



The Bridge

*A QUARTERLY JOURNAL BY AND FOR
THE RESIDENTS OF NEWBRIDGE ON THE CHARLES IN DEDHAM, MA*

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

OCTOBER 2012



Light and Shadow

Original Color Photo by Frances Budd

Notes from the Editor

In this issue we initiate printing the names of donors to The Bridge through the HSL envelope program. In addition, the donors in each month will be displayed on our resident website at www.newbridgeresidents.org. Just click on "Community > The Bridge".

But as important as donations are, submissions of stories, articles, poems, and artwork from you, the residents, is even more so. We cannot continue publishing without new material each month. So we ask each of you to write down those stories that you tell at dinner, or dredge up notes you may have made years ago and saved for posterity.

We will help you write and edit your work as necessary. Only one article and poem per author is published in each issue. We hold over multiple submissions for another issue. New authors are especially appreciated. Join us now.



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NBOC residents are invited to submit essays, articles, short stories, poems and artwork of interest to the NBOC community.

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In Town

Max Potter

Then, Tuscaloosa was a long skinny animal with Fifth Street as its backbone. At one end was the University with its Greco-Roman buildings and many neatly dressed students carrying books, going to and from class. At the other end was downtown, the heart of the County seat. It was typically Sinclair Lewisish in feel, save for Saturday, when the Bucolics came to town – in trucks, horse and wagons, and the occasional jalopy. A motley crew they were. In the first place, they were poor: poor financially, poor in dress and poor in health. Teeth were a rare commodity but pellagra wasn't. Young women, borne down by births and the burdens of farm life, aged quickly. The men, toiling in the sun, were baked to a leathery consistency, probably the origin of the name, "rednecks."

The men were dressed in bib overalls, covered by nondescript suit jackets and beat-up fedoras, wearing ankle-high work shoes. The women wore chintzy shapeless dresses of the sort either made at home or ordered from the Sears catalogue. Some kids wore dresses made from flour sacks or old burlap bags (called "croca" sacks.) They walked with a high-kneed, stomping gait acquired from years of stepping over rows of cotton. But they were in town for a high time.

They walked up and down, looked in the windows, gawked at the ten-story bank building, the local skyscraper. They stood on the corner and talked. They went to the seed store, where barrels of turnip seeds, cottonseeds and other agricultural needs were in large open barrels on the sidewalk. You could buy bologna, as well as boxes of "white meat," made by Arm and Hammer. These were slabs of pork belly, open to the air and flies, covered in layers of salt, to be taken home and used in the preparation of collard and turnip greens. The store was owned by a one-eyed man who had immigrated from Poland many years before, and spoke English with a Polish/Jewish accent, presumably Yiddish with a southern accent.

I think these visitors brought with them home-packed lunches. There were no fast food places. However, feeding the many infants was not a problem. The "moms" would simply sit down on the curb, pull out a breast, and nurse the little tykes.

Nothing was ever made of this. It was part of life. Let me point out these people were mostly white, for whatever that is worth.

Down the street at the Courthouse another series of events took place. Political rallies were held. I remember once listening enthralled to a speech by James "Big Jim" Folsom, a six foot eight Populist, who went on to become a reasonably decent governor.

Religious rallies were a mainstay — mostly evangelical in nature. There was one occasion when one preacher presented an exciting sermon, in which he extolled the fact that if one believed in Jesus, one could walk in a barrel of snakes. What made this fascinating was that as he preached (hollered), he danced around the stage with a poisonous snake wrapped around him, interesting even to a non-fundamentalist like myself.

Another highlight was the cinema. There were three moving-picture houses in town, but the big attraction was the Diamond. It showed double features — usually horse operas accompanied by a serial, and a series of coming attractions usually of the same genre. They starred such heroes as Buck Jones, Johnny Mack Brown (a local boy), Ken Maynard and a host of white horses and black hats.

The theater was vintage, ratty in every sense of the word; the rats were practically indigenous. They had feasted for generations on dropped pop corn and were reasonably domesticated. Uniquely, performances were open to black patrons who were allowed to sit in the balcony, something not allowed in the other cinemas. If you were a white child with your black babysitter, you both could sit downstairs.

Of course, there was audience participation. "Look out Buck, he's gotta gun." "Hey, they're waiting around the rock."

Occasionally, a voice would burst in with some anguish. "Hey Clem, y'all in there? Paw says come git in the wagon, there's a cloud a-comin' up." And off they would go in their cane-bottom chairs, back to Gordo or Little Sandy or similar hamlets after an exciting day in the big City, their souls enriched by the Word of the Lord, their psyche enhanced by outpourings from the films of Republic Cinema, and their stomachs nourished by processed foods.

"I can hardly wait til next week." •

Blowing it Off

John Averell

Old baseball players hang up their spikes. What does an old French horn player do, hang up his mute?

It all started when I was in fifth grade at Holmes school in Darien, Conn. I was fascinated by the mellophone that one of my father's friends played. A mellophone is the little brother of a horn. ("Horn" means "French horn" in concert band and symphonic circles.) I convinced my parents to buy me one and I started out with lessons and played in the elementary school orchestra.

A mellophone is okay to start on, and does look like a horn, but it doesn't have its range and beauty. My mother used to tell the story of my practicing the mellophone soon after I got it. My grandmother lived with us at the time. As the women worked in the kitchen, Grandma O'Brien said, "I guess Joe O'Connell's cow is feeling sick again. I can hear her from here." I eventually improved.

In junior high I graduated to a real horn. This was a "single" horn, meaning it was simply in the key of F. Below is a picture of my brother Rip (the lower one) holding the mellophone. I am above him holding my single horn.



I did pretty well, played in the orchestra and band, and eventually had a teacher who suggested I get a

"double" horn, which almost all good players use. This means it has tubing that allows it to play both as an F and a B-flat instrument. The range and quality of a double horn are what make the instrument so beautiful.

Clarence Newman, my high school horn teacher, got me a used Conn Model 6D, which I have played since 1949. Mr. Newman asked me to fill in as fourth horn with him at the Stamford Symphony in a performance of Brahms's Requiem. That was my first performance with a real symphony. I still have the program in my scrapbook.

