

Frank Maidenberg oral history, October 1991: Highlights

Disc one

[Conducted by Judy Pierotti, friend of Jill's, in Madison. Frank is 77 years old.]

Asked for whom he is named. Not sure. Hebrew name is Frayn. This is probably a diminutive of Ephraim. Neither Frayn nor Ephraim appear on the family tree.

Never had middle name. None of the brothers.

Frank says that where his parents were from is like Tevye's village in Fiddler on the Roof. Frank recalls Mom always mentioning "Podolia Guberniya" which is not a village or shtetl, but a district in Ukraine.

They were also in Odessa, sold baked goods.

Recalls 1905 pogroms (the worst of these was in Odessa). Just like Fiddler. Says his parents' description of life in the Old Country was just like the show.

Frank does not have clear knowledge of either his father's or mother's families in Russia. Says Milt has the details.

Remembers Tante Haike.

Mother's brother was Harry Vinokur, married to Edith. They lived down the street from us in Marion. They had four daughters.

Remembers the end of WWI, dancing with Harry in a big circle, singing in Yiddish that the war is over. This would have been 1918.

Franks recalls his father "making a reasonably good living." Might have been a peddler or shopkeeper, but was doing all right.

Dad left New York (not sure why New York--I would have thought Philadelphia) because knew if they were going to speak English had to get away.

Harry and his wife realized that their four daughters would not easily meet Jewish mates in Marion. So they went back to New York. Their eldest daughter was named Minnie. She was an accomplished piano player. Died young, of disease. Family tragedy.

One of the girls never married.

Frank is foggy about where his father's family lived. But he does remember the names of his paternal grandparents, Solomon and Perel. He does not know the names of all of David's siblings.

Esther married someone who never really settled down anywhere or any place.

Frank remembers a story that "Pop told us once". Also, Mom told me how they struggled to save up enough money for Joseph to come to the United States. Doesn't recall year. Sent \$1,500, a lot of money in those days. Don't know what happened but there was big breakdown in family communications between Pop and his father. The family after getting all the money decided they didn't have to leave after all. Family communication stopped, at least for many years.

Pop was a very good student. He learned to speak English, wanted his children to be forced to learn English. When he came home from the store in Gas City he would read the Yiddish newspaper, Der Tog, and also the local newspaper.

He kept his books in Hebrew writing. Befuddled an IRS examination.

Pop was very bright, spoke understandable English. He had a fantastic memory. All of his customers when they would come into the store, he knew their families, asked about them, by name.

Mom and Pop always spoke Yiddish at home. We spoke English. When Mom and Pop wanted to talk in private, they used Russian.

Morris Rosen: I still remember him davening in the shul, davening with great exuberance, everyone noticed. Not successful in business. Never knew whether to believe him. Hampered the relationship between my father and his sister.

Mom and Pop came over at the crescendo of pogroms. They had to leave all their belongings. He was reasonably well to do, good businessman, had some assets [? - David was only 22 when he emigrated.] They started from scratch.

Pop was in New York selling piece goods. That was his way of making a living. He moved from New York to Harrisburg after the realization that they were going to have to learn English. Milt was born in Harrisburg (actually Philadelphia). I was born in Marion.

Mom was 84 years old when she died, in 1969. She never learned to read or write. But she was very bright. Could talk business with everybody.

We found some old papers that showed our name was spelled Meidenberg.

Pop told us about growing up, working in a bakery, delivering things. I don't remember any specific stories.

He was probably the equivalent of a high school graduate, but mostly self-taught.

How parents met. He was delivering bakery goods to the town where she lived. Knew her parents. That's how they met.

About the pogroms: horsemen came in. Friends they had all their lives had to participate in the destruction. Edict from the Czar. Couldn't understand how these people would turn on them. Got some apologies.

Life was intolerable, had to leave.

They talked about the freighter they came over on, the hardships. There were no staterooms for them. Food was meager. The voyage was awful. Lot of illness.

