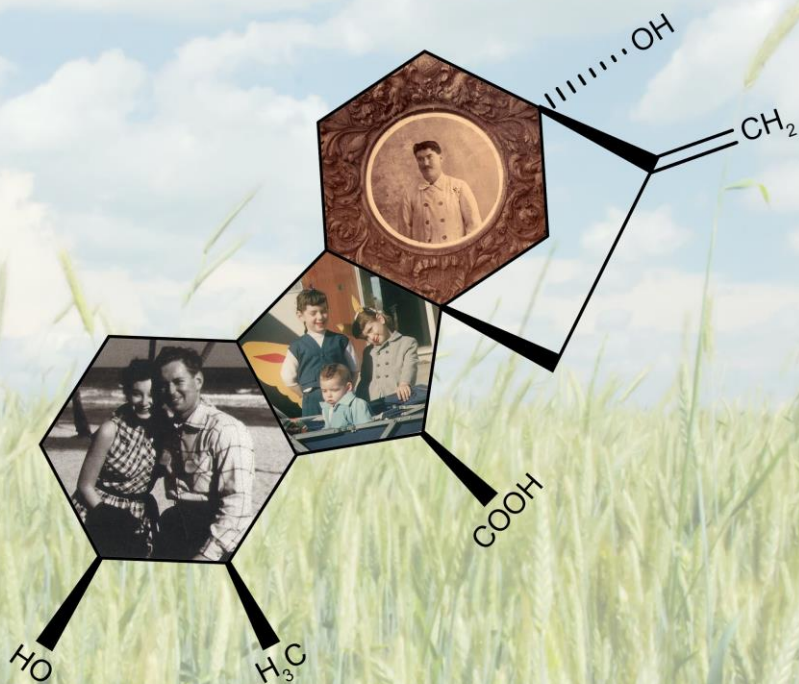


Harvesting Memories

Stories From My Roots



Larry Rappaport

*HARVESTING
MEMORIES*

STORIES FROM MY ROOTS

Larry Rappaport

Harvesting Memories: Stories from My Roots
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Introduction

“Who, me? Write a biography?” I asked myself. “Highly improbable,” I answered.

After years of scientific writing, I began to write my memoirs, a medium with which I’d had only infrequent encounters. But if, when I started, I had no other reason to write than to create a narrative for my children, grandchildren and family members, I have since discovered the real reason why I was drawn to this project. I came to understand that in the writing process I was learning much about myself, as well as about my relations with deceased parents, my wife, Norma, my children, and theirs.

My ambition to write my memoirs was given strong roots when I took courses in biography writing offered through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), sponsored by UC Davis Extension. I wanted to learn to create a record of events I remembered about my parents, grandparents, and my immediate family, our children and what happened to all of us over the years. I know that I have often regretted not knowing more about my great-grandparents and grandparents. Happily, my father and mother were both good storytellers and I started writing with their stories as a base. Libby, my sister, gave me a lot of information and, along the way, other family members filled in with their memories.

Over the fifteen or so years since I started writing stories, the topics have branched out to include special events, my academic career, travel adventures, my military experiences and a few philosophical thoughts. The book you are holding began as a series of unrelated essays. Once it was clear that I could actually create a book from those stories, I organized the contents to reflect various chapters of my life.

Now, a word to my grandchildren. Having had children and grandchildren is a most wonderful gift, and I am lucky to know you as you are growing up. As I

complete this book, I can't adequately describe the pleasure I experience when I see you engaged in conversation or when I'm simply sitting nearby as you play with or argue with one another. Maybe one of these years you will want to write about your family and, hopefully, these chapters will be helpful to you. I think of you often and hope that you will see these stories as a gift of love. Writing them has evoked pleasurable, humorous, and sometimes difficult memories for me. Please enjoy reading and sharing them yourselves. I hope they will provide you with a greater knowledge of our family roots. I also hope you will gain a deeper understanding of the person I am, as well as some valuable personal insights.

Larry Rappaport
May 4, 2014

Origins

In 1920, Aaron, my father-to-be, and the entire Rappaport family were making plans to leave Jerusalem for New York. This objective could only have been chosen after a great deal of agonizing and endless foot-dragging. After all, Jerusalem, the iconic City of David and Solomon, is the most revered historical and religious center for the Jewish people, and home to seven generations on my grandmother's side of the family. Deeply religious, my grandparents, Chaim and Baba, must have felt terrible, even sacrilegious, to consider leaving.

*Chaim** was born in 1871 and grew up in Odessa, Southern Russia. Partly due to his fervent religious commitment and because of the vicious anti-Semitic atmosphere in White Russia, he left home in 1890 and perilously made his way to Palestine aboard a small sailboat.

The Rappaport family lived a very traditional Jewish life. Chaim spent hours in his synagogue in prayer and study while Aaron and his brothers, Julius, Simon, (*Shimon*) and William (*Velvyl*) studied and prayed in a religious school. Baba, my grandmother, worked for a pittance in her small fabrics store along with her daughters, Belah (*Bay-le*), Rose and Ray (*Ruchel*). While I knew them all personally in America, I had little understanding about their lives in the Holy Land.

Chaim soon became familiar with the city, made friends, and eventually began to seek an appropriate mate. According to custom, he was introduced to a matchmaker he met through his synagogue. Undoubtedly, she brought Grandpa Chaim Rappaport and Grandma Baba Steinhardt together in "a match made in heaven." If so, this optimistic description never applied to their lifetime financial situation. Having limited financial aspirations, Chaim must have considered Baba a "catch," mainly because of her family's name and reputation. She was born to a proud family which had lived in Jerusalem for at least seven generations. Indeed, a street named Steinhardt Alley can be found today in the old Montefiore section of Jerusalem, near the Windmill. Earlier generations of Steinhardts were reputed to have been well-to-do business people. Owing to Chaim's devotion to religious study and practice, there were virtually no financial prospects for the newly married couple to achieve what might be considered even a middle- or lower-class existence.

Baba and Chaim found a small, old house in Bet Israel, a deeply religious section of the city adjoining Mea Shearim in Jerusalem and near Rehov Baruch Rapoport Street, named to honor my great-grandfather's cousin, a famous Talmudic scholar. The ruins of this house

still exist and the property is so laden with debt and unpaid taxes that no one has been able to completely assemble the ownership history and money sufficient to make a valid, legally unchallengeable claim. Even if family relations could be clearly defined to establish ownership, so many generations have passed and the value of the property is so low that it would not be worth the cost of establishing ownership by a single family unit.

As a gesture of respect and the hope of acquiring reflected glory, Grandpa chose to accept Rappaport as the family name. Thank goodness, because while I have adjusted to sounding out the name Rappaport without waiting to be asked how to spell it, my Grandfather's true family name was totally unpronounceable and is lost in the ether.

The Rappaports had seven children, four boys—Aaron, Julius, Simon and William, and three girls—Bela, Rose, and Ray. Typically, Grandpa Chaim went off to synagogue to pray twice daily and spent much of his time studying religious texts. Aaron and his brothers studied in a Yeshiva, a religious school. Grandma Baba, the chief wage earner in the family, spent many hours each day in her small fabrics store, helped by her daughters, and took care of the house. Likely, none went further than grade school. On the Sabbath, after services, the family gathered and spent the day together eating, chatting, resting and entertaining visitors.

Until the beginning of World War I in 1914, the political and economic situation in Palestine remained relatively stable, as was the family's daily routine. When the economic downturn ensued, living in Jerusalem gradually became a matter of when, rather than if, they would have to leave Palestine. The family was inured to living on meager rations until the declining economy caused such hunger and deprivation in the country that they were forced to look outward for relief.

America became the natural destination for the family when Bela, Dad's sister, and her husband, Godel Canelstein, left for New York in 1919. An enterprising businessman, Godel managed to earn a living, even in poverty-stricken Jerusalem. In New York, he quickly established himself financially, and then helped the remainder of the Jerusalem family to emigrate to the U.S. Julius and Rose left Palestine for the U.S. in 1920, and the exodus was completed in 1922 when my grandparents, Dad's younger brothers, William and Simon, and his sister Ray left for the New World.

Dad returned to Jerusalem after his two-year imprisonment on the Isle of Malta, determined for philosophical and practical reasons to leave for America as soon as possible. Instead, along with the remaining family, he altered course, took a ship to France and, in Paris, enrolled in

a school of art for a period of time before continuing on to New York. Spurred by his positive experience in Paris and by the vision of an artistic career, Dad began to view his future in America with optimism. New York would be his Promised Land where he would be free to pursue his painting and become prominent in the art world.

*The letters Ch, as in the name Chaim, are pronounced with a guttural sound from the throat, not like Ch in “Chain.”

Goodbye, Jerusalem

Aaron Rappaport, my father to be, was born in Jerusalem in 1896 to my grandparents, Chaim and Baba Rappaport. He spoke with pride about the family name, reminding us that the Rappaports were at least seventh generation Jerusalemites. Aaron had three younger brothers, Julius (*Yudah*), William (*Velvel*), and Simon (*Shimon*), and three sisters, Ray (*Ruchel*), *Belah*, and Rose. The family was very poor, as Chaim was first of all a scholar who, like most Orthodox Jews, spent much of his time studying Torah and praying in the synagogue while Baba and their daughters maintained a small tailoring business.

The family lived in a dilapidated shack in a deeply religious section of Jerusalem. The house still exists, although it is a mere decaying shell. Many attempts have been made to assign proof of ownership, but progress has been very slow as the records go back many generations and, a significant factor, the unpaid back taxes would be enormous.

My father's experiences as a youth were relatively uneventful, although he did like to talk about Jerusalem, its history, ancient streets, the wonderful stone paths and the city walls, built for defense by the Ottomans some 500 years earlier. In 1963, when I was on sabbatical leave at Hebrew University of Jerusalem with my family, I recalled my father's stories about those same neighborhoods, the markets and the sight of donkeys carrying heavy bags of oranges and bananas for sale in the streets and in the Bedouin encampments.

Dad was an excellent storyteller and my sister, Libby, and I would listen to him with interest and excitement. He told about his devotion to art, and how, even at a very early age, he became proficient in both sculpture and oil painting which he studied at the Bezalel Art Institute in Jerusalem, still Israel's premier art school. He spoke with admiration about Professor Schatz, his favorite art teacher, the discipline he enforced, and his manner of evoking the best from his students. I visited the Jewish Museum in New York in 2012 and saw a display which included a large photo of Professor Schatz and information about his history and his art. His sculptural interests, it turned out, were to have a powerful impact on Dad's future.

Dad liked history and talked about the more than 600-year occupation of Palestine by the Ottoman Empire, which then dominated large portions of the Middle East and Southern Europe. During World War I, the Ottomans joined forces with Germany and Austria fighting the Allies in Europe. They forcibly recruited eligible young men in Palestine

in order to bolster their Middle East army. While the Ottomans were generally tolerant of Christians and Jews, the Jewish population was fearful and avoided military service as much as possible.

One morning, just as Aaron was waking up, Grandpa Chaim came rushing into his room looking very agitated. "Aaron! I just heard that the Turks are searching for recruits for their army! They'll take you if they catch you! Get dressed and pack immediately!" he shouted. "We're leaving right away!" The urgency of his announcement was underscored by the speed with which my grandfather packed his own belongings. "We're catching the next train for Cairo!"

Dad was in shock at the thought of leaving Jerusalem, his home, his friends and family. When it was time to go, they gathered round him, embraced him tearfully, and expressed their fears of his leaving Jerusalem for an unknowable future. His heart heavy with regret and anxiety, Dad promised to write, and embraced and kissed them "goodbye."

When they were ready, Zaide and Aaron, carrying inconspicuous small bags to avoid undue attention, slowly made their way to the Jerusalem Railway Station. They bought tickets, boarded the train, took their seats and held their breath as the train pulled out. Only many hours later, after they had crossed the Egyptian border, did they relax. With a sigh of relief, the travelers offered a prayer of thanks.

On their arrival in Cairo, they visited the synagogue where they found friends who gave them food, shelter and aid in finding work for my father. He told about his studies at the Bezalel Art Institute and of his training in painting, sculpture and woodcarving. Although the job market for artists in Cairo was slim, his skill as a woodcarver landed him a position with a furniture company. His first task was to help build and carve intricately designed furniture for Lord Kitchener, the British Governor-General of Egypt. Dad told me that the Egyptians loved such furniture and many years later, when I worked in Egypt for a time, I saw the same kinds of furniture in the homes of wealthy friends.

Dad's work so pleased Lord Kitchener that he visited the furniture company and asked to meet the designer.

"I like your work very much; the furniture is really beautiful," he told my father, who was naturally very pleased at the attention and praise. Then Lord Kitchener said, "Should you ever have any problems in Egypt, contact me and I'll see what I can do to help." Dad thanked him profusely, but continued working for the factory for a time. Eventually, he left the furniture company for unknown reasons.

Remembering Lord Kitchener's offer, Dad went to see him at the White Palace, the official home of the Governor General of Egypt. But

first he had to convince the two armed guards who confronted him, bayonets crossed, that improbably, he was there at the invitation of Lord Kitchener. Dad was about 5 feet, 7 inches tall, and the vision of him confronting the tall, uniformed guards at the Palace Gates, dressed in his long black coat and large brimmed, black hat, particular to Orthodox Jews, is astonishing to me, even today.

Somehow, he convinced them of his sincerity, and they received permission to escort him in to meet his hoped-for benefactor. Lord Kitchener greeted him cordially, and Dad described his predicament. True to his word, Kitchener did find him a job in a school in the Muslim city of Assuit in Upper Egypt. The Headmaster assigned him an unusual position: teaching calisthenics and art to high school children. He really enjoyed living and teaching in Assuit:

“I liked the children and loved teaching them.” His aptitude for learning languages, coupled with his experience growing up in Jerusalem where he learned spoken Arabic, facilitated his ability to communicate effectively with his students.

Apart from missing his family and living in an alien environment, all went well in Assuit for a time until one day, as he was teaching, he heard a voice with an imperious English accent:

“Aaron Rappaport?”

“Yes?”

Aaron was stunned when two very serious uniformed British Army Officers entered his classroom and grabbed his arms.

“You are under arrest!”

Distressed, he whispered, “Why in the world am I under arrest?”

“You are a citizen of the Ottoman Empire. You are an enemy alien and your country is at war with the British Empire. Come with us!”

Aaron was transferred to the City of Alexandria, then sent on a prison ship to the Island of Malta and assigned to a prisoner-of-war compound.

“Imagine,” he said sarcastically, “The majority of inmates were Austrians, Germans and Turks who were imprisoned there until the war ended. They were the enemy! Not me!”

Despite the surprise “invitation” to visit Malta, he used his time well. With pride, he told me, “I learned French and German, and my English improved a great deal.” A positive feature of his experience was meeting sophisticated people who read widely and held a variety of political viewpoints and diverse ideas about politics and religion. This was a revelation for the formerly sequestered young man.

His exposure to new ways and ideas was to influence Dad’s outlook (and mine) for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, while his mind

brimmed with questions, he took special delight in using his newfound linguistic skills to learn to read the Bible in French, English and German. He also began reading literature previously forbidden in his home where only Bible study was considered worthy. Years later, even though he had abandoned religious observance, when I visited him in Los Angeles I would often find him reading the Bible in one of the languages. His understanding was equal to his knowledge of traditional Hebrew. From other captives, Dad learned about great books and developed a life-long love of classical music. Many prisoners respected him by dint of his artistic skills and his genuine interest in learning.

A dark experience during Dad's imprisonment was his exposure to anti-Semitism, violently expressed. Some German and Austrian prisoners called him "*verdamter Yude*" (damned Jew), and "*schveinhund*" (pig-dog). Dad wasn't afraid to react. Emotionally scarred, he told me, "I hit him so hard on the side of his head that he was afraid to get near me again."

Despite these negative experiences, Dad knew that his two years on Malta had given him a new outlook on life. He became self-reliant and willing to accept challenges that he had never experienced before.

In 1919, the war over, Dad returned to his family in Jerusalem and the beginning of a new adventure.

Aaron Returns to Jerusalem

The house was abuzz with excitement as Aaron finally returned to Jerusalem after two years of living and working in Egypt and two more years on the Island of Malta where he was imprisoned as an “enemy of the British Empire.” His family gathered early in anticipation of his return, and he was immediately enveloped in a throng of happy, tearful parents, brothers and sisters. Once settled, they subjected him to endless questions about his experiences abroad. Comments about his short hair and a moustache as well as unexpected rejection of Jewish ritual contributed to the sense that he had changed in some very important ways. He answered each question patiently and in detail, describing places, people and events in his usual interesting way.

Eventually, he was ushered into the tiny dining room where an entire week’s income was spread over the dining room table in the form of all the foods that he loved and had missed. The questions continued as they ate, but his answer to “What will you do now that you’re back?” was very circumspect.

“We’ll see. I’ll need some time to get myself together before I can decide.”

Finally, exhausted, everyone went to bed, but Aaron remained wide awake. He was truly excited and very happy to be with his family in Jerusalem. He felt their warm welcome, love and the rekindling of fond memories of his life growing up. Now, in 1919, five years after he left Palestine for Egypt, World War I was over and he had returned to a Palestine in turmoil. The Ottomans, who had occupied Palestine for some 500 years, were driven out by the British. They in turn were mandated the territory as part of the World War I peace settlement engineered by the League of Nations. His homeland was left dirt poor, as was his family.

In 1919, the old city of Jerusalem was a backwater, as it had been for centuries—a small town with cobblestone streets and dirt roads surrounding its walls; a city whose population was diminishing as its economy deteriorated. Thus the topic of survival was frequently revived in family conversations.

Chaim, Dad’s father, had little to offer about surviving in their economically depressed society. While he worked part time as a tailor, his life was devoted to the study of Torah. His contribution to the discussions was typically that of the male parent of devout families. “Got vet helfen” (“God will help”). Practical Baba was the chief administrator of the family and the main source of income.

Aaron spoke at length with his parents and siblings, renewed friendships, walked the streets of his beloved city and visited his friend and mentor, Professor Boris Schatz, at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Crafts.

He recalled his youth in the neighborhoods of Bet Israel in Jerusalem where he was born and lived as a young man: the Wailing Wall—the remains of the ancient holy Western Wall of the Jewish Temple—the Arab neighborhoods with their picturesque homes, the ancient, meandering, cobblestone streets where vendors sold herbs and spices to Christian visitors and necessities to Bedouins who were camped in tents around the city.

Once again he heard the mixture of languages in the street—Yiddish, Arabic, Armenian, English, German and Hebrew, and pious Jews in their black garb and payes (ear locks). He visited the railway station from which he and his father left hurriedly for Cairo five years earlier, and the newer districts that would become Western or New Jerusalem. Again he smelled the aromas of exotic herbs and spices blending with the less appealing odors of animal dung and garbage waiting to be hauled away.

When Aaron asked friends why they were preparing to leave Palestine, they replied, “We just can’t make enough to live on here any more. We haven’t enough for rent, or to put bread on the table.” Gradually, he came to terms with the complex feelings he was experiencing. He loved the city for its stones, its unusually bright and clear atmosphere, ancient history and his fond memories of growing up there. However, after five years away, his values and goals had changed irreversibly. As a prisoner on Malta, away from the cloistered atmosphere of his home and neighborhood, Aaron had thought abstractly about how it would be after his detainment was over.

“I knew that life in Palestine would be strange. On Malta I was exposed to many new experiences and cultures. I met people who read books, not only the Bible. In fact they read the Bible in different languages. They played with ideas, and questioned customs and religious practice. I met free thinkers and philosophers, even atheists.”

Clearly, he had absorbed and accepted many of their ideas, and realized that he had returned to a culture he could no longer tolerate. Above all he wanted to work as an artist, a profession inconsistent with his parents’ religious beliefs. To illustrate, he told me about a teen-age conversation with his father who was intolerant of his son’s desire to paint “graven images.”

“I showed my father a picture of a horse I had drawn. He studied the picture and said, “This is a beautiful horse, but I think it’s too beautiful. You didn’t paint it yourself, did you?”

“Of course I did,” I lied.

“Who helped you with this drawing?”

Finally, I answered, “I’ve been studying at Bezalel with Professor Boris Schatz. He helped me. Instead of complimenting me, he gave me a hard smack across my face! He yelled, “You should be studying Torah! But that’s not the only reason I hit you. You lied to me.”

Aaron decided that he did not want to live a lie any longer. No matter how much he loved Jerusalem, he would make plans to leave Palestine for New York where he would become the person he wanted to be.

This decision significantly influenced the future of the rest of the family. Eventually, all decided to leave for New York. Life in Jerusalem was simply too hard, and they saw no promise of improvement. Accordingly, they made plans to leave and boarded the “Cherbourg,” a French vessel bound for Calais. There they transferred to a train bound for Paris where Aaron had planned to enroll in an art school to investigate painting the human body in the style of the French masters.

The family remained in Paris for about two years. When Aaron had fulfilled his artistic goals, he felt ready to see relatives and the sights of New York.

New York Dad

As his boat entered New York Harbor, Dad-to-be took in the eye-popping skyline, the likes of which he had never seen: the ferries crisscrossing the waters, the numerous ships entering and leaving the harbor; the many tall buildings and the Statue of Liberty.

He knew that New York City was nearby, but he soon learned that it would take some time before he took his first step on the mainland. Together with all the “huddled masses,” he was herded from his ship onto Ellis Island. There, he maneuvered through the warren of cordoned lanes as he went station by station to be processed and cleared for disembarkation to the mainland. Norma and I recalled the many personal stories of our immigrant parents and relatives when we visited the wonderful museum that was recently opened on Ellis Island to commemorate the amazing immigration process.

Before he was given a clean bill of health, Dad-to-be was carefully examined for head lice and other pests, evidence of debilitating infirmity, anarchistic tendencies, and proof that he would be sponsored and not become a burden upon the U.S. Government. Only when he proved “negative” to all was he permitted to board a ferry that would take him to the boat landing on Manhattan Island. My uncle, Godel Canelstein, and his wife, Bela, my father’s sister, met him there. Godel was instrumental in helping Dad and, ultimately, everyone in the family, to reach the U.S. My father was very appreciative.

I asked about Julius and Rose, Dad-to-be’s brother and sister, who went directly to the United States from Palestine while Dad took a detour to Paris. Godel answered, “They are doing well. They’re working. You’ll see them this evening when they come for dinner at our apartment.”

As their taxi headed toward Harlem, Dad discussed his stopover in Paris (“wonderful”), the voyage to America (“crowded”), the food (“terrible”), and his feelings about being in the U.S. (“We’ll see”). Dad had something of a “show me” attitude about new things so that familiarity necessarily preceded any expression of unequivocal confidence.

But then he added, “I’m looking forward to getting to know New York.” This wasn’t necessarily the answer one might expect from a new immigrant as many of them grew up in small towns and villages where they remained until they left for America. By comparison, Dad-to-be was a seasoned traveler, better prepared to look beyond the pale.

The apartment house was near 125th Street in Harlem, a popular area for new immigrants. Bela had prepared a sumptuous meal, and Dad had a chance to unwind as they spoke of the family remaining in Jerusalem and the prospects of their coming to the U.S. Godel expansively discussed his own success since his arrival. I remember him as a somewhat self-important man who nevertheless was a selfless ambassador for the families coming from the Middle East.

Julius and Rose visited the apartment and again there was a huddle of affection and another meal to celebrate their reunion. They shared news of their parents and siblings still living in Palestine and about their experiences since they arrived in the U.S. Both seemed to have begun to adjust to life in New York and spoke glowingly about the many cultural events available. For my father's interest, they praised the wonderful art museums.

"There are Jewish theaters, book stores, and many Jewish restaurants," said Julius.

"It won't take long and you'll feel at home here," said Rose. "It's very safe and we feel much freer here than in Jerusalem," no doubt referring to the restrictions dictated by the religious culture of the Old City.

"I hear you found work," Dad said.

"Yes," said Julius proudly, "I have a job in a jewelry store. I'm learning how to repair watches." Julius, like Dad-to-be, had learned some English in Palestine and continued to learn in Egypt where he had also spent some time.

Unlike Aaron, who was mechanically challenged, Julius had "good hands." He quickly learned the jewelry trade and eventually was able to buy a jewelry store in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Rose, like many of the women who came from the old country, was unskilled, but soon found work as a seamstress in a sweatshop. I remember hearing the bitter stories of relatives and friends of the family who had shared similar experiences. Uniformly, they spoke of the long hours, the demanding bosses, and the unhealthy, uncomfortable and unsafe environments in which they worked. And who can forget the terrible damage and loss of life that accompanied the "Triangle Fire"?

It didn't take Aaron long to get the lay of the land, first of Harlem and, in time, much of Manhattan. Dating back to his youth in Jerusalem, he was an inveterate walker, a characteristic that was not transmitted genetically. It wasn't till I reached my 30s that I began to believe long distance walking had merit. Lacking funds for transportation, he had no choice, but he actually preferred exploring on foot. Of course, he was able to get almost anywhere using the subway

system. As a child I marveled at how he always knew how to get where he wanted to go in New York.

Dad was amazed to see so many people from different countries living in proximity and getting along. The streets were alive with the sounds of many languages. Many Jewish immigrants settled in Harlem comfortably, enjoying the common cultural characteristics and familiarity of Yiddish which was a common street language. However, their accents quickly revealed their home country, even region of origin. Soon, not surprisingly, people would “predict” the idiosyncrasies of others based on their accents. On the other hand, meeting people was made easy and before long, Aaron began to make some friends.

The newcomers brought with them the distinctive foods of their countries of origin. Indeed, those from Eastern Europe, mainly Poland and Russia, soon established theirs as the primary Jewish cuisine in New York City. Here again, how food was prepared separated Jews by country of origin. In Norma’s home, *lukshun kugel* (noodle pudding) was always prepared with a healthy dollop of sugar. By contrast, God forbid that a trace of sugar found its way into my mother’s noodle pudding. Luckily, while they disagreed on many things, my parents were as one on the question of whether sugar is added to noodle pudding.

“Never!”

Norma and I, on the other hand, have had a problem with this throughout our entire married life!

As Dad’s family came from Palestine where food was much simpler and had a distinctive Middle Eastern character, Dad soon found specialty stores that sold food with which he was familiar.

Of course, the need to be employed was of even greater importance than how food should be prepared. Aaron soon learned that his ambition to become a well-known portrait artist would have to be deferred until he obtained enough money to pay for food and rent. I don’t know how he landed his first job, but he determined that there was a need for commercial artists to illustrate women’s shoe and hair styles for magazines and newspapers. Very soon he established himself by exhibiting his new portfolio of pen and ink drawings of beautiful women’s coiffeurs to prospective customers. Luckily, women’s hairstyles were changing rapidly in the ’20s as the flapper generation emerged from the rather staid post-Victorian one. Seeing opportunity, he extended his territory and before long was making what the family referred to as a “nice living.”

For several years, Dad’s drawings appeared in such redoubtable newspapers as the “Rotogravure” section of the *New York Times*. He was able to rent an apartment, to “dress up,” and to take advantage of the

sights, sounds and culture of New York City. Some photos taken in the 1920s show him to be a dapper, good-looking man who carried himself proudly. He was undoubtedly optimistic that the world was his *knish* (dumpling)—(oysters are not kosher).

Dad began to believe that his vision of a new and enlightened future in America would indeed become a reality.

Momma in Minsk

My mother (Elsie *Segelovitch*) was born in 1903—not a spectacular event in a family that had already produced three sons and four daughters. Very quickly, however, the entire family fell in love with this cherubic, pretty, good-natured child. Her brothers, especially Jack (*Yankl*), who was born three years later, were invariably her champions. Even her sisters, Jenny, Naomi (*Ne-cham-ke*), Lena, and Fanny (*Fai-che*), who likely had good reasons to feel jealous, could not help but love and nurture her. All the attention Elsie received probably spoiled her, but at the same time contributed to her strong sense of self, a quality that stood her well at several critical junctures in her life. Jack, strong minded and willful, was the devoted caretaker of the younger children, especially Elsie.

One day, while out walking with Elsie in the countryside, Jack saw a beautiful horse in a pasture and immediately decided that he needed that horse. On their return home and with the aid of his little sister, he assailed his mom with a demand that she give him the money for this horse. I have no record concerning the time it took for him to wear her down, but eventually his desire was fulfilled. Soon he was proudly riding his horse about the neighborhood. While he was very possessive about his horse, if Elsie asked Jack for a ride, only moments would elapse before she was “on board” and maneuvering his favorite animal around the potholes and fields.

For the Siegel family, the daily routine was similar to that of many other Orthodox Jewish families in Eastern Europe. I didn’t know my namesake grandfather Leo (*Lay-be*), who died in Warsaw in 1914 while receiving medical treatment for cancer. My mother told me, “Most of the day Grandfather prayed at home or at the synagogue. Like many of the men for whom prayer was the essential function of their day, *Zaide* also had a part time job tailoring men’s clothing and managed to bring home a little money each week. According to my cousin, Sylvia Swerdlow, Grandma’s life was wrapped up in the store, which was essential for the family’s survival.

Sylvia remembered Grandpa as a very bright man, especially committed to religious practice. While he was immersed in spiritual matters, Molly-Pearl (*Malke-Per-le*) bore children and, with her daughter, Naomi (*Necham-ke*), ran the store. Yet behind her husband’s strong facade, she made most of the important life decisions for the family.

My mother-to-be was often able to get her way in matters where her three sisters might have been stoutly denied. Orthodox Jewish parents did not favor education for girls but, as I was to discover during my own childhood, Elsie valued education above most things in life. Luckily, her parents were politically liberal and, after much persistence, Momma was allowed to study with an agreeable Catholic priest. I still remember her pride as she showed me her much-too-neat math notebooks which she brought with her to America.

The move to New York was very difficult for proud *Bubbe*. As she aged, Bubbe was circulated among her children's homes. She lived with our family for a few years when I was about five, but my memory is sadly deficient because it contains only the latter period of her life, when she had already become senile. Yet Momma's stories about Bubbe's sheer inner strength, her love and dedication to her family, and her business acumen remain vivid in my memory.

In 1917, Russia was ablaze in revolution. The White Russian army was beaten by the Germans and had surrendered; the Communist Bolshevik Party had taken over and killed the Czar and his family. The Red Army was at war not only with the Cossacks and other loyalists, but with soldiers from a number of nations, including our own, who were sent to Russia to defeat Communism in its infancy. The Siegel family became increasingly uncomfortable as the Communists made clear their intention to wipe out all capitalists. At the same time, anti-Semitism, endemic in White Russia and often expressed violently and publicly in "pogroms," burst forth more ferociously than ever. Soldiers of some of the invading armies aided the onslaught against the Jews. Jack, who was politically active from an early age, fought the invading Poles until his life was constantly in danger.

One day a mounted Polish soldier took aim and shot Jack six times across his abdomen. He was rushed to the office of a friendly surgeon who removed the bullets and stitched up the wounds. Jack was brought home that night, as secrecy was essential. If discovered, the Cossacks would no doubt return to finish the job. Amazingly, after much anguish, Jack, aided by Elsie and other family members, slowly began to recover. Eventually, he returned to good health, although the deep bullet marks remained a vivid testimonial for the rest of his life.

Considering the prevailing threat to their existence, it became clear that the Siegel family, along with many others, had to leave Russia if they were to survive.

New York Momma

Whereas she had been a student and a free spirit in the old country, on her arrival in America she found that the streets of New York bustled with people, “horse and wagons” and many automobiles, that the pace of life was decidedly faster and that the demands on her personally would change her life dramatically. Suddenly it was understood that she would have to work in order to help support the family. However, virtually the only work that was available for a non-English-speaking greenhorn woman was to be found in the low-paying, exploitive sweatshops of the East Side. For Elsie, who had an innate yearning to study, this was a decided comedown. Where indeed was the “*goldene medeene*?” (golden country) Nevertheless, as did so many immigrants with like life experience, she attacked her work with typical dedication and soon became proficient in sewing dresses. This occupation, as it turned out, was to be of great value when she married and much later when sewing became critical to the sustenance of her family.

One of the truly sad consequences of coming to America was that Molly, Elsie’s mother, was not permitted to work. In Minsk, because of her business acumen, she had provided a very easy life for the family. She was a proud and productive person whom everyone respected and admired. Now with her foundations shattered, she became a very reluctant dependent, a shadow.

Exacerbating the problem was the failure of her children, particularly her sons, Joe and Jack, to accept their mother would do any mundane work in the clothing industry. In Elsie’s mind, Molly could have done well in the sweatshops or even in business like so many others had done. The Jewish community had grown rapidly with the post-World War I exodus from Poland and Russia. Many people undertook familiar jobs as tailors, cobblers and small shop owners; many found jobs in the burgeoning clothing industry.

Often male (never female) friends of my parents who, after a time, had mastered more mundane duties in the clothing industry, would announce proudly in their somewhat broken, newfound language, that “I’m working as a cutter” or, “I’m an operator.” These would become high paying jobs that would help many of these workers to join the emergent Jewish middle class.

Oh, You Went To See Aida?

As the doors opened, the 11:00 p.m. crowd surged into the subway car, hurling Aaron, my future father, toward a pole that he grabbed thankfully; at the same time three other passengers, two men and a woman, reached for the same refuge. Other passengers squeezed into the car and the four were soon compressed physically into a fleshy continuum. Once the surge of the train's departure from the station had shaken everyone into a near-stable position, Aaron took a moment to size up his fellow passengers at the pole. The young woman who stood only inches away from him immediately attracted him. She was about 5 ft. 2 inches tall, "*zofitic*" (pleasingly plump), blond, fine-skinned, had large green eyes, and was somewhat Slavic in appearance. She was animated, her eyes revealing her excitement as she spoke rapidly. Aaron listened intently over the roar of the train as the trio discussed their evening.

In Yiddish, heavily accented with Russian, the woman spoke enthusiastically about the performance they had just attended. "Oi, Aida. It was so wonderful," she said. "I could go back right now and hear the whole opera again." Her fervor grew as she described the excellence of the singers and the wonderful staging. "It was so beautiful. The singing was so wonderful."

After listening for a short time, Aaron interjected, irreverently speaking directly to her. "Oh, you went to see Aida. I was there also. I love Aida. The performance was perfect." Once started, he relentlessly pursued the discussion, never letting his eyes leave hers. He talked about the fine points of the opera and the magnificent Metropolitan Opera House that staged it. By the time they had reached 125th St., the now-quartet was engaged in a friendly discussion and Aaron had formally introduced himself. "I'm Aaron Rappaport." He learned in response that Joe Siegel, the big burly one, was her brother, and that the other man was apparently her date. Joe was acting as sort of a chaperone.

"My name is Elsie Siegel," said the woman.

Aaron gently guided the conversation toward more personal matters explaining that he was an artist, had studied in Jerusalem and Paris, and was doing commercial art. He went on to tell them that he had a studio on 8th Street and that he was doing pretty well. He was also single. Soon he asked, "Where do you get off?"

"At Tremont Street," she answered, with a hint of interest in her expression. Somehow, while Elsie talked to her date, Aaron maneuvered himself closer to Joe and indicated his interest in his sister. In fact, he would be happy to get off at Tremont Avenue with them and exchange

addresses and other pertinent information. Joe apparently acquiesced. In response to Joe's whispered query, my mother-to-be must have signaled her compliance. Joe quietly spoke with her date. Whether Elsie had suddenly "developed a headache" was never made clear, but when the train left Tremont Street station, standing on the platform among other departing passengers were Joe, Elsie and Aaron. The evening's date remained on the train and was never heard from again.

It was 1922, and Aaron had made a move that was to dramatically change his life. He never told me how soon he knew that Elsie was the love of his life, but he felt then that something drew him to her and that he wanted to get to know her better. This chance meeting was followed by a number of dates that revealed a mutual interest in family history, cultural matters and in shared goals and values. Elsie was born in Minsk, Belarus, into a relatively well-to-do family, while Aaron was born and raised dirt poor in Jerusalem. Aside from the obvious physical attraction, their common language and similar religious backgrounds, parallel family structures, strong-minded parents, and their recent arrival in America as "*green'ne*" (greenhorns, or new immigrants), provided fertile soil in which to grow an intimate relationship. Once it took root, neither of them ever looked back, although some might not have considered it a perfect match. Neither Elsie's naiveté nor Aaron's eight-year seniority, his strong-willed behavior, his pedantic lecturing, nor his adamant hostility toward religion seem to alter their commitment to one another. To his advantage, Aaron was a comparatively urbane person with unusual world experience, no doubt attractive to the less sophisticated Elsie.

One of the fascinating features of this saga was the manner in which it began and in which it was pursued. In the '20s, marriages between Orthodox Jews were usually arranged. A marriage broker would make a *shidach* (marriage agreement) between the parents of the two life-long mates-to-be. Decisions, especially financial ones, were agreed contractually. However, this romance began, developed and was consummated in a manner that would have shocked most people.

I can imagine them saying, "What, no *shadchun* (marriage broker)?"

In the end, Aaron and Elsie came to the realization that life would be more beautiful were they living together. They were married on November 28, 1923.

So Maybe It Wasn't Aida

Debbie, my younger daughter, sat hunched over the kitchen table, her head in her hands, her slight forward rocking motion counterbalanced by the slow nodding of her head. She was reading, "Oh, You Went to See Aida," my story of how my parents met. Somehow, her body language was causing me serious concern. Clearly, she was having some trouble with my essay, and I could hardly wait to defend every letter of it. Finally she looked up with doubt inscribed deeply in her affect. Debbie is a thoughtful, caring, sensitive and rarely confrontational person, but always sincere and truthful. If Debbie frowned, there had to be something wrong with the telling.

Haltingly, she began to talk. "You know, Dad, I spent a lot of time talking with your folks when I studied at UCLA."

My parents had rented an apartment in L.A., and Debbie frequently visited them there. She genuinely loved them. In response, my parent's mantra was, "Isn't she wonderful?" In short, she could do no wrong . . . which, as I watched her somewhat baleful look, of course, meant to me that *I could be wrong*.

"Yes, so what's wrong?" I asked.

"Well," she said carefully, "I don't remember anything said about a chaperone being present. I remember that Grandpa was very aggressive on the train. He was "pulling at Grandma's arm and trying to get her interested in him, even though she had a date with her." I was truly nonplussed at this news: "Uncle Joe, the chaperone, wasn't present when they met?"

Weakening slightly, I nevertheless held my ground, thinking, "Deb's memory isn't the greatest; maybe she just got the story wrong, or forgot some details."

Actually, the story was basically right. Dad had met Mom on a subway train with her date and he managed to convince her that she needed to get to know him.

"Also," she said, "I never heard anything about a marriage broker. They never spoke about prenuptial arrangements between them."

Another unnerving comment that I found difficult to deal with! "After all," I thought, "I had heard my parents' story several times and was convinced that I had presented it factually. Well, almost factually. The part about the marriage broker . . . I had created that part fully believing that marriage in those families must have taken place in the traditional way.

Debbie persisted, and reread the essay several times. Each time she straightened up and, in her very quiet, caring voice, insisted that the story was not altogether as I had presented it. Upset, I remained adamant that, only with minor deviations from my version, I had reported the story accurately.

To confirm my conclusion, I visited my sister, Libby, four years my senior, who lived in Los Angeles and had heard the same stories from my parents for many years. A better listener than I, she had heard and remembered more details about their relationship. I watched as she read my version of “Aida” and noticed the “Debbie look”—wagging head, furrowed forehead, doubtful look in her eyes.

“Well,” she said, in her most direct voice—Libby didn’t mince words—“In the first place they weren’t at the opera.”

“What?” I exploded. “They weren’t at the opera?!!”

“Absolutely not! They were both at a dance,” she said, “but they didn’t meet there.”

“I can’t believe it,” I nearly shouted, while thinking, “There goes my title, dammit! NO AIDA!”

“Secondly,” preparing for the *coup de grace*, Libby said, “They didn’t meet on the train; they met on the subway platform. And Joe wasn’t with them.”

My heart sank. I gasped and thought, “Where would I find such a meaty opening sentence?”

Libby continued her story. “Dad must have fallen in love at first sight. He insisted on talking to Mom and ignoring her date.”

“Anyway, I don’t know whether Mom suddenly ‘developed a headache’ or not,” Libby continued, “but the train left Tremont Street station with Mom’s date on board. “From then on Dad wouldn’t leave her alone.”

Now I began to add up my losses. “You know,” I said to myself, “the theme of the story is basically as I wrote it. Dad met Mom and her date. Dad couldn’t get his eyes off her and pursued her intensely; he even reached for her hand. Mom was angry with him and pushed him away. The trio boarded the train and, a tribute to Aaron’s passion, in the brief time he had to work he somehow convinced Elsie that she needed to know him better. Even more magical was his remarkable success in shaking off her date and leaving the train with his bride-to-be.”

From then on, the pair dated frequently, and after a time their families met. The love birds left little room for debate about their intentions. In the end, Aaron and Elsie came to the realization that life would be more beautiful were they to spend it together.

They were married on November 28th, 1923.

Adjusting to New York

Some members of the Siegel family chose to settle in Harlem, considered by many Jewish immigrants as a desirable place to live. As Yiddish was the primary language spoken by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, hearing it in the streets, eating at familiar restaurants, and being able to shop at stores where Yiddish was spoken must have overcome some of their apprehensions in the New World.

Nevertheless, after searching, calculations and much discussion with relatives, shortly after their wedding on November 28, 1923, Aaron and Elsie packed their bags and again migrated, this time to an apartment in a new, middle-class, six-story apartment house in Northeast Bronx at 776 Mace Avenue.

Marriage suited Elsie, and the first years were enjoyable. She worked for a while as a seamstress, but soon took charge of their apartment with a vengeance. I remember well how she cleaned from the top down, ceiling to floor, which she proceeded to wash as they did back home in Minsk, on her knees with elbows flying as she exhaled an operatic aria or a Russian or Yiddish folk song at full volume. To those who knew her, she was a “*baleboste*,” a manager. She cooked well—not fancy, yet very tasty. She understood the meaning of “fresh” and she struck the fear of God into every grocer, “fisher” and butcher who invariably set aside top quality meats for her. Elsie also began to study English reading, writing and speech at a local public school. She was a pleasant person who soon befriended her neighbors and made a point of trying to speak with those who knew English. She kept the refrigerator stocked for the inevitable “round midnight” raids by relatives from both sides of the family. Viewed as a good person, she was loved by most of her friends and relatives.

Aaron came to their marriage with a different life experience and, particularly, a family history that was not as benevolent as Elsie’s. His outlook was magnified by the impoverished circumstances of his upbringing, struggles within the family over religious conviction and practice, his desire to become a professional artist, and a need to be of this world, not delimited by the narrow religious tradition of his parents. What he brought to the marriage was knowledge of the arts, language, literature and music, a sophistication gained from his more than five years of living and working in Egypt, on the Island of Malta, and in France where he, along with other members of the family, remained up to two years to satisfy the restrictive laws imposed on migrants to America. Aaron also brought his artistic skills, enhanced by his training

at the Bezalel Institute of Art in Jerusalem, which he turned to practical gain once he arrived in America. Thus, unlike many of their friends, he had “a profession” and was viewed with “respect,” if not some level of adulation. He had emerged from his very traditional background, cast off his “religious clothing” and became generally more worldly and informed. All of these qualities were, of course, attractions for Elsie. Now at home, like all newlyweds, they had much to learn about living together.

One early crisis in their marriage centered on kashrut, keeping the Jewish dietary laws, which by the time he had arrived in America, Aaron had already discarded wholesale. Moreover, as a former prisoner on the Island of Malta during World War I, he was persuaded by his reading and exposure to different philosophies to be open to new ideas, to become internationally minded, atheistic and somewhat leftist in his political views. He read the *New York Times* avidly, and was probably well ahead of many of his contemporaries in assimilating factual knowledge.

Elsie, by contrast, was naïve in political matters, and if by the time of her marriage she was more liberal when it came to religion, she was nevertheless imbued with superstitions that were difficult to shed. Thus, when Aaron, to prove a point, purposefully ate ham on Yom Kippur (!), a time-honored act of rebellion, Elsie fully expected that she would shortly be burying her new husband—the victim of a lightening bolt from heaven. She learned that she had married a very strong-minded man, an idealist of sorts, and an uncompromising disputant over virtually any issue. His strongly held opinions were to become long-term issues for his friends, wife and children.

While Elsie was oriented toward home life, Aaron continued to pursue his new artistic specialty, drawing beautiful women’s hair designs for such newspapers as the *New York Times* and for various trade journals and magazines. His success (and his ever-present need to appear important) required that he rent space for a studio in which to produce his art.

Virtually all their lives together in New York, Aaron remained devoted to his morning routine. He awakened, dressed neatly—suit, dress shirt, tie—ate breakfast, usually an egg, cheese, salad in the Middle Eastern vogue, very strong, twice-boiled Turkish coffee, sugar, no milk. Finished, he rose from the table, leaving the dishes behind, and gave Elsie a peck on the lips goodbye, responding to her blessing, “*Gay mitt glick*” (good luck), with “*Mirtz-a-shem*” (God willing). His Stetson hat in place, he left at about 8:00 a.m. and took the IR subway line to 8th Street in Manhattan, and then walked to his studio on the 13th floor of the Bible

House, opposite John Wanamaker's upscale department store. He religiously entered the very traditional, grill-walled elevator, while saying "Bon jour, mon ami," to the costumed elevator man with whom he practiced his French for thirteen floors, and then made his way importantly to his small studio with a large print logo on the door: AARON RAPPAPORT, ARTIST. Adorned in his gray smock and gray beret, he would spend the day creating beautiful drawings of hairstyles, paintings of landscapes, and portraits of people he had contracted to paint, or had seen on the elevator, in the park, or on a subway train.

Dad's success in commercial art during the fat years of the '20s allowed the family to buy the furniture, clothing and assorted household articles that would allow them to settle in comfortably and to fulfill their most desired goals.

Right on cue, Elsie became pregnant and, on July 26, 1924, gave birth to a very pretty, blue-eyed baby girl whom they named Libby, and on May 28, 1928, a son, whom they named Leo. I don't ever remember being called Leo, as Larry must have had a special ring. I certainly agreed with this decision.

Life was good and there was no reason to raise questions about the viability of the country's finances or, closer to home, whether a change in business climate would possibly swamp their happy life.

A not-too-fond memory: Most of the furniture they bought for the new apartment was still in use sixty years later.

Reflections On My Mother

My mom, Elsie, was one of the nicest people I ever knew. She was born in 1903 in Minsk, Belarus, the youngest child in a large middle-class family whose life was centered on the family general store that her mother ran with a firm hand. Not all her brothers and sisters were charming as I remember them, but all loved their round, cherubic, good-natured sister. Elsie's brothers were invariably her champions; even her sisters, who seemingly had good reasons to feel jealous, loved and nurtured her. Probably the attention she received spoiled her to an extent. At the same time, it likely contributed to her strong sense of self, a quality that stood her in good stead at several critical junctures later in life. Driven from their pleasant surroundings by the Communists, the family escaped to the U.S. in 1921. Elsie was about sixteen and full of awe about everything she saw in New York where they settled. She worked for a while as a seamstress, and later spoke glowingly about feeling good being in a "Jewish atmosphere"—theatre, music and many people who spoke Yiddish.

Mom was an immaculate homemaker and an enthusiast about most things she did. As they did back home in Minsk, she cleaned our apartment from ceiling to floor—on her knees with elbows flying—while singing an aria from *La Boheme*, or a Russian or Yiddish folk song at the top of her lungs. In fact, she loved opera so much that occasionally she would wake the house as she belted out an aria in her sleep.

She was a true "*baleboste*." She knew quality when she saw it, cooked exceedingly well, not Julia Childs, but very tastily. Once a month our Family Circle* met in our home and, after a sumptuous meal prepared by Mom, it was time to play canasta or casino.

A warm, ebullient person, she easily befriended her neighbors and made a point of trying to speak English as much as possible. She kept the refrigerator stocked for the inevitable "around midnight" food raids by relatives from both sides of the family. A highly discriminating shopper, she insisted on the finest quality foods from the local shopkeepers whom she cajoled and trained to meet her expectations of receiving "the best" of their goods. Everyone viewed her as a good person; she was loved by friends and relatives alike.

One of Mom's outstanding qualities was her ability to solve problems. Both sides of my family were tough; often family get-togethers, even the monthly Family Circle*, would erupt in anger. A born mediator, she could listen to two sides of an issue and then express her thoughts warmly and genuinely. Somehow, by negotiation and sweet

talk, she managed to smooth things over. Everyone would “kiss and make up” and the party would resume. Friends, relatives and children called her “The Peacemaker.” This characteristic was essential to her marriage to my father, a very strong-minded, stubborn man, not endowed with her diplomatic qualities.

My father, Aaron, was a very disappointed man in the years following the economic crash in 1929. Successful in commercial art during the '20s, he was increasingly frustrated and challenged in the '30s. After all, who needed their portrait painted in the '30s? Answer: only millionaires like the Annenbergs, one of whom he actually painted.

Over time, Dad grew increasingly depressed and short-tempered. His outbursts were often precipitated by arguments between my sister, Libby, and me. Always reasonable, Mom's hand on his shoulder, and in a soft voice, she would say, “Aaron, they are just playing,” as Libby, four years older and much bigger than I, tried to throw me out the sixth floor window.

Mom was always good for a consult with my sister Libby and me. She was actively concerned about our welfare, schools and friends, and took pride in our successes. She expected good work, but was never oppressive. She rarely raised her voice in anger, but could swing a mean broom when Libby and I were fighting and the screams got too loud.

Mom prized learning, and I was always impressed with her interest in education. In Minsk, Byelorussia, where she was born and grew up, she went to a regular grade school and, unusual for Russian girls, studied language and mathematics. She graduated and insisted on continuing her studies, but could not enter the public school system because of prejudice. Finally, a tolerant priest signed her up for high school so that she could learn under the auspices of the Church. One day, with pride, she showed me her notebooks. I was amazed to see pages of “mile-long” mathematical equations in beautiful script.

Not surprisingly, Mom was eager to study English once she was settled in New York. I remember sitting next to her in a local grade school room, watching as she, in her 30s, sounded out words and wrote sentences. Later, along with other immigrants in her class, she was able to write and read English stories, if not perfectly, then adequately. As she grew more proficient she began to talk glowingly about subjects she would like to learn about, among them *Pseechulogie*.

The mobile library, which appeared weekly in our neighborhood, was a major source of interest for Mom and she encouraged us to visit and borrow books regularly. Both my parents made a point of taking me to museums. Saturday morning was “Museum Day” and, as a result, I

became familiar with several sections of the wonderful Museums of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Like most children, I went through periods of wanting to be a pilot, firefighter, or police officer. I remember walking along Allerton Avenue and stopping to watch the local “shoemaker” (shoe repairperson). I returned home to announce that I wanted to be a shoemaker. “That’s fine,” Mom said, “As long as you are an educated one.” No doubt, she influenced me a great deal.

I don’t think I fully understood it at the time, but she was remarkably acceptant of what I chose to study in college. When I determined that I wanted to go to the University of Idaho to study Plant Pathology, she said very little. My leaving, especially to go out to “Indian country,” would be hard to take. But there was no pressure from her or my father to rethink my “rash decision.”

When she learned that I would be shipping out to Korea during the war, I knew that she was beside herself with worry, but she managed a “stiff upper lip” in my presence. Of course, I knew she was in tears when she was alone.

Norma admired Mom and learned from her: “She’s a mother more than a mother-in-law to me, a very special woman.” As Norma and I grew closer, I took pleasure in seeing the two women huddled for hours on a couch, sharing thoughts, laughing and simply enjoying one another’s company.

From this good start I knew that there would be few reasons for Norma to have “mother-in-law problems.” This would bode well for the future of our relationship.

*The Family Circle was a monthly meeting of all of my father’s siblings, cousins and relations. The meeting would rotate to various relatives’ homes. Norma also grew up with a monthly Family Circle, seemingly a common family activity of the time.

