of Jim is Uncle Monnie. I'm on my dad's lap, and Aunt Sadie is next to me.



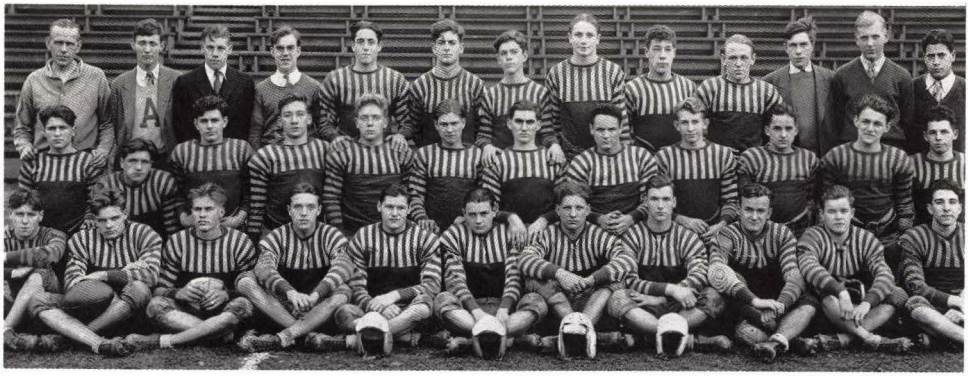
This is me with my Aunt Ida Reuben, my mother's sister. The year was 1917.



I'm the one on the left, with Howdie Levine holding my arm. My sister, June is in the middle. On the right are Willie Goldberg and Lennie Harris. We four boys were the Oaklang Gang. Sixty years later, all of us except for Willie posed in the same positions for another photo.



Taken in January 1930, this photo is of the members of my high school fraternity, Theta Sigma Chi. Top row (l-r): Bill Ostrow, Rody Levin, Jerome (Inky) Goldman, Bernie Perlstein, Ralph (Gaul) Weisman, and Danny Sissman. Front row (l-r): Phil Alpern, Johnny Ferber, Gene Cohen, me, and Elkan Avner.



Above is the Allderdice High School Football Team, 1932. I'm in the middle row, fifth from the right. Among my friends on this team: Elkan Avner (middle row, far right); Eddie Andrews (middle row, fourth from left); Ralph Raphael (middle row, third from left); Lennie Levy (top row, fifth from left); and Johnny Webb (middle row, second from left). On the right we have Dynie Levinson—Allderdice backfield.





Beth Shalom Choir, 1940, with my mother, Rose Reuben Levinson, second from left in the middle row. My father-in-law, the Reverand Elias Zaludkowski is seated in the center of the bottom row.



Me with my parents and sisters in 1935. Top (l-r): June, Aaron, and Rose. Bottom: Netta and Sam.



This was taken of Sonia and me during a vacation around 1940.



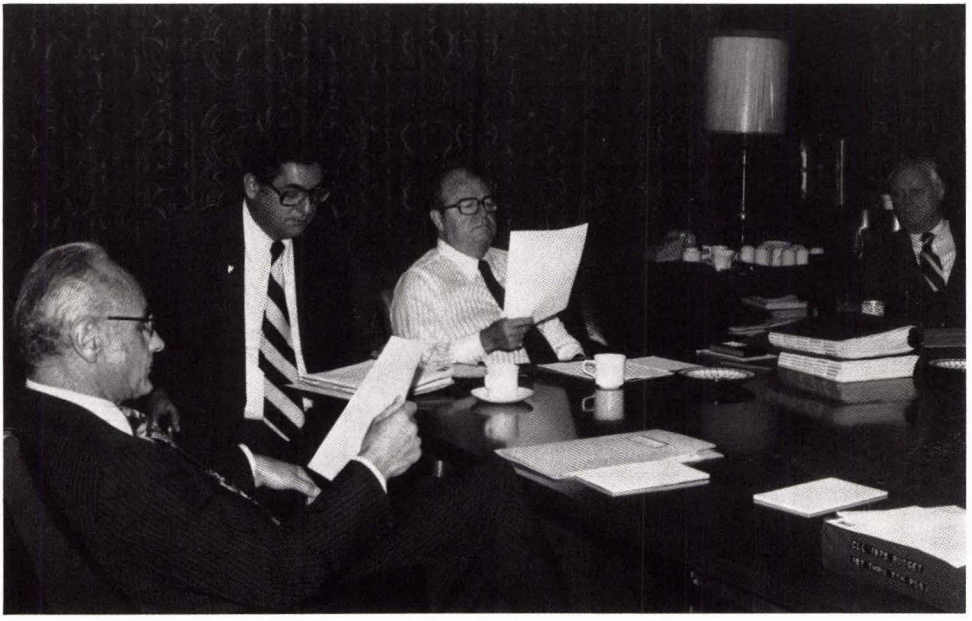
This photo of me with my dad and three of his brothers was taken about 1945. From left to right: Emanuel, Abe, Sam, me and Jack.