It was difficult to pull up stakes, come to a new land, new language, new customs. It must have taken remarkable stamina and courage.

Pop settled first in New York. [Only Frank has New York rather than Philadelphia.] Then moved to Harrisburg, where they were not excited about staying. They knew a rabbi in Harrisburg who told them about the new industrial developments in the midwest and told them in particular about Marion, but he meant Marion, Ohio.

Pop took the Pennsylvania RR, told conductor to wake him up in Marion, but meant Marion, Ohio. He wound up getting off at Marion, Indiana, made contact with some Jewish merchants there. Got hold of horse and buggy, started selling piece goods. Sold on credit often, pay back \$1 a week. Bartered often, chickens and eggs, produce.

He had a sixth sense as to who to trust.

He took me with him to Gas City, Upland. We parked, sold off the back of the buggy. Muslin, dress goods, like a farmers market.

Was in Marion for six months, then sent for family. He found the rabbi, told him he wound up in the wrong Marion.

No anti-Semitism that affected him in Marion or Gas City.

When they came up to the wagon, Pop would say how is your mother, your daughter, how is so and so doing? Amazing. He called himself "Dovid."

He opened the dry goods store in Gas City. There was glass factory there that had opened. Indiana Dry Goods store. His suppliers trusted him, helped him stock the store with merchandise.

Willie Glogas befriended Pop when he first came. Willie was in the shoe business. Opened a shoe store next door, the Twin Cities Cut-rate Shoe Store. Twin Cities was Gas City and Jonesboro.

Interurban. Saturday night was the big business night. Helped Pop on Saturday night. Stores open until 9.

I worked for Willie Glogas in his shoe store while in high school. A real good shoe was 5.98. Best salesman was one who could upgrade customer to the higher price.

One day I was sweeping the floor, Willie came and bawled me out. That was when I decided I wanted to work for myself. And I had upgraded so many customers!

Indiana Dry Goods was on First and Main Streets in Gas City. Two old-fashioned windows in the front. Row of tables down the store, filled with 80-square print, the fabric women used to make dresses. We sold pillow cases and sheets. We had a yard stick mailed to the table.

One of the suppliers was a big dry goods store in Cincinnati.

Disc two

We would have the salesman over to the house for dinner. He and Pop would talk about business. He was almost a family member. I remember going to a fancy hotel in Cincinnati when there was a show. I didn't know what a finger bowl was for. I didn't know how to eat watermelon.

We went from Marion to Gas City on the Interurban. We lived five or six blocks from the streetcar stop, Third and D. Our dog was called Tony, fox terrier. It would meet us when we came home.

Pop had a horse and wagon. Horse was Prince. Maybe a touch of what they had in the old country.

They wanted us to go to school. Mom would meet the teacher, ask about us.

Boys made cigarettes out of corn silk. Made me sick, never wanted to smoke afterwards.

Pop always had the store. It had a big pot-bellied stove in the back. Once there was a fire there, had to take all the merchandise out, put in a warehouse. That was the seed of my interest in industrial real estate.

Had a fire sale. The salesman from Cincinnati shipped in a lot of merchandise to go along with the damaged goods. It was a big success.

Never was a Jewish family in Gas City, nor other places where Pop sold, Sweetser, Upland. Once in a blue moon I would hear Mom and Pop talking about a "bad goy" who disparaged the "Jew peddler."

Gas City had Owens-Illinois glass factory. Workers were customers.

He told customers about his life story, how he got to Marion.

I learned to drive the Model T truck when I was 10 or 11, kind of an enclosed van. Three pedals. Accelerator, brake, reverse.

Sunday went for picnics at Matter Park. First with Prince, then with Model T.

The brothers: two and a half years apart.

We all had pet names. Milt had a lisp, small speech impediment, we called him the shtimmer-kutter. I was called the stinker because I would forget to go to the toilet sometimes. Ben was Bentsy tsvok, Benny the Nail. He was the athlete in the family. Meyer was the pisher, because he used to wet the bed.

