

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

1930's - 1940's Biography

Personal Experience

O. H. 1275

IRVING LEV

Interviewed

by

Richard R. Testa

on

July 13, 1989

IRVING LEV

Irving Lev, born October 12, 1922, was the third of five sons born to Louis Lev and Bessie Gessen Lev, who came to the United States from Russia in 1913. The Lev family lived on the south side of Youngstown, at 344 E. Florida Avenue. Irv attended Taft Elementary School and Woodrow Wilson High School where he graduated in 1940.

During the Depression, Irv and his brothers worked for his father's construction company, Louis Lev and Sons, whenever work was available.

Mr. Lev attended Ohio State University from 1940-1941 before being drafted into the Army in 1942. He served three years in the Army Air Corps.

After his discharge from the Army, Mr. Lev resided in California until 1950, during which time he married his wife Alice and attended the University of California at Berkeley from 1945 until graduation in 1948. Upon returning to Youngstown in 1950, he resumed construction until his retirement in 1987.

Mr. Lev has been active in community affairs for the emotionally disturbed and disadvantaged.

-Richard Testa

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INTERVIEWEE: IRVING LEV

INTERVIEWER: Richard R. Testa

SUBJECT: Depression, World War II, Air Corps
travels, construction work, projects

DATE: July 13, 1989

T: This is an interview with Irving Lev, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on 1930's - 1940's Biography project, by Richard R. Testa, on July 13, 1989, at 1849 Goleta Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio.

Irv, where were you born?

L: [I was born] in Youngstown.

T: What date?

L: October of 1922.

T: So, you've lived in Youngstown all of your life?

L: Except for brief sojourns elsewhere, yes.

T: Brief sojourns elsewhere. . . ?

L: The brief sojourns elsewhere would be time spent in the Army and time subsequent to being in the Army when I was on the West Coast. I was away from home from . . . let's see. I went to Ohio State in 1940 or 1941. I came back to Youngstown to live again, in 1950. I was gone for approximately nine years.

T: You were in the Army during that time?

L: During the period that I was away, I was in the Army three years of that ten-year hiatus.

T: What branch of the Army did you serve with?

L: I was Air Force, or as known in those days as the Air "Corpse."

T: The Air Corps.

L: The Air "Corpse" (laughter). Well, that depended on what plane you were flying.

T: It was how lucky you were.

L: If you were lucky, it was Air Corps. That's my macabre sense of humor.

T: Where did you go to school?

L: Elementary school?

T: Yes.

L: I went to Taft Elementary, and Woodrow Wilson Junior and Senior High.

T: Oh, you're a Southsider, then?

L: Yes. I lived on Florida Avenue.

T: Where about?

L: [On] 344 East Florida, between South Avenue and Rush Boulevard. Do you know that area?

T: Yes. My in-laws lived down on that area.

L: Who lived there?

T: My sister-in-law lived there for awhile. . . .

L: On, what? Florida?

T: Yes, down on Florida Avenue.

L: Down at the lower end?

T: Yes. [The number was] 931.

L: Yes. That's down below the. . . .

T: Yes. Okay. [What did you do] then, after high school?

L: After high school, I worked for a short period in the construction business, and then I went to Ohio State.

T: How about your parents?

L: Who are they?

T: Yes.

L: My father was Louis Lev. He immigrated to this country in about 1913. My mother, who had the maiden name, Gessen, Bessie Gessen, immigrated at about the same time. My father came from Staradub, Russia. Staradub is a town about 135 miles northeast of Kiev, a town of about thirty-five thousand people. [It is] still there. My mother came from a town called Shedrin, which is on the bend of the Neppa River. Note: Staradub is in Russia, Shedrin is in Bylerussia. If you drew a line between Kiev and Minsk, it would be one-third of the way from Minsk is northwest of Kiev. It would be about 130 miles. Both cities that I just mentioned are white Russia. The town that she came from was called Shedrin, and that is no longer in existence. It was one of the towns that was overrun by the Nazi's in World War II and was totally obliterated. I have since, learned quite a bit about the city. The Nazi's wiped it out completely. They had the inhabitants of the city dig a huge pit. They bulldozed them in and covered them with lime. The eyewitness-accounts say that that earth was moving for several days later, as people tried to crawl out. They were alive; and then, they got trapped in the earth and couldn't get out. There were about forty-five hundred people killed there.

