

**PREFACE:** In 1993 and 1994, Toby, Mike and Reed interviewed their parents about their lives. Reed captured the interviews on video. All three children asked questions. We did not have a plan ahead of time, but asked what was on our minds and what was in the context of the conversation. What follows are Mike's notes on highlights of the interviews. It is wonderful to see the actual interviews, to catch the humor and warmth, to savor the personalities singly and together. Milt was 81 on May 7, 1993. Irma was about to turn 78.

**Milt Maidenberg and Irma Maidenberg interview May 7, 1993, notes.**

Dad went to IU in 1929, the onset of the Depression.

Graduated in 1933, the year the banks closed under FDR's moratorium.

No employers visited IU that year. Dad wrote letters. Marshall Field offered a job. Dad was in the school of business.

He went into sales training. Pay was \$18 a week. "I lived on that."

I wanted to go to. My mother encouraged me. Cost was a factor.

All the boys I went to school with, we all became good friends. The SAM fraternity house. Depression years. No one had any money. I worked on Saturday selling shoes. I made five or six dollars. That was a lot of money then.

Did I have a childhood? I worked all through life!

Until age of 10 lived on Fourth St. Dirt road.

Why Marion? Father was an immigrant, had heard there was opportunity there. Gas boom. Gas City. He was a peddler. Horse and buggy for seven-eight-nine years. Then bought Model T. Then opened store, Indiana Dry Goods. Spent 40 years there before he died.

He worked hard. In high school I used to go to Gas City every day after school. On the inter-urban, which cost a nickel. Willy Glogas was friend of my father. His son Bobby died in WW II, shot down in last mission. Was over Adriatic, target was Ploesti oil fields

One characteristic of our family growing up was we didn't ask any questions (about life before Marion, or in Old Country), and they didn't tell us anything. Sorry about that now. We only found out by overhearing them talking.

Jewish community in Marion in early days, when I was growing up, was very big. Most of them had stores. Attracted by the general prosperity.

Rose would talk with Irma about how miserable it was in Europe. Sometimes if they didn't have any food they would put a big pot of water on the stove to boil, as if they were cooking something in it. Maybe they had a few bones.

Mother started going to Manitou when she was five or six. Family would go up with the Sachs family.

Dad: Ben had a very strong influence on me. We were very close.

Mom: First glimpse of Milt at the lake. Tall, thin, no shirt. Very good looking I thought. I said to myself, hmmm.

Rose Dobrow to Milt: You better watch out, you're going to lose Irma.

Irma's memory: Rose said, what are doing always hanging around here, eating our chicken? Make up your mind.

Mom went freshman year to Butler. Her father did not think she go away to school her first year.

Mom graduated 1936.

Not hard for her to move to Marion. It was nice community, lots of Jewish people. And I was in love with Milt.

Milt's parents were so thrilled to have a Jewish girl marry one of their sons. I was a princess on a pedestal.

When Meyer and Ben married Christians, caused great unhappiness with my parents.

Milt took train from Chicago to Youngstown, Ohio, to see if he could do anything about Meyer's plans. Ben already married.

Don't think Wilma, Ben's wife, ever came to Marion. Meyer and Marge came during the war, when Meyer joined the business.

Ben Jr six or seven years old when Ben divorced Wilma. She was from Akron (?).

Marion Jewish community very turned in on itself. We had no Christian friends to speak of.

Milt Keiner as catalyst for bringing Jews and Christians together. Worked at it during dinner parties. He wanted to belong to the Country Club as well.

Marion Machine was Keiner's company.

When I was 59, Alvin Cohn of Continental Coffee wanted me to come live and work in Chicago. "You'll make some real money." I didn't want to. I wasn't comfortable with it. I wasn't that ambitious.

I didn't have that drive. I thought, make a lot of money, become an important person, and die young?

Marion was comfortable.

Also didn't want to move to Indianapolis. Benny Senn went down to run it for us. Would have been smarter if I had gone, really expanded it. But didn't. It worked out all right.

Frank helped start the business. He left National China in 1962. His father-in-law died, left the Iroquois Building. He liked real estate. We made a deal to buy him out. After he left we spread out. Started a lot of mail order. I took the lead.

Mom: lot of our social life had to do with Indianapolis and the Pragers. We were very, very friendly with them. Met Pragers through Jason Klain. Both were in the scrap business. Sam was a scrap broker.

Sam had that dry sense of humor. Sylvia was bright, dynamic, engaging. Linda was born a day before Toby.

Milt: My father had a heart attack. Put him in the hospital. Today's medicine they would have saved him. He didn't take care of himself. He smoked Camel cigarettes, a lot of them.

Where my mother was born was in those days Romania.

Irma: My mother was a big influence on my father. He would have spent every cent he had if it weren't for my mother, who was very frugal. She was a very strong woman, not the clinging vine I once thought.

Milt: During the war, nobody ever talked about it (the fact that the Holocaust was taking place). UJA would come down to Marion, but raised money for Jewish people in general. I don't have any conscious memory of any discussion of the Holocaust when it was taking place.

Began to learn after the Americans had liberated the camps around 1945. News started to come out then. Learned more in the 1950's.

First trip to Israel 1958. All airplanes were propellers. 12 hours NY-Paris. 10 hours Paris-Tel Aviv.

David and Rose kosher "to a point". No Jewish butcher. Had two sets of dishes. Never had pork, never. Matzoh only during Passover. With schmaltz. Always came home for lunch.

Rarely had beef. First eighteen years of my life I didn't know there was something called steak. Beef we had was always in soup. Mainly we ate chicken. When I went to IU, I was served a piece of meat which they called steak. I had never had it before. True story.

Bob Gordon ADL director in Indiana.

I'm looking forward to Dec. 31, 1999.

If you weren't as old as you are, you'd be dead. That's my philosophy.