I was close to Meyer at one point. He was the mechanic in the family, he helped me make a bicycle. Helped with the Model T.

At another phase, closer to Milt, we were in business together. Later Meyer came into the business.

Ben went off to Des Moines, Iowa, became a newspaperman, did well.

Front porch was important. Remember Pop and his cronies, Lawrence Klain, _____ Berman. They would drink tea from a glass, hold sugar cube between their teeth, Russian-style.

House in Marion (this must have been the one on Fourth St.) Three bedrooms, I shared with Meyer. Heated by a big potbelly stove, fired by wood, logs. In kitchen had a wood-fired stove.

Neighborhood was friendly although we didn't do much socializing with neighbors. Occasional anti-Semitic remarks in school.

Used to work in store in summer, did special sales. Sold socks, bandannas. We bought sugar wholesale, gave it away to help sales. Did the same with brooms. Did this in store in Fairmount and the one in Sweetser. I was the manager. It was good experience.

Graduated high school in 1933, depths of the Depression. I couldn't go to college because we couldn't afford it. Milt was in college, Ben was working, Meyer was working. I was the only one around to help out.

I helped by running the sales, particularly in Fairmount.

Lee Halperin of Marion showed us how to be in the fur business. We skinned muskrats in the upstairs room of the store in Fairmount. We did well. There were also a few mink around. Had to learn different varieties of mink. I once bought a housecat thinking it was mink. Lee Halperin got a kick out of that.

There was friend in Marion (Irv Weinberg?) who flunked out of medical school. Neither of us had much to do so we decided to go into business together. That was something called the Economy Pie Plate company (?) which made picnic sets--- paper plates, cups, napkins. We bought the inventory, truckload, and sold it house to house. Did pretty well.

When we ran out of that we looked for something else. For example, laundry hampers. Baskets. Other bankrupt merchandise. We did pretty well.

Then all of a sudden Irv Weinberg had a friend who bought dishes by the ton and sold them by the piece. We looked into it, got more and more curious.

The trucker in Gas City who lent us a truck after the fire to store the merchandise, leased us a truck to go to the potteries. We had the names of a couple of potteries. Zanesville, that area, there were makers. We bought dishes, peddled some. Did pretty well. Then we had a little store.

Scrounged up all the money we could get. Borrowed money from Irv's brother, from friends, some from Mom. We would buy dishes, lay them on straw, lay them out, dishes, straw. Took us two days to unload the dishes. Mom came down to help, other friends of the family.

Mother's Day 1934 we had an opening. We called it something like National China and Glassware Company. We picked a big name. Grand opening special was a 32 piece set of china for 94 cents. It wasn't china, actually, but we didn't know that. And lots of the pieces didn't match, but we didn't know that they had to. And anyway for 94 cents what do you expect?

Belle Weinberg was Irv's sister in law. She and Mom would come down to watch the store when we were away doing the buying.

Had a problem with the truck, had to get it fixed. We were running out of money. The truck stop [they were in Ohio] had a restaurant with slot machines. We tried our luck and made 10-12 dollars. We bought a big steak dinner.

It would take three days to unload the truck. Messy, the straw would blow, merchants would complain. We had friends in the shoe business, asked them to save boxes for us.

After three months of this, things got tough. It was still the Depression, and how many sets of dishes could someone buy?

We found out what people wanted. There were calls for deep dishes, platters, family style. We would go out to the farm houses to sell them. Sometimes we would come back with eggs or chickens.

Found another pottery, Hartford China Company, which made a bowl that you could leave in the oven. This was popular, sold well. We bought them on close out.

It was good experience. Eventually we started selling to restaurants. Bought glassware and silverware as well. We sold seconds. We developed relationships with the customers.

There was man named Hellman (sp?) in Fort Wayne, noticed the competition. He wanted us to go into business with him. He would own 51 percent. We found out he wanted to open up in Lansing, Michigan. It didn't have a china store there. It was the state capital.