T: This was in the 1940's?

L: [In] 1941, I would imagine. All my mother's relatives were annihilated in that town. I tried to go back to see that town, but we were denied permission by the Russians. As a matter of fact, the year that I went to Russia, they had the Chernobel Conflagration at that particular period of time, and no one was allowed down to Kiev. I wanted to go down to see Kiev at least, because my mother had told me about it. But, we were unable to do so.

T: Your parents are still living?

L: No. My dad passed away. This year, it will be twenty-six years ago. My mother passed away fourteen years ago.

T: What was school like when you went? What were some of the subjects you studied? What were some of the things you got involved in?

L: What period are you talking about?

T: Let's say, high school. What did you do. . . ? You grew up during the Depression.

L: Yes.

T: What were some of the things that you could do for entertainment? And, how did the Depression affect you and your family?

L: Well, you don't know how something affects you if you are right in the middle of it. You have to understand. You only know how you are affected by something if there is a comparison. If someone lives a certain way all his life, he doesn't know that there is anything different. When the Depression came about, I was seven years old. Here are some of the things I remember. As a boy, I never had any toys, for example. I can't remember ever having had a toy that was bought. The things that we played with were homemade; for example: rubber guns, shooting rubber bands, playing games out on the street like hockey with PET milk cans and sticks. That was always done. Things like "Ollie Ollie Outs In Free," where we'd play this game. . . . It was a hide and seek game, and we had boundaries. When I lived on Florida, the boundaries were Lucius Avenue on one side, Gibson on the other side, Erie Street on the other side. We had an area encompassing about one square mile approximately. You would play at night, and there might be fifty people involved in the game. We had all sorts of gang games. Not "gang" in a decadent sense, just all buddies that hung around and played a game. Now, this was all before we started driving. We all started driving early. I started when I was thirteen. My dad started to teach me how to drive. We'd drive around the neighborhood. There was no license at that time; at least, none that I knew of.

T: What kind of car did you have?

L: The first car I drove was a big old 1929 Nash. It gradually got worse and worse as the Depression kept going on. Then, my father had to park it, because he didn't have enough money for gas. When my dad had to go to work during the Depression, he had to take his tools. If he could find work . . . he would take his tools on the bus. He was a carpenter. If he got a job, a contract, the whole family went out and worked. I can remember that when I was about ten or eleven

years old, the whole family--me and my two older brothers--at the time, would go out to work on these jobs. You could get the best craft people that were available, at never more than two dollars a day. They'd be union or nonunion, it didn't matter, because one thing I learned quickly; when there is no working, unions don't mean a thing. People will do anything they have to do to take care of their family. I still remember that. We had fantastic workers. Your going rate was fifteen to twenty-five cents an hour.

T: That was construction work?

L: Yes. These were good carpenters for that kind of money. I didn't see much of that, because there wasn't that much work. My dad just didn't have work. It just wasn't available. But, when you did go out, you worked from dawn until dark. I don't know how much my dad earned on each job, but it was enough to keep us eating all the time. I can remember how proud he was that we never had to go on relief.

T: He never went to the souplines?

L: No. Of course, there were little things I remember. I remember there was city money; script money, that you're probably not familiar with.

T: No, I'm not.

L: It was money that was issued by the city. It was currency of realm at that particular time. I remember very little about it. The things you remember about the Depression when you think about them. . . . You don't remember any treats. I often think of that. When things were a little better, we would go out. . . . Our recreation, for example, would be to take a drive, when there was gas. On the way home, as I said, when things were getting better, we'd stop and get an Isaley's ice cream cone. Do you remember those, Rich? Those long. . . ?

T: Skyscrapers, yes.

L: Now, those were a nickel. When things were really bad, and every so often when my mother and dad would go to a movie, and we kids would all be home alone. When they would come back. . . . They would walk from where we lived to the Uptown. At that time, it was a dime; except on Saturdays, when it was two cents for the matinee all afternoon. They would bring us home a Mr. Goodbar. I think the thing was about three-quarters of a pound, or a half a pound. I remember that was a big treat. We'd chop it up into little pieces for all of us, and that was a treat. I can remember going to see

matinees at that time, but I don't remember ever going to a movie. As I said, I don't remember any toys. The first article of clothing that I can remember that was bought for me was when I graduated from high school.