Making It in New York

Libby was a precocious child, quick to walk, quick to talk and quick to learn. She showed evidence of high intelligence that naturally pleased her parents. Much later they would remark on how clever Libby was as a child. Aaron and Elsie were extremely proud of their prodigy; Elsie sewed Libby's clothes and generally dressed her in the finest. Elsie also saw to it that Libby was very well fed: she became "*zoftic*." In my family, indeed in many families which came from Eastern Europe, such wholesomeness was considered an expression of ideal beauty. A baby was beautiful if it had plump and juicy "*polkes*" (thighs). A round belly was good to kiss and round cheeks were intended for "*knipping*" (pinching). Libby excelled in all of these features and was therefore a "prize baby." There was an additional feature that made her an attractive child. While Aaron had learned English in Egypt and on Malta, Elsie was in the early stages of transition from Yiddish to English. Libby's first language, therefore, was Yiddish and she spoke it with the sweetness that characterizes the early speech of most young children. When Aaron returned home from his English-speaking work environment, he was greeted with "hello, *tah-te*" (father), shouts, and giggles from his happy, curly-headed, blue-eyed toddler.

This was the period before America's legs began to atrophy. Not everyone owned a car, so people actually walked everywhere, and Sunday, in particular, was a day for Aaron and Elsie to promenade in the European style. In the morning, while Aaron read the *New York Times*, Elsie served an expansive breakfast, usually including bagels fresh from the bakery, smothered in smoked salmon and cream cheese and a large salad in the Mediterranean style. A wedge of coffee cake served to tamp it all down. Dad would have a cigarette, several cups of coffee he prepared in the Turkish style, and then it was time to go for a walk. Dressed in appropriate clothing, the family, with Libby positioned in a very fancy carriage, would ride the elevator down to the first floor and walk out to get "*fresher luft*" (fresh air), an expression that Aaron used with intensity until the end of his life.

Aaron was a serious walker and a Sunday morning walk would usually extend for a mile or two. The streets were characteristically crowded with shoppers and lined with pushcarts, their owners selling every kind of commodity. Horse-drawn carts would go by as well, their drivers hawking fruits and vegetables or hauling block ice or bottled milk. The stores sold dry goods, clothing, hardware or foodstuffs. Occasionally, a market had several items for sale—fruits and vegetables,

chickens and meat, dairy products. More often, stores would compete with others offering similar products. Each shopper would have her “own store”—the “best” bakery, butcher, “fisher” or fruit and vegetable store.

The Sunday morning walk was an enjoyable social experience that led to frequent encounters with friends and *her* small storekeepers whom Elsie had come to know and terrorize. She had a love for quality in all things, but quality fruits, vegetables and meats were uppermost in her mind at the time. Beware the storekeeper who slipped a defective tomato into her bag or the butcher who sold her slices of hard meat. They soon learned that she had a “nose” and high expectations. Her success in acquiring high-quality foods, however, came not from disputation, but rather from a very sweet, calm presentation that seemed to melt down any resistance. She often referred to her “boyfriends,” but all her boyfriends seemed to have a lot to do with food. So, as Aaron, Elsie and Libby promenaded, Elsie would smile her warm smile and say “hello” in her friendly way. They would smile back and exchange some friendly words, the butcher whispering words of love, “I’ll save a special cut of brisket for you.”

Aaron would walk proudly, erect, looking ahead, his mind apparently filled with loftier things than fruits and vegetables. But not always. He might have been thinking of cheese or coffee. Although they lived in a neighborhood whose Jewish population’s appetite was primarily Ashkenazic—from Eastern Europe—Aaron’s Middle Eastern appetites were somewhat different. He loved Turkish coffee, olives of every kind, eggplant and *katchekaval*, a hard cheese with a strong aroma reminiscent of feta.

There was a requisite stop to buy these necessities. The family would return home, their ears ringing with the sounds of the street. Then, of course, it was time for a “bite,” and then a nap. In the evening, relatives might descend for dinner, card games, and lots of arguing. Bedtime was anytime . . . often in the early morning.

Nothing extraordinary, but it did say something about the adjustment these recent arrivals made in their new country, to marriage, to their first child and living in a large and unfamiliar city. In the 1920s, it seemed that with Aaron working and earning reasonably well, the country’s economy growing at a rapid rate, and friends and relatives living nearby, life was beautiful and could only get better.

In The Beginning

Most likely, my mother, Elsie, actually said “Whew!” (or maybe it was “Oy”) when my head crowned on May 28, 1928, in a Harlem hospital. However, it took more effort to push out the rest of the nine pounds I had accumulated while still in the womb. Although they named me Leo, they called me by my Yiddish name, *Lable*. How this name evolved to Lawrence and Larry was probably owed to their wild imagination. They must have decided that Leo, the name that appears on my birth certificate, was simply not sophisticated enough to predict a wondrous future for their offspring.

I have it on good authority that once they started speaking again both Mom, and Dad, were very happy to have a brand new, red-haired, cherubic son to join my sister, Libby. I was told that I was a nice, not too demanding, not-too-smart baby who ate without coaxing, gurgled appreciatively, and was generally easy to get along with. As I grew, they derived satisfaction from the fact that I ate copiously and democratically, became very chubby and, therefore, to them, beautiful.

Elsie was a traditional mother who, in the style of the time, would wrap me tightly in a warm blanket so that I resembled nothing less than a plump Jewish burrito. She would then place me in my carriage on an appropriately blue sheet, and cover me with a like blanket so that I would be protected from everything. The carriage—some would call it a perambulator—was a well-sprung, shiny black vehicle fitted with a pull-over hood to keep the sun out of my eyes which anyway were almost covered by the warm woolen hat that covered most of my head. Now that I was presentable and safe from the elements, she would push the carriage into the elevator on the sixth floor where we lived, exit at the first floor, and ceremoniously wheel the carriage down four steps into the street. There we joined a cluster of perhaps a half-dozen babies whose mothers had also stuffed them into similar clothing and carriages.

The infant years became toddler years and I learned to like my life and my Mom’s routines. One day, when I was four, Mom wheeled my stroller the few blocks to Allerton venue in the Bronx to visit the small market where she knew and befriended all of the stall owners. Her first stop was at the kosher butcher shop where she was greeted by the “The Butcher,” Mr. Cohen, one of her market “boyfriends,” as she called them. He had a deep respect for her knowledge of food quality. After a warm welcome, he cocked his wrinkled Stetson at a sharp angle on his balding head and wiped his bloody hands on his bloody apron.

“Only the best for you,” he said, as he went to the rear of the walk-in freezer and brought out a wrapped package of meat. Mom thanked him and paid the bill, but lingered at the meat counter.

Suddenly, someone called her name. “Elsie! Elsie!” Surprised, Mom turned around and saw Sarah Horwitz, the sister of Ruth, a friend my mother made in 1922 on a ship while emigrating from Antwerp, Belgium, to New York City. Ruth introduced Sarah to Elsie shortly after they had arrived and they became a close trio, visiting one another frequently. Eventually, however, they lost touch, as they all moved to different parts of the city and phones were very expensive and not yet universal.

“Sarah!” “Elsie!” they shouted, as they embraced and immediately engaged as if they had never parted. Sarah pushed the “correct” carriage bearing her beautiful child, Norma, three years younger than I. They exchanged stories about their experiences since they had last seen one another. Both were married, enjoying life, and living in the Bronx, amazingly only a few blocks apart. But the most important outcome of their meeting was that Norma, my future wife, and I were introduced amid jokes about making a “shidach,” a marriage agreement. The Horwitzes and the Rappaports remained fast friends for life as their shared customs, language (Yiddish), and history in Europe made it easy to join hands in New York. Norma and I saw one another from time to time. We played together and talked a bit, but both age and distance limited our opportunities to become fast friends until much later, when these were no longer issues.

Red Curls

I have it on good faith that both Mom and Dad were very happy to have a red-haired, nine-pound cherubic son. I was considered to be a pleasant child, not very demanding, who gurgled appreciatively and was easy to get along with.

In my early years they derived a great deal of pleasure from watching me eat copiously and indiscriminately. No doubt, the folds of fat on my body gave Mom and Dad much visual pleasure. From this you may presume that plump people were prized by our patriarchs.

Likely, Mom would have said, *“Oi! Lable. He is so bewcheeful!”*

I was a good child who, for a time, learned spoken English at a slower rate than average. Probably, I didn't need to speak until I was three, because my mouth was otherwise occupied. Anyway, thanks to their unrelenting feedings, I had little time or need for scholarly discussion.

Eventually, I got the hang of integrating brain and vocal cord functions, allowing me to participate freely in conversations. Turning over a new leaf, I made up for lost time, and learned to speak and to write well.

As a small child, I had one physical feature that evoked animosity and tension between my parents: I had beautiful red curls. As I approached age three, Mom and Dad began an increasingly rancorous dialogue about whether and when my beautiful red curls would be shorn. Mom was adamantly in favor of a haircut so that she would no longer be obliged to explain to every fawning passerby that her “cute little girl” was, in fact, her cute little boy.

Not surprisingly, it was Dad, the artist, who fought vigorously against cutting my hair, as he would no longer be able to draw fetching pictures of my exceptional locks. The debate over whether this “crime” (his term) would (ever?) take place intensified malevolently. The upshot was a classic “hair raid.”

The attack occurred one afternoon while Dad was at work, probably thinking about painting a portrait of his round, curly, redheaded son. Meanwhile, Mom walked me to Burke Avenue to visit Dad's favorite Italian barber who, in turn, introduced me to Rodolfo, now *my* favorite barber. Singing me an Italian song, he lifted me into a special child's chair, then covered me with a sparkling white sheet and proceeded to whittle down every hair on my head. Mom took me home and prepared for Dad's onslaught.

No sooner did he return than the subjects of Mom's search for social freedom and Dad's desire for unlimited artistic expression erupted into an extended war. Dad was infuriated. He screamed at my mother for some three hours and then withdrew into himself for some three weeks. Conversation came to a near standstill.

Predictably, their time-honored remedy for anger management was successful: The agony of "war" subsided only after many weeks of "Chicken Soup Therapy."

What's My Name?

While I was called Larry or Lable most of my life, the name on my birth certificate is Leo. I don't know when the switch was made, but it must have happened when I was very young. I am very happy with Larry, as I never liked the name Leo.

My first language was Yiddish, not English, as Dad and Mom still conversed most comfortably in their native tongues. While Dad's first language was Yiddish, he learned to speak French and German before he came to the U.S.

Mom's native tongues were Yiddish and Russian. Thus the only language they had in common was Yiddish. Therefore it was the language of our household and the reason for my being called by my Jewish name, "*Lable*."

Some time after the family was settled in New York Mom began to study English. This presented problems for me as I was a good boy and did my best to emulate my parents' behavior.

One day, when I was about 8, I told my best friend, Herbie, "We went shopping yesterday to get some *"foinicher."* Naturally, I was surprised and hurt when Herbie laughed out loud and made fun of my accent and pronunciation. English was always a challenge among the youth in our neighborhood as our parents, virtually all immigrants, spoke English incorrectly.

The problems of language were not restricted to street talk. I was the unfortunate butt of a story that took place later when I was in kindergarten in P.S. 89, in the Bronx. One day, Mrs. Shepherd, the kindergarten teacher, gave me a message for my mother, asking her to visit the kindergarten playroom the next day. Worried, Mom slept poorly that night. The next morning, dressed neatly, she walked to my school to meet Mrs. Shepherd who greeted her warmly.

Mrs. Shepherd greeted her kindly and said, "Mrs. Rappaport, you must know that your son has been absent from class for more than a week."

"It can't be," Elsie answered.

"It's a fact," said Mrs. Sheperd.

Tears welling up in her large green eyes, Mom answered, "Excuse me, I'm sorry, but I send him off to school early every morning. Lable is a good boy. He never misses school!"

"Lable?!" Mrs. Shepherd almost shouted. Then she relaxed and smiled.

"Mrs. Rappaport, What is your son's English name?"

“Larry Rappaport!” my mom answered. Finally, Mom got it. Teacher and mother looked at each other for a moment and then burst out laughing.

From then on, when Mrs. Shepperd called my name during roll call, I answered loudly: “HERE!”

And the issue was closed forever.

My Neighborhood

I loved to climb the stairs from the sixth floor to the roof of our apartment house in the Bronx. From there, once I got past the lines of laundry left to dry (because we didn't have a washer or dryer) I could see my neighborhood from every direction.

To the north and west I saw apartment houses and stores in the more developed areas of the neighborhood. The most important of these was Mr. Cohen's candy store that was situated on the corner of my street, Mace Avenue, and the Boston Post Road, famous since the time of the Revolutionary War. When Mom was in a generous mood, she would give me a nickel to spend in Mr. Cohen's store. When he was in a generous mood, Mr. Cohen, a short, quiet, pleasant man, would dish up a delicious ice cream soda (chocolate, of course) made in a small Coca-Cola glass—syrup, soda, milk, a small ball of ice cream. Heaven. A nickel could also buy a candy bar that today costs about fifteen times that amount. When I was less affluent, I could buy penny candy; for two cents there was always "2-cents plain"—seltzer—and, of course, there were "egg-creams" as a last resort. I could also see the "El", the elevated part of the subway, which was critical to our travels to almost any part of New York City. And I could peer straight down along the edge of the building and see the plants my mother and I grew on our fire escape.

But for me, at age ten, the most attractive feature of this landscape was the rough, unfinished foundation of an apartment house just across the street from ours, a symbolic ruin of the Depression that had totally stopped construction of all buildings in the neighborhood. For the kids who lived on our block, however, the rough, inverted U-shaped pillars where windows were meant to be fit represented opportunity: those kids foolhardy enough to try would jump from one pillar to another. The high rollers would even race to see who could jump all the pillars fastest. As luck would have it, no one was ever killed in this maniacal game, but then I moved away when I was thirteen.

Then there was the nearest intersection of Mace Avenue and Boston Road, placed there ostensibly to provide opportunity for cars to pass and people to cross. We, who owned the streets after three o'clock in the afternoon, used the four corners as bases for the perennial stick ball game that started at 3:30 and ended more or less at 6:00 P.M., depending on the season. During the games, the streets were full of very noisy kids, those who were on the opposing teams and those who were there to support or merely to kibbitz. Cars slowed as they approached

and many drivers would honor the game, allowing the pitcher to get off “just one more killer pitch.”

Looking east from the roof, I had a totally different view. Jewish immigrants lived mainly in the apartment houses to the north and west, while Italian families owned the rows of red brick one- and two-story homes that stretched along Mace Avenue all the way to my grade school, P.S. 89, six blocks away. The languages spoken, of course, were distinctly different, but so were the cultures and values. There was a wide gap in political opinions. Mussolini was in full flower at the time and had brought a measure of pride to the Italian community, the brunt of much humor and derision because of the Mafia influence that was publicized daily.

The Jews, whose bitter experiences in Europe had made them fearful of any group who favored men wearing brown or black shirts, generally kept their distance. In addition, there was a strong strain of anti-Semitism in the Italian community which was fed by a priest who actively promoted the image of the Jew as Christ-killer. Thus there were sometimes frayed relations among children in the neighborhood, which led to frequent fights; many days I was subject to hazing and fistfights as I walked home from school. Often we walked home in groups, purely in self-defense. Nevertheless, I had several Italian friends and we occasionally visited one another's homes. With them relations were good. We attended classes, ate lunch together and participated in school clubs without any problems.

I liked P.S. 89 a great deal after I got past 4th grade. Previous grades were typically taught by crotchety female teachers who were nearing retirement and seemingly shared the same nasty attitude. They were memorialized in a saying that had to do with four of these teachers: Mr. Dill (who was actually the 8th grade biology teacher), Mrs. Phelan, Mrs. Dolman and Mrs. Ayers: “Dill’s Phelan Dolman’s Ayers” was a favorite joke among kids in the school yard.

The school had a garden, in which I enjoyed working very much. The children prepared the soil and planted and tended the garden under the supervision of a demanding teacher. I liked doing all the jobs in the garden and remember asking lots of questions, some of them not too bright.

Also looking east, I would take pleasure at seeing the “Italian farms,” small operations specializing in vegetables for sale at local markets. Sunday mornings, I would walk long distances with my dad, often passing these beautiful farms. I came to appreciate the effort that went into growing excellent, tasty vegetables. It was rumored that once in a while kids engaged in a little “midnight agriculture.”

But it was when I turned to the south that I was particularly connected. We loved this section further from home, yet reached easily by bike or on foot, a large area of native trees luckily ignored by developers for many years. I could see what to me looked like forests, and they were, in the sense that there were many large trees that grew over a wide area, all the way to Pelham Parkway. No houses there, but recently built sidewalks bordering the newly laid asphalt streets sadly transected the forest into neat rectangles, predicting a further change in the character of the neighborhood.

With my friends, Herbie Wohl and Willy Fine, I liked walking in these wild areas, and enjoyed making “safaris” through them. One day we were explorers, making our way fearlessly through the thickets, ever-alert for unknown enemies and dangerous animals. Another day we were gold-miners, digging for the precious metal, but alas, without luck. At other times we made our way gingerly through the underbrush, hiding behind trees and slithering along the ground in search of wild boar. After an afternoon in the wild, I returned home, happy that all enemies were conquered and all friends saved from a bitter end. With satisfaction from an afternoon’s work, I was ready for the cup of hot chocolate my mother would knowingly prepare in advance.

A small turn of the head to the southwest and I would see the area I liked best. Bounded on the north by apartment houses, there still remained a large tract of undeveloped land that stretched for long distances. We called this area “the lots.” The land was undulating; there were large boulders, revealed when heavy machinery was used to cut a road we called the “canyon” through the lots stretching from Mr. Cohen’s candy store all the way to Pelham Parkway. Coarse grass grew freely in parts, while in others there was only heavy soil that supported little vegetation. Here Tom Mix and the Lone Ranger and Tonto could gallop for miles, or at least it felt like miles. We played softball and “ring-a-levio,” a sort of hide-and-seek game that I rarely heard mentioned once we left the Bronx. In the winter, the gentle snow-covered slopes turned into “Olympic ski runs” as we ran headlong down a slope, Flexible Flyer sleds poised, threw ourselves down upon them and propelled them as far as we could go.

Each spring I would find a small, somewhat secluded area in the lots where I would plant my own garden. They were never very productive, probably because the soil was not too good, but they were mine and I tended them for the lone tomato plant that I might manage to grow. Regrettably, sometimes they would be discovered and decimated with the glee that only little kids experience at the moment of

destruction. I suppose I am admitting that I, too, had similar pleasurable moments when causing some kind of havoc.

I reached the height of pleasure when I acted out my pyromaniac inclinations. A favorite activity was baking “mickeys.” We placed potatoes in a fire we started with dry grass and sticks, and burned them until they were “right.” Mostly, they were beyond charred, but this never deterred us from trying it again whenever the desire struck. I can still conjure up the wonderful smell and the charcoal flavor of a really good mickey.

Another fiery inclination: I liked to light fires in the dry grass that covered parts of the lots. Of course, few ten-year-old boys would anguish very long over the consequences of the fire spreading; indeed I probably experienced some barely suppressed elation at the prospect that this is exactly what might happen. Once it did, seriously. The fire trucks descended on the blaze I had set, a scene that I watched from my secret hideout among the boulders. What a thrill! I still remember feeling a little frightened and slightly remorseful (but not too much).

But that wasn’t the only “warm expression” I experienced in the lots. One day Annette and I, both twelve, took a stroll to one of the secluded sections of the lots. We sat down facing one another and exchanged looks deep into one another’s eyes, just like in the movies. Then, overcome with what must have been passion, we leaned forward and our lips met. My first kiss, and perhaps hers as well.

Such were the pleasures of the lots that we experienced every day—rain, snow or shine. Yet, eventually, the truth will emerge. The best part of playing in the lots was that we were far away from the windows that faced Mace Avenue with our mothers hanging out of them insistently tolling lunch and dinner times.

Such was my idyllic playground in the Bronx.

Glace Cakes

I stood before the bank of dispensing machines contemplating where my quarter would go and what I'd get for it. The Horn and Hardart Automat, the hugely successful high-tech (at least in 1936) self-service restaurant in New York, held endless fascination for me, no less than the sight of a jet plane taking off loaded with hundreds of passengers holds for me today.

The thought of eating lunch at the Automat with my father after a morning's "work" standing alongside of him in his studio on 8th Street in Manhattan was enough to get me out of bed early, dressed nicely, fed quickly and out the door with him on the way to the IRT subway station on Allerton Avenue in the Bronx.

But before lunch there was the first ritual, which was part of his everyday life and that I looked forward to sharing. We walked to Allerton Avenue station, about eight blocks, climbed a huge number of steps to the platform, and took the first train headed for Manhattan. After some forty minutes we exited at 14th Street into a wide square with Orbach's and Klein's department stores, prominent features of the landscape, amid vehicles of every description racing to who knows where. We carefully walked the six blocks to 8th Street. Some winter mornings, when it was bitter cold, we would take the local to 8th Street, a short distance walk to the Bible House (never knew why they called it that) where Dad's studio was located. Opposite was the familiar site of John Wanamaker's, the staid, upscale department store that we would *never* go to. "Too much money" was the inevitable excuse.

As we walked proudly, Dad made a point of introducing me to everyone he knew in the neighborhood. He clearly took a great deal of pleasure in my being there with him, and I felt it. As we approached the Bible House, a huge, rather ugly red building, I anticipated the elevator ride up to the 13th floor. The elevator was a celebration in open French-style grillwork and was invariably operated by the same, requisite Frenchman. Dad would first address him as "mon ami," followed by a torrent of French, which was answered with equal verbosity by the "elevator man." Dad loved to speak French and had little chance to use the language, so this was a special moment for him. I took pride in his skill and listened intently, although I knew not a word.

At the 13th floor we would exit amidst a flurry of French goodbyes (although they did not kiss each other on both cheeks) and we would walk a long distance on wooden floors, past studios and offices of every kind until we reached the one whose door was imprinted with my

father's neatly lettered advertisement: A. Rappaport, Artist. Inside, the first familiar feature of the room was the very large north-facing window with a wonderful view of Manhattan.

I waited as he put on his gray smock; he always wore a beret and looked like an artist is supposed to look. In the room there were the familiar easels bearing paintings at various stages of completion and pallets waiting for him to squeeze on huge gobs of paint. I waited expectantly for the emerald green to slither out of the tube. I still love that color. Next to his easel was mine (temporarily); he gave me a clean canvas and I squeezed out some paints onto my own pallet. I felt very important and really enjoyed being there and "painting" alongside of him.

Often he would give me a brief art lesson, usually focused on perspective but often accompanied by lectures on how to paint the human body. In his education at the Bezalel Art Institute in Jerusalem, he learned that one had to know a great deal about anatomy to paint the human face and body properly. Indeed, he said, "We studied cadavers so that we would really understand the relationship between the human skeleton and muscle." Having no cadavers available, I took him at his word and tried hard to draw the human face as he saw it. I wasn't very good, but I took away an appreciation and love for art that still remains with me.

While I painted, I remained constantly aware of the clock sitting on a nearby table, teasing me as it labored toward noon, for me a sort of epicurean witching hour. Finally, it was time and Dad removed his smock and decorously hung it on a hanger. We left his sanctum, took the elevator down to the first floor, walked out on the street and headed for the next holy place, the Automat, for our all-important ritual.

At the Automat, I could have all the food a quarter could buy, dispensed from the miraculous food delivery machines. The machines accepted only nickels, which were provided by a human mechanical money changer who, with the wave of her arm, managed magically to spew out the exact change for each dollar before the customer's eyes. The "chefs" of the Automat always had what I wanted because I could walk directly to the bank of sandwich dispensers, insert my three nickels into the slot, watch the entire column of sandwiches rotate and, magically, one door would open and my choice would be there, ready to be removed and placed on a tray.

I saved the best for last. Invariably I made a beeline for the desserts, hoping that this week my favorite one would be available. Invariably it was. I inserted my two nickels, the column of desserts rotated, and when it stopped, I would reach inside the chamber for the

glace cakes, looking like small, circular, cut-off pyramids of delicious, rich chocolate cake. It was almost a religious experience. I ate the sandwich quickly, but consumed the two glace cakes very slowly, sparingly, in the hope that they would never go away. But of course . . . Dad shared this ritual with me, a broad smile on his face as he watched me eat my meal.

Such “workdays” were abbreviated and we would catch the train for home soon after we took a long walk in the neighborhood. I would return feeling great, able to tell my mother and sister, Libby, about how we spent the morning painting and, of course, not for the first time, how much I enjoyed the Automat and chocolate glace cakes.

Vacation Memories

Among my favorite childhood memories are summer vacations in the Catskill Mountains, renamed the “Jewish Alps” and the “Borscht Belt” because of the number of Jews who visited every summer. Similarly, Sullivan County was nicknamed “Solomon County.” Starting from when I was age 6 to about age 12, our family usually took an annual trip to the Catskills. My parents, Aaron and Elsie, and sister Libby, would hire an oversize cab called a “sherut.” It would pick us up at our apartment house in the Bronx and, if there was additional room, add anyone else who could fit, and drive us to the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York.

We drove many hours on sometimes poor roads with few stops. I looked forward to the high point of our travels: stopping at the “Big Apple,” a popular restaurant that, not surprisingly, was graced by a “statue” of a big, red apple. The excitement of making this stop was grounded in year-long anticipation of the delicious apple pie and ice cream that we knew awaited us. The dessert was indeed outstanding, no doubt because of the aromatic, crispy, crunchy, juicy Macintosh apples used in making our treat. This memory has stuck in my brain ever since my first visit to the Catskills, about 1935, when I was seven. I still prize this apple variety, despite frequent disclaimers by fellow Easterners.

In the summers of the '30s, perhaps up to a million Jews from New York and nearby states would make their way to popular destinations with names like Warwarsing, Ellenville and Lake Kaun-e-onga. There, some of them filled very fancy hotels with memorable menus and facilities. However, these were not for New York's poorer residents who also considered it a privilege to be able to vacation in the Catskills. For us there were bungalows and “*kuch-a-leyns*” (“cook by yourselves”), sometimes leaky and somewhat tacky houses, shared with other families. In a *kuch-a-leyn*, the wives cooked their family's meals in communal kitchens and served them in a communal dining room, in contrast to the brimming, opulent formal meals served in such famous hotels as The Nevele, Grossinger's and Kutcher's. When our meal was finished, we would clear the table, wash the dishes and put them away. Then we were free to meet with friends and make new acquaintances.

There was an established routine which virtually all of the families practiced. The first weekend the entire family went to the Catskills together. Subsequently, the husbands would arrive on Friday, spend the weekend with the family, and then return to the City Sunday evening for the next workweek.

Joe and Sarah Horwitz, Norma's parents who were close friends of my parents, on one occasion joined us for a few weeks near Ellenville in one of the "kuchaleyns." One of my favorite memories of that visit was that both families were tickled when I reported to her mother that Norma, who was about three years old at the time, was running about stark naked. I'm not sure how Sarah felt about it.

The Catskills were beautiful in all seasons and many articles have been written about the green mountains, the flowering plants, the clear air, the beautiful sunsets and, at night because of the near absence of lighting and smog, the remarkable "star show" that followed.

In the summer, the Jewish culture was palpable, beginning with "*farbrengging*" (chatting) in Yiddish, the common alternative language, and people letting their hair down and relaxing after long, hard days at work in the City. During the day we walked, climbed the not-too-demanding mountains, swam in nearby lakes, and played ball games when we could get enough players together. At night, some of the younger people would take walks under the stars and, occasionally, would sneak into one of the fancy hotels to watch the shows where many famous comedians got their starts.

I looked forward to this almost-annual trip with anticipation, a welcome change from the City. As my parents could not afford to send me to camp, I loved this substitute which offered freedom, the chance to meet new friends, the sports—especially swimming in a pool or lake—and the luxury of roaming without heavy traffic.

This doesn't mean that there was *nothing* to fear. I was a naïve kid and, in at least one memorable event, was invited to climb a nearby mountain with a couple of "older" friends whom I liked. Eventually, we made it to the top where we walked, talked and laughed. I paid no attention to where we were going and was shocked when they whispered something about being lost and that we probably wouldn't make it back to our "hotel" that evening. I was really frightened, but after they got the desired torrent of tears, they smiled and assured me that they were "only kidding" and that we would find our way back to our community.

I suddenly became less naïve.

Every year, on July 4th, I remember an event that took place not far from my house. Like most kids, I was attracted to things that go "boom." Despite my parents' admonitions not to play with unexploded firecrackers, I willfully collected some and, with a "secret match," lit one. The rest of the pile exploded and my hand was severely burned. Message: Listen to your Momma!

It was hard to return home because of the wonderful atmosphere of the countryside, but I always held out hope that “maybe next year” we would be able to return.

Scientific Stirrings

Early on Sunday mornings in 1941, when we lived in the Bronx, I had a job delivering large bags of groceries for a mom-and-pop grocery store. Each delivery netted me a nickel. I used this money, and any I received as gifts, to buy chemicals and glassware with which, at great risk to my family and residents of our building, I ran experiments in our kitchen. At P.S. 89, my grade school, I was intrigued with the biology course taught by a “giant” named Mr. Dill, and enjoyed working in the school garden.

On graduating from PS 89, I entered Christopher Columbus High School, where I was intrigued by the introductory science course, taught by Mr. Zimmerman, and the biology course, taught by Mr. Brandstatter, a tiny man with a big mind. I joined the Science Club in which I participated for one semester before we moved to Brooklyn. These experiences—growing up in a largely agricultural area in the Bronx, and joining my mother who loved growing plants on the fire escape of our 6th floor apartment—provided a basis for my future botanical interests. The home science experiments were a natural outgrowth, as was the romantic notion of some day working in a laboratory.

The art world had not been kind to my dad, an artist, during the Great Depression years. My mom, untrained except as a homemaker, could not find work sufficient to supplement his meager income. However, Mom had an angel, Godel Canelstein, her well-to-do brother-in-law. With his loan of \$800, for us a huge amount of money, Mom bought a millinery shop near the corner of Nostrand Avenue and Eastern Parkway. Libby, my sister, four years older and studying art at the famous Cooper Union School of Art in Manhattan, could only manage a part-time job to help the family. Even at age thirteen, I was very conscious of the financial problems our family was suffering. When my family moved to Brooklyn in 1941, though underage, I promptly found an after-school job delivering clothing for a dry cleaning store.

I retain profound memories of an afternoon when I delivered clothing to the owners of the Kings County Pathological Laboratories. I feel the excitement I experienced at seeing the shiny white walls, the bright lights, the microscopes and other equipment on the fluorescent-lit lab benches, and the sight of white-clad technicians running tests on human urine and blood samples. I could barely contain myself, and ran all the way home to tell my parents about my adventure with such enthusiasm that they made a remarkable proposal: return to the

laboratory, declare my interest in science and what I had seen in the lab, and ask for a job.

“Even if they don’t pay you for your work, it would be a wonderful experience for you,” Dad said. I would work to learn and to be of help in the lab. The next day, with considerable trepidation, I walked into the laboratory reception area and asked to see Dr. Blavis, the owner of the laboratory. I was surprised at the warmth of my reception as I was ushered in to see him: no raised eyebrows, no “ahems” when I gave my reason for the visit. I didn’t have to tell him how excited I was to be talking to him about my dream. Dr. Blavis was a large man with a warm, friendly face, a ready smile, blue eyes, gray hair and a receding hairline. He listened with interest to what I had to say and, to my complete surprise, told me that he would give me a chance.

I ran the half-mile home and excitedly told my parents of my great luck. Thereafter, I worked and studied in the lab most afternoons after school and on many Saturdays. From the start, I loved the white lab coat I was given and the atmosphere of the laboratory. I soon learned that the technicians ran urine analyses to obtain data useful to diagnose diseases, performed Ascheim-Zondek pregnancy tests and, daily, thousands of Wasserman tests for syphilis for personnel, servicemen and sailors at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

I became expert at washing the “beautiful” test tubes with their yellow and red contents and many other dishes containing substances of questionable consistency and odor. I also learned how to clean up the lab and the cages so that they sparkled, a job I disliked, but “it had to be done.”

Eventually, working with one of the technicians, I learned how to perform several lab tests independently. The rabbits paid a terrible price for the knowledge gained to determine whether a woman was pregnant. First, I placed a virgin female rabbit into a box with one ear protruding through a gap in the cover. Next, I drew a sample of the woman’s urine into a syringe, inserted its needle into a vein into the ear, and injected a specified amount of the urine sample into the vein. When I finished, I returned the rabbit to its cage. Three days later, I again squeezed the rabbit into a box and injected air into a vein in her ear, which quickly killed the animal. Next, I fastened the animal to a special table, slit the abdomen open and examined the ovaries for clots. The appearance of such clots was a clear indication of pregnancy.

One day Dr. Blavis asked me if I would like to join his daughter, Shirley, in running a business selling and delivering “sheep cells” to laboratories and hospitals. The processed blood was used in tests for syphilis in service personnel men associated with the Brooklyn Navy

Yard. I agreed, and weekly, I traveled to a slaughterhouse in Manhattan to obtain fresh blood samples from sacrificed female sheep. The blood was collected in small containers, thence into small ice chests. I hand-carried these containers on the subway to the lab in Brooklyn as fast as possible, so the samples would arrive before clotting could take place. In the laboratory, the blood was decanted and either used in our laboratory or packaged in dry ice for speedy shipment to other laboratories and hospitals.

I did the work; Shirley got the money. This was disappointing but, in retrospect, the experience was worthwhile.

On occasion Dr. Blavis, or his son, Murray, would hand me a few dollars. Even though the amount of work I did was unrelated to the amount they gave me, the acknowledgement was satisfying. I continued to learn and work in the lab for about two years. However, the requirements of schoolwork and probably my heightened social activity led to my decision to quit when I was about fifteen.

Without doubt, my amazing experience contributed significantly to my decision to go into science and, in fact, to study pathology as a professional goal. Not the bloody, screaming kind, but PLANT pathology.

In fact, over time, the notion of working with healthy plants instead of dead ones led me to emphasize a major in plant science. This became the basis of my career in plant sciences.

The Red and the White

In some ways my uncle, Jack Siegel, began preparing himself to be my mentor before I was born. By the time I was seven, he had already had a lifetime of experiences that were to influence me long after he had separated himself from our family.

Jack was a committed Communist until he died. Born in Minsk, Belarus, in 1901, he was the youngest child in a large, well-to-do, middle-class family. His mother, Molly Pearl, was an astute businesswoman who generously provided her family with many of the gifts that money could buy. One of Jack's prized possessions as a teenager was a horse that he frequently rode about the neighborhood. Clearly, as the youngest boy, Jack was undoubtedly favored and, according to Elsie, his favorite sibling, he was loved and pampered by everyone in the family.

Jack grew up in a country steeped in its own 19th century history whose insular, "God-chosen Czar" was unwilling to change in the face of severe internal social unrest and mortal danger from the outside. In 1917, World War I ended for Russia, which was overpowered by Germany and Turkey. The nation was immediately convulsed in the throes of the Bolshevik Revolution. Jack, like many idealistic youths, was powerfully influenced by the rapidly changing political scene, the propaganda of subterranean Marxists bent on creating a new, classless society, and the abject poverty that permeated the country.

At sixteen, Jack was powerfully built, had penetrating blue eyes and a shock of blond hair. He was a self-confident and determined young man. He joined the Revolution well before it broke out on a large scale, and was a militant activist following World War I. During this period, a number of Western countries, including America, sent troops to quell the Bolshevik Revolution. Naturally, Jack fought for the resistance.

Jack was totally committed to the Revolution and willing to fight for it. He frequently confronted Czarist soldiers with his political views. One day, Jack was cruelly attacked by a mounted Polish Cavalry officer who fired six rounds from his carbine at close range, perforating Jack's midsection. As quickly as possible and at considerable personal risk, his family members rushed him to a friendly surgery (not all were friendly) where the bullets were removed and the wounds treated and bandaged. Ironically, none of these medical benefactors approved of Jack's politics.

Later on, when I was a teenager, the sight of Jack walking about shirtless in his apartment, wounds glaring, would awaken memories of his story of the attack, his recovery, and his return to the conflict.

Living in New York, Jack never missed his stride. He found work in the cleaning and dyeing trade and soon became a union organizer. I remember times when he came to our apartment in the Bronx late at night, sometimes deathly ill from exposure to the elements, sometimes black and blue from the attacks by “union busters.” My mother would nurse him back to health while pleading with him to “get a normal job.”

I felt close to Jack, in part because he always treated me as an adult, never condescending, as many might act toward a child. Sitting in his living room together with Paula, his unsmiling, somewhat acerbic, and equally dedicated “live-in,” appropriate to the free-love views of their creed, Jack would openly discuss his beliefs. An atheist by definition, he nevertheless preached his vision of the future Communist world with unmatched “religious fervor.”

“The revolution will change our lives,” he said. “We will live in an egalitarian society in which people will be free from the tyranny of capitalism. The government will take care of everyone. The masses will create a classless society based on hard work: each according to his ability and each according to his needs. There won’t be any nationalism, so there will be no reason for war.”

Sitting on a couch together, we heard the first broadcast of Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony and Adolph Hitler’s ranting on the radio. Listening to Jack’s predictions, I soon came to fear the forthcoming Armageddon that, in Jack’s view, would engulf the world. He often said, “Communism will defeat Fascism, and Russia will show us the way.”

For the time, he exhibited an unusual concern for people of color, a tolerance which I embraced. “In a Communist country,” he said, “There will be no racial prejudice. We will live in a color-blind society.” I count Jack as among the first to instill in me a strong social awareness, which I retain to this day.

Headly stuff for an eight-year old pre-teen, all the more so because the message was delivered by a man who had physically and spiritually dedicated his life to achieving these goals.

Around the age of thirteen, I joined the American Youth for Democracy. In retrospect, this group’s name belied its core purpose as an idealistic, philosophically and energetically pro-Soviet organization that was active at the time. We met regularly, heard speeches and engaged in conversations that reinforced our commitments to a more “democratic world.” After a year or so, as its strong Communistic bent became clear, I drifted away, bored and disenchanted by the organization’s single-

minded philosophy that conflicted with my own evolving political sensibilities and positive views of American democracy.

Our relationship continued into the '40s. I visited with Jack and Paula (by then respectably married) after they moved to Tom's River, New Jersey, a leftist bastion, where they had bought and managed a chicken farm. I helped clean "chicken motels" and collected fresh eggs as we continued our discussions.

However, not all was ideal. Our relationship, based so strongly on Jack's unshakable beliefs and my youthful innocence, had begun to fray in my early teens as I began to espouse more democratic views.

One day I asked, "Jack, do the Russian people have the right to vote?"

"Now you're asking me a difficult question," he answered, without answering.

Similarly, when I expressed my strong disappointment at the agreement made by Stalin and Hitler to divide Poland between their two countries, he answered, "The Soviets had to do it. They weren't prepared for a war with Hitler."

Despite my growing philosophical differences with Jack which had begun in the late 1930s, the war interrupted further questioning. We both could acknowledge Russia's importance: they were our allies and our job was to defeat Hitler.

Accordingly, with my friends, I made every effort to muster the necessary support for the war effort, collecting newspaper and metal items. The metals were shipped to a central collection point where they were melted down and used to manufacture new weaponry.

Where the world was led to believe that the Allies would beat Germany and new democratic governments would arise, Jack envisioned the wholesale takeover of formerly free nations by the victorious Soviets. This outcome was impossible for me to accept and it was no longer meaningful to engage in serious political conversation with Jack and Pauline. I felt angry and thoroughly disappointed.

As I left New York in 1946 to study at the University of Idaho, my contacts with Jack and Paula were much diminished. Nevertheless, we remained within written contact. By then, much of my youthful idealism had dissipated. The promise of the new "international social order" deteriorated as news of the excesses of the Soviet government came to light. While I still liked the idea of an egalitarian society, I felt that the Soviet Union had lost its way; the positive political legacy I had absorbed from Jack crumbled as the Red Army occupied the Balkan nations and refused to free Poland. With the resentment that comes from

a sense of betrayal, I, along with many Americans of all ages, became hostile to the Soviet leaders for what they had done to our dream.

This loss of image was echoed in my shock at what had become of Jack. Living in Los Angeles, he became the epitome of the successful American capitalist. He drove big cars, wore expensive clothing and, eventually, like most of his diehard comrades, sold real estate and second mortgages. My nephew, Larry, remembers Jack as a strutting, pompous man who continued to pontificate as if nothing had ever happened to alter his image of Communist Russia. Thus the eager idealist who so influenced me in my youth became an apologist for the Soviet Union, determined to leave a bequest to *The Daily Worker*, the Communist newspaper. Mercifully for him, Jack died before his dream disintegrated in the ashes of the “former Soviet Union.”

In many ways, Jack was a mentor to me into my early teens, providing me with some basic tenets that I continue to value. From him I learned to appreciate hard work, idealism, personal dedication, the intrinsic value of people, regardless of their origin, and the importance of developing a social consciousness to foster an integrated and peaceful society. Ironically, because my mentor was so unswervingly single-minded, he unintentionally taught me to question everything and to avoid extreme ideologies at all cost.

In 1938, at age ten, I thought of Jack as an oak—solid, vital and ageless. Later, as I grew more critical of his views, I thought of him, sadly, as a withered tree.

Depression Years

Aaron and Elsie were riding high throughout the '20s. They were happily married and living in a nice apartment in Harlem. Mom-to-be was able to create a warm home and to take care of my sister Libby in a comfortable, safe environment. They had made friends in the neighborhood and had large families living nearby. They appreciated music and the arts and found New York to be full of cultural treasures.

Dad was very excited about the city because of the opportunities it offered. After the utter poverty of their lives in Jerusalem, his brothers and sisters were making a good adjustment to life here, parallel to his own. Soon after he arrived in America, he developed an appreciative clientele for his commercial art. He found an appropriate studio in which to work and made a rapid adjustment to life in the New World.

In 1928, my parents moved to the Bronx to an apartment house in what was then "the 'burbs." From their 6th floor apartment they could survey the rural landscape that surrounded them. Just to the north, beyond the one-story homes owned almost exclusively by Italian immigrants, their small farms provided a peaceful agricultural landscape. Just beyond the apartment houses, stretching to the south, were large sections of beautiful native trees, untouched by real estate developers, and destined not to be developed for years because of the Depression.

From their photos and stories it is apparent that they had a bright vision of their future in the New World. But it was not to be. The financial crash of 1929 hit painfully, and it was to change their lives in ways they could never have predicted during the early, heady years of their marriage. It wasn't fair that my father's bank crashed and left his family practically penniless. (At the time there were many Enrons in this country, not the fewest on Wall Street). My father, who never understood anything about money, was bewildered. Looking back ten years to his family's impoverished existence in Jerusalem, he asked himself over and over how this change of fortune could take place in such an affluent society. He was a proud man, with an upright bearing and a sense of fulfillment. He always dressed well and at times sported a moustache. His life was changing mid-dream; his declining business led him to understand that his commercial work was coming to an end. With little money in hand, he accepted that he had to create a new specialty and to work doubly hard to find new clients.

While he appreciated very much the money he had made designing advertisements for the latest in women's hair and shoe styles, he never felt very comfortable with this work because it was

“commercial.” As there was effectively little left of the art market, he turned to what he loved to do most: painting in oils. Although he accepted that having themselves painted was among the lowest of priorities for most Americans, he nevertheless focused on portraiture. His artistic style was traditional and he was unyieldingly disinterested in any period beginning with the advent of Impressionism. He was old school, and when he taught, he taught as he had learned: you paint a face by imagining the anatomical features beneath the skin. He told me that at the Bezalel Institute in Jerusalem where he studied, students learned to draw by first examining cadavers. Then, using their imagination, they “built” their human subjects starting bone-deep. When Dad gave me an art lesson, he would urge me to “look through the skin” and see the underlying bone structure.

His hands were usually busy, no matter where he was. A pencil and pad in his hands, he would sit on park benches, in restaurants, even the subway, and, finding an appropriate subject, would draw faces, hands, standing people, sitting people, sleeping people. They were always interesting because he had an eye for special features. One of his favorite subjects was older Jewish men and women. An old, heavy-set, bearded man wearing worn clothing and a no-less-worn slouch hat, asleep on a park bench, was a frequent subject of his drawings.

He also loved to paint landscapes, the subjects of which ranged from the streets of Jerusalem to scenes he imagined or were drawn from his memories of short vacations we took in the '30s in upstate New York. As there was little money for a vacation in the Catskills, my parents would rent a “*kuchaleyn*” (cook by yourself), an invariably old dormitory-style building that housed a number of families. By definition, it featured a common kitchen in which all meals were prepared and then eaten in the nearby dining room. The bedrooms, which our family shared, were very simple and on occasion would come with a small roof leak to remind us of who we were.

People were usually very friendly. Virtually all the adults were immigrants who had common histories and were also experiencing the financial consequences of the Great Depression. Nevertheless, it was a chance for us to get away from the city. For my sister Libby and me, going to a children’s camp was out of the question, so this was a real opportunity to enjoy life in the country. Just getting into a communal taxi, driving across the George Washington Bridge and heading north, toward the Big Apple, a well-known diner where we always stopped for a break and something to eat, then continuing into farm country and eventually toward low hills, lakes, “bigger hills” (the mountains of

upstate New York) and finally arriving at our destination, was a thrilling experience.

As did many of his contemporaries, Dad would arrive on Friday night and stay over the weekend. Typically, he would load his easel, canvasses and paints into the taxi that would pick him up at home and drop him off at our vacation spot. Before long he was engaged and usually produced several landscapes over a weekend.

Although commissions were few and sometimes far between, somehow Dad discovered people who seemingly were untouched by the Depression. Occasionally, he would receive a commission to paint a portrait of one of them or their entire family. His portraits at the time were excellent, and a few of them were featured in the rotogravure section of the *New York Times*. This was a special section in which all the photographs were tinted sepia. Very distinctive and beautifully presented, it was a special honor to have a picture published there. Of course it helped that his subjects were very high up in office or of a renowned family. I remember, in particular, a painting of Judge Ferdinand Pecora who was in one of the high courts of New York. In addition there was a picture of "Moe" Annenberg, scion of a very wealthy family in Pennsylvania. Part of this family was notorious for their involvement in shady dealings, probably related to Prohibition. But Moe liked my dad and instead of the agreed upon \$1,000, offered him \$10,000, peeling off large bills as they spoke. Out of principle, my father refused the higher figure. "An agreement is an agreement."

I don't remember eating on "principles" during the '30s. This was also an important kind of event for Dad, not only for his ego, which urgently needed stroking, but because the satisfied customers sometimes steered new business to him. Regrettably, he had very few such customers, so what income he made had to stretch for very long periods of time. Eventually, he managed to branch out and later, in addition to his portraits and landscapes, he was commissioned to paint a series of pictures of Jewish and Christian themes that were used to develop slide shows for lectures. He also had some students, many of whom were devoted to him. Overall, his ability to earn a living remained at a very low level.

The onset of World War II created new job opportunities. Many people in my father's position set aside their preferred work and took up jobs generated by the war. But he was stubborn and, of course, too proud to stoop to "menial" labor. He insisted that he was committed to his profession and needed to pursue his "true course." In some ways, I came to admire his persistence; he was determined in his belief that he was yet to be "discovered" and refused to deviate from his professional goals.

Despite his downward financial spiral, he followed his usual ritual each morning, left for his studio in Manhattan and worked a full day.

A major fallout of his bitter experience was that Dad began to suffer what today would be called depression. He became an increasingly angry and bitter man, blaming the government for “not taking care of its people.” While he never formally joined a left-wing party, he nevertheless agreed with many of their ideas. He felt that “the capitalists” had caused the Depression and that “the little people” were unwitting dupes of a cruel and heartless system. Sadly, for the rest of his life and for those around him, I don’t remember any time when he was truly happy for extended periods.

Meanwhile, Mom, the rock of our family, continued to raise her children, but by the mid-1930s, unable to make ends meet, began to work with her brother Joe, who lived in Philadelphia. He would bring her sacks of silk or nylon stockings, “seconds.” She would sort through the pile, match up pairs of stockings and sell them to the women in the neighborhood. I distinctly remember her having to borrow money from friends who lived in the same building in order to buy food. Paying the rent became a problem and there seemed to be no promise of improvement.

As Dad’s self-image declined, Mom’s native practicality and inner strength emerged. She realized that they could not continue as they were; she was especially aware of how times were changing and so might the way they lived if she took a more active role. With financial aid from Dad’s brother-in-law, Godel, she was able to buy a millinery shop in Brooklyn. They also found an apartment about a block away from the store. One night the family moved out of the Bronx apartment. Our lives were about to change.

Elsie and Scotty—An Unlikely Couple

America's declaration of war on Germany in 1941 signaled the beginning of the end of the Great Depression as the economy improved and jobs became available. My father, Aaron, a professional artist, was the breadwinner in our family when the last item on a home shopping list was a painted portrait. Unlike the ten years preceding the Depression, he was not successful during the catastrophic Depression years. He was a proud and single-minded artist, so the thought of seeking a paying job was simply unacceptable. As a matter of fact, he had no other skills than his art. The Depression years were most difficult for him because of the self-doubt he suffered each day.

Because of the financial stress of the Depression years, he had limited success in persuading people to order paintings from him. Although he occasionally found a paying customer, he accepted that our lives would not likely change very soon.

To compensate, Mom worked with her brother, Joe, who bought "job lots" of women's hose and underwear which she would sort for sale to people in the neighborhood. The stockings were in demand, even though they were "seconds," because they were made of nylon, then a new and valuable fabric. That was the extent of her business experience.

My parents were friendly with Godel (married to my father's sister, Belah) a successful businessman who liked my mother. He was instrumental in helping the entire family move from Jerusalem to New York. He kept encouraging her to open a store, an overwhelming thought for her, and one she repeatedly rejected.

One evening he visited our apartment and, after the usual glass of tea with lemon and sugar, told Mom, "I have been looking around and have found a ladies' hat shop for you. The owner wants \$800 dollars. I'm ready to fund it!" He waited a moment to allow his offer to sink in, and said, "The store is in Brooklyn. You'll have to move there." Mom blanched, stuttered and, as in the past, immediately rejected the thought of leaving our beloved neighborhood and community in the Bronx for a place we had never seen. I imagined the tumultuous thoughts passing through her mind, reflected in her facial movements and color.

Mom was a short, round, emotional woman who laughed and cried easily. Now she was both teary and somber. After a while, she wiped her large, green eyes, talked about how sad she felt, and then, surprisingly, resumed the conversation and agreed to consider the offer. Always an optimist and usually reasonable, she began to accept that she had a tangible offer that could make a major difference in our lives. More

discussion, more emotional agony and then, practical woman that she was, Mom yielded and agreed to visit the store.

Within the week, Godel drove Mom, Dad and me to Brooklyn and parked near a small ladies' hat store on Nostrand Avenue. We noted the IRT Subway station just a half block away on Eastern Parkway, a very nice, tree-lined avenue, where we could possibly rent an apartment.

We entered the store and met the owner, a warm, business-like woman. After an exchange of niceties, she showed us around the premises. Actually, there wasn't that much to see: a large front window bearing the owner's name and address, and allowing passersby to view "the latest" hats. We entered the store and were greeted by the owner who, after introductions and a description of the neighborhood and her clientele, gave us a tour of the store. First the small sales room with four dimly lit tables and benches placed in front of four round wall-hung mirrors.

A curtain opened to the back of the store revealing a very cramped space with enough room for three shelves and a built-in table, leaving barely enough room for two people to sit and work. Recessed in a wall was a small sink and toilet. That's all.

We listened carefully as the owner told us how she worked, about riding the subway to the 37th Street millinery district in Manhattan, buying the hats from wholesalers, and returning with them in huge plastic bags. She spoke enthusiastically about her "shopping spree" and how she and Scotty, her employee, would work on the hats, shaping them and adorning them with ribbons and flowers according to the fashion and the whim of her customers.

As Scotty was not present when we arrived, the owner spoke freely about her. Scotty, she said, was a wonderful, Southern woman who had worked with her conscientiously and agreeably for a number of years. If Mom bought the business, she would also have Scotty to teach and help her with all phases of the operation. We were anxious to meet Scotty but, as we learned, she had the good sense to allow the business discussion to take place without interference. Mom still needed convincing; the prospect seemed overwhelming. How could she possibly make a go of it?

