

# Senior Honors for Senior Statesman



By ALBERT W. BLOOM, Executive Editor Of The Chronicle

Yarn-spinning Louis J. Reizenstein, 74, a senior statesman with senior honors in the community, wears each of them lightly, and with wit, his trademark — along with uncommon sense!

He has become the first elected permanent life trustee of the board of the United Jewish Federation. The UJF constitution did not provide for life trustees since the United Jewish Fund and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies were consolidated in 1955, except for the continuance of a few individuals who had occupied such positions previously.

The founders of UJF decided that the board should contain no such position. For 15 years, until now, that rule has been abided by; but, as the citation says:

"There are some individuals who offer such outstanding services, who achieve such affection among their fellow citizens and who are obviously of such value to a community that a special recognition must sooner or later be afforded. Louis Reizenstein has achieved many honors and rewards. Still, another one seems appropriate and indeed, essential. Louis was the first President of the United Jewish Federation. We have always looked to him for wise counsel, for effective recommendation, and for leadership, generosity, and wise decisions. . ."

Louis Reizenstein, shrugs off the kudos as we sit in the artfully decorated living room on Ellsworth Place in Shadyside, The Chronicle with tape-recorder at the ready, Louie in lounging robe and slippers.

"One redeeming feature of my life is that I can never take myself too seriously.

"It seems to me that people who do that, who take themselves too seriously, are often defensive types who feel inferior."

We warmed to the line of questioning, and Louis said, "Wait a minute."

He took out his hearing aid, adjusted it, and winked:

"All right," he said, "it's your nickel." Sense of humor applied to serious business "has got to be spontaneous," he mused.

"The ability to sit in on an impasse at a business or community meeting and break the tensions with a story is an asset," he conceded. But it can be an embarrassment, too.

Like the time when Governor David Lawrence and the flower of the Pittsburgh Jewish community were waiting for Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt to come to address a dinner meeting in a downtown ballroom one winter's night. The waiting grew longer and everyone had stretched the early part of the program out.

Louie and his beloved Florence were sitting out in the audience at a table near the dais.

Governor Lawrence got up and called: "Louis, c'mon up here and tell us some stories.

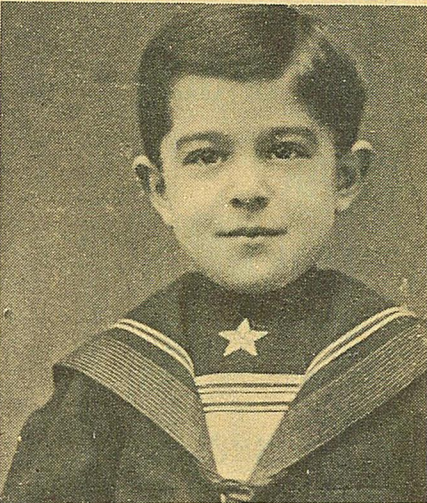
Mr. Reizenstein chuckled in recollection:

"I felt like the little boy whose mother called him into the living room in front of company and said: 'Johnny, now say something cute. . .'"

But nobody refuses a friend like Dave Lawrence; and Louis weathered the test with a smile — and a story, of course.

Life with the devoted Governor was always an interesting story, oftentimes serious, no matter where they were.

Louis recalled the time in Jerusalem when the Lawrences and the Reizensteins were on a humanitarian mission to Israel,



LOUIE the Boy.

"Gentlemen, that reminds me of a story. . ."

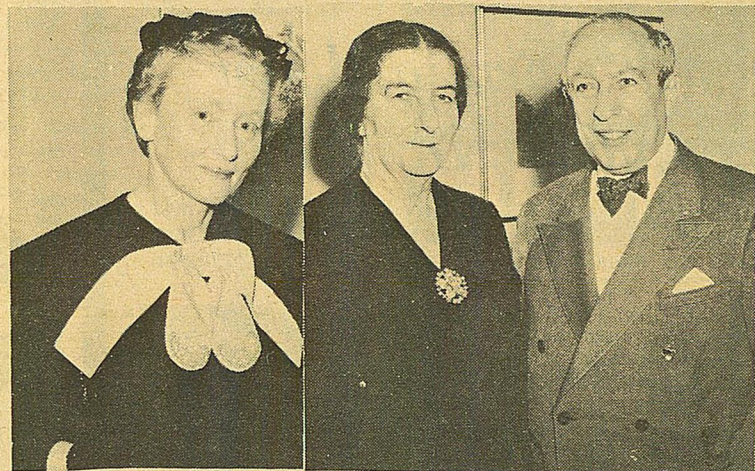
the Governor had to take some time out: He had to put a long distance call back to the United States to discuss, not the phenomenon of Israeli politics, but the matter of Presidential politics. A national convention was in the offing.

After all, wasn't it Chaim Weizmann who said to President Truman: "Yes, Mr. President, you are the President of 200-million Americans, but I am the President of a million Presidents!"

That story has now become a legend in public and international affairs.

It also should help Jews, and other folks of public affairs, not take themselves and their personal roles in public affairs too seriously.

Veteran Louis Reizenstein recommends it.



FRIENDS in fair weather and storm— left to right: the late Mrs. Florence Reizenstein, the now Premier Golda Meir and Louis Reizenstein.

We both point out a number of people who would do well to profit by the friendly advice.

Even the most serious moments could not stifle Louis's good sense and good humor.

Some years ago we were sitting together at a national United Jewish Appeal convention in New York on another winter's day. We both had to get back to Pittsburgh for his wife, the redoubtable and lovely Florence early defender of civil rights and of Israel, was to be honored back in Pittsburgh the next night as "Woman of the Year."

The late, famed Moshe Sharret, erudite Foreign Minister of Israel, was delivering a formal address in superb, cogent, and dignified prose.

Tense, with our eyes on the weather and our ears on Foreign Minister Sharett, Louie looked at my journalistic notes, grabbed his own pad, scribbled a note and passed it to me. It said:

"He has more answers than we have questions!"

A friendly, flowering man, Louis Reizenstein raises lovely blooms in the greenhouse off his living room.

A former President of the American Gladiolus Society, he noted that "One year I raised 1½-million gladiolus. Whenever I had a successful year, I would lose \$5-or-\$10,000."

Born July 26, 1896, Louis Reizenstein was a "premie" — he was in good historical company: Moses, Churchill, etc.

He came into the world two and half months ahead of schedule. He's been ahead of his time ever since.

Back in 1955, he helped put the energies

of super-rugged individualists into the teamwork of Federation and then had to accept the onerous task as first president as the only person all could agree upon.

When the thorny time came the YM&WHA and the IKS, he played a similiar role and had similiar office thrust upon him.

Success in industry and community didn't come easy. Deprivation was an early companion; it remains a ready memory.

Louie was the son of German immigrants, Louis and Frieda Jacobs Reizenstein. For decades, Reizenstein China patterns and art have been a family and community hallmark of Pittsburgh elegance. But chemistry and industry were Louie's bent and in it success beckoned.

It was a long upward haul for the little boy who grew up on the Northside, without many companions of his own faith, and familiar with anti-Semitic epithets.

Perhaps that, too, played a part in making him a more gentle, understanding, constructive, and helpful community leader. Professionals loved and enjoyed working with him. He understood and helped them.

His two personal trademarks: wit and sulka bowties.

His advice to younger men seeking community roles:

"It's not recognition that counts, but the causes.

"Don't think about yourself so much; think about the other guy.

Success?  
"It's like the question of how do I get to Carnegie Hall?

"Answer: Practice! Practice!"