T: You had hand-me-downs?

L: Yes. We all hand hand-me-downs. It was the customary thing.

T: You mentioned two brothers. Were they older than you?

L: [I had] two older and two younger.

T: How about the first in line? Did he get new, or did he get hand-me-downs from your dad?

L: Well, he was much smaller than my dad, so. . . . I don't really know. That part I don't have any memory of. We lived in a large home. Well, at that time, it was large. It's not as big now, as it was. My dad owned the house. He lost all of his other houses, and he lost this one to the bank; but he stayed there until he could buy it back from the bank. He ended up with the house again. He bought it back again.

I remember going to school all the time. I remember the elections, of course. All I can remember is poverty. I mean, I can remember hearing about, really, which I assume, was the same as welfare, now. You remember people riding on buses, because they would buy passes for that, if they had enough money to buy a bus pass. I don't know how much it cost.

T: I think it was a buck.

L: At that time?

T: Yes.

L: The buses were busy then. People didn't have cars. We didn't have a car . . . well, we had a car, but it was just jacked up, because we didn't have any money to run the thing.

You didn't have refrigerators, of course. You had the icebox. Do you remember iceboxes?

T: No, I don't go back that far. Tell me about what the kitchen in your home would have been like.

L: Well, the kitchen in a home. . . . You had a big gas stove with a high range. I remember that. You had an icebox. Probably twice a week the iceman would come.

I don't remember how much the ice cost. He would put a card outside in front of your house. It was a square card. Each of the four corners of the squares would have a number designating the weight of the ice you wanted. The ice trucks would come around. In the earlier days, it was a horse and wagon. Later on, it was a big old truck. He had cakes of ice in the back. He had an ice pick. All we kids would follow, so we would get little pieces of ice. It was covered over with canvas. As soon as the operator of the truck would carry a block of ice in, he would have a pair of ice tongs. Do you know what ice tongs are?

T: Yes.

L: Two handles and a pivot. You pick it up with one hand. He would throw it up on his shoulder. He had a little piece of leather on his shoulder, so he wouldn't get his shoulder all wet and cold, although it was anyway. He would carry it into the house, and put it in this box, which had the ice on the top. It had a circulatory system, so that the cold air would funnel down from the ice and through the product. Actually, it kept the food quite well. There was a big pan underneath the box to catch the water. Someone had a designated job to pick up that water. If you didn't pick it up on time, it would slop all over the place. And, whosever job it was, had to clean it up. In the wintertime, you had a big metal box, the size of one of the lower half windows, and it was fastened onto your house. You would open the window and reach out, and get whatever you wanted out of that box. That's the way that worked.

T: That's how you kept your meats fresh?

L: Well, anything you had to keep outside. You had to watch. If it was real cold outside, you had to move them around, or keep the window slightly ajar, so it wouldn't get too cold and freeze. There are a lot of things you remember about days like that. I suppose that my peers and contemporaries would remember the same things. Milk was, of course, in the milk bottle with a cap. Whoever got up first used to sneak outside in the wintertime and get the bottle of milk, cut the cream off, because the milk would get cold and expand, and when it was real cold, the cream would come up about two inches out of the top. You would cut it off with a knife and eat it. Now, they have skim milk. Everybody got bread from Schwebel's. They made bread at that time and still do. We were familiar with them, because back in the early 1930's, we had a job building the bakery; so we got to know them all very well. They delivered warm, delicious rye and pumpernickel bread.

T: Schwebel's, at that time, was where? On the East Side?

L: Schwebel's, at that time, was on Lawrence and Cherry. We built a small addition for them back in the 1930's. It's interesting because my brother, who is also a contractor, did a portion of their building out on Midlothian. One of the other contractors built the first one; and then, my brother built all the additions. So, we got to know them quite well.

T: That's kind of kept it in the family.

L: Well, somewhat. Down off of Poland Avenue, right under the Elephant bridge. I don't know what that street is called anymore.

T: I'm trying to remember.

L: It's down now. But, anyway, that's where the city dump was at that time. That's where we had a place called Hoover City. That doesn't ring a bell to you, does it?

T: Hoover City?

L: They had piano boxes and packing boxes. Several hundred people lived down on the dump. They made their way, just by forging through the rubbish and garbage that was brought there everyday, getting enough to eat and enough to live on. That's still done in many areas. As you know, I was recently in India. That's still done over there.

