

Les Nizin

JA: Thank you for sitting down with me. Where do you call home?

LN: I was born and grew up in Queens, New York. New York is my home.

JA: Let's discuss your family

LN: I grew up in a middle class home. My mother was a homemaker of Austrian descent, and I must say, she was a fabulous cook. My father was an immigrant from Germany and he wanted to be a physician, but his step father would not help him out financially and so he received his degree at Fordham University and became a pharmacist. My father became deaf after diving off a diving board. He worked as a pharmacist, in the Barbizon Hotel for women, in Manhattan. I commuted to his place of work on Friday afternoons and on Sundays, during my high school years, to help him out. Grace Kelly lived at the Barbizon and was a customer at the pharmacy. My father was invited to her wedding in Monaco. Gypsy Rose Lee lived close by, and I would drop off her prescriptions that were filled at his pharmacy. My dad was a prolific reader and the most intelligent man I have ever known.

I have been married to my wife Gail for 60 years, and we have two daughters and four grandchildren: two boys and two girls.

JA: How did you meet Gail, and what is the secret for your long marriage?

LN: We met at a AEPI fraternity dance, I was 18 years old. I walked over to Gail – she was 15 years old – and asked her to dance twice, but I did not ask her for a date. It was only a year later, through a blind date introduction from a camp friend, that I miraculously and happily reconnected with Gail. For both of us, it was love at second sight. We were married during my third year of law school.

Whenever Gail and I have a disagreement, I come up with a playful quip or joke – she smiles and it's back to normal. Laughter works! You should try it!

I am very fortunate to be married to Gail. She taught early child elementary school in the Roslyn public school system and then was the art teacher at the Solomon Schechter school in Roslyn, New York. Switching careers, she became a travel consultant, at my suggestion, first specializing first in ski vacations and, eventually, the world. We have had a full and enriching life together.

JA: I will try it next time Hedy and I get into an argument. Tell me more about your daughters.

LN: Barbara, the oldest, lives in Harrison, NY. She is an accountant and has three children. Elizabeth, the younger sister, resides in Manhattan and is a pharmaceutical representative. She has one son, who is 15 years old. We are a close-knit family. Since we have lived in Naples for 19 winters, we get together often with our family when we are in New York . We celebrate Passover and the Jewish New Year in New York every year. Our family visits us in

Naples in the winter. Last year, Gail and I were so delighted to travel to Israel with our daughter Barbara's three children. We feel blessed to have lived long enough to know what careers our three grandchildren in their mid-twenties will pursue.

JA: I know that you are an attorney. Tell me about your education.

LN: I attended public school at Forest Hills High School in Queens. I then pursued my undergraduate degree in Queens College, majoring in political science. I received my law degree from Brooklyn Law School. I am a New York City resident, born and bred.

To make some money during college and to put myself through law school I held many part time jobs – answering phones at a legal office, selling women's shoes, a bus boy, a waiter, a short order chef in the Catskills, and working in the Post Office during Xmas

JA: What kind of law did you practice?

LN: I specialize in criminal defense, as a criminal defense attorney. Not putting all my eggs in one basket, I also handled matters related to divorce, real estate, and foreclosures. By the way, I still practice in New York. I was also a Village Justice, but due to traveling back and forth to Naples, I gave up the position.

JA: You must have had some very interesting cases.

LN: I handled hundreds of cases both for private clients, as well as court appointed clients. I can deal well with the dark side of life.

I was partners with another attorney for 43 years, and later I was a sole practitioner. To build up my practice I took many court appointed cases.

One specific case that received a lot of publicity was a case where the district attorney of Queens was indicted, together with his son in law, in a Ponzi scheme.

JA: As a criminal attorney, were you ever threatened?

LN: To this day, I have received a monthly threatening letter from a client, who is serving a life sentence for murdering his step daughter and shooting his wife in the eye. I did not represent the client at his murder trial, but I did represent him during his divorce that was done remotely, while he was serving his life sentence.

JA: I first spoke to you some three years ago before I purchased a place in Naples. I saw your name listed in the Jewish Federation newsletter as the MCA president .