Then, as if by plan, in walked Scotty, six feet tall, slim, black hair with a hint of gray, attractive, about fifty. Her Southern heritage was evident as her gentle voice came through in a beautiful, cadenced drawl. We liked her immediately, although in height and accent she was totally alien in our experience. The sight of round, squat Mom standing next to this Southern stick figure (later she laughed when I called her a "Southern belly") was at the least amusing . . . more so when they were

speaking, and Mom's thick Russian accent came up against Scotty's soft Alabama drawl. What a pair!

Mom liked Scotty immediately, although she was unaccustomed to being with gentiles. Her bitter experiences with pogroms when growing up in Minsk had taught her to be wary of gentiles. Now she would actually be working with one—a great deal to swallow. Nevertheless, they spoke amiably and Scotty did her best to assure Mom that she would work with her and teach her the trade, as she did with her present boss.

If she was dubious, Mom didn't say, but after a while, from her suddenly brighter disposition, we understood that, with Dad's agreement, she would accept Gödel's offer and the family would move to Brooklyn.

Elsie's Millinery

The move to Brooklyn was comparatively simple. Our very basic furniture and few personal possessions occupied relatively little space in the moving van my parents hired. The apartment at 481 Eastern Parkway consisted of a small bedroom, kitchen, and living and dining rooms separated by glass doors. Dad and Mom slept on a fold-out sofa bed in the living room; I slept in the bedroom; and my sister on a couch in the dining room. It took some time to adjust to living in the "city" after 13 years in the relatively open land of the East Bronx. Eastern Parkway was heavily trafficked and we learned quickly to look left and right when crossing to get to the subway, a half block away.

The millinery shop threw Mom into a bewildering new world. She had been a seamstress for a time in the '20s but ladies' hats had to be made by experts. A major feature of the store was that it came with Scotty, who was skilled in the millinery arts, had an artistic bent to accompany her technical ability, and was one of those most pleasant and endearing Southern women about whom (good) books are written. She was determined to teach Mom virtually everything she needed to know to get started. She also came to love and respect Mom because of her genuine appreciation for good work, her willingness to learn, and, eventually, her heretofore-undiscovered business acumen. Most of all she appreciated Mom's friendship. Scotty had some personal problems, which may have been responsible for her addiction to alcohol. She found support from Mom, whose sensitivity and common sense helped her over some difficult bumps in her life.

I think Mom really began to believe she was in business when she saw "Elsie's Millinery" newly lettered on the large, plate-glass front window. She was energized. She began to make frequent subway trips to 37th Street in Manhattan, the center of the millinery business. A time when women's hats were very popular, the entire street between 6th and 7th Avenues was dedicated to factories and wholesale outlets for the millinery business. Mom came to know many of the wholesale companies, recommended by the previous owner, and found new ones that suited her taste as well. Soon she understood what would sell and would order appropriately. When it was time to pick up the order, either Dad or I would make the 40-minute subway trip to 34th Street (the site of the original Macy's department store) and walk to the stores on 37th Street. Usually, this occurred once or twice a week, unless there was a special (emergency) order that required a separate trip. Most of all, the charm that earned her the best cuts of meat from her favorite butcher on

Allerton Avenue in the Bronx served her well in acquiring assistance at the factories, knowledge of the business and early delivery of her orders. It wasn't very long before she was really competent at her work and could create hat designs with aplomb. (Not surprisingly, she found a butcher close by who also became one of her "boyfriends").

Mom turned out to be an excellent salesperson. She was a short block of a woman, with a moderate Russian-Yiddish accent, a ready (genuine) smile, a certain wide-eyed naiveté and a friendly, welcoming manner. She also had an infectious laugh that tended to put customers at ease. I had frequent opportunities to witness her in action as either Dad or I would bring her lunch and dinner from home. I would often hang around and talk to Scotty in the back room or try to make myself small as she conducted a sale.

The best story I remember about her centered on a very popular, wide-brimmed hat that was popularized immensely by the gorgeous actress Greer Garson. She wore it in a very emotional, romantic movie called "Mrs. Miniver" and immediately there was a run on "Mrs. Miniver hats." Of course, as soon as they became famous, one appeared in the window of "Elsie's Millinery," and customers began to come.

I was sitting on a chair in the corner of the store when a quite heavy black woman came in and asked for a Mrs. Miniver hat. Mom had her sit down before one of the round mirrors, guessed her size, went to the back of the store and returned with the right hat, luckily of the right color. She fit the hat on the woman's head, stepped backward, dramatically clasped her hands together and announced, "You look wonderful. Just like Mrs. Miniver." When they realized what she had said, both customer and Mom cracked up laughing. I tried to remain quiet, but there was no way.

Mom worked very hard. Store hours were from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M., six days a week. Unless business was intense, Scotty would leave work at 6 or 7 P.M., and Dad made it his business to be at the store after 8:00 P.M. so that he could walk Mom home after she closed the store. Some nights she worked late and, during the holiday seasons, she was at work well before 10 A.M.

As business picked up, it was possible for Mom to draw some money as a salary. It began to look like life would be less stringent and that money would not necessarily occupy most of the daily conversations.

With the move to Brooklyn, life changed for me in significant ways, many that I didn't like. For one thing, I left Christopher Columbus, a brand new, shining high school, which I loved, and transferred to Boys High School, built of dingy red brick before 1900. It was a mile away,

toward Williamsburg, an area that was decidedly deteriorating. While Boys had an excellent reputation and had some of the best teachers I ever had, the neighborhood was a slum, and many of the students were very different from those with whom I grew up. It wasn't Hell's Kitchen, but it was an impoverished area with people struggling to make a living. The Depression had obviously impacted the neighborhood heavily. I would walk the mile or so from home, or sometimes, when weather was forbidding, I took the trolley directly to the school.

At P.S. 89, my grade school, and at Christopher Columbus, the students were mainly Italian and Jewish; at Boys it was more complex, a mix of Irish, Jewish, Black, Italian and Polish students. While there was tension in the Bronx, conflicts at Boys far exceeded anything I had ever seen before, including physical confrontation and slurs conferred liberally upon students of each of the representative nationalities, even in the classroom. I never adjusted to the hostile, even vicious, atmosphere. It didn't help that I was very short, about 5'3", and had yet to experience the growth spurt typical of that of a 14-year-old boy.

The most vivid memory I have of the atmosphere is of a confrontation in class with a very big guy who had the seat next to mine. He reached over to my desk and grabbed my newspaper without asking. After a while I had the temerity to ask him to return it. His response was spontaneous: he pulled out a switch knife and stuck it under my chin. I rose slowly from my chair and, knife still under my chin, he backed me across the room where the teacher was engaged with a group of students. Soon I was up against the blackboard and managed to whisper her name. She finally became aware of what was happening and somehow managed to call off my tormentor. Obviously I haven't been able to forget this incident.

Beginning with the first day at Boys, I learned that I was really a very innocent kid who may have had an idea about girls from playing "spin the bottle" and other parlor games. However, what I was exposed to immediately at Boys High, and in the streets near it, was actually shocking. It wasn't even tantalizing, just ugly.

Despite the hostile atmosphere, I managed to succeed academically at Boys. No doubt the encouragement I had from my parents, the excellence of my teachers and the mutual support of friends contributed to my success. However, I never really adjusted to Boys High and transferred to Erasmus Hall High School in Flatbush for my 3rd and 4th years. Even though it required trolley or train transportation to reach, Erasmus was a welcome change because of the nature of the student population and the safer, more familiar nature of the neighborhood.

The Path to Plant Pathology

In 1944, during my junior year at Erasmus Hall High School, I began to think about what area I would like to major in at college. Two options emerged as the most interesting.

First, I liked writing and thought about a career in journalism, which fit my interests in people, politics and international events. I actually enjoyed writing essays, even in grade school, despite at least one memorable comedown in eighth grade. Time and again, during World War II, the need for blood donations was stressed in the newspapers and on radio. The class assignment was to write an essay about a critical need for the war effort. A few days after we turned in our papers, our teacher, Mr. Gold, began to read derisively from one of the student's papers. The first line read "BLOOD! BLOOD! BLOOD!" I shrunk into my seat as, with gory sarcasm, he took this sentence apart. In a curious way, I can still "feel" the humiliating experience: To this day it has helped me to write about my feelings without becoming maudlin.

The other option became apparent in my youth. I grew up in a mixed neighborhood in the Bronx: Italian farmers with small farm holdings, their one- and two-story houses, and the more recently constructed six-story apartment houses such as the one in which we lived. My dad and I very much enjoyed walking past the farms, seeing the workers, and occasionally helping ourselves to a luscious tomato. Among the *cognoscenti* this is known as "midnight agriculture."

Mom and I had happy times, planting seeds and seedlings in trays on the fire escape of our 6th floor apartment. Frequently, I worked in the garden of my school, P.S. 89. For a few years, I attempted to establish a garden in the large, open areas we lived in, called "lots."

My interests in science were evident when I was twelve. I performed "laboratory experiments" in our apartment house with chemicals and glassware I bought with my earnings from delivering groceries and a little financial help from a few relatives. I was particularly interested in my biology courses in grade and high school.

I benefited greatly from working about two years in the Kings County Pathological Laboratories, a commercial facility that ran various blood and urine analyses. The latter exposed me to scientists at the bench, the atmosphere of a "real" laboratory and the "opportunity" to work that ranged from cleaning rabbit cages to performing general urine analyses and pregnancy tests. While I enjoyed the atmosphere of the laboratory, I learned I did not like killing animals, even in the service of

science. I also took time to study human diseases in books in the laboratory library.

I decided to marry the two fields that interested me most. Why not study plant biology, specializing in plant pathology? I would be able to work on plants, which I liked very much, and on diseases, which interested me, as well. Thus, the “idea” of plant pathology as a major became very appealing.

In 1945, my senior year in high school, I applied to universities that featured plant pathology in their curriculum and which I could enter mid-year. These were inevitably Land Grant colleges, always associated with divisions of agriculture. As Brooklyn, New York, was not known as a great center for plant pathology, I applied to a number of universities around the country, including Brooklyn College, to satisfy my parents that I was not tilting at windmills and where, anyway, I would be able to take courses basic to the field I chose.

After my mid-year graduation from Erasmus Hall High School, I entered Brooklyn College, always with the intent of transferring as soon as possible to a university which featured my chosen subject. As the answers to my applications came in, I was surprised to learn that I was everyone’s second choice. Several universities accepted me for fall 1946, but not sooner. I think that first openings were awarded to World War II veterans. As I was 17, I had not yet been called up. Only the University of Idaho at Moscow accepted me for enrollment in January, 1947, and, as I felt an overwhelming need to “get going,” I decided to enroll there.

The University of Idaho had certain practical advantages that inclined me to enroll there. Because of economic issues, I knew I could expect little financial help from my parents. In addition to the cost of tuition and subsistence, there was the cost of transportation. New York and Moscow, Idaho, are separated by some 2,500 miles, an expensive journey. Tuition at U of I was very low, and living in the Campus Club, a cooperative living facility, would allow me a relatively low-cost subsistence. I planned to work in the kitchen once a month to fulfill my commitment to the “Co-op.” The rest of the month I would “hash” for others who could afford to pay a substitute to fulfill the weekly cost of service to the Co-op. I worked virtually every month of the school term for the entire school year. I scraped by on my earnings and the monthly \$30.00 check my parents sent which, together, just covered enrollment costs, tuition and books. (Financial matters improved greatly in my sophomore through senior years after Ed Rowberry, my roommate, and I opened “The Red Light,” which is described in a story by that name.)

In addition to monetary advantages, enrollment in the U of I would be a new adventure. Above all, plant pathology was featured in

the Idaho curriculum. Only by going there would I accurately assess my choice. If it turned out to be academically, culturally or financially inadequate for me, I would transfer to one of the other schools that had accepted me for the following school year.

While I had positive feelings about enrolling in the University of Idaho, my parents, relatives and friends expressed a variety of emotions, mostly negative, about my unequivocal decision. The first disbelieving looks were followed by repetitive, but not surprising, questions about my plan: “What’s an Idaho?” “Where in hell is Idaho?” “Are there Indians there?” “Won’t it be dangerous?” “How do you get there?” (Meaning: Can you get there from here?) Less-active imaginations yielded suggestions about horses, mules and oxcarts.

To satisfy the doubters, I did some research, which led me to the conclusion that Idaho was indeed one of the United States of America and that it really was connected to other states by roads, railroads, busses, and the air. Flights were available from New York to Seattle and Spokane, as were rail lines from Chicago to Boise, Spokane and Moscow. My answers to their questions only elicited more questions. In short, no one liked the idea of little Larry going off into the unknown.

Later, after I had some experience traveling across country to Idaho and surrounding states, I thought about how uninformed we all were—family and friends—about geography and culture of communities outside of New York City.

The cover of a *New Yorker* magazine issued in March, 1976, illustrated this theme beautifully; it showed a map of the United States with 98% of the space labeled New York. The remaining two percent rest of the country was crammed into a neglected corner of the map.

To their credit and my everlasting appreciation, while Mom and Dad never waxed poetic about my decision to leave New York “to who knows where?,” they remained supportive, if downcast, for some time after I left for Idaho. I, on the other hand, left New York with optimism for my new adventure.

Westward Ho!

Now reality began to set in. I was actually leaving New York alone for the first time. My parents maneuvered their 17-year-old “child” through the crowds at Grand Central Station and onto the legendary 20th Century Limited. I was excited and somewhat apprehensive about traveling alone to Chicago on the first leg of my trip to Moscow, Idaho.

Separating from Mom and Dad was not easy. We were a close-knit family and the three of us felt the weight of this great change in our lives. There had been weeks of agonizing discussion about whether I’d be allowed to go to Idaho, but I eventually wore them down. Always the “good boy,” I am now glad that I persisted in my determination to go.

On the platform, there were the requisite reminders to write and to “take care of yourself.” I made the necessary promises to do so, which probably had no effect whatever on their feelings of loss. My mother shed a tear and the three of us hugged as I moved to detach myself and get on board.

We waved to one another as the train departed the station. My earlier feelings of apprehension were now mixed with a sense of excitement in anticipation of my new adventure. At the same time, I resolved to make it a point to communicate with Mom and Dad as much as I could. Mom had made one request that I thought would not be difficult to fulfill: “You don’t have to send us a letter. We just want to know you are all right. Just send a postcard.”

As the train eased away from the platform, I perused “my” car. The 20th Century Limited was put in service in 1902 and remodeled in the early ’30s. The most modern and advanced passenger train in America, it was considered one of the ten best in the world. As one intimately familiar with the tough straw wicker seats of the noisy New York IRT subway, what I found on this train was near nirvana. Obviously well-maintained, the car was well-lit and the seats, reminiscent of today’s business class airline seats, were very comfortable, especially important for one who could not begin to contemplate the cost of a sleeping car. The further we got from Grand Central Station, the more enthusiastic I became. Growing up as I did in a comparatively poor family, I never dreamt that I would be lucky enough to have such an experience at that stage in my life.

The ride was relatively quiet and I was interested in much of what we saw as we crossed the eastern part of the country. As we entered the city of Chicago, I saw the huge railroad depot, which I was expecting because Chicago was reputed to be the “railroad hub of America.” I

boarded another train headed west, a less well-appointed one that I thought might have been built to transport troops. It had cloth seats which were positioned much closer to one another than on the 20th Century Limited, and it was generally shabby. I kept in mind the fact that it was less than a year since the end of World War II, and building passenger trains had been the last concern of the government during that period.

We rolled out of the station and I kept my eyes peeled for yet another landmark famous in Chicago—the stockyards. We had read Carl Sandburg’s poems in high school, and I thought, “He was right when he called Chicago “hog butcher of the world.” The stockyards bordered the tracks for quite a distance.

Then it was the flat lands of the Midwest, the wide open plains which filled every child’s imagination, and the rolling foothills leading to the Rockies. After stops at places like Laramie, Wyoming, which were so important in my childhood cowboy period, we eventually pulled into Boise. There we boarded yet another train. I imagined this one must have been pulled out of storage to transport troops or a small number of travelers determined to take the train to northern Idaho. It was pulled by a coal-burning engine which had a great deal of interest for me, although I soon found that the price of standing between cars resulted in my being coated with a layer of coal dust.

What was most unexpected was that the interior of the car was made entirely of wood, including the seats. It might have been O.K. for travel as a local with short stops between stations. But one and a half days on those seats was unnecessary torture! After a very slow ride through farmland and then up through mountainous areas, I was happy to see that we were pulling into Moscow. Later, when we moved to Davis in 1956, I reminisced about how Davis resembled Moscow, then a very small, uninteresting-looking, pleasant town set in the rolling Palouse hills which, in January, were bereft of vegetation, except for the occasional tree. It certainly was a far cry from Brooklyn, New York. And I couldn’t care less.

I somehow got my two suitcases up the gentle hill to the Campus Club, the cooperative in which I would be living. I slept for a long time before I could begin to think about my room (pleasant with plywood walls, big enough for me and my roommate) and the dining room presided over by an ogre named “Mom.” There I was destined to spend a fair part of each month, setting tables, serving meals, washing pots and pans and sweeping and washing floors. It was not an easy way to make a living.

Gradually, I made friends with most of the 125 inhabitants of the Campus Club, many of them returning veterans who had been through hell in Europe and the Far East and who did not all have patience for this strange, fast-talking (compared to their drawl) wise guy from Brooklyn, a part of the country that was uniformly distrusted and disliked. Most of the people I met in Idaho at the time had little experience traveling in other states and had spent virtually no time anywhere near the East Coast; if they did, they very likely avoided the dark Satan, New York. Not surprisingly, it took them a while to begin to understand and to start to accept me as a regular.

Eventually, I made several close friends, including Bob Hardin, Gary Flory and Al Mochel. They made fun of my Brooklyn accent, which was much stronger then. We worked and studied, played touch football and dated together. Gary Flory, who regrettably died in 1995, taught me to drive his forest green '34 Ford (rumble seat and all) and lent it to me for the occasional date. I still write to Barbara, his widow.

I renewed some of my friendships when I attended our 50th class reunion in April, 2000. E-mail has encouraged our staying in touch and should I return to the Northwest again, visiting these friends would certainly be a priority.

Despite a considerable difference in our culture and history, I came to appreciate certain qualities that I found were typical in many of the people I met. I was amazed at how self-sufficient my friends were. Nearly all of them were brought up on farms, where they had started early to drive tractors, raise animals and plants, and assume responsibility for important duties. Most of them belonged to 4-H and raised animals with the aim of showing them in competitions. They could win top dollar for prize animals, or sell them at auction.

As a result of these activities and the fact that many were vets attending college on the GI bill, they came to Moscow flush with money. They easily put themselves through college, had a good social life, lacked for nothing that money could buy, and went on to take good jobs or returned to their parents' farms to work and eventually to take over. They were genuinely nice people, self-confident, and friendly.

No doubt our cultures were very different. To New Yorkers, as an early *New Yorker* magazine cover indicated, the map of the United States consisted in large part of the Island of Manhattan, while everywhere else in the country was Bridgeport, Connecticut. I was brought up in a family that valued classical music, opera, art and the life of the city. At the time, I met few of my fellow students who cared much about these values. We certainly had some loud arguments about the meaning of "modern art" at a time when Impressionism was accepted as

traditional in the larger cities. I don't know how it is today, but I expect there is a higher level of sophistication.

On the other hand, they knew a great deal about nature, fishing, hunting (from which I separated myself loudly) and hiking and trail-walking in areas in which I would be instantly lost. I admired their sense of fairness and for standing up for what they believed in. Having come from a left-leaning family which lived in a left-leaning neighborhood, in a mainly liberal city, this was the first time that I had confronted so many people on the political right. We had loud raucous arguments, agreed to disagree, and all-in-all managed to get on very well.

Social Life at the U of Idaho

Predictably, living in Moscow, Idaho, offered one surprise after another, most of them interesting or at least novel, if only because of the enormous contrasts with New York City. In January, 1946, when I arrived, Moscow was a small, pleasant farm town of 3,000 people, situated in the beautiful, rolling wheat-covered Palouse hills. There were some 800 students, almost all women, as the veterans of WWII would not return in large numbers until the following fall. It was a very nice, short period of exclusive sociability.

In addition to the small but attractive campus, it had some 14 churches, a movie house and the “Varsity,” the town center for Friday night recreation for college students “exhausted” after a week of classes and study. It still lingers in my mind because there was virtually no place else to go off-campus for an evening of relaxation.

I was one of the few students who was not a veteran living at the Campus Club, a cooperative men’s dormitory. Nevertheless, I spent most of my free time with returned veterans, all of whom had served overseas. Apart from their vivid memories of actual combat, service abroad had exposed them to life experiences they may have never dreamed of and which, for the most part, had a positive effect on them. Judging from the behavior of students who had not served during the war, the vets were worldlier and probably more tolerant than when they left home. This is the only reason I can think of that made them accept this wise kid from Brooklyn, New York, who was experientially, culturally and behaviorally very different from almost all of them. I valued their friendship and still maintain contact with some of them.

On Friday nights, after I had finished my job of waiting tables or washing pots and pans, we would pile into someone’s car and drive downtown to the Varsity for an evening of talk and beer-drinking. At the time, other alcoholic beverages could be bought only at private clubs, which had both an age limit and an (expensive) membership requirement, neither of which I could fulfill.

Unlike most of the students at the Campus Club, I was one of the few who had no experience in social drinking. Drinking at home was the responsibility of my father, who preceded every dinner meal with a swift shot of whiskey. The only consistent drinking I can remember prior to my time in Idaho was the few sips of insipid Manischewitz port wine that are an essential part of the traditional Passover Seder. Passover commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from their Egyptian oppressors, an important historic event in Jewish history. I know that I

speaking for all children, past and present, who drank this wine at seders, by uttering the universal children's response: "uggghhhh!"

Actually, drinking beer at the Varsity was in no way different for me. Having never "drunk" beer before, I did learn, but painfully. The first night that I *really* drank at the Varsity was commemorated by a giant headache and stomach upset made even more memorable by repeated trips to the john that night and the following day. Thereafter, I was cured of real "drinking with the boys." I still attended class at the Varsity and had a beer now and then, but learned to titrate my intake so that I came to enjoy it.

Social life at the University of Idaho was rather proscribed. I suppose that hunting was the major sport, and many of my friends engaged in it. Having come from a home which did not allow me to have toy guns when I was a child, hunting was a decidedly resistible pleasure. I did have one experience, however, which scarred me for life. One day I went walking in a nearby forest with my friend Seymour Levy, who had been recently discharged from the Marine Corps. He had a rifle with him and offered to show me how to shoot. Although I had expressed no interest in doing so, he nevertheless convinced me to "just sight down the barrel" to get the feel of it. I did, and found a bird in my sights. I don't know why I did it, but I pulled the trigger, expecting what I did not know. The rifle went off and the bird disappeared from my sights. I stood there, disbelieving what I had heard and seen. It was the first time I had ever fired a weapon. I left with a pain in my heart and unable to explain to the congratulatory Seymour how deeply sad I felt at what I had done.

As there was little available in the way of theatre or movies and as I had very little money to squander, entertainment was confined mainly to campus events. I learned to enjoy hanging out with the guys in a way I had not done at home during my teens. I learned to like football and basketball games and became a rooter for the Idaho Vandals, a name to which I never really adjusted. We played a lot of touch football, and I learned that despite my comparatively small size, I liked playing defense, especially when I was up against Al Mochel, who played center and who to this day weighs well over 225 lbs. I liked playing opposite him because I was quick and could usually get by him as soon as he had passed the ball to the quarterback. It became a sort of cat and mouse game between us.

As the Campus Club had about 125 residents, it had an organizational structure. Social events were organized by a social chairperson and I enjoyed performing this job. We had occasional dances and I liked decorating the large lounge area where we held them. Because quite a few of us were in the same boat, with limited

possibilities for social life off campus, inviting a friend to dances became an essential activity. As at most universities until the present time, there was a significant distinction between the “Greeks” and the dormitories. I dated indiscriminately and enjoyed the dances very much.

Occasionally, a major cultural event would take place at the gym. I was thrilled by the visiting Soviet Union’s Red Army Band, which not only performed the expected military marches while playing beautifully, but included amazing singers as well. In particular, I was impressed with a basso whose powerful voice made the windows rattle. I can still hear him.

Clearly, Idaho offered little in the way of the social life I had enjoyed in New York. There I would go to concerts, the theatre and museums of all kinds. However, as a result of living in Idaho, I had become much more comfortable just being with “the guys” and I didn’t have to “go somewhere” to be having a good time. I believe that this experience subsequently helped me to deal with new associates in new and unfamiliar surroundings.

The Red Light

When I left New York to study at the University of Idaho in Moscow in 1946, I understood that there would be very little financial help from my parents because they simply didn't have the money to fully support me. I went because I was determined to study plant pathology. At that time, WWII veterans had top priority for admission to universities. I was accepted by several universities, but because I was not a veteran, only for September, 1946. Only the University of Idaho, in a sparsely populated state, was willing to risk an invasion by a doubtful character from Brooklyn, New York, in January, 1946, when I wanted to start.

Why Idaho? At the time, I was enrolled in Brooklyn College with the aim of "getting the basics" before transferring to a university with a college of agriculture. The logic was impeccable, but who's logical? I was so focused from the time I was a senior in high school that anything not on track to PP was just a rut in the road. Sorry Brooklyn . . . I had to leave you. Anyway, I had the option of transferring the following fall if I was dissatisfied. As it turned out, after a year at the University of Idaho, I found it very agreeable and decided to continue.

How to survive? I lived in the Campus Club, a "co-op," which required that each member serve in the kitchen at least one week in four, three times a day, performing one of the many tasks we were ordered to undertake by "Mom," a demanding, humorless, red-faced top sergeant who brooked no lip. Among the upsides of living in a community of mainly veterans at the Campus Club was that they had money and the last thing they had in mind was washing dishes. They had had all the KP they ever needed to experience while in service, and most of them were brought up on farms where "shit work" was the byword. As a result, along with the very few other non-vets at the Club, I was able to sub for the vets who "paid handsomely" for my work: \$10 per week. Considering that I had a small subsidy from home, that tuition was virtually free, and that lodging and food cost about \$30 per month, I was able to get along acceptably. My overhead was very low as I had no car, and the major recreational attraction in Moscow, population 3,000, was the Varsity, a beer hall that many of us visited some Friday afternoons. Oh yes, I forgot to mention: during my freshman year there were very few students . . . the vets had yet to arrive. So, it was Larry Rappaport and 800 women who inhabited the campus. It wasn't too lonely.

But I digress . . . that is not the subject of this ramble. The subject remains survival and, indeed, improving my living condition

whose monotony I began to feel most urgently by the end of my sophomore year. With my unusual powers of observation, I noticed a remarkable physiological change in Campus Club students that occurred sometime about 9:30 p.m. They experienced a precipitous collective drop in sugar levels, resulting in a sudden efflux of bodies from the Campus Club. Sometime later they would return with bags of food. The campus was small and a mile away from town, so that to get chow they had to jump into their cars and drive. With my even greater powers of analysis, I determined that such a feeding frenzy could take place “right here” in the Campus Club, if food was available.

Together with my roommate, Ed Rowberry, I located a very convenient, surprisingly large, and unused janitors’ closet in which we built shelves and a counter, and then proceeded to paint it fire-engine red. We also installed, naturally, a bright red light just at its entrance. And we mounted a very large sign reading, not surprisingly, “THE RED LIGHT.” We stocked the shelves with candy and gum of every sort, and “Kaywoodie” pipes, very popular then. We found a small refrigerator for the soft drinks, and prepared sandwiches each evening about 8:30 p.m.

The grand opening was advertised in the Campus Club Bulletin and, with the visual attraction of the red light (How could they resist? Some of these guys had seen many red lights while in service in Europe!), we had an amazing response. The first evening we quickly ran out of sandwiches and had to restock our “gum and candy shelves” the next day. We opened and closed at regular times, so were reliable, and tried to keep new items on the shelves, which was a good draw. Much to our surprise, students from nearby dorms began to troop over, and we worked very hard to maintain this very active business at the same time that we struggled to maintain our grades.

Of course, we were rewarded financially by our success, and having a little extra change in my pocket gave me the freedom to go out with friends, to buy things that were otherwise prohibitive and to save toward a “transportation fund” to get me home during vacations.

After a year of working in THE RED LIGHT, I decided to throw in the towel. I had my eye on graduate studies and felt that the immense amount of time required to buy, stock and sell was detracting from my studies.

In a way it wasn’t easy; I felt a real sense of loss. We had an original idea and it was well executed. It seemed I was fleeing a sinking ship. Ed, my roommate, continued the business until the year we both graduated.

This turn at personal entrepreneurship gave me some insights about organization, bookkeeping and, most of all, people and their

foibles. Nevertheless, I learned how to make a helluva tuna fish sandwich. Just ask Norma.

From New York to Moscow and Back

While I liked the *idea* of going to the University of Idaho in Moscow as a freshman, making the move took a lot of courage. What did this innocent Brooklyn boy know about agricultural sciences and living in a little-known state? (“You’re coming from New York, and you’re going to school in that hick state?” “What’s an Idaho?” “What for?”)

This “crazy decision” gained little support from virtually all my friends and relatives. Nevertheless, I was determined to fulfill my dream of studying plant pathology, beginning in January, 1947, and Idaho wanted me to do it. I was stubborn, but nevertheless intrigued.

But why Idaho? Well, I made the “mistake” of getting “skipped” when I was in 5th grade at PS 89, with the result that I was ahead of my class by half a year as I progressed through high school. I graduated from Erasmus Hall High School in the winter quarter of 1946, when competition for entrance to state universities was difficult, especially as many World War II veterans were using their GI bill funds to attend college. I applied and was accepted by Brooklyn College for the fall semester of 1946. My parents were happy to see me safely tucked into Brooklyn College, only a half hour from home. However, when the University of Idaho accepted me, I elected to go there, much to my parents’ disappointment.

The University of Idaho (U of I) was probably happy to have a strange bird from New York in its student body. Actually, there were three such wanderers from New York with whom I became friends.

I think I really made the break successfully. I studied hard, worked hard, played hard and, with exceptions, spent little time agonizing about what I had left behind.

Located in the northwestern part of the state, U of I is a lovely, small campus. We had about 3,000 students in 1947. The majority of the buildings were concentrated in a small area, so that people were almost always in sight. In the winter, when the skies were devoid of sunlight and snow covered the ground, it was nice to be able to bump into friendly faces.

Part of my grand plan was to work in Idaho during the summers to learn about farming, especially the production of vegetables, fruits and flowers. After nine months of classes I was ready to find work my first summer. With the aid of college friends, I got a job on a farm near Twin Falls, in southeastern Idaho. I was befriended by the farmer and his family and came to appreciate their family ties, the communal work in which they engaged, and their social life. I also came to understand the

financial costs of running a farm in the face of impending emergencies—windstorms, sandstorms and the like. I never had a notion of becoming a farmer, but if I did, I was soon dissuaded. The life of a farmer was not for me.

I worked steadily, ate with the farmhands, and came to understand their values. Many of them had never met a Jew and I hoped that, by example, I could dispel prejudices they may have accumulated in ignorance. The work was routine, and I did as much as I could to learn, including how to drive a tractor and the names of tools I had never known before.

However, by late July, I grew homesick and, after much dithering about whether to stay and work or go home to parents and friends, I finally broke down and returned home by bus. Three days on busses was no fun, but I was happy I went, if just to reestablish friendships and relations, to get a taste of a Brooklyn accent as opposed to an Idaho drawl, and to eat a much-needed pastrami sandwich.

Despite the distance, I decided to continue at U of I as a sophomore. My plan was to return home for vacation after the end of the spring semester and to work for the remainder of the summer. I had arranged to work at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, New York. At its manicured campus, I worked three months with a well-known tomato geneticist. I enjoyed the work, and from him and other scientists learned much about plants, breeding and scientific methods. The job served to enhance my interest in research and teaching in my hoped-for academic career.

One event to which I looked forward daily was returning to my rented room in a boarding house “governed” by “Mom,” chief cook and slave driver. She was notorious for her behavior in the house, ordering the tenants about, and shouting loudly if they didn’t clean up and bus their dishes after meals, or make their beds properly. She was like no “Mom” I had ever known.

But I am getting ahead of myself. That summer I had to get from Idaho to New York City. This was an expensive proposition, and little money was available from my parents to help me. As I couldn’t possibly afford a car and I didn’t know anyone headed east, it seemed there was only one way to get home---hitchhike. Hitchhike from Idaho to New York, nearly 2,500 miles? Well, I did!

Hitchhiking was never without interesting, sometimes bizarre, experiences. What made it interesting was the constantly changing scenery and natural wonders, meeting new people, including truck drivers, farmers and, occasionally, a professional, and listening to their stories.

I was probably the world's most unsophisticated hitchhiker. I didn't keep a diary, so couldn't testify under oath as to the exact date I left Moscow, nor which routes I took. I travelled the populated roads and highways with the most traffic, both for security reasons and for the greatest chance of getting a long ride cross-country. This was not necessarily a sight-seeing trip, although I was constantly in awe of the wonderful mountains, rivers and lakes, the beautiful sunsets, sunrises and picturesque landscape it was my good fortune to experience.

I had few options as to where I would end up each night, although I knew where I would have liked to be: in "civilization." As I had no previous camping experience, I occasionally allowed myself the privilege of sleeping in a motel, if I could locate a reasonably priced one along the way. Otherwise, I found a corner in a Greyhound Bus station or railway station. Worst case—I unrolled a blanket and took my chances.

I left Moscow as soon as I could after my second year finals. Lucky for me, my first hitchhiking experience was with Verne Auerbach, a fellow "sometimes student" who had hitchhiked south many times to his home in Idaho Falls. Verne was a pleasant, good-natured and humorous farm boy who had a very pragmatic outlook on life. He had a good singing voice and a large repertoire of "cowboy songs." His humor, sometimes directed at my innocence about hitchhiking, never failed. By example, he taught me the practical art of hitchhiking in Idaho, a state with few people, so opportunities for rides were limited mainly to local between-town traffic.

We started off from Moscow headed south, and after a while managed to reach Lewiston. From then on we waited for the next ride or, if we were unlucky, we walked, despite Verne's philosophy: "I don't walk too much; you can get yourself tired before you start out." Eventually, a ride came along, sometimes in a car, the cab of a truck, or sitting on a hay bale in the back of a farmer's pickup.

Unfortunately, on the first day, rides were far and few between, and when sunset came I realized that I was about to spend the first night of my first hitchhiking trip somewhere on the ground. Good old boy Verne fished a blanket out of his backpack, and I followed suit. We lit a fire, heated a can of spaghetti, and settled in for what turned out to be a pleasant, if cold, first night.

Verne didn't exactly tuck me in, but he did sing some songs and gave me advice on how to get set for my first night under the stars. We had a few laughs, and I eventually fell into a fitful sleep. We awoke early and continued on, still at a slow, discouraging pace. Never mind. Verne's repertoire of "lonesome cowboy songs" helped me transit my virgin "free-ride" experience in relative good humor.

After a few days with varying success, we reached Twin Falls, Idaho. We said "Goodbye," and I said, "Thanks a lot. Do you want to come along?" A slight smile quivered on Verne's lips as he caught my joke. He didn't bother answering. I continued on alone, but not without some trepidation.

Then my luck changed. I got a long ride all the way to Ogden, Utah. I arrived about 8:00 p.m., very tired. I thought, "I deserve a good rest. Maybe tonight I'll stay in a motel." The first one I came to had no vacancies. I found a phonebook and started down the list of motels, then hotels, to no avail. There were no vacancies in Ogden. Desperate, I stopped in to the local police station and told the officer at the desk who I was, and what I needed. He was accommodating, and said, "There must be a room somewhere in Ogden." With that, he started calling some other hotels and rooming houses, without luck. After ten minutes he conceded that, indeed, there were no rooms available in Ogden.

"Well," he said, "I can put you up in a cell if you like." I didn't "like," but I didn't wait long to answer affirmatively since I didn't know how or where I would spend the night, unless I agreed to behave like a convict. The guard ushered me to a small cell which, thankfully, I would have all to myself. I stepped in and found myself in a small, dimly-lit room, illuminated from above by a single (maybe 60-watt) incandescent bulb. In the corner there was a smelly urinal, just like in the movies. On the floor there was a very flat, very dirty looking pad which was to serve as my bed for the night. I swallowed hard and acknowledged the guard's "Good night" with a weak, choked, "Good night."

I was alone, I thought. Then a voice sounded from the cell on the opposite side of the aisle. "What are you in for?" Shocked, I mumbled something like, "I'm a guest of the police department tonight." I thought, "A little levity might break the ice." The inmate came into view. He was a somewhat disheveled, unsavory man, taller than I, and powerfully built.

"I'm in for murder," he offered laconically. I gulped again, and began to think about escape routes. He continued by telling me that he was a Native American; nothing more about who he was, where he was from, or what caused him to "misbehave." I quickly lost all interest in the charges and, after a few words of consolation, and perhaps, "Good luck," I complained about my tired body, said "Good night," and turned in.

Once again I slept fitfully, but at least I felt safe. When I awoke the next morning, I waited patiently for the guard to come by to release me. After exchanging niceties, he generously offered me breakfast. The image of the food served in that prison flashed across my face, and the guard correctly interpreted its meaning. I responded, "Thanks, but no thanks."

He smiled. Nevertheless, being a good sport, he released me from jail. We said, "Goodbye," and I hightailed it out of the room and headed for my next adventure.

I successfully hitchhiked the rest of the way across the country to New Jersey. Finally, too anxious to get home, I took a bus to New York, and the subway to Brooklyn.

Then, after recuperating from the expedition across country, and a happy visit with my parents, I was ready to start my summer job in upstate New York. By the way, I took the bus!

Getting My Feet Wet

I adapted well to my studies at the University of Idaho, and my interest in plants, agriculture and science intensified. Because I had no previous agricultural background (excluding a home garden on the fire escape of our sixth-floor apartment and growing up in an agricultural neighborhood in the Bronx), I chose to work on farms and experimental stations during the summers in order to get the hands-on experience I knew I would need. Accordingly, I spent the summer of 1947 working on various farms in southern Idaho, the summer of 1948 at the Parma Branch Experiment Station of the University of Idaho and the summer of 1949 at the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, New York.

Parma, a tiny town with a tiny population, was situated on sun-drenched, irrigated land about 60 miles west of Boise, in southern Idaho. As I did not have a car, any social and sight-seeing activities were limited, although I did make some friends. I lived and had my meals in a private home close to the station and learned something about the dynamic of a small town.

Occasionally, we encounter a special person who impacts our lives in memorable ways and with whom we make an immediate connection. At Parma, I came under the dedicated influence of its Superintendent, Delance (“Doc”) Franklin, a bluff, smart, opinionated man who encouraged me to become active in all aspects of the research being performed at the station. I asked lots of questions, even foolish (at the risk of reaping scorn), and worked very hard, usually “opening” the station in the morning and “closing” it at night.

In a way, I think my naiveté about practical agriculture endeared me to Doc; he had many a laugh at my ignorance, not only of agricultural equipment, but of common tools about which any farm boy would have learned at a very early age. One day I was working alongside him as, with increasing tension, he attempted to repair a tractor motor. Finally, in desperation, he nearly shouted, “Larry, would you go to the shed and get me a spanner?” Never in my life had I heard of a spanner; I assumed it was a fairly sophisticated tool that I would not have known about, having grown up in the Bronx and Brooklyn.

I gritted my teeth and whispered, “What’s a spanner?”

He doubled over with laughter and managed to insert a dig:

”You mean you don’t know what a spanner is?”

I was embarrassed, especially when I learned that it was a kind of wrench, but by then my ignorance was no longer a novelty; I became

accustomed to the good-natured smirks, not only from Doc, but also from some of the other people on the station. Despite my naiveté, I know that he appreciated my willingness to “get it right.” By the end of the summer I had learned quite a bit and offered fewer opportunities to be the brunt of laughter.

The station was dedicated to field research that would result in increased productivity and improved quality of horticultural crops. The primary vegetables under investigation at the station were corn, onions and beans. I helped Doc as well as Dr. George Woodbury, a professor of horticulture at Moscow, carry out their experiments. I felt able to contribute, because I made efforts to utilize the knowledge I had gained in my studies. Nevertheless, I was still very “green” in my understanding and appreciation for the intrinsic value of some of the investigations. For example, I was somewhat surprised at the enthusiasm Doc showed for the research in progress on hybrid onions. While I was familiar with the value of corn hybrids for many purposes, it seemed strange to focus effort on hybrid onions. However, I took notice when Doc introduced me to Dr. Henry Jones, a scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture; he did so with a deference and genuine appreciation that was inconsistent with his more usual direct behavior:

“Larry, I want you to meet Dr. Henry Jones of the United States Department of Agriculture. Henry was the first person to breed hybrid onions; everything we are doing here now is based on his original discoveries.” Henry was in his 60s, genteel and humble, considerably different in character from Doc Franklin. I felt I should bow in obeisance, but thought it wouldn’t go over too well. It was only as I worked with these onions and compared them with the standard “open pollinated” varieties that I came to understand their advantages: uniformity of color, shape and size, higher yields and resulting increased economic value. In addition, as I studied the literature, I came to value Henry’s many scientific contributions as well as his authorship of an excellent textbook in his field.

Recognizing my deep interest in all aspects of the work on the station, Doc seemed to pay special attention to advising me about methodology and concepts. He was also concerned about my academic education. When he learned that I was committed to majoring in plant pathology, he exploded derisively: “Plant pathology!” He encouraged me to reconsider and switch majors to horticulture instead.

“You know, Larry, a plant pathologist looks at a field of beans and says, “What a beautiful field of beans . . . and 100% of them are dead. A horticulturist is impressed when he looks at a field of beans and 100% of them are healthy and productive.” In retrospect, this was a lousy

reason to switch. After all, plant pathologists are concerned with diseases and their research often results in mitigation or even cures, making it possible for horticulturists to see “100% healthy and productive” plants.

Nevertheless, Doc’s enthusiasm was infectious, enough so that I did not seriously challenge his judgment. When I returned to Moscow, I undertook studies in horticulture and have never looked back (although for several years before I retired, I engaged in a serious investigation of an important plant disease). Working with Doc that summer gave me many insights into agriculture, field research, experimental techniques and the tools and field equipment used by farmers and researchers to grow and harvest plants. In addition to being a fine mentor for me, Doc had the good judgment to marry Barbara, a wonderful woman who, in addition to being warm, friendly, hospitable and thoughtful, was a great cook who baked the most delicious blueberry pies. Fifty-six years later, I still savor the memory of their taste.

The experience at Parma fed directly into my studies at Moscow and into the research program that I initiated soon after I returned to Moscow. By then, I had an idea about how to ask and test a question, how to design an experiment and how to go about acquiring data. It was my good luck that the faculty was highly supportive of my desire to undertake a research program that I proposed. When I needed some equipment, they generously provided it and made some room in the limited greenhouse space for me to do my work. I suspect that Doc had been affirmative in his assessment of my experience at Parma, because I felt particularly “cared for” by the faculty as I pursued my investigation.

One of the attractions of the University of Idaho at the time was that, because it was small, I could be closely associated with two excellent faculty members in the department of horticulture, Dr. James Krause, the Chair, and Dr. Leif Verner. Verner, in particular, was a very thoughtful, skilled plant physiologist who gave me many insights into scientific method and scientific writing. At that “developing” stage of my life, it was both useful and gratifying to have close contact with these fine teachers.

I still greatly value them and the entire Idaho experience.

California: My First Adventure

I've had a not-so-secret love affair with UC Davis since 1947 when, as a horticulture student at the University of Idaho, I heard repeatedly of the wonders of California agriculture and the quality of education at UC Davis. I nursed the thought that some day I would be able to visit UCD, learn about its programs and facilities, and meet some of the faculty who had contributed so much to its success. My opportunity came in December, 1948, when Don Stilson, a friend at UI, invited me to drive with him and another friend to California, his home state. We would stop in Davis where we would visit his uncle, Professor Alden Crafts, a famous botanist, and his family. Dr. Crafts could answer my questions and direct me to other faculty as well. I immediately agreed, packed a bag and was ready to go when he was.

We left Davis in mid-December in Don's decrepit 1937 Chevy sedan in the middle of a storm, a portent of the weather conditions we were to experience during the entire trip. Most notable about his vehicle was the heating system: a six-inch (in diameter) flexible pipe that emerged from the bowels of the motor and extended between the two passengers on the front seat to the rear seats, providing enough heat to keep us shivering. Even more shocking was the knowledge gained during a dreadful snow storm. The pipe was aimed at the windshield so that the driver could see through the six-inch melted gap. The pipe was passed to the rear to warm our partially frozen feet or to the driver's side of the windshield so that he could see where we were headed. Above all, it was essential to keep going. If we didn't, I knew that by the time we reached California, I would need a foot replacement. Teeth chattering all the way, we finally reached the border and were greeted by a warm, bright sun. This was enough to convince me that this trip would turn out to be wonderful.

We eventually arrived in Davis, a tiny community in a strictly agricultural region. Don and I walked about the campus, looking at the buildings and facilities. I visited Dr. Knott, the Chair of the Department of Vegetable Crops, my interest area. He gave me some insights into the department's teaching and research goals. After a time I felt that I had a real opportunity for graduate study in his department.

Don and I walked about the campus to get a feel of the facilities. The buildings were not at all impressive compared to the majestic administration building at UI. Some of the wooden buildings were attractive, though, and are still in use today.

Eventually, we made our way to Dr. Craft's office in the Botany Building. He welcomed us warmly and, not a minute to lose, spoke at length about his research and the future of his field of study. After a while he kindly invited me to visit his home on B Street, where he introduced me to his wife, Alice, a warm, "chatterbox" sort of person who generously invited me to have dinner with them. At that point Don, who had had enough of boring science, hugged everyone, and said, "I need to get home, so I'd better get going now."

Dr. Crafts and I then retreated to the living room where we continued to discuss his research programs and their implications for the environment and agricultural productivity. I knew from the literature and from this visit that he was an outstanding scientist and I felt appreciative and humble for the time he gave me.

After about 45 minutes, I began to feel uncomfortable—hot, sweaty, nauseous and feverish. I told Dr. Crafts that I was ill and should get to a motel room to see if I could sleep it off. He called Alice in and told her about my condition.

"No! We can't let you do that," they said. "We have an extra room upstairs and you can stay there until you are feeling better."

I was shocked and beyond appreciative. What generous people!

Their kindness was tested to the limit because to everyone's surprise, I was bedridden for about six days. They thought that I had Valley Fever, a disease I had never heard of but which occasionally was known to be deadly.

Finally, I felt strong enough to leave. As it was a few days before Christmas, I purchased some gifts which I left under their tree. Intense expressions of thanks, big "You're welcomes," and I left exuberant and appreciative beyond words.

I maintained a correspondence with both Alden and Alice for about eight years. In particular, I appreciated receiving her letters while I served during the Korean War.

The next time I saw the Crafts was in Davis in January, 1956, when I arrived with my new wife, Norma, to take up my dream position in the Department of Vegetable Crops.

Norma and I

My father Aaron's family left Jerusalem in 1921, because of the devastating effects of World War I and the accompanying political upheaval, but also because of mounting Arab nationalism and anti-Semitism. Norma's parents, Joe and Sarah Horwitz, both from Kolno, a small town near Warsaw, Poland, and my mother, Elsie Siegel (nee *Segelovitch*), who was born in Minsk, Belarus, became first-generation Americans after escaping endemic, deadly anti-Semitism in their home countries.

While they received some formal education in the "old country," our parents were unprepared for the streets of New York and, like many immigrants, had to struggle to adjust. Nevertheless, their cultural values were formed early in life and they came with a sense of optimism that helped them adapt to new ways. For them, getting good jobs, learning English, and encouraging their children to get a good education became primary values.

Our parents came to know one another because my mother, Elsie, and Norma's aunt Ruth met on the ship they had boarded in Antwerp, Belgium, as they migrated from Poland to New York. They became fast friends during the voyage and, after they had settled in, Ruth introduced my mother to Sarah; they, too, became friends. The families managed to maintain their close friendship for the remainder of their lives, despite a ten-year hiatus beginning in the mid-1920s, and several moves to different sections of New York City and, eventually, to Los Angeles.

Norma and I met in a kosher butcher shop on Allerton Avenue in the Bronx. She was about six months old and in a baby carriage, while I was a three year-old active toddler. The coincidence of our chance encounter in a kosher butcher shop, despite the extended separation of our parents, might have suggested the romantic notion that our meeting was "*bashert*," predestined by God, a Hebrew term that describes events that are meant to be.

As we grew up, our age difference and the distance between our homes conspired to limit our meetings. Nevertheless, when our families met socially, I was very conscious of our age difference, especially after I went off to college while she was still in high school.

We would usually meet when I returned to New York during the holidays but, as we continued to mature, I condescended to treat Norma with greater respect. She is quick to remind me that I wasn't above chucking her under the chin and making a "wise" remark about "You're

getting there,” meaning: “You have a way to go before I would deign to consider you as mature enough for a date.” We were good friends, and were each on our own path of exploration.

For many young women in the '50s, going to college was an important goal, as employment options were limited. Many aimed for a degree in education with a job teaching grade school. Norma attended Brooklyn College, an almost-free New York City university (\$5 a semester!), and graduated in June, 1953, with a BA in Education.

Later, after I graduated from the University of Idaho, we dated and I found myself increasingly interested in her. I appreciated her good sense of humor, her sensitivity and her intelligence. Moreover, our friendship was not harmed by the fact that Norma was now a very pretty young woman, well beyond the “chin-chucking” stage. One of the advantages of having been lifelong friends was that our interest in one another met with immediate approval by our parents.

I had one vexing behavioral problem that was sometimes a source of irritation to our friendship. My travel and study experiences away from my home in New York had given me a sense of worldliness, confidence and purpose that Norma could not have had at the time. As a result I felt superior, in charge. Probably, in keeping with the custom of the time, she somehow tolerated my snootiness and didn't allow such behavior to interfere with the progress of our relationship.

Unexpectedly, Uncle Sam intruded on my doctoral studies at Michigan State University and sent me an “invitation” to appear at Fort Dix, New Jersey, on December 17, 1951, to spend four (long) months in basic training. Fort Dix is not far from New York City, but the rigors of training were such that I could rarely get away on a weekend, even for a day. When I did manage to get away, usually on a Saturday afternoon, I would race home to Brooklyn as fast as I could go, and plunge into bed exhausted. Yet by 8:00 p.m. I was ready to begin a new day.

Luckily, Norma never let the dreaded “New York Saturday Night Dating Ritual” interfere with our relationship. This “ritual” specified that no woman in her right mind would ever accept a date offered later than Wednesday evening of that week! When I awoke from my restorative nap, I was able to visit Norma at home without restrictions.

We became very good friends, especially as she had had a failed romance with a wretch named Mickey, and I had a willing ear which helped her vent. We talked for many hours and our new intimacy fed into our growing relationship. I also learned that Norma was a quick study. Despite some open wars between us, she soon learned to deflate some of my less-lovable attributes.

Gradually, it became clear to both of us that our friendship was evolving into a serious romance.

A Korean “Idyll”

A Last Fling in Vancouver

After completing basic training at Fort Dix, I received a new “invitation” from Uncle Sam, this time to pay a “personal visit” to Korea. By the time I got the call, Norma and I were seeing each other as frequently as possible. We weren’t making any great plans, yet we were both aware that we had something bigger brewing, and Uncle was getting in the way of our budding romance. For the remaining month of my leave in New York, we went to the movies, to a night club where we danced, had a memorable dinner at the Tavern On The Green in Central Park, and spent as much time as we could being together, but leaving time for visits with parents and friends.

Mostly, we reminisced, touched on the future and generally packed in memories that would have to carry us for the roughly fifteen months that I would be away in Korea. We promised to write frequently and parted with difficulty. We kissed, clung to one another teary-eyed, kissed some more, and, finally, haltingly, said “Goodbye.” Leaving turned out to be even more painful than I had anticipated.

