

## **THE FORMATION AND EXPLOITS OF A BEECH-NUT FAMILY**

**By Edward W. Shineman Jr.**

In 1891, the Lipe and Ziely brothers, with the financial help of Bartlett Arkell, formed the Imperial Packing company in Canajoharie, NY. My story begins 10 years later after the company name had been changed to Beech-Nut Packing Co., reflecting one of the principal woods used to smoke hams and bacon, the company's initial meat products. I shall attempt to show how seven men and women from four generations joined forces over a 75-year period to form a Beech-Nut family.

The first person on the scene was a gentleman named Frank Shubert who had migrated from Alsace Loraine in time to participate for the North in the Civil War. After returning to Canajoharie, he was awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor for capturing two Confederate markers. He and Christopher Sticht operated a boot and shoe store, but in 1901 he decided to apply for a job in Beech-Nut. His application was accepted, and he started working in the meat department.

A few years later Frank's daughter, Bertelle graduated as valedictorian of her Canajoharie High School class. She had hoped to go to college, but her parents could afford the tuition for only one student, so her older brother Walter got the nod. Bertelle thought she would like to work in Beech-Nut's office and her application was readily accepted.

About that time, in 1904, a gentleman from another family arrived on the scene. His name was Edward Shineman, and he had also attended school in Canajoharie. As he approached graduation time, he decided to forego his senior year in order to attend teacher's training class. The result was no high school diploma, but a job teaching at the Round Top School on Seeber's Lane.

After a few years teaching, Edward decided to explore another field, and took an accounting course at the Albany Business College. Following completion of the course, he found a job working in a hardware store in the Capital District area. All of these efforts occurred prior to 1904, when Ed made one of his periodic weekend trips to visit his Canajoharie family.

While there, he happened to run across Walter Lipe, son of one of Beech-Nut's founders. Upon learning of Ed's accounting experience, Mr. Lipe told Ed that there was an opening at Beech-Nut in case he would like to move back to the Canajoharie area.

Ed expressed an interest and inquired about the starting salary. Upon learning that it was \$12 per week, his enthusiasm dampened. He was already earning \$18 per week. Mr. Lipe must have been a super salesman. He told Ed that the company was destined to go places and, if he made an effort, he might be able to ride along. Ed decided to accept the offer.

Shortly after arriving on the scene, Ed spotted a gorgeous brunette named Bertelle. They soon struck up a relationship that led to a wedding in 1911. Bertelle wanted to continue living with her parents, and convinced Ed to join her there. Thus, a family with three members working in Beech-Nut was formed. Cecelia, Frank's wife (Bertelle's mother) ran the household.

Four years later, after Frank and Bertelle had stopped working, Ed Jr. joined the Shineman/Shubert family. It would be a long wait before he would be eligible to consider membership in the Beech-Nut family. Before this could happen, Frank and his son, Walter, a high school principal in Baldwin, LI died. This prompted Frank's widow, Cecilia, to invite Walter's widow, Allie, to join the Canajoharie household. She accepted, and soon thereafter she became the fourth member of the Beech-Nut family when her application for an office position was accepted.

In the mid 1930's throngs of visitors were flocking to Canajoharie to take Beech-Nut's guided tours that finished with a free sample of confectionery products. Students home from college sought summer jobs as guides. Ed Jr. applied and received one of these jobs. Thus, the fifth active member of a Beech-Nut family had arrived. Allie had retired to join Bertelle at home and Frank had died. That left two, Ed Sr. and Ed Jr. still working.

After two summers of guiding, Ed Jr. was nearing graduation from college. He started looking for a permanent job, but the country was in the midst of the Great Depression. GE, in neighboring Schenectady, was still recruiting for its Business Training Course, and Ed Jr. found a slot, starting in 1938.

He really liked this combination of a day-time job with evening courses to further his education, but in 1946 a strange thing happened. He journeyed to Canajoharie for a visit with his parents, as his father had done 42 years before, and happened to strike up a conversation with Franklin Fero who was running Beech-Nut's office functions. There was an opening in the accounting department in case Ed would like to return to Canajoharie. He was not an engineer, and the thought of working for a company that produced products he could literally get his teeth into intrigued him. He accepted the offer.

A few years later, in 1954, Ed Sr. was due to retire. He had experienced a fabulous 50-year career, ending as Chairman of the Board. The company was flourishing and with his personal success, he had realized the prophecy Mr. Lipe had made when hiring him half a century before.

Ed Jr. remained as the only working member of the Beech-Nut Family. Two years later, in 1956, senior officers talked with their counterparts at Life Savers Corporation. The result was a merger and change of name to Beech-Nut Lifer Savers. They tried to find a place for officers of both companies. Ed Jr., who had worked his way up to Corporate

Secretary and Controller, wound up as one of three assistant treasurers of the new company.

Meanwhile, in the late 1960's, Ed's two son's had accepted summer employment with Beech-Nut, Alan in manufacturing plant, Tom as a sales rep covering the Montgomery County region of New York State. Thus did four generations of Shineman wind up on the Beech-Nut payroll.

By 1968 Ed had progressed to Treasurer when another merger came along, this time with E.R. Squibb and company. Ed Jr. was named Assistant Secretary-Treasurer of the new corporation, known initially as Squibb Beech-Nut, and he was transferred to the New York City office.

Former Squibb executives were calling most of the shots. Shortly, they determined that Beech-Nut products did not fit in with their plans. One by one they were spun off. After this was completed, Beech-Nut was dropped from the company name and the Beech-Nut family came to an end. It had been a joyous ride as seven persons from four generations had devoted a combined total of about 100 years to nearly 80 years of Beech-Nut's operations.