

Memories of the Catskills The Making of a Hotel

by Alvin L. Lesser

Foreword by John Conway,
Sullivan County Historian

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Meet Alvin L. Lesser, Author of **Memories of The Catskills: The Making of a Hotel**

“My son asked me to write the book **Memories of The Catskills**,” recalls Alvin Lesser. “I immediately replied with an adamant ‘No.’ I told him I had spent one-and-a-half years writing our first book, **Basic Accounting Simplified**, and I had no intention of leaving my sedentary life playing bridge, tennis, and other pleasurable things.”



He said, “But Dad, I would like to know what you did in your youth and how the Lesser Lodge was built.” That got to me. Now that I’m going to be ninety and am “middle aged,” I told my son I would write the book. Better now than when I’m old. Much of my early biography is included in the pages of **Memories of The Catskills**.

During the summers I aided my parents in running the Lesser Lodge and I had the winters free to attend college and do as I wished. I helped my parents until 1963, when the main house was consumed by fire.

During 1942, I attended New York University for one semester, majoring in accounting. It was at this point that the United States Army decided the war could not be won unless “I led the charge.” I spent the major part of my army career fighting through France and Germany. I went through many harrowing experiences during the war that I will more fully discuss in my next book, tentatively titled “Me and the Other Heroes of World War II.”

My division, the 71st Infantry, liberated a concentration camp named Gunskirchen Lager. It is hard for me to comprehend the inhumanity of man. I saw hundreds of people whose thighs were the size of my wrist. While I was at the concentration camp I saw a group of soldiers who had captured two SS Troopers. They said they were going to take them to headquarters. After shots were heard at a distance, the soldiers returned. I doubt if they even knew where headquarters was located....I was then informed I was a writer for the *Red Circle News*, the official newspaper of the 71st Division. Until the army was good enough to cruise me back to the United States, I held that position.

After I was discharged, I took advantage of the Army’s college program and graduated from New York University with a Bachelor of Science degree. My major was accounting and my minor was law. While attending college, on June 8, 1947, I married my wife, Evelyn. We have been married 63 years and my wife, 85 years of age, is still a beautiful woman. In 1951, my wife and I bought our first home in Wantagh, New York, for \$17,000.

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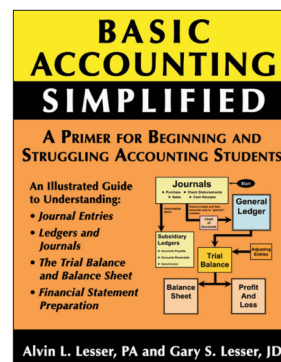
After my graduation, I rented an office in Deer Park, NY. Over time, I built up a large accounting practice. One of my clients named Glenddale Associates was in a real estate business which bought and sold commercial real estate all over the United States. I became involved in the business and passed the tests to become a real estate broker. Since the business consisted of only the buying and sale of land, it didn't take up a great deal of my time. I visited my accounting clients quarterly and had adequate help. So, I was able to handle both businesses.

In 1987, I sold my accounting practice and retired to Florida, where I joined the Boca Woods Country Club. After years of playing golf and a great deal of practice, I achieved the rank of "Duffer." Nowadays, I play bridge when I'm not playing with balls.

When I was eighty-nine years of age, my son and I wrote a book, **Basic Accounting Simplified**. I did the writing and my son did the formatting and graphics. The book is being sold on the Internet and is doing very well.

I wrote **Memories of The Catskills: The Making of a Hotel** primarily to describe the Catskills—what life was like there at a specific time and at a certain place. I hope you enjoy the book and have a few smiles and some laughs along the way.

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Questions Alvin L. Lesser is frequently asked

1. While growing up, did you have any idea that you were a part of a time and place that would be remembered fondly by so many?
2. Did you ever get a say in what changes were made to Lesser Lodge?
3. While enjoying the entertainment at the various hotels, did you have any idea of how famous some of these comedians, singers and musicians would become?
4. Why did you work for a time at Grossinger's? Was it to see how other hotels were run?
5. In your book you write about "handymen." Who were they and did you learn anything from them?
6. How did your loneliness as a very young person affect you when you reached manhood?
7. In your childhood you went to a one room schoolhouse in White Sulphur Springs. How did it differ from the schools you attended when you were older?
8. How did the fact you were the only Jew attending the one room schoolhouse affect you?
9. Jerry Lewis appeared many time at your parents' hotel. How did that come about & what was he like?
10. How did the big depression affect your parents' hotel?
11. As time passed, the number of people visiting the Borscht Belt declined. What caused the decline?

To request a review copy of **Memories of The Catskills**, to arrange an interview with Alvin Lesser, to receive cover and/or interior art, or for any additional information, please contact Kate Bandos at KSB Promotions: 800-304-3269, 616-676-0758 or kate@ksbpromotions.com.