In high school I played in the orchestra and band (although I played a sousaphone in the band because that's what they needed). I joined the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, which was really quite a good group. Our school music chairman, Luther Thompson, also played the horn, so he got me in.

The conductor was a fiery Italian by the name of Quinto Maganini who came up from New York every week on the train. Maganini was a Pulitzer prize-winning composer for his opera, "The Argonauts". Before I got my driving license I had to bum a ride from Darien to Norwalk from some other member. One night I rode home with the bass player, Joe Bruno, who also was driving Maganini to the train station in Stamford. He was running a bit late and speeding up to make the train. Finally Maganini said, "Slow down Joe, better late to dinner than early to hell!" He did make it though.

I went on to college where I played first horn for four years with the Concert Band of Wheaton (Illinois) College. Those were my salad days. We practiced every day, my lip was tough, and there was lots of good music to play. One of the perks was that we got to tour for two weeks during Easter vacation, so I got to see much of the country over the years.

Being close to Chicago I once visited an old man named Carl Geyer in his workshop. Geyer was arguably the finest maker of horns in the world at the time. He personally constructed horns for the symphony professionals, and his design is still used as the basis for one of the families of horns. I bought a mouthpiece and a mute from him.

There was a long time of only occasional playing until I reached Melrose, where I quickly hooked up with the Melrose Symphony in 1985. Over the seventeen years in Melrose I played symphonies, marches, pops pieces and about

everything you can imagine. As the years went by after age 65, the stress on my lip from a horn mouthpiece began to take its toll. The time came in the last Pops concert on May 4, 2002 that I decided to hang up my mute and retire from serious horn playing. I think I'm a good enough musician to know when that time was ripe.

I didn't really "blow it off" completely. Now I play an E-flat alto horn, the same range as my old mellophone, in the Wakefield Retired Men's Club Band. It's a much easier horn to play, less demanding on the lip, and I have fun. Then I started conducting the group as one of several conductors who also play. My life as a musician still goes on. •

Dad's Journey Estelle Schwedock

It was a two day journey, sitting in second class coach accommodations. That was all he could afford.

My father had left New York City, journeying to Denver, Colorado to be with my mother before she faced major experimental lung surgery. The surgery was called 'thoracoplasty'. Eight left ribs were to be removed, left lung collapsed and partially removed.

She had been hospitalized at the National Jewish Hospital in Denver for six years with severe lung tuberculosis. This new surgery technique was now accepted. The first patient had succumbed two days after the surgery. A choice was then offered to my mother. Remain in the hospital indefinitely or have the surgery and finally return to her family in New York. She had made her decision, surgery was the answer.

My father decided to travel to Denver and be at her side. Since my father was strictly kosher he had prepared several cheese sandwiches to be eaten during the two day trip. He settled in his seat, reading the newspaper; finally he fell asleep. Upon awakening he reached for his sandwiches only to discover that a mouse had eaten thru the paper bag and devoured most of each sandwich. What to do? He had no choice. He arrived in Denver two days later having had only water during the entire trip, tired, hungry but happy to be with my mother.

The surgery was successful. After two years, during which my mother made a full recovery, she returned to our family. •

Hineni, Here I Am Frankie Wolff

Actually I was surprised, saddened even that it took me so long to become a *Bat Mitzvah* because I had felt acutely tuned to my Judaism for some time.

As I remember it, two separate events seemed to coalesce before I signed up for the *Bat Mitzvah* class. First, I just wasn't comfortable anymore sitting in Synagogue humming the melodies while Hebrew voices surrounded me. At the same time, in another part of my world, California, my daughter-in-law Pam was diagnosed with cancer. For the next three years, I remember flying back and forth between my home in New Orleans and California. I definitely gave myself that excuse for taking three full years to learn Hebrew. My other excuse: all those squiggles looked exactly alike!

During those same three years, I also rented an apartment in Brookline for one month each summer to be close to my daughter and young grandson, who lived in Lincoln. On those long daily drives back and forth I learned the Hebrew prayers. Our Cantor had made tapes for the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* students and I sang and memorized those Blessings all the way to Lincoln — and all the way back.

Our group of four women finally chose to be *Bat Mitzvah* at a *Havdalah* service in April, 1998. It was not a moment too soon — in June I would be 70!

It is now 14 years since my *Bat Mitzvah* but I remember that day oh-so-vividly. The memories flow: the hours spent curled up in my favorite chair learning my Torah portion on my friend's tape recorder; incorporating my daughter's family's special way of welcoming *Shabbat* with their "sorrlys" and "thank yous" as the foundation for my *drosh*; the twisted expression on my son's face.

Our Rabbi cautioned us: "You don't MAKE a *Bat Mitzvah*! You make love. But you celebrate a *Bat Mitzvah*." Celebrate we did!

We circled the Synagogue, swaying and singing. My grandson Izzy, four years old at the time, eagerly joined our group as we wove around the pews filled with families and friends. There was clapping. Hugging. Smiles and Tears.

But the memory I cherish most is holding close the Torah, reading from it. Me. I was chanting Torah.

Hineni.

Here I Am. At Last.

Building My First Boat Tom Hollyday

Growing up on the Eastern Shore of Maryland we all knew about boats. My father and many of his watermen cousins built their boats. He constructed a Hacker design runabout with a Hall Scott engine that was the fastest boat on the Tred Avon River in 1929. My ancestors had set up one of the earliest Maryland colonial shipyards back in 1679. Through the decades close relatives served in privateers and warships in various wars for the United States and even for the Confederate states. We all learned early that boats are like ladies. Love them, and they will love you back!

So in 1958 when I came home for the holidays during my sophomore year in boarding school, I asked if I could get a twelve-footer like the other boys so I could learn the rivers, not to mention to impress the girls. My father looked at me remembering his own youth and with a wink said, "Tommy, your mother and I will get you a boat but you'll have to build it." With that challenge I sent for all the kit boat catalogs and spent much time that spring perusing them. We selected the Topper kit, a 12-foot outboard from Custom Craft Boats in Buffalo, New York. My father said it contained higher quality wood but might be harder to build than the other kits.