T: That's what I'm wondering. Since recently, I know, you've traveled all over the world. . . .

L: A lot of different places, yes.

T: What would be considered a bit trip back then, back in the 1930's. Your family probably had one of the few cars. . . .

L: No. We were in no different shape than anybody else. A big trip, then would be to Lake Milton.

T: Really?

L: Oh, yes. That was a long trip. That was a big trip. You geared up for that one. Until I was sixteen or seventeen, that was the furthest I ever was away from home.

T: What, about twenty miles?

L: I don't think it's that far. It's about fifteen minutes now, at the very most. I don't know if that was true of everybody, but, of course, your range was much less. My dad had gone to New York once, during the depression, looking for work and to see if things were better there. I know, back in the mid 1930's, my dad was considering taking us to a place in a communal farm in Minnesota. There just wasn't any work. As I mentioned a little earlier, I don't know what it was like to be without; but I know my dad was, many, many times. I can remember the quality of our food was low during the Depression. . . . I know subsequent to that, when my mother was at Heritage Manor--she became infirmed and had to be cared for there. I'd go up everyday to talk to her. She would be apologetic. She said, "When I think of what I had to feed you during the Depression. . . ." The quality of the food went down and down, until you were eating low end. You could do that, though, and still live nutritiously. When my son and I were in India recently, I found that when we were there, if you wanted to, you could eat easily just exactly the way the poor Indians ate for fifty cents a day, and have enough nutritious food to keep you going. Now, you'd lose weight on it, but you would reach a level. The poor people just don't eat real good food, but it's nutritious. You can do the same here. And, we did.

T: Yes. I remember my dad. . . . They ate everything off the chicken except the beak. They ate everything that could be boiled or fried or. . . .

L: You, know, I think of things. Some people still like them. For example, lung meat. Although, now, liver is considered in some cases a delicacy. Beef liver wasn't. Chicken feet, we would eat, and you never see those anymore. There were a lot of cheaper foods that were eaten. You didn't eat steaks in those days, at all. Well, I can say this. Until I was about sixteen, I never ate a piece of chicken or a piece of beef, that I can remember, that didn't go through soup first.

T: Oh, really?

L: That's right. There was no roast meat because first, you'd made soup; and then, you would serve the meat as a separate dish with some kind of a spice, a horseradish sauce or something like that, to spice it up. The same was true of chicken. To this day, I still like boiled chicken, boiled meat, and boiled fish. I found that stuff you grow up on, you develop an affinity for, if that's good English. I've heard people talk about stuff that I don't think is fit to be eaten by dogs, but they think it's great. People talk about eating a Jewish dish that people used to make of ground-up

lungs. Rich, you could eat lungs until the cows come home, and you can't call it good. It is like eating sponge meat. I hear people saying, "Man, that was great."

T: I know. I remember my grandmother used to make a lung stew. Oh, [it was awful]!

L: Oh, God! I think it's terrible!

T: It was horrible. I used to hate to walk in the house. . . . Even to smell the stuff. . . . !

L: Some of the mixtures we ate in India . . . when we went to some of the native places, the places where people on the street ate. . . . There was nothing fancy about those. They were just a hole in the wall and a table. Stuff was just dumped on a tray. That explains why I got sick when I was over there, probably. You would eat ground up bean dishes, pea dishes, all kinds of lentils and stuff like that. That's what their diet is. Rice, milk, a mixture of it. When they eat, they all eat right handed. That's the same hand, by the way, they use to pick up the cow shit, which is picked up off the ground and saved for fuel.

T: Cow dung!

L: You may call it cow dung. I call it cow shit.

T: That would explain why they get sick a lot too, I imagine.

L: They don't though. They probably all have diarrhea. . . .

T: They're immune to it?

L: Well, yes, of course. There are people that drink water . . . the natives will drink water, and it won't hurt them. But, [if] you drink it, the bacteria will get to you instantly. Sure, your body becomes immune to things. You develop immunity.

T: Okay. So, you lived through the Depression, then you went into World War II?

L: Well, I went to school, and then, it looked like things were serious. So, I enlisted in the Air Force. I was in the Air Force for three years. When I came out of there, I was in California at the time so I just stayed there. I was married in California, stayed in California, and went to school out there.

T: When did you get married?

L: [In] 1945.