I drove up to take a look, but at home things were rough. The folks were borrowing money to keep their heads above water, keep the store open. I couldn't leave home. We decided that we would split up, I would keep the store in Marion and he would go to Lansing. It was hard to divide the store but we did it without fighting about it. Irv Weinberg lives in Florida now.

From this came the restaurant equipment business with my brother.

Disc three

More about his parents.

Pop, well the older boys didn't have as much contact, communication with him as I did. I was lucky. He wasn't consumed with always making a living. He would talk with me about business, about how he came to the wrong Marion, other things. He had a good outlook on life. He was good at business, and with customers. He was amazing in the way he educated himself.

When his health started to fail, in those days, well Mom was a wonderful cook but we were eating pure cholesterol. She would make gribenes, the fat with all the oil taken out. We would eat it like popcorn.

Pop died at the age of 65 of a heart attack. He must have had tremendously high cholesterol. That's was the way people ate. The more schmaltz the better.

Mom made a dish called veranikas and another called zoverin russel, both of them full of fat.

Mom always served the chicken soup at the end of the meal to "wash everything down." It had knedlach. It was too much.

I had long talks with him on the porch. He was quite upset that his neighbors in the old country overnight would become enemies because of the edict of the Czar. Pop basically trusted people though. He helped them and they him. He kept his head above prejudice. I'm sure he changed a lot of anti-Semites' minds.

We had an orthodox shul in Marion. He was president. We didn't have a rabbi, although we had a shochet who came to town to kill chickens. The schochet would teach the kids Hebrew, for their bar mitzvah. But I wanted to know what the Hebrew meant, and the shochet got annoyed with me.

Pop was a leader, but he helped get the Reform congregation started, so the kids would not get detached from religion.

Pop liked to have people over for political debate. He liked to travel, more than Mom, who was fixed in her habits. He visited Esther in Canada. He liked people and liked to talk to people.

I have three wonderful kids, and I would like for one of them to take an interest in my business. Pop had four sons and he would have loved for one of them to be interested in his business. But for some reason we never did. Pop would say, you've got to do what you like to do or you're not going to do good. It was that simple, and I appreciated that.

I was the one closest to him. I was closest to the dry goods business. I had more of his time.

I learned the ethics of my father. I am like him in that way. He would try to take the full measure of a person.

Mom would sometimes talk of the chazerish goyim, but she made many good friends. They weren't prejudiced.

Mom was hard working. Devoted to the family. She would chew food for us when we were little and there was no baby food.

She was a bright lady, but without an education.

We had a strictly kosher home, different sets of dishes, special ones for Passover. I remember all the work we went through on Passover putting some sets away, unwrapping the Passover plates. Those were their customs.

She was 84 when she died. It was hard for me. She was living alone. Loved her grandchildren. Nan and my mother didn't hit it off very good.

There was a liberal inclination among my parents. It seem to come from Jewish teachings, the prayer books.

My parents were anxious to have a daughter, so they tried once more, and got me. I have pictures of me with curls and wearing a dress. I'm five years old already!

Mom's main home remedy was chicken soup. She was really convinced of the medicinal qualities of it.

Also Vick's rub. She would rub our chests with it.

Went to Horace Mann. All of us did. School was terribly important to Mom and Pop. They wanted to know what was going on, they talked to the teachers, very concerned parents, very involved.

I always liked civics classes.

I had an interest in gardening, still do to this day.

There weren't enough Jewish people in Marion to have a shul. We would rent a hall downtown for the holidays. One was above the Oddfellows Hall.

Mom and Pop never made a big issue with religion. Didn't force us to go to shul. Mom was more strict, wanted us to go. Still it was there, a matter of our daily lives. They didn't mind if we saw non-Jewish friends.

The temple was built in the early thirties when we established a Reform congregation. Pop was a big supporter. Eventually the Orthodox shul was in the basement of the Temple. But there wasn't much coming together on either side.

I had a bar mitzvah. I was trained by the shochet. It was a momentous occasion for our family. I think there might have been some non-Jewish guests. I made a speech, Mom cried with happiness.