Along with many others from Fort Dix, I left by train for Fort Lewis, Washington, which would be home for the next month or so, pending our departure for Korea. Assigned to barracks, I resumed military life. Some kind soul must have had compassion, because the physical training we received was not nearly as stringent as the basic training meted out by hyperactive sergeants at Fort Dix during my first four months in the army.

Up to this point, my main concern was Norma, who increasingly occupied my mind, my parents and close relatives, and Uncle Sam’s “nerve” at yanking me out of my Ph.D. program at Michigan State University. Now in the state of Washington, after all the emotional separations, I found myself feeling vulnerable, as a future in Korea came closer to reality each day. I had to come to terms with the notion that I would be going into a “live” war zone and that in being in an infantry line company anything could happen. Certainly, others in my unit were going through the same experience, although we didn’t talk about it much.

I began to view my surroundings with new interest, and thought that as long as there was time, I should get around and see something of the area. Luckily, I met Ray Reisman, my army buddy from Fort Dix, who was assigned to Fort Lewis at the same time. Ray was a short,

skinny, dark-haired New Englander whose experiences growing up paralleled my own. We thought alike and shared stories that brought us together during our time at Fort Dix. Meeting in Washington gave us a chance to vent our concerns about our forthcoming experience in a war zone.

As we considered what to do, we decided that “the future is now,” and that we ought to take advantage of the opportunity to see the surroundings. On the sober premise that we might never have a chance to see Vancouver, B.C., again, and with a weekend pass in the offing, we caught a bus to Vancouver. We gave little thought to where we would stay or where we would go; it was enough that we were on our way. After traveling through the magnificent forests and lush plant habitats of western Washington and along the Pacific coast, we arrived in Vancouver in the early evening. We collected our bags and then, faced with the reality that we did not know where we were going, decided that some dinner would help us get it together. We walked until we found a small café, had a bite to eat and considered what to do next.

As if by plan, a man approached us and identified himself as an American living with his Canadian wife and child in Vancouver. He must have sensed that these two forlorn-looking soldiers could use some help.

“You know, I drive a taxi for a living,” he said. He looked like a model taxi driver, especially as he wore a peaked cap and had an appropriate-looking badge on his chest. He was about 5 ft. 10 in. and had sharp blue eyes. I guessed he was about thirty-eight.

We had a friendly exchange about where we were from, how we had gotten to Vancouver, and what we wanted to do now that we were here.

Then he said, “You know, tomorrow is Sunday, and I’m taking the day off. If you’d like, I’d be happy to give you a tour of the city. My family will be coming along. They’re fun, and I’m sure you’ll enjoy getting to know them.”

Surprised, Ray and I responded simultaneously, “Gee, thanks! That’s great! We really appreciate this. It’ll be nice to meet your family.”

For two buck privates in baggy khaki uniforms, whose most recent family consisted mainly of other disconsolate privates and a couple of wired sergeants, tomorrow was going to be a warm, fuzzy day. We found a room in a nearby hotel, slept well and, after breakfast, were ready to see Vancouver.

Frank and his family arrived promptly at 9:00 a.m., as agreed. His wife, Millie, in her mid-30s, was attractive and talkative. Their

daughter, Olivia, age 8, was friendly and even interested in these two peculiar-looking guys.

We got into the cab and Frank began an interesting monologue about people, places and things in Vancouver. Vancouver did not disappoint—it was eye-poppingly beautiful. We traveled through Stanley Park, with its many unusual gardens and views to the ocean, and Capilani Park and its wonderful, scary, “swinging footbridge.” We took the “Sky Rider” cable car up Grouse Mountain, experienced the magnificent views of other mountains and valleys, and the “sky-high” slide down the cable toward what turned out to be a much smaller and manageable city than the one that stands there today.

We shared a pleasant lunch, which Millie had generously prepared. She and Olivia had a special relationship and we shared some laughs with them. After a daily diet of army fare, Ray and I certainly enjoyed the “home-cooked” lunch. We continued our sightseeing around the city, but had only enough time left to drive slowly through the Asian center, enjoying the sights, sounds and aromas of the Chinese, Japanese and Italian restaurants and markets.

Finally, Frank brought his car to the entrance of our hotel. After such a full and unexpected day, we thanked our new friends profusely for their thoughtfulness, and finally, with warm hearts, many a “thank-you,” and even a hug, said “Goodbye.”

We returned to base, enriched by what we saw and by how we felt about the generosity of our Vancouver friends. We exchanged letters of appreciation and, from time to time, have remembered the kindness of these gentle people. By their thoughtfulness, they had helped relieve some of the anxiety I was feeling as the date of departure approached.

Five days later our troopship, the General Walker, packed to the gills with soldiers, departed the Port of Fort Lewis for Pusan, South Korea.

Leaving for Korea

After a month of waiting around Fort Lewis, Washington, we received orders to pack up and prepare to leave. We boarded a large, gray troopship on June 15, 1952 and set sail for Korea. I felt as if I was taking part in a movie, standing on the deck, watching the shoreline disappear. For the most part it was a very peaceful voyage, the Pacific so quiet that it appeared to be a glass mirror, disturbed only by the occasional dolphin or the “flotilla” of flying fish breaking surface. By day the decks were closely packed with men in khaki; by night we slept in stacked bunk beds in the bowels of the ship. I spent some time reading, but tuned into gabfests that ranged from changes in the weather

to what it would be like when we got there. From these conversations I came to realize that the army may have taught us its trade, but did little to prepare us for the experience of being in a different country, about its people, or what to expect when we got there.

We were about twenty miles offshore, approaching Pusan, Korea, the last day aboard the ship, when an unfamiliar word, “gook,” usually surrounded by derisive adjectives, began to make the rounds. I soon figured out that this word should be spelled with a capital ‘G’. Suddenly, our future allies, whom we were on our way to help, were given a new name. I wondered how in the world so many men aboard ship could have learned this word and begun to use it almost simultaneously. Eventually, the answer came to me. Likely, a number of soldiers who were returning for second and even third tours of duty were “doing what came naturally.” From then on, it seemed that most of our troops used this word regularly. As one who was sensitized to religious and racial prejudice by life experiences in different parts of our country, I was appalled. At first I reacted strongly, but soon realized that if I spoke out, I stood the chance of getting my head handed to me. On the other hand, I never learned what “nickname” the Koreans used for us, but likely they had a “good one” as well.

The ship docked at about midnight in a raging cloudburst, foreshadowing a very long, all-night trip aboard a truck with a porous, flapping canvas cover. Somehow it managed to keep moving over the gooey roads that would eventually lead us to our camp. Finally, exhausted and apprehensive, we reached the headquarters of the 45th Division, 180th Infantry Regiment to which we were assigned. The unit had just gone into reserve after a period of fierce fighting, and was now savoring Rest and Recuperation (R&R) some distance behind the jagged front line.

We tumbled into our assigned tents, discarded our soaked clothing, and fell asleep, only to be reminded all too soon of where we were by the booming loudspeaker system. We showered, ate a cooked meal, received an orientation lecture and were given some free time to look around. Although we realized that we would be in reserve for only a week or two, it did give us a chance to learn something about the culture of the regiment. I recently saw the French movie, “The Long Engagement,” which dealt with the horrors faced during World I by newly arrived recruits trying to stay alive in the appalling trenches. As I watched it, I remembered once again how thankful I was for our quiet period of indoctrination.

The terrain was pretty rough. Our regiment was stationed in a narrow valley surrounded by mountains, which provided needed

protection from enemy fire. There was little time for sloth. We trained intensively day and night, partly to get our bodies back in shape after the long ocean trip, and so that those of us who would soon be on the line would at least be familiar with the conditions under which we would be fighting.

To my surprise, I was assigned to Headquarters Company. Someone who actually read the biographical materials that were collected from us noticed that I had a Masters Degree and was working toward a Ph.D at the time I was drafted. However, this information was much less important than the discovery that I could type.

Now, clerk-typists were absolutely essential to the workings of the army, which not only “held the line” but also recognized feats of individual bravery by awarding appropriate medals. The work entailed gathering information about a soldier’s uniquely heroic action, and writing an appropriate and exciting description of the events that led to him being singled out for recognition. The section was called Awards and Decorations (A&D) and was headed by a very nice guy named Bob Koehler. Koehler was a gangly, smart, genuine and good-natured straw-sucking “Pennsylvania Dutchman.” I liked his sense of humor and that he didn’t feel threatened by the “new kid on the block.” On the contrary, he did everything he could to train me quickly for the job. Mind you, this provided certain advantages to him. A&D had been a lonely, one-man job. I was someone to talk to and with whom to share confidences. It also relieved him from some of the time pressure that he was under to “produce” the necessary articles. We spent considerable time critiquing each other’s work. I was happy to cooperate, and our work was acknowledged by our superior officer. We were kept very busy when the regiment returned to action.

Several months later I was reassigned to the Judge Advocate General section. They *really* needed someone who could type, no matter how poorly, to deal with an overwhelming problem created by Major General David L. Ruffner, newly arrived to assume leadership of our regiment. His priorities soon became clear. His primary goal as our leader was to maintain discipline. No mere slap on the hand or ordering the criminal to do 50 pushups for some moderate misbehavior. He was absolutely thrilled to “award” a court-martial for almost any infraction. I have no statistics for his performance, but I would have bet money that he had achieved the outstanding record for courts-martial going on at any one time for a regiment in the U.S. Army.

Characteristically, I was told, a “normal” regiment might process perhaps ten Summary Courts-martial (“Summaries”) at any given time. These were for minor disciplinary infractions, such as speeding on the

Main Supply Route (MSR). The maximum punishment could last no longer than 30 days. Speaking of speeding, one of General Ruffner's major entertainments was flying his helicopter along the MSR, landing near a speeding vehicle and giving a ticket to the "perp" who was driving it. This automatically resulted in a summary court-martial.

About five Special Courts-martial ("Specials") for more significant cases would have been a large number at any one time. The "Special" could be for any infraction, including very serious ones—insubordination or hitting an officer—but confinement could last no longer than one year.

General Courts-martial ("Generals") were rare—one or two in process at any one time. To provide scale, the charges against the defendant are so egregious that the court of military officers could reach a decision for the death penalty. A "General" first requires a closed grand jury-type investigation. Next, charges are brought by the prosecuting attorney. The lawyer for the defendant had little opportunity at the time the charges were read to present a defense.

General Ruffner's record? Within the first few months of his reign, General Ruffner achieved his remarkable record: close to 100 "Summaries," 25 "Specials" and 13 "Generals" running simultaneously! Luckily, there was a review policy in effect, as I understood it, so by the time the results were reviewed in Japan and again in Washington, it was common for the death penalty sentence (and I assume many of the other drastic decisions) to be reduced.

As I worked along at my job, I became familiar with aspects of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), the legal bible which contained all you needed to know about military law to try a case. In time, I acted informally to provide advice to the poor lieutenant-for-a-day who had the responsibility of trying the case.

The atmosphere of the court was sometimes intense, but often the Chief Officer in charge of the proceedings could break the ice. One colonel had a favorite announcement which he made after the court officers took their places, and before the defendant was brought into the court: "O.K., bring in the guilty bastard."

A Close Shave

By the time I arrived in Korea in August, 1952, American and allied troops had liberated all the land lost during a major offensive by the North Korean army, which nearly drove our forces into the sea. Only a clever and well-executed counterattack, directed by General Douglas MacArthur, allowed a return north to the 38th parallel, where our positions were stabilized. Luckily, President Harry Truman relieved him

from duty for insubordination and ordered him to return home before he could initiate an assault across the Yalu River into China, which would follow an initial atom bomb attack.

I was recently placed on a “disabled list” by the Veterans Administration because I have tinnitus, a hearing disorder that is common to many people exposed to very loud noises. This prompted memories of the conditions under which we were quartered while I was with Headquarters Company of the 180th Infantry Regiment, 45th Division.

We lived in “hoochies,” peculiar, moderately well-fortified sandbagged huts, which I think were particular to the Korean War. These were much safer than the front line, although even a near-hit by an incoming shell would have blown one apart. We were facing north and were usually located on the south side of a hill or mountain; nevertheless we received incoming artillery fire, so were always conscious of our vulnerability. Sometimes shells would explode nearby as we slept. Additionally, there was incessant shelling from our own artillery batteries that were stationed not far behind our positions. Sometimes the Division held a “turkey-shoot,” when every weapon capable of delivering a bullet or a shell at the opposing forces was fired simultaneously. I guess it was supposed to unnerve the enemy, but it unnerved us as well.

Both my office and bed were in the same “hoochy,” which was shared with other personnel. One night as I slept, I heard an awful shriek right next to my ear. I awoke in fear, thinking we were being attacked. Then, as my head cleared, I realized that the sound was coming from the sandbagged wall next to my head. I finally figured it out: a rat (and we had some huge ones there), must have been caught between the sandbags and was having trouble getting out. I was happy when it finally did, but I didn’t fall asleep again that night.

We did our jobs, ate together and usually had some time to ourselves in the evening. Sometimes friends would drop by and we’d have a meal together—“traditional” army food deposited into our ever-ready aluminum mess kits.

Our position was behind the front, but well forward of the Quartermaster Company, leaving its safety and pleasures to men who were generally known as “the f---ups.” Most were there because they were either a threat to themselves or to others, and some were considered unsafe at any speed. They washed tons of laundry, prepared and served meals, dug latrines and built “piss tubes.” These were made of large shell casings placed in a hole upright at a forty-five degree angle, all the better

to pee into. But not marching in step had some advantages—a change of clothing any day, showers, hot food and, above all, safety.

I was never far from work—typing up legal charges promoted by the hyperactive General Ruffner. I also spent some time in court, and in discussing the charges with the defense “lawyers.”

Apparently, I had simply shifted my workaholic behavior from the university laboratory to the typewriter in the hoochy. For this, I received approval from my immediate superior, Captain Siemens, a regular army officer. He was a pleasant, sane man, with an almost fatherly quality about him. He never threw his weight around, but achieved results by being straight, clear-headed and good-humored.

I spent my evenings studying German to prepare myself for the language exam I would eventually take in order to complete my two-language requirement for the Ph.D. Accordingly, I took an extension course which was sent from an Army office in Tokyo to which I returned my homework weekly. When we were in reserve, after dinner I would go to my space in the work tent and study. It was peaceful and productive work, and it gave me something constructive to do with my spare time.

Somehow, I failed to understand that by adhering to this discipline, I would offend the Major in charge of our headquarters unit. Luckily, I can’t remember his name, but I certainly remember his habits which were always consistent. He was a very committed fan of the University of Kansas “Jayhawks” basketball team, following its progress moment to moment. His problem was that he could not brook its being beaten, especially when the “enemy” was the City College of New York. At that time CCNY was a premier academic university which also happened to have a fine basketball team. Surprisingly, one year it outmatched the University of Kansas team and had the audacity to beat them in a national playoff.

Whenever he “talked basketball,” the Major would reveal an anti-Semitic predilection. Almost invariably, when the Major mentioned CCNY (indicative of his stereotypical view of Jews having long noses), he would pull on his nose while spitting out “Nate Holman,” the name of the CCNY coach. As far as I knew, he never realized that I shared Holman’s religious background.

The Major was about 45-years old, just short of six feet tall, pale-skinned, erect and virtually bald. His unblinking eyes were most striking—cold, pale grey, piercing, the pupils unusually dilated. Each evening, he would return to the work tent after an extended stint at the Officer’s Club. He would walk slowly, gingerly into the tent, staring straight ahead, so drunk that his head bobbed on his shoulders, reminiscent of the rocking head motion of a Javanese dancer. He would

gaze about with a vague look in his eye, generally say nothing, and then leave. The tension in the air was always palpable. The next morning, he would appear at 6:00 a.m. sharp, apparently none the worse for wear, ready for a day's work.

One night he arrived at the tent, swaying awkwardly, looking about. All eyes were averted. Then he spoke to me in a sodden voice.

"Rappaport, you shink you're shomeshing special, don't you?"

I stood at attention, staring straight ahead. "No, Sir!"

"I shink you do," he responded. He stood directly in front of me, reeking of alcohol, his head out of control, and stared piercingly at my first attempt to grow some fuzz on my chin.

"You shave that "effing" beard off by 6:00 a.m. shmorrow mornin' or I'll shend you to I-Company!"

"Yes, Sir," I answered.

He turned around and staggered out of the tent. I knew whereof he spoke. I-Company had been wiped out the week before and I wasn't taking any chances!

I shaved the damn thing off before I went to sleep.

An End and A Beginning

One evening a few months later, while I sat at my table writing my usual letter to Norma, I saw my "boss," the Major, approaching. I noted that he was upright, that he walked in a straight line and that all of his body parts seemed to be synchronized. This meant that he had business to discuss and that he had not been inhaling his favorite liquid drug. I stood at attention and he told me to relax.

"What now?" I wondered. He had not mentioned the I-Company incident since that memorable evening, and I had since learned to relax while still trying to look small.

He made some small talk and I answered appropriately. "Maybe he isn't such a bad guy after all," I mused. What followed, however, was unbelievable. "Rapp," he said (everyone called me Rapp; this name was even stenciled on my shirts). "We think you've done a very good job for the regiment. So we've decided to reassign you." I immediately concluded that this was a nice way (after all, he was sober) to send me packing to Quartermaster Company with the rest of the "undesirables." At worst, I saw a transfer to another unit that needed my bad typing to bale it out of the trouble caused by yet another bad general.

"What do you think about a transfer to Second Battalion? As Sergeant Major?" O.K., so my teeth didn't fall out, but I was nevertheless in shock.

He continued, "There's also a step increase in rank to Sergeant First Class." (During the previous sixteen months in Korea, I had been promoted from Private to Sergeant. Promotions were more frequent in a combat zone.)

I stammered, "But . . . but . . . but," and was silent for a long moment.

"Well, what do you think?"

I was amazed and didn't exactly know what to think. He probably understood what was going on in my head and, as he turned away said, "You'll hear more about this soon."

After I had collected my thoughts, I began to accept that this was a reward for the work I had done and an indication of how my superiors assessed my capabilities. I even accepted that it was an honor, since there is only one Sergeant Major position in any battalion. I don't know how they figured that I could be a leader of men, but I assumed that they were probably scraping the bottom of the barrel as it seemed that the war would probably end within the five or six months remaining in my tour of duty.

Soon my orders came through. I packed up, kissed everyone goodbye and was driven to the headquarters of the Second Battalion. I met the Colonel in command of the Battalion, was shown to my (nicer) quarters and my workplace, with its (nicer) desk situated in a private part of a tent. It was next to the Colonel's, so I understood from this that we would be in frequent communication. But about what? I was seriously deficient in information. Indeed, on reflection, I realized that I never knowingly had met a Sergeant Major before, much less knew what he did for a living.

Some conversations with old timers and with the Colonel taught me that I was responsible to the Colonel on all matters related to the training, appearance, conduct and welfare of the enlisted men. An experienced Sergeant Major would also be in a position to make recommendations to the Battalion Commander regarding personnel issues and to be available to him to discuss any other matters about which he cared to have my insights.

One of my most satisfying responsibilities was helping the men to get to their country of choice for Rest and Recuperation. I had finally figured out what I was really supposed to do: I was running a travel agency. Actually, my chief advising responsibility was to listen to the Colonel, who carried the weight of the Battalion on his shoulders. (Of course, I offered to help him decide tactics and disposition of troops, but he demurred.) Often we talked of home, family, Norma, the good and

welfare of the troops. In all, the job was at least as interesting and much less stressful than my work at Regimental Headquarters.

Other features of my assignment led me to accept that I had a good job. For one thing, I had my own jeep, which I could use at my discretion. My discretion told me that I needed periodic trips to the Quartermaster Company. After all, they had the best showers and food. I also had official business, usually on personnel matters, in Seoul to which I drove periodically.

After completing my business in Seoul, I took the opportunity to visit some of the brightly painted temples that dotted the countryside. I bought one of the early Canon cameras made and took many pictures. I enjoyed seeing the rice paddies and the beautiful terraces being cultivated by very diligent workers, and I stopped along the way to see farms and to look at the straw huts that served as their homes.

The Main Supply Route, the main and only highway, was often muddy, but everything possible was done to keep it functional as it was the lifeline from the south to the front line. When driving south along the MSR, I was fascinated by the places and people I saw from time to time. I was delighted to see a Korean woman dressed in a beautiful, classic, highly colored long dress, carrying a parasol, and appearing as if from nowhere, walking along a dirt path which surely was muddy after the latest rain. Sometimes an elderly Korean man would appear in the national dress, a long white coat outlining a wispy, long gray beard, and an unusually tall stovepipe hat. In those situations, images and thoughts of war receded and I became a tourist.

One day the Colonel told me that we were moving out of reserve and going on line. After packing frantically, the Battalion moved out and assumed new positions on Christmas Hill. It was located at a site which partly commanded a view of the enemy positions. Because the hill was steep, Headquarters was located on the back side of the hill, but near the peak. We were relatively safe, unless there was a close fire fight. The Second Battalion's fighters were distributed along "fingers" of land that approached Chinese positions which were also dispersed on opposing fingers. There was frequent shelling and small arms fire, the first I experienced away from reserve positions.

One night the Chinese attacked in force and a fierce firefight ensued. Men were running along the crest of Christmas Hill, reinforcing positions and securing our own. I was not involved in any of the fighting and didn't see a single foreign soldier, but I knew that I was in a war situation for the first time. It was frightening and I felt inept. I was, after all, not a combat soldier attached to a squad or a platoon, nor was I in charge of troops. I had a carbine which, luckily, I did not have to fire.

Most of the time I stayed at our Headquarters position, but I was also at the top of Christmas Hill when it appeared we would have to defend ourselves. Morning came, and with it the noise of combat slowly ebbed.

That morning, as I looked out from our position, I saw an American tank laboring along a very narrow road that spiraled up a neighboring hill. When it had gone halfway up the hill, the ground began to give way and slowly the tank slid over the edge and tumbled down the hill. My heart sank and tears welled up as I visualized what happened to those inside. An enduring memory.

We eventually went off-line and we returned to the humdrum of being in reserve until it was time to leave. The war ended as predicted, after months and months of negotiations, including untold hours spent arguing about the shape of the “peace” table.

Before I left I was approached by the Colonel who asked me to “re-up.” “You’ll be promoted to Master Sergeant,” he said. Anticipating my return to the lab, I could barely suppress a smile, but I did. I thanked him for his confidence in me and wished him well.

We said “goodbye” to our friends who would stay longer, and the few Koreans who were associated with our battalion. Then we boarded “cattle cars” and left the rough landscape of the 38th parallel, headed for the Port of Pusan.

One of my more disquieting memories of that last trip was of a large group of Korean civilians quietly watching us as we turned onto the port grounds. One of them raised his right hand and, in the internationally understood symbol, extended his middle finger. Probably I gave the gesture too much significance, but I nevertheless left feeling that I had missed something important. We had been so isolated during our time in Korea that we learned little about how Koreans felt about us. I suspect that many of them had similarly negative feelings.

The trip across the Pacific was memorable for the calmness of the water, the flying fish, and thoughts of a peaceful future with Norma, devoid of guns and people killing one another. At last, the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco Bay appeared on the horizon, more beautiful than ever. I didn’t kiss the ground, but I related strongly to those who did.

Several weeks later, duffle bag on my shoulder, I climbed the stairs out of the Nostrand Avenue subway station in Brooklyn and walked toward my apartment house. Suddenly I was teary-eyed. I saw Norma, Mom and Dad, and my brother-in-law Henry, who was filming “The Return,” coming toward me. I kissed Norma long and hard and we held each other tightly. It wasn’t easy to let go, but I needed to hold my mother and Dad. In a small but significant gesture, Mom hugged and

kissed me and ran her fingers over my arms and legs, assuring herself that I was intact and really all there.

Footprints In Our Marriage

In a way, our meeting when I was three years and Norma was six months old predestined our marriage. Our parents had met during the disembarkation process at Ellis Island and as we grew up, we met frequently as our parents developed a life-long friendship. We've had a shared culture, values and interests that allowed us to overcome some of the ordinary hurdles that often face "newly-marrieds." Our cultural interests later became important mainstays and gave us years of pleasure. While we glanced off each other during our teens, there was some attraction for one another, but never anything serious. I left for college and during that time we both dated and got involved with others.

We met often as Norma was emerging from a deep relationship that she decided to break. I was available to listen to her painful story and to commiserate. Even though neither of us was interested romantically at the time, we reached a more insightful level of understanding about one another. This ability to talk freely about our inner feelings has stood us in good stead, although in later years it required reading Debra Tannen's book, "You Just Don't Understand" to prompt me to understand that she needed to talk and I needed to listen.

I appreciated Norma's willingness to be available on those weekends when, during my basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, occasionally I was given a pass and returned home unannounced. This was a time when, according to unwritten custom, no New York woman in her right mind would make a weekend date after Wednesday.

We grew closer as the time came for me to ship out to Korea. We wrote very frequently and, about six months after I left, I gave her a watch signifying our engagement. We were married about six months after I returned.

Our first striking life change took place as I returned to graduate school at Michigan State University and was immediately immersed in the courses and research that I needed to complete the doctoral degree. In a way, that three-year period was a metaphor for much of our subsequent lives. I was determined to complete "my work" and, as Norma was not employed, she took up her role as housewife and, soon, mother. While I helped some, I was always torn, feeling that my primary need was to forge ahead to complete my degree.

One of the most important features influencing our marriage was how each of us viewed time. My dedication to getting the work done, to get a good job and to then work, work, work deprived us of the time needed to cement a deeper relationship. Norma nursed some anger about

this and, while I loved my job and felt I needed to work, I know now that I should have been more accessible. I regret not listening better when she expressed her feelings about the matter. Similarly, while I think I did a lot with our kids, I know that they, too, remember me as a sort of absentee father who seemed to be working all the time. What I did had significant payoffs, but I deeply regret that I missed some of the pleasures that could have otherwise accrued in terms of family coherence and intimacy, especially with Norma.

When we moved to Davis, Norma continued being a homemaker, one who truly enjoyed creating a home and raising children. To some extent, I think her personal satisfaction mitigated her feelings about my taking so much time for work. To give her all due credit, she respected my efforts but could not really understand my need to be so deeply involved in work.

When the time came for the kids to think about leaving home for college, Norma attended Sacramento State University and earned a Master's degree in Vocational Counseling, and an appropriate dose of self-appreciation. I strongly supported her progress but, to my surprise, along with her "liberation" I felt a hint of resentment at her new-found independence. She became increasingly fluent in discussing matters and I had to work harder to make my point in conversations.

In some ways, her self-discovery proved to be an advantage for my scheme to work 24-hour days (a small exaggeration). She sought employment and eventually was hired by UC Davis as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for employees who were having problems on the job. Her record in this area was exemplary. I took a great deal of pride in her advancement and took pleasure in meeting her new friends. Our conversations at home changed in character and quality. I was convinced that her going to work, first for private firms and then for UC Davis, was a very good decision.

While we had the usual concerns about kids growing up and going to college, the onset of our daughter Debbie's bipolar illness was a major event that has since powerfully impacted our lives. It focused our attention on Debbie as never before; we came together emotionally and intellectually to deal with a problem that, even though it has diminished significantly in recent years, we understand will never really go away.

Despite my self-absorption, life was not a bleak landscape. My progress through the University system, and the worldwide associations I made through my academic activities, led to wonderful travels, including sabbaticals in Japan, Israel, and Britain with the whole family, and later to Australia and Switzerland as a couple. In addition to the professional boost the sabbaticals gave by improving my research, these experiences

exposed our family to the wonders of the world; we have fond memories of these times.

Much to my surprise, time, the factor that most impacted our lives while I was working, became a friend after we retired. It wasn't easy and it took me a long time to let go, but ultimately I began to realize that I could survive without most of the academic crutches I had depended upon for so long. I began to accept that there is a life after retirement and that I could relax and be at home without the university going to hell without me. Norma and I have had a chance to share more time together, for me to become a more active member of our household, and simply, to let go and enjoy the benefits of making choices instead of feeling they were being made for me.

I don't think there was a time in our lives when I felt closer to Norma than I do now. Over time we have developed a more relaxed, loving and caring relationship which continues, even to this, our 60th year of marriage.

“It’s Only Indigestion”

In March, 1954, Norma and I arrived in East Lansing, Michigan, where I would resume my studies and research for the Ph.D. at Michigan State University. They had been interrupted, in 1951, by Uncle Sam’s invitation to join the armed forces and “tour” Korea. With savings from my “immense income” paid during my time in service, and a little help from our parents, we managed to buy a Dodge sedan, our first car ever, and to drive to East Lansing by way of a long detour through the southeastern states and New Orleans. We thought about our trip as a perfect way to visit places we had never seen, and for Norma as the beginning of separation from parents and friends in the East. Oh yes, we were accompanied by a noticeable bulge in the region of Norma’s upper abdomen. We knew that life would be most interesting once we arrived in East Lansing. We had little money, virtually no savings, a small educational stipend from the government and occasional help from family to support ourselves. I also planned to work for additional funds as the opportunity arose.

Having few resources, we searched Lansing and East Lansing for inexpensive apartments. After viewing a rat-infested flat on the Lansing River, we decided we would upscale our goals and rented an inexpensive, tiny, one-bedroom apartment in the rear of a private home that had been subdivided into an upstairs flat, ours, and the owner’s premises below.

It was adequate for our needs, but had the drawback of being in Lansing, a car-ride or, if one can’t drive, a long walk to the Michigan State University campus. Norma hadn’t learned to drive, not uncommon in low income New York families which managed very well on public transport. Buses were available in Lansing at a considerable distance from our apartment—fine during early pregnancy, but increasingly risky as “the bulge” swelled.

“How not to teach your wife to drive” may be the subject of another article.

Eventually, she did learn to drive and managed to pass a driver’s test a few weeks before the babe was born. Meanwhile we applied for married student housing in Aggie Village, the equivalent of the old Aggie Villa on First Street in Davis.

I went off to the University each morning, determined to finish up as quickly as possible. Norma loves books and is generally very resourceful, so she managed to fill her days usefully and patiently. I would come home as often as possible, but it wasn’t the best way for a

recently married couple to get to know what life was really going to be like. We had good times together, but it was obviously lonely for both of us. To complicate matters, being new to the area, we had few friends initially, although in time we developed some long-term relationships.

Inevitably, there was that *uh-oh!* moment when we had to decide when the time had come to drive to Sparrow Hospital in Lansing, fortunately located a short distance from our apartment. As the time grew closer, we became increasingly conscious about how we planned our schedules so that we could be ready to leave for the hospital on short notice.

Shortly before midnight on June 11, Norma awakened with a jolt. She had begun to have infrequent contractions; eventually the pangs became more regular and more frequent.

I am not ordinarily a hysteric, but when she started feeling intense pain, I had a sudden, frenzied feeling that culminated in a frantic, "Let's get going!"

Much to my consternation, she blithely replied, "No, it's only indigestion. The pain is too intense for me to be in labor. It simply doesn't match the description we were given in the childbirth class."

Nervously, I questioned her analysis, but indigestion won. It was after all, her indigestion. Nevertheless she climbed out of bed and began to pace the floor, hoping that the agonizing pain would disappear with a change of position.

Finally, overcoming Norma's recalcitrance, I again insisted that we "get going." Having found no relief from pacing, she acquiesced to a phone call to the doctor who told me, "Bring her on in."

We dressed and drove to Sparrow Hospital, Norma experiencing considerable pain. Nevertheless, examination revealed that despite showing many of the symptoms of an advanced stage of childbirth, Norma was actually in an early stage of labor. My first daughter lingered on, no doubt preferring the warm sloshy environment of her mother's womb to my anxiety.

In this respect, by delaying her emergence, she was very unkind to her mother. Sparrow was a good hospital, but hospital gray is hardly a welcoming color and, to Norma's bad fortune, her chief nurse-caretaker had the same coloration, physically and emotionally. A colder person I have met since, but never during a hospital stay.

As it turned out, Norma did not deliver for an additional twelve excruciating hours, and was totally exhausted by the time they finally wheeled her away to the delivery room. I had done what I could to alleviate her suffering, dutifully rubbing her back and frequently

demanding of “Stoneface,” generally with no response—not even sympathy—that she give her more Demerol to relieve her relentless pain.

Once they decided that Meryl was getting serious about leaving her habitat, they wheeled Norma into the delivery room. Times were different then, and the thought of a husband or parent being present in the delivery room (as we were when Meryl’s son, David, was born), was, to my knowledge, unheard of.

I stalked the waiting room along with other stalkers, and waited. No television, no cell phone, not even a radio for distraction—just a bunch of tired, agitated, worried-looking men.

In all, Meryl lingered a total of twelve hours before deciding to make the grand exit on June 12 and, miraculously, at the same time, Norma’s indigestion disappeared.

Of Fish and Fowl

From the time we were married in 1954, Norma, and I have had a number of pets, including two goldfish, a parakeet, two cats and a dog. Our love for “pets” contrasted sharply with the atmosphere in the home in Minsk, Belarus, where Elsie Siegel, my mother, was born and raised. She learned to fear animals from her mother, Baba, who was petrified at the sight of a loose dog. She frequently saw people chase and strike out at animals for no apparent reason. During professional visits to Egypt and China, I saw similar treatment of dogs. Mom was a peace-loving woman who would never hurt an animal, but reacted viscerally when she saw one and gave it a wide berth. My father, Aaron, on the other hand, liked animals, especially dogs.

Mom migrated to the U.S. in 1923, but not even this pet-loving country altered her life-long fear of animals. God forbid that an itinerant cat should pass too close to her. One day I was sitting with her in the tiny back room of her store, “Elsie’s Millinery,” in Brooklyn. Suddenly, I saw her eyes widen and her face blanch as she froze in place. I looked about and found the reason for her distress: a cat had slithered into the store, presumably in search of an appropriate hat, and the poor woman did not know what to do about it. Fearlessly, I picked up the animal and carried it outside. It was that easy, but not for Mom.

I never suffered Mom’s physiological symptoms on seeing an animal up close, but I shared the feeling that there was nothing special about pets that I needed to embrace.

This perception changed radically after Norma and I were married. We often reminisce about our family adventures with the pets we have owned. We started small in 1954 in East Lansing, Michigan, where I was working on my doctorate.

Our first apartment was tiny, only large enough to sustain us and a pair of miniature goldfish. Not threatening, not much personality, they reminded us of a couple of friendly Indian graduate students at Michigan State University named Rai and Rao. Nice guys, inseparable. So were the two fish. They owed their names to our friends.

Rai and Rao got along swimmingly (oops!), ate happily for a time, and found pleasure in chasing one another around the tank. Some months later, Rai began to weaken, swam lethargically around the bottom of the tank, and stopped eating. Rao tended his mate and probably shed some tears when, a few days later Rai floated, immobile, to the top of the tank. We grieved for a couple of minutes but took solace

in knowing that Rao would continue on—to eat our food and soil our tank.

The next morning I heard a shout from Norma, “Larry, come here! Something’s wrong!” She pointed at the fish tank. Rao’s head was buried in the sand. “I think he’s dead,” Norma said. We decided that the death of his friend was too much for Rao to bear. Shaking her head, Norma declared solemnly “There’s no doubt. He committed suicide.”

In 1956, I happily accepted a job offer in the Department of Vegetable Crops at UC Davis. We stacked our belongings in the trunk, on the rear seat, and on the roof of the 1950 Dodge sedan I bought with savings from the enormous salary Uncle Sam paid me for 21 months of service. Suspended from the two front seats was a car-bed bearing a Meryl, aged 8 months. Suspended in Norma’s womb was a tiny speck of a Debra.

The Department generously allowed us to rent an old wooden house at the Vegetable Crops Field House, across from the future Recreation Pool and Lodge built some years later. The house was encircled by a welcoming lawn with enough space for Meryl to run, Debbie to waddle, and for us to push them both on the swing. We still remember a beautiful trumpet vine that surrounded the lawn and gave us privacy. The price was right—\$45.00 a month—providing enough savings to buy a parakeet and a cage!

Queeg was a blue bird, but not especially distinguishable from other blue parakeets we have known. What inspired Meryl to name the bird Queeg, the angry ship’s captain in Herman Wouk’s novel, *The Caine Mutiny*, remains a mystery, as she was not yet old enough to read this book.

Queeg was friendly and well trained. He loved to walk out of his cage and fly about the house (chased by Norma with a ready rag). Meryl, in particular, enjoyed him, relishing the moments when he landed on her head. She would walk about modeling the bird and, eventually, would entice him back into his cage.

From Meryl, I learned that absentmindedness is not limited to the realm of the aged. One day, as she paraded about the house with her prized parakeet on her head, she walked right out the front door and into the yard!

What would you do if you were a parakeet with open sky above you? Well, he did it! Queeg flew away, high into a neighboring tree, leaving guilt, anguish, and tears behind. We comforted Meryl as much as we could, but she was inconsolable.

To our surprise, the saga had a happy ending! Two days later Queeg had reconsidered; apparently, the eats were better at the

Rappaports, and he decided to make a grand return. He flew down from his perch, circled the yard and landed on Meryl's head. Overjoyed, she turned around, walked slowly up the stairs, triumphantly entered the house, parakeet on top, and placed it in the cage.

I doubt whether parakeets were among the animals that my mother learned to fear in Minsk, but I believe she would have shared the same sense of relief that we did when Queeg came home.

A New Life in Los Angeles

Our family's migration to California began when Norma and I, our daughter Meryl, and five-ninths of Debra moved to Davis in January, 1956. In 1958, my sister Libby, her husband, Henry Kasimow, and their children, Pamela and Larry, also opted for a new life in the greener pastures of Los Angeles. This presented a problem for my parents, Aaron and Elsie, and Norma's parents, Joe and Sarah, who were faced with the daunting prospect of leaving New York after having lived there ever since they arrived in America.

They would miss their friends, relatives and regular contacts with their children and grandchildren. After much analysis, both sets of parents decided that being close in Los Angeles was a much greater attraction than remaining alone in New York.

They moved to L.A. in 1959 and found appropriate apartments. Libby and Henry, by then familiar with the Fairfax District, helped them get settled in an appropriate neighborhood for our parents, as it had many of the characteristics of similar districts in New York. The bakeries, delicatessens and markets were familiar, as were the shopping, language and atmosphere. The population was mainly Jewish and, although our parents spoke English much of the time, it was comfortable to live in a neighborhood with similar language and cultural characteristics all their lives.

Aaron and Elsie's small first floor apartment on 3rd Street, near La Cienega, had one bedroom, a living room, kitchen and bath. It was adequate, but hardly luxurious. The appliances which came with the apartment were old and the furniture they bought showed promise of graceless aging. Dad had to start anew to develop a clientele that would be interested in his paintings and Mom would have a little time for herself after leaving her millinery shop in Brooklyn.

Dad took the living room which fronted on 3rd Street and through whose very large windows passersby could watch him work and see a sampling of his art. He proudly placed a sign on the small front lawn, A. RAPPAPORT, ARTIST. Attired in his customary gray smock and black beret, he set up his easels and soon the room began filling with canvases, frames, pallets and paintings as well as a fragrance redolent of his 13th-story studio in New York City which I often visited in my youth. Eventually, Mom, whose only training was as a milliner, found a job in the millinery department of the May Company. Soon she was familiar with the task at hand and the people she worked with. She loved her job as much as she did her store in Brooklyn. Her lengthy experience there

contributed to the positive atmosphere that attracted customers and enhanced the income of her department. I remember visiting her at May Company and being welcomed with the zest and warmth that she exuded in her own shop in Brooklyn. It was good to see how happy she was to be working again.

My parents never owned a car in New York, both an indication of their persistently weak financial condition and a tribute to the excellent in-city transit system.

Now, faced with the open streets of L.A. and its poor transit system, they made a remarkable decision: they would both learn to drive and then buy a car. Why remarkable? Neither of my parents had a mechanical bent and Dad, in particular, simply had shown both poor judgment and ability when he had attempted to drive in the past. Years earlier he had managed to break an axle on his brother Bill's car. Once I drove with him when he was in training to obtain a license. I sat in the "coffin corner" as he made his way down a very busy street. I got religion as I shrunk into my seat and he unwittingly played chicken with a string of cars parked at the curb, just inches away from my door. Luckily, he didn't hit any, but it was a totally unnerving experience. Another time, in L.A., he accelerated rather than braked, and drove the car into the side of a house. Luckily, no one was hurt, but this put an end to his attempt to get a driver's license.

Mom, on the other hand, kept at her lessons and eventually earned a driver's license. They had bought a Chevy Nova of which they were very proud. As a concession to Dad's self-image, he took the responsibility of unlocking the car when they were going somewhere. I was impressed with Mom until one day she drove me around the streets of L.A.. In a nervous moment, she accidentally killed the engine at a very busy intersection. Her eyes widened and she choked, "What should I do?" Eventually we managed to get the car started and going in the right direction. While my body was intact on arrival, it took some time before my blood pressure approximated normal. The upside of the story is that she never had an accident and eventually decided that the car was a bit much for her. They ultimately sold it and probably got a new lease on life.

Their decision to move west turned out to be a good one as our parents lived near Libby and Henry and their family. Later, as our parents grew older, Libby and Henry were able to help them both on a daily basis. Of course, they looked forward to visiting Davis periodically, and were most helpful to Norma when Craig, our youngest, was born. They enjoyed their time with Meryl and Debbie as well; the girls have fond memories of our parents' visits.

My parents loved Davis. We lived in a small farmhouse that belonged to the Department of Vegetable Crops. Dad had a sense of wonder about the departmental farm and the nearby Pomology orchards through which he loved to walk. He called Davis “Shangri-La.”

We, on the other hand, were able to travel south periodically so that we could spend time with our parents. We did this as often as possible, but still remember without any pleasure whatsoever, the torturous 9-hour trip on Highway 99 to Los Angeles. We drove our Chevy station wagon, which had no air conditioning because we couldn’t afford it. On the way we stopped at a gas station where we would fill up. Norma would collect wet paper towels to apply to our necks and we would drink water furiously. We never failed to stock up at the Carnation Ice Cream store in Bakersfield to relieve the pain of the remainder of the trip to L.A.

Meryl, Debbie and Craig often reminded me of my mental state about the time we arrived in Bakersfield after being subjected to hours of “Mom, Meryl is looking at me,” and “Mom, Debbie touched me!” and “Craig put his foot on me!” Meryl recalls that after so many hours of this back seat torture, I would scream, “I’m at the end of my rope!” Most likely an arm would shoot out in the direction of the back seat in the vain hope that I would make contact with one of my torturers. I always failed. After the drive over the Grapevine with a nervous navigator at my side, L.A. had all the characteristics of Nirvana.

Years later, my parents were delighted when Debbie decided to go to UCLA for her undergraduate work. She brought them a great deal of pleasure and, characteristically, they enjoyed parenting her and feeding her whenever possible. Her visits with them are among Debbie’s fondest memories of her experience in Los Angeles.

The kids, in turn, have fond memories of the times they spent with their grandparents before the ravages of age and decline whittled away at their once-vibrant personalities.

Libby

Note: This story was written in August, 2002, when Libby was still alive. She died a few months later.

I didn't want to write about my sister Libby for a number of reasons, mostly because our relationship has always been bittersweet. However, Norma prevailed, saying, "Maybe by writing you'll be able to come to terms with your history with her, as you did with your father."

Maybe so. It isn't that I don't have good, loving memories of her, but they are often hidden by a cloud of sometimes mutual animosity and, for a period, outright jealousy which I have had difficulty understanding.

Libby was born in 1924 and is four years older than I. A pretty, precocious, impetuous child, she gave our parents periods of delight and unspeakable angst. Her aptitude to learn was unusual from the beginning, and Mom and Dad were proud when she came home from school with high grades and accolades from her teachers; indeed she skipped a year in grade school, an uncommon achievement.

At the same time she was not an easy child, not with herself, nor her family, nor even her admiring teachers at PS 89. At home she was "lippy," and provoked disagreements with our parents. They were old world and accustomed to children behaving and listening respectfully to their parents. Libby simply didn't fit the mold. As she progressed into her teens, she became more independent and more antagonistic, apparently having decided that what she wanted was what mattered. She began to wear heavy makeup at a young age (a no-no), to stay out late with boyfriends, asserting her independence. At the time, I felt that she wasn't very discriminating about her boyfriends, but after meeting some of them, I remember that most of them were pretty nice people.

After graduating high school, Libby was accepted at Cooper Union, a prestigious art school in Manhattan. She established a friendship base with her art school friends, centered mainly in Greenwich Village. Upon graduation, she immediately was faced with the economic facts of life: few people roam the streets looking for recent art school graduates interested in painting portraits or landscapes. This is a difficult profession, as our father learned the hard way. I think that her only job after graduation was with a factory, drawing designs for men's ties.

Then she met Henry Kasimow and fell madly in love with him. After an exciting courtship, they were married in 1945. They visited our

family's apartment in Brooklyn frequently, so I got to know him very well. I felt that he really liked me and I did him, with some reservations.

In January of 1947, I set off to the University of Idaho for undergraduate studies. Except for a wild ride they took to the West on their honeymoon, stopping off in Moscow, Idaho, where we spent a happy week together, I was mostly out of touch with them for long periods of time. When we did meet periodically, I sensed from Libby coolness and distance that lasted many years. I did not understand this until much later.

The proverbial first child, Libby was clearly the dominant figure in our home. She demanded and got a great deal of our parents' time, which meant I got less. I felt that she was very jealous of me. The first and only son, I was relatively acquiescent, loving, and motivated to do the right thing, at least until I was 8 or 9. I dutifully stayed and played near our home and was obedient most of the time. In contrast, Libby was a difficult child, demanding and not particularly pleasant. (Looking back, maybe I understood the dynamic and took advantage of the situation to ingratiate myself with our parents.)

I followed Libby to P.S. 89 and the trail of excellence that she had left behind. I was a fairly good student, serious, but easily intimidated by the witches who were our "old maid" teachers. I did not fit well into Libby's footsteps and it was definitely a problem for me; I simply felt intellectually inferior to her. My parents didn't help much to alleviate my anxiety. Even when I skipped a half year in fifth grade, they didn't seem to understand why. I remember them speaking all too clearly about us, *soto voce*, saying, "Larry is the good one; Libby is the smart one." Thanks for the memory, Mom and Dad . . .

Our relationship, from my early childhood into my early teens, was often combative. It oscillated between sullen, cool neutrality to outright physical combat. I remember being knocked around frequently; once, in a fit of uncontrolled anger, she actually tried to stab me with a fork. As she had already become fairly heavy in her preteens, and I was "the shrimp," among the smallest boys at P.S. 89, you can imagine who ended up on the bottom most of the time. In reaction, my parents did a lot of yelling; my father was not past reaching for a belt when the noise level got too strident, and I remember my mother, who loved me most of the time, chasing me around the kitchen and striking out at me with a broomstick. Of course there were periods of calm, even warmth. Sometimes there were even loving moments, but as I remember them, they paled by comparison with the norm—the scarred battlefield. It is noteworthy that when she was in a particularly good mood, Libby would "make me up" with lipstick, eye shadow, and powder, wrap a babushka

around my head and announce, "Isn't he cute?" Maybe she wanted a sister.

Periodically Libby would make a point of explaining things to me, the result of her increasing knowledge of the street. While I learned the language of "dirty sex" from my friends when I was about 12, it was Libby (now 16 or 17) who made it understandable to me. She talked about it with maturity, probably gained from conversations with her girlfriends who learned early to speak intimately about personal matters. Besides, she must have had her share of experiences.

Life improved for her when she attended Evander Childs High School where she had a successful experience. She was out of the house much of the time and made some new friends. She also had some boyfriends who undoubtedly buoyed her self-esteem.

Libby, despite her rebelliousness and independence, was highly sensitive to the terrible financial situation in our household. Art was neither a profession in high demand during the Depression nor in the years just following World War II. My mother did not open her successful millinery shop in Brooklyn until 1941. Like most of the teens in our neighborhood, Libby worked at Macy's or a similar company on Thursday nights and all day Saturdays. She dutifully gave most of the pittance she made to our parents. Libby had a conscience. To this day she maintains connections with family members whom Norma and I had withdrawn from years ago.

When she began her studies at Cooper Union, our relationship took a turn for the better. Libby would occasionally invite me to attend art classes with her. I liked them a lot because often they would be painting or drawing nude models. I was mainly drawn to the female models, one of whom got angry because she (correctly) saw me as a salivating adolescent. Libby even took me to visit her friends in Greenwich Village where they would talk left-wing politics and sketch together. I liked this very much, especially the sketching, and would join in with gusto. (Not very good, but enthusiastic.) I felt very mature among them. I don't know how they felt, but they let me hang around. Cooper Union was a really good experience for Libby. She was proud to have been accepted and to have graduated from such a prestigious art school.

I don't have much of a memory of her in the period after she graduated because I was involved with school, friends, and the war effort. When I left for Idaho in January of 1947, Libby was getting to know Henry, and soon her life was wrapped up with his.

For many years afterward we saw each other infrequently. Eventually, she and Henry moved from Philadelphia to Los Angeles, following the lead of our parents. Her life was permanently scarred by

the tragic death of her 3-month old baby boy, Steven. Her second child, Pamela, was a sweet girl whom Norma and I loved, and to whom I often sent presents when I was studying in Michigan. Indeed, she was the flower girl at our wedding. Pamela became a rebellious, risk-taking teenager. I think Libby and Henry tried very hard to rein her in, but there was no stopping her. At 19, Pamela, shockingly, was murdered under unknown circumstances.

Libby was deeply and permanently affected by these horrible events. Afterwards, she rarely exhibited the verve of her earlier years. All Libby's love was focused on her remaining son, Larry.

Henry worked as a TV repair person until he was about sixty, and then decided that he didn't want to work anymore; rather he would spend more time on various art projects. A very creative person, Henry worked intensely in many media and produced some interesting paintings and a variety of whimsical objects ranging from intricately designed cardboard and balsa wood boxes, to fanciful chess sets, to long chains of decoratively arranged clothespins which he draped across the arch in their living room. In his isolated world he was probably one of the early "pop" artists.

Libby was a doting wife who felt that Henry was an ingenious and original artist. She actively encouraged him to continue his artwork. To ensure sufficient income, Libby sought work as a substitute art teacher in elementary schools. Most of the time, her assignments took her to schools in the Watts section of L.A. With despair, she would describe life in her classrooms as more like baby sitting than teaching—very little education was taking place.

We saw much more of Libby and Henry after our parents moved to Los Angeles. Several times a year, we drove to L.A. to visit for a few days or a week. Our connection was strengthened by the reality that our parents were aging and becoming less functional in their everyday activities. Libby devotedly took major responsibility for their day-to-day needs, and was a backbone of support until both parents were gone. Libby and Henry gained a new focus in their lives after their son, Larry, married Lisa. Their bright, pretty granddaughters, Erin and Jillian, brought Libby and Henry much joy; they were totally committed to helping them in every way possible.

Over the years, our visits became somewhat friendlier, yet Libby and Henry still exhibited a diffidence that made us feel uncomfortable. Finally we began to catch on. Libby would make remarks about my being a professor; Henry would often derisively call me "The Professor." I think Norma and I finally understood that the negativity arose from jealousy of my professional status, and ultimately, because of our

financial status. It was a shock. To my knowledge, I have never worn my profession on my sleeve, but I suppose I became a bit more sophisticated, even “professorial.” Our horizons expanded as we took many trips, most of them scientific, paid for by those who invited me, grants or sources within the University. When we arrived in Davis, my income was likely lower than Henry’s, but we never discussed salaries openly.

In recent years we have reached a level of comfort only occasionally disturbed by a comment or an attitude. While our lives are full of activities, travel and friends, involvement in community, children and grandchildren, Libby’s is quite isolated. She and Henry travel infrequently and spend their days reading the newspaper, watching TV or listening to music till the wee hours of the morning. She is obese and in severe pain most of the time. Her main topic of conversation is the deteriorating condition of her body, a sad shell of the very pretty person she was in her youth; she also enjoys talking about the lives and achievements of her granddaughters.