LN: I was one of the thirteen original members that founded MCA, in December of 2012. I was the president from 2015 to 2021. MCA has grown quite a bit, from approximately 300 members in 2015 to over 827 members today.

JA: It seems that you have strong managerial qualities to have been able to run such an organization. Have you headed any other organizations?

LN: First of all, I must admit that I am a keen observer. I have an acute sense of propriety. I think that I am shy, but have been told by my wife and several judges and other attorneys that I am the gentle man, of all gentlemen. I am a man who conducts myself, from the position of goodwill. I have self-control and can handle emergencies, and as I said before the dark side of life. I stay calm, cool and collected, when problems arise. I believe these are strong leadership qualities. I have served in various capacities on the following associations and organizations:

- President of my local school board, on Long Island for 12 years
- President of the Board of Managers of the Queens Bar Association.
- President of Network of Bar Leaders for all of New York City
- President of our co-op in West Hampton Beach, New York .
- Member for 25 years of the New York Appellate Court committee that oversees Court assigned attorneys for Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island.
- Associate Dean of the Continuing Legal Education for the Queens County Bar Association
- I am the Chairmen of the Judiciary Committee, of the Queens County Bar Association, interviewing 25-50 Judges for election by the populace or appointment by the Mayor of New York.
- I have been a member of the Appellate Division of New York , Character and Fitness Committee for the past 23 years. I interview about 250 candidates a year, to assess their qualification, for admittance to the New York State Bar.
- I served for 5 years as the editor of the Queens Bar Associations monthly newspaper.

JA: You mentioned that Gail was a travel consultant. Did you travel much?

LN: I must have been to at least 25 foreign countries and have seen much of the USA. My most memorable trip was to India in 1979, but climbing and tenting in Machu Picchu is not far behind, nor was our trip through the Spice Islands, seeing the Komodo dragons.

JA: Naples has a great many restaurants. How often do you dine out.

LN: I must confess that the only food I can make are eggs and matzo brei. Gail and I dine out several times a week. Gail is great at researching the latest, new, "IN" restaurants. We enjoy exploring new venues but my favorite Naples restaurant is Veranda E.

JA: Do you have any hobbies?

LN: My love is playing golf, as well as watching golf, football, and baseball on TV. Golf is one of the reasons that I am here in Naples. What most people do not know about me is that I

enjoy woodworking. Gail bought me a large table saw for one of my birthdays. I cut, hammered and installed Pecky Cypress on our bedroom walls, and then I white washed the Pecky Cypress. A previous project was installing shaker shingles on the facade of our first home in Oceanside, New York. In addition, I absolutely love to paint, not painting canvases, but, rather, walls. I have no fear of heights, and I have been on the roof of our home, painting the soffits. I am a wiz with a roller and a brush. I have painted numerous rooms in our home and outside our home, as well as my children's homes and apartments. I find it most gratifying and relaxing.

JA: What is a typical day for you?

LN: I usually get up at 5:30-6:am. I catch up on emails, read the New York Times, Newsday and the Naples Daily News, online.

Afterwards I walk 1.5 – 2 miles to the beach and return from the beach with coffee in hand. I have a smoothie for breakfast and watch the morning news. I still handle legal work and then it's time for lunch. Gail and I go to the gym. We love watching movies together and hearing the Naples Pops or Masterworks. We prefer the theater experience in Manhattan. We enjoy dining out with friends or just together. I don't read fiction, but I do read an abundance of law journals. There is extensive reading involved in practicing law. I prefer physical activities, as a way of relaxing.

JA: What MCA activities do you participate in?

LN: I bike with the co-ed group, participate in the Talmud group, breakfast with Glenn's group and a few of his dine around events. I enjoy going to many of the lectures and science groups. I have also been involved with Habitat for Humanity and Meals of Hope."

JA: Les, thank you for allowing me to get an insight into your life. For a shy person, you seem to have been very much involved with professional and educational associations. You are very creative and amazingly able to juggle, balance, and contribute your time to professional and civic causes.