I don't remember intense anti-Semitism. Occasionally bullies would use language. Teachers usually wouldn't tolerate it.

Mom would bake extra bread for non-Jewish friends, also strudel, gefilte fish, which had to be ground, not chopped.

Seders in our home always lasted too long. Pop was very traditional. We didn't understand what he was saying.

We would build a sukkah. Meyer made the frame. We would hang corn.

We never had a Christmas tree. We talked about it. Sometimes a new family would come to town and put up a tree. This caused a lot of discussion among the old-timers. How can there be a Christmas tree in a Jewish home?

I have become more antagonistic toward the extreme Orthodox, who resist change. Extremist Orthodox in Israel holding up progress there. I don't like it when a Reform rabbi won't marry a Jew and non-Jew even if agree to raise kids Jewish.

Jewish community in Marion has shrunk. Most of the businesses around the town square were Jewish owned. Now there are practically none left.

With rare exceptions like my family, most of the offspring of the Jewish families have left town

At one time, 50-60 kids in the Sunday school.

Times have changed. They continue to change.

Mom didn't like to travel. We never had family vacations.

Mom influenced me a lot. She was totally dedicated to her family. She loved it when her sons brought guests home. She was anxious to show the gentiles what nice people the Jews were.

Disc four

It was hard to meet Jewish girls. I was living next door to George Zimmerman, who was one of the town's leading merchants. He had two daughters, Nanette and Bobby. Bobby died a tragic death at the age of 16, of colitis that today would have been easily treatable. They took her to Mayo's, but it was too late.

Nanette was six years younger. She was the little rascal next door. She would sneak up behind me, grab my newspaper. I got so mad. I chased her around. This is how the romance started.

I dated in high school. But if I went out with the same shiksa two times in a row, Mom would find out about it and there would be a family council.

I was drafted into the military in July 1941, before Pearl Harbor.

I started to think about being away from Nanette. We got serious. We were supposed to be married in January 1942.

When I was drafted into the Army, they wanted to know about me. I said I was in the hotel and restaurant equipment business with my brothers. I was in the engineering department and I designed kitchens.

In typical Army fashion they sent me to Lawry Field in Denver to be a cook, in the cooks and bakers school. I never figured the connection. I did learn about dishwashers and mechanical potato peelers.

We wound up getting married in Denver because all the leaves were canceled. Original plan was to get married in Marion.

I was in the service for four and a half years. Nan wanted to start a family right away, but I didn't want to because I was going to be overseas.

Nan was a petite brunette. Her father was very domineering. He caught her smoking one time and raised hell. As a result, she smoked even more. She was a smoker her whole life.

Found a spot on her lung in 1980. Then found out cancer had spread. She had chemo and radiation.

She was playful, bright, cheery. She had a boyfriend who came to work in the store in Marion. Her father didn't like him at all. She got tired of him. He left town. We started to date. Our relationship grew.

Her parents were George and Helen Zimmerman. They were friendly with my parents. They pushed Nan, but my parents held back. Finally when we were

separated after I went into the Army we started writing and found out how much we had in common.

George was thought to be tough, grouchy disciplinarian. People were afraid of him. He was a softy underneath, but people didn't know that. He contributed to a lot of worthy causes, helped people.

He was crushed by the death of Bobby. Bobby was outgoing, vivacious. He never recovered from her tragic death.

Helen and George were both born in the U.S.

My dad and George were very good friends. We were a family from the other side of the tracks from them, "down dere dorten". Both our parents wanted us to get married, which made us a little hesitant.

I was the only son of four who was around. I felt that.

I was always interested in politics. I admired Roosevelt for bringing us out of the Depression. I knew what the Depression did to my parents. I knew it kept me from going to school.

I was more independent in my political thinking even then. I thought of Republicans as well as Democrats.

The Depression was horrible. We were still fighting it when World War II started. That's what pulled us out.