Now, except for rare moments when she might strike out at one of us, or I might make a comment in frustration with one of them, we have a sort of pleasant truce. Sharing our own distress in family situations has somewhat leveled the playing field. Life hasn’t always been so perfect for “The Professor.” Norma is very considerate of Libby, always bringing her some personal gift that might enhance the quality her life. We call them periodically, and stop in L.A. to stay overnight whenever we head south to see our children who live near San Diego. Not having had my sad experiences with Libby and Henry, my children have generally had a good relationship with them. Indeed, my son Craig and his wife, Robin, named their son after Henry and their daughter, Lindsey, after Libby.

Several months after I wrote this story, Libby took a fall, and after a short convalescence, developed pneumonia and passed away. She had periodically commented that they had few friends. Following her funeral, to my surprise, their house overflowed with neighbors who came to lend their support to Henry, bearing platters of food and hearts full of care.

In all, I often remember my times with Libby. The passage of time has softened my memories, and I prefer to remember the positive side of our relationship.

Dance, Henry, DANCE!

One of my fondest memories of Henry, my sister Libby's eighty-year-old husband, is of him spontaneously jumping up and flitting gracefully about the living room like a Spanish dancer, a huge, confident smile on his face, his dark eyes staring intensely, his arms outstretched, his fingers fluttering, and his feet firmly imbedded in thin air. This was Henry at his best, giving full vent to his joy, wordlessly, yet with passionate expression. This was Henry when he was "feeling good."

It is 1999. Right now, Henry is lying in a hospital bed, unmoving, in intensive care after his second operation for colon cancer in two years. Two weeks earlier, my wife, Norma, and I visited Henry and my sister, Libby, in their Los Angeles home. I had brought along a few essays I had written about my father to check out some of the details with Libby. Henry sat in his usual place at the head of the living room table, now uncommunicative, gaunt enough to be unsettling, appearing totally self-absorbed. He seemed to be unaware as I read the essays aloud. After I had finished reading, he remained still, staring straight ahead, appearing detached.

Suddenly, in his unusual, throaty voice he said, "It's a great thing you did to write about your father that way." I nodded in acknowledgment. Then he said, "Would you like to hear a story about me?"

"Sure," I answered with genuine interest. I thought this was an especially meaningful question, considering the surgery he was going to face in two weeks.

My mind flashed on some of Henry's special qualities. At his best, Henry is a generous, caring man who loves his wife, Libby, his son Larry and his wife, Lisa, and their lovely daughters, Erin, seventeen, and Jillian, eight. As his closest family in California, Norma and I feel that he cares a great deal about us and this feeling is reciprocated. Henry is very artistic. Until recently he regularly painted fine pictures and made fantastic objects out of almost anything--wood, paper, plastic, metal, even clothespins, some of which grace an arch between the living and dining rooms of their home. He takes pleasure in showing and discussing his latest works. He loves classical music, listens intently to the fine stereo system he has built up over the years, and likes to talk about his latest musical disc which, when he is well, is inevitably playing when we arrive from Davis. He is seldom given to discourses about himself or his history, although from time to time he has described his experiences in

the U.S. Army during World War II, some frightful, and others of unusual interest.

One day he relented and told us a large part of his life story. “O.K., I was born in 1918, in a small town, Novalexandrashki, in Lithuania. My father, Samuel (*Shmuel*), contracted land in fruit-bearing orchards, harvested the fruit, for which he paid a fair price, and sold it in nearby villages. He made a reasonable living and was able to provide a good life for my mother, *Asna*, my one-year-old brother, Jack, and me, aged three. We lived in a nice home. We had a good life. Unfortunately, my father died of pneumonia when I was five. He was only twenty-eight and I think that if we had antibiotics then, he might have been saved. I remember that his body was laid out near the fireplace and I wanted to go over to talk to him. But my mother said, ‘Shhh, don’t disturb him. *Er shloft* (he is sleeping).’

“Much of our money was used for my father’s medical treatments and he left the family poor, but not penniless. My mother was very worried about our future. Because of our financial situation, it was decided that Jack would be taken to Toromont, Poland, to live with our Aunt *Haya*. I didn’t see him again until I went to live in Toromont several years later.

“Mother opened a bakery in the village of Novalexandrashki and worked there together with her mother-in-law. They didn’t get along well at all, so Mother sent me to my grandfather’s farm in Vizhigena, Poland, which allowed her to develop a business of buying fine fabrics in Lithuania and selling them in nearby villages in Poland. In 1927, she made friends with an American named Jaffee who was visiting her village. As they grew to know each other, they eventually made plans to fulfill one of my mother’s childhood dreams—to live in America. Although he was considerably older, in his sixties, they arranged to marry and use his passport for them to emigrate.

“A few years after they settled in the U.S., Jaffee died and left *Asna* with a bequest of \$37,000, in those days a small fortune. This gave her independence and the confidence to remarry. She innocently married a man whom she divorced about a year later when she found him and his friends playing pinochle in their home while she was at work. Apparently, this was a floating card game and she understood she had married a non-stop addict who had gambled much of their money away. In order to stay solvent, she got a job in a sweatshop as a seamstress making fashionable dresses.”

Henry went on, “When my mother went to America, she left me in the care of a butcher friend who owned a meat store and slaughterhouse. She promised that as soon as she could, she would send

money to bring me to America. The American Consulate in Warsaw informed her that immigration law would prevent me from traveling to America for five years. Only some time after she arrived in the States did she find out that this information was false.”

“The butcher,” to whom Henry referred with the same venom he reserved for the Nazis, “didn’t care a damn about me and treated me as if I was just one of the older workers. I was only eight years old and he put me to work in the barn, holding candles while he cut up animals after the *shochet* killed them.” (A *shochet* is a Rabbi who slaughters an animal according to Jewish law so that the meat will be kosher.) I worked from early morning till late at night. It was scary at night, and it was freezing cold in the winter. I really hated it there and spent my time dreaming of how I could leave.”

“It seems that you had to do whatever the butcher wanted,” I said.

“Yeah, he was tough. He kept me for the ‘ransom money’ that my mother agreed to pay when I finally left. I was really fed up, but I was lucky. Other members of my family lived nearby, at my grandfather’s farm. They got wind of what was happening and, after some time, my Uncle Irma let me know that someone would come for me and take me to the farm. In fact, my Uncle *Nachum*, my father’s brother, came one night and took me to the village, walking fourteen miles through the woods. He actually carried me on his shoulders most of the way.”

“He must have been a big, strapping guy to be able to do that,” I said.

“He sure was,” said Henry, “And I was really happy he was taking me.”

“So, how was life on the farm?” I asked.

“My *zaide* (grandfather), Laibe, treated me very well; he was precious. My *Bubbe* (grandmother) was also very nice to me and she made me feel right at home. The farm was in a tiny village with only three homes.”

“Why did they choose such an isolated place to live, in a small town, away from other members of the family and with no Jewish community?” I asked.

“My grandparents had a secret. They had a daughter who was a hermaphrodite and they were embarrassed by her condition.”

“That’s terrible,” I said. “What was she like?”

“She was the best,” Henry said. “She was very smart and very nice. But she lived in the shadows, away from everyone. She kept her face covered out of shame because she had a beard.”

After a long pause, Henry continued his story.

"I had one scary experience as soon as I got there. You know, I didn't have any papers. I was an illegal immigrant. Vizhigena is just across the Polish-Lithuanian border. Grandfather was afraid that the border police would catch me because I couldn't speak Polish. They patrolled the area and would have immediately returned me to Novalexandrashki. One day I was sitting on the outside toilet and saw them coming. I pulled up my pants, ran into the house, and hid on the top of the stove. They grilled my grandfather about who it was that they had seen running away. He didn't expose me. Rather, he told them that it was his son. They believed him, but to show that they meant business, the police beat his son to set an example. From then on I kept a sharp lookout. You know, his son is a little older than I am. Actually, he was my uncle. I still feel guilty that he took the rap for me. By the way, he emigrated to Israel.

"My grandfather grew potatoes and vegetables. He also had a thriving black market business selling whiskey to visitors to the farm and to people in nearby towns. He worked me very hard. I soon realized that the border police might have been even more vicious to my uncle were it not for the fact that my grandfather was always good for a touch of free whiskey."

"Well, what did you do with your time on the farm?", I asked.

"All I did for three months was dig potatoes with my bare hands and sack them; it felt like three years."

"You didn't have much *mazal* (luck) working with your grandfather," I said. "I imagine you didn't want to spend your life digging potatoes. After all, you didn't grow up on a farm."

"You got it. After three months of potatoes, all I wanted to do was leave. Also, I never forgot my brother, Jack, and wanted to find him. I knew that he lived with Aunt Haya in Turomont, about twelve miles away. Early one Sunday morning I left the farm and made it to Turomont that evening. I know it was a Sunday because I remember stopping at a church to get directions. Even though I had never been on my own before, I was happy to be leaving."

This adventure was no small undertaking for a boy who had never been away from home alone and who had no experience with the geography of the land he was traversing. It was even more complex because Turomont is in Poland, so Henry continued to face the problem of being an illegal alien in another country.

"When I reached Turomont, Aunt Haya welcomed me lovingly. Naturally, I wanted to see Jack immediately. He was only one year old when he was taken away to Turomont. Even though I didn't remember

him, I immediately picked him out of a crowd of children playing in the street in front of the bakery. Aunt Haya proudly showed me her bakery, which was beautiful and well known in the area. Since I didn't speak Polish and was an illegal alien, she kept me hidden in her house in back of the bakery.

"From then on, Jack and I stuck together, even though there was a big age difference. We spent a lot of time talking about our mother. He wanted to know all about her, where she was and what plans she was making to get us to America. Jack was so young when he was sent away that the thought of leaving Aunt Haya, who was really like a mother to him, really scared him."

"I can imagine that it was really a problem for Jack, although the thought of seeing his real mother again might have made it a little easier. What did you do while you were living in Turomont?", I asked.

"I helped Aunt Haya in every way I could. I learned street Polish quickly and then I was able to go to *cheder* (religious school) and to public school. I made friends with a lot of the kids and actually lived a pretty normal life."

One day Henry learned that "the butcher," as he called him, had gone to his grandfather's farm to find him. Apparently, he did this out of concern for Henry's welfare, but most likely because he was concerned about the "ransom money." He was not happy to hear that Henry had left and pressed his grandfather to learn where Henry had gone. Probably Henry's grandfather gave him enough information for him to plan to send his son to find Henry and to bring him back to his hometown.

"When did all this happen?", I asked.

"It was 1932. I was thirteen. We knew that we had to leave," said Henry. "My mother had sent money to Aunt Haya for our passage to America and Aunt Haya helped us to get passports. She was heartbroken that we were leaving her. Jack was like her own child and she always showed that she loved me from the day I arrived. When we were ready, Haya took us to the port of Gdina and watched as we walked up the gangplank. We were all in tears. We hated leaving her; she was so good to us."

Henry continued, "There was more. At the dock, a lady asked me to take care of her two small children who were also traveling alone to New York. She gave me a few dollars, more money than I had ever seen, and I agreed. Actually, it wasn't too difficult and, with the money, I was able to buy oranges on the boat, something we never had before.

"Still, we were a little nervous, and it wasn't until we reached New York that I breathed easily. 'Jack, there's Momma,' I shouted, pointing to a small woman standing on the dock and waving wildly.

Frightened, Jack said, ‘Are you sure? Let’s be careful. We don’t know anyone here.’ Once we were off the ship, we ran to her. I recognized her immediately. I couldn’t forget her. We were finally together.”

Telling the story had brought a light into Henry’s eyes. He seemed almost sprightly; he even ate some food for which he had had little appetite. As I watched him, I began to believe that there might come a time when we would get to see Henry dance again.

As it turned out, Henry’s surgery took place about two weeks earlier than scheduled and was successful. In fact, Henry returned home much earlier than expected. We had gotten air tickets in January so that we could be in L.A. with Libby during the surgery, originally scheduled for February 18th. We flew to L.A. on February 17th as planned, and spent two days trying to make ourselves useful. Norma had cooked some foods that she knew Henry loved—noodle kugel, meat loaf—in the hope that he would be tempted to eat more than had previously. While he was amazingly active the first night of the visit, subsequently Henry was very quiet, weak and withdrawn. Even the special foods Norma made were not sufficiently tempting to encourage him to increase his food intake.

Libby, who is not in good shape physically and is often in severe pain, has faithfully performed many of the functions that “her patient” would have received in a nursing home. It is not at all easy for her.

I spent some time talking with Henry, clearing up questions I had about what I had written. As we went over the material line by line, he suddenly stopped and, in a very heartfelt way said, “I appreciate Libby so much. Sometimes I think I don’t live up to her standards.”

We left for the airport feeling happy that Henry had survived the operation and with the hope that he would continue to improve.

Kotex

In October, 1970, the Rappaorts—Norma, Meryl, 16, Debra, 14 and Craig, 10—were “on the sabbatical road again,” this time for one year, in Bristol, England. With the generous assistance of my friend, Jake MacMillan, a distinguished Professor of Chemistry at the University of Bristol, and his family, we quickly rented a three-story Victorian house. Our children were enrolled in local schools, and I was working at the bench in his laboratory within a week of our arrival.

Almost immediately, we knew that we had truly left Davis. Apart from the change of accent, we had to come to terms with the marked differences in weather conditions: it was much colder and there was much more rainfall than in the Central Valley. I liked watching the weather news because, fairly regularly, the weather map was marked by arrows aimed at the British Isles from all directions of the compass.

Time was not a friend. The weather became progressively colder and wetter until, by December, we knew that we were ready for a change of climate. With advice from our friends, we decided to spend the last three weeks of December on a driving vacation in Spain and Portugal, noted for their warm climate.

We embarked on an ocean-going ferry at the port of Southampton and landed in Bilbao, Spain, after a bumpy ride. We recovered our car, went sight-seeing around the city for a day, and then left for Madrid.

This is not intended to be a story about the weather, but it became a dominant theme during our travels. In a record-breaking streak, the climate, instead of soothing our chilled bones, became progressively colder and not much different from what we were experiencing in England. Eventually, we bought some warm clothing for each of us, which made life more bearable. However, we still wanted to see “everything,” which meant that we were out sightseeing until we were unable to tolerate exposure to the very low temperatures.

Never one to complain, Debbie was, nevertheless, frequently tearful. Despite her new gloves, she experienced unusual pain in her “frozen fingers” which also began to peel, as if they had been frozen. This condition reminded us of a term in a Charles Dickens novel: “chilblains.” We felt sad and frustrated for Debbie, but couldn’t find a way to alleviate the pain. When, occasionally, it did warm up, her temperament did as well. Eventually, she recovered and, with this change, the subject of her hands disappeared from our conversations.

We continued our travels and arrived in Toledo late in the afternoon of Christmas Eve. We had to quickly find a place to stay for the night, but Norma told me that something else was happening that was even more important than finding a place to sleep. Meryl was suddenly reminded that it was her time of the month. It was getting dark and we began looking urgently for an open *farmacia*. After some time we found one and walked into a classic, dimly-lit drug store, with labeled urns standing around the perimeter of the smallish room, glass door cabinets revealing many containers of medications, chests with numerous drawers, and an uncluttered counter. Behind it stood a young lad, perhaps 16 years old.

“*Buenas noches*,” he said very politely. I responded in kind.

“*Puedo ayudarle?*” (*May I help you?*)

“Do you have pads for women?” I asked.

A soft smile, “*No comprendo, señor.*” (*I don’t understand*).

I tried again. “*Hay aqui sanitary napkins?*” (*Are there sanitary napkins here?*)

A blank stare. “*Lo siento. No comprendo, señor.*” (*I’m sorry, I don’t understand, sir.*)

We looked at each other in frustration, Meryl’s brow beginning to furrow. I wracked my brain, seeking a way to let him know what we needed.

Suddenly, inspiration was mine. I was transformed into a chivalrous Don Quixote. I drew myself up to my full 5’7” inches, my eyes burning with passion, and proclaimed in loud, stentorian tones,

“*Para la sangre de la mujer!*” *For the blood of a woman!*

Poor Sancho Panza! Suddenly, his face glowed red. His eyes bulged. He stood transfixed. Then, he turned on his heel and fled through an arch into a rear room.

He returned just as quickly . . . bearing a box of Kotex and a broad smile on his face.

Pepper

Craig, our 12-year-old son, was overjoyed. After years of resisting his pleas for a dog, Norma and I gave up the unwinnable battle. With our full understanding that Craig would probably fail to honor most of our care and feeding agreements, we visited the pound in search of an animal to adopt. We found an undistinguished brown and black puppy with soulful eyes relaxing on the floor of the cage, while others stood on their hind legs, shouting “Take me! Take me!” Not for her to stand up and beg us to select her; rather her eyes said it all: “See, I’m not a yappy mutt. I’m resigned to whatever comes next; if you’re interested, come and get me.” We got the message, and Pepper, as we were to call her, came home with us.

Our daughters, Meryl, 17, and Debra, 15, were equally delighted to have a dog, and Pepper became a dear family friend. The only Doubting Thomas in our home was me. I never thought I wanted a dog, having been raised by a mother who was very fearful of animals. I imagined being left with feeding, cleanup and walking the dog. But who listened to me? Soon, however, Pepper became an integral member of the family. Much to my surprise, she won my heart, just as she had won over the rest of the family.

Her favorite observation point was the one that afforded her the best view of all of the household activities. Pepper positioned herself in the entryway to the kitchen, but with one eye on the front door in anticipation of visitors and returning family. She was welcoming to all but one: the mailman, who would drive her to a frenzy long before he was within sight of our front door. He came up the walk with a thick pad draped protectively over his arm, should the beast attack him. Naturally, she was in the house and could not possibly do so. In any case, the mail was delivered through a slot in the door. But she would race through the kitchen and out the doggie-door into the fenced-in back yard, growling and barking ferociously all the way. Only his retreat down the street could return her to sanity. This was Pepper at her worst.

By contrast, when a family member or friend came in, Pepper offered low-level, happy squeals of welcome and “smoochie” licking. As a smoochie family, we understood her language, and our friends all loved her as well.

To prevent damage to a new carpet, she was under orders not to enter the living room. What’s a dog to do? She would lie in the doorway, chin on the floor, eyes a vision of anguish, begging to be allowed in. We always felt guilty when she put on her act. Gradually, sensing our

ambivalence, she made inch-long movements, slithering snake-like on her belly into the living room. She seemed to say, "See, I'm not *stepping* on the carpet." Little by little we relented; little by little she moved in. She eventually joined us in the living room as a full-fledged TV buff.

On the positive side, Pepper helped clean up around the house. She licked the soiled dishes clean and then supervised their transfer to the dishwasher. She carefully hid her bones so that we didn't have to worry about them. Such a thoughtful dog! On rainy mornings it was really helpful when she ran out to fetch the newspaper for us. Leftovers were never a problem; she was always ready to dispose of them for us.

She loved peanut butter. We would collapse laughing to see her with a lump of peanut butter on her tongue which moved in and out repeatedly until the peanut butter was gone.

She would gladly perform some tricks we taught her. For example, when we said "Shake!", she would sit on her haunches and extend her paw. When Craig attended UC Davis and played lacrosse, Pepper became the team's mascot, and Meryl made her an appropriate blue and gold jacket which she wore with pride. She patiently endured being dressed by Meryl and Debbie in other, more feminine, attire as well. We loved her with all our hearts; she was a sweet-natured, affectionate, intelligent creature, easy to live with, so undemanding.

Pepper lived for 17 years. She became increasingly feeble. In the end, she could do little more than lie about, refusing food and drink. One day a veterinarian friend came by and saw her lying flat on the floor. He took one look and said, "Give her some chicken soup."

"What?" we asked, simultaneously.

"Give her some chicken soup!"

This expression had special meaning for us. Brought up in Jewish homes, we knew from childhood on that chicken soup was the cure for many disorders. Whether it had curative powers or not, chicken soup was prescribed for most illnesses. Now we would see what it could do for Pepper. Norma placed a bowl of warm chicken soup near her nose. Pepper slowly lifted her head and took a few sniffs, then a few sips of the yellow elixir. Seemed good, so she had a bit more. Gradually, her head came off the floor and she slowly finished the bowl of soup. She was feeling slightly better for the next few days, sustained by numerous bowls of chicken soup, but her decline continued and soon she could hardly move at all.

Rather than let her suffer any longer, with great anguish we brought her to the veterinarian. We held her in our arms and watched tearfully as he put her to sleep. We left the lab, sick at heart, feeling that we had somehow betrayed her trust. The pain of that day lingers on.

We still talk about her, remembering her fondly. We never had another dog since.

How to Kill Your Mother-in-Law

In 1986, the six of us, Norma and myself, the newlyweds; our daughter, Debbie; her husband, David Kramer; and his sister Shirley and brother-in-law, Stan Henen, were out for a walk on the beautiful shores of the Indian Ocean at Queenstown, South Africa. The day was sunny and bright with a mild breeze.

We made our way down a winding path from the car park to the beach. Once there, we quickly decided on the easy choice: to walk along the shoreline rather than hike up and over the ridge to reach a beautiful beach populated by lovely birds. David explained that we would have had a tough time had we decided to take this option later because of the incoming tides. However, now, at about 3:00 p.m., he assured us there would be no problem.

We set off walking through the surf at a moderate pace, discussing the events of our day but preoccupied with examining the gorgeous scenery above us, the unbelievably clean beach beneath our feet and the beauty and clarity of the ocean with its gentle waves washing on to the shore. The beach was narrow, as it abutted the vertical stone face of the ridge. We felt no concern as we made our way casually, the soft white sand yielding with each step. As we rounded a bend, we saw an increasing number of large, loose rocks and boulders that clearly had fallen from the stone face, eroded by many years of pounding by the incoming tides.

David, a native of South Africa, thoroughly familiar with the land, the ocean and the jungles, instilled confidence as he led the way. As we continued for about fifteen minutes, we gradually became aware that the beach seemed to be diminishing in size. We looked back and saw that the tide, in fact, had begun to come in rather more rapidly than expected. Consequently, we picked up our pace because, as David and Stan explained it, to go back was to meet more water than we would be able to traverse. Better to increase our pace to get past this part, which had not yet begun to look threatening.

We soon realized that the tide had begun to come in much faster than expected. Water was soon lapping at our feet. We finally accepted that we could no longer deny reality—we were in trouble and there was only one option open to us: We would have to make our way by climbing along the rock face.

David, part cat and physically powerful, wearing his inevitable “Zoris” (a kind of sandal), began to climb the wall slowly, showing us

each of the tiny ledges and indentations on which to step as we joined him in scaling the rock face.

Most of us were far from qualified for the work ahead. Shirley and Stan, confident climbers, soon moved ahead of the party and disappeared behind a curved part of the wall.

Accomplished as she is in many matters, Norma's last choice for an occupation would have been mountain climber. Rather, give her a gently undulate path through a garden or quiet woods and she exudes happiness. I was physically in better shape than she, but as I thought of the scary option before me, I realized once again that I had married a very wise woman. I was most impressed with her determination and unrelenting focus. I thought, "She's amazing! Well, what other choice do we have?" After all, people have been known to freeze under such frightening circumstances.

We followed David with an energy that could only come from our growing fear. Debbie is naturally agile and graceful—a dancer, not a mountain goat. Later, she admitted that she was struck with fear, but concluded that if her Mom could do it, so could she.

David, who both before and after his recent marriage repeatedly claimed to like his new mother-in-law, bounded about the rock like a billy goat, constantly pointing exactly where to place each foot. There was no doubt . . . he really loved his mother-in-law. Moreover, while I didn't discuss this with him, I imagined he was feeling the weight of his decision to take the shorter option. It would have been unseemly if he had contributed to the demise of his brand-new mother-in-law! As the tide rose, so did we. Some twelve feet (??) below, the incoming waters crashed against the cliff, falling back to reveal large rocks and boulders, a constant reminder that we had to watch each step in order to make it down safely.

I don't know exactly how long it took us to traverse this unexpected path. As the old cliché goes, "It may have been minutes, but it seemed like hours." Probably we climbed for about three-quarters of an hour.

As the tide began to recede, so did we, moving down slowly, carefully, and soon, unbelievably, we were on sand again, everyone shouting "Congratulations!" and shaking hands.

The natural scene was idyllic—a beautiful vista, as David promised. Birds of many hues walked or flew about. The water was now quiet as if to belie what we had just been through.

We walked about, looking at tiny animals and wonderful flowering plants while discussing our experience, revealing our innermost thoughts and feelings.

Eventually, the conversation ended, but we still recall our experience with wonder from time to time.

Yes, even fifteen years later!

Not for the Faint-Hearted

I sat in the small bus making our way through the dense forest, alternately elated and apprehensive about having signed on to take the “Canopy Trail” tour during a vacation in Guanacaste, Costa Rica. I watched in awe as we penetrated the wonderful forest with its huge population of plant species, more than in all North America. I was reminded of the ongoing battles between logging companies and conservationists over preservation of old growth redwoods along the coast and elsewhere in California. Now we were seeing huge *Guanacasta* trees extending forever, it seemed, into the sky. I marveled at how justly proud the Costa Rican people are of the efforts their country has made to preserve native trees, the land and the waterways. They have learned that this strong ecological commitment has attracted tourists and helped create a very stable society.

I tried to imagine how it would be to take the Canopy Trail through the forest. This was no ordinary trail, we were told, one I had never imagined existed, and certainly one I had never imagined traversing. Thus, when the opportunity was offered, I immediately agreed and, along with five other “crazy trail riders” set off in the bus, leaving the more sensible members of our tour behind to anticipate the condition of our bodies when we returned. (Accompanying us were friends and relatives of participants, including Norma, ostensibly there to enjoy the scenery and take photos, but hiding the thought that they were there to claim the bodies.) We were taken to what was billed as the Butterfly Farm, which turned out to be a tent with some beautiful blue morphos butterflies, and little more; it was adjacent to the “jump-off” site at the start of the Canopy Trail. We entered a make-shift elevator and slowly rose to the launch platform.

I was happy that Norma was available to photograph the lunacy that was to take place on the trail that day. My concerns grew as we were lined up by two attendants who spoke little English. At the staging area, they helped each of us into a heavy harness that consisted of straps wound around the waist and between our legs, leaving a single 3-foot strap extension with a pulley-type fitting at its end. The tip of the cord extension was placed in our hands. “Vamanos, let’s go,” they ordered. Dutifully, we moved forward, walking like a chain gang to the electric chair. I thought about an appropriate dirge to mark the occasion.

We arrived at a platform that was attached tightly near the top of one of the huge trees and upon which we all stepped gingerly. I was shaken when I looked down into the valley beneath our feet, and

instinctively reached for the tree trunk. A cable was strung on a fifteen degree incline from our platform to the next platform which was supported similarly on a tree about three hundred feet away. I judged the platforms were between 100 and 150 ft. above the ground. We were not far from the top!

We had a chance to see “the trail” when one of the attendants hooked his harness on to the cable and took off, swinging wildly as he glided fiendishly to the next platform. When my turn came I followed his instructions explicitly. I helped the attendant hook my extension strap and pulley onto the cable. Next, I stepped off the platform and “sat” (in the air), legs crossed and raised slightly, my head tilted to the left and my right hand holding on to the cable behind my head. By squeezing the cable, I was told, I could reduce the speed of the glide. The flight looked exciting, but nothing they told me so far erased my fear.

As the station attendant released the cable, I leaned forward and screamed loudly as I took off and sped down the cable. I flashed on a memory of how I felt as we raced down the Steeple Chase Roller Coaster at Coney Island to the next platform. On arrival, I was thankfully “captured” by the first attendant who helped me lift off the cable and onto another one for the next leg of the trail. I was encouraged to “hear” that most of us reacted in the same way. Needless to say, the screams had to do with the excitement and thrill of the ride, and maybe more than a little fear. When all had completed the glide from one platform to the next, we went through the same process until we had traversed seven more cables.

After we had gained a little confidence on the early legs of the trail, one of the women in our group decided that she could do what the attendants were doing as they took their turns—fling herself about upside down or, let go and glide down the cable like Superman, arms and legs outstretched and flapping in the wind. She seemed immensely elated when she stopped at the next station.

At the 7th stage, I mustered what courage I had left and suddenly, I, too, was Superman. On leaving the platform, I let go of the cable and leaned forward with my limbs outstretched. It was a 1,200 ft. run and it was glorious. To “enhance” the quality of the ride, the attendants on either end of the cable started to pump the cable up and down. I whooped all the louder!

The other more sensible members of our group didn’t volunteer for this extracurricular activity. Halfway through, we were given the option to quit, but we spontaneously refused with a loud, “No way!” We were surprised to learn that it took the six of us over an hour to complete the challenge.

What about the “canopy” part of the trail? By slowing down during the descent, in the distance we could see brown blobs we were told were monkeys. We passed an astonishing array of foliage and flowers and thrilled to see amazing, colorful, flowering trees, and the unforgettable view of the dense forest seen from above.

From the ground I saw trees in flower, but only from the heights we attained on the cable could I see branches and flowers close-up. We could almost touch them. Beautiful!

Finally, we landed and dismounted from our harness steeds, took endless deep breaths and proudly—thankfully—told our stories.

Altogether this was a most exhilarating and interesting experience, but not one for the fainthearted.

San Diego

In 2001, our *chavura*¹ shared a guided tour through northern Mexico, which turned out to be one of our most interesting experiences. While we expected to discover wonderful places, and we did, for me the most notable centered on our relations with the Tarahumara Indians who populate that area and, as it turned out, with our guide, Diego.

Our first “real” introduction to Diego took place at lunch soon after we met him for the first time. As we finished our stand-up lunch, prepared by Doug, our tall, taciturn guide and several volunteers in our party, I wondered how we would manage to distribute the remaining food to the some twenty-five Tarahumara Indian children who had gathered about us, waiting patiently, quietly, obviously wondering if there would be enough left for each to get something to eat.

“Do you think you’ll be able to eat with a bunch of kids watching you?” Doug asked. Indeed it was highly unusual and uncomfortable to feel surrounded by a “crowd of human vultures.”

“We’ll be O.K.,” we responded, assuring him that we understood and appreciated his motives. Thankfully, when we had finished eating, Doug chose not to “let ’em at it,” as someone suggested, but methodically prepared and randomly distributed half-rolls topped with slivers of cheese, tomato, cucumber and onion.

By what system Doug chose to pass out the food was undecipherable to me. Later he said that he had based it on his opinion that those first fed (the smaller children) would not have likely been able to compete for the food. When the supply began to dwindle, accompanied by apprehensive expressions on the faces of those still waiting, he divided the rolls and the toppings once again, and the children gratefully accepted, walked away with a slight smile and ate silently with gusto. I was moved by the sensitivity he displayed and how thoughtfully he had managed to distribute the food.

As we continued our six-hour return trip from 1,700 ft., near the bottom of Copper Canyon, to 7,700 ft. at Creel, I thought about Doug, who was not exactly “your typical guide,” at least when compared to others we had experienced on previous tours. He was enigmatic, very soft-spoken (a problem for those with a hearing deficiency), indecisive, and rather colorless in his presentations. I guessed he was a product of the ’sixties, frequently asking democratically, “What do you want to do?” rather than following a comprehensive plan and explaining the material assertively. His hesitancy often led me to question whether he was up to the job. He was not too well-informed about the land, the flora

and fauna and, indeed, Mexican history and the history of the area. Instead of in-depth conversation, Doug distributed leaflets containing basic information but unaccompanied by discussion of personal or general experiences and, in general, detailed information which would have been provided by typical guides at every opportunity.

During the wonderful train ride overlooking the canyon from Fuerte, in the state of Sinaloa, to Creel in Chihuahua, he revealed that his travel agency offered him the job as guide without much of an interview because he had been a frequent visitor to the Copper Canyon region and had developed an abiding interest in the Tarahumara Indians whose history, unusual customs and rituals had intrigued him.

Indeed, when we visited their villages, his persona changed visibly, and he revealed a side that could have been duplicated by few other people. As we walked the path to one settlement, he spoke animatedly and with intense appreciation of their culture and spiritual values, information he had obtained mainly from his own experience with them. He told us that Tarahumara means, "the light-footed ones," and light-footed they are. Many of the men can run 100 or 200 miles, stopping only when absolutely necessary, and have competed brilliantly in international races. Doug said that they are able to run this way, fueled only by a drink called "cobiso," made from ground-up dried ears of dried corn. An experienced hiker and climber, he had tried to keep up with them, running on the trails along the steep canyons, but they quickly outdistanced him. Exhausted, he pestered them for cobiso until, eventually, they gave him some. He said he started out limp with fatigue for about 100 yards, and then experienced a mighty burst of energy and was able to run rapidly for an extended period of time, unlike any previous experience he had ever had.

The women are also very athletic. Teams play a fast-running game with two linked hoops, each about 6 inches in diameter, which are flung with a 5-foot stick. Two women, both barefoot, one 6 or 7 months pregnant, demonstrated the race running back and forth on a rocky dirt road. Men play a similar game, except it involves kicking a perfectly round wooden ball up and down the road with their toes—no hands.

Doug described their life with concern, the sad story of a nation that was second in size only to the Navahos in North America. The Spaniards forced them off their good agricultural land in the western plains of Sinaloa into the mountains, where the land is relatively poor for agriculture. They developed small agricultural communities near the churches established by the Spaniards, but many of them retreated into the canyons, where they became mainly hunter-gatherers, living in equilibrium with the land and the environment. The Indians incorporated

Catholicism selectively into their own rituals. In their hunt for gold and silver, the Spaniards enslaved them, worked them on their haciendas, worked them in the silver mines and forced them to purify the silver using mercury or cyanide, both of them deadly. Even after the Spaniards left, commercial interests continued to force the Indians ever more deeply into the mountainous recesses and down into the precipitous valleys. Doug pointed out the caves in which many of them live as well as the meager cabins they have built in communal villages.

Before the Spaniards arrived, the main musical instruments the Tarahumaras played were rattles, drums, which are very popular to this day, and the chapareque, an instrument with two strings made from animal gut stretched along a three-foot long branch. Appreciating the wide range of the violin, the Indians quickly took to playing it. Most surprisingly, despite an absence of tools, they started to build their own violins, using pocketknives, bits of broken glass, and hand-made tools. One of Doug's major contributions to their welfare is his ongoing mission to provide them with tools and to encourage others to bring them for the Tarahumaras. When preparing for our trip, he asked us to bring our excess tools along, especially chisels, to give to them.

As we walked along a path we came to the cave of one of the violinmakers who met us, violin in hand. Doug explained the local history of the violin and what it takes to construct one under their stringent living conditions. As he did, Doug brimmed with enthusiasm; we sensed that he was in his element and that here was a man who had a calling and we were there to witness it. Then the violinist played creditably on his homemade instrument. The quality was good, according to Jane, our resident musician. She was impressed, considering the limited facilities available for building a violin.

In his encounter with the violinist, and with other Indians whom he met, we observed that Doug shrank down to their height as he talked to them, he claims, in "broken" Tarahumara. These Indians are exceedingly unexpressive; they do not look at you, do not smile, nor even nod a welcome. Nor was there any indication of "thanks" when Doug and Tom handed them the tools they had brought along to give them. While they did not throw their arms about each other, Doug's approach to the violinist was repeated many times during our walks among the Tarahumara. Wherever we walked it became evident that he knew the Indians along the trails and would go out of his way to stop and talk with them. Even when they did not know him, mention of his name would immediately draw a crowd of appreciative people.

I saw that a story Doug sheepishly told us on the train had to be true. In discussing his relationship to the Indians, he said, "The

Tarahumara don't understand the name 'Doug,' so I said, 'call me Diego.'" Later, he learned that his generosity and thoughtfulness in supporting their efforts was rewarded with an additional name change.

"Sometimes they call me 'San Diego,'" he said with a slight blush, dissolving into a proud look on his face. From our observations, he richly deserved that name.

Anxious for us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role dance plays in their religious ritual, Doug arranged to have Indian dances for us.

"They dance as a form of prayer," he said. We watched them perform the "Deer" and the "Elk," reminiscent of the Native American dances we had seen in the U.S. How important dancing is in the Indian culture was expressed in a story he told of an interaction between a Tarahumara Indian and a priest.

"Have you something to confess, my son?"

"No, Father."

"Nothing?"

A bit hesitant now, the native repeated, "Nothing." But then, after further thought, he said, "I have only one thing to confess. Maybe I didn't dance enough."

Doug's view of the future of the Tarahumara is not optimistic. The completion of the railroad tracks between Fuerte and Chihuahua, which took a total of 100 years, exposed the valleys and the canyon area to commercial and lumber interests. A road paralleling the railroad tracks is being pushed east through the extremely difficult terrain between Divisadero and Fuerte. When it is finished, he told us the canyon area will be more accessible. As a result, the living conditions of the Indians, now poorly represented by advocates and easily manipulated by lawyers for various interests, will suffer even more. If their land has been stolen as in the past, if they have serious health problems, a growing problem with alcohol and a living-on-the-edge economy at present, the future appears unremittingly bleak at this time.

Doug's personal involvement proved to be infectious. I sensed that our group was left with a feeling of appreciation and sadness for the indigenous people of the Copper Canyon. By the time we had reached Chihuahua, the last overnight stop in Mexico, I had formed a close relationship with Doug. Despite his limitations as a guide, I had come to realize that we were in the presence of a very unusual, especially caring, human being, appropriately named San Diego.

¹A chavura is a group of friends which meets regularly for dinner, discussion and friendship.

Gotcha!

Our family's travels have always been exciting, not only because we have seen wonderful sights, but also because of the surprises we experienced as we made our way through cities around the world.

With that introduction, I should be starting off with a detailed description of the wonderful sights in San Diego, Florence, London, Marrakech, Budapest and other cultural centers we have visited; but I won't. Instead, I will focus on another aspect of our travels which will soon bring tears to your eyes.

Have you ever been pick-pocketed? How many times? This story is about two victims who by now have an international reputation as "suckers" who repeated the same mistakes in all those wonderful cities. And you may remember that old saying: "Never give a sucker an even break!"

Norma's first experience with pick-pocketing occurred while I was on sabbatical leave in San Diego in 1986. Her wallet was stolen from a zippered purse in the women's locker room at a gym while she was changing her clothes. Devastated, she gave up exercise for several years, but it didn't resurrect the purse.

The second time Norma was pick-pocketed, we were on sabbatical leave in London in 1994 and she was *saving* money by shopping during the annual sale at Harrods, London's famous, posh and hugely expensive department store. For this sale, the accommodating management had cleared a giant dressing room (except for salespeople, racks for "trial clothing" and large mirrors). Norma squeezed into this room, no doubt elbowing aside two or three rivals, and began the tedious process of "on again-off again," constantly mindful of her purse which was firmly wedged between her feet. Eventually, she found "the dress" and reached for her purse which somehow seemed lighter than the one she brought in. Surprise! In the time it took to pull a dress over her head, the bag was opened, her wallet was stolen and her purse was returned to the floor where she was standing! "How could that have happened?" she whimpered . . . the pitiful complaint of the unfortunate victim.

She reported the theft to a salesperson who said, "I suggest you go to the Security Office on the second level." Norma's mournful query, "How will that help me?" was answered by a GO THERE! look in the salesperson's eyes.

She escalated down the two flights to the office and, as she approached a desk, the security officer asked, "Are you Mrs. Rappaport?" Her mouth agape, Norma nearly shouted, "How do you

know?" "Well," answered the clerk, "we have recovered your wallet from a dust bin." Unfortunately, all the cash was gone, but the credit cards were left. This time.

Black and blue, Norma returned home to receive consolation (absolution?) from her sympathetic husband. Norma's famous last words: "I'll never do that again!"

Next Scene: Sightseeing in a busy market in Marrakech in 1999, Norma had hidden her small money purse in a very deep pocket in her skirt. As she wandered about . . . well, you know the drill: poof—the purse was gone! Once again . . . tears! That's it for Marrakech!

Everyone loves Florence, but Norma has sworn never to return. After a wonderful week of sightseeing, we walked about the markets, the streets crowded with shoppers, as we bought some goodies to bring home for the kiddies.

When we returned to our hotel, Norma, rooting around in the bottom of her purse, announced tearfully, "They got it again." Her wallet had been stolen.

Sympathy doesn't help much in times like these. The purse contained a credit card. When we reported the theft to Visa, they told us that about \$5,000 dollars worth of leather goods had been purchased with our credit card! Luckily, Visa covered the theft and we were not liable.

Determined never to be pick-pocketed again, on our October 2008 trip to Central Europe, Norma avoided carrying a purse entirely and left me to safeguard the cash. Big mistake!

On our first day in Budapest, we left our small cruise ship, the *River Adagio*, and began a very interesting bus tour of the city. In preparation, we hid the bulk of our cash in the hotel safe (smart move). I placed my wallet in a zippered fanny pack fastened around my waist, the closed zipper in plain sight so that I would be able to see and feel any one trying to take it. The wallet contained a small amount of money and two credit cards as well as an assortment of family photos.

One of the first stops was a visit to "Heroes Square," a monument to those who fought in the 1956 War of Independence which forced the rout of the Soviet occupation army. Camera in hand, I walked about seeking good photo opportunities that I would happily show when I returned home. The Square was lightly occupied by tourists, most of them gathered in front of the widely distributed statues and memorials. I don't remember being in a crowded situation suitable for a pick-pocket's dirty work. I returned to the bus, happy with the images I had caught. Later, I happened to look down at my fanny pack and noticed that the zipper was open.

“Strange,” I thought. Then I looked for my wallet. No wallet! I searched “all the usual places” and finally accepted that I had been pick-pocketed. I couldn’t figure out how this could have happened at Heroes Square. I did look about as I took my photos and likely was distracted momentarily—time enough to fall victim to a professional who was expert at his craft.

At last, Norma was not alone. I had learned nothing from my experienced teacher. We called Master Charge (no charges), checked our resources once more and thought about other ways to store our valuables.

I placed my remaining “treasure” in a shirt with two vertical pockets with zippers, then pulled on a sweater followed by a jacket. Although I felt like I was wearing a suit of mail, it worked. We experienced no more thefts on this trip.

Back on our ship, the Program Director told us that pick-pocketing was endemic in the Central European countries.

“You may think that you own your pockets, but they do!” In addition, he told us that out of 20 cruises on which he had served, only two ended without a pickpocket experience.

One of our newfound friends on the tour actually caught a man’s hand in his pocket on the crowded Metro train in Prague. Kind soul that he is, he refrained from rendering the fellow’s fingers inoperable. “I didn’t do anything,” said the thug, “I was just getting off,” as he slithered away.

The bottom line is: we hate what pick-pockets do to us. It may seem too strong to say we felt violated, self-doubting and stupid. Despite the agony, there was also ecstasy. The cruise was excellent and what we saw and heard from the wonderful guides was fascinating.

Advice from the experienced: We would advise anyone planning a trip to leave all your valuables at home or in the hotel safe. The necessities should be sequestered under layers of clothing equipped with lots of Velcro and zippers! It may also pay to offer up a prayer to the gods, who know all the tricks of the trade.

Will You Marry Us?

“Will you marry us?” Robin asked.

I faced Craig, my son, and his fiancée, Robin Rafferty, with what must have been the most dumbstruck look either of them had ever witnessed. I didn’t say, “Are you kidding?” But my face must have said that, plus, “Who, me?” and “How could I do that?” As I look back, I wish I could have immediately answered, “Great, I’d love to. What an honor to be asked.” Instead, I remained silent for a long moment, long enough for them both to sense some doubt beyond the immediate surprise I was experiencing.

“Well, you really don’t have to. We’ll understand if you feel uncomfortable about doing it,” Craig said. I answered genuinely, “Oh! I feel *so* honored,” but didn’t answer the question.

I believe they took this answer to mean that I needed some time to recover and to assess whether I felt I could actually perform the ceremony. If so, they were partly right. I was immediately beset with the doubt that I sometimes experience when faced with a new challenge. They explained that they wanted a very personal ceremony, performed by someone well-acquainted with them. Moreover, they wanted me, as a representative of a long-committed relationship who could model a marriage that had weathered storms and survived. Since they had already rejected a formal religious service, I understood that putting together a ceremony appropriate to their wishes would certainly be a great challenge.

I really liked Robin, and felt that she was the woman my then-36-year-old son “should” marry. She obviously loved him. She seemed mature, strong, intelligent and sensitive, and I sensed that she would be able to deal with Craig in an adult and thoughtful manner. In fact, sometime later, when he was acting up during dinner, she gave him a baleful look and said, in her Southern California drawl, “It looks like when we get home tonight it will be time for a little domestic correction.” It was funny, but Norma and I understood that she had what it would take to deal with our strong-willed son.

Another issue that surfaced quicker than I might have expected contributed to my reaction when they asked me to perform the ceremony. While I am a largely secular Jew, I nevertheless have a strong sense of community and our history that caused me to raise questions about whether I would be comfortable officiating at a ceremony between my son and a non-Jewish woman.

Norma was very helpful during this period of self-questioning, although I did not arrive at a satisfying answer. Eventually, I made an appointment with Greg Wolfe, Rabbi of Congregation Bet-Haverim in Davis. He is a pleasant, good-humored, happily married man who has a wonderful family and is very committed to his faith. At the time, he was new to the congregation, and I sought him out without really knowing him. He listened as I explained my conundrum.

When I was through, he answered quietly and sincerely: "I understand your concerns, but I feel that this is about family and connectedness. I believe that if you do this, you will make Craig and Robin very happy."

We talked further about the issues, but by then, with relief, I had made up my mind and was feeling very positive about my role. He graciously gave me some model ceremonies and books to use to create the ceremony for Robin and Craig. That night I spoke with them about my decision, and they were obviously pleased that we would be going ahead. The next question that many people asked, as did I, was, "How are you able to perform a marriage? Do you have authorization?" Of course, they had the answer before they asked me to do it. When the time came, I visited the Alameda County Clerk's Office and was sworn in as an officiate for one day, allowing me to perform the marriage ceremony for Craig and Robin on June 1, 1996.

The night before the wedding ceremony was to take place, Norma and I drove to Emeryville to provide help, if needed, and so that we could attend an honorary dinner, hosted by Robin's brother, Phil, at a lovely restaurant in Oakland. Several months earlier, at a beautiful brunch served in Fullerton, Robin's home town, we had met her mother, Joyce, her very lively 86-year-old grandma, Cathie, three brothers, Phil, David and Jon, and sisters, Kim and Julie, as well as other members of her extended family. They are close to one another and meet regularly for family picnics and celebrations. Each year at Christmas, they have a "Make-It Party;" each family member secretly drawing the name of a relative for whom they must make something original and appropriate.

The dinner was a very warm experience. There was much "getting-to-know-you" talk by those who could, while less outgoing people waited to be introduced. Our own extended family has shrunk and, to some extent, dispersed to the four corners of this nation. Nevertheless, we did our best to be loud enough to be heard. In all, it was a festive and sedate event until, preceded by some appropriate toasts to the bride and groom, my turn came to offer comments, which I directed mainly to Robin's family.

“I’ve been thinking about nice, appropriate things to say to you this evening. But I realize that all I can do now is to tell you in no uncertain terms that I am embarrassed to know you.” A puzzled look played on their faces, but not for long. “Having met Robin and knowing how capable she is, I thought I’d meet some intelligent people here who had some understanding of human nature. Now that I’ve heard some of your comments, I am aware of the fact that you have befriended my son Craig and that you actually seem to like him! How could you like him? What is the matter with you people?!!” I allowed that to sink in, and then said, “I’ve lost all respect for you, and all I can say is our good fortune is your loss.”

Once the “truth” had emerged, they joined in, punctuating the moment with loud laughter and applause, and a few irreverent retorts. I quit while I was ahead, but only after saying how happy we were to see Robin and Craig together, preparing to be married into such a warm and loving family.

Following some “appropriate comments” by members of both families, the dinner ended and Norma and I returned to sleep in our hotel room in Emeryville.

The next morning we awoke and dressed in our finery. I wore an olive green suit, a tan shirt, and a beautiful tie that Norma had bought for me for the occasion—maroon with an olive green and gold design. Norma was splendid in a pale sea-blue chiffon dress and looked the part of the very happy mother and mother-in-law-to-be. Properly primed, we went downstairs early, thinking we could be available if any last-minute issues arose.

After sitting a while, I decided to go out to the car to retrieve a present that Craig and Robin had given us. I got up, walked briskly toward the extensive glass door, which appeared to be open . . . and hit it hard, nose first! The force of the blow was so great that it nearly knocked me down. I staggered away, my nose swelling rapidly, bleeding profusely. I was in shock. Norma, the hotel manager and others on the staff immediately came to help. They moved me to a secluded sofa and helped me lie down. They applied cold compresses and called the Para-Meds. As the ambulance arrived, I questioned my ability to make it to the wedding on time. It was now just two hours away, and the situation was ominous. Gradually, I recovered my senses, if not my sense of humor, and while receiving repeated cold compresses on my nose, I looked about in bewilderment. The bleeding eventually stopped, permanently, I hoped. I took the time to wonder whether the front of my suit was now actually matching the maroon tie and, if so, what I would do about it. Fortunately, no “material” damage had occurred.

Then we noticed Robin and her entourage entering the lobby, happily sauntering by, just out of the beauty parlor and acting as if they were going to a wedding. We were glad they didn't see us, because we didn't want to dampen their happy mood. I could imagine the look on her face had she seen me with twin streams of blood streaming from my nose.

Eventually, rather than the sling I imagined I would be carrying as I performed the ceremony, an innocuous Band-Aid was stretched across the bridge of my nose. When we arrived in Oakland at the stunning rose garden where the ceremony was to take place, I was feeling well enough to greet people and to get ready for the "big show." I spent a little time wondering how badly I would be messing up the beautiful photographs of the happily "marrieds."

I Now Pronounce You . . .

Our excitement was building as we left the hotel and drove to Morcom Rose Gardens in Oakland. I promised myself that there would be no more bloody noses that day. By the way, my nose, now bridged with a genteel Band-Aid, began to recede in importance. In response to the occasional question or wise remark about it, I answered simply, "Oh, it was nothing."

In fact, the closer we approached the garden, the more I was able to focus on what was now becoming a reality. Surprisingly, after the two months of agonizing about whether I could perform the ceremony, and more time studying books on marriage ceremonies, e-mailing back and forth with Craig and Robin, talking with friends, and counseling with Rabbi Wolfe who had helped me to select sayings that would have universal meaning, I was feeling almost confident that I could perform the ceremony, if a bit apprehensive. I couldn't help reviewing the formalities of seeking and qualifying for permission to perform the ceremony: Was I *really* qualified to do it? Would I do everything "right"? What could possibly go wrong? And, could I fix it? Much of what happened that afternoon followed prior consultation with Robin and Craig. Above all, I wanted to make them feel happy and satisfied.

My qualms began to dissipate as I entered the garden. It was Sunday, June 1, 1996, a perfect, sunny day; the roses were prolific, beautiful and wonderfully aromatic. A large crowd of family and friends had gathered expectantly in the seats near the entrance to the small open-air amphitheater, while others stood at the periphery, presumably to avoid the warm sun.

I took my place under an arbor decorated with a beautiful vine. A trio played music from "The Four Seasons" as the colorful

entourage—Megan and Kelly, Robin’s nieces, the flower girls, Dan Aguilar, the best man, and my grandson, Joel, the ring bearer, with David Rappaport in tow—marched in proudly and gathered round. Finally, looking dazzling, Robin and Craig entered the amphitheatre and stood before me.

Neither had been married before. They had met while working closely at the same company for two years. Craig was 33 and Robin was a year younger. Perhaps fearful of jumping in too fast, they had taken time to realize how much they cared for one another as their friendship evolved into romance.

I started the ceremony by thanking them for the wonderful gift they had given by inviting me to perform the ceremony. I spoke from my experience with them when I expressed my appreciation for the thoughtful, mature way in which their relationship had evolved: “by taking time to know one another well and, in so doing, learning to treasure each other.”

“Volumes have been written about what makes a happy, loving and lasting marriage. They speak of trust, mutual support, gentleness, compromise, flexibility, issues of respect for individual identities, respect for their space and acknowledgement of their opinions, even in the midst of intense confrontation.”

However, it isn’t always easy. Using the words of Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet, I illustrated the difficulty of growing symbiotically while maintaining individual identity:

*In love,
All of life’s contradictions
Dissolve and disappear.
Only in love are
Unity and Duality
Not in Contact*

After a poignant poem by Kahlil Gibran on the same subject, I included the practical wisdom of Ogden Nash:

*To keep your marriage brimming
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you’re wrong, admit it.
Whenever you’re right, shut up.*

“We see your growth, your resilience, and your deep love for one another that will help you transcend the inevitable difficulties that life presents. It gives us all enormous confidence that this union is based on solid ground and will flourish.”

To sanctify the occasion, Craig and Robin followed a traditional custom in Jewish weddings: they drank from a cup of sweet wine which

“has the double meaning of wishing you a sweet life and also that married life halves bitterness, doubles sweetness.”

It is interesting now to read what I had assembled more than nine years ago to describe Craig and Robin’s relationship and to attempt to predict how life might be with them. Happily, much that transpired since their wedding is consistent with the predictions. Slipped in among more serious statements, I had the temerity to state that: “Even Gracie and Cleo, each a pampered “only cat” before you came together as a couple, have managed to bury their differences sufficiently to support your relationship.” (Regrettably, they are both dead now).

On a more poetic level, I quoted the Bal Shem Tov, the spiritual founder of Hasidism, on the unity of marriage:

From every human being there arises a light that reaches straight to heaven.

And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other,

Their streams of light flow together, and a single brighter light goes forth

from their united being.

“Robin and Craig, everyone here sees the light that radiates from each of you today and we know that as you draw together in marriage, your combined light will glow ever brighter.”

There were additional blessings and then it was time for vows, rings and the necessary legalities.

Robin and Craig made identical commitments to one another:

“I will base my life with you on love and caring. I will be considerate of your wishes and desires, and respect your integrity and intentions. I will support your dreams and goals, and strive to keep our lives well-acquainted with laughter and joy. Where there are troubles, I will stand with you—where there are storms, we will weather them together.

“I, Robin, bring to you, Craig, the best person I can be, now and forever.”

“I, Craig, bring to you, Robin, the best person I can be, now and forever.”

They exchanged the rings that Dan Aguilar, the best man, handed to them.

I said, “Robin and Craig, please repeat after me:”

“I give you this sign of my love, knowing that love is precious, fragile and strong. I give you this sign of our love, an ever-present symbol of the vows we have made here this day. I give you this ring as I give you my love.”

“According to Jewish custom,” I said, “Craig will smash a wine glass with his foot to mark the moment of marriage. The breaking of the glass signals the end of the ceremony and a chance for all of us to express our joy at this happy occasion by shouting *Mazal-Tov!*” (Good luck!).

“Craig and Robin, now that you have joined yourselves in solemn matrimony, may you strive all the rest of your lives to keep this commitment vital, with the same love you possess at this very moment.”

“By virtue of the authority vested in me as Commissioner of Civil Marriages of the State of California and for the County of Alameda, I now pronounce you husband and wife.”

“Break the glass!”

Mazal Tov! The musical trio struck up “Till There Was You,” as the newlyweds joyously led the way out of the amphitheater.

Later, at a wonderful dinner-dance in celebration of the wedding, Robin and Craig thanked me repeatedly for my efforts. But seeing the warmth in their eyes was sufficient to have made it all worthwhile.

Eight Lights For Eight Nights

As children, my sister Libby and I looked forward with anticipation to the first night of Hannukah. We lit a candle or two but, considering my parents' disinterest in religious expression, neither prayers nor a *shehechyanu* were sung over the candles. We were given the time-honored Hannukah gelt (real money—perhaps a quarter or two—not lacy golden bags of chocolate), and a small gift . . . all my parents could afford. But there was more than adequate compensation in what followed.

Mom was an excellent cook and made fantastic latkes. No shortcuts for her: she used her very private, infallible “shit recipe.” (In Yiddish, to pour in is *shitarein*.) She sought out and peeled the “right” potatoes, ground them together with onion and salt in an ancient, “portable” (you could get a hernia lifting it) steel grinder that was attached to the lip of a pullout shelf. She next added matzah meal and eggs, and mixed till she had a smooth blend. Then, with her well-calibrated hand, she converted dollops of the mix to perfectly round, flat pancakes. These Mom transferred to a large pan and fried carefully in oil, just long enough to get them to the correct shade of golden brown. There was always lots of sour cream (“the kind you used to get”) and delicious homemade applesauce to go with them.

With bated breath we looked forward to eating the latkes and, when they finally appeared on the table, all of us—my sister Libby, Mom, Dad and I, plus any number of relatives and friends, attacked the stack and invariably demolished it. We always knew that they were particularly good, because Mom would tell us so: “Oi! The latkes are delicious, if I must say so myself.” No question, Hannukah in our home was mostly about latkes.

But times have changed and Hannukah has become much more dramatic and complex. Yesterday Norma and I spent about two hours packing presents and Hannukah gelt (the chocolate kind). We made a very big pile! While I had helped with some of the shopping, eagle-eyed Norma had spent many hours finding just the right things for all. Some will remain in Davis for Meryl's family; the rest we will carry with us to San Diego on Friday. There are the requisite gifts for each of the grandchildren (but not one for each night—too much work). Anyway, they don't deserve them.

We will join in lighting the Hannukah candles, but unlike my childhood days, the prayers will be sung. And there is a new wrinkle. It

is a given that the massive pile of gifts includes some for the parents, who must be “good” and patiently wait their turn to receive them.

Surprise!!

On September 24, 2010, Norma and I returned to Davis after a four-day visit to Avalon, New Jersey, to see our friends, Mark and Betty Belafsky. Unfortunately, Mark was experiencing severe foot pain which would have rendered an ordinary man immobile. Nevertheless, he and Betty were extremely generous in caring for us, making sure that our every wish was fulfilled.

To begin with, Mark drove the one-and-one-half hours to Philadelphia to pick us up at the airport and to tour historic Philadelphia. We visited the marvelous National Constitution Center. As we anticipated dinner at a famous deli, I mentioned that I loved markets and had visited wholesale markets in a number of countries. Mark immediately responded by heading the car toward the Redding Terminal Market. We examined the various displays, and since neither Norma nor I had ever had one, we decided to split an authentic Philly Cheese-Steak sandwich as an appetizer before going on for our major deli meal.

As the four of us gathered around the special counter designated for sale of cheese-steak sandwiches, we noticed an influx of “suits.” These men were similarly dressed in dark gray and acted like cops on a mission, searching the premises, darting about and pressing us to stay out of the narrow aisles. From where we were standing we could see a large number of cars arriving, disgorging more “men in black” who took positions surrounding the building. No one was allowed to leave or enter.

Of course, all this activity spurred a guessing game. I volunteered that we were about to meet the mayor. I was quickly shouted down; apparently no one loved the mayor of Philadelphia. Others groped for the name of the secret dignitary. I suggested Obama, which was loudly decried. Then suddenly, some one shouted: “It’s Obama!” Instantaneously, everyone was on tiptoe, trying to see past the forest of dark suits. Apparently, the President had entered the store through the entrance closest to us, turned right and made his way about 75 feet to a milkshake counter where he engaged some of the workers in conversation. I guessed this gave the police a chance to clear aisles and for him to get the lay of the land. Mr. Obama then turned around and slowly made his way to where we were standing—at the infamous Philly Cheese-Steak counter!

The President was immediately engaged, shaking hands and asking questions, first of Norma (“Where do you come from?” “Davis, California.” “Oh, it’s nice there.”), then of Betty and me. The President ordered two cheese-steak sandwiches and asked loudly, “Does anyone

else want one?" Two hands shot up and the President ordered two more. As he waited for them to finish sizzling, Obama made his way around the counter to a veritable mob of mainly minority people who were shouting at the top of their lungs and who greeted him with high fives that only a president as fit as Obama could have withstood. Finally, a "suit" came by and picked up the sandwiches while the President moved towards another door.

The crowd, restricted by the police, watched in awe as President Obama gradually disappeared from sight. Mark, who could have been a photojournalist in another life, chronicled this unforgettable experience.

We passed the remainder of the trip very pleasantly. On the last day of our stay, our friends drove us back to Philly where we once again wolfed monstrous pastrami-on-Jewish-rye sandwiches. We then spent a few hours working our way through the wonderful Barnes Collection of Impressionist art before heading to the airport for our return home.

We fully enjoyed our warm visit with these dear friends. The surprising Obama adventure was truly a highlight of our trip, and a meaty story we excitedly shared many times upon our return.

The Kindness of Strangers

October 15, 2008, was the first day of a long-awaited riverboat cruise from Budapest to Prague. After a 12-hour economy class flight from Sacramento to Budapest, Hungary, Norma and I painfully exited the plane with what remained of our cartilage-deficient knees and wandered about the airport in search of a taxi that would take us to meet our cruise boat on the Danube River. I glanced at my watch: 6:00 p.m. Tired and hungry, we were eager to get there. We intentionally found an office that scheduled taxis, thinking that we would avoid problems that might come with a “fly-by-night” taxi. We were assured that the driver would know how to get to our ship, the River Adagio, one of many that ply the Danube.

The elected driver greeted us with a big “Hello” and a generous smile as he loaded our baggage—two large suitcases and two carry-ons—into the trunk. After a 40-minute drive, the taxi came to a halt on the upper level of a two-level road that paralleled the river. He explained that the lower road was under construction so that he was unable to get us closer to where the ship was docked. Pointing, he said “You will have to go down these steps to the lower level and walk to the boat.” “Where’s the boat?” I asked. He pointed up-river to a display of blue lights near one of the beautifully lit bridges that cross the Danube, a distance of about two long city blocks. Accepting the inconvenience, we got out of the car, paid the driver and gave him a nice tip. He unloaded our baggage, smiled happily and took off.

Nothing tangible had happened, but I began to wonder about the sensation I was feeling in the sphincter region of my anatomy. The good news was that we had a beautiful panoramic view of the city. Floodlights illuminated the buildings, bridges and monuments, a dramatic sight.

But this pleasure was short-lived as Norma said, “Well, let’s go.”

We pulled our bumpity-bump suitcases down the stairs and over the jarring cobblestones as we began the slow, awkward walk towards our ship. Ahead of us we saw a mob of perhaps 100 teenagers, many with beer bottles in their hands. Initially disquieting, but actually some were friendly and said “Hello” while others were indifferent. Despite that “certain feeling” we had no problems.

As we approached the boat, which the driver had identified as “ours,” we soon saw that it wasn’t. Rather it was a party boat to which the young people were gravitating in high spirits. Our hearts fell as there

was no other boat in sight. We decided to check with someone on the boat to be sure that we were headed in the right direction.

“Would you know where our boat, the River Adagio, is docked?” I asked the “maitre d” as he approached us. “No, I don’t, but I’ll ask the sailors; they’ll know.”

He left to seek advice. He soon returned to tell us that the ship was docked upstream, a distance of about ten more city blocks in the direction we were headed. Shocked at this news, we trudged on with heavy hearts, eventually approaching a tunnel at the base of the bridge. It was now dark and we felt that time was becoming critical. My watch now read 7:00 p.m.

We looked at one another with eyes that said, “What do we do now?” We trudged on as I thought to myself, “Where the hell is the men’s room?”

Then magic! Three immaculately dressed men appeared and Norma, the quick-witted one, said, “Do you speak English?” “Of course we do,” they answered, smiling. One look at us and they understood that something was wrong. We explained our dilemma and, immediately, they said, “Don’t worry; we’ll help you find your ship.” Tears in our eyes, we said “Thank you” repeatedly. To our further delight, each took a suitcase or bag, leaving me with an overnight and Norma with none.

A deep sigh of relief! At least we had English-speakers with cell phones and a sense of direction.

In near-perfect English, pointing, Ulrich said, “First we go over to that hotel. They will know where the ship is located.” My bladder agreed with this excellent idea and we made our way as quickly as our new-found friends could move. After all, they didn’t have us on their agenda when they decided to go for a walk that evening.

As we proceeded, I spoke with each of our benefactors. Andrea, the most soft-spoken Italian I have ever met, said, “We are all representatives of a pharmaceutical company. We are meeting here overnight. Ulrich is from Germany and Kopari is from Budapest.” Aside from their generosity of spirit, they were genuinely nice people. I asked, “Please give me your business cards so that I can write to you when we return to the States.” (I did.)

When we reached the hotel, the other four approached the desk while I flew to the “toilette,” which I reached just in time. (Yes! This is worth reporting. It’s one of the memorable events of the entire trip!).

“The ship is docked very close,” said the clerk. “Near the Novotel Hotel,” pointing in the opposite direction from which we were headed by the cab driver and the “knowledgeable sailors” on the party boat!

We left the hotel relieved to know where our ship was located (or did we?). Feeling guilty about tying up our new friends, I said, “You’ve been unbelievably helpful and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Now that we know where the boat is located, please go on with your plans . . . It’s better than pulling our bags around Budapest.”

But no! Kind-hearted men, they saw our uncertainty and fatigue, and said, “Well, it’s only a short distance more; we’ll go along with you to the ship.” A silent “whew” from both of us. A few blocks later—this time going in the right direction—we were there! We thanked our gracious saviors profusely for their generosity and wished them a good life.

The agony of the experience quickly diminished as two River Adagio attendants rushed up to us, grabbed our bags, and said, “Welcome to River Adagio. We are happy to see you. Don’t worry about anything. We’ll deliver your bags to your room. Dinner is still being served. Please come this way and we’ll take care of everything.”

Suddenly relaxed, Norma had a pleasant smile on her face as one of the staff took her arm and, as befits a queen, led her to a table where she was seated ceremoniously.

I, on the other hand, felt an irresistible impulse to suck my thumb and cry, “Mamma.”

But I didn’t.

Tootinkes

I often think about the many superlative qualities of Norma, my wife and partner of sixty years.

I greatly admire her adaptability and growth over time. In New York City, as a beloved only child, Norma grew up in a safe, secure environment with proscribed bounds which bred a certain timidity. When we married and moved away from this familiar and rather predictable world, she rapidly and successfully adapted to new living conditions, social life, and cultural differences. I appreciate that, through repeatedly adapting to new situations, she gained independence and self confidence.

I highly value openness to others. Norma has a consciousness about others' feelings and sensitivities and the willingness not only to voice warm words, but also to act upon them. Her openness has been pivotal in building loving and long-lasting friendships, especially our own.

Norma is an excellent communicator who is often very articulate and expressive. This quality has enhanced the health of our marriage, helping us share and talk through the difficulties and joys life brings, ultimately resulting in increasing friendship and love between us. I am grateful for the closeness and companionship we've shared in our life together.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Norma is a mother—if not a Momma—figure for a number of people, including family members and friends; she is definitely a people person. Throughout our married life she has often gone out of her way to befriend those new to town or lonely, often resulting in long-term friendships for our family.

I deeply value “smarts,” not only the IQ kind (of which Norma has plenty), but also, and more importantly, the kind that allows her to quickly size up situations, understand the dynamic, and usually act in a measured, logical and sensitive manner. It is a great quality for conflict resolution and has helped us deal with difficult situations, both at home and in the outside world. Norma is a quick study and applies new experiences to better our lives and that of those around her. Although there is no degree to be earned in “smarts,” earning her Master's degree exponentially nurtured her view of herself in the world. This growing self confidence was wonderful both for Norma and for our relationship.

Norma has been an exceptional adviser to me, helping me consider and weigh choices in my professional and personal life. I trust her excellent judgment and ability to read people; these qualities have helped me work through many situations.

Her broad interests have contributed to many wonderful, shared experiences. She is an exceptional planner, able to organize and make things happen—with flair. She uses her artistic sense to create a beautiful environment and enjoys decorating for all occasions. She loves flowers and always displays an artful bouquet or an exceptional rose plucked fresh from garden. Always ready to entertain, she is a wonderful cook and hostess, creating a warm and hospitable atmosphere which she enhances with her great storytelling abilities. She really tells a good joke!

Norma and I have grown together through parenting three children. Having come from families with parents who loved and appreciated their kids, we entered marriage with a shared desire for children. Norma has been a wonderful mother to our children, encouraging, appreciating, and “*shepping nachas*” (taking pleasure) from their successes and progress.

Norma’s connection with the children was extremely important during the early years of our marriage, as I was deeply engaged with work. She assumed many of the parental responsibilities and was able to communicate openly with them. Her awareness of “where the kids were” helped me better understand situations they were facing that I might otherwise not have understood as well. There were times when I was explosive or critical of the kids. Norma’s ability to talk about our interactions helped me understand and soften my approach so I could respond more maturely. I’ve been fortunate that we’ve been able to create a warm partnership, a source of solace and strength through the challenges and joys we’ve faced as parents.

Norma’s ability to compromise has resulted in few major disagreements and many satisfactory consequences. As we age and my memory declines, we each are facing new challenges. It is a comfort that we have the foundation of 60 years of loving partnership, and truly knowing one another well, to help us adapt to the continuing changes and surprises in this chapter of our lives.

Over time, my appreciation and love for my wife has grown immensely, in no small way owing to her wonderful human qualities. I have developed a loving language of nicknames in which I decline words that are modifications of English and Yiddish. Whether she is “Normal,” “Chatchke” (toy), “Tootinkes,” “Shaine” (pretty one), “Maideleh” (little girl), or “Boobeleh,” she has been my dearest love. I look forward to our continuing time together in which I may yet create the perfect name for this wonderful person who has been so important and meaningful to me for so many years.

A SABBATICAL IN JAPAN

First Flight

Our home was abuzz with activity as we said “goodbye” to friends, finished organizing our home and packing our suitcases, as we were getting ready to leave on our first sabbatical, in August, 1963. Our children, Meryl, age 9, Debbie, 7, and Craig, 4, had been primed for months with our plans to fly first to Japan, where we would live for 3 months. Then, after academic and sightseeing stops in Bangkok and New Delhi, we would continue to Israel where we would remain for an additional 8 months. This would be their first international trip and the first time ever that Norma and the children would have the chance to fly. While the general excitement level increased, Norma and I repeatedly expressed our own elation, indeed incredulity, that we would be able to undertake such an expensive adventure at that point in our lives.

In 1963, I was an assistant professor with a forgettable annual salary. When I learned that, unbelievably, I had been awarded both Guggenheim and Fulbright grants, we could begin to get serious about planning such a costly trip. In retrospect, once we received the wonderful news of the grants, we probably decided to go, whether or not we starved on the way. What an opportunity for me to pursue my research at the Department of Agronomy, University of Tokyo, and the Department of Botany, Hebrew University in Jerusalem! What an opportunity for us to visit parts of the world that we had only dreamed about!

Finally, bags packed and stacked on the driveway, Norma “backed out of the house,” as she likes to remember, “cleaning the last floor tile” before she closed and locked the front door on her way out. We were on our way.

At San Francisco International Airport, we took the requisite photos standing near the Pan Am plane, then climbed on and found our seats. The kids treated this moment as if they were getting on a roller coaster. As the plane sped down the runway, they grabbed the arms of their seats and when the plane took off they exhaled a collective “wooooh.” There were no “Are we there yet?,” even though it was a very long flight, broken only by a stop in Hawaii for three days of rest and sight-seeing. The Honolulu break was a good idea because we were exhausted after the final week of preparing for our travels. We took time to collect our thoughts and plan for both work and pleasure in Japan.

At the airport in Tokyo, we were met by Fumihiko Hayashi and Tohru Hashimoto, former postdoctoral fellows in my laboratory. They

had reserved two taxis for us to be taken to our overnight lodging at the International House. Although we were warned by Hashimoto of the terrors of Tokyo traffic (“Please, Dr. Rappaport, when you cross a street in Tokyo, always cross in a crowd”), no one could have prepared us for Tokyo taxi drivers, a terrifyingly dangerous species. We insisted that all of us share the same taxi, thinking that if we got lost, we would at least be together. Later, with my newly gained experience, I thought, “Stupid, if we had separated, at least some of us might have survived an accident.”

The taxi careened through the streets at unbelievable speeds, thankfully stopping at traffic lights (considered “decorations” by drivers in some other parts of the world). Unbelievably, as the light changed to green, we “charged out of our corner” and immediately, with a sudden screech of brakes, we stopped, but not fast enough to avoid hitting a pedestrian, knocking him down. We were thunderstruck! I don’t know the word for “lawsuit” in Japanese, but nothing that transpired next would indicate that it was known in Tokyo. The victim slowly drew himself up until he was erect, stared at the driver, then turned and continued to walk slowly to the other side of the street.

End of accident, but not the end of our hair-raising drive. We saw very little of the city of Tokyo as we all stared incredulously at the driver who almost never took his eyes off the small TV hung on the passenger side of the car. (A TV in a car was unheard of in the U.S. at the time.) It is not an accident that in Japan this position is called the “coffin corner.” Eventually, we reached the International House and emerged from the taxi, weak-kneed—forever.

We were greeted with many bows and “welcomes,” and registered in the lobby of this very modern and attractive building. We were given very pleasant rooms with modern, Western-style bathroom facilities. I was immediately impressed by the green, perfectly manicured lawn that grew on the flat roof over which we looked from our window. We felt very comfortable and took a moment to offer a prayer of thanks to the *god of intact body parts*. We were brought a very nice dinner made most memorable by the dessert: a beautiful, large, ripe peach, the most aromatic and tasty peach I can remember eating; a very nice beginning. We also learned that the Japanese like to peel their grapes before eating them. That night we slept exceedingly well on futons spread on the tatami floor of our beautiful Japanese style bedrooms. (Futons are now common in the U.S., but we had never seen one before.)

The next day we were picked up by our future landlord, Mr. Shigeo Seki, whom thereafter I learned to call Seki-San. After many bows and welcomes, he brought us to his home in Bunkyo-ku,

Honkomagome, a purely residential section about a mile from the University. Happily, he was a very conservative driver, so we relaxed and actually saw something of the city. Anticipating renting to future Fulbright and other academic visitors, he had built a small, modern house on his home property with Western as well as Japanese style rooms. Luckily, we fit into a time niche perfectly, as a future scholar and his family were to arrive in late October, just as we were leaving Japan.

We felt at home immediately, mainly because Seki-San, though very formal and otherwise traditional, was nevertheless warm and welcoming to us, doing everything possible to assist us through the difficult adjustment period we were about to experience. It helped a great deal that Seki-San, who owned a publishing business and several book stores in Tokyo, spoke English passably. He introduced us to his wife, Mrs. Seki, and to his pre-teenage sons, Toshitaka and Tomoyoshi. We were invited to dinner in their pleasant home and settled in, ready to go to work and to learn as much as we could about Tokyo.

We became so close to the Sekis that some years later, on a trip to the U.S., they visited Davis and we were particularly pleased that they agreed to stay with us. They showed considerable interest in our home and lifestyle, as well as our residential neighborhoods and the University. However, Mrs. Seki's eyes lit up when we took them to De Luna's jewelry store where she "oohed and aahhd" her way from case to case of watches and jewelry. She eventually bought a beautiful diamond and left Davis smiling. In subsequent visits to Japan to attend scientific meetings, I always looked the Sekis up and spent an evening with them. During one such visit to Japan some 25 years later, I again met the Seki boys, now happily married and employed. I maintained a correspondence with Mr. Seki until 1996, after which I never received an answer.

Without any Japanese language, we had to depend on the good graces of Seki-San, as well as Fumihiko and Tohru, who were all very generous with their time in helping us to get oriented so that we could start "living" in Tokyo.

Living in Tokyo

Living in Tokyo, while interesting, even exciting, never provided the "thrills" we experienced during that infamous, hell-bent taxi ride from the airport to the International House. The interest and excitement came in part from the sheer novelty of living in an exotic country, still emerging from the ravages of war. With this novelty came some problems for which we could not have come prepared, even had we anticipated them. Some examples: finding the word for, and the nearest location of, a bathroom; the discovery of new muscle groups required to

use the unfamiliar toilet stalls; the tiring aural and vocal challenges of absorbing, translating and answering the English spoken by most of my Japanese associates and friends; comprehending and pronouncing the names of unfamiliar foods; quickly adjusting our facial muscles as we attempted, gracefully, to refuse foods that were sometimes unfamiliar, unusual, or even repulsive to our Western palate, and finding new facial muscles to help us feign glee when we feared offending our generous hosts by refusing the special food of the night.

We were unusually fortunate in having rented the Shigeo Seki guest house and equally fortunate in having them for friends. They were kind enough to direct us to neighborhood and downtown stores, and to give us directions to train stations when we wanted to visit different parts of Tokyo and, eventually, other parts of the country. Having a livable home at a reasonable rate made it possible for us to explore Tokyo, to buy a few luxuries, and to eat in reasonably priced restaurants.

Of course, buying food was an immediate problem as we lived in a traditional Japanese neighborhood. Initially, with the assistance of my former postdoctoral fellows, Fumihiko and Tohru, we would make our way around and visit the small stores that sold the essential food items. After a while, we were able to do this independently. However, I left for work regularly in the morning and Norma was uncertain about the metric system. Luckily, we were able to rely on Meryl, our ten-year-old, who rapidly learned metric weights and measures and really enjoyed shopping for us. She quickly ingratiated herself with a food store owner who would smile as she approached his fruit and vegetable store. He looked almost fatherly as she examined the beautifully arrayed fruit displays, organized by quality and size. She had a “system.” She would first check the price of peaches, always settling on the mid-priced range (of three), while casting a longing eye at the more expensive, larger and more beautiful fruit arrayed just above. The proprietor would invariably smile and, after placing the requested number into her bag, would knowingly fit one or two of the choicest at the top. She thanked him, counted out the yen, and always returned home with a proud smile on her bright face.

It was essential for us to learn some Japanese words as virtually all signs having to do with food, directions and bodily functions were in Japanese. If we went to a restaurant and ordered milk for the children, we quickly learned to ask for milk specifically—served cold and without sugar. Although becoming more common in America today, it was happily the practice of restaurants in Japan to feature in their windows life-like models of the food platters they served. So, pointing became part of our language training. Accordingly, we all quickly learned “*Ben-jo-wa—Doko deska?*” “Where’s the bathroom?”

Occasionally, a professor or graduate student would pull my leg by inviting me to lunch at his favorite “famous restaurant.” Invariably, I was given “the test,” which was, of course, eating raw fish, one of their staples and one of the most repugnant to most Americans, while asking the innocent question, “Can you take this?” While I wasn’t ready the first time, subsequently I made a great show of eating sashimi and enjoying it. It was O.K., and at least I didn’t blanch, and have the good manners to comment favorably. I suppose I rated a B+ for my performance. I learned later from a UCLA colleague, Professor Bernard Phinney, that when asked the question, he reached for the sashimi (raw fish) and answered, “Of course I can. I am a scientist. I can eat anything!”

Some years later at a meeting in Kyoto, I attended a splendid dinner with Japanese and American scientists. The main course, *shabu-shabu*, is self-made at the table with each person selecting a thin slice of raw beef, fish or shellfish, and briefly dipping it in a delicious broth prepared in a boiling tureen. In a few moments the food is picked out with chopsticks, allowed to cool momentarily, and popped into a hungry mouth.

One of our Japanese hosts picked up a slice of raw fish, swallowed it, and asked the famous question. Peter Albersheim, from the University of Colorado, quickly mimicked him, but swallowed the fish without cooking it. A smile of approval spread over the faces of the assemblage. Peter then asked our hosts, “Now, can you take this?” while reaching for a slice of raw beef and swallowing it. The universal response was a guttural, spontaneous “uchhhh” plus a visible stiffening of their bodies. Peter explained that he had been to Germany on sabbatical leave and found that the Germans loved their steak tartare, raw hamburger, which he also learned to appreciate. This display did not remove the odious look of disbelief that remained on the faces of our hosts.

In all, we learned to enjoy many new and unusual foods. We never could have predicted how popular Japanese foods would become in America. Today our family is very fond of sashimi and sushi (but not steak tartare).

Innocents Abroad

Department store shopping was not difficult because an “English-speaking” salesperson was available to serve us from the moment we arrived until we were bowed out of the store. On one foray, we purchased some basic kitchen and household items. We were promised delivery the next afternoon and, because storekeepers were

notably honest, were surprised that our order did not arrive at the expected time. I decided to call the person who had made the sale.

It was a steaming hot, perspiring, miserable day in Tokyo, August, 1963. While part of our semi-western home was air-conditioned, the tiny entryway was an Amazon of humidity and bereft of air, cold or warm. It was in this unforgiving space that I needed to phone the Takashimaya department store from which we had bought several kitchen items. As promised, they had delivered everything we had ordered, except a frying pan. In anticipation of a very long phone call, I undressed for the occasion, down to my briefs, and placed a thick Turkish towel and a large pitcher of water on the telephone table, the better to wipe the inevitable perspiration from my body and to prevent dehydration, should heat exhaustion overcome me.

Why so much preparation? Well, there weren't that many American civilians living in Tokyo at the time, so English was not commonly spoken; and the pre-war phone system was not yet modernized. Based on previous experience, this meant that I would be having a shouting exchange with the salesperson who had sold us the kitchenware.

As Norma stood by, prepared to break my fall if I fainted from the exertion, I dialed the number and, eventually, was able to get the operator to understand that I needed to speak to our salesperson. What followed after she located him was reminiscent of the Abbott and Costello routine, "Who's on first?"

"Hello"—the dim echo of a voice.

"Hello," I responded.

"What?" he asked, a bit louder.

"Hello!" I answered, louder yet.

After a few more such exchanges, our voices heading toward a crescendo, he questioned, "Yes, Sir?"

"This is 'Mr. Rappaport, the American.' My wife and I bought kitchen utensils from you this morning. Thank you for having them delivered to our home so quickly."

"What?"

It felt like hours were going by in my seemingly futile effort. My voice rising to accommodate to his limited speech and the deficient sound, I responded even more loudly, "This morning I bought dishes, pots, a broom and a frying pan. Everything except the frying pan was delivered."

"You received everything?", his voice rising to match mine in the vain hope that I would hear better what he was saying.

By now I felt that I was about to catch fire, and only the torrent of perspiration running down my body would save me. Norma, taking in the developing scene, was beginning to giggle at the interchange and my increasing frustration; the longer I spoke the funnier it seemed. Even I managed to crack a smile as I hung from the torture rack.

Exasperated, I shouted, "I didn't receive the frying pan!"
"What?"

"THE FRYING PAN!!!"

Finally, I had an inspiration. Sweat pouring down my body, I remembered the Japanese pronunciation for the letter "R". How could I forget, after spending a year in Davis hearing Fumihiko call me "Lah-wee?"

I screamed the magic words, "FLYING PAN!!!"

Bingo! He immediately understood: "Ohhhh! FLYING PAN!"

"Yes, flying pan," I gasped in relief.

"O.K., I deliver right away!"

"Thank you," I shouted! "Thank you very much!"

We hung up. I practically collapsed on Norma, who was convulsed on the floor, the kids laughing hilariously in the background. Well before I was able to stand without holding on, the frying pan appeared at our door.

I Have A Friend

Seki-San was highly amused by our language training exercise and we soon learned that there was a better way to shop than the one we chose. One day I asked him where I should go to buy a pair of shoes. He smiled knowingly and answered, "I have a friend."

To my unstated question, he answered, "My friend will come to your house and will make them for you." I was both amazed at the nature of the service and the anticipated price, imagining what this might cost in the States. True to his word, his friend appeared in a few days, tape measure in hand, along with pictures of shoes that he was making at the time. Not yet ready to take a chance on a "foreign shoe," I showed him a pair of my (very) worn shoes. He looked at them as though they were some alien object. I didn't notice whether he held his breath. Nevertheless, artisan that he was, he fastidiously lifted my shoe and took the measurements. Apparently to reassure himself, he also measured my feet. He then stood up and finished taking his notes. We thanked each other profusely and he promised to return in a week. As planned, he appeared a week later with a beautiful pair of hand-crafted shoes. I tried them on and was very pleased both with their fit and their appearance. I don't remember the price, but I do remember that it was infinitesimally

low. I paid him and we exchanged thank-yous and goodbyes. I had learned a valuable lesson about shopping, at least in Japan in 1963.

Some time later we again turned to Seki-San for shopping advice. It would have been an insult to the entire nation of Japan had Norma not been able to buy a string of pearls in Tokyo. After all, Japan was the source of the world's best pearls and they were inexpensive compared with prices in America. Once again, Seki-San responded to my question saying, "I have a friend." His friend turned out to be a pearl wholesaler who couldn't possibly have brought a sample of all his wares to our home. Mr. Seki drove us to his friend's home where he met us at the front door. We were then introduced to the highly stylized and elaborate welcome that we saw again only when we visited homes to which we were invited. The two friends dropped to their knees, bowing up and down from the waist like courting cranes, exchanging a barrage of words which I later learned meant: "I'm sorry for my poor home; forgive me for not being able to be more hospitable." Seki responded formulaically, "I regret the inconvenience which I am causing by coming to your home, thank you for your hospitality; your home is wonderful."

After they arose, Norma and I were introduced, and we moved to another room where tea was served. We sat at a fairly long table strewn with large necklaces formed of loosely strung pearls which, we assumed, was how they were sold on the wholesale market. The pearl merchant then opened bag after bag in ascending order of quality, covering the table with individual pearls—pink, white, gray, black and yellow. It was a remarkable sight, all the more so because, although we knew little about pricing on the wholesale market, we instantly understood that we were sitting in the midst of a fortune. Thoughts of safety issues filled our minds. Like many Japanese homes, this one was built of wood with small windows and parchment-covered sliding doors which made the home very accessible to the street. We could only conclude that robbery was not an issue. Certainly, knowledge of the pearl bank that we saw in this home would have attracted thieves in other locations in the world.

We were given an interesting lesson on the factors that contributed to quality of pearls. We learned about the value of different classes of pearls which, not surprisingly, varied widely with quality. Norma eventually selected a beautiful necklace. We thanked our host appropriately and left satisfied, once again very appreciative of Mr. Seki's intercession on our part.

Norma was very happy with her purchase and wore the necklace for many years. Sadly, some time later on a visit to Mexico, the bag containing the pearls was stolen. Although she eventually replaced the necklace, the new one could not have had the same intrinsic value as the

one she bought during our interesting visit to Seki-San's friendly pearl merchant.

Special People

Beyond any of our expectations, having our children with us in Tokyo turned out to be a remarkable benefit. As "gygen" (Caucasians), we were looked upon with interest, curiosity and even surprise as there weren't many of us to be found on the streets of Tokyo. While we were always made to feel welcome wherever we went, it was our children, Meryl, Debra and Craig, ages 9, 7 and 4, who were the main attraction and who opened many doors for us. We were frequently stopped on the street by well-wishers, especially older people, who patted our children on the head, saying, "Kawaii-ne," an all-encompassing word for cute.

In comparison with most Japanese children of the same age, Meryl and Deb were taller and had wavy brown hair. Generally free spirits, the girls were given to skipping in the street and expressing their feelings audibly. Craig was indeed very cute, outgoing and expressive, a natural attraction even in California. While riding on a bus, we were amazed to see elderly Japanese women stand up and insist that our children take their seats. Coming from a country where children are often taught to yield their seats to elderly people, we were shocked and initially resisted what to us seemed a discourteous exchange. However, the children basked in the attention and seeing the smiles, even affection, expressed by the "displaced persons," we soon learned to remain quiet and smile back.

Early on, Norma and I decided that it would be a great idea if the children had the opportunity to spend some time in a Japanese school. At first glance it seemed like a foolish idea, considering that they would be enrolled for only two months. Yet, idealistically, we felt that they would benefit from exposure to Japanese children. Reciprocally, their classmates would have a chance to meet American children, most of them for the first time. We discussed the matter with Seki-San who, typically, was very positive and once again offered his assistance. It was not difficult to place Craig in a sort of kindergarten, which he seemed to enjoy. Soon afterward, Seki-San told us that he had arranged a meeting for the children and me at a nearby public school. We dressed appropriately, I in "the suit" and the girls in their nicest dresses, their hair done up beautifully. How could anyone resist them?

Seki-San drove us to the school and we were soon ushered into a dim, narrow hall furnished with an antiquated long table and chairs. Seated at the table were the *Kocho-Sensei* (the Principal) and several women whom I judged to be teachers or assistant administrators. They

immediately stood up to welcome us in the formal manner to which we were slowly becoming accustomed. We all sat and took a long moment to take a sip of tea, to nod and smile, the Japanese ice-breaking equivalent of discussing the weather.

I used the time to look around and noticed that at each end of the hall there was a circular window, about 3 feet in diameter, which was constructed of pie-shaped glass segments. I was astonished to see that the entire 360 degrees of each window was jam-packed with little faces. Apparently, the students were either forewarned that we were coming, or they saw us enter their building and followed us to the hall. Either way, they figured out what was going to happen next and raced to the adjoining rooms to pack the windows, waiting for the performance to begin. I had a crazy thought: maybe, like sumo wrestling fans waiting in long lines to buy tickets to see Taiho, at that time the most famous of the sumo wrestlers, they camped out all night to get a window seat for this event.

While it was likely that several of our hosts could speak English, Seki-San once again interceded for us so that there would be no chance for embarrassing mistakes. He explained the circumstances of our being in Japan, how he came to know us, the “importance” of these visitors, and the value of the children’s two-month sojourn for improved international relations. He also pointed out the benefits for the Japanese students who, for the first time, would have American children studying alongside them.

The Principal listened gravely, spoke with his subordinates for a while, most likely concerning problems that might arise and the fact that our kids would be enrolled for only a short time. It was like a cheap thriller—the suspense built as we waited. The children looked at each other, understanding that their fate was in the balance. Finally, with a smile, he nodded his head and said, “Your daughters will be welcome in this school.” The girls were overjoyed and actually clapped their hands. We exited the room with many welcomes and thank-yous, amid pleasant smiles and obvious warm feelings.

Meryl and Debbie began 4th and 2nd grade classes that same day, and enjoyed a most interesting month of school in this new and unusual environment.

Mao Intrudes On My Sabbatical

Gibberellins were a focus of my professional career; I was particularly interested in how gibberellins trigger the growth and affect the yield of potatoes. I had chosen to work at the University of Tokyo because of its longstanding research on gibberellins, which began in the

early 1800s; in 1963, these hormones were still a preeminent focus of research there, and were also being studied worldwide.

Biologically active compounds produced by the fungus *gibberella* are of scientific interest and importance because they radically affect the productivity of many world crops. Required by most plants, these naturally occurring hormones help determine the timing, rate and amount of plant growth and development. When applied appropriately, gibberellins will stimulate stem elongation, and alter flowering in many plants; without gibberellins, the plant fails to elongate. In agriculture, gibberellins are applied to some crops to enhance yield. For example, in California, Thompson seedless grapes are sprayed to induce fruit enlargement.

In the two months I spent in the Department of Agronomy at the University of Tokyo, I not only achieved my research goals, but learned a great deal about Japanese views of the world, at least as seen in October, 1963. My foremost instructor was Professor Shinichiro Kawata, the self-styled “Emperor” of the laboratory in which I was researching methods of tissue-culturing potato buds under aseptic conditions. The research used cell-tissue culture methods to develop new cell lines that are resistant to the fungus *fusarium*; this fungus is highly destructive to most varieties of potatoes and other crops and impacts world potato production. Lest you immediately discontinue reading at this point, I’ll spare you further details.

I was made to feel very comfortable in the lab and was given whatever information and assistance that I needed. The glassware, heaters, nutrient media, as well as the necessary bench space, were made available without my lifting a finger. I did wash test tubes and petri dishes, however, and the number of clean ones that I mounted on the drying racks was testimony to the amount of work I was about to do. Even Professor Kawata, the head of a very industrious laboratory, commented on the number of experiments I managed to run in the brief time I had.

I was also given (sometimes undeserved) respect—as when the graduate students called this lowly assistant professor, “Professor.” The “real Professor,” who in the Japanese system is next to God, assigned me a very large, carpeted, office in which to do my paperwork and plan experiments, equipped with a library (all Japanese), a huge desk, sofas and chairs. He also sat me to his immediate right at the long table situated in the laboratory. There research discussions were sometimes held, where lunch miraculously materialized (the trays delivered by bicyclists), and where, at about 5:30 p.m., out of nowhere, magnums of sake and assorted nibbles would sometimes appear. After this “snack,”

those of us who could would go “*hashigo*,” which means “climb the ladder,” which means bar-hopping until you dropped.

I went hashigo two or three times, mainly out of regard for the lab, although I didn’t like going because of the impact drinking had on my otherwise very quiet, peaceful friends. After too many beers (actually, they started with sake and when its effects began to be felt, they switched to beer), the topic of conversation invariably changed to the American role in the Vietnam War and, of course, the atom bomb attack on Hiroshima. Although in the laboratory I was treated with warmth and respect, in the bar, stereotypically, they saw me as the archetypical American and, therefore, the universal perpetrator. I didn’t mind discussing politics, but once, as the conversation heated up, one of the graduate students uncharacteristically struck me hard on the knee. I decided that I had climbed all the ladders I needed to.

Amazing to me was my personal reaction to their repeated attacks. When, despite my repeated protestations, I could not convince them that in some of their judgments I agreed with them, I gradually found myself wrapped in the American flag, defending our government.

Where did all the animosity come from? From the time I first entered the halls of the University of Tokyo, I was amazed to see pictures of American military planes flying in patterns, on bombing runs and firing their guns at what appeared to be houses in cities and in the jungle (I presumed of Vietnam). The walls were also covered with pictures of Mao leading his gallant troops, obviously against the former nationalist government of China. If this was typical of one building, I would have considered that it was a localized Maoist movement. However, such displays were to be found in many public buildings I entered.

There was little to no discussion of politics in the laboratory, at least in English. Yet, when we spoke during our bar-hopping experiences, I realized that, despite our propaganda after the war, they harbored genuine anger about several issues. They spoke repeatedly about the indiscriminate bombing of civilians, especially of the raids on Tokyo which destroyed a large part of that flammable city. By the end of the war, civilians were reduced to eating grass and anything else remotely edible. No amount of explaining to them about the American losses we predicted if we did not bomb Japan (close to 1,000,000 anticipated casualties) and instead invaded by land, could elicit any sympathy for our cause. Discussing the aggressive and often murderous behavior of Japanese troops toward allied forces and, especially, prisoners of war, elicited neither interest nor sympathy. Moreover, discussions of the attack on Pearl Harbor yielded similar responses; indeed, they considered that Japan was the victim. Repeatedly, they

brought up the atomic bomb and its horrible impact on the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some of my associates had lost relatives in those attacks, and I believe that few people in Japan let go of their feelings of anger and pain.

Thus, seeing how Mao's forces had managed to beat the Chinese Nationalists, how he had established a new "democratic order that placed people first," that had gotten rid of the Chinese capitalists and their foreign "owners" and that he was marching onward to a new level of civilization inspired my Japanese associates and gave them an outlet to vent their anger against America as the arch-exploiter of the masses.

In retrospect, when I was struck by my graduate student in the bar, I realized that I had received the crystallized expression of many perceived slights, both real and imagined.

Hiroshima

As we returned on the "Bullet Train" after a 3-day visit to Hiroshima, I experienced intense feelings ranging from depression to elation. Professor Kawata had been very sociable, inviting my family—Norma, Meryl, 9, Debbie, 7, and Craig, 4—to dinner at his home—most unusual, I was told. He also persisted in inviting us to visit his sister and her husband in Hiroshima. He said that we would be very welcome. This, we doubted greatly, because he also told us that they had lost two children in the atom bomb attack. I thought, "And he wants us to bring our children to meet his family in Hiroshima?"

Finally, after much discussion and with feelings of apprehension, we acquiesced. Together with Professor Kawata, we took the fast train to Hiroshima. Not even the sights—Mt. Fuji, the beautiful and unusual scenery, the people, many in traditional garb, the manicured farmland—were enough to distract us for long from the anticipation of a difficult, emotion-laden experience.

Waiting at Hiroshima Station was a tall, good-looking, sixtyish, gray-haired man, dressed in a typically conservative, dark suit. He and Professor Kawata greeted one another with typical formality—the repeated bows, the formalized greetings, more bows. We were introduced to Mr. Kenzi as the President of the local "*denki*", the electric company. He bowed. I bowed. We were impressed, but even more so when we were taken to a magnificent restaurant where we were introduced to many unusual foods, including "prawn *odori*"—dancing prawns. He explained that they "dance" as you swallow them. We reserved public comment on the thought of swallowing live prawns. But we ate practically everything else with interest and pleasure.

We were driven about the city, Professor Kawata acting as interpreter and tour guide. We walked the Peace Bridge, went to the museum where the horror of the explosion was depicted in colorful dioramas, and walked about the streets of the preserved, decimated center of the city. All of this was as expected, but it also contributed to our increasing apprehension as we anticipated meeting Mrs. Kenzi in their home. At this time we were told about how the children died, just eighteen years earlier. Without emotion, Mr. Kenzi told us that their 8-year-old daughter was in school near the center of the city when the bomb went off. She was killed instantly. The next day their son, a few years older and safe at the time of the blast, walked downtown to look for his sister. He died quickly of radiation sickness.

Mrs. Kenzi, an attractive woman in her mid-fifties, was effusive in her welcome. After greeting her brother at the doorway in the traditional manner, she invited us in with much warmth. Her love for children was evident from the moment we entered her home. As she looked at ours tenderly, we could not help but feel her loss all the more intensely. Despite the thick coat of armor we wore as we entered, we soon began to accept that Mr. and Mrs. Kenzi truly wanted us in their home, and not for retribution.

Later, we were given kimonos and we each proceeded to the “*furo*”, the Japanese bath in their home. We followed the custom: soap up first, then wash up, prior to stepping into the very hot bath. Once I overcame heat shock, I was able to luxuriate and eventually floated out of the bath and into “my” kimono.

After a wonderful dinner in their home, Mr. Kenzi showed me his collection of Japanese pottery, some of it ancient, some modern. He knew all the major potters personally, including foreign ones, many of whom had trained with Japanese masters before returning to their home countries.

To my great surprise, he generously gave me a set of sake pottery made by an English student of a leading Japanese potter. (We recently saw the student’s pottery displayed at the Chinese Museum in Balboa Park, San Diego.) We found ourselves repeatedly thanking these wonderful people for their generosity of spirit as well as their largesse.

What drew tears from both Norma and me was that before the children went off to bed, Mrs. Kenzi asked for kisses goodnight, in English. The children happily provided them because they, too, sensed the warmth of our host’s feelings toward us.

We left with a bow the next morning, unable to do with them what we would have done with an American family—hug them. But they

understood our expressions of appreciation as we left with a warm glow that has never receded.

“Your Address, Sir?”

In August, 1963, together with Norma and our children, I started a sabbatical leave from UC Davis, looking forward to three months of research at the University of Tokyo, followed by eight months at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. As well, I had invitations to lecture at universities in Bangkok and Delhi on the way from Japan to Israel.

As our plane approached Delhi, I recalled my conversation some months earlier with Prasad, a good-looking, probably high caste, Indian postdoctoral scientist who was working in my lab. Prasad, in his lilting, staccato delivery said, “I would like you to meet my friend, Mr. Behari Lal. He owns a steel-rolling mill in Delhi and is very rich. He has five cars. He will take good care of you.”

“Why in the world would he want to offer me hospitality?” I replied. Prasad drew himself up, peered at me through his unusual green eyes, and responded, “Well, he has five daughters. He wants me to marry one of them.”

Certainly, Prasad had many virtues, but the list did not include the ability to accumulate wealth. I replied, “But you haven’t. Why not?” He tilted his head up in his almost royal manner and said, “Well, they are too dark.”

I was shocked. In one blow he had managed to destroy Mahatma Gandhi’s view of an egalitarian India. I knew of the hereditary Indian caste system that segregates people according to class, and that there is a close association between caste and skin color. Prasad’s response suggested that he was of a higher caste, and “caste-mixing” was not acceptable.

My thoughts turned to the present as the plane landed and we were bussed to the air terminal. At 2:00 a.m. it was unbelievably hot and humid, all the more so because we had come from Japan and were dressed formally and for colder weather. We passed through customs where I noticed a number of ancient vehicles, each loaded with people, pulling majestically up to the terminal. We were a bit taken aback as the passengers, together with other greeters who had arrived earlier, surged toward us. We learned later that the entire faculty had come to greet me, the “Great Professor,” and my family. We were swept up in very strong-smelling chrysanthemum leis and I was given the official greeting from Mr. Behari Lal. I accepted as gracefully as I could, considering that I was barely able to see him over the tops of the leis.

Finally, it was time to leave and I was able to examine the cars: Two battered World War II jeeps, a 1937 Chevrolet and two others of

indeterminate origin. Yes, indeed, Mr. Lal owned five cars! I was suddenly alarmed when I realized that Norma and the children were being separated from me for the trip to Claridges, a famous hotel in residential Delhi. (I alone was assigned to the limousine.) In an impolite act that probably shattered some grand plan, I insisted that my wife and kids would leave in the same vehicle.

At the wheel sat a classic Sikh, handsome, bearded, wearing appropriate white garb and a dramatic turban. He was very pleasant, but said almost nothing beyond, "Your address, Sir?" as we left the terminal and the welcoming committee behind. It was now after 3:00 a.m. We were exhausted, yet exhilarated at the thought of being in Delhi. I wondered what Prasad had told his friend, because I was made to feel like some sort of demi-god. However, in the crowded Chevy, our leis nuzzled exasperatingly close to our nostrils, the five of us fought sleep and thought about how nice a shower and clean bed would feel.

After a while I began to consider how long this trip was taking. Claridges was supposed to be about 20 minutes away from the airport and it seemed to be taking much longer. Nevertheless, we remained calm and patient. After nearly an hour of driving through some nice neighborhoods, the car suddenly stopped and the turban rotated toward me. Very correctly, our driver asked, "Your address, Sir?" Our leis sagged. We processed the meaning of this simple question and quickly came to the realization that we knew exactly where we were. We were lost!

"Claridges," I whimpered, realizing at last that this answer meant nothing to him. The turban returned to its original orientation and we continued a short distance when, once again, the car stopped. This time the driver opened his door, stepped out in a manner befitting a Sikh warrior, and walked down the street. He stopped in front of a house and knocked on the door. Soon he returned, his step somewhat livelier, and he got back into his seat. He turned the key, stepped on the gas and—nothing. The motor wouldn't turn over. When he got through trying, the turban swaying with his exertion, he once again opened the door, got out, straightened himself, walked to the rear of the car and started pushing. I knew this was India and that no Indian "Great Professor" would ever be caught doing what I did next. I thought about Gandhi as I got out, adjusted my leis, walked sedately to the back of the car and joined the driver in pushing his crumbling vehicle, where I knew not. As luck would have it, after about two blocks of labor, Claridges suddenly appeared before our eyes!

Picture the scene. The Sikh and the "Great Professor," now forever partners in pushing, urging the vehicle toward the magnificent

hotel entryway. As we arrived, we straightened ourselves as ceremoniously as we could and once again were surrounded by the officialdom and employees of the steel-rolling mill. My sleepy family emerged amid the milling, and we visualized yet another official greeting, this time at 4:30 a.m. We managed to smile and be polite to the numerous, now relieved, well-wishers. Suddenly, there was shouting as a very large Indian man barged through the crowd, pushing and separating us from our numerous hosts.

“Get out of here,” he shouted as he pushed them aside to make room for us. “Leave these people alone!” He practically picked us up and ushered us forcefully through the horde. Our savior, it turned out, was the hotel manager who, responding to our quizzical look said, “It’s quite all right. I know my brothers and they will kill you with kindness!”

Free at last, we finally were able to check in and head for our room. Along the way, I asked him about removing the leis, which by now hung limply our necks.

“Oh,” he said, “You needn’t have worn them this long. You are supposed to take them off right after they put them ’round your neck.”

Fever

The third day of our visit to India was dedicated to sightseeing. At the end of October, 1963, the whole family—Norma, Meryl (age 10), Debbie (age 8) and Craig (age 5) were bundled into a 1937 Chevrolet piloted by a very determined economist friend of Mr. Behari Lal, our benefactor in Delhi, courtesy of Prasad, my equally determined postdoctoral fellow in Davis. Mr. Lal had asked the economist, name lost in history, to pick us up at our hotel and to show us some of the sights of Delhi.