I was 32 years old when this was taken at Levinson Steel in 1944. At the time, I was the company's secretary and general sales manager.



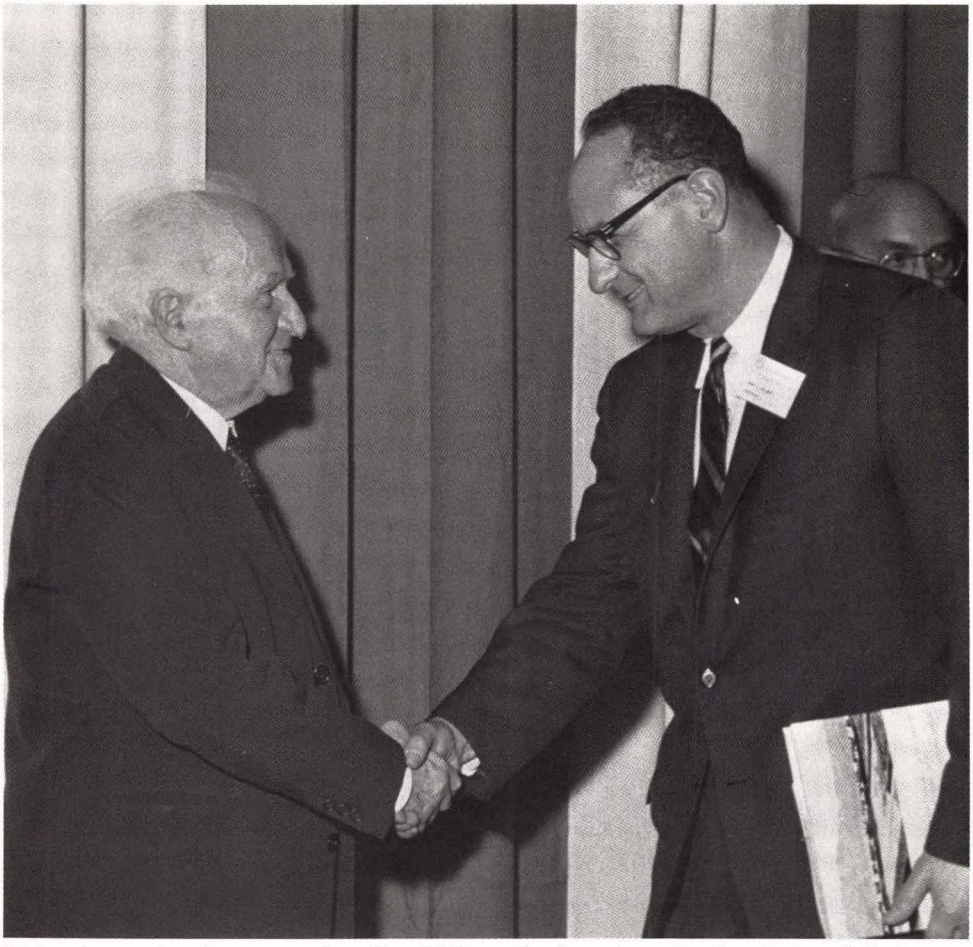
I'm being congratulated by my father, Sam, on my election to the presidency of Levinson Steel Company in 1950. I was 35.