T: [What] date?

L: July 27, 1945.

T: Any interesting war experiences? Any close calls? anything that you care to talk about?

L: It isn't the quest of talking, but I don't know that any of them were. . . . I never had a sense of fear. I had a lot of sense of anger. I never had any feeling like, "Oh, my God, I'm going to die!" Your ship would get hit, and pieces of shell fragments would come at you and into your ship. You'd get hit by them, but there was no sense of anxiety and fear about it. You would lose engines over enemy territory because of shells. I never had a sense of anxiety about any of it. I don't know. Some kids did. Our tail gunner, in three months time, his hair changed from black to white. He was scared.

T: Did he survive the war?

L: Yes. All our crew survived the war. Other crews that were with us didn't. They got shot down. I lost some good friends. I had some men in the bunk next to me that got shot down, but you didn't. . . . I often felt that being in the Air Force was like a remote way of fighting. I thought the guys who really fought were the guys who were on the ground, in the slop [with] bayonet, rifle, whatever, living in aversive conditions. We didn't have that. You would be up there for a long time. You'd be sleepy. You'd get tired sucking oxygen up there. You did the job you were supposed to do, but you never had a real sense of personally participating. Even when you'd see the bombs falling or see the shells hitting, it was like it was a remote situation. No one on our plane ever got bodily wounded. You'd get hit by flak, but it wouldn't hurt you. It would be spent.

T: So, you never gave any thought to where the bombs were falling or who they might be falling on?

L: Sure. You thought about that often. My attitude there was that I was there to try to shorten the war. I had animosity towards the enemy. I didn't want to go there and drop bombs in the field. I remember one occasion, for example, when we had to fall out of formation, because we lost an engine. We had a load of incendiaries, which are like one pound little bombs that, when they hit, they burn at real high temperatures. They would set everything on fire. We fell out of forma-

tion. The four officers on board were having a big confab as to what to do with the bombs. Drop them and get the hell out of there and run. This argument went on. My argument was we didn't come there to drop bombs in a field. We came to hurt the enemy in any way we could. Now, the others didn't particularly feel that way, but I beefed enough so that we finally picked out a small town of about twenty thousand people. And, early one Sunday morning, we just burned that thing to the ground. I often thought about that, because that was probably the only action I took personally. That did something. That wouldn't have been done if I hadn't had intervened, because I didn't see the point of just going over there. I didn't see any difference in how we caused harm to the enemy, just so we caused harm.

T: Regardless of what it was?

L: Yes. Regardless of what it was. Now, I didn't distinguish between, and still don't distinguish between, civilians and fighting people. I don't think it makes any difference. I don't think you can separate one from the other.

T: The enemy is the enemy.

L: Yes. Some of the things [that] you think about that happened and are now accepted things, you were in the forefront of. For example, they talk about the towns and the plan, and eventually what became of social security. Some of the things you think about that have happened in a short lifetime, my time. I can remember the first time I looked up and saw an airplane. When I looked up, everybody looked up. That was a thing that you gazed at until it was out of sight, because it was so uncommon. You can remember, for example, radio coming into being. We got our first radio in the mid 1930's. The Goldberg Family, Amos and Andy, things like that. Television, of course, is a thing that came much, much, much later. People that were science buffs would have their little crystal sets that they would build. That happened in the late 1920's. That came about. You remember the Depression and the [stock market] crash, because that was the overriding factor in most of our lives. All of a sudden, when people owned a house and things weren't bad, you had a nice car. . . . That, just overnight, disappeared. When I earlier mentioned the fact that I never had clothes, before I was seven, I probably did. You see. They were probably there. Although, it was the tradition in those days to have hand-me-downs whether you could afford them or not. I think we were in good shape. My dad owned our house, he had the house and the duplex next door, he had a couple of other houses that he was

building that he owned. And, they all went out the window. Everything was gone! I started to be aware of when things pulled out. I always worked for my father in one form or another. I had jobs passing out hand-bills or working in grocery stores. When I got to be fifteen, I started working in a shoe store. Other than working on the jobs for my father, for which we got no money, of course, you got fed. There was always work that you had to do; like I shingled our house when I was fifteen. There was a hog in it, but he showed me how to hide the thing. I hid it behind the chimney.

T: Now, what do you mean by a hog?

L: A hog is when the shingles don't come out right. Some how you end up with a spiral instead of a straight line. But, that was the learning experience. I can remember, when I was six and seven, I would always be out working, sweeping up the job, or something like that. That was true of all of us. It was just the way it was done. Then, you start having discussions of. . . . There was a deadliness about everything. Doom and gloom. All you'd hear about was the red lines, people marching on Washington, people out of work. That just pervades that entire period. You never went anywhere, because there wasn't any place to go. You were just there. I don't know what we did for entertainment. I was thinking about that several nights ago when the power went off. I was sitting here in the dark. I was sitting here alone. I don't know what we did at home. I don't know whether we played games or what we did. I just don't remember what happened in the evenings. I know that we'd go to the library constantly. We'd walk to. . . . There was library down on Delason and Market Street. We walked from my house at least twice a week. All of us would go down. That was a source of reading material.

T: How about visiting among the neighbors?

L: You played with all your neighbors.

T: What was your neighborhood like?

L: What was our neighborhood like?

T: Yes. What did the adults do for entertainment?

L: They'd visit one another, I suppose. They would read at night. I have memories of my father reading. My mother less so, because I doubt if she could read very much. I doubt if she did because she'd be so proud when she'd sign her name, that she got it spelled right

and stuff like that, because she had no formal education at all. Although, she could slowly read three languages.

T: What kind of ethnic mix was there in your neighborhood?

L: Let's see. Across the street, Croatian; next door to us, French; Catty-corner across the street, Italian; Irish, the next house. The next house down was Welsh and there were some Greek people across the street. There was a Jewish family about four doors down the street; [then] another Greek family. There was a gamut. I think we ran the gamut.

T: Were you able to communicate with each other?

L: Of course. There was a lot of anti-semitism. There was always a lot of name-calling back and forth. But you'd get as good as you get. The kids were always playing games out in the street. Always. I remember Pet milk cans were a hoarded item. You always saved your Pet milk cans. Do you know what Pet milk is?

T: Yes. Evaporated milk.

L: You would save those little cans because that was your hockey pucks. Everybody had a slingshot. That was standard for everybody.

T: I can remember, when I was a kid, you used to put the Pet milk cans on the heel of your shoes.

L: That was one thing. We also played street hockey. You played baseball. Your baseball . . . usually, you'd wear the things out, and then somehow, you'd steal some tape or find some tape. Nobody had a white baseball. They were all wrapped with black tape. No one had a bat. We used sticks for bats. When you did battle with the next street over. . . . I remember we had a huge slingshot about six feet tall. Two guys would hold, it and we'd shoot mudballs over to the next street. One of them was my brother Milt.

T: What was it, an old tree trunk?

L: You'd find a tree with a fork in it and a little branch coming off, so you could hang a bucket of mudballs, and you'd get about a pound and a half-mudballs.

T: That's funny.

L: We used to do the same things you do now. You'd go out and sled-ride, or hop rides on the back of cars. That was common.

T: I heard kids used to make skis out of flat iron or curtain rods, back then, too.

L: Barrel slats. We didn't do that. We didn't do skiing. But when things really got deadly, people would take little pieces of coat hanger, cut them up, and use those for slingshot bait. You could put out a person's eye with that.

T: That could be dangerous.

L: Then, all sorts of programs started to come in with Roosevelt. I grew up in the Roosevelt era, of course, from 1932 on. I went into the service and was in the service all that period of time, thinking that Roosevelt was next to God. I was totally devastated when Roosevelt died. Since then, my opinion has changed quite a bit about what type of a person he was and about what type of a president he was. But, at the time, I thought he was absolutely the greatest thing that ever lived.

T: Okay. Knowing what you know now, who would you rate as the best and the worst presidents of your lifetime?

L: That's a good question. Of my lifetime?

T: Yes.

L: The worst president, I have no question about, was Reagan. I think he was, by far, the worst president that we've ever had. The best president . . . I can't say. It would have to be divided. On social issues, it was probably Johnson, but he was terrible on foreign affairs. Truman, although he was good domestically, I think that his policies hurt us as far as our relations with the Soviet Union now. I think Reagan was a disaster. I think probably, Nixon was good on foreign affairs, as good as anybody.

T: As far as trade with China?

