



Agudath
B'nai
Israel
Synagogue
Lorain, Ohio

THE GARY FAMILY

(Bob & Jim Gary, April 2023)

THE FAMILY & THE BUSINESSES

The three Garfinkle (aka Garfinkel aka Gary) brothers, Dave, Si and Frank and their sister Pearl moved to Lorain in the later part of the 1930s. They came at different times from Cleveland having previously lived in Philipsburg, PA, affectionately known in the family as “swamp poodle”, where they were all born. The now married brothers had begun their families. Dave, the eldest brother, led the way to Lorain. In Lorain he worked as a shoe salesman at Cousin Jack Garfinkel’s shoe store. His father-in-law, Sam Levine, helped him open Advance Motors, a used car business across the street from the shoe store at Eighth St. and Broadway.



Si, Frank, & Dave - 1974

Dave and Ruth and their son, Gene (Eugene) lived in a house on Eighth St. near Oberlin Avenue. Si and Sadie followed them to Lorain shortly thereafter and then Frank, Hilda and their daughter Ellen Jean were next, both couples moving across the street from Dave in a two-family. Sister Pearl, her husband Al and their son, Dickie (Richard) also lived on Eighth St. Al opened an army and navy store with surplus goods from the military. Pearl passed away in 1953 and Al moved away not long after. The three brothers focused on the retail auto business. By the end of the 1940s in addition to Bob (Dave and Ruth’s son) and Jim (Frank and Hilda’s son) there were 2 used car lots, a Nash dealership, and another new car dealership that sold Kaiser, Fraser, Mack Trucks, Willys (Jeeps). In the fifties, Edsel joined the party. In Fortune Magazine’s lengthy article on the introduction and review of the new Edsel there was a picture of smiling Frank with a senior executive of the Edsel Division.

They subsequently added Hudson, Borgward Goliath, and Dodge dealerships. The Gary brothers were what Joe Btfsplk was to Lil Abner in that old comic strip. Although the brothers thrived in the auto business only the Dodge and Mack Truck nameplates survives today. From the automobile business they branched out into real estate and built the local IRS office and purchased commercial buildings, apartments and rental homes. This included, before its time, a lakeside project on Kelleys Island in partnership with Morris Asch.



Along the way, Dave and Ruth moved from Eighth St. to Sixth St. and then to Kolbe Road, adjacent to the Oak Hills swimming pool. Frank and Hilda moved from 8th to Allison Ave. and then a few doors away from Dave and Ruth on Kolbe.

A word about our last name. When the family came to Lorain, the family name was Garfinkle or Garfinkel depending on who you ask. Sometime around 1940 it was changed to Gary. The occasion was either putting up a building for the Nash dealership or the move to Lorain. Should it be Garfinkle Motor Sales or something shorter and cheaper? According to legend, Gary was proposed because this vanilla name was not only shorter, but it also made the name more commercially viable in their new community. There is no official family record of why or when this came to be.

Dave was the Patriarch. He married Ruth Levine from Cleveland and they had two children, Gene and Bob. Gene married Gerry Horowitz from Cleveland and raised two children in Lorain, Joey and Jamie. Jamie married a French aeronautical engineer and moved to France. Joey lived in Lorain and worked in the family real estate business but died in his fifties. Gene remained in Lorain in the family’s auto and real estate businesses. After a divorce he remarried the former Joan Rothman. Gene passed away in 2017.

Bob married Karen Schiller from Buffalo, NY. Bob practiced law in Washington D.C., Cleveland, and Lorain while Karen was a school psychologist in Elyria.

They still have a home on the Chausse in Sandusky but consider their primary residence Longboat Key, Florida. Karen is very active in their new synagogue Temple Beth Israel and Bob has been lecturing on cruise lines and teaching courses on Islam. He has written a book, yet to be published, with the Imam who gave the inaugural prayer for Americans Muslims at President Biden's inauguration.

Si married Sadie Gottlieb from Cleveland. They didn't have children, but Uncle Si was like a second father to Bob and Jim. He used to call Jim, Jiminy Cricket! They moved to Florida in the early 80s.

Frank married Hilda Kess, also from Cleveland. They stayed in Lorain until 1982 having sold Gary Motors a couple of years before. Ellen Jean, who worked in real estate while in Lorain and was active in ABI's Couples Club, now lives in Boca Raton married Bob Bartick (now divorced). They have 3 daughters, Denise in Cincinnati, Nancy in Boston and Julie in Boca Raton. Jim worked as a senior investment manager and married Myra Newman from Shaker Heights. Myra passed away in 2009. They have two children, Jonathan in San Diego and Meredith in Brooklyn.



Hilda (Top Row, Right) & Sisterhood Kitchen Planning Committee (from the 1969 Dedication Book)

The Gary's no longer have a presence in the Lorain but still retain their connection. Bob and Karen maintain a membership in ABI. The cousins also donated over 100 acres in Sheffield Village to the Nord Center to be used to further Nord's mission of providing resources to the families of Lorain County.

REMINISCES

In talking about our dads and uncles, we want to mention how close the three brothers remained. Through good times and bad times, they remained true business partners but more importantly they were also best friends. We remember when the Lorain National Bank created a trust department the newly hired senior trust officer met with the brothers and asked them for the partnership papers of the dozens of entities they jointly owned. They told him they had no papers; all their arrangements were verbal, and they were simple in design and nothing needed to be memorialized beyond their understanding. And that's the way it was! They had lunch together at Sutter's almost every workday.



Jim & Bob - 1954

Our Jewish identity was a big part of our life like it was for most Jewish families in Lorain in the forties, fifties and early sixties. Every junior high student went to Hebrew and Sunday School. Every boy was Bar Mitzvahed. In 1954 we were the first double Bar Mitzvah at A.B.I. Amongst other memories, we recall our duet of "Adon Olom." Bob's father was president of the congregation and he had the coveted seat by the

window in the Sanctuary of the 9th & Reid Ave. synagogue! He was responsible for bringing the Captain of the Exodus to ABI to tell the story of its journey. When the new Temple was built the family donated the Gary Hall and it was family lore that Rabbi Meyer got a free Nash every few years.

Growing up in Lorain was right out of the movies. Unlocked doors, summers at the beach, sporting activities at Lakeview Park. The beach was the center of activities. A few of our friends including Bob had either small sail boats or boats you could water ski behind. There were carhops, Doc's Drive-In, Crystal Beach Amusement Park, Cedar Point, sleeping on the back porch when it got really hot, and a backyard swimming pool! We played all kinds of sports in the neighborhood. One of our sporting venues was the small cemetery between Sixth and Seventh Streets between Oberlin and Washington Avenues. We played football and baseball there using the headstones for goal lines, bases etc.

During the school year there was the AZA basketball competition in the Temple's gym. Our coach was Eddie Solomon, who owned and ran McGarvey's in the Vermillion Lagoons. Speaking of AZA, for decades it was run by one of Lorain's great personalities, Art Goodman. He was everyone's go to adult when you couldn't talk to your folks about what ever earth-shattering issue that was on your mind! May he Rest in Peace. There was a bowling league! Saturday afternoons. Our recollection is that we were in it from 12 or 13 to 15 or 16. Coed teams, Sylvia Shapiro, Broadway Lanes and the little brown envelopes that the captain would put the weekly money in.

Another point we want to be sure and mention is discrimination or lack thereof. Neither one of us can remember any discrimination against us or our family. I would guess that some of the clients of our fathers mumbled about Jews, but it was never one of our friend or acquaintances. It was another reason that our time and experience was so idyllic. How times have changed.

A FUN STORY FROM BOB

After Bob graduated from the NYU School of Law, he

Access a 1969 Lorain Journal article on the Gary Brothers posted to the *Brady's Bunch of Lorain County Nostalgia* website by clicking here: [The Gary Brothers Found Opportunity in Lorain](#)

Family Photos



Gene, Joan, Jim, Myra, Karen, & Bob - 1980s



Bob, Ellen Jean, & Jim - 2000



Dave & Ruth - 1960s

and Karen moved to Washington, D.C. where Bob became a prosecutor in the United States Department of Justice. With the creation of the Cleveland Organized Crime Strike Force, the DOJ moved him to Cleveland. He left DOJ to be the Director of the Ohio Organized Crime Prevention Council and Special Assistant to Ohio's one term Governor Jack Gilligan. His mother Ruth said come back to Lorain and hang up a shingle. Karen, Bob and their girls returned to Lorain.

The fate of Bob's legal career was determined by a small article in the Lorain Journal that supermarket chains in Lorain were fixing prices. With his cousin Ellen Jean as his client, he filed a class action on behalf of Lorain County grocery shoppers which ultimately settled for 20 million dollars. Ellen Jean to her chagrin was rewarded for her participation as lead plaintiff along with millions of others with a \$20 coupon redeemable for groceries. He expanded his practice to Cleveland and had a law office with Carl Stokes the first black mayor of a major American city. Bob was urged by Lorain's Jack Wolf to run for Lorain County Prosecutor. He lost to Greg White everywhere except in Oberlin where his anti-gun and opposition to the death penalty positions were popular.

Photos Courtesy of the Gary Family. Ad found on *Brady's Bunch of Lorain County Nostalgia* website