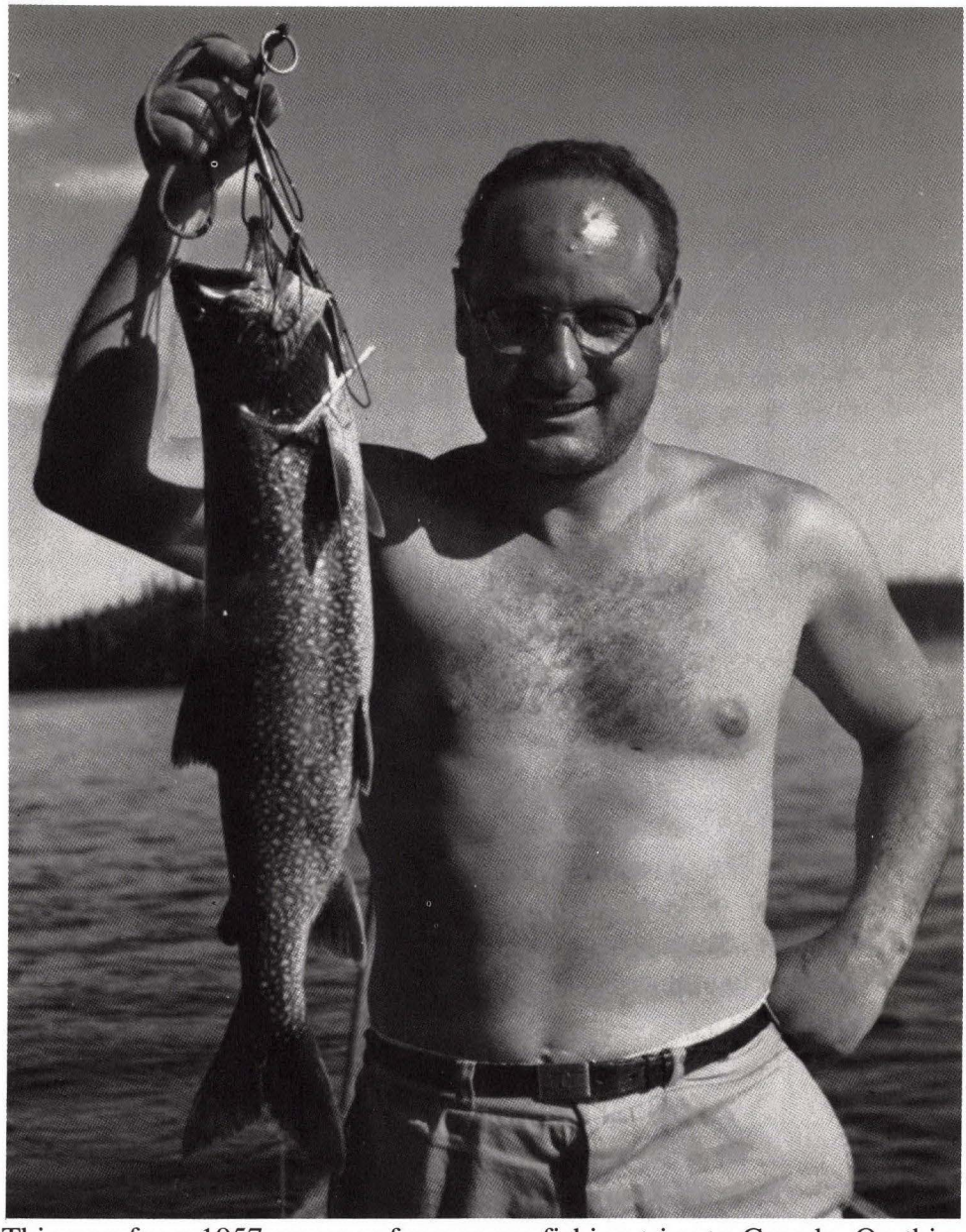
In this office scene, besides me on the left, there are Jim Levinson, Joseph M. Katz and Myron Krueger.



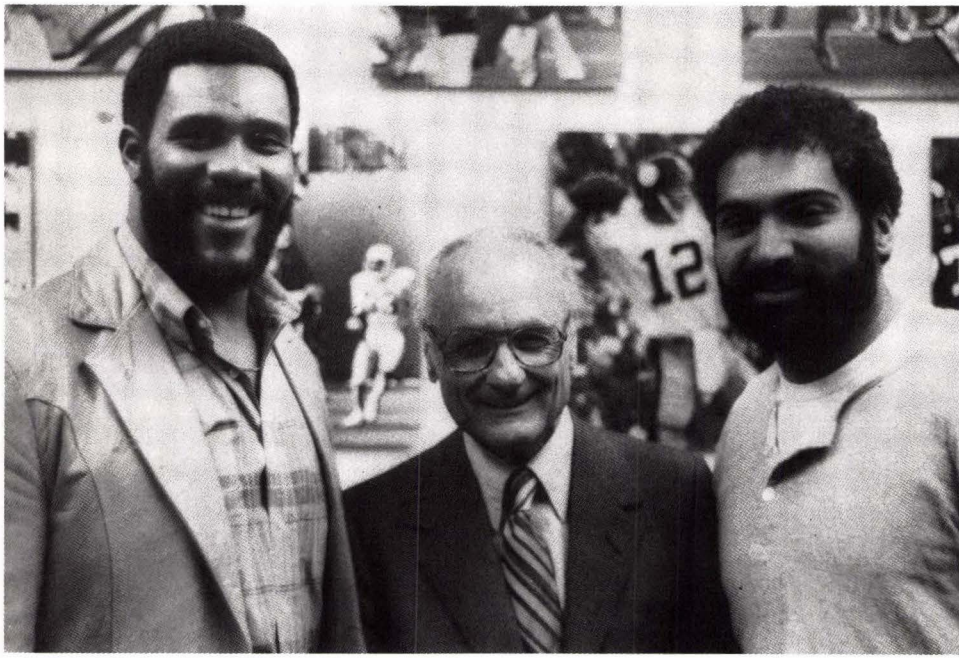
During my association with Camp Achievement, Sonia and I hosted an annual Christmas party at our home for the kids. Mrs. Illery, who got me involved with the project is on the left.



