Directions and Deeds

The Autobiography of Samuel Colish

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The Autobiography of
Samuel Colish



Samuel Bolish D.D.S.

This book is dedicated to my beloved wife, Daisy, who gave me support and confidence in difficult times and wise advice in good times.

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Introduction

Ever since the Jews accepted monotheism and its accompanying idea of humane relationships among men, they have manifested an unflagging concern for their less fortunate brethren. Wherever and whenever the difficulties of the Jewish people have intensified, the Jewish spirit of benevolence and mutual aid has manifested itself, resulting in the development of large philanthropic organizations offering asistance to Jews throughout the world. In the United States alone, many such organizations raise hundreds of millions of dollars every year. In addition, hundreds of smaller societies raise money for specific religious or charitable goals.

Volunteers are essential for Jewish fundraising efforts, so Jews must give generously of their time as well as of their money. Active volunteers share a deep commitment to the notion that Jews have an obligation to share their material possessions with those less fortunate than themselves and to encourage others to do likewise. Occasionally, however, some volunteers become discouraged by a derogatory remark made by an apathetic contact. How, they wonder, can one continue to solicit contributions year after year in the face of such abuse?

My long experience as a volunteer has taught me that when you believe in a humane endeavor nothing can impede you from its fruition. One should proceed with the task at hand, disregard the few unpleasant incidents, and derive satisfaction from the many productive responses obtained and dollars raised for the less fortunate.

My involvement in fundraising began when I was a child, when making charitable contributions or collecting for charitable causes was my parents' household policy. No matter how difficult our own living conditions we always managed to set aside a portion of our meager possessions for those less fortunate. We learned to share within the family, as well, and so developed concern and regard for others' needs. This early orientation left its mark on me and my three brothers and six sisters. The principles of charity we learned at home have influenced our lives ever since.

Our Bible states that every Jew, within his means, is commanded to give alms for the poor. Even if one can give only a little, what little a poor man gives is equivalent to the large contributions of a rich man. Jewish law delineates precisely how much should be given to the poor and how much one should contribute to charity. Deut. XV-7 states, "Thou shalt open thy hand to him [the poor] that thy brother may live." "Thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother." Deut. XV-8 tells us, "Thou shalt surely open thy hand to him (the poor) and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need inthat which he wanted. (without interest payment)." Our sages say "Charity symbolizes the descendants of our father Abraham." The throne of Israel was established under the humanitarian principles of Abraham, the first Jew, and the Jewish way

of life and charity has set a standard for the ethical and moral relationship of man to man throughout history.

We know that the giving of charity is greater than all the sacrifices. "To exercise *Tzedakah* (charity) and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." Those who claim they haven't enough to share with others should consider Prov. XXI-3, which states, "No man ever became impoverished by giving charity nor will any evil or harm result from its practice."

We know that to give is good, but *Tanach* (the Bible) tells us that to urge others to give is even better. ". . . Those who urge others to give charity and cause them to practice it, earn a greater reward than the ones who give it." "Those that turn many to charity [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever" [Dan. XII-3]. Maimonides, one of the greatest Jewish scholars, regarded the giving of charity to such a high degree that he proposed seven rules as a guide for the giver.

The Jewish attitude toward the giving and taking of charity is reflected in the word tzedakah. Although the word means "righteousness," it also carries the connotation of "justice." In other words, what is given to the poor and accepted by them belongs to them by moral rights. Our Rabbis have explained, "If poverty exists, it is society that is at fault, since it permits the oppression of the poor and the weak." Poverty is a violation of natural law, and the practice of benevolence is a form of atonement and amelioration. We also believe that when God gives wealth to the rich, he does not give it outright, but rather in trust for the poor.

This ancient belief gave rise to the equally ancient Jewish custom of inviting a stranger to one's home for the Sabbath. After the housewife, no matter how poor,

had prepared the Sabbath meal and put on her finest clothes, the honored guest was invited into the home to join the family at table. Before the Sabbath candles were lit, however, some money was put aside in the tzedakah box (*pushkah*) as a contribution to the synagogue or some Jewish educational institution.

When the synagogue became a house of study and prayer in addition to its original function as a house of assembly, it also became a house of charity. Strangers and travelers were welcomed there, and special benevolent consideration was given to the poor. The hungry were fed, the naked were clothed, the weary were sheltered. This Jewish tradition of charity is ancient and cherished. It continues today. I hope that through the example of my life as described in these pages I can encourage one of my brethren to say "yes" to the next request for a donation, or better yet, to say yes and then ask someone else to do the same.

CHAPTER 1

In Poland

Since the turn of the century I have lived in America—almost all of these years in or near New York City—but my life began in Poland, in a shtetel where my parents' house was the center of community activities. Jews in the shtetel earned their livings as merchants, artisans, and tradesmen. Even the rabbi, who received no salary except honorariums for performing weddings and other duties, worked at some trade or craft, although functionaries of the synagogue, such as the *shamus* (caretaker), *shochet* (ritual slaughterer), and *melamed* (teacher), were paid. When Jews were not working they relaxed with their families or visited the synagogue. Only on rare occasions did they venture outside the shtetel, for an invisible fence segregated them from their non-Jewish neighbors. Traders passed all news in their travels from village to village.

Most of the large estates were controlled by counts, dukes, and duchesses, or by the government, although any Pole or Russian could own a shack with a plot on which to grow grains and vegetables for himself. Jews were prohibited from owning land, so my parents rented an estate, consisting of several hundred acres, from a Russian count. We lived in a large stone house—a for-

tress built in the eighteenth century—with two dozen bedrooms, servants quarters, and a huge social hall (which my mother later converted into a general store). The estate contained horse stables, a large cow barn, a brewery, a tool shed, and a barn for storing grain. Part of the hillside was thickly wooded, surrounded by fruit orchards, while the flatlands were planted with fodder and vegetables.

The estate had been unoccupied and neglected for many years because of its high rental and exorbitant brewery tax. However, my mother possessed an enterprising spirit and believed that with proper management the property could become a profitable proposition. She divided its operation into two main divisions: She managed the general store, and my father, the rest of the estate. This required three supervisors, each to oversee a different segment of the farm, assisted by dozens of hired peasants. Each supervisor reported to my father at regular intervals, and he and my mother would suggest methods for improving production.

All dairy products and surplus fruits, vegetables, eggs, and grain were loaded on a wagon and transported to the city, where they were sold or exchanged for merchandise needed in the general store. In this manner, the general store was resupplied for the shtetel residents with items such as clothing, yard goods, hardware, tools, and crockery. Records were maintained by my father, while my mother managed the finances and paid all salaries and bills.

My mother had received a good business training and an excellent education from her grandfather, the wealthiest man in town. When she was only five, he took her with him on his travels to his buyers throughout Poland

and neighboring countries, hiring a governess to instruct and train her in proper decorum. The governess taught my mother several languages and the proper etiquette when calling upon royalty, which she did with her grandfather. Precocious and lovely, dressed in the finest attire, my mother received considerable attention from her hostesses during these visits. For their transportation an extra carriage was attached to his own, drawn by two extra white Arabian horses.

She lived and traveled with her grandfather for ten years, during which time he told her how he made his fortune: how he consummated his business transactions and what prestige he'd won from his customers for fair dealing. She absorbed his advice as a sponge does water, and with her training from her governess she soon developed into a good organizer, shrewd businesswoman, and convincing public speaker. Once she determined to accomplish something, no one could change her mind. Although not everyone always agreed with her, they respected her judgment, since it was usually practical and sound. Later on she used her training to encourage many people to contribute toward worthwhile charities.

My mother's grandfather was genuinely colorful, a dynamic personality. "He was six feet tall with a powerful muscular physique, standing and walking erect like a military officer," my mother once described him. "His clothes were stylishly tailored in exclusive shops from the finest materials; his leather boots reflected like mirrors; his fur-lined overcoat and hat had a silky feeling to the touch; a heavy gold chain dangled from his vest pocket and he carried a cane with a solid gold handle. As he entered the room, all activity ceased and everyone

stood at attention until he signified with his cane that they could continue with whatever they had been doing."

My great-grandfather was highly regarded by his fellow Jews, but he also carried considerable clout with the Czar and his financial minister. The Russian government occasionally solicited him for loans, which in turn opened the way for the concessions he received from Russian royalty. He became interested in renting their estates, and within a few years he controlled many properties, which he placed under managers who conducted their daily operation. These managers made regular progress reports to my great-grandfather, who would recommend ways to promote efficiency and increase profit. Thus, within a short period, some of these unprofitable estates became successful operations, selling their products—grain, cattle, poultry, fruit, and lumber—to the Russian or some other government.

My great-grandfather was a strict disciplinarian, intolerent of anyone who deviated from his specific instructions. I remember one incident when I experienced his passion for perfection. I was only four years old, playing in front of our house, when I saw in the distance a carriage drawn by four white Arabian horses. As it drew near, I could see a rifle-bearing bodyguard perched on the cab's seat beside the driver. The carriage stopped in front of our house, and after delaying a few moments, the armed guard descended from his post and opened the carriage door. Two more broad-shouldered bodyguards descended from inside the carriage, and stood in military array (with guns) followed by my great-grandfather. As my brother and I ran to greet him, he waved us aside. The outer guard then closed the carriage door, took his place in front of my great-grandfather, and bowed before

him. Suddenly, my great-grandfather took his cane and struck this guard over the head. The blow was accompanied by stern admonitions for even momentarily delaying dismounting when the carriage had stopped (his assigned duty). The guard dropped to his knees, pleading with my great-grandfather to forgive him and promising never to be tardy in his duty again. "Master, master," he said, "pardon, pardon me."

I ran into the house and told my mother what had happened. She assured me, quite calmly, that my great-grandfather was neither cruel nor tyrannical, but rather that his actions were essential for his survival. I remember her telling me about his wide travels. "Your great-grandfather must pass through dense forests, where thieves lie in wait to attack passing travelers. They know merchants carry gold and silver and are good prospects for robbery. To protect himself, your great-grandfather hires well-paid guards to stay on constant alert for any impending danger. His guards are well aware of their duty and the penalty they pay if they delay in its execution. When the guard is slow in dismounting to open the carriage door, he deserves a just reprimand.

"I have been with your great-grandfather many years and I know him well," she continued. "He may appear cruel and dictatorial on the surface, but he is really very kind, gracious, devoted to his family, and very charitable to his people." This episode became more and more vivid to me as my mother related it over and over for many years when we gathered around the dining-room table to listen to her reminiscences. She never deviated one iota from that original description.

My mother also told the story of another incident that occurred during a visit to one of my great-grandfather's rented estates. It was rye harvest, a time when both men

and women worked the fields. The women cut grain with a sickle and did the binding while the men loaded the bundles on wagons and carted it to the barn. My great-grandfather was discussing the progress of the harvest with his manager when he noticed in the distance that the women had stopped working. He sent his manager to investigate, and he soon returned with a surprising explanation: He informed my grandfather that one of the women had given birth in the field and the others had gathered around her to assist in the delivery. My great-grandfather immediately ordered a wagon driver to take him to where the women were working. Seeing him approaching, they quickly wrapped the newborn in an old petticoat and scurried back to their jobs. My great-grandfather jumped off the wagon and went directly to where the baby was lying and gently picked the child up in his arms. Meanwhile the mother had gone back to work. On learning who the mother was, he ordered her to drop her sickle, and after placing the baby in her arms, he directed the wagon driver to take her to the main house, where she should be given complete rest and the baby proper care. He ordered her to discontinue further outdoor work until completely recovered and told her she would be fully compensated for wages she missed while recuperating.

My mother liked to tell another, more personal, story about her grandfather. When the oldest of his two daughters turned fifteen, she became eligible for marriage (according to the custom of those days. The betrothal, or *tenaim,* was arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. The parents fixed the *nadan* (dowry) and the penalties for any breach of the contract. The young woman had little or no choice in selecting her husband, and reneging on the *tenaim* carried a stigma

far worse than divorce does today. In most cases, the couple never met and knew little, if anything, about one another's personalities. These arranged marriages, interestingly enough, rarely ended in divorce. Marriage was a sacred obligation, and the bride and groom made every effort to accommodate themselves to each other's temperaments and idiosyncrasies.

After surveying prospective mates in the community, my great-grandfather concluded that no young man was suitable for the daughter of such an affluent and powerful man as he. He decided to travel to the city of Vilna, where he consulted with the chief rabbi of the yeshivah. My great-grandfather had often visited this city and was friendly with the rabbi, who graciously welcomed him and listened to his request. The next day, the rabbi recommended his outstanding student, who soon was to be ordained, for the match. My great-grandfather conducted a long interview with this young man and was so impressed by his scholarly abilities that he contacted the student's parents and arranged his daughter's betrothal. After the fiance's ordination my great grandfather returned to the Yeshiva and gave a party for the entire rabbinical school. In appreciation for the chief Rabbi's recommendation he made a large donation towards scholarships for deserving and needy students.

It was customary in the shtetel for the whole community to share in the joyous occasion of a wedding, particularly when it was an affluent individual's daughter. The celebration lasted seven days. At the wedding, the traditional rituals were performed: the seven blessings, the symbolic ring, the reading of the *ketubah* (marriage contract), and the breaking of the glass.

My grandmother met her husband for the first time at the wedding, but she soon learned to admire him. She

had been raised to respect *vissenshaft* (knowledge), and even when she learned about his lack of ability in business matters, her love and admiration for him never diminished, but intensified until his dying day. My great-grandfather made certain that the couple would be well provided for throughout their lives. He purchased a home for them, furnished it, and supplied them with whatever assistance or servants they required. The marriage produced sixteen children, of which my mother was the eldest.

My father, on the other hand, came from a family of great scholars and rabbis. His grandfather, Zvi Hirsch Kalisher, a traditional rabbi with philosophical interests, was one of the first orthodox rabbis to go against the Jewish messianic belief of past centuries and advocate the nationalization of Palestine through colonization. Kalisher disagreed with the cardinal principle of Jewish religious thought, the belief that Jews will be restored to the Holy Land upon the arrival of the Messiah. "We cannot delay," he would say. "We must return now."

One international development, in particular, influenced his intense interest in Palestine. The Industrial Revolution had caused nationalistic feelings to well up all across Europe, with an attendant emphasis on linguistic and cultural heritage and on a country's right of self-determination. The struggle of Europeans to retain their identities and attain their independence inspired Jews like Kalisher to pursue the same goals. In 1836 Kalisher sent a letter to Nathan Meyer Rothschild, son of the banking magnate, in which he pleaded for financial support toward an agricultural settlement for poor Jews residing in Palestine. Rothschild showed no interest in this project but that did not discourage my great-grandfather, who later contacted Moses Montefiore, an

English Jew noted for his outstanding philanthropic work and concern for the Holy Land.

Montefiore had visited Palestine himself, where he found some ten thousand deeply pious Jews living in Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberius, and Hebron without any visible means of support. They sat daily in the synagogue studying, relying upon charitable contribution for their sustenance. Although a charitable man, Montefiore felt this way of life was not directed toward the Messianic dream, a feeling that became a conviction after six subsequent visits. When Kalisher approached him with the idea of colonization, Montefiore responded enthusiastically and together they helped found a settlement near Jerusalem which still exists today. "Palestine must belong to the Jews and Jerusalem is destined to be the seat of the Jewish Empire," wrote Montefiore. "Begin in the first place with building of houses in Jerusalem." Kalisher also persuaded a group to buy land on the outskirts of Jaffa. In response to his insistent requests, the Alliance Israelite Universelle, an international Jewish organization, founded a Jewish school at Mikveh Israel, near Jaffa.

In 1862 Kalisher wrote his most important work, *Derishat Zion* (Longing for Zion), urging Jews to hasten the coming of the Messiah by resettling the land through their own efforts and sacrifices. "Let no one think that all of a sudden the Lord will descend from heaven and say, 'go forth,' " he wrote. "Note how the Italians, Poles, Hungarians, risked their lives and their possessions for the reputation of their countries. Only we Jews who are heir to a land which is the glory and the joy of the world have nothing to say and act like a man who has no courage." He was criticized heavily by other rabbis for his radical ideas. His scholarly son, my grandfather, was

forced to leave Prussia after Kalisher's death, and he was never officially ordained because of his own liberal attitude.

My father, even more liberal than his progenitors, loved secular books. During his studies at the yeshivah, he would sneak a book by Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, or others on astronomy or materia medica, under his *Gemorah;* when he thought the rabbi was not watching he delved into these *verboten* texts. Eventually the rabbi's suspicions were confirmed and my father's hopes for ordination were doomed. Out of respect for his famous lineage, however, the rabbi permitted him to finish his studies.

My father was not overly disappointed about this turn of events; his love for all kinds of books far surpassed any reverence he might have received had he become an ordained rabbi. After his marriage, whenever he visited the big city to sell produce from our farm, he browsed around in bookstores searching for modern texts on science or medicine. When he left for America in 1900, the major part of his baggage consisted of his books.

Because of the different backgrounds of my parents and the training they received, ours was a matriarchal home, unlike the normal home of those days. My mother was domineering and aggressive, while my father was diligent, hardworking, and studious. Each in his or her own way, however, contributed toward a harmony in our home which had a beneficial influence upon the children.

After her marriage, my mother operated the general store, and soon her business abilities manifested themselves by consummating profitable deals. The Polish peasants seldom possessed sufficient cash to pay for their merchandise, so my mother extended them credit, taking

as collateral a portion of their next year's crop. Invariably, these poor Poles became perpetually obligated to my mother. Weather conditions were not always good enough to produce a crop sufficient for their own use as well as for payment on their obligation; in addition, most Poles liked hard liquor, and any funds remaining after the sale of the crop were dissipated at the *shenk* (saloon). Were it not for their wives, who worked in the fields or as servants doing housework, many of them would not have had sufficient funds for their household necessities.

Nevertheless, no one was let down, no one was turned away sick or hungry. These poor souls found an open door in the general store to supply them with their basic necessities or to dower a bride or to secure a loan to purchase transportation to America. Except for the synagogue, our home was the focal point for problem solving and community activities, where all the *mitzvoth* (commandments) were regularly performed. Wayfarers and strangers were cordially welcomed to stay, for a day or a week, regardless of their ability to pay for their accommodations. And when a legal or religious question arose, my father was called upon for an opinion. He also helped those unable to read or write send letters to relatives in the United States, and to interpret those they received from their American relatives.

My brothers and sisters and I grew up in an environment of hard work and study, but there were the usual moments of levity shared by large families. For instance, I once exhibited some jealousy toward my brother, then two years old, in a rather singular fashion. I was fascinated by a growth, the size and shape of an old-fashioned collar button, my brother had in front of his ear. Why should he possess something I didn't have? As

much as I tried to duplicate it by gluing an artifical growth to my ear, I always failed. Hounded by this jealous feeling, I decided to perform its surgical removal. The only available armature for this operation was a horse's hair. Thus, I plucked a hair from a horse's tail, stowing it away for future service.

The time arrived one day while I was playing outdoors with my brother. After seating him on a bench, I started my surgical operation by slowly winding the hair around the growth. As I tightened the hair, his resentment became louder and louder. His objections finally attracted my mother, who hurriedly ran to where we were presumably playing. She snatched my brother away from my surgery and carried him into the house. After removing the hair, she turned her attention to me. In no uncertain terms, both verbally and physically, I was given to understand that in the future I should not practice surgery without first obtaining a license.

From the time we were able to speak coherently, we were taught Hebrew by a teacher my father hired on an annual salary. His entire day was devoted to some form of instruction, each session geared to the progress of that particular child. My father took over during the Sabbath and holidays, supplementing the Hebrew teacher's instructions in a unique manner. From his vast store of biblical knowledge, he fed us pertinent facts in the form of parables, broadening our biblical concept while making it enjoyable. The Bible, under his tutelage, became vibrant and alive, not merely a book on the shelf gathering dust. When he saw our reaction to his method, his face radiated with delight: he was getting his message across to his children. His love for study was so absorbing for him that in his spare time he became a *sofer* (scribe).

A sofer not only had to be learned in the Law but also had to demonstrate satisfactory resources of character and power of concentration. He had to be a deeply religious individual and a capable artist, able to reproduce the Torah Scroll exactly and without error. Even after the introduction of the printing press, the Torah Scroll still had to be copied by a professional sofer, as it is done to this day. Although my father was qualified to have become a professional sofer, he plied his art as a layman, without compensation.

On many occasions I was privileged to watch him prepare for his task and perform his craft. To mix the ink he used a special mortar and pestle, in which he ground black powder combined with a glue. To this he added boiled water (which had been cooled) to give the ink its appropriate consistency. Finally, he selected a quill from a large goose or turkey, then shaped it into proper form.

Having prepared this paraphernalia according to statutes, he ritually prepared himself. Before an observant Jew starts his morning prayers he covers himself with a prayer shawl and then dons phylacteries, wrapping one around his left arm (if right-handed) and placing the other on his forehead (with prayers for each procedure). My father followed the same routine prior to beginning his duty. As he slowly recorded each letter by the light of a kerosene lamp, he became so deeply engrossed in his work that nothing distracted him until he completed his daily quota. He then removed his phylacteries and prayer shawl and discarded the remaining ink, since a new batch is made at every session. (Phylacteries are not worn on the Sabbath or holidays; neither is writing permitted on those days.)

Before a Scroll can be accepted for regular synagogue

services, an expert examines it for errors and makes any corrections. Then a day is designated for its dedication. The rabbi, the elders, and most of the villagers met at our home, where a parade was organized to march down the main road to deliver the Scroll to the synagogue. Here the shamus started an auction in a singsong manner; individuals bid to inscribe their names on the last page of the Scroll. It was considered a high honor to make a contribution on such an infrequent event. After the donors penned their Hebrew names on the Scroll (or their names were penned for them), tables were set up and refreshments were brought to the synagogue for everyone present to partake. The day ended with the regular afternoon and evening services.

For fifteen years after their marriage, my parents lived happily on this rental estate. During this period, they gained the respect and reverence of the Jews in the shtetl and, superficially, the Christians. Although peasants were never denied assistance whenever they requested it, still the undercurrent of jealousy toward a successful Jew persisted. No matter how the Poles attempted to cushion this attitude, they were unable to eradicate it; it had become deeply rooted at home and in their church.

When we examine Russian and Polish history, we find that the persecution of Jewish populations there followed the same patterns as in France, Germany, Spain, and other European countries where religious hatred and violence penetrated church councils and seeped down to the populace. Decrees were issued forbidding Jews to have social intercourse with Christians and forcing them to pay a special tax for the support of the church. Jews wore a yellow badge on their outer garments for identification. The Jewish charter was cancelled, denying any rights to Jews, causing riots in

several Polish cities. Perhaps the nearest horror to Hitler's Holocaust occurred in 1648, when the Cossack Chmielnicki led the slaughter of 200,000 to 400,000 Jews. Their household possessions were confiscated, their synagogues destroyed, and all books and Scrolls burned in the marketplace. Only those who managed to flee were spared.

Harrassment of Jews continued in Russia into the nineteenth century. One pogrom, begun in 1871, continued with greater or lesser intensity over the next ten years. In 1881 antisemitism intensified in several large cities, culminating in the May Laws of 1882. The May Laws proposed the following scheme—one third of the Jewish population was to be absorbed through conversion; one third ejected by emigration; and one third exterminated by starvation. As a result, 1,300,000 Jews poured out of Russian gates between 1881 and 1918, mostly to America. Czar Nicolas continued the oppressive policy against Jews until his dethronement by the communists in 1917.

This deeply rooted dislike for Jews by Poles and Russians became evident at the saloon, when the peasants under the influence of liquor blurted out antisemitic remarks. Jews had to be on constant alert for any distinguishable national trends that might affect their safety. Despite my parents' efforts to assist their Polish and Russian neighbors, travelers brought us rumors of another pogrom that was to take place in the very near future. As prosperous Jews, we would be the prime target for the government's oppressive edicts. My parents decided that my father was to leave for America and, after he became sufficiently established, my mother and the eight children would follow. It was a difficult decision for them to make—to pull up well-established roots and

leave behind many possessions honestly acquired through diligence and hard work. Nevertheless, at the turn of the century, my father contacted his sisters and nephew in Philadelphia, informing them that he was coming to America and to meet him in New York.