During the Depression my father struggled along. He lost a lot of money. People couldn't pay their bills. He had to borrow money at high rates.

Pop fortunately held his own. He remembered barter, let people pay him in kind. He pulled out of it, but it was touch and go.

The rabbi who married us in Denver was a little suspicious. He kept asking us questions. We had a hard time talking him into it. We didn't have time for any of the family to come out. A friend in the Army was best man.

I began to figure out the Army, understand what cooks and bakers school meant. I got sent to Officers Candidate School in Florida. This was early 1942, Miami, a hotel. Nan went back home to live with her parents.

After I became aware of what was going on in Europe, I felt I had to serve. The world had to wake up.

I wound up in the air force, though not as a pilot, instead air force supply. I was in Africa and Italy.

After OCS we went to Oakland, California in air service command activity. Bombsite repair, engine repair. Our unit was put on the hot list. We were sent to Everett, Washington. Lived in tents. It was rainy and muddy, but a good experience. Then we went to New York. I was the supply officer, had to make sure we had the all the necessary equipment. Being hot meant we could be sent overseas at any time.

When the Vichy French pulled out, our unit was sent to Morocco, Casablanca. We arrived at 2 in the morning after a rough crossing. We were there for six weeks. The battle of the Kasserine Pass took place soon thereafter.

We went into Tunisia and Algeria. Set up oil dumps.

Bought wheat crop from farmers. Later invited them to harvest the same crop to avoid it being a fire hazard.

We were in Bizerte, Tunisia. Became our central hq. Then we went across the Mediterranean. Unlike others I never became seasick.

Before I left Africa, I saw Max Ganz. He came in from the east. He was in a field hospital. He went to Italy too, same as us. San Severo. A B-24 came in, it was shot up, bad shape, landing gear wouldn't come down.

Disc five

The plane was coming down near a pipeline. It broke the pipeline and high octane fuel spilled out, but miraculously there was no fire.

All the crewmen survived. The plane was completely destroyed.

That was the closest shave I had in the war.

My brother Milt wasn't in the service. He took over the local B'nai Brith communications committee. He kept track of people, let everyone know what was going on. We all looked forward to getting it, finding out what was going on.

Found out about Bobby Glogas' death.

Nan was back home during the war. Helped out a lot. I was overseas for two and a half years.

Business continued all right during the war. Better than the depression years.

After the war I came to Camp Atterbury in Indianapolis, was reunited with Nan.

Our unit was going to go to the Pacific, but the atomic bomb changed all that. After the war in the Pacific ended, I was released. Few months later.

Nan and I started looking for a house. We didn't want to live with her parents. We found a place. It was a four bedroom home, cost \$15,000. It was on Euclid Ave. near the hospital. We were lucky to get it.

We had a happy marriage, 37 years [actually 38].

I received the Bronze Star for keeping planes in service. But the whole air force system was ridiculously inefficient. I found it repugnant to get a medal for doing what everybody should have been doing.

National China. By the time Irv Weinberg and I split up, when he opened up a store in Lansing, Michigan and I stayed in Marion, we didn't want to deal with the guy in Fort Wayne who wanted to buy us out, my brother Milt graduated from college and was working in Chicago for Marshall Field.

Interestingly enough he wound up managing their china and glass department. He handled a lot of close outs, and I would get wind of it. He would send us stuff.

Milt didn't know if he wanted to get into the business we were developing, the hotel and restaurant equipment business predominantly. Milt got a year's leave of absence from Marshall Field and came down and joined us as we were building it up. A few years later we asked our brother Meyer who was in Ohio managing a shoe store or something to come join us. That was in the late thirties. Meyer came just about the time I had to leave for the army, so that worked out pretty good.

When I came back and got reacquainted with my wife, I went back to work for National China. I stayed in that business until 1960 or so.

We brothers got along pretty good. There were disputes of course, but not insurmountable. We tried to get two out of three to agree, that was our principle.