Two weeks after I came home for summer vacation, a huge 12' long box arrived by truck freight and sat on the colonial herringbone bricks in front of our home. The carton contained long strips of fine marine wood, large plywood bottom and side panels, boxes of Monel fasteners and tubs of Weldwood glue, as well as instruction manuals.

To build her I had to set up the frames and keel and make them plumb or square. That required leveling everything and making sure the frames fit accurately with the keel. The beautiful Douglas fir transom had to be attached as part of this process.

Then came the real challenge. I discovered why my father thought this boat would be hard to build. In the other kits, the manufacturer had pre-cut the frames but provided cheaper wood. My boat had the high-quality wood all right but it had to be finished by hand. A boat without careful framing would not hold up in rough seas. I must say I sweated a lot those long weeks filing down the wooden parts so they would fit snugly and to my father's satisfaction. The challenge wasn't over. Many of the

wood parts had to be bent. Much to my mother's consternation, I used the tubs in the bathrooms of our house to soak the parts in hot water so they would bend. Then a maze of clamps was used to keep these pieces in place while they were glued and fastened, working bow to stern.

The next challenge was fitting the large flat plywood planks over the framed skeleton. These panels were 12' long and unwilling to bend easily for a young boat builder. One day though I received a great honor when my cousin, Lowndes Johnson, the designer of the Comet Class sailboat, walked up the back lane to my house. His white hair peeked out under his cloth hat, and he was dressed as usual in his work clothes and brown sneakers. He grinned with mischief and held out a couple of large paint-encrusted "C" clamps from his boatyard shop. He said, "Tommy, I thought you could use these." Cousin Lowndes and I worked together all that morning in the hot sun figuring out a good clamping scheme to secure those plywood rascals.

A final trial was finding an engine. I had some funds from my grass-cutting jobs, and I looked at the various newspaper ads, finally finding a TD15 Johnson 5 hp that had seen much better days. It ran up about 75% revolutions maximum but it fit my budget. The old farmer who sold it to me said that he had caught a lot of rockfish using it, but he couldn't be sure how much longer it would run.

We launched a week later. Another cousin carried my boat to Easton Point in his long-bed Ford pickup. With the help of my oldest brother, who was home from the Army, we put her over. The extra gas sat in the bow in a Wolf's Head 5-gallon oil can that a mechanic friend had given me. We cranked her up and she planed pretty well running on the Tred Avon River. That day, my father who was a professional photographer caught the picture below with his Speed Graphic.



That runabout with its accurate bevels lasted a long time. My brother used it after me, and it was still afloat 30 years ago, used as a utility in a Crisfield boatyard. The best we got from her was 17 knots using a Mercury high-rev five. It's hard to explain

the love between a man and his boat. I know I will never forget that first build. I can tell you also that framed in my memory is the pleasure I received that summer of living up to the boat-building heritage of my family.

A Ramble with Biscuit

Diana Bronner

An early day in May, late afternoon, overcast day, spring in the air, tree blossoms giving up their beauty to make way for the practicality of leaves; cry overhead of an unseen red tailed hawk, twitter of birds, peep of the peepers fill the air.

Biscuit and I walked down to the trail and as we headed toward the river's edge I heard the call of a Canada goose. Alerted, I looked ahead and saw in the water a pair of geese herding three little yellow goslings. They were moving away from the bank and I knew they needed their space from us, the intruders. So with Biscuit protesting, we retreated so as not to disturb them.

Back onto the trail, I heard a little peeping noise coming from ground level. At first I could see nothing, then suddenly I spotted a little yellow ball of feathers, a gosling struggling to get through the tall grasses. He was headed in the right direction but he kept stopping, overwhelmed by the tangle he faced. He kept trying, but was making little headway, plaintively crying all the time.

Obviously it had gotten separated from its family that was now on the water. I was torn by the many thoughts that crossed my mind. Do I leave nature to take its course hoping the parents would come looking for their missing child? Do I leave the little one to find his own way through the grasses, across the trail, down to the water's edge? For such a little bit of a fellow, it was a long way. Was he injured and the parents were deliberately leaving it behind as called for in the law of survival of the fittest?

One hand was holding Biscuit's leash. I reasoned that if I picked up the gosling, I would have to drop the leash as I would need both hands to

pick up the bird but if I didn't pick it up would an animal get him? That thought did it and without further ado, I dropped the leash, gave BB a stay command and gently picked up this yellow ball of fluff. It fit just right in my one hand and oh, what a perfect creation, yellow, soft, downy with little brown feet and a perfectly formed miniature bill, like the proverbial little rubber ducky in the bathtub. I just stared at this miracle in my hand. How could my timing have been so perfect to be there at this perfect moment?

I retrieved Biscuit who was starting to wander (so much for the 'stay' command) and holding the baby cuddled against my sweater, we walked down to the water's edge. The parents were circling in the water, each one calling, the female with its high pitched voice, and the male with its lower honk.

Walking on the squishy muddy bank, I stooped down to put the baby in the water but to my horror, he rolled over floundering. Fearing the worst, that it was in fact injured, I quickly and hopefully righted him. Oh the relief! He found his little sea legs and gathering strength and confidence; off he paddled leaving a tiny wake. I watched with some pride, I must admit, as he deftly swam toward his waiting parents and siblings who quickly surrounded him and they all headed downstream to places unknown to me.

On the way home, I could still feel the softness, that tiny ball of perfection and felt blessed for having been in the right place at the right time, for its sake and mine. Biscuit and I happily headed home, satisfied with a job well done. •

A Tale of Two Grandfathers

Stanley P. Rosenzweig

This is the story of my two grandfathers, each of whom played a significant role in my life, yet were worlds apart from one another.

My father's father, Isaac was born in Austro-Hungary in 1871 and married in 1890 at the age of 19. About one year later he and my grandmother came to the U.S., settling in the Lower East Side. His occupation was listed as tailor. In 1895 the couple had their first child, a girl. The following year, just before the birth of my father, the family moved to a small mining town in Pennsylvania. They moved back to New York, where my grandmother eventually had six more children.

Isaac, who was quite autocratic and definitely a hypochondriac and complainer, nevertheless was extremely resourceful in the work world. His most interesting work experience occurred when he and three other men opened the first movie theater, I believe, in the country. One of the partners was a man named Marcus Loew. The theater, called the Nickelodeon, was in back of a saloon run by his partners. It was located in a very rough neighborhood in the Lower East Side and frequented by very disreputable customers.

I remember Isaac as being a distant, self-centered, critical man. In fact, I don't recall a single warm, supportive or positive remark he ever made in my presence. Of course, he had many grandchildren, but I don't know if any of them had many positive memories of him. What sticks in my mind was that I was the third oldest of his male grandchildren. When the two older males were *Bar Mitzvahed* he gave them each a *tallith* with a *tallith* bag plus *tfillen*. These are religious items typically given to a Jewish boy at the time of his *Bar Mitzvah*. When it was my turn being *Bar Mitzvahed*, he was heard to remark, "Why should I give him a *tallith* and *tfillen*, he'll never use them." (Of course, I made a point of proving him wrong.) Indeed, he never gave me those items or anything else. A trip to the Bronx to visit this set of grandparents, plus the relatives with whom they lived, was always seen as an unpleasant experience.

Now, my maternal grandfather, Joseph, or Zaydie, as I have always called him, was an entirely different story. He was warm, kind, gentle and loving. Indeed, he was the only person in my life from whom I felt unconditional love and

acceptance. I think of him as the most important adult figure in my growing up, representing to me all that is good in the world.

My earliest memories of Zaydie was when he was living with his son and daughter-in-law and their two sons in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Though we lived in Queens, it was actually not very far from them. Their family and ours were always very close. In fact, I generally considered their oldest son, Murray, as my best friend. Naturally, we saw my Zaydie quite often. What was noteworthy in our relationship was that my Zaydie spoke only Yiddish with a few words in English. I, on the other hand, spoke only English with only a few words of Yiddish. Yet, somehow we were able to communicate with each other. I relished his loving touch and his warm, receptive demeanor. One time when I was a child in the apartment where he lived, I remember going a roundabout way from the kitchen where he was sitting to the parlor that was the adjacent room. I brushed by my seated grandfather and, as I was hoping, he gently picked me up and placed me on his lap. I was so content.

Today, I see grandparents lavishing so much on their grandchildren, toys, clothing, games, you name it. I remember Zaydie buying me only one thing, an ice cream cone, once when we were out for a walk in a park. And, I recall his making a great display as he tossed the wrapping of the cone, when I had finished eating it, into a nearby trashcan. I cherish that ice cream cone still. It was more significant to me than almost anything anyone has ever given me.

Despite our language differences, I can only recall one instance when I felt stymied as to what to respond to my Zaydie. It occurred when I was a young adult and had already chosen the profession that I was to pursue, that of a clinical psychologist. One day my grandfather asked me directly, using mostly Yiddish, what career or profession I had chosen. When I said, "psychologist", he seemed puzzled. I was then confronted with the dilemma of how best to describe what my work would entail. Then, I remembered a radio program on WEVD, the Jewish station, called "The Jewish Philosopher". While I did not know the background or training of this person, I knew the format that was used. People would send him their personal problems, such as

questions about their emotions or relationships. The Philosopher would then mete out advice to them. This was the closest I could come to what I wanted to communicate to my grandfather. So, I said to him, "It's like what the Jewish Philosopher does". He nodded, smiled and seemed satisfied with my explanation.

In contrast to Isaac, my Zaydie never actively pursued a career nor showed much interest in the world of work. When he came over to the United States, he along with his son, pursued and held a number of menial jobs, like laborer and roofer. Shortly afterward he apparently retired and was supported primarily by his son. As long as I knew him he was strongly affiliated with his local synagogue or *shul* where he seemed to spend all of his spare time, attending services or socializing with fellow congregants his age. His lack of any identifiable success in the work world never entered into my assessment of him and certainly not my caring for him. In fact, in my growing up, I used to think of him as a "great man". It was only when I reached adulthood that I realized that this assessment was just my own personal view.

As far as my grandfather Isaac was concerned, I might have felt mildly impressed with his accomplishments, but actually never held him in much esteem. His experience with the movie business was good for anecdote telling but not much else. I don't recall having any special emotion when I learned that he had passed away.

After I moved away from my home in New York to pursue advanced studies and a career, I began to see less and less of my Zaydie. As he aged I would get information from my parents as to how he was functioning. Up until his mid-nineties, he was holding his own. After 95, he began to decline and show signs of mental confusion. The family conferred and decided to have him admitted to a nursing home. My father and my uncle shared the expenses.

Finally, one day, I received a call from my family that my grandfather was failing badly and was not likely to survive much longer. As quickly as possible, my wife and I drove to New York and the nursing home where he was living. As soon as we arrived I went to his room to see him. He was lying

quietly in his bed, seemingly delirious. He just kept repeating the words, "Norman, Stanley and Murray, Norman, Stanley and Murray". This was actually the order of his three oldest grandchildren. Both Norman, my older brother, and Murray, my cousin, had spent many years living with my grandfather and, of course, had been very close to him. As he continued to repeat those three names, tears came to my eyes. On his deathbed he appeared to be repeating the names of the three people who had meant most to him in his life.

In a short period of time I attended my Zaydie's funeral. He was 97 when he died. He appeared to have been the oldest person in the cemetery. I thought to myself, "It doesn't make any difference how old a person is when he dies, it's what that person meant to you".

So that's the story of my two grandfathers. While their family relationship to me was the same, their impact on me was worlds apart. Certainly, my father's father had redeeming qualities and some effect on my life but the best part of me came from a short gentleman with closely cropped hair and a little beard, my Zaydie. •



The Oddball *Glo Wittes*

Many families have members who are strange, different from the rest, perhaps shunned or ostracized – “oddballs,” to use a colloquial term. Charlie Schwartz, my Dad’s younger brother, one of six siblings, was the oddball in his family. He was scarred for life by a streetcar accident in which he lost half his right arm. I believe he was about seven or eight at the time. He had chronic pain in the stub of that limb. More devastatingly, he used his angry outbursts of temper to get whatever he wanted, which alienated him from everyone. My heartbroken grandparents doted on him; but they gave in to him on everything, including his insistence on dropping out of school.