This picture is of me meeting David Ben Gurien, Israel's first Prime Minister, in 1958. At the time, I was the Pittsburgh General Chairman of the United Jewish Federation Annual Campaign and was on a UJF mission to Israel.



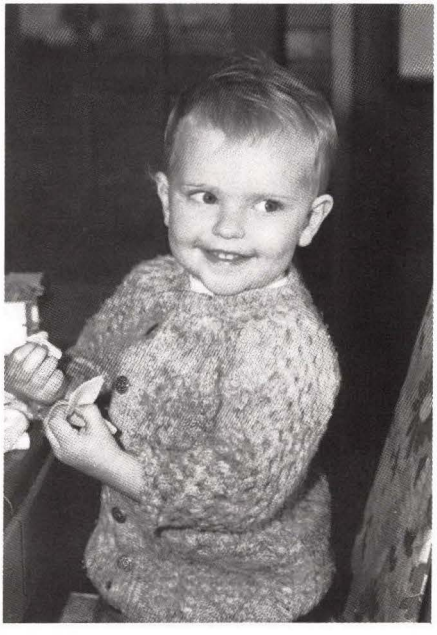
This was from 1957 on one of my many fishing trips to Canada. On this vacation we were fishing in Quebec's Lake Mistasini.



I've been a fan of football for as long as I can remember. I enjoyed playing it while in school, and I enjoy watching it now. The two guys with me here are Joe Greene and Franco Harris. We became friends when they were playing for the Pittsburgh Steelers.



On this page is my family today. In the back row of the photo above, taken in 1984, are (l-r) my daughter Eleanor, her son Marshal Peris, her husband Jeff Peris, my son Jim, his wife Louise Cochran, and his former wife Satinder Singh. In the middle are Johathan Peris, Noah Levinson and Mira Levinson. In the bottom row are Sonia, Rachel Peris and me. The photo on the right is of Dorothy (Dora) Levinson, who arrived after the other picture was taken.





This is a 1982 picture of me with my brother-in-law Earl Grollman, who is a retired rabbi and one of my closest friends.



In 1958, when I was in Israel with a United Jewish Federation mission, I visited a place called Maabarat, which is simply the word for shantytown. These were children who obviously enjoyed my magic tricks.



Rose Levinson volunteered five days per week for 30 years at the Pittsburgh Home For Crippled Children. Many Pittsburghers besides me remember my mother as you see her here. The picture was taken in the early 1950s.

What a joy it is to get a glimpse of Aaron's remarkable personality by reading this splendid autobiography. His successful battle against cancer is especially moving. Few of us have evolved to this level of wisdom, openness, warmth, compassion, and humor. Even fewer of us have the talent to communicate our ideas lucidly. This is a very special book which cannot fail to reward the reader.

—Dr. Thomas Detre, Vice President
Health Sciences, University of Pittsburgh

Aaron is a decent, sincere human being who gives help and hope to those who so desperately need both. His chapter, *A Great Day For The Races,* is an example. Knowing him and how honestly he believes in the brotherhood of man has saved me many times from the bitterness that otherwise might have enveloped me when I dealt with confrontational situations with the white community.

—K. Leroy Irvis, Speaker
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

"How does it feel to be Jewish in a predominantly Christian country?" The most eloquent response I can give is "read Aaron Levinson's autobiography." It is a provocative saga of a family with roots in Czarist Russia who blend the best of the ethnic, spiritual culture with the richness of America. We identify with different religious labels, but through diversity, Aaron brings us unity.

—Rabbi Earl A. Grollman, D.D.
Beth El Temple, Belmont, Massachusetts

Aaron's description of his cancer diagnosis, surgery, treatment and recovery, is touching and familiar to anyone with the disease. Notable is his strong, positive outlook and his resolve to conquer the disease, which was associated with his subsequent complete recovery. I would recommend this book to any cancer patient for its inspiration and...for how one's attitude may affect recovery.

—Dr. Ronald Herberman, Director
Pittsburgh Cancer Institute

Aaron Levinson's life story is compelling. The chapters dealing with his experience in the Levinson family business reflect the wisdom gained in leading a complex and successful family firm. This thought provoking material is useful to anyone participating in a family-owned business.

—Barbara S. Hollander, Ph.D.
Founder of the Family Firm Institute

Aaron Levinson has lived a dramatic life, dedicated to his family, his business, and important parts of our society. He is that rare individual—an unselfish volunteer in the public service. Great guy!

—Dick Thornburgh, Former Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvnia