

The University of Baltimore is launching a two-year investigation called “Baltimore’68: Riots and Rebirth,” a project centered around the events that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and their effects on the development of our city. UB administration and faculty members in the law school and in the undergraduate departments of history and community studies are planning a series of projects and events to commemorate the 40th anniversary of this pivotal event. We are currently working with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Maryland Public Television and the Enoch Pratt Free Libraries to pursue funding for projects that may include conferences, a website and a library traveling exhibit.

Your potential participation in an oral history project would contribute to the very foundation of this project – the memories of Baltimoreans who lived through the riots and saw the changes that came about in response to them. Your life story can fill in the limited knowledge we learn from newspaper accounts and the television footage.

If you choose to participate in the project you would be interviewed by students from the University of Baltimore. They will ask you questions, but your memories will determine the direction of the interviews.

If you agree to serve as an oral history informant in this project, you will meet with a team of undergraduate students. The students will take a still photograph of you. In addition, if you have a photo of yourself in or around 1968, we would greatly appreciate it if we could borrow it, scan it, and return it. We would reserve the rights to reproduce those photos and use them on the website, conferences, exhibit or publications.

The students may conduct the interviews at a location of your choice, or you may meet them at the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library for your interviews. During the interviews, your recollections will be recorded in two forms: audio and video. The students will be responsible for operating the equipment. You can expect the interviews to last for a minimum of 30 minutes each.

Sometimes talking about events that occurred decades ago will unearth forgotten memories. Undoubtedly, some of those remembrances will be negative. We greatly appreciate your willingness to take the risk of exploring a potentially painful past so that your life experiences will be recorded.

After the interviews, the students will transcribe your oral history. They will provide you with a copy of the transcription for your review before the transcription is published. The transcription, video and audio records will be archived in the Langsdale Library Special Collections and will be accessible to the public. Your name will be attached to these documents. The University of Baltimore may use your image and/or your words in any future documentaries, exhibits, conferences or publications. Participants in the oral history project agree to waive their confidentiality.

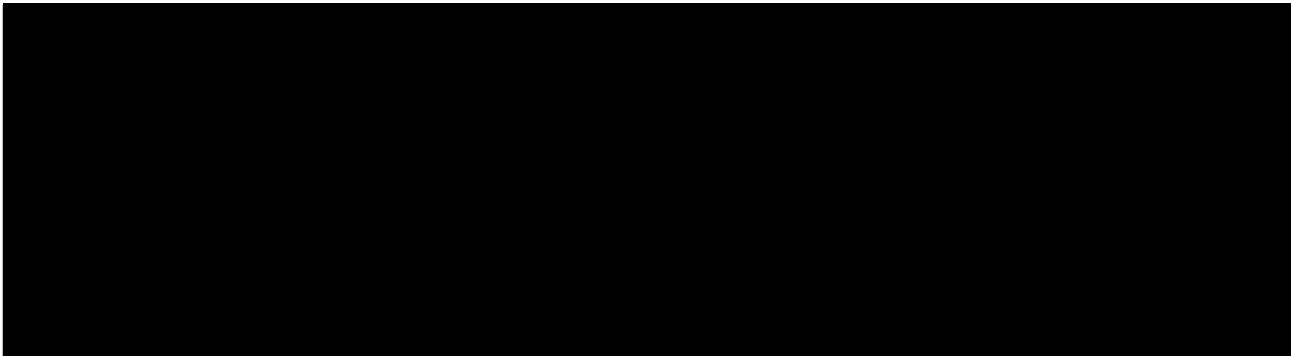
If at any time you are uncomfortable with participation in the study, you are free to drop out. Participation is strictly voluntary. While your participation is requested and highly valued, you are free to decide whether or not to continue participation at all times. You may decline to have your name published with your reminiscences

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 410-837-5296. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Nix, Ph.D.
Visiting Assistant Professor
History and Community Studies
The University of Baltimore

I have read and understand the information provided above, and consent to participate in the study. I have also been given a copy of the informed consent for my records.



Interview with Frank Bressler

Maria: Ok so first of all, please state your name, your full name.

Frank: My name is Frank Bressler.

Maria: Ok. And in the 1960's in the years leading up to the riots in Baltimore, what was, just briefly describe your life situation, how old were you, where did you work, where did you live, where did you do your shopping?

Frank: I lived in Baltimore, in the Park Heights area, rather in the Pikesville area, and I was in the dry cleaning business, I was in the service from 1943 to 1946, and started in the business in '46, actually the riots didn't occur until 1968. I had a dry cleaning plant on Belvedere Ave near Reisterstown Rd and that was where we were at the time, the location of my employment.

Maria: Ok. And at that time, were you married and had a family?

Frank: I was already married, I was married in 1948, this year fortunately, God bless us, we will be married in a couple of weeks for 59 years. I have three daughters all married, 2 grandchildren, grand daughter, grand son, one daughter lives in California, one in Florida, one in Connecticut.

Maria: And did you have your 3 daughters, had they been born yet in the '60s?

Frank: They were children at that time, little children

Maria: So did you own the dry cleaning plant?

Frank: Yes, I did.

Maria: Ok. And in terms of just your daily life, where did you do your shopping for food and clothes, and essentials?

Frank: Most of the shopping in that time was done around in the Park Heights area, in Pimlico, 3500 block of Park Heights Ave near Park circle, which most of the stores were destroyed during the riots.

Maria: In the year before the riots, what sort of interactions did you have with people of other races?

Frank: Well at that time it was mostly the community, whoever was there, and is a mixed area and employees mostly African-Americans, which you call 'em at this time, and we didn't have any problems at all at that time, very little conflict with anybody. At that time you could walk around the streets, go where you wanted, at night and prior to that, many times you could even go out in Druid Hill park and sleep out there at night and wake up alive the next day, and you could walk down the street at night and didn't have to worry about anybody shooting or stabbing you and drugs were not as prevalent then as they are now.

Maria: Did you have business relationships with African-Americans; I mean you said most of your employees...

Frank: Most of my employees were.

Maria: What about social relationships?

Frank: Not social because it was mostly a Jewish community around Park Heights Ave, and Reisterstown Rd in that area, was mostly in Mt. Washington, was mostly a Jewish area. And most of the people that we were acquainted with, the schools, our friends, were you know in that community.

Maria: And how would you describe race relations in Baltimore in general at that time?

Frank: At that time there wasn't, the problems really started if that where there was such a divide, but prior to that everyone got along, people worked, you had maids coming in cleaning for you, domestic servants, which was normal and that was always nice relations...

Maria: What do you remember about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King?

Frank: Remember, I mean hearing the news we were rather shocked, you know after the march and the civil rights and everything I was shocked as everyone else to hear he was assassinated.

Maria: How did you hear about it do you remember?

Frank: On the radio.

Maria: And how did that make you, I mean how did you react?

Frank: It's hard to say now how I reacted then, we were upset because of what occurred just a short while afterwards, the reaction to it, which followed

Maria: Could you have, when you heard about his assassination was there any part of you that thought something bad was going to happen as a result?

Frank: No I couldn't anticipate what was gonna happen, because just like in any assassination, when Kennedy was assassinated and others were shocked by it. But you do not know at the time what was going to occur afterwards, which we were rather shocked, what did occur when the riots developed a short while following that incident.

Maria: And how did you hear about the riots starting? Well first of all did you hear about the riots in the other cities before they hit Baltimore?

Frank: Actually no. It started on a Sunday night, we were at a, with a group that, *Bethful* synagogue, we were part of a group that put shows on every year and during the

intermission someone stood on the stage and says something is happening in town, we don't know what it is, sounds like a riot, we're cancelling the show now, everyone go home, go directly to your home, do not go anywhere, go home; which we did. Then we turned on the radios to hear how in the inner-city all this was beginning to happen, it started small and then like a cancer, grew grew grew, spread spread to various sections of the city.

Maria: So you were listening to the radio to get your news?

Frank: At that time most of the news we got was from the radio.

Maria: And what were the reports saying about where, was being hit...

Frank: It started mostly in the inner-city around Gay St. Holiday St, Gay St, down near the City Hall and started along that area and we heard about them breaking windows, setting fires, looting businesses, and we were rather shocked at what was happening because that was the core and from there it began to spread. There were many fires, we knew people, I knew people over there who had businesses that were looted and the...

Maria: Were you in contact with those people during the riots?

Frank: I found out who they were afterwards. Shortly, that was Sunday, by Monday evening there was a meeting that went around by word of mouth through northwest Baltimore that the riots were happening in the city, they were hitting mostly Jewish businesses, which we were very concerned about what to do. And on Belvedere Ave near Reisterstown Rd there was a place, a warehouse and if I can recall it's probably 200 businessmen assembled that night to discuss what was happening and what we could do about it. Some of it was already spreading down to south Baltimore, lower Baltimore to the Polish area, Lombard St to the Jewish area, along there and through downtown

Baltimore and through the business area down Howard St, Lexington. And everybody became concerned and started setting up defenses of what to do, how to protect themselves. Lower Baltimore, all we heard, all the way down the Polish area, down to south Baltimore, Lombard St area already were putting people up into their businesses with weapons, guns and says stay away from here, we're armed, stay away from here and they protected their businesses. The next day there was a meeting among some of the leaders of the businessmen in the community of the Park Heights, Heyward, Rogers Ave area and we decided since most of us, or many of us were ex- military people, we were going to set up a military type of defense in Baltimore to protect this type of the area to keep this from happening out here, we called in attorneys to tell us legally what we could do, what we couldn't do, how we could protect ourselves, how we could protect our business, if you hurt anybody what you could do to protect yourself, if you were threatened and so we were pretty well advised what to do during the period of that day or so I sat down and tried to compose a constitution to form for this organization so that we would have something to go by. We raised money and whatever we could, as dangerous as it was, I drove downtown to Baltimore St across from Gayney Theatre, there was a gun shop there, the riots were going on at this time, moving, progressing. I had enough money, I bought 16 double barrel shot guns and 3000 rounds of ammunition. The man says you got enough to go to war, I says if we have to, we will. I returned home safely and distributed the guns to various businesses at various locations. We set up defenses on Crossroads, Park Heights, Belvedere, Reisterstown Rd, Heyward Ave and Rogers Ave, 3 lines of defense around the Pimlico hotel area. We had short wave radio and we were able to communicate with each other. First the second night and third night I was at a

cleaning business, and I went down and I spent, I and other men spent the entire night in our businesses. I moved all my clothes to the back of the building and I sat all night with a shot gun pointed at the door incase anyone came through to try to loot or burn my place. Under my constitution we have the right to defend our own property when the government or the police were unable to do it, you were in alliable right. One of the first laws of the government is that they must protect the citizens of the United States against insurrection or riots, that is rule number 1. They failed to do it, the police did come in but the police had orders not to shoot anyone, they did arrest a lot of people.

Maria: What about the National Guard?

Frank: No first police went in and tried to stop and control it but this was progressing so fast that it started going up Harford Rd, up Bel Air Rd going out to Walbrook area, off North Ave, going up Franklin St, and in all the areas, and they primarily went after small businesses. The cleaners, the this, the that, the drug stores, the liquor stores, whatever, they went after them first. The method they used first was sending children in; they figured if you send children in, the police weren't going to do anything. But once children went in, they started looting, then everybody went in and tore, and when they finished tearing up the place, ended up setting it on fire. There was too much for the fire department to handle, we didn't have enough police to go in all directions, the so called insurrection rose up so fast that it was rolling out of control. We seem to feel afterwards in review that the, a lot of the tension and the people in the inner-city felt they were not getting this they were being deprived of and this and that, suddenly it opened up a Pandora's box and all of this spilled out uncontrolled. It just released in every direction. As I say, getting back to our areas, the other areas burning and destroyed and so on, they

brought the National Guard in. The National Guard once again patrolled the streets but the National Guard didn't have any bullets in their guns cause they didn't want to have mass murders or deaths or so on, or blood running through the streets of Baltimore. So it was by show of force they hoped to stand on corners with rifles in their hand that you know don't scare, cause they didn't know there were no bullets in there. The purpose of it was good because it did eliminate unnecessary deaths.

Maria: Did you see the National Guard?

Frank: Oh yes. They walked up on the street, in fact at one point, I went around to northwest police station not knowing that the police hands were tied because we had this organization that if you need any help call us. At that time we put our heads together and came up with an idea of propaganda which became very, very effective among my employees and others, we told them northwest Baltimore is now armed to the teeth and we let this filter back into town. It didn't take long before the people in town, the word passed around, northwest Baltimore is armed to the teeth, be careful.

Maria: Did your employees live downtown?

Frank: The one that, one of my fellas, he lived for a guy who used to sell, what'd they call it, numbers in town , Lil' Willie...and he was he connected with a good point and the word spread real fast. So this bit of propaganda was so effective that we almost set up a wall, invisible wall. So he came back to me one day says, nothing's gonna happen, he says they're armed to the teeth out here. I says what do you mean armed to the teeth, the police? He said no there's people out there, they're armed to the teeth, he was coming back to me. Then he came to me on the 3rd day, I think on the 2nd or 3rd day, I says Jamie, I heard a rumor that they're gonna be coming in off the beltway and they're gonna come

in to the malls off the beltway around Baltimore. And he says Frank, nothing's gonna happen, I says what do you mean nothing's gonna happen, he says they're just testing you, meanwhile the state police went out there, the county police went out there and everybody out there on all the entrances coming in, coming in to the city, nothing happened. This progressed almost 3 days and moved on up Park Heights Ave starting at Park Circle. Up Park Heights Ave there was a group of stores 35, 3600 block of Park Heights Ave, was all businesses, mostly Jewish delicatessens, this and that, dairy stores, food stores and everything and it just spread from the beginning all the way up until every store was looted, burnt and destroyed. It progressed on up to Park Heights and Belvedere Ave, near *Biddle* race track, a short way above that was the Pimlico hotel and actually it stopped just about that point, that's about as far as it got. Al Stein cleaner up on Heyward Ave was looted, another person behind Pimlico hotel, a jewelry store was hit but there was no other further damage into northwest Baltimore as a result of our actions. So we feel we weren't, didn't sleep, the propaganda and our actions in our defensive action, saved northwest Baltimore from destruction.

Maria: That's great. That's wonderful. I actually have a couple of questions for you as a business owner also. Before the riots but in you know any other time, during the time that you owned your business, had you had any sort of threat to your business or damage or anything like that, theft?

Frank: No there was no damage, people were working, it was people were working, everybody was trying to get a job and they were making whatever they could out of a living and trying to get along the best they could.

Maria: So your business had been fine up until...

Frank: There was no problem, there was no racial problem.

Maria: Oh no I don't mean, I just mean generally had you ever been robbed or had you ever been...

Frank: Oh I had my windows cracked and people robbed and break in on occasion but fired somebody and he broke in and somebody else, they would break my windows in the front, the kids would throw rocks, I mean this was normal, you accepted being in business in the inner city, things like that happening

Maria: But nothing major?

Frank: Nothing major.

Maria: So, and did you, well actually, these are actually a lot of questions for people who had damage done to their business and you were, you did not have damage done.

Frank: Oh I saved my business

Maria: You did. Do you remember how your employees were reacting to the riots?

Frank: Truthfully not.

Maria: Do you remember what the mood was in your neighborhood where you lived, not necessarily among the business owners but among everybody?