The business changed from a retail and gift operation to a wholesale house. We got into designing and installing kitchens for hospitals and hotels and institutions like that. Entirely different from retail.

We could grow even though we were located in a small town. We did business all over the state.

I did a little industrial warehousing on the side when I was at National China. I liked that. My business became buying old industrial properties and fixing them up for warehousing purposes.

I left National China. There were some disagreements. I figured two brothers in one business was enough. My interests grew outside National China.

I built a Holiday Inn in Marion.

Tony was born in 1947. He was Anthony Charles. The middle name came from Nan's side of the family. There was no particular reason for the name Tony. We both liked it.

Tony wrote a paper in high school about how he wanted to go away to school and then come back to be mayor of Marion. Which he did.

David was born in 1949. He and Tony got along pretty well, although one time David got so mad he kicked a hole in Tony's door.

Jill came along quite a bit later, in 1956. She was a good eater---chubby little girl as a baby. We picked the name. We figured Maidenberg is such a long name, let's have a one-syllable first name.

David was named after my father.

Nan always put the kids to bed with a book. That made readers out of them. We felt that was so important.

Nan was the book reader in our family.

We were strict. Told them what time they had to be in. They figured out we meant what we said.

We liked to do things together as a family.

We didn't have many problems with the kids.

Nan was a night person. I got up early.

We tried to make them good citizens, understand importance of treating other people the way they wanted to be treated. Be sensitive to minorities.

I was active in the Chamber of Commerce. Nan did a lot at the Temple. We each had our own activities.

Nan was bright, intelligent, loving. She never could quit smoking. She was well versed in books, the arts, theater. She was a sharp dresser, made up properly. She was a very good parent, always kept track of the children. She would talk with the kids in the wee hours of the morning, when I was asleep. I would talk to them in the mornings, when she was asleep.

We learned to communicate better over time. I used to clam up when I got angry, but I learned this wasn't the right way.

Nan died Jan. 3, 1980. David was living in Washington, DC. He moved back to Marion to be with me. I don't think he wanted to, but felt it was the right thing to do. Having his company was important. It was a tough period. It took a couple of years for me to get back to normal.

We were and are a close-knit family.

Joyce was going to return to England. She had two boys and a girl, just like us.

We got married Jan. 11, 1981.

Most people my age would have retired. I feel that as long as you are doing something you enjoy and are doing it reasonably well, you should do it. I've seen people killed by retirement. My father-in-law used to open his big store in the morning and turn on all the lights. In the evening he turned off all the lights, took the receipts, took the mail to the post office.

The whole clan decided he should retire. I can't help but think he would have lived longer if he hadn't. He didn't have any hobbies, anything to do. He wore out tires on Tony's baby carriage, wheeling him all over Marion every day.

I'm not made to retire. I enjoy what I am doing. I could have retired ten years ago.

I still am involved in civic matters. I work with the housing authority. I am often criticized for not having minorities on the board, but I am not going to put a minority on the board if the person is not qualified, just to have a minority. I think that is a mistake.

We have one of the best housing authorities in the country, in Marion. We have five members on our authority. One is a banker, one is a lawyer, one is a realtor, there is me, an entrepreneur, one is business manager at the public schools.

Between 11 and 12 percent of our town is black. There was one woman who was vociferous that we didn't have a minority of the board. I told her to come to meetings to see for herself. She came to five or six, said the commission was doing its job, and hasn't been back since.

I have gone through periods when I regretted not going to college, but I don't I would have been able to accomplish as much. I might not have been able to do the civic work which I enjoy and which I know is good for the whole community.

Would I have gotten the same satisfaction if I had gone to college and became an aircraft designer with Boeing in Seattle?

My strengths include having strong women around me. My mother, my wife, my chapter two wife, my daughter. All very helpful. These women have been a great influence on my life.

Advice to grandchildren: find out what you like to do most, and prepare yourself for it as best you can. If you don't enjoy it, you should look for something else.

I liked to remembered for the way I am. I have always been an optimist, and am still an optimist. There is always an answer.