So it was that “poor Charlie,” as he became known, grew up with little education, no social skills, no friends, no ambition, a sad, unhappy loner. He spent most of his days hanging out at his parents’ mom-and-pop store. This preoccupied him and kept him out of harm’s way.

When my grandfather died Charlie and my grandmother moved to Minneapolis to live with Aunt Ethyle and Uncle Al, his sister and brother-in-law. He remained there until his mother died, at which point Ethyle and Al, fed up with housing and caring for this difficult man, “turned him over” to my parents.

Uncle Charlie arrived in Montreal when I was about ten; he was in his thirties. Mom was in full support of her brother-in-law’s move to Montreal with two stipulations — the first that Uncle Charlie was not to live with us. My parents found him a teeny apartment near my Dad’s office where Uncle Charlie was to work. The second stipulation was that we were never to refer to him as “Poor Charlie,” that disrespectful if well meaning moniker by which he was known in the family. She felt this name perpetuated his inadequacies and dependence.

On first meeting my uncle I was struck by how different he was in appearance from the rest of the good-looking Schwartz clan. Where they had chiseled features, dark hair and eyes, he had a squarish face, pockmarked skin, thin mousy gray hair, a weak chin and squinty eyes of no particular color. If not downright ugly, he was pathetically plain. He looked nothing like the picture of him as a tot, probably just prior to his accident. In that first meeting Uncle Charlie embraced me and I cringed

at the feel of his stub of an arm digging into my back with his strong hug. My mother noted my repugnance and lectured me on it later. “Glorianne,” she said, “having only half an arm doesn’t make Uncle Charlie half a man.” This was a lesson I was to learn well over the course of years.

I saw Uncle Charlie regularly at my house on Friday night and at celebration dinners. Never did I see any outbursts of his renowned temper. Where I did become acquainted with it was at my Dad’s office where Uncle Charlie was employed doing I know not what. Dad’s staff of hot-tempered young men flew off the handle at the drop of a hat. Their normal speaking voices were shouts when good-humored, and bellows when angry. Uncle Charlie fit right into this milieu. He could outshout the loudest of them, and often did. I don’t know how my Dad survived and mediated the intensity of emotion in that office. However I witnessed his complete exhaustion when we drove home together too tired for any conversation.

The guys in the office not only tolerated but liked Uncle Charlie. Apparently when socializing with them outside the office Uncle Charlie kept his temper under control, as he did in my home on Friday nights.

In time Uncle Charlie met and eventually married when he and his wife were in their forties. They had a drop-dead gorgeous daughter who had all of the Schwartz clan’s good looks. Uncle Charlie displayed one of his oddball eccentricities in calling his daughter “the girl,” rather than her given name. Another eccentricity he maintained was his propensity to surround himself with boxes and more boxes, at his desk, in his apartment and later in his marital home. He was a hoarder who could throw out nothing and stored EVERYTHING.

Still another oddball characteristic was his habitual greeting to people. He would extend his good arm for a handshake and declare, “Hello. I’m Charles Schwartz; that’s C H A R L E S S C H W A R T Z”. He would do this even with people he knew.

My father died suddenly at age fifty. After his death Uncle Charlie couldn’t do enough for my mother, trying to ensure her well-being and happiness. He would call me regularly even after I had moved to the USA to inquire anxiously, “Did you speak to Sara (my mother) today? – Is she eating enough? – Are you making sure she’s getting out with her

friends? – How are her headaches? – Is her car working?” And so forth, on and on. I believe his concerns were motivated by enormous gratitude to both my parents for the life he had managed to build through their care and generosity. In fact I believe that it was this generosity that enabled Uncle Charlie and his wife to open a small mom-and-pop store, probably with money left to him by my Dad.

Uncle Charlie was in his glory in this store. His wife, who had been a cashier prior to their marriage, continued at the checkout counter. Uncle Charlie sat on a high stool greeting people with his odd salutation when they entered the store, otherwise puttering around. Old habits die hard, so boxes cluttered the aisles, making it difficult to walk around in the store. He dispensed free candy to the youngsters and mothers who came in with their tots. They certainly seemed to enjoy one of Uncle Charlie’s singular feats, that of pulling items off top shelves with a broom and catching them as they fell with his half arm!

Owning and running his own business helped Uncle Charlie to mellow out. He even began to look more like a Schwartz and like the cute youngster he had been before his accident. He was happy. He was fulfilled. His temper diminished. His whole demeanor was pleasant. He lived to see his daughter married, and died on the same day as my mother! His grave is very close to those of the two people he loved dearly, my parents. His name, spelled out in stone as he had done in the flesh, greets visitors.

CHARLES SCHWARTZ

Rain Estelle Ringer

Crisp landscape • dry blanket of grass
Hot hot bodies tanning in the sun
Ice thawing • treats melting • sweat dripping
Flowers wilting • leaves leaning • streams dried

Clouds awake • burst open • explode!
Thank you • life resumes • perks up
RAIN!

Beautiful • wet • saturating
RAIN!

We welcome Earth’s blessing:
RAIN! RAIN! •

A Stitch in Time Estelle Ringer

Near the end of her senior year, my granddaughter called me from Boston: would I be part of her senior project and teach her and two other classmates to sew? My credentials were, I was a grandmother with basic sewing skills, a sewing machine, inherited wealth of threads, pins, scissors, buttons, and used zippers, and patience. This project would start on my return to Boston in three weeks, and last about three weeks. I agreed.

Soon I was surprised to receive a phone call from the senior project director wanting to know: (1) My philosophy on sewing and its impact on the students, (2) our ultimate aim and (3) in the allotted time, could the student actually make white graduation dresses.

I assured her they would learn to sew, have satisfaction from their creativity, and have a practical application for their work of art.

My husband set up our basement with long tables, chairs, mirror, extra lighting, and music. The “seamstresses” came carrying their own sewing machines – sewing life began!

They caught on quickly; I only had to give a direction once. They could soon thread a needle, knot it, pin, baste, and sew. The first project was a square duffel bag. Then full speed ahead!

My suburban basement looked like a sweatshop with my privileged longhaired, jean-clad young girls bent over their sewing machines. Next came skirts, scarves, and shifts. They discovered bargain remnants of every variety: velvet, cotton lining, rayon, wool.

We were ready for the *pièce de résistance* – graduation dresses. The girls bought patterns and special white fabric. They first bought inexpensive cloth to make and fit a mock-up dress. Then white sheets were spread out on the floor to keep the fabric white and clean. The cutting was on my extended, padded dining room table. They cut, pinned, basted, made darts, turned spaghetti straps, applied invisible zippers, hemmed, and ironed. Finished!

On graduation day, like ballerinas they gracefully glided across the stage, turning to show their dresses and especially their darts. Oh those darts!

Later they took their sewing machines to college. Amanda just graduated from medical school and made her wedding dress. Carrie is an assistant professor at Columbia. Rebecca is a lawyer. They are all still sewing. •

Chantal *Sybil Gladstone*

It has taken me a long time to find the courage to write the story of Chantal. It goes back to the time when my husband and I were co-presidents of our PTA and joined the citywide PTA Board. At one meeting, we heard presentations made by remarkable foreign students attending Newton high schools under the sponsorship of the American Field Service. AFS was founded when volunteers from the US traveled to France to drive ambulances before our country entered the First World War. Attempting to maintain the good will engendered by this activity, a student exchange program was developed.

We decided to apply to host one of these students, were duly interviewed and approved. Then we waited. In time, we received information and pictures of the beautiful young Frenchwoman who would be joining our family at summer's end. She would attend the senior year of high school with our daughter, Susie, live in our home, and become part of our household and our family for one year. Fortunately, Chantal spoke excellent English. Before long, she seemed to feel comfortable in our midst, and enjoyed a trip the four of us took to Nantucket. On an evening hike to an observatory there, she and Susie quickly pulled ahead, and we heard rollicking French songs drifting back to us along the quiet streets. There were pillow fights back at the guesthouse. A good beginning, anyone would think.

In October, Chantal's father wrote from France that he would be making a business trip to our area, and would visit us! It was against AFS rules for family visits to take place before Christmas, but *père* made his own rules. Alas, it was painfully revealing when his daughter declared, "I don't want him to come!" She stormed and wept, while we felt helpless. Of course, he was coming to "look us over", and we could not be inhospitable.

Driving him back to the hotel after his visit to our home, we were shocked when he asked whether his daughter had been receiving letters from her boy friend, Paul-Emile. Restraining my anger, I replied, "I don't know, I don't examine her mail." Weeks and months later, Chantal complained, "I don't know why he doesn't write to me." We had our suspicions. Her father had explained he wanted her mind to be "free" during her American year.

Our Susie became the recipient of many

sorrowful confidences. In early years, Chantal's father would inspect her closet for neatness. When dissatisfied, he threw all the garments to the floor, insisting they be rehung neatly by his messy daughter. Even worse, her mother refused to buy her a parka Chantal admired, then purchased it for the next younger sister, Dominique. These stories baffled us until our wedding anniversary arrived in October, and we received a handsome gift of a volume of Elizabeth and Robert Browning's poetry from the French and American sisters, Susie and Chantal. Later, in private, Susie revealed that Chantal had asked, "How do you know the date your parents got married?" The oldest of six children, she remained ignorant of this fact in her family, and we began to understand why she was treated as an unwanted child. Apparently, that's just what she was.

Then followed nightmarish tales of dreams in which she felt trapped in a train or an elevator. Susie bore witness to endless tearful confessions, all of them weighing heavily upon our daughter. Yet she good-naturedly took Chantal shopping for American clothes, shared her friends, and included her in social events. When the burden became too heavy, another AFS family would extend week-end hospitality to our overseas visitor, and our daughter could have a respite.

The cleanliness I insisted upon became an area of conflict until the day Chantal brought a boule home from Quincy Market, sliced it on the kitchen counter with crumbs everywhere, and exclaimed, "This is what I like, a FRENCH kitchen." I laughed. She laughed. We understood each other.

Through long discussions about her extended family, about her school work, about her tentative friendships here, and about our respective forms of religious observance, (born Catholic, she "loved being Jewish" while she lived with us) she and I formed an irrevocable bond. Oh, it was hard to part at the end of the year. Susie's final words were, "Remember. You can be anything you want to be." Alas, not so, with a father who said she didn't need to attend college, and who hurried her into marriage with the re-surfaced boy friend.

During many of our visits to France and Chantal's visits here, we observed the incompatibility of that marriage, until it was severed by divorce. But before that, she was a bridesmaid at Susie's wedding, clad in sunny yellow, with a circlet of flowers resting on her blonde hair. She was clearly

happy to be one of us again.

Years later, she called from California. "Mom," she said, "There is bad news." It seemed that Paul-Emile had drifted into depression. Having traveled to California, he took out a rental sailboat, and apparently sank it. Chantal said she would hold a memorial service for him on the beach the next day at 11:00 AM. Would I pray for him? I assured her that I would. She and her daughters faced a double tragedy: a husband and father who left them, then left them again.

Christian came into her life after a long sad period. A good man, he treated her with love and consideration, generosity and tenderness. Together, they flew to New York, visiting Susie and her family, sharing their happiness. Chantal visited us in Boston while he was occupied with business matters in New York City. It was a joy to learn of his kindness, his gift of new luggage for the trip, and of a new car for her use.

It was heartbreaking, two years later, to hear that he was seriously ill with an unnamed condition. "A brain disease," she murmured, evasively, in response to my questions. When she called to inform us of his death, I asked, "Chantal, what did he die of? Was it AIDS?" Silence. After a long pause, a quiet affirmative response, "Chantal, how are you? Are you HIV positive?" Silence followed, then, "Yes."

Many years have passed. Last April we invited Chantal to meet us in Amsterdam at the end of our trip on the canals of Holland. A rendezvous was arranged in the lobby of our hotel. When the time for the meeting arrived, I walked right past her, failing to recognize my French daughter. She had become rail thin because of the dietary restrictions that accompany the AIDS regimen. Cords stood out on her neck. "Mom," she called, and we quickly embraced. "It's not enough," she said, so we hugged again. Her bony frame was frightening.

Chantal, her American "Dad" and I spent twenty four hours together, visiting the Van Gogh Museum, feasting in various restaurants, and talking, talking. When she headed back to the train station (she preferred to go alone), we mourned for all the lost potential, the long struggle, the loneliness we saw in her face and heard in her voice. Now, every transatlantic phone call ends with, "Love you" on both ends.

We grieve for the misery Chantal has had to endure. We are proud of her survival skills. •

A Newspaper for Grandma Sheila Klein

When I was about seven or eight years old, my Grandmother Muldofsky came for a visit. A visit from Grandma was always a special treat and a wonderful occasion to be "spoiled rotten." She brought all sorts of goodies with her – some to eat and some to treasure forever.

One particular treasure is a group of five small china pitchers that I always loved playing with when I was staying at her house. I was absolutely thrilled when she gave these to me. These pitchers have always been displayed in a very prominent space in every one of the nine kitchens I have had, and are a delightful remembrance of the special times spent with my Grandmother. They now have a lovely place here in my NewBridge kitchen.

My grandmother and I always had a wonderful time together making pastries, challahs and other delicious treats, and I am proud to have inherited her old fashioned wooden rolling pin that we had used for many of our baking projects. Grandma loved reading her newspaper each day and she especially enjoyed the *Bintel Brif* column, which was for Jewish immigrants the equivalent of today's Ann Lander's column. This was the only time that I was not permitted to ask for her undivided attention. Because we lived in a residential neighborhood and there were no stores nearby, she asked me to go to the "candy" store to purchase a newspaper for her.

She gave me five cents and off I went. When I arrived at the store, the storekeeper asked me what I wanted to purchase. I held out my hand with the five cents clutched in it and said I wanted a *Forverts* newspaper. I thought I had pronounced it in exactly the same way as my Grandmother had. The man listened very carefully and then told me he had to leave for a minute but would be right back. He returned with a few other people and said that he had forgotten what it was that I wanted – would I please tell him again? I repeated my request, using the same pronunciation as before, He then handed me the newspaper after laughing heartily with the other people.

Many years later, when a friend asked if I would like to see a copy of the *Forverts*, I was very surprised to learn that it was now also printed in English, and the name was the Jewish *Daily Forward*. •

The Kindness of Strangers Edward Goldstein

Unlike Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, I have rarely depended on the kindness of strangers. But, like it or not, it was the kindness of strangers that changed the trajectory of my life in a major, if non-measurable, way when I was young.

“Well, which will it be ... Oklahoma or Minnesota?”

It was the early fall of 1941. I was 18. A couple of months earlier I had arrived in New York from England, where I had lived with my parents since leaving Nazi Germany in 1939. I was staying with friends of my parents, but had convinced myself that I needed to strike out on my own.

I was now at the Jewish Welfare Board offices in New York City to see if they could help me learn a trade without my spending any money — which I didn't have. The nice lady had taken me through the various options and we had narrowed the choice. Two different locations run by the National Youth Administration — a relic of the New Deal — offered courses in radio repair. One was located near Enid, Oklahoma, the other near Shakopee, Minnesota. It was now up to me to choose.

I knew nothing of American geography. Oklahoma? Minnesota? Who knew the difference? But the course at Shakopee would start in just a couple of weeks, and that decided it.

“OK, I'll go to Minnesota.”

A couple of weeks later I took a bus to Minneapolis. An NYA truck picked me up at the bus station and took me to a compound just outside the little town of Shakopee.

About a dozen or so rough wooden buildings clustered around a high flagpole flying the Stars and Stripes. My first impression was of neat, well-kept grounds entirely isolated from the rest of the world.

The truck left me off in front of a low-slung wooden building with a sign that said *Administration*. A tall, blond young man, perhaps in his late twenties, wearing corduroys and a work shirt, greeted me:

“Hi, you must be Ed. I'm Bill Marquis, the chief counselor here. Welcome to Shakopee. Come on in and we'll get you settled.”

We shook hands and he led me into the building, where we quickly completed the always necessary paperwork; after all, this was part of the Federal government. Bill then led me to one of the

barracks, introduced me to some of the other young men, who seemed mostly to be straight off the farm, and helped me find a bed and locker.

We then went to his office where he told me about the camp, its educational programs and ground rules. The radio repair course I had enrolled in would start the next morning. He told me there would be four hours of instruction and four hours of work each day, Monday through Friday. Weekends would be free, except for housekeeping details. My first work assignment would be to shovel coal to feed the furnaces.

I quickly adapted to the routine of study and work. For recreation, I read the books in the camp's library and used its ham radio, WJPD, “the Jumping Puppy Dog station,” to chat with radio operators all over the world.

The academic and technical work was easy and I soon became a pretty skilled radio repairman. The inhabitants of the town of Shakopee were encouraged to bring us their defunct and malfunctioning radios, which we would repair at no charge. I also liked shoveling coal. It was dirty, but provided great exercise.

Before long, I was reassigned as strawboss of the group that was repairing radios ... my first management position.

I didn't see much of Bill Marquis for most of that period.

Around the end of November, a few weeks before the scheduled end of the course, Bill asked me to have a beer and hamburger with him. A ten-minute drive brought us to a smoky, neon-lit combination bar/pool hall/restaurant in the center of the small town of Shakopee.

After we ordered, he came right to the point: “What do you want to do with the rest of your life, Ed?”

“Well, I'm a pretty good radio repairman. I guess I'll get a job doing that until something better comes along.”

“Have you thought about going to college?”

“Sure, but there's no way I can do that.”

“Why not?”

“In the first place, my English isn't that good. Second, I have exactly forty four dollars to my name.”

“Well, it's a shame. You would do well at the University here. Let's talk about it again.”

The following week, Bill invited me to his office.

“I just had a phone call from Mrs. Kreiner at the Jewish Welfare Board in Minneapolis. She’s an old friend. I went to see her last week and told her about you. She talked to a few of the Jewish businessmen in town and here’s the deal. If you can pass the entrance exam at the U, three of them will guarantee your tuition and living expenses for a year. After that, you’re on your own. How about it?”

It took a few more explanations before I grasped what was being offered to me. Here was a man whom I hardly knew who had taken it upon himself to change the direction of my life. And here were some people whom I had never met who offered to pay for this opportunity.