Frank: Well the fear was that it would come out, further out into northwest Baltimore into our business, we were seeing on the television what was happening every hour. The burning, looting, the everything going on, it was I mean you know, it's a terrible thing to see that your city is being... Actually what happened, buildings used to have big wide windows open stores, as a result of the riots, if you ride through there today, you're gonna find all the places have been bricked up, stoned up, the windows have been removed, the doors have been barred, there's bars, there's grates in front of the windows,

grates in front of the doors, none of this existed prior to the riots. The doors were open, your register was there, people would come and people would go, you didn't have to live in fear.

Maria: What is there today where your store was?

Frank: Well, years later the neighborhood changed, my business changed, my clientele moved further north into northwest Baltimore and I had to move further up towards Old Court Rd, I relocated and I stayed there for a while but I had a branch store and finally I reached the point at which I sold it to Koreans. They took over and then the soon year they sold to others and things got so bad in recent years and crime in the area and the shooting, and drugs that they just closed it up.

Maria: So is there nothing there now?

Frank: No they're not there, it's gone. The one on Belvedere Ave is gone, there's still one place open near Old Court in Reisterstown Rd, near Staples. There's a place that carries my name which I sold them and was sale of the place, but the business itself as crime got out they were afraid to go down, they couldn't drive down at night, afraid to leave at night. Cause Belvedere Ave in northwest Baltimore from that area now on down to Park Circle is nothing but a slum and a total drug area and crime area; one of the worst in the city.

Maria: Do you remember when it was that you sold the store?

Frank: 1982.

Maria: Ok. So you had that store for a long time.

Frank: And I was there since 1946, for 36 years till 1982.

Maria: Well as far as you know it's just the building now, is the building still there?

Frank: They sold it to somebody, its something other business in there. The whole area has changed; all the businesses are of a different type, catering to a different person, clientele until now than existed at that time.

Maria: You mention watching the coverage on television also, what did you think about...do you remember your impressions of the coverage? Do you think it was accurate, do you think it was adequate?

Frank: It was adequate but was frightening to see your city being torn up. That the city was being looted, the city was being burned and that, businesses were being destroyed who had been there for many, many, many years. That they just don't exist anymore, they just completely wiped...they changed the face of the whole city. After the riots nothing was the same afterwards, then was the tension between the black and the whites, the fear of them coming in maybe causing damage, and the tension continued for many years after that.

Maria: And could you talk a little more about that, how Baltimore changed after the riots and how your neighborhood changed

Frank: Well what happened is it caused a flight of people from the areas, people who used to live out in, Forest Park area used to be predominantly Jewish and gradually as the neighborhood changed they moved out and moved to Park Heights area, from Park Heights they moved further out Park Heights into the valley and further, further away. Going back to prior to WWII there was a ring around Baltimore, a ring around Baltimore which says no one can sell to blacks beyond North Ave, when the war started there was an influx of people coming for the war, for the industries and everything, they needed housing and started opening up other areas, and renting rooms and gradually that rule was

broken down. Not only was for the blacks, but strange as it was, back about that period, there was even places up here if I can get into the Jewish aspect of it, Colonial Village, right on Reisterstown Rd, restricted to Jews, across Patterson Ave toward Liberty Heights Ave, the area was restricted to Jews. Roland Park was restricted to Jews, they couldn't sell to Jews and here it is we're talking about this instance with the blacks but yet all of this was going on. The Jewish people were limited to University of Maryland, they had quotas who could become doctors, they kept quotas, they couldn't become engineers in certain places, some banks in Baltimore wouldn't hire Jewish people, you didn't know this, there was a lot of prejudice but yet we've learned to live with it because unfortunately for the Jewish people, this has been going on for 2000 years. So it's nothing new, we've learned to live and absorb and you know mix in whatever was and sorta keep quiet about it. But gradually things changed, laws changed, zones changed, the restrictions changed and as the Jewish people moved in, the black people moved into their areas, Liberty Rd area and so on, and the whole community changed.