Thankful, we were soon driving furiously through the streets, aimed at visiting the Red Fort, one of India's wonders. Soon the remarkable building came into view—a huge, red edifice with very high walls, which we soon discovered surrounded a very large tract of land with little vegetation. By 11:00 a.m. the temperature was searing, but nevertheless, we eagerly made our way through throngs of people, anticipating the sights of temples, a palace and a harem remaining from a period when they were vital to the plush lifestyle of the thin layer of enfranchised royalty. Now, after years of neglect, the general atmosphere was that of a run-down ruin, populated by many poor people, including beggars, snake charmers and numerous monkeys that had developed a mutually respectful relationship with their human kin.

We were interested in virtually everything we saw, but after walking for about two hours, the sun had taken its toll. The kids were complaining about the heat and their need for water. Norma and I soon came to realize that our leader, inured to the pervasive heat, was totally insensitive to our requests for a rest stop and our need for water. He forged ahead looking neither left nor right (it wouldn't have mattered to us in any case because he had a case of severely crossed eyes).

After about an hour, I became increasingly lethargic, dehydrated and feverish, rapidly losing interest in the tour. Finally, as we came to a small temple with the requisite population of monkeys swinging about, I stopped, sat down and refused to budge. Our guide was indignant, brushing off my repeated requests for a break and a drink of fresh water.

"We must see the harem: it was very important," he said indignantly.

"I'm sorry," I croaked, "I simply can't walk another step."

By this time we were all furious. Undeterred, he forged ahead, but the troops refused to follow, even were he to threaten us with death at the feet of elephants.

Norma, more courageous and, certainly by now more defiant than my own dwindling energy would permit, finally shouted, “We do not want to see the harem; we want to get a drink of water and to leave this (*unsaid* ‘misbegotten’) place.”

Slowly, our relentless leader absorbed the information and with a barely suppressed “hmmm!” led us toward the main gate where we proceeded to walk by one kiosk after another at which bottled water and soft drinks were for sale. We repeatedly pointed this out, but our guide answered, “Oh no, not here; you can’t trust these vendors. I’ll take you to a more reliable place.” Assuming that he knew something we didn’t, we swallowed our anger, got into the car and were again hurtled through the streets teeming with people.

After at least a half hour (to me, five), we stopped before an undistinguished-looking store and were ushered inside to what looked like the entrance to hell. The walls were black with soot, the tables rickety, and the small room so dark that one had to adjust to the “light,” as if we had just entered a movie theatre. Soon a man clad in a filthy apron approached, *nodded knowingly* to our guide, and took our orders. To our consternation, he returned with a tray of glasses with “Cokes” poured over ice. It was shocking because back at the Red Fort, the bottled drinks were capped in the usual way. This idiot had taken us to a place where the drinks were served over ice, we guessed because the owner was his friend. We nevertheless swallowed them and asked for more.

The saga ended at the hotel and, as he dropped us off, our relentless guide said, “I’ll pick you up at six. Mr. Behari Lal is sponsoring a dinner for you!”

Immediately, Norma responded, “Can’t you see that this man is deathly ill? He’s not going anywhere this evening. Please convey our sincerest regrets.”

“But you must come; the entire factory will be there!”

“We won’t be there! Tell Mr. Lal that we are very sorry!”

At that point we left for our room, the sound of our tormentor’s demented sputtering diminishing as we retreated.

That night I was deathly ill: hallucinations, a temperature of 105 deg. F, thrashing about without my knowing where I was or what was happening. Luckily, Norma acquired the services of the hotel doctor who prescribed 5-fluorouracil, used to inhibit RNA synthesis in cancer patients. By morning I was feeling better and decided that I would be able to go to the University of Delhi where I had been invited to present a lecture.

I was picked up at 10:00 a.m., feeling a bit rocky, but well enough.

Norma and the children remained at the hotel tempering the sting of the sun's rays with frequent immersions in the beautiful swimming pool.

Sometime after 7:00 p.m., I bounced into our room, having presented my lecture and experiencing a resurrection of health that was absolutely miraculous.

Of course, Norma was unaware of what had happened, not having received a message, and had assumed that my remains could be picked up at the local morgue. Both elated and angry, she berated me for my insensitivity. Needless to say, I was dreadfully sorry that I hadn't called, and made plans never to repeat this behavior.

Israel Calls: To Jerusalem

It was the end of October, 1963, and, after saying goodbyes to the Seki family and my friends at the University, we departed from Tokyo. We were on our way to Israel, where I was scheduled to complete the next eight months of my sabbatical leave at Hebrew University on a Guggenheim Fellowship. On the way we made stops in Bangkok, Thailand, and New Delhi, India, where I gave lectures. We also packed in some wonderful sightseeing, including a memorable visit to the Taj Mahal and a “muscle-powered” cruise down the wonderful Chao Phraya River in Thailand. Our contact person in Bangkok, a Professor of Botany at the University, saw to it that we had the chance to sample the beautiful fruit and vegetables of the region as we sat and reveled in the beautiful “mobile landscape.” We left Bangkok at 4:00 a.m. (not memorable) and continued our journey to Israel.

We felt our hearts quicken as our plane approached Lod Airport, just east of Tel Aviv. On the way from Thailand, my mind was filled with thoughts about why I had decided to go to Israel for my sabbatical. While I knew that scientists in the Department of Botany at the Hebrew University had exactly the expertise I needed to continue my research on utilizing tissue culture to select for disease-resistant plants, I also knew that there were some strong personal draws that had nothing to do with science.

My father was born in Jerusalem to a deeply devout family which, for financial reasons, left Israel in 1921. His mother was from a family that had lived in Jerusalem for seven generations. It was a very difficult time for most people, but the stories about his life there, about the city, the people and the land were very much a part of my consciousness.

Going to Israel was a dream we shared with many Jews worldwide. Nurtured on Biblical stories of the Promised Land, interest was heightened by the feats of Jews from Eastern Europe who migrated there, beginning in the 1850s. Their goal was to establish an ideal socialist agricultural state, to start a cooperative living community, the *kibbutz*, and to “make the deserts bloom.” Many of these people left their homes for other countries, in part because of the oppression of the Czar and his rapacious Cossacks and the endemic anti-Semitism in Poland. More recently, the long-held idea of Israel as a place for all Jews was fed by the image of those who survived the ravages of the Holocaust and who had no home to which to return. For those of us, like Norma and myself, who were fortunate to have been brought up in America and who

had no intention of migrating, Israel nevertheless represented a spiritual homeland, a safe place for the Jewish people. Reviewing these memories served to heighten our anticipation as we drew closer.

As we flew into Israel, I looked for the sharp demarcation between Jordan and Israel about which friends had told me. The Jordanian land typically would be dry and devoid of trees, the result of avaricious appetites of the goats that are traditionally a main source of food and dairy products for the Jordanian people. By contrast, Israel was a very green country, at least along the Mediterranean Sea. By 1963, agriculture in Israel had advanced to a fairly high level, and the goal of “making the deserts bloom” was a reality. As the plane flew in for a landing, I was surprised at how emotional I was at that moment; even more so when I felt tears welling up in my eyes.

Waiting at the airport for us were our friends, Dov and Ditzia Koller. Dov, a Professor of Botany at Hebrew University, had been on sabbatical leave in 1958 in the Department of Biology at the California Institute of Technology. At the same time, I was on leave there from UC Davis. Our friendship grew over that period and we stayed in touch subsequently by finding one another at scientific meetings and by mail.

We loaded our luggage into Dov’s very small car, squeezed in, draped ourselves with children and started our hour-long trip to Jerusalem. As we drove, he pointed out significant historical sites, but at that point we simply wanted to see the landscape and the people. On the narrow, winding road to Jerusalem, he pointed out rusted vehicles, many of them visibly pock-marked from shell fire, lying on the shoulders and banks along the road. They were left there from the 1948 War of Independence as a monument to those poorly trained troops who, after the United Nations recognized Israel, died defending against the attack by troops from five Arab nations.

We passed farmland and farm animals, owned communally by *kibbutzim* and by farmers joined together in private cooperatives called *moshavim*. Most of the lands seemed moderately well-tended, but the rocky soils in that area were undoubtedly a challenge to farmers. I said, “I’m surprised at the quality of the buildings; they don’t seem to take care of them very well.” Dov answered, “On this poor land, soil improvement is a much higher priority than building or painting sophisticated chicken houses.”

Finally, as we rounded a bend in the road, we saw Jerusalem situated on a height, as were all ancient cities. It was a beautiful sight, made more so by the golden limestone layers upon which the city was built. As we drew closer, we saw that nearly all the buildings were built

of the same stone. The bright sun illuminated them and made the city glow . . . a very exciting and memorable view.

Understanding that we were exhausted, Dov took us directly to Talbieh, a rather modern section of the city, where he and his wife, Ditz, had rented an apartment for us. We were pleased with what we saw and, when he left us after many “thank-yous” (learned from our friend Seki-San in Tokyo), we simply collapsed, happy that we were there at last.

Masada

Metzada or Masada, meaning fortress, is the name of a site of ancient palaces and fortifications in the Southern District of Israel. Masada is located on top of an isolated rock plateau, about 1,300 ft. above sea level on the eastern edge of the Judean Desert, overlooking the Dead Sea. According to Josephus, a Roman general and historian, Herod the Great fortified Masada between 37 and 31 BCE as a refuge for himself in the event of a revolt. Today, Masada is known because of the First Jewish War against the Roman Empire which, in 70 C.E., destroyed Jerusalem and the Second Temple. The revolt ended, except for the surviving 960 “Zealots” who fled to the fortress of Masada, where they held out for three more years. When defeat became imminent, they committed suicide, the last fighters in the rebellion against Rome. Today, at the end of their military training, Israeli soldiers are brought to Masada, where they swear an oath: “Never Again.”*

While I was on sabbatical leave at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in 1963, we were befriended by Moshe Negbi, a member of the Botany Department which I was visiting. Not only was he helpful scientifically, but he introduced us to his wife, Ora, an archeologist, who generously offered to lead us on a visit to Masada. Today, next to Jerusalem, Masada is the most popular destination of Jewish tourists visiting Israel. We were excited about the prospect and gratefully accepted her offer.

Several days later, Norma and I boarded a small bus at about 6:00 a.m., so that we would arrive at Masada before the temperatures rose to unbearable levels. It was our first trip into the desert and, as we headed south, we became aware of how arid and apparently lifeless the desert can be. We passed near the Qumran caves, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, and several small kibbutzim which stood out because their green farms contrasted sharply against the barren hillsides. On the east side of the Dead Sea we could see Jordan, then an enemy of Israel. Eventually, the bus came to a halt and we descended amid a large crowd of people, both young and elderly, all of whom planned to climb the “Snake Path” to the top of Masada. Highly experienced, Ora led us deftly through the crowd and soon we began the climb. The sun was rising and it was already becoming warm, but that did not daunt the climbers.

Our family is not famous for heroic exploits as mountain climbers, and little that occurred that day changed our history. While we were in our mid-30s, neither of us was in particularly good shape, certainly not for mountain climbing. Nevertheless, we bravely moved

onto the narrow, loose-gravel path that wound its way to the top of the mesa. This was the last day of the “dig,” and the path was the only way to get there. Today, a modern cable car whisks passengers to the top in 10 or 15 minutes, and there is a much-improved path.

The path was steep, roughly 3- to 6-feet wide, broken by steps carved into the hill, and without any railings, so that the higher we climbed, the more we could see—and the scarier it became. I noticed that Norma was becoming increasingly anxious, indeed petrified, as we progressed at a snail's pace toward the top. Closer to the top, she developed a piercing headache and could barely move one foot in front of the other, even when clutching me with all her might. While I was worried, I nevertheless could walk and was bemused by the number of “little old kibbutz ladies in tennis shoes” casually passing us by. Highly insensitive to Norma's plight, I insisted that “You won't fall; if you slip, you'll sit down.” Was she furious?! The climb took about two hours and by the time we arrived at the top, the poor woman was exhausted. Clouding her mind was the knowledge that there was only one way to return.

As it was crowded at the summit, we forced ourselves to level ground and found a shady spot against a wall. By then Norma had a vicious headache and simply wanted to sit and drink water. A kind soul gave us some water; we ate our sandwiches and rested. We begged everyone we encountered for aspirin but, while we were offered sandwiches and drinks by some of the “diggers,” they had no aspirin to offer. Norma's headache continued unabated.

Finally, Ora in the lead, we began to explore the legendary sites of Masada. It was the last day of the archeological dig and Yigal Yadin was present, famous as a general during the War for Independence and as the archeologist who was reclaiming Masada. We were happy that we had the chance to meet him. Young archeologists and volunteers from at least ten countries were working, digging and clearing intensely with the hope of making that last, most important find. Indeed, at one exciting moment there was a shout, and we joined the crowd as they rushed over to view the discovery. It was a clay pot, but to them it seemed like they had discovered Tutankhamen's burial site.

We visited the remains of Herod's Palace and fortifications: the bare outline of dwellings, including the black residue left after years of cooking, and ritual baths. The Masada farmers built large storage rooms for the grain they grew. The interior walls of the fort are now partially restored, the old walls delineated from more recent improvements by a black line running their length.

One who climbs the Snake Path to Masada can understand why the surrounding Roman legions had to content themselves with a siege. When we looked down into the valley, we could see the distinct remains of eight Roman encampments. Anyone attempting to climb Masada to attack the fortress would be an easy target from those above.

If the defenders of Masada hoped that the Romans eventually would consider this last Jewish foothold too insignificant to bother conquering, they were to be disappointed. The Romans were well aware that the Zealots at Masada were the group that had started the Great Revolt and they were determined to destroy them.

After failing repeatedly to breach the existing wall, the Romans built a rampart on the western face of the mesa, using thousands of tons of stones and beaten earth. They were high enough so that finally the legions could climb over the defensive wall and level the remains of the encampment. When the Romans had accomplished their mission, they found the 960 victims, who preferred suicide to their enslavement.

As we made our way slowly down the Snake Path, we had time to contemplate our experience. We felt that we had relived an event which, though of minor importance historically, nevertheless still stirs emotions and the desire for more information, strong enough to encourage us to return many years later. Only this time we went up the easy way, by cable car.

**Some of the historical information was obtained from a "Wikipedia" article about the geography and history of Masada.*

A Mystery Ride

As we arrived at the Mandelbaum Gate on the common border of Israel and Jordan, we noticed a group of some twenty Israeli policemen who were preparing to board a boring gray, uninviting, antique bus. Norma and I were about to join them for the forty-five minute ride to Mt. Scopus in East Jerusalem. We were told in advance that both sides of the border were heavily guarded and, not surprisingly, we began to feel uncomfortable about the prospect.

What we were preparing to do “here” was to go through the Mandelbaum Gate after being thoroughly inspected by Israeli soldiers. Once through the Gate and on Jordanian territory, we would receive similar treatment at the hands of Jordanian soldiers.

How and why did we get into this situation? In 1963-64, I was on sabbatical leave in the Botany Department of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. My friend, Dov Koller, Acting Chair of the Department of Botany, invited Norma and me to visit the original Hebrew University campus located on top of Mount Scopus, on the eastern side of Jerusalem. Dov had gained the special permission we needed to make this rare trip. We couldn’t have imagined that we would ever visit the campus, buildings and laboratories of the Botany Department, as well as Hadassah Hospital, previously the premier hospital in the region. We would have views of Jerusalem and Jordan that were closed to Israelis since the War of Independence in 1948.

The Botany Department had a distinguished faculty that, in 1948 was forced to move to a new campus in Israel when remaining on Mount Scopus became untenable. Only the tip of Mount Scopus remained in Israeli hands after soldiers from five Arab armies drove the Jews out of East Jerusalem during the 1948 War for Independence.

When the war ended, the United Nations (UN) took responsibility for supervising the Mount, with the understanding that Israeli police would stand guard at the Israeli sites permanently. Fresh guards would arrive from Jerusalem to be exchanged every two weeks. Owned by the UN, the transportation was the same “ugly bus” we were taking as part of the truce agreement. No physical change—not even new paint—would be allowed, except for basic motor maintenance.

After waiting for our passports to be checked, the replacement Israeli police boarded the bus. The door closed and the bus cranked up and crawled slowly across the border. While I expected to see armed Jordanian soldiers there, I did not imagine the number of machine gun nests on either side of the road, manned by very stern-looking, Jordanian

soldiers. The bus stopped and we were all ordered off. Some Jordanian and UN officers inspected the interior of the bus and our passports, and assured themselves that the Israelis had no weapons.

Once again we climbed aboard the vehicle. To our surprise, after we were all on, two Jordanian soldiers, equipped with Sten guns, boarded the bus and took positions, one behind the driver, facing the rear, the other at the rear of the bus facing forward. They overtly carried a magazine of bullets in their free hands. It was very disconcerting, to say the least.

I had taken a window seat just behind the driver in the hope of seeing something of the Jordanian capitol through the front window as well as the one on my side. The bus started up and slowly moved forward. Suddenly, the driver pulled a lever, and solid metal shades descended at every window, even the driver's, and clattered noisily into a fixed position. However, there was a slit about 3 by 18 inches in the shade that covered the driver's window. If it weren't for that narrow crack, the bus would have been completely blacked out. The driver, of course, had very limited vision. There went my sight-seeing trip through Jordan!

Obviously, we were not supposed to see anything, nor were the Jordanians able to see us. Because of my position, however, I could hunch down and peer through the slit and was able to see the road, the lead UN vehicle, and some houses and people in the street; but I had no real sense of the city, its inhabitants nor its condition.

The bus was blanketed in unnatural silence as it laboriously climbed the dirt road toward Mount Scopus. We realized that our only "protection" were the two UN vehicles positioned at either end of the bus. Considering that this bus traveled to Scopus regularly and contained Israeli police, we couldn't help but think about some of the "what could happens." One of the more reprehensible "things that happened" was the ambush and slaughter of a busload of Israeli doctors, nurses and patients on the way to Hadassah hospital from Jerusalem in 1948.

As we progressed, we were able to relax a bit and imagine what we would see once we arrived. Eventually, the bus came to a halt while we were still in Jordan, but about to enter Israeli territory on Mount Scopus. The Jordanian soldiers looked about the bus and then made their exit. Once they were gone, the Israelis began to talk freely; someone said something funny, which brought forth laughter. I also laughed, but not having understood the joke—it was simply an expression of nervous relief. The door closed once more, the bus proceeded another twenty yards, and again came to a halt. We were right on the University campus, not far from the Botany Department. It was very quiet and, except for

guards positioned at vulnerable sites, the campus appeared dead, a sad reminder of the losses sustained during the war.

As we approached the Botany building, we came to a signboard that was in place since before the Department evacuated the site some fifteen years earlier. It was a surreal moment: the sign was headed “The Department of Botany,” both in Hebrew and English. Below were posted announcements, amazingly still legible, of the lectures that had been scheduled to be presented by Professor Michael Evenari, Head of the Department at the time the campus was abandoned. Moreover, Dr. Evenari was still Professor and Head of the Department on the Hebrew University campus in Israel. Time had stopped.

We had little time to walk about and see the library, now dusty and decaying. I was impressed with the array of Hebrew and foreign language journals and volumes, still on the shelves; many more had been transferred to Jerusalem since 1948.

We were then escorted to the Hadassah Hospital compound. It had been an impressive building, but the pock-marks from bullets and shells were a reminder of the bitter fighting that took place during the war. There was considerable water damage to the building and, of course, it was empty, windows broken, the wind whistling through. However, as it was situated at a beautiful site overlooking Jerusalem, it presented a valuable location for the Israeli guards to establish a defensive position. We walked about some more, but it was a morose landscape; we weren’t too disappointed when it came time to board the bus for the return trip.

Except for the tension during “the changing of the guard,” the trip was uneventful, and we returned both pleased to have had the chance to visit Scopus and saddened by having experienced, first hand, the losses attending a bitter war.

I Said “Yes!” He Said “No!”

Four years after my first visit to India in late September, 1964, I traveled together with a number of international scientists to attend a conference at the University of Calcutta. A neatly dressed student met us at the airport, introduced himself, bowing as he did, and offered to take us to the Hare Krishna Mission Inn where the conferees were to be housed.

As our car meandered through the narrow streets of Calcutta, I recalled my feelings during my first visit to Delhi with Norma and the children. The streets were dirty, packed with people, many of them sleeping on the ground. We had dodged potholes and various kinds of “leavings” as we followed our relentless guide. A sad spectacle; I was no more ready for similar sights in Calcutta, where they were even worse than in Delhi. I couldn’t help but contrast what I was seeing in Calcutta with our way of life at home. I tried to bury my initial reaction and looked forward to the next day’s tour of the city which was arranged by Professor Chandra, the Chair of the Botany Department.

Eventually, we arrived at the Inn which, while reasonably clean, was primitive by our standards: gray windows, gray concrete floors, feeble showers, and a tired bed. After I was settled, I made my way to the dining room and joined a group of people who were in animated conversation. Among them was a short, stout, straight-backed, gray-haired man. His thick Slavic accent rose above the others, and it clearly embraced words that made people both interested and amused. I soon learned that he was Dr. Michayel Mikalyevitch Chailakhyan, a well-known Soviet scientist of Armenian heritage who had enough knowledge of English to be conversant in a social situation.

I made sure to sit next to him at dinner as I was interested in his research, which was akin to my own. I also wanted to speak with him about his life in the Soviet Union and, especially, about how freely he was able to speak and to conduct independent research. I got his undivided attention when I told him that my mother was born in Minsk, Belarus, and that she had come to America in 1920. We talked about her life there and in the U.S. after she had emigrated. He in turn spoke about his experiences growing up in Armenia and eventually moving to Moscow.

As my questions became more incisive, he conspicuously avoided any criticism of his country. In the midst of the Cold War, I knew that as a member of the highest scientific echelon in the Soviet Union, he needed to be careful. He had benefited greatly from his

“closed-mouthed” policy and was not going to jeopardize his status because of a few throw-away jabs. We exchanged stories about our families and life in general. This was Chailakhyan’s first trip out of the Soviet Union and he was obviously very tentative in his behavior.

After dinner, I said, “Let’s go for a walk.” He was uncertain about that idea: “Are you sure?” “Of course,” I answered. In fact I had checked with Indian friends who were very confident of street safety in this vicinity. He finally agreed to go along. It was a very pleasant evening, past twilight, and we started out walking amiably as we surveyed the surprisingly quiet streets. As we walked, his hand on my arm (I was by now his protector), I looked down one of the cross streets and noticed in the distance several brightly lit buildings with some well-dressed men standing in front of them. I said, “Why don’t we go over there and see what’s happening.” He gripped my arm fearfully and said, “No!” I said, “Why not? It seems very peaceful and we might have an interesting experience.” He again said, “No!” I said “Yes, I think it is a good idea. Let’s go.” Grudgingly, he stuck to me as we made a right turn, military style, and walked toward the lights.

We soon came upon two long white tents, one of them resonant with the sounds of many people talking, accompanied by the clink of glasses and dinnerware. Across the street, the front of a four-story house was covered festively with many bright electric lights. Several well-dressed men in their 20s, I guessed, stood in front of the adjoining tent. They were very friendly, smiling and, indeed, welcoming. “Can I do something for you?” one of them asked in accented, but perfect, English. “Well, we wondered what was happening here. This must be some kind of festival,” I answered. “It is; I am getting married tonight.” Chailakhyan got the drift of the conversation and we exuberantly offered the appropriate “best wishes.” “Would you like to stay for the wedding?” the groom asked. My eyes must have brightened, because as I said “Yes,” my reticent partner hissed “No!” under his breath, so as not to seem insulting.

With further encouragement, we agreed to wait for the wedding to take place. The tent was vacant, which allowed us to see the beautiful decorations. The sides of the tent were covered with colorful drapes descending to the tables that surrounded the periphery of the tent. Huge mounds of fruit, cakes and colorful dishes of sweets covered the tables. “Please sit down,” our host said, as he pointed to two seats in front of what appeared to be an altar. “The wedding should begin soon.” My watch read 8:45 p.m. and Michayel and I were beginning to flag under the strain of our very long flights to Calcutta. Nevertheless, we thanked

him for the invitation and did as asked. He returned to patrolling the entrance to the tent.

We sat talking quietly as we waited, eating the little cakes that the groom had handed us. After an hour, we began to question whether there would indeed be a wedding. The noise from the adjoining tent continued unabated, so it was evident that the wedding was not yet ready to begin. Finally, at about 10:30, our eyelids in serious danger of permanent closure and no signs of a wedding, we decided we had to leave. We stood up, went out of the tent and told our host of our dilemma. "When do you think the wedding will actually begin?" I asked. He looked up at the beautiful, starry sky, and answered, "When the stars are in the right constellation." Speechless, I emitted an "Ohhh." "But would you like to meet the bride?" he asked. Excited, I quickly responded, "Oh, yes," as a millisecond later my new-found friend hissed, "No!"

Too late! The groom escorted us across the street and, pointing upwards, said "My bride is in her room upstairs on the fourth floor." Then he resumed his position in front of the marriage tent.

We walked through the very narrow entrance of the house into nearly total darkness, the stairs lit by a few candles. As our eyes adjusted, we could see many doors, as if to apartments. By now Chailakhyan had cut off the circulation in my right arm. Not to be deterred, I stepped forward, pulling his dead weight up the flights of midnight-black stairs past expressionless faces peering out of doors on each floor, until we reached the fourth. I was beginning to feel as queasy and uncertain as my friend about this part of the adventure but, "in for a dime . . ."

We were waved toward a small, dimly lit room, crowded with women and children who cleared a path so that we could enter. Dressed tip-to-toe in a neon-bright red gown, the bride, head bowed, sat on her haunches on a bare mattress, unmoving and speechless. All was dead quiet, an eerily peaceful scene. Out of the corner of my eye I glanced at Chailakhyan's bleached, taut face. For no logical reason, I too, felt uncertain whether we would be leaving the house in one piece that night.

I don't know where it came from, but at this point I burst out, dramatically, with "Academician Michayel Chailakhyan and I are visiting scientists. He is from the Soviet Union and I am from the United States. We are here as friends to attend an international conference at the University of Calcutta. We offer our best wishes for peace and happiness for our countries." Then, addressing the seemingly unseeing bride, I ended with, "We are honored to be here and we wish you and your husband-to-be a very happy life together with many healthy children."

Silence. I gave Chailyakhyan a “come-hither look” and we stumbled out of the room, down the stairs and out the door as fast as we could go. Not speaking, we retraced our steps along the very dark street and headed for the Hare Krishna Mission Inn. As we arrived, I stopped, faced him and said, “I know that this was difficult for you, but it was a pretty amazing experience. No?”

Slowly his lips, barely visible beneath his dense, gray moustache, curled into a smile, and he whispered, “Yesss!”

Where “No” Means “Yes”

After the wonderful “wedding evening” spent with Professor Chailyakhyan, I went to my room and prepared my clothing for the promised tour of Calcutta. It was well planned and those of us who participated learned much about the city, its problems and ambitions for its future, projected by the city fathers we met.

When we returned, I scanned my notes in preparation for my lecture. I was nervous but took comfort in the knowledge that mine would be one of the first lectures the next morning. I awoke early, once again, reviewed my notes, and then, after a leisurely breakfast, a visit to the Botany Department laboratories, and discussions with graduate students and faculty, I was led to a large hall where the symposium would be held. After seeing these facilities, and looking about the campus, I realized that this university, one of the best in India, was very poor. A small example: the main lecture hall had huge windows but neither drapes nor shades to darken the room, necessary for showing slides of the data we were to present. As we entered the hall we noticed some students attempting, not too successfully, to darken the room by plastering newspapers over the windows.

By the time I arrived, several hundred people had filed in. Aside from the speakers, there were many undergraduate students who had studied botany or related subjects, graduate students who populated the labs, faculty, postdoctorals and visitors from other departments; I thought it an amazing turnout.

Following some words of welcome by the President of the University and his introduction of other dignitaries, I listened to the first two papers while reviewing mine. I obsessed about whether my slides would be visible. Then it was my turn. I walked up the four steps to the podium and faced the crowd. I was nervous, my usual stage-fright when I was about to speak.

I looked out at the huge audience, shuffled my notes and began by thanking the University President and Dr. Chandra for the warm welcome and the invitation to speak at this Symposium. I’ll not take the risk here of discussing the substance of my paper in detail because it might have too soporific an effect. Suffice it to say, the subject of the talk was “Rest and Dormancy in Potatoes.” Dormancy is a stage of arrested growth—think leafless, quiescent trees in the winter months, or freshly harvested potatoes that have no sprouts, but which produce long sprouts after a time in your darkened cupboard. (Yawn).

The audience appeared attentive and courteous. Using my barely visible slides, I began by explaining how the experiments were performed. As I proceeded, I felt a small swell of confidence. Then I noticed a disconcerting response from individuals in the audience. Their heads had begun to wag rhythmically from side to side, coupled with a perceptible roll of the neck. It was apparent, even as I entered the most “exciting” section of my paper, that the audience was clearly disapproving my presentation. I began to speak more rapidly and my voice began to “thin.” I wondered, “What have I said that evokes such a negative response?” I felt terrible, all the more so because I realized that I could do nothing to alter the course of this growing disaster.

At last I finished speaking, beads of sweat on my forehead. To my amazement, the audience applauded loudly! Were they really so happy that I had stopped boring them with my inane story? Were they just being courteous to this foolish American? Furthermore, I was dumbfounded because, despite my poor presentation, a number of serious questions were asked. I answered meekly. Clearly, they had been engaged, but how to explain their behavior?

When the questions thankfully stopped, I slithered off the stage, slumped disconsolately into my seat, and mopped my brow, the classic behavior of a defeated combatant. To my surprise, Professor Chandra, who was sitting next to me, loudly congratulated me on my “excellent lecture.” I looked directly at him and, thinking bad thoughts, said: “You must be joking—they were all shaking their heads as I spoke.” He frowned, and then covered his mouth to suppress the laughter I could see welling up.

As the next speaker approached the podium and was about to start his talk, Dr. Chandra whispered to me, “When we shook our heads, we were acknowledging your excellent paper. In India, moving your head from side to side does not mean “NO” as it does in the West. Here it is the same as nodding your head “YES!” in your country; so, actually, you had the approval of the entire audience! You have nothing to worry about.”

I exhaled a happy sigh as I felt my body relax. I struggled to resist the temptation to kiss him. I even began to enjoy the next paper and, shamelessly, the image of its author experiencing similar pangs of bewilderment on seeing all those heads shaking, telling him that his paper was a dud.

That evening, despite being severely jet-lagged, but satisfied with how the day had turned out, I decided to go for a walk. After a while, I heard familiar music and, eventually, saw a brightly lit, large white tent in the distance. As I drew closer, I realized from posted

advertisements and the distinctive sound of the music, that I was about to experience Ravi Shankar and his ensemble—live and in India! I have liked his music ever since I first heard it, so it was with excitement that I joined a very enthusiastic audience to hear and cheer this charismatic man's performance. I lasted only an hour, albeit an exhilarating one, when it became too difficult to keep my eyes open.

As I dragged myself away, I smiled knowingly and took special pleasure in seeing all those heads wagging approval of this marvelous concert.

An Egyptian Adventure

In 1979, the UC Davis College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences entered into a contract with the Ministry of Agriculture of the government of Egypt and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project had two main objectives: improving the production and quality of horticultural products—vegetables, fruits and flowers—and an economics component for economists to do what economists do.

A dramatic period in the history of the Middle East conflict, Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian President, had heroically led his nation into a peace agreement with Israel and improved relationships with the Western nations. This was a most constructive way to cement relationships between our countries—not only by improving the quality of food placed on the Egyptian table, but by increasing the yield, quality and sales of Egyptian agricultural products.

I had recently assumed the position of Chair of the Vegetable Crops Department at UC Davis and my mind was almost entirely focused on the task of renewing our faculty at a time when many existing professors were about to retire. In the first year of the program, I watched as a number of faculty members took research excursions to Egypt to engage in the new programs. Two Vegetable Crops Department/UC Agricultural Extension Service personnel, William Sims and Ron Voss, accepted semi-permanent positions in Cairo as co-chairs of the Horticultural Section of the California-Egypt program.

In 1979, I visited Egypt because, as Chair, I needed to know what so many members of the Vegetable Crops Department were doing and whether the projects we were working on were fulfilling the goals of the grant.

At the height of the program, some 600 Egyptian scientists and 60 Americans, predominantly from UC Davis, worked on the California-Egypt program. Their goal was to build the Egyptian agricultural economy by training Egyptian scientists and economists in modern techniques of growing, marketing and transporting fruits, vegetables and flowers. Additionally, a key facet was an economics program aimed to analyze and modernize the Egyptian agricultural economic system; as this was a separate component, little can be said here about the progress made by this program.

Bill Sims and his driver greeted me at the Cairo airport. “Hope you had a good trip,” Bill said in his warm and friendly style. “You must

be exhausted.” I was, but murmured a “Thank you” as I accepted his sympathy. As we drove, I yawned sleepily, but tried to focus.

“How’s the project going?” I asked. Bill spoke candidly:

“It’s really not great.”

He proceeded to tell me about administrative difficulties that were hampering progress.

“You know, the scientists are doing well, but there are some big disagreements among us as to how to make this project work effectively.”

He went on to describe the efforts to establish a sort of granting agency, along the lines of the National Science Foundation (NSF). However, Professor El Azouni, who supervised the Egyptian component, really hated this system. “We think that funds should be shared equally between the Egyptians and the Americans. He thinks that all USAID has to do is give him all the money and let him lead the project. We don’t even have to be here. In fact, he has said publicly that we are just using up all the money traveling back and forth.”

I remained quiet at this point, but understood there would be much more to come. While I was surprised at the Egyptian response, I was dubious of our own approach. Our educational and governmental systems are very different. At the time, all Egyptian scientists were employed by the government: they received money to support their research as well as their salaries. They were unaccustomed to our competitive granting systems and concluded that our “colonial” approach was demeaning. I knew that there would be further discussion on this point, especially when it came to evaluating the results of our research.

Eventually, we reached a large building located near the Nile River. We entered the spacious lobby and took an elevator to the second floor. Bill led me along a dimly lit hallway to an apartment which, he said, served as base, bedroom and breakfast nook for visiting scientists.

Before he left, Bill said, “Oh, yes. I almost forgot to tell you. Dr. Wali, the Minister of Agriculture, would like to see you tonight. A driver will pick you up at 10:00 tonight. Good idea to get some sleep.”

He intimated that such midnight meetings could go on for hours. I thought, “Exactly what I need after 14 hours in flight.”

In the apartment I met several Davisites, project leaders who happened to be in Cairo at the time. After a quick hello, I excused myself, cleaned up, and went to bed after setting an alarm and requesting backup.

I was very surprised and a little apprehensive about Minister Wali’s invitation (command performance?). I didn’t fully comprehend that as Chair of the Vegetable Crops Department I had a highly

significant position in the project. As we drove to his home, an apartment on the 10th floor of a multi-story building that belonged to his family, I tried to prepare myself for the unexpected. First of all, why me? Well, I was Chair of my Department. Maybe not so much in California, but in Egypt, a Professor and Department Head is a very powerful and respected person. So maybe I was getting a little respect. But to a meeting at his home?

Then I began to speculate. Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian President, had flown to Jerusalem in late 1977 to discuss peace with Menachem Begin, Prime Minister of Israel. Sixteen months later, on March 26, 1979, the heretofore mortal enemies signed an unbelievable “Treaty of Peace.” Wali might have learned that I am Jewish and thought that it might benefit the program in some way: a go-between Egyptian and Israeli scientists? A symbolic display of fairness and equality? I doubted both of these premises.

Then time ran out. I was at his door. My driver knocked and, after a moment, Minister Wali opened it and, with a warm handshake, invited me in.

“Welcome,” he said as he led me into his very large, dimly lit, apartment. It was furnished in “Baroque,” with very heavy-looking sofas and chairs. A number of small side-tables were bedecked with highly ornate lamps and heavily decorated lampshades. A long table in the center of the dining room was carved elaborately with curlicue palm leaves, much like the sculptured work my father did when he was employed by a furniture company in Cairo during World War I. Minister Wali motioned me to a sofa, while he chose a nearby armchair. That there appeared to be no one else in the apartment gave me some unreasonable concern. I credited this feeling to my brief visit to the Agriculture Ministry that day where, seemingly, every item of business was inevitably being discussed in groups, all of the participants talking simultaneously. Yet, because of his demeanor and, ultimately, the substance of his conversation, Minister Wali soon dispelled any qualms I might have had.

He was a gentle, soft-spoken man, fortyish, with a tan complexion, stocky, about my height, balding, and with piercing hazel eyes. He didn’t smile freely, but in his calm, softly inflected speech and without the usual preliminaries, I soon realized that he intended to use this time to inform me of his vision and plans that would flow from the peace. I sat back and listened in wide-eyed wonder as he spoke prophetically of a new environment in Egypt and throughout the Middle East.

“I believe there will be peace between Israel and other Arab nations as well,” he said. “There will be a Middle East Common Market that will include Israel and Arab countries. We will have tourism between our countries.” He spoke of open trade and the exchange of ambassadors between Egypt and Israel. Peace and prosperity would finally come to the region.

Never had I heard any Arab leader speak in these terms. Apparently, Sadat had decided he was in a position to promote international peace. After listening for years to the exhortations of such men as Nasser and Gaddafi, I had adjusted to their violent statements not only about Israel, but also the entire Western world. To listen to Wali talk was a breath of fresh air. After all, he was a Minister of the government of Egypt and, I later realized, was held in very high esteem by President Sadat. In fact, he held the position of Minister of Agriculture, but for some time held the additional title of Deputy Prime Minister.

The conversation did not wane (although I was beginning to), but continued, mainly with Wali expressing his lofty thoughts, not leaving much room for discussion or question. I did manage to ask, “How do you see such progress taking place?” He essentially brushed off the question, as if to say, “Don’t bother me with details.” Rather, he pursued his main goal: to create an image of a changed Middle East with the aid of successful programs such as the USAID-Egypt Project.

I took a moment to reflect on my passivity in the face of his monologue. Only later, after other meetings with him, did I come to see that this was his style, probably arising from his position as an unchallenged administrator. He admitted that progress had been slow with our project, mainly due to organizational issues, but he offered a very optimistic perception: “It will be fine. It will work out,” as if he was willing it. I suspected that this positive attitude served him well day-to-day, considering all the difficulties his country was facing at the time.

Now it was his turn to be “wide-eyed.” I told him of my father’s “escape” from Jerusalem early in World War I, his train trip to Cairo with his father, and his experience working and teaching in Assuit in Egypt.

Later, this topic would raise eyebrows for many of the Egyptian scientists who, obviously, had heard the story from Wali. I asked him about his family. He asked me about mine. A cup of tea, and he continued to discuss the Project. By then I was exhausted, as many hours had elapsed since I had had any real sleep.

Then it struck me that Wali may have had a purpose in providing such an optimistic appraisal of the Project, as well as sharing confidences

with me. I sensed that he wanted me to be comfortable, even intrigued, with what I was hearing. Although he did not directly raise the prospect of my becoming more involved in the USAID-Egypt Project, I speculated that this was his intent.

Irrespective of his reasoning or intent, I had already made up my mind. By his remarkable presentation, Minister Wali had convinced me to reconsider my role in the Project. When I became Chair of the Vegetable Crops Department, I was immediately involved in learning the ropes and starting to rebuild the Department. The thought of undertaking yet another administrative role seemed an insurmountable task, especially as I wanted to continue teaching and maintaining research, to say nothing of having time for family and friends.

Another important consideration was the political atmosphere in Egypt, especially as my associations with Israel were well known. I assumed that the Egyptians would not be very welcoming and that I would, therefore, have difficulty executing my duties were I to become involved in the Egypt Project.

Now, in Minister Wali's apartment, my resistance dissolved and a kernel of hope took root. Dating from my father's stories of life in Palestine to my own political observations in my adult life, I had had a personal wish to see an end to strife in this region. I now was ready to share Wali's unlimited enthusiasm and take a position with the Project, in spite of my concerns. With the door Wali was opening, I might personally help to bring peace to the Middle East by building cooperation through agriculture. Perhaps I betrayed some of this newfound purpose, because (mission accomplished?) he soon terminated our discussions.

He escorted me to my car, whose driver had been patiently waiting outside the apartment house. We exchanged friendly "goodbyes" with a warm handshake from someone I now believed was truly interested in making important changes.

I entered through the rear door of the sedan and, as we drove off, waved goodbye to Dr. Wali. But excited about the successful outcome of our meeting, I *felt* like I had entered through the *front* door.

Halas¹

When the California-Egypt Project was initiated, it was agreed by both sides that it would be a long-term program; it had an optimistic and positive beginning. However, after a rocky start in the first few years, followed by a period of rapprochement and considerable success in the progress of the work, the UC Davis administration from the top down began to question the future of the project. As seen earlier, most of

the problems were of a cultural nature with respect to administration, financial issues and different views of the work ethic. These issues, coupled with unexpected sensitivities and perceptions by personnel on both sides, added hot pepper to the atmosphere. Despite highly effective work by the UCD staff in Cairo, Bill Sims and Ron Voss, who made every effort to maintain a friendly atmosphere for all, the fabric of our association began to fray.

Probably I should have been able (willing?) to listen sooner to the rumblings from our administration. Clearly, the tensions generated by El Azouni's relentless attack on the structure of the project, how it was administered and by whom, and his repetitious diatribes about the bilateral allocation of funds to Egyptian and American administrations alike, rather than solely to Egypt, wore thin. Nevertheless, I remained hopeful until the actual end was in sight. By the middle of 1983, the sounds of discord, especially on our side, had surfaced to a point that what had been a shadowy idea of an early termination became a reality in the minds of our administration.

Despite the gathering clouds, for the most part the work proceeded successfully, the Egyptian scientists remained happy with what they were doing and, as far as my ears could tell, with their American scientific associates who likewise remained highly committed. No doubt, Agricultural Minister Wali was aware of the growing animosity and the increasing coolness of the UCD administration who otherwise might have been considering how to improve and even expand the project. If they seemed withdrawn, they were.

Finally, the word came to us from Davis that the program would end with the completion of the five-year contract period. Despite the warnings, I was initially uncertain, perhaps foolishly, hoping that this was a ruse to "shake them up." But it was no ruse. These intentions were expressed at joint meetings of administrators both in Davis and Cairo; the Davis contingent would definitely leave.

The main responsibility for closing down was borne on the broad shoulders of Frank Child, the American Project Director, and the Co-Directors, Sims and Voss. Gradually, the news got out and the response saddened me greatly. Almost all the Egyptian scientists I talked to asked repeatedly, "You are not really leaving . . . are you?" Indeed, it seemed to us that our administration could hardly wait. Nevertheless, the Egyptians continued to work on their projects, and so did we, 'til the end.

There were rounds of goodbyes, expressions of regret and even instances of hostility. It is difficult to be rejected and, I imagine, more so because it is not easy to avoid the fact that we were there "to help them."

There were smiles and small talk but, in fact, the atmosphere at the end was one of regret and disappointment.

Many of the UC scientists felt the loss of the project personally, and openly expressed regret at the decision. Some maintained their associations after the project terminated; they sponsored some of their counterparts on leaves or, in the case of the junior scientists, for advanced studies in Davis. After the work was officially terminated, I wrote to Agriculture Minister Wali, but he never answered.

It was clear that there had to be a written record of the project, and a “hurry-up” volume was produced which summarized its history from inception, a brief overview of the projects, and of the personnel who conceived them. It lies on a shelf somewhere, although a few participants still have a copy.

Looking backward, I view the project with a mixture of both regret and relief—relief to be free of the unnecessary tensions, especially considering my ongoing responsibilities at home; regret because I had been so deeply involved and there was still so much unfinished business that might have helped nurture peace in the Middle East.

Now as I write about it, I am disappointed that so little of the program is remembered here in Davis.

¹ Halas means “finish, the end”

Who Was That Guy?

The thought of giving up work had never entered my mind before 1991, when I was faced with making a speedy decision as to whether to take early retirement. I had no plans and no desire to take that step, and doing so was one of the most painful actions in my life. I loved my job, loved the University and felt fulfilled in a way that I had never imagined I could be when I arrived in Davis.

In truth, though I was excited to receive the “happy to inform you” offer from my future department head, I was inwardly uncertain that I could ever make it alongside a faculty which did so much to create the science and applications that led to the abundance of food that we enjoy, and that have remarkably enhanced the economy of this state.

I felt I knew my strengths and, even more so, my weaknesses. However, I was confident that I did have what, even today, I consider to be an important component of success: motivation. It didn’t hurt that I also had a healthy dose of compulsiveness that drove me to work totally ridiculous hours and to seek perfection where a B+ would have been adequate.

Despite my positive feelings about my job, I rarely felt confident that the work was complete and, accordingly, I drove myself at whatever task I undertook. Even now, as I write this story, I know that I will comb and groom it for an inordinate amount of time. Norma will gladly confirm this; she frequently questions why I take so much time reviewing. I have only a perfectionist’s answer. I need to have it right, not only for myself, but for others who will read and critique it.

Why all the detail about my job performance when I’m supposed to talk about retirement? Mainly because I never believed that I would have anything to do after I retired. I imagined I would continue working like Charlie Rick, a renowned geneticist in my department, who had to quit at age 85, only because he injured himself.

My retirement trajectory was slightly different. In fact, Bruce Bonner, a botanist friend, and I continued working for six years on a grant we received the year we officially retired. During that period, my time and activity in the lab declined steadily as the project wound down. The notion that I had elected to retire weighed heavily on my mind, and was depressing. I had never prepared myself emotionally for separation from research.

The golden parachute the University offered was too good to refuse, but it came very suddenly. I needed those transitional years to disengage gradually and arrive at a moment when I could actually let go

and move on. After year six, when I asked Bruce whether he wanted to renew, he answered, "Hell no!" After continuing our research all those years, this was now exactly my sentiment, as well.

Retirement had crept into my way of life as I gradually spent less time in the lab, adding new activities all the while. I came to realize that in the real world there was serious volunteer work to be done in addition to simply taking time for pure fun, such as travel vacations, rather than travel to conferences. I began taking adult education classes, and recreational writing, which has increasingly become a major activity. I renewed my involvement with Hillel at UC Davis and Congregation Bet Haverim, and reactivated my political interests and involvement.

Something else has changed for me, something of which I was virtually unaware. I began to look back and accept myself in a way that I rarely had before. I still work intensely at what I am doing, but with a great sense of security. I have even come to accept that I did pretty well during my working career.

I have more time for family and have become increasingly appreciative of Norma, the way she thinks and reasons, her sense of humor, her maturity, kindness, honesty and insights into people and events. These qualities, and others, have helped cement our relationship even more, and I have come to appreciate her advice and counsel as we continue to "mature."

Remembrances of a Fiftieth Class Reunion

A few weeks ago, in preparation for painting the entryway of our home, Norma and I removed all the pictures from the walls. Manuel and Reynaldo had done an excellent job of creating a warm, “taupey” atmosphere to replace the cool white walls we had lived with since time immemorial. After the paint had dried, we began to replace the pictures. One of these, an 8” x 10” framed photograph of the beautiful, rolling Palouse hills in northern Idaho and western Washington, dredged up some memories, and I began to remember details of my fiftieth class reunion at the University of Idaho in 2000 A.D.

The Palouse hills, luscious green during the late spring—golden yellow in late summer and fall—were, unexpectedly, to be the landscape of my undergraduate experience at the University of Idaho for the four years I spent there, 1946 to 1950. I wondered about who might be present at the reunion and, while I had maintained “holiday card contact” with several of my friends, how they would seem after such a long separation. My memory was accidentally heightened yesterday when I came upon a folder containing a list of participants and other materials we were given to commemorate our visit.

Norma and I drove to Moscow in late March, a few days before the reunion was to begin. We headed north through the lush agricultural region of southern Oregon and then turned east where the countryside would soon turn dry, reminiscent of the unwatered areas of the Central Valley of California. Eventually, we crossed the border into southern Idaho, passing through Parma, where I had spent a happy summer working at the University of Idaho Parma Branch Experiment Station. We continued on to Boise, then a pleasant, small city, now a larger, more interesting one. The drive north resurrected distant memories of the beautiful, sometimes rugged, scenery of central Idaho; we passed lakes and villages, some not much larger than when I was there as a student.

While I had heard that Moscow had changed, it was surprising to see that it had become a much nicer, more sophisticated city than the village I had found in the middle of “dried pea” fields when I first got there. The well-planned streets, lined with interesting stores and restaurants, sparked my memory of the barren “Varsity” beer hall that we students inhabited on Friday nights. I was happy to see the campus again. Although it is considerably larger, it is still beautiful and accessible.

However, the reunion with old friends was by far the best part of the experience. I missed Gary Flory who died some 10 years ago, but was happy to see his widow, Barbara, with whom I exchange letters from

time to time. Gary, a veteran of WWII, as were most of my friends at the Campus Club, the Coop where I lived and worked for four years, was constant about sending Christmas cards that were always full of detailed information about the condition of the farm he had inherited from his parents, and his hopes for having “a better year next year.” Despite the sometimes severe Idaho weather, especially early in the growing season, I think he did well, but it is in the nature of farmers to expect more. Gary was a good-natured ringleader who would often initiate plans for entertainment—whether touch football or a night out on the town. Together with Bob Hardin, whom Gary rechristened “Hogan,” and a few others, we were never at a loss for things to do, even if it meant piling into one of the small dorm rooms to shoot the bull, or into Hogan’s 1934 two-door Chevy, replete with rumble seat. (Gary taught me to drive in this vehicle.) As I was eighteen when I arrived in Idaho, I never got over the fact that these “older men” included me in their circle. I guess they liked kidding me about my Brooklyn accent, harassing me about being from “the big city” and arguing politics.

Everyone liked Hogan, a bright, tall, gangly, slightly “stooped” farm boy with a great sense of humor and a strong western twang. He was a glider pilot during World War II and had an entertaining way of describing his experiences, even the scary ones, punctuating them with a comical flailing of his arms. He also had a vulnerability about him that sometimes made him the brunt of a joke, but he always answered with humor, his eyes twinkling.

Having been brought up on farms, my friends would not have been described as “cultured” in the sense that a New Yorker would have understood. Yet I found them interesting and engaging because of their practical outlook on life, their self-sufficiency, gained from growing up and working on farms, and their commitment to friends and families. I took them to be very decent and honest people, devoid of guile.

The reunion was about as such reunions are expected to be. At our first tentative encounters, our eyes were cast downward to the buttons we were given bearing a picture of our 1950 faces. We reminded each other of who we were; we told our stories, heard administrators extolling the wonders of the University and accepted the propaganda that was circulated to us. I enjoyed the campus tours, listened dutifully to the appropriate speeches and ate the obligatory chicken dinner. Generally, I was happy to be there for the few days of the celebration.

It was a delight to meet Bob Hardin some 50 years later, as well as his wife, Betty. Norma came to like them as well. One evening, eight of us congregated in our bedroom at the motel where our group of friends had agreed to stay. Naturally, the main topic was “old times.” I

especially enjoyed talking with Bob and once again appreciated his friendliness and warm personality. When he was still a student at the University of Idaho, Bob took advantage of his GI benefits and was able to buy land at Moses Lake, Washington, that he and his family would eventually develop and farm. He still farms it and, while there was no dearth of discussion about crops and weather, he revealed a side that I had not previously appreciated. The “new” Bob, his once stark black hair now graying, liked to talk about music and books. Considering that my 50-year-old memories were of a relatively unlettered man, I was amazed to hear of his current interests. With enthusiasm, he discussed a book he was reading, “The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of The Oxford English Dictionary.” When I returned home, I enjoyed reading it immensely. When we separated, it was with warmth and good intentions about maintaining our connections. We did this for a year or so, but, regrettably, the new bonds soon dissolved.

After the reunion ended, we spent some time with Barbara Flory, with whom I reminisced about “the old days” and with whom we spent a pleasant few days in Lewiston, Idaho, where she lives. It was then that Barbara gave us the picture of the Palouse Hills that hangs in the entryway. Again, it was a time spent in remembrance and I left feeling very connected to her, although our contacts once again diminished to an exchange of holiday notes.