I was overwhelmed and scared and thought of a dozen reasons to turn down Bill’s offer. But Bill kept at me until I agreed.

“OK, I’ll make the arrangements at the U,” he said.

And so I spent most of the Tuesday after Pearl Harbor day taking tests at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

As I walked back to the bus depot to return to Shakopee, I passed a Marine Corps recruiting station. I thought that here was the solution to my anxieties and doubts. I walked in and tried to talk the recruiting sergeant into letting me enlist. But he turned me down because I was not a US citizen.

A couple of days before New Years I received a fat envelope from the U. It contained a letter telling me I had passed the entrance examination and been accepted. Also included was paperwork to let me enroll for the spring quarter of 1941 starting the second week of January.

During the ensuing couple of weeks I managed to get a “part time” job that would allow me to work up to forty hours per week at thirty cents an hour. And I rented a room. I was now a full-fledged freshman in the School of Electrical Engineering of the Institute of Technology at the University of Minnesota.

Bill Marquis and I celebrated the event at the crummy bar/pool hall/ restaurant in Shakopee. I said goodbye to the camp, moved into my room in St. Paul, began attending classes and working my “part time” 40 hours a week.

After finishing my junior year, I entered the army as an infantry private. Four years later, after serving in the occupation of Germany and marriage, I returned

to the University under the GI Bill of Rights and graduated in the summer of 1949.

Bill Marquis had enlisted in the Marines soon after I left the camp. We exchanged a couple of letters, but we soon lost track of each other. In the best tradition of Jewish charity, I never met the benefactors who had so generously financed my first year of college. Mrs. Kreiner of the Jewish Welfare Board and I corresponded for a few years until her death soon after the war. •

Cat’s Eyes *Nat Goldhaber*

My Grandparents moved into our apartment after my father died suddenly and my mother got a job as a seamstress in the garment industry. My grandmother would take care of three boys, ages 2, 3 and 5, as well as cooking for the two or three boarders who all lived in our apartment. It must have been very difficult for her.

One of us boys was almost always in some sort of mischief. I remember on one occasion my brothers were arguing about whether my grandfather slept with his beard above, or below the bed sheets. They decided they would sneak into his bedroom late at night while he was sleeping and see for themselves. I said I wanted to go with them. They said I could not, because I was too young and had not yet developed “cat’s eyes” – so I could not see well enough in the dark. In the middle of the night I heard a crash. My brother Marty had tripped over a chair while on the way to my grandfather’s room. Both brothers ran back to our shared bedroom and jumped into their beds. Shortly afterwards, my grandmother came into our bedroom to check us but said nothing. The next morning at breakfast she asked if I heard a crash last night. I explained what had happened. She asked if I was with my brothers. I explained that they would not let me come because I had not yet developed cat’s eyes and could not see as well as they in the dark. She said I could tell my brothers that our grandfather mostly slept with his beard over the bed sheets, and she also told me that my brothers had made up the story about cat’s eyes. She assured me I could see as well as my brothers could in the dark, and maybe better than Marty who had tripped! I was relieved. I loved my *Bubbe*. •

The Nude Under the Desk

Howard Kravets

After I was discharged from the service I decided I wanted to be an artist. I became a student at Vesper George School of Art, the only male student in my class. The war had just ended and there weren't too many young men around, especially in an art class; so I was, to say the least, an object of great interest. Although I had only weighed ninety pounds when I escaped from Germany, I now had gained back enough weight so that I didn't frighten people. But the extreme weight loss left me with a terrible tremor in my hands. All the female attention added to the tremor.

Our first assignment was to draw an ad for Carter's Ink. Hardly had I started when my trembling hands tipped over my inkwell leaving a nice blot on my paper. What to do? I printed in bold letters under the blot, "Carter's Ink flows smoothly." I got an A and a note, "Best in the class."

But this was no place for me, a married man, and all these lovely young women. It was too distracting! So I took my portfolio of sketches that I had accumulated over the years to the art school at the Museum of Fine Arts and met with one of the professors. He inspected my cherished drawings, looked up at me and said, "Try to be a sculptor. You might learn something about three dimensions. Tear up this mess. It's terrible."

Not to be discouraged, I took a free class in sculpting. We had a lovely black, nude model, and I began to mold the clay to copy her beautiful body. My professor was a perfectionist. He wanted a replica of the nude that sat for us. I, on the other hand, wanted to idealize her. Her breasts were just too big, so being my own Lord of Creation, I made them smaller and more of the size I thought better fit her.

My teacher, who was from some foreign country, who knows where, looked at my work, his face turning red, and said, "Da breasts. Vat have you done vit da breasts?"

"Nothing," I said, as the whole class giggled and my face turned red.

Not finished with me, he picked up a large caliper with sharp pointy ends; handed them to me and said, "Measure da breasts!"

My already trembling hands were now getting worse as I approached our model who now looked at the sharp calipers trembling and shaking in my

hands.

"No, no, no" she said as she pulled a flimsy gown around her naked body and fled the room.

I finished the nude; it won a prize at the Boston Arts Festival. Now, because we moved here from a large home with too many things and no place to put them, she poses under an unused desk in our living room, and has become "*The Nude Under the Desk*." •

Her Wedding Day

Rita Fireman

What things to remember from her wedding day.
What hopes, what desires, what fears
did she carry with her?
Can she hear them rustling in the folds
of her dress, the dress her friend made of ivory silk?

Her man walks beside her, the silk
brushes his leg.

Gardenias infuse the air
breathe in my breath
breathe out

yes I do yes forever more
in sickness and in health
la luna the moon in my hair
on my finger a star

I will cherish I will protect
woman wife from this day forward
chaste kiss the wine glass
under your foot.

Rice in our hair,
gardenias pinned to my dress,
bourbon and a pink lady in the bar.

A red cap carries our matching
American Tourister bags to track 22
and the midnight ride on the Pennsylvania
railroad. Our berth is narrow, familiar
like the back seat of his Buick
hot heat honey-suckle.

And the train running all night long to the sun.

The Flanders hotel stands half
in sunlight half in shadow.

They ride the elevator to the honeymoon suite.
She stands at the window.

The Atlantic rolls to the shore. •