Maria: Do you remember, does anything stay in your mind in terms of the businesses that were affected? Do you remember anything major?

Frank: Yeah, a lot of them didn't have any insurance. I mean when we started our business, our father started in 1934 with one little room with a till, with a pressing machine and we grew into a business, we had a store, we had routes, and other businesses like that started with nothing and built after WWII, if they didn't have insurance they lost everything. Some went back, some never went back, most of the business in the inner city just never opened up again. It wasn't worth it. You lost your base, you lost your customer base, you just didn't have it.

Maria: Do you recall that after the riots, your relations with people of other races changed?

Frank: It diminished after a while, but like everything else, when you get sick it takes a while to get well. When you have a riot the city was sick, people were angry with each other, the ones who were hurt in businesses never forgot because if you were in business you lost everything that you spent a lifetime building up. You're never gonna forgive anybody for it. And that's hard to start over again, especially if you had a house and children to raise and everything. Not that forgiving, not that soon. But as the generation changes and another generation changes so what has happened now the end result of Park Heights Ave started out, the change, the influx of people coming in. Park Heights Ave which from Park Circle on up to Belvedere Ave was a beautiful area, the homes were well kept, the neighborhoods were well kept and as the people moved out and Afro-Americans moved in, a lot of 'em rented, instead of renting they didn't take care of the houses, multiple people moved into the houses, crime moved in, drugs came in, and today Park Heights Ave is now one of the worst slums of Baltimore, more houses are boarded up in there, the city lost its tax base because areas that weren't clean, they never rebuilt, businesses didn't rebuild and so the result after the riots is where Baltimore is today. It has lost, 100 000 people have moved out of Baltimore and the people that live in Baltimore live in fear. As many times as I would like to go down to over Eastern Ave to the Greek restaurants down there and my wife absolutely forbids me to drive through there because honey, she says, if your car breaks down and we're stuck here God help us. I may go all the way around the beltway to get there but I wouldn't drive through the city

anymore, so there's another effect. At one time you could drive anywhere you wanted you didn't have to worry about driving through the area.

Maria: Do you think that a similar event could happen in Baltimore again?

Frank: Anything can happen again. Right now we're having an influx of multi-racial people coming in from all nations of the world. As you see over in Iraq, as you see in Palestine, there's groups of people of different religions that are now factors that are growing that are creating trouble that didn't exist before. We have gangs, the Crips and the Bloods, Cherry Hill in town where if you're wearing the wrong bandanna they'll kill you, they'll beat you up, they'll stab you just because you walked across the street into their neighborhood. This is a new world, this is a different world, we didn't know this kind of world years ago. We lived in peace, neighbors lived with peace, people respected each other. They respected your homes and your property.

Maria: What changed do you think? Why did it change? I know it's a big question.

Frank: Well it's a big question, a lot of it as we know going back if you want to get into the other side of it is the inner-cities with children born of single parents, no fathers, the peers, the criminals in the street become the peers of the children either you get in with them or they'll beat you up, you gotta join in the crowd and show that you're just as bad and as terrible as they are. And the culture spreads and spreads until the children are left on the street with no control, no family, no homes, which has affected their lives and their education, because when they come home from school there's no one there to be with them. No mother, no father, no good meal to eat, and the children react to all these conditions and therefore the whole city is now almost in a chaos, except around the harbor area, but walk away from there and God help you.

Maria: So you do think that this sort of thing might be able to happen again?

