



**Leigh Levitt**

I was born on March 8, 1926 in New York City. My (paternal) grandfather came over in 1892, I'm sure of that. He was a seltzer deliverer – and in the census- maybe 1910 - it had him down as “seltzer deliverer”. I have a bottle with his name on it. So it's interesting.

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I remember my first grade teacher, Miss Ochesky, and she married a Polish prince and left the teaching business as far as I know. Everybody knew it, she was a pretty girl, teachers were all women at the time, or practically all women. And she was a very attractive lady, I recall. I remember all my grade school teachers – my most memorable teacher was Miss McCormick in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. She used to inspect everybody for fingernails, handkerchiefs, behind the ears...she had all kinds of funny sayings like, “it's your little red wagon”, (it's your problem), and we lined up every day. She actually cried over one of my notebooks, she thought I could do better, and she wasn't getting through to me.

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Most of the time I walked on Holidays to the synagogue, which is a hell of a walk. When I went to Hebrew School I took a bicycle up there and it was all uphill (laughs) so downhill was much better. I was bar mitzvah'ed there. It was a conservative Synagogue. My grandfather was Orthodox, and when he did come to visit us, I remember he walked around the table davening in the morning. He davened every morning and every night. And I remember the story my father told me: once this good friend of his was visiting him, and my grandfather was walking around the table and he asked him a question, and my grandfather walked around the table and gave him a slap: shouldn't interfere when you're davening.

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We were expected to marry a Jewish girl. My wife went out with non Jewish fellas and I went out with non Jewish girls but in the long run you were going to marry a Jewish girl or boy, no question about that. How your parents felt or how they looked upon things was important

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I knew what was required to get into a good college, so I was editor of the paper, I was on the swimming team, got the usual awards, the National Honor Society, that kind of stuff. .... I did get accepted to Harvard, but... at that time, they were doing tests for the army and navy college program, and the thing I'll never forget...I put "navy" down, I took the test and passed it. A friend of mine – a good friend of mine put "army" down. He got into ASTP \*, at the Battle of the Bulge. He was sent over, and he was killed. The difference between one check of Army or Navy made all the difference in the world.

\*Army Specialized Training Program

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The dental officer I was with in the Navy was a full commander (he used to say "full of what"?) and he was a great guy to work with. He was wonderful...the thing I remember is this commander, who was very senior to me, said, "We're both dentists. Whatever comes your way you take care of, whatever comes my way I take care of." That's the way it was. So that, to me, was lucky. We shared everything.

Years later, we went camping together down in Charleston, South Carolina. I met him down there. His wife had passed away at that time. I went fishing with him - he had spent most of his time in the service in Charleston. He caught one fish – I caught nothing at the time.

It was Passover and I brought a hard boiled egg! That trip was interesting. We went down during Passover and... I guess we had a tent – and we had a little Seder. In the tent was my wife, myself, my daughter and my son. My son, who was five at the time, he says, "I know how this is – there's the good guys and the bad guys!" He had the idea. He caught his first fish down there too. I have a picture of that. You try to find some matzohs in South Carolina!

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We joined Westchester Jewish Center, and when my daughter was 8, she was ready to go to Hebrew school, but they only had a 3-day program, but Larchmont Temple had a two-day program – we decided, let's go join Larchmont Temple. At that time they weren't taking people outside of the Larchmont area. They said but if you come regularly Friday nights, we'll arrange something. So we came every Friday night, and if we missed one the Rabbi said, "where were you?" We went regularly, and we were very active at the Temple. My wife was the president of the Sisterhood; I was president of the Brotherhood. She was in charge of several of the bazaars – I don't know if you remember the bazaars. They don't have them anymore. We had a lot of people in different industries that had surplus material to give to us. The bazaars were great; they got 2-300 people working at them. It was really a lot of fun. The kids helped out. There was a sense of community.

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**Leigh Levitt** was responsible for Larchmont Temple's newsletter for a number of years, and his wife Muriel was in charge of the Judaica shop for twenty years. Recently, Leigh

became the Temple's original Webmaster. Leigh recently celebrated his 87<sup>th</sup> birthday at a Friday night service in March."