L: Well, I think he was progressive. I think he was good on foreign affairs. I like Kennedy, probably the best of all the presidents we had, but I don't know how to rate him because I really don't see anything great that happened out of him. Even though we remember his speeches and parts of his speeches, I just don't know that he was or would have been a good president. Eisenhower, now, stands out better than I thought he was at the time. The worst, as I said, was Reagan, and I think the worst to come from Reagan is yet to be seen.

T: As far as his appointments to the Supreme Court or the policies he's started?

L: Absolutely! Stuff is starting to uncover, like the HUD stuff that's coming out now. He's just put bad people in office. When I say Reagan, I don't mean him personally. I mean him as the leader of an administration. I think it's going to be devastating. I think we'll pay a big price. I think the things that are happening. Refusing all these taxes is bad, because there is something that needs to be done in conjunction with what other countries have to do as well, which is to stop the protectionism that protects American products from going to the Far East. I think those things have to be done.

T: What have you been involved in as far as community service?

L: Community service?

T: What are some of your interests within the community of Youngstown?

L: Going backwards, because it's easier, right now I'm involved in integrating some Jewish Russian families into the community, helping to look after their needs under the AEGIS of the Jewish Federation. I'm involved with Heritage Manor, which is a Nursing Home for the aged; and the Jewish family children's services, which is the same type of thing. Prior to that, I was involved with the Burdman Transitional Home. That's the only official involvement I have with anything, which is mental health. I was an officer on the agency board. I helped with activities at Woodside. Mental Health sorts of things.

T: You had a project a few years back, with that warehouse out on Meridian Road, where they were packing the lights?

L: That was the workshop we had with Transitional Homes, where we had our clients, emotionally disturbed clients.

T: What do they do out there?

L: We had contracts with General Electric repackaging various light bulbs and Christmas tree strings, things of that sort. That's an ongoing thing now except that now, it's being run in Warren instead of in Youngstown. The state has pretty much shut down the Youngstown program. The state is being bastardly as far as mental health is being concerned.

T: That wasn't Meridian Road, was it?

L: Yes. We had a plant on Meridian Road, and then we also had the building next to Woodside, which was the old District 11 office that we turned into a workshop. That's now closed because the state has withdrawn the funds for that project. So, there is no Work Enterprise Program going on for the emotionally disturbed in Youngstown. The only thing going on right now is Goodwill for the mentally retarded. The state shut the other one down.

T: Would you ever consider running for political office, with all your expertise?

L: No. I'm not exactly a politician. That wouldn't interest me at all. In the first place, I'd be at a low level, and that would be a mistake. The only office I've ever had was a precinct committee person. I didn't mind it. All you do was you attend a few party meetings, and you select a few people to work the polls. You do whatever you are supposed to do to get voters to vote and some party politics. I don't really like party politics as such, because they are usually run by a tight clique. I just don't approve of it.

T: So, you would never consider getting into politics, in general?

L: I'm always in politics. I always have a candidate I support. I always have some say about an issue, but I don't want to run for office myself. I like to select people that run for office.

T: Would you care to make any comment about Youngstown politics?

L: Sure. Youngstown politics. . . . First, there is a dearth of candidates, as you well know. I was surprised to see Bob drop out of the race. I think Ungaro is doing a horrendous job as far as Youngstown is going. Nothing is moving in this town at all. Now, that may not be his fault, but I would keep trying different people until I found someone better, because I see nothing coming out of his administration. Jim and I were downtown yesterday. (Speaking to James Olsausky) "Remember the flowerpots we saw just full of weeds, [and the] grass growing right up out of the sidewalk?" This is exactly one block from city hall. No flowers in these boxes. They spent a lot of money for it. It used to be nice.

T: Yes. It used to be.

L: They're willing to put money into putting something in and tearing something out. I think what's going on downtown right now is a debacle. All they are doing is spending money with absolutely no results. It's not one bit better than it was immediately before this and certainly not as good as it used to be, when we had two way traffic down the middle of the road. There have been at least two projects that we did not design the downtown and are just getting closer and closer to where they were before. So, I think politics stinks. I think the party structure in Youngstown stinks. The Republicans can only get candidates in two or three council races. You have a democrat running on the republican side for Mayor. There is no more Republican than there is the man in the moon. They don't have a shot at getting anybody elected. So, Ungaro is getting an automatic stamp to go into office, again.

T: Okay. I thank you. That concludes the interview.

L: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW