

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Léa Edelstein

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
Immigrant Stories Oral History project

Interview IM-A-L-2016-048

Léa Edelstein, an Egyptian-born Jew who immigrated to the United States as a young woman, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Immigrant Stories* Oral History project.

Interview date & location:

Date: 17 October 2016      Location: Lea's home in Deerfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Marcia Blitstein, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time: 1:34 / 1.57 hrs.

Transcript  
being processed

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 23, 2017.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

© 2016 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

## Léa Edelstein, *Immigrant Stories*, IM-A-L-2016-048

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Léa Davidson was born in Cairo, Egypt to Jewish parents on October 6, 1929. Her father, Naftula (Nathan) was also born in Cairo. Her mother, Golda Peritsky Davidson, was born in Jerusalem, Palestine. Léa was the middle child of five daughters. While she was still young the family moved to Alexandria, Egypt. It was there that Léa and her four sisters were raised in a middle class home. Naftula supported his family by working as a cashier and delivery person for British, American, and South African military. Léa enjoyed her life in Alexandria. There she had friends of various faiths, attended a Catholic school, and later worked as a secretary at a bank.

In 1949, she boarded the ship, Mohamed Ali El Kebir, and emigrated from Egypt to the United States with her mother and two younger sisters. There she continued to work as a secretary, first in Philadelphia, and later in Chicago where she had a position at the Merchandise Mart. On March 10, 1952, she married Sidney Edelstein, a Chicago-born Jewish attorney of eastern European descent. Léa later became an American citizen and she and Sidney made a life for themselves in Skokie, Illinois. There they raised their two daughters, Rita and Natalie. Throughout Léa's life she has enjoyed tennis, composition/writing letters, and baking. Currently Léa is a grandmother of three, and enjoys her life in Deerfield, Illinois.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Egyptian Jews; El-Alamein- Egyptian city and location of two World War II battles; NAAFI- Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes; Sacred Heart British School of America - Catholic School in Alexandria, Egypt; Mohamed Ali El Kebir- Egyptian ship; Laisser-Passer- "Let her pass/Let her go"- essentially a one-way passport; kaddish- Jewish prayer of mourners- literally "holy"

**Note to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

### **COPYRIGHT**

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955**