Our drive back to Davis offered new views of the beautiful scenery of western Washington and Idaho. Though it was a pleasure to return to the University and to participate in my 50th reunion, the best reunion was with old friends, savoring memories and sharing new ones with Norma.

Hillel Then and Now

While I was working on my doctorate at Michigan State, Norma and I became familiar with Hillel in a limited way. Invited by a Jewish faculty member, we occasionally attended events there. At the time, I was totally immersed in my academic studies and had little time for much else.

We moved to Davis in 1953. The campus had 5,000 students, and no facility for Jewish students to meet one another. There were a number of Israeli students in my department, and I met other Jewish students in my classes. People seemed hungry for a way to connect with other Jews, and I felt it was important for these students to have a place to develop their identities in an atmosphere that supported Jewish values. At the same time, we wanted to provide a social atmosphere where students could enjoy their “free hours.”

We began by inviting students to our home. We would gather on an occasional Sunday morning for a huge treat: lox and bagels, which Norma and I prepared. (Although procuring these ingredients is trivial now, with Noah’s Bagels, Trader Joe’s and Costco nearby, at that time a supply run to Sacramento or beyond was required to buy these exotic ingredients.)

Initially, these were social gatherings of 10-20 students, and as word spread and the group grew, we began to consider a more formal structure. I had a real desire to make these kids feel at home, and also was interested in having more structure and content when we met. I facilitated some discussion groups, and found that individuals also sought me out for advice and support. I enjoyed being a willing ear and guide for students exploring personal and identity concerns.

As interest built among Jewish students, we started local discussions about creating a Jewish place for them in Davis. Although there was support for the idea, funding sources in Davis were insufficient. I approached the Jewish Federation of Sacramento to get names of potential supporters. Two pivotal early contacts, Milt Levinson and Nate Rothberg, were highly supportive of the idea, and proved a significant force in fundraising. I began to network, giving presentations, reaching out to individuals in Sacramento and, later, San Francisco, to garner financial support. During this time, as a young faculty member, I had to balance the programming and fundraising activities needed to develop what would become Hillel while also aggressively continuing to build my academic career.

When I was invited to join the Sacramento Jewish Federation's Board of Directors, I gained access to a broader audience of potential Hillel supporters. Ultimately, a plan emerged to affiliate with the national Hillel organization. Meetings ensued, and funds were raised, mostly from a small number of private donors. Six or seven years later, we were able to rent a modest bungalow on A Street in Davis.

There were a series of work parties to spruce up the little house. The building was painted white with blue trim, carpet was installed and a blue and white "Hillel" sign was proudly hung near the front door. Happily, students began to come.

I was proud to serve as the founding Director of Hillel. In 1965, there were probably 250 Jewish students at UC Davis. Early programs were led by Sacramento Jewish community members, and there were lectures by UC Davis faculty members; social events and parties also attracted students. The lox and bagel gatherings moved to Hillel House where the small kitchen became a congenial gathering place.

There was continued interest from some Davisites, but mostly the Sacramento community, to purchase the property. In 1967, with the aid of a generous gift of seed money from Joseph Pedott of San Francisco, we were able to do so.

Shortly after this, the demands of my academic career forced me to step aside from the Hillel Director role. The program's growth was sufficient to justify a salaried staff leader, and I needed to focus on my research, teaching and family time.

Over the years, I have continued to be invested in Hillel's evolution, serving on its Board, helping to select various Hillel Directors, raising funds and attending Hillel events. As the program grew over the years, I was still an active supporter, though less instrumentally involved on a regular basis. Over 45 years, the number of Jewish students on campus swelled to approximately 4,500. With increased attendance and expanded programming, it was clear that we needed a larger facility. There were many years of arduous fund raising and struggle to gain City Council and community approval for construction.

I was so excited when we broke ground to build a new Hillel House on the site of the original little bungalow and the property next door. After 45 years, the dedication of the new Hillel House in 2012 was truly a thrilling moment. It is amazing to think that the seeds of this wonderful, 4,500-square-foot facility first germinated in our living room more than fifty years ago!

Hillel has grown significantly since it was founded near the Davis campus and has expanded programs to CSU Sacramento (CSUS).

From a place sustained by the love and energy of a small number of committed people, it has successfully achieved national accreditation.

Why have I maintained involvement with Hillel for more than fifty years? First, I have greatly enjoyed getting to know students, dealing with their issues and advising them. Some of the best friendships of my life came through this affiliation, and I have enjoyed many meaningful, ongoing connections as a result of my involvement. To this day, I rarely miss a Tuesday lunch at Hillel. I still have a great deal of pleasure mingling with the students, and offering a willing ear. Secondly, I have enjoyed nurturing an idea from infancy to maturity. My participation in developing this organization from birth has given me pride, satisfaction and inspiration.

The Davis Human Relations Council

At a Bar-Mitzvah party in the early '70s, I bumped into Frank Wolf, a friend, who embraced me more warmly than ever while launching into a paean about what "a great guy you are."

Frank is normally a smiley, effusive, warm person, but he was unusually expressive as he told me that he had recently bumped into Isao Fujimoto, a mutual friend, and member of the UC Davis faculty. A civil rights activist, Isao had launched into a discussion of the slow progress of social change in Davis over the past forty-odd years.

"Davis was a racist city when I joined the faculty in the early '60s," he said. "Even though I was lucky and got a job at UC Davis, as a Japanese-American I felt limited about what I could accomplish. We lacked a community."

Then he told Frank, "That all changed when Larry Rappaport started the Davis Human Relations Council."

Shocked, I answered, "*Whoa* there, Frank. I was certainly involved in founding the organization and was its first president, probably because no one else wanted the job. However, some others were deeply involved as well. Will Lotter, Richard Holdstock, Tom Frankel and John Pamperin were all founders of DHRC. They were activists and had worked to promote equality in the community well before I got involved. We also had strong support from Bob Senghas, the minister of the Unitarian Fellowship." (Today the Unitarian Church.)

"Yeah, yeah," Frank retorted, "but Isao said you were instrumental in getting it going and in working to make things happen." I stopped arguing at this point.

Frank asked about our strategy for creating change on campus. We formed DHRC with two objectives: to raise consciousness about racism in town and on campus, and to actively promote hiring of minority members. Because UC Davis was the chief employer in Davis, we decided to focus on University hiring policies. I called for an appointment with Dennis Shimek, head of Personnel at UCD and, together with Richard Holdstock and Will Lotter, met in Shimek's office.

We said that members of DHRC and many others were increasingly concerned about the scarcity of minority students, staff and faculty on the Davis campus.

I quoted from a conversation with a Black student about being a minority member on a virtually all-white campus. "We don't feel comfortable in Davis because there are so few of us. When I walk in town or on campus, I feel on edge. People stare at me."

We made the case that UC Davis was slated to become a major UC campus. This was prime time for the University to create policies to encourage minorities to apply for staff positions at UCD. As head of Personnel, he was certainly in a position to lead in addressing minority issues in hiring staff at UCD.

Mr. Shimek seemed agreeable, even positive, in his responses, and we left satisfied that we had had a fair hearing. We weren't naïve in believing that we had "scored," but we did feel that the visit had served to sensitize him about the faulty employment policy on the Davis campus.

Undoubtedly, our cause was aided by the remarkable civil rights movement around the nation, and DHRC programming reflected this. While much of our activity centered on Blacks, our actions were noted in the Asian community, as well. We invited leaders and elected officials to speak about racial issues, and were impressed with the attendance and interest at such events.

In all, we felt that our first year was a remarkable success. The DHRC did not last very long, in part because the City of Davis recognized that it had a significant job ahead of it and, eventually, established a commission with a similar name.

Frank had triggered long-dormant memories. Although the accolades he delivered warmed my heart, my fondest memories are of the great fellowship and joint efforts made by a small, dedicated group of which I was only one.

A Letter to My Father

Dear Dad,

I can't believe I'm sitting here in 2001 reading this essay to the Aging Bulls, five Jewish friends whose camaraderie has prompted many reflective discussions over the years. We are reading letters we wrote to our fathers. This isn't easy for me, Dad, because it isn't my intention to cause you pain. But I've traveled a long way since your sad death and I think it is time I settled accounts with you.

About three years ago in a class on "Writing a Family Biography," I wrote the following essay about you:

As a young child, I saw Dad as a man who loved his family and was generally kind to me, a vital person with broad interests, for whom making art was part of his very being. He was strong minded, judgmental, easily angered and quick to punish. Optimistic at first, and then progressively more disappointed as the Great Depression intensified, he turned inward as his dreams of artistic and financial success waned. He became ever more critical of the economic system that he felt was responsible.

In my pre-teens I grew increasingly aware of Dad's exacting model of appropriate behavior: traditional, old world, controlling, requiring acknowledgment and demanding "respect" perhaps more than "love." He was always hospitable, yet frequently withdrew from those who did not measure up; sociable, yet isolated, idealistic, but eventually, deeply cynical about people, society and even (less obviously) himself.

As a teenager I noticed that Dad became inwardly self-doubting, yet outwardly proud, ever more self-centered and humorless. His sudden angers were given expression in his piercing, narrowing eyes, accentuated by the Bell's palsy that contorted the right side of his face. His silent rages were almost palpable to those who observed them.

In later years, Dad was depressed, bitter, a defeated, unhappy, insecure man whose main pleasures came from his artwork, memories of better times, and

from his appreciation and love of his wife, children, and grandchildren who still remember his kindness and attentiveness.

As I look back, I have come to appreciate Dad in ways I had not previously experienced him. To think of the way he led his life in Palestine, Egypt and Malta, and during his early years in America is to recognize that, as a motivated young man, he must have been an optimist with a strong sense of himself. Setting aside his old-world behaviors, I see now that the embittered man he became was the product of some very bitter life experiences. Sadly, the man I came to know was not the man he might have been.

Dad, I surprised myself when I wrote that piece because some of it sounds so angry. Over the years since you died, I have found myself needing to explore and rationalize our relationship. Writing about your life experiences as a young man, before I was born, gave me new understanding about you and your behavior. Had I been there for those experiences, I might have written a very different, more accepting character description for my original class assignment.

I started writing a family biography with several of the incredible stories you told about your life as a young man. In your earlier years you encountered and mastered a variety of adversities, soaked up cultures and foreign languages, gained a broad understanding of the wider world, and the confidence to succeed and thrive within it. From these stories I gained insights about how you might have been as a young man that led me to a different view of the man in whose home I grew up. I came to see you as positive, optimistic, self-reliant and forward-looking.

These qualities helped you through some amazing experiences, but from the time I was seven or so, I had a diminishing sense of those positive attributes; you had begun to change away from the man I thought you were. I began to perceive you as an angry, critical and depressive person. I know you loved me and took pleasure in the good things I did, but your temper and sometimes vicious physical response to “the bad things” I did were out of proportion to the reality of those acts.

What were those acts? Picking a fight with Libby (the reverse was the normal pattern), responding to her frequent, irritating taunts which ended in me yelling, “Momma!” or “Dad, Libby is throwing rocks at me.” Of course, we never had rocks in our home, except those that you painted on canvas, but her taunts were as painful.

I did not understand the dark, brooding man you became, the angers that arose from nowhere, the depressive silences and the outbursts about almost anything untoward that that took place.

What happened to that positive, sociable, self-confident man who could lead the early life you did? I now believe that the Great Depression was pivotal in changing the trajectory of your life and personality. The financial losses you sustained, and the career momentum you lost because few people were interested in having their portraits painted during the Great Depression, contributed to your own deepening dejection. I know it hurt to see Mom in the street selling ladies nylon stockings to her friends and that she sometimes borrowed money from our neighbors for food. I believe that the damaging effects of the Great Depression affected your personality. That your business never really got much better for the rest of your life didn't help your self-esteem.

The Great Depression may also have accounted for your tensions and angers that sometimes erupted violently over minor issues. I received beatings that, at least by today's standards, were excessive. Libby, four years older than I, felt your changes even more than I did; she told me she felt that you didn't love her, or, if you did, you never told her so.

No, I haven't forgotten that you were proud of me and especially my "successes," but I could never escape the feeling that they were compensation for your own diminishing ego as your professional difficulties increased. It was difficult to be an artist during the Depression, and your identity was totally linked to your profession.

Maybe I could have come to terms with your behavior had we been able to discuss our views openly. Unfortunately, it was not in the character of our relationship to engage in an interactive dialogue about matters that evoked powerful emotional responses in you.

I realize that I participated in the failure to come to terms with each other while you were alive. I rarely sensed you would be receptive to this type of interaction which was distant from the behavior of your generation and times. As a result, here I sit at age 85, gradually coming to terms with the man and father you were, and the son and father I am.

While you were often rigid and dogmatic, you set standards of behavior which I internalized. In large part, my critical judgment skills have served me in good stead throughout my career. The love of learning and value you placed on knowledge nurtured my drive for education and academic success.

I have always been very focused and professionally driven. Early in my career, the demands of succeeding in the laboratory, teaching and publishing to attain tenure created significant tension and consumed

much of my time; the success I achieved came at a price to family and personal relationships. When I was younger, certainly during the period when our children were growing up, like you, I had little patience and was quick to anger. I was not given to gentle, exploratory discussions over time, although I have mellowed. This personality shift evolved as I achieved my professional goals, relieving some of the pressure I had always felt to measure up. Through life experience, and counseling, I have become less judgmental, more receptive and empathic.

I realize you gave me many important values that have helped shape my life. Like you, I am proud of my family and take pleasure in the growth and successes of my loved ones. You had a great appreciation of beauty in art and nature which were an integral part of our daily life. This essential value certainly sculpted and enhanced my interest in art, visiting museums, music and other cultural events.

You had strong political beliefs which were fueled by your daily reading of the *New York Times* and mandatory attendance at the radio. You would erupt with commentary in reaction to events and individuals whom you heard. Mention the name “Joe McCarthy” and you would explode in anger about the extreme, repressive political beliefs and anti-Semitism he preached. I clearly remember you would jump to your feet and yell “Nazi” at McCarthy’s words as they shrilly came across the radio waves. Your sensitivity to politics made a strong impression on me. I became a left-wing liberal and, although I have become more central in my politics over the years, I still maintain a liberal position as a Democrat. I have translated my political beliefs into social action over the years, most actively during the civil rights era.

Your consistent pattern of taking long-distance walks demonstrated the importance of physical well-being, taking care of my body. (Of course the best walks led to the Horn and Hardart Automat for a light lunch, followed by—sound the trumpets!—a beautiful glace cake!)

You were a devoted husband. The love you shared with Momma formed a basis for my own loving, demonstrative relationship with Norma. Your often-expressed concern and responsibility for your family certainly impacted my thinking and behavior. I made a conscious choice to be an involved grandfather, regularly visiting with and sharing experiences with my five grandchildren.

You had a strong work ethic and principles—such as refusing to “go on the dole” during the Depression—which taught me the importance of standing up to adversity. Indeed, the experience of growing up with little taught me to manage and be satisfied with a

sufficient minimum of “stuff” and to be a careful steward, so different from my childhood years when we had few means.

Though you could have felt jealous, you encouraged, assisted and appreciated Mom’s success in her business. This attribute shaped my own values about equality in marriage, the importance of providing for family, and encouraging Norma’s career goals and aspirations.

Although you came from a very religious household, you were hostile to religion, yet maintained strong interest in the Bible and its characters, reflected especially in your artwork. Having been raised in your atheistic household, I also was inclined to be hostile to organized religion. That hostility led me to take religion courses in college which opened me to religious concepts and made me more accepting of all kinds of people. While I have great difficulty with the concept of a God in Heaven, I greatly appreciate the values and guidelines that Judaism provides.

Unlike you who refused to enter a synagogue, I am much more liberal and participate in religious services and holiday celebrations. I played a founding role in our Jewish Fellowship of Davis and served in several leadership roles over the years. Our children attended religious school and had Bat and Bar Mitzvahs at this temple. The tradition that Norma and I built of celebrating Jewish holidays at home continues to be a central reason for family gatherings to this day.

You might be mystified to see my ongoing participation in this community, now known as Congregation Bet Haverim. I am particularly proud of my role in the Congregation’s first capital campaign which raised about \$2 million to fund the renovation of the temple. Together with several others, I met with many members of the congregation over a year-and-a-half period to discuss the importance of their engagement in our community and to ask for a financial contribution. This involvement opened my eyes to the wonderful bunch we have in our membership and was a highly significant, motivating experience from which I derived a great deal of pleasure. You might be surprised to learn that I have a very warm relationship with Rabbi Greg Wolfe who has been with us for the past nineteen years.

You often invited your many friends to our home. Norma and I have continued in this tradition. Our active social life over the years has frequently revolved around entertaining at home, and getting together with friends to enjoy cultural outings and dining out.

When I began this piece, it was intended as a simple, short description about your character. However, your importance in my life, as expressed here, evoked a much larger exploration of your qualities and

their profound influence on the person I am, my life, and even that of my family.

With love and appreciation,
Your son, Larry

In Charge of David*

As a seventy-six-year-old adult I'm supposed to be
In charge of David, but at age 11, he's in charge of me.
When it comes to things electronic
His power is little short of tectonic.

He often finds occasion to remind me
That my memory is not all it's meant to be.
This is what happened recently,
I'll try to report it accurately.

In order to paint the living room wall,
The entertainment center was moved forward withal.
Behind the center the painters revealed
A tangled mass of wire, long concealed.
All of it was lying there.
What to do in my despair?
Hire a professional to take a day
And, of course, demand huge pay.

David said, "I'll fix it up
Put it back in shape, tip-top."
In my mind, I tittered
But lest he be embittered,
I thought, "Oh, well,
What the hell.
Give him a chance
To ring the bell!"

The very next morning, as agreed
David arrived on his two-wheeled steed.
But I, instead, was a-bed
On the physical therapist's bench.
My lower back a-drench
In hot, moist steam.
My eyes closed—in a dream
Of David's body dangled
In amongst the wires tangled.

* The BULLS were assigned the task of writing "If you were in charge." I thought, "What if you are not?" and wrote this, with a little help from my friend . . .

Meanwhile, at home, David is ready to begin
But grandpa is missing once again.
I forgot to tell him
I'd be late
For this very important date.

Rushing home, I flung open the door,
And saw David pacing the floor.
"Sorry I'm late," I said with chagrin,
"So what else is new?" he said with a grin.

His eyes alight, his brain ajingle,
He began the task with fingers nimble.
Soon there was a shout of joy
From this amazing adult-boy.

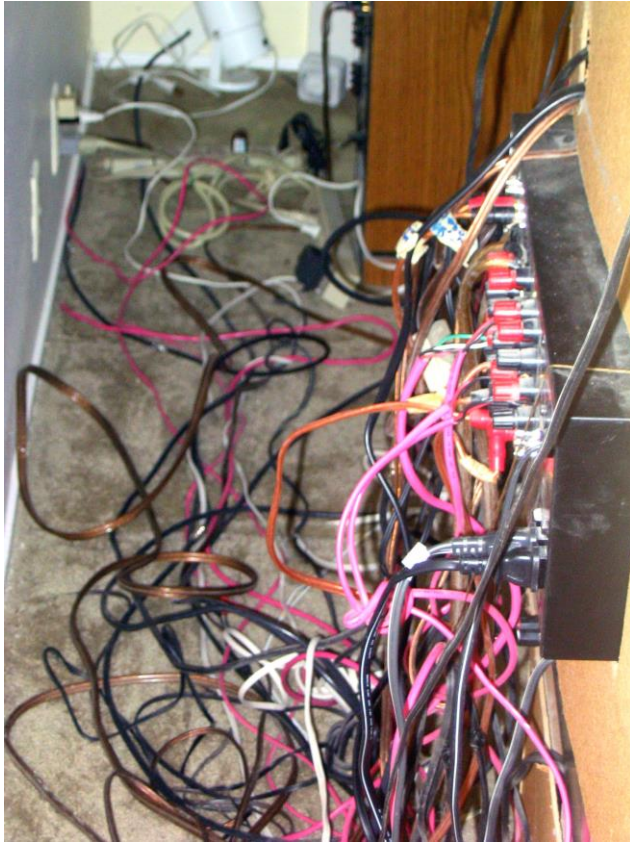
For the entire thirty minutes it took,
His cool confidence never shook;
And then, taking my arm in tow,
He led me on a one-man show.
And, of course, he let me know
The "Professional" who'd wired my system years ago
Was a weasel who, no doubt,
Clearly knew little about
The work which he'd been paid to do
The proof of which was in plain view.

He handed me a pile of excess wire
Now my garbage can to attire.
He flicked buttons and knobs,
His success to show.
In awe I watched the system glow.

ALL six speakers were working now,
In fact, ALL the components!
HOLY COW!!

And now I see his imprint forever
(How clever).
The last thing he pointed out
With a smile—not a pout
Was an acronym—DVD
(Short for DAVID)
Imprinted on my mind in letters large:
To forever remind me of WHO'S IN CHARGE!

July 12, 2004



Back To The Bronx

“Julie, I’d like to take you up on your offer to drive us over to my old neighborhood.” Norma and I were visiting Neal and Julie Gantcher, friends in Westchester, New York, for a few days in 2009, enjoying the sights of that upscale area. But the proposed visit to my childhood home at 776 Mace Avenue would be the first since I had left the Bronx at age 13, and my foreboding images were formed by views of the South Bronx on TV and the evening news.

“I have very fond memories of Mace Avenue and I hate to destroy them by returning to a decrepit ruin,” I said. “Oh, it won’t be that bad. Not every street in the Bronx is rundown,” she said. “Let’s go.”

As Julie drove expertly through the heavy traffic, I tried to recall details about the neighborhood. I said, “It’s hard to believe, but from the bedroom window of our apartment on the 6th floor, we could look down on single-family houses. Beyond them there were small vegetable farms stretching all the way to PS 89, my grade school. The houses were owned by Italian people who threw really great parties. Lots of music and laughter. I first heard *“Flat-Foot Floogie with the Floy-Floy”* while I watched a party from my window.”

As we approached Allerton Avenue, the business street, I reverted to Bronx jargon, “Boy, this sure ain’t the same place I came from!”

No trolley cars, but the “el” was still there. I focused for a moment on the stairs leading up to the train platform and tried to imagine the number of times I had climbed them to go somewhere “downtown.” The street, then barely trafficked, was choked with buses, cars, taxis and trucks, and the sidewalks were alive with bustling pedestrians. Instead of Jewish, Italian and Chinese restaurants and the little specialty stores and markets—fish, vegetables and fruits, bakery, meat and dairy—previously owned mainly by Jewish merchants, the stores and restaurants now strongly reflect the Hispanic inhabitants of the neighborhood. My mother and I would go to the bakery for bread and bagels, to the appetizer shop where we bought herring, smoked white fish and lox, and to Daitch’s Dairy for milk, butter and cheese. I remembered how I watched, always fascinated, as the grocer opened a refrigerator door that exposed a huge round tub of sweet butter placed on its side. He would then chop out a square of its bright yellow, aromatic contents, a near exact measure of the amount we had asked for. I looked for “Hymie’s Soda Fountain” where we went for the “world’s best” ice cream sodas and malteds. Of course, it was gone, along with virtually every other landmark whose

memory I had nurtured. Actually, I lightened up at the sight of White Castle Hamburgers, so there was a redeeming social significance to this visit! It felt good. But we didn't stop for one.

Julie was sympathetic: "You won't find many neighborhoods here exactly like the one you remember anymore." Which was exactly the reason that I had resisted returning. Finally, I mustered the courage and directed her to turn right one block, which brought us directly to my old apartment house. It looked smaller, less imposing than the neighboring buildings, a bit decrepit, its wrinkles reminding me that it is only slightly older than I am.

I said, "They stopped construction of those buildings during the Depression; they ran out of money, so only the foundations were completed. Great for the kids; we thought that the foundations were built for *us* to play on. We used to try to kill ourselves by climbing around them and jumping from one unfinished concrete window frame to the next."

Now there were multi-story buildings everywhere, some taller, more massive, overwhelming my apartment house that to me, as a child, had seemed so huge. It was nice to see that the small "Italian houses," as we called them, were still there.

I looked at the four street corners of "my block" and remembered mobs of kids playing kick-the-can, stickball, and ring-a-levio, or just hanging out; not very likely in the traffic of 2009. "We lived up there on the sixth floor, at the corner," I said. "That fire escape was ours. Sometimes, in the summer, I'd sleep on it when it was too hot to breathe inside the house. Sometimes I grew pots of flowers on it—four o'clocks."

By this time I was experiencing a queer mixture of depression and excitement.

"You know," I said, pointing toward a sea of apartment houses and very large commercial buildings, "there were large undeveloped areas over there. We called them 'the lots.'" I stood looking at the concrete and bricks and visualized the fields of grass and stands of native trees—beautiful maples and oaks that stretched for miles. "Over there, there were 20-foot-high boulders. We used to play 'King of the Hill' on them. You know, I must have been a pyromaniac. In the fall, the grass would dry up, and I'd set fire to it and watch while the firemen came to put it out. I was *baaaad*. In the spring, I'd grow a small garden there. The kids usually found it and wrecked it, but I'd do it again the next year. And the lots was where Annette gave me my first kiss."

We continued our drive. I actually felt tears well up at seeing PS 89, my grade school, and my first high school, Christopher Columbus. I

said, “I loved Columbus; used to open and close it.” The large building sat in an open field. Now it is surrounded by houses and apartments blocks. Not bad, but not the same.

Finally, the requisite visit to the “Coops.” We drove along the large, continuous block of red brick buildings, called the Cooperative Houses, that had been constructed with union money in the early ’30s, during the Depression, and which were populated mainly by Socialists and Communists.

I said, “We had friends living there who wouldn’t have had the money to live decently if it weren’t for their union. Many of them were dedicated to social change. They believed that the world would be a much better place if we would only follow the lead of the Soviet Union, if we shared the wealth more equitably.” I wondered what the present inhabitants believe today.

We drove away, past the Pelham Parkway train station, the Bronx Zoo, where I remember Mom and I being sprayed long-distance by a huge, malevolent tiger, and the now-shuttered Alexander’s Department store, second home to my sister and her friends during their teens.

Finally, we came to the dramatic Paradise movie theatre on Fordham Road. “We had very little money at that time, so it was a major event when our family walked three miles to see a Saturday matinee.” As we approached the building, I realized that its name was appropriate to its décor. The ceiling looked something like a planetarium; a blue heaven with lots of light bulb stars. We slowed to a crawl and I reflected on how fast life passes by; the padlocked doors and peeling paint remained on this place that, for me, was once one of my childhood’s major attractions. In some ways, the fate of the Paradise seemed a metaphor for the experience of my old neighborhood. But then, I realized that while something in it had died, my old neighborhood had, in fact, continued and was very much alive for many people, even if it had changed for me.

How Do You Know?

I never met a 20-year-old who did not think he was immortal. This is one quality that makes young people ideal for military service or other hazardous work. Younger people are generally high-risk takers who can be counted on to hurl themselves into action . . . whether military or bungee jumping.

Now, in 2002, at age 73, I find that, directly or indirectly, mortality is the subject of numerous conversations among my friends and acquaintances. When my aging group of friends gathers on a social occasion, most often our conversation begins with “grand rounds.” Yes, the kind of grand rounds physicians make when they visit their patients in the hospital. Only ours take place in a pleasant living room over a glass of wine. Inevitably, one of us will ask Jane or Barbara or Ed how they are feeling after their respective operations. Once answered, Tom or Stew or Norma will be queried about their latest medical procedure. Of course, this questioning is motivated by true concern, but lurking behind every such question may be yet another: “How am I doing?”

I frequently ask myself this question, especially when someone inquires, “How are you?” Unless I am actually having a problem, I usually answer, “I’m O.K. Well, the computer is working O.K.; it’s just the peripherals that aren’t doing so well. You know . . . the scanner is broken; the printer is broken. Well . . . maybe the CPU is only a 486.” It’s good for a laugh, and keeps me upbeat, but I would not deny the fact that I do look daily at the obituaries to see if I am listed.

At this time in my life, I still have a bit of the 18-year-old in me. I am pretty healthy—the usual aches and pains—but I have no life-threatening illnesses (which means I am a frequent visitor to my doctor). I live well, love my family . . . my wife, kids and theirs . . . and my friends whom I can’t imagine being without. I enjoy as much of every day as I can, and stay engaged doing the things I want to do.

As I age, however, I do worry about the future quality of my life. A biologist’s view of senescence is that most cells begin to die as soon as they are made . . . some quickly, others more slowly. But, eventually, the machinery wears out, and death comes, hopefully during sleep; an ideal death.

Nevertheless, I am all too aware of the true terrors of aging: memory loss, diabetes, the sudden stroke, the heart attack . . . even the fall that may lead to permanent physical damage, a period of accelerated decline, and an even earlier, uncomfortable death. But greater yet than any of these is the terror of forgetfulness: thoughts of dementia and loss

of identity are most frightening to me. I have experienced it in my family; I'd rather not experience it myself.

Being aware of the inevitability of death has given me reason to reflect on what it is that gives life a special quality. As Morrie was dying ("Tuesdays with Morrie" by Mitch Albom), he had the willing ear of a young journalist whom he filled with his wonderful philosophy of life. It was almost too good . . . too perfect; but then Morrie was a most unusual man.

I think that having gone through life's various "Passages," so well described in books by Gail Sheehy, there is a heavy dose of uncertainty about our future that many of us prefer to set aside. After the immortal years, the thirties begin to bring reality into the equation and our first gray hairs introduce us to the reality of our limited sojourn here on Earth. How we will live the rest of our lives is necessarily a personal matter. We can exercise and eat our vegetables, but how and when we will die remains a mystery.

I have tried to identify thoughts or feelings that would embrace the quality of our existence, despite the uncertainties. I have found some appropriate expressions, not surprisingly, in literature, poetry, song, humor and folk experience. A poignant Jewish song, "*Vus is geven, is geven, is neetaw*" ("What Was Was, Is No More") undoubtedly was written during the time when the Czar of Russia was provoking anti-Semitism. Perhaps the author felt there was little left to believe in, that the word "love" might have seemed like a platitude.

The Bible is a constant source of strength for those who believe in a supernatural being. I have doubts about the existence of God, so have difficulty in finding solace in the thought of a hereafter. Yet many thoughts expressed in the Bible have value for me and are relevant to my quest for a unifying theme that would give me peace during my own devolution. The importance of love in our relationships is pervasive in the Bible; this emotion is the essence of innumerable poems, songs, and books.

Blues music grew out of the bitterness of slavery—truly composed of life's uncertainties. How uncertainty, love and mortality are intertwined is evoked beautifully in the following song.

For a Dancer

by Jackson Browne

Keep a fire burning in your eye
Pay attention to the open sky
You never know what will be coming down
I don't remember losing track of you
You were always dancing in and out of view

I must have thought you'd always be around
Always keeping things real by playing the clown
Now you're nowhere to be found

I don't know what happens when people die
Can't seem to grasp it as hard as I try
It's like a song I can hear playing right in my ear
That I can't sing
I can't help listening
And I can't help feeling stupid standing 'round
Crying as they ease you down
'Cause I know that you'd rather we were dancing
Dancing our sorrow away
(Right on dancing)

No matter what fate chooses to play
(There's nothing you can do about it anyway)

Just do the steps that you've been shown
By everyone you've ever known
Until the dance becomes your very own
No matter how close to yours
Another's steps have grown
In the end there is one dance you'll do alone

Keep a fire for the human race
Let your prayers go drifting into space
You never know what will be coming down
Perhaps a better world is drawing near
And just as easily it could all disappear
Along with whatever meaning you might have found
Don't let the uncertainty turn you around
(The world keeps turning around and around)
Go on and make a joyful sound

Into a dancer you have grown
From a seed somebody else has thrown
Go on ahead and throw some seeds of your own
And somewhere between the time you arrive
And the time you go
May lie a reason you were alive
But you'll never know

I feel a very close connection to this song. It hints at a possible future beyond our life on earth—but maybe not—and, in the last stanza, advises on how one should live “between the time you arrive and the

time you go.” While “love” isn’t mentioned specifically, I feel it overlays the entire song. And it talks about the quandary we all face as we continue on:

“And somewhere between the time you arrive
And the time you go
May lie a reason you were alive.
But you’ll never know.”

How do you know?

A Letter To My Grandchildren

My dearest Joel, David, Tamara, Henry and Lindsey, I am writing now, in 2014, to leave some thoughts about our times together. Please don't feel bad about this, because I have come to terms with my future and hope you can, as well. I have had a wonderful, eventful life, in no small way because you have all been an important part of it. I have spent a great deal of time thinking about our personal relationships, how I have felt about you at different times in our lives together. I am delighted with my memories, which are mostly sweet and full of love.

I often look at photos of you, many of which I made myself, so they have a very special meaning for me. I tried to photograph you at different times in your lives, just as I did your parents, Meryl, Debbie and Craig, as they were growing up with Grandma and me. I greatly enjoy our ever-changing display of family photos in the kitchen, many of which show each of you in your various pursuits across the years.

I can never describe the sensational feeling I experienced when we learned of your birth, Joel, our first grandchild. Grandma and I jumped up simultaneously when the phone rang. So did all the other members of our "chavura" who were asleep at the Frankel's cabin at Lake Tahoe. We all applauded in spontaneous appreciation of the moment. It was July 4, 1988, and we instantly knew what the phone call meant. We passed some wine around . . . yes, at 7:00 a.m.!

Grandma and I rushed from Lake Tahoe to San Diego to meet you, and to be with your parents. Of course, we immediately announced: "Joel, you are a beautiful baby." Your good humor and good nature as a baby predicted how fantastically good-humored and good-natured you are today. Grandma and I were certain that with Deb and David as your parents, you would be highly intelligent, and likely very amiable with friends and relatives. You know what? We were right! I really appreciate your ability to reason when faced with a difficult problem.

Aside from your bubbly nature as a child, we had no good reason to believe that you would have such a good sense of humor; I never saw your mom laugh so much as when she is with you. Nor did we expect you to be such a wonderful brother and pal to your sister, Tamara. Yes she's lovable, but I've never met any brother and sister who are so tightly bound and caring about one another. And you, Joel, as the older, unusually thoughtful sib, set the stage for this wonderful relationship which you both will undoubtedly enjoy and share for many years to come.

We, who are much less involved in sports than you and your dad are, never foresaw your interest and strengths in soccer, running, swimming, and surfing. Your general agility continues to be a source of pleasure. When we take you to the train station, you can't help but clamber up a bench. On family trips, you never met a rock you didn't want to climb!

I have taken a great deal of pleasure from your interest and understanding of Judaism. The image of you at the Bimah during your Bar Mitzvah is lodged clearly in my mind. The two years of preparation was a metamorphosis. You matured intellectually and socially, but also physically: from the young, round-cheeked boy, to a tall, thin handsome young man. Several years later, I was delighted to tour Hillel with you at the University of Washington, and see how your Jewish life and community were important to you. You have absorbed the value of "Tikkun Olam," healing the world; I am proud to see you engaged in many efforts to do so, such as heading a Jewish-Arab dialogue at UW, nurturing the fragile lagoons of San Diego, or working to preserve the environment in South Africa.

Joel, you are a helluva cook! Even at 14, you were at home in the kitchen. I really like your experimental approach; your recipes are unusual, but even more impressive is the appreciation you bring to each meal you prepare. You have interest about the source of the food, how it was grown, the subtlety of the flavors and textures. With you, food is not just a meal, but often is imbued with a sense of the spiritual. And, in good Jewish tradition, you use meals as a way to connect with others; it has been fun hearing of the various communal eating experiences you organized for Moishe House and other groups with which you've been involved.

You are unusual and thoughtful in the way you seek to understand things. You take from one experience and then go deeper to learn more. You strive to extract the essence from each experience, and to make a true connection with each person. I feel I really know you and always have a sense of connecting easily with you when we meet. The beautiful baby I met 26 years ago is now a beautiful young man, both inside and out.

David, I've been amazingly fortunate in having you so close to us. It was unexpectedly wonderful to be present in the delivery room, to see your head crown and hear your lusty scream. Somehow I kept it together and took many photos of you during your delivery.

Once you passed the early baby stage and began to express yourself, it was clear that you were an extraordinarily bright child with a great sense of humor. As you grew, we all marveled at how aware you

were of everything in your environment. I remember your Mom taking notes on all the precocious things you said. And of course, this development continued and has until this day.

One of my favorite memories is of a conversation we had when you were about six. We were in Sonoma with Grandma, your Mom and Guille, and Guille's family. We had just finished an enormous Thanksgiving turkey dinner at a restaurant named The General's Daughter, and you and I were sprawled out on a couch in the lounge, unable to move. I could see that, as usual, your shoelaces were untied, and I commented on this.

"Will you tie my shoelaces for me, Grandpa?" you asked. After failing to get you to do it yourself, I reached for your shoe and began to tie.

"Is this the way it's going to be when you're twenty, I asked?"

You immediately responded, "Yes, I am setting a precedent."

I laughed out loud, but somehow knew that in fact our relationship could easily be that way if I wasn't careful.

In fact, not only did you learn to tie your shoes, but you learned to wire cables, program robots and reciprocate in helping Grandma and me. I could go on talking about your native intelligence, your exceptional intuition and knowledge of computers and electronics, your uncanny ability to quickly whip off an excellent, meaningful poem or story, your reading skills, excitement about music ("music is my life"), and your interest in robots, Star Trek, cartoons, cooking and baking.

When Grandma and I came to visit you at University of Colorado, Boulder, during your freshman year, we were excited to see your involvement in so many different intellectual and social experiences. We were proud to see you teaching a class of high school seniors, your involvement in the honors engineering program and your easy social interactions.

Characteristically, you initiate and appreciate opportunities, and are there for your friends. Last year when some friends were planning their wedding on a shoestring, you volunteered to cater and DJ their wedding party. Over a period of months, you and your girlfriend tested and developed a menu to feed 200 people on a \$1,000 budget. You shopped, cooked, and delivered an A+ banquet.

At 21, I am so happy to see your success as a budding engineer. It was a thrill to hear that you were selected for a highly competitive internship at Microsoft in Seattle for summer of 2014. I look forward with interest to hearing how your experiences there will deepen and shape your thoughts about your future.

For me, the person you are is as important as your many accomplishments. I must spend a moment commenting on how sweet you can be, how loving to your whole family, and to Grandma and me. You met and conquered some very difficult challenges over the years. It is a delight to see your resilience and vitality. I appreciate how open and willing you are to engage with others. You are amazing in your perspective, sensitivity and understanding. I am so very pleased to know you as the level, outgoing, light-hearted, loving and thoughtful person you are.

Tamara, I was delighted to welcome you as my first granddaughter. You were a wide-eyed baby who grew into an observing child. You looked about, took it all in and were selective about sharing whatever judgments you made about what was going on.

Teasing, tickling, making silly faces and “shtick” were my specialties when playing with all of my grandchildren. You certainly had the good sense not to respond to all of my foolishness; you were discerning from early on. It was intriguing to see your personality develop. What emerged was your love of life, good humor, gentleness, inquisitiveness and love of beautiful things.

From an early age you have had a clear picture of what you want. I remember an incident when you appeared at eight in the morning for breakfast dressed in your beautiful birthday dress and Grandma suggested you might want to take it off so that it would stay clean until the evening birthday party.

You answered, “But Grandma, I waited all my life to wear this dress!”

Growing up in a home where physical activity is prized, I am not astounded that, like your brother, you became an excellent swimmer, a “striker” in soccer and an all-around strong athlete. When you were just 4 or 5, your antics—hanging upside down from the highest point on the highest monkey bars in the park, always left me worried and scared.

“How will she get control when she wants to come down?” I wondered as I watched—and hated to.

“Should I go stand underneath to catch her in case she falls?”

I didn’t. I just closed my eyes and knew inwardly that you were so competent at everything you do that you would be O.K. And I would be very proud of you.

What was surprising was how competitive you were with Joel’s friends, which I believe contributed to your self-confidence. To reach the wonderful treehouse that your dad and Joel built, the guys might or might not climb up there first, but you would certainly be present, striving to beat them up the ladder.

At age 9 or so, you were a beautiful girl who danced in the ballet, "The Nutcracker." You wrote interesting stories, meticulously drew pictures and studied avidly to be at the top of your third grade class. For your Bat Mitzvah, you were characteristically well-prepared and handled the important day with poise, grace and obvious joy.

As you moved into middle school and high school, your openness to trying new things was fun to see. You were experimental in learning guitar and drums. Whether competing against yourself or others, you continued to challenge yourself in swimming, running and surfing. Although by nature you are often quiet and introspective, I was proud to see you exploring and testing yourself. You took on leadership roles at school and in B'nai B'rith Youth Girls.

The fact that you chose during your senior year to pursue a two-month summer experience with "Amigos" reflects some essential aspects of your personality. You are very comfortable in your home and your relations with your family. You have long been interested and enlivened by other peoples and cultures. You challenge yourself to face what you do not know, and to gain confidence by mastering personal tests. You are diligent in pursuing your goals. To be part of Amigos, you successfully raised several thousand dollars towards working and living in Oaxaca, Mexico. That summer, you immersed yourself in an unfamiliar culture and place, isolated from communicating with your family, and embraced experiences that took you out of your comfort zone. Although there were difficult challenges, you successfully rose to meet them. Indeed, you emerged with the strength and self-confidence you sought to tackle the transition to university.

Your love of nature was an important part of your choice to attend UC Santa Cruz. You took to your freshman year with excitement and seemingly made an easy transition. I was happy to see you were comfortable in your new environment, as you created a social circle by diving into the Frisbee team and dorm, and succeeded in your academics. I know you were tentative about a biology major. I think this sophomore year of pursuing the challenging coursework will leave you satisfied regardless of your final choice.

It was a treat to have you in Davis for six weeks this past summer while you interned at a health-related non-profit organization. Best of all, you stayed with us, an opportunity I had hoped to experience. It gave Grandma and me a chance to know you better, and, I would venture, vice versa.

Although you are often quiet and seemingly introspective, there is much below the surface. For me you are like a deep well; the more I know about you, the more I find there is to discover. Our conversations

reflect that you have given thought to many things. You are quick to grasp and respond sensitively. I know I will gain from these interactions as your response is always valuable and meaningful. Your seriousness is balanced by your spontaneity. You can be boisterous and easily provoked to let loose long peals of giggles.

I have always been impressed by your organizational skills, and your ability to manage your time so effectively. When you decide you need to study, you stick to your plan, even when more attractive options are available. Your focus, preparation and determination are characteristics that have helped you move successfully through several challenging experiences. I look forward with anticipation as you continue to progress in your education, accept new challenges and make choices that shape your life.

Henry, Grandma and I waited a while to meet you after you were born because your mom and dad wanted you to experience the first week of your life at home with them. It was difficult for us to wait, but it was worth every moment of our impatience.

Seeing you for the first time was a special treat. After all, you are our own son's first child, a baby who had been eagerly longed for and for whom we waited many years. From a little blue bundle, you have grown into a handsome, well-built, nice guy. Imagine that! Thirteen years old!

You didn't say "Hi, Gramps!" and offer to shake my hand when we were ready to be with you. But I knew that there would be a time for that. Meanwhile, just seeing you—healthy and alert—was thrilling beyond words.

I remember at a young age you broke into a smile upon seeing me a few months after we were last in San Diego. Seemingly, you remembered that there was something funny about this man. Maybe you connected me with "the look" that "cracked up" Joel and each of your cousins in turn. I have treasured our "silly connection."

I believe that very early on you chose to start calling me "Papa," your word for Grandpa. I really like it. At two, you were a fun child, loving and beloved, very aware of your surroundings. You enjoyed being outdoors in the garden and playing with your two cats. As the son of a major sports aficionado, it isn't surprising that among your earliest words were "baseball," "football," "basketball," and "Go Giants," "Go Niners," "Go Duke!"

It is a pleasure to see your inquisitive nature. You are often reserved around adults, but you listen to what's being said and pipe in with thoughtful questions.

Over the years I have observed your greatest passions to be your animals and sports activities. There is hardly a visit to San Diego that

does not include the opportunity to cheer you at one your team sports—whether baseball, basketball, and now lacrosse. Having carefully tended your geckos, Leah and Ducky, and thus proved yourself responsible enough to care for a coveted dog, I was amused when you got your dog, “Bochy,” whose namesake reflects your and your father’s affinity for the SF Giants.

You have made annual solo visits to Grandma and me each summer since you were seven. I think you enjoyed this yearly vacation from your sister, and a chance to be an only child! It’s been fun to see you enjoying tennis and lacrosse camps, splashing in the pool with you, and hanging out together. You were always very enthusiastic when we visited the Bohart Museum of Entomology, and were both fearless and excited to handle the various critters. Unfortunately, this interest led to unintended consequences with your black widow farm in San Marcos! (Kitty, rest in peace.)

You are comfortable with yourself, easygoing and good humored. These traits, along with your great smile and “surf dude” looks make you popular and easy to be with. You are a good friend, fair and kind. When we visit, you usually are surrounded by friends shooting baskets in your cul de sac, or have buddies at the door asking to play with you.

Now, in 2014, you are thirteen years old. You recently made the transition to middle school and I’ve been delighted to see you do so well academically. You are still emerging and exploring, and I am interested in getting to know you better as you grow and change through your teens.

During a future Davis summer week, I hope we can spend some time looking around the UC Davis campus, seeing something of the Central Valley of California. It is an amazing agricultural area and supplies fruits and vegetables for the entire country. This may not sound as exciting as baseball, but it is really important for America as well as other countries which require these necessary products. As you know, agriculture was the focus of my career and it would give me pleasure to share my insights about it with you.

As you continue to explore, I know your inquisitive nature will lead you to ask good questions. I hope our time together will serve as a foundation for your future adventures and discoveries.

Lindsey, since your birth on June 11, 2003, you have been a happy, contented child. As an infant you pleased everyone with your cherubic, smiling presence. You looked up to your older brother, and would attempt to follow in “Towie’s” path.

Whenever we came to visit, we delighted in cuddling up with you to read stories; as you got older, we were happy to listen to you show us your progress in reading. You always drew us into your activities, bubbly and eager to share your current passions, be they pets, keyboard, or sports events.

For some years now, your greatest passion has been for theater and singing. You enjoy being in the limelight, and we always look forward to coming to see you in one of your shows or recitals. You are very focused on developing your lovely voice and dramatic skills; your progress and improvement over time has been very impressive to us. I am amazed at your remarkable poise and self-confidence on stage at your young age. You have made several recent family events more special with your singing talents. Your delivery of "Grandmas' Song," sung to the tune of "Surrey With The Fringe On Top," was an amusing and delightful addition to your Grandma Norma's 80th birthday party. In October, 2013, I was proud to hear you sing a solo to your Aunt Meryl and Uncle Mark at their wedding reception. Whether your audience is 150 people, or just for yourself, you are in your element when you are singing.

Your appearance is important to you. You are adept at selecting color-coordinated outfits with matching hair accessories. You never met a spangle you didn't like, which seems to match your sparkling personality.

We enjoy our visits with you on the telephone. You always happily chatter and share your accomplishments and activities. Your openness helps us know you better.

A highlight of your annual summer trips to Davis is always "pool time" with Grandma and me. You would practically walk in the front door and out the back door to dive in! Actually, you would make a quick stop to select and don one of your always very colorful pool outfits. We have many photos of you, Henry, Grandma and me cavorting in our pool, with you loving every minute. You especially relished a night swim as a special treat. I look forward to our next summer visit together.

At age 10, there is so much more of your life to unfold. I know you will explore and make new discoveries with your characteristic enthusiasm, and I will be delighted to see and share some of those times with you.

I hope I've told you, my five wonderful grandchildren, how much I love and respect each of you. I want to share my own values and wishes for you to draw upon as you grow, mature and, hopefully, even have your own families. This is important to me because I have faced

times in my own life when I've had to make difficult choices, or when I've not known exactly what to do. I have found that holding a clear sense of my own values has provided me with a foundation to make choices that honor and are true to myself. I hope each of you can take meaning from my experience as you develop your own value system and make good choices in your own lives.

Openness with others is a key to a loving and happy life. It took some years, but I have learned to make myself more accessible to others. The more open I am to my family, the more I have been able to enjoy interacting with them in a way that was not easy as I was growing up. By offering a welcoming smile, warm demeanor, genuine reactions, and being a little playful, I have conveyed an attitude that has opened many doors for me, both personally and professionally.

Honesty includes not only telling the truth, but being open to receiving candid communication from others. This may not always be comfortable but is an attitude that underlies almost all our interactions with other people. I also believe it is very important to be open to hearing ideas from all sides and perspectives, and to treat others with respect, even when one's own opinions are very different.

I hope that all of you will have the chance to grow up in a safe and comfortable world. It saddens me that Israel, our spiritual homeland, is not secure as a country, and that no solution is obvious at the present time. One of the things I deeply hope for is that Israel can be a country that lives in peace with her neighbors and can continue to contribute to the development and advancement of the world. I hope that you will carry Israel in your minds, and that in whatever way you find it possible in your lifetimes, you will participate in helping her to find peace and prosperity.

Judaism is an ancient heritage that offers universal values that we can all live by, regardless of whether we participate in organized religion at all. The values of community, repairing the world through social action and justice, and treating all beings with compassion and respect, are fundamental ways to better relationships and life. Grandma and I have had a strong commitment to the Jewish Community of the Davis-Sacramento region and, to some extent, to the world Jewish community. I hope that you will find it within yourselves to seek connections to your community, wherever you may settle. We have received much pleasure from our connection to Judaism, and I hope that you will have similar experiences in your lives.

Be kind to your parents. Love them as they love you. Try not to be too critical of them, especially if they don't like the things you do. Instead, try to understand their ways and make an effort to teach them

about what you believe or are doing. Be willing to hear and respect their ideas and opinions, even if you have different views. Every now and then, they could just be right!

I write this with a heart full of love and I wish each of you a life full of happiness.

Love,
Grandpa Larry
2014



Elsie and Aaron Rappaport, 1953



Larry and Libby, the Bronx



University of Idaho
1943



Sergeant Major
Rappaport on R & R,
Tokyo, 1953

FERDINAND PECORA
Former Justice
New York Supreme Court

Supreme Court
of the
State of New York



FERDINAND PECORA
JUDGE



Mr. A. Rappaport
776 Mace Avenue
Bronx, New York City

Dear Mr. Rappaport:

You will, I think, be interested in knowing that The New York Times will publish photographic reproduction of the portrait which you painted of me last spring, in its rotogravure section, this coming Sunday, December 20th.

Visitors to my home, in common with all the members of my family, have without exception admired the artistic excellence of your work.

With very good wishes,

Very sincerely yours,

Three-quarter Figure
with hands — seated

Size: 30" x 40"

From Life	\$500
From Photo	350

Section of a marketing brochure created by Aaron Rappaport, artist, featuring his portrait of former Justice of the New York Supreme Court, Ferdinand Pecora, and a letter of appreciation from the Judge. The portrait was published in the rotogravure section of the *New York Times*.

Back row, l to r: Sarah and
Joe Horwitz, Norma Rappaport,
Elsie and Aaron Rappaport
Front row, l to r: Meryl, Debra and
Craig Rappaport
1962



Meryl, Craig and Debbie
Purim, 1963



Shelly Schuster, 1st Hillel President,
with Craig



Pepper



Five Rapps at Larry and Lisa Kasimow's wedding, 1980



On safari, 1986

(Right)
The artistic clan
Larry's 80th birthday,
Point Reyes, 2008



(Below)
"The Kids"
October, 2013



Pool babes!
Henry, Craig and
Lindsey



Peak experience
Kauai, 2013



Joel, Lindsey, Larry, Tamara and Henry, 2008

David, Joel, Tamara, 1999



Henry and Libby, 1991



Henry, Libby and Larry Kasimow, 1976



Left: Erin and Jillian Kasimow, 1993



Below: Passover Seder at the Rappaports, 1993



Erin, Jillian,
Lisa and Larry
Kasimow, 2008



Then (1953) . . .

. . . and now (2008)