Frank: One never knows, just yesterday the Hamas took over Palestine from the Fattah; 2 weeks ago this didn't happen. In a few weeks from now, the United States I pray is as the next serviceman...that we bring home our troops from Iraq because they're only over there getting killed everyday and blown up in their Hum V's and by IEDs explosives that are going on. They're dying everyday and coming home with arms legs gone and it's a terrible situation what's happening. Meanwhile the Kurds, the Shiites and the Sunnis are blowing up each other and we're in the middle of a civil war right now and we don't know what's going to happen, what the world's gonna be unless the nations get together and we get a president who will then call nations of this world together to sit down and see what is in the best interest of all the nations and not what's in the best interest of businesses who are trying to establish a government in Iraq so we can buy oil from them. There's a new term called blood for oil, no more blood for oil, which is a term that you may be hearing in the future. You're killing our young boys to try to get a government and unfortunately it is a terrible situation, so when you ask can it happen, the world right now is exploding, everybody's hating everybody else, and most of it is based on religion.

Maria: Well I think that I'm about set here...

milestones

Smitten In Song

Linda L. Esterson
Special to the Jewish Times

For Frank Bressler, it was love at first sight. And he only saw her from behind.

It was the fulfillment of the impossible dream. Just 24, he had recently returned from three years of Army service and knew he was destined to meet his *besmert*.

On a December night in 1947, Frank went to a B'nai B'rith Chanukah party. When the band took a break, a beautiful brunette sat at the piano. Time stopped.

"I didn't see her face, but I knew my future was set at that precious moment," says Frank as he distinctly recalls the life-altering experience.

As she played, many of the Jewish singles gathered around the piano to join in song. Frank stood behind her and comfortably melded his voice with the others.

At 19, Irene Klawansky was an experienced musician, having grown up as the daughter of a cantor. She

spent many an hour as her father's accompanist and enjoyed their family evenings filled with music.

After the dance, Frank approached Irene. She provided her telephone number on a small piece of paper, which is proudly displayed in a frame today. He called and asked her for a date on New Year's Eve, but she was already booked. Irene could tell he was smitten and wanted to "be with him, too."

"I thought he was adorable ... he looked so handsome," she says. "He seemed very mature, more than the boys I had gone with."

They went on their first date in early January to a show and out for a sandwich. By Valentine's Day, Frank had professed his love and presented her with a necklace and bracelet set.

Irene, too, was entranced by him. His maturity exceeded his years and her impressions of other boys who were just "ho-hum."

Within a few months, Irene had discussed him with her mother, who told her she was too young to get married. In those years, though, people found their matches and settled down early, especially those who came home from the war, according to Irene.

Frank offered Irene his school ring a few times in the ensuing months. The more time they spent together, the more deeply they fell in love. And when they passed an accident and he stopped to help, Irene knew he would make the perfect husband.

He proposed in April and they married July 18, 1948. After a honeymoon at Grossinger's in the Catskills, they returned to their native Baltimore, where Frank would

spend 36 years running Bressler's Cleaners. Three daughters, two grandchildren and 60 years later, they still hold hands.

"We're still very good friends and we're still very much in love with each other," says Frank, now 84. "I couldn't ask for anything more."

He's still throwing compliments her way and caters to her needs, doing things like cleaning dishes and making beds. He's always been that way, and one daughter told her father she wanted to find a husband like him because of the way he treats her mother.

They have more time to travel lately, to places like Israel, Greece, Turkey, Hawaii, Canada and the Grand Canyon, since Frank retired about a year ago from his job as lobby director at Sol Levinson and Bros. Funeral Home. The Bresslers volunteer at Northwest Hospital Center and their synagogue, now Beth Tfiloh Congregation, and the Jewish War Veterans.

For a successful marriage, Frank recommends three things: being good friends, respecting each other, and love.

"We depend on each other so much, we're like one person," he says. "We know exactly what the other's thinking. We blend together."

Irene echoes his sentiments. "You have to have respect for each other and be understanding," she says. "Don't get upset about every little thing. Nobody's perfect."

And a sense of humor is also paramount. After all these years, Irene still laughs at Frank's jokes.

"I had told my mother and father that when I met the one, I would hear bells ringing," he says. "It wasn't bells, it was a piano playing." □

Linda L. Esterson is a free-lance writer in Owings Mills.

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PHOTOS PROVIDED



Irene and Frank Bressler