My mother, remaining behind, was faced with many problems as she conducted the affairs of the estate. Each week a new governmental edict strained her fortitude. An exorbitant tax was placed on the brewery, and my mother was falsely accused of having been operating it illegally. To avoid its confiscation, she was compelled to pay off the local inspectors. Furthermore, the local Polish customers, to whom she extended liberal credit, refused to pay on their accounts, even while insisting on further credit for new purchases. The little profit that still remained was doled out for legal fees and bribes to keep the wolf from our door. The farming production dwindled within a year so that it barely showed a profit. Because of these adverse conditions (and because my father had sent her encouraging letters from America), my mother decided to dispose of most of her personal possessions and give whatever remained to the poor and needy. All household objects, the cattle, grain, and farm equipment were sold for an infinitesimal percentage of their real value. A year after my father left for America, my mother was prepared to join him.

Under her supervision, the servants packed all silverware, copper utensils, clothing, feather beds, tablecloths, and linen in crates for shipping. They were delivered to the railroad station, then freighted to Rotterdam and loaded on our transatlantic ship. All special foods and preserves (hardtack, herring, prepared chicken) and clothing packages were toted by my mother and nine

children (one child was a cousin who traveled with us) to the railroad station.

After receiving border clearance, the children were lined up in pairs and fastened together with large safety pins. My mother led the brood while my oldest sister brought up the rear to guide us in the proper direction and prevent us from straying at the crowded railroad station. Upon entering our second-class compartment we were unpinned and instructed to remain within the compartment until we reached port. There the safety pins were again put into service. Loaded with our bundles, we marched down the street until we arrived at the port and plodded up the gangplank. Here we were ushered into our "magnificent quarters"—steerage third-class. We accommodated ourselves in these crowded circumstances, however, and were able to peep out our tiny porthole over the rolling waves to watch the seagulls floating on the water. Within a few hours, the ship's anchor was drawn and we left port on our voyage across the Atlantic to the *goldene medina,* the golden land, America.

CHAPTER 2

In Philadelphia

The twelve-day voyage across the Atlantic was uneventful, since we spent most of our time in the ship's hold. Kosher food was not served on the ship, and we were traveling steerage third-class, so before we left Poland my mother had her servants prepare sufficient hardtack, dried cheese, dried herring, tea, chickory for coffee, noodles, and chicken for the entire voyage. Huddled together in our cramped quarters, we managed to survive on these provisions. Our only luxury was an occasional gift of baked potatoes from the crew's galley. (The potatoes were kosher as long as they were served without any of the dressing used by the crew.)

As we looked out from our portholes and saw the seagulls skimming over the surface of the sea we realized that we were reaching shore. This was soon confirmed by the blare of the ship's steam whistle. We then climbed up from our stuffy quarters to the upper deck, where we had a dazzling view of the New York skyline. It was a relief to breathe fresh air again after being cooped up in the hold with the stinking, noisy engines of the ship so close to our quarters.

After we docked, my mother again pinned us together in two rows with a strip of cloth, one row held by my mother and the other by my oldest sister, Mamie, then fourteen. We marched down the gangplank into the large, crowded Castle Garden waiting room. The government agents inspected and cleared our papers, but we remained there for several hours in order that we could verify the claim on our baggage and be given health clearance.

Meanwhile, my father had arrived from Philadelphia to meet us. He hired a moving van pulled by two horses to transport us and our baggage to his sister's home, where he had lived since arriving in America. It was a twelve-hour trip from New York to Philadelphia, so on arrival at my aunt's house we were tired and hungry. But she had a delicious meal waiting for us—the first good food we had in over a month. After dinner we brought some of the bedding in from the moving van and spread it on the living room floor; this became the children's sleeping quarters, while my parents occupied the spare bedroom in which my father had slept. Need I say more? It was the most restful night we experienced in six weeks.

My father's two brothers-in-law had, over several years, developed a very successful customer-peddler business in the Philadelphia area. Business was conducted in the following manner. The peddler traveled throughout the countryside, soliciting orders from new immigrants for men's, women's, and children's clothing. After obtaining a sufficient number of orders, he contacted a wholesaler and purchased the merchandise with cash at a discount. Then he stacked the bundle of merchandise on his back and delivered his customers' orders. The peddler sold on credit at a very high markup, collecting payments over a year on a fifty-cents-per-week basis for

each item. While collecting on the old account, he also promoted new purchases. Thus a good peddler could recover his total investment in a few months, and all collections thereafter were capital gain. Meanwhile, the purchaser was constantly indebted to the peddler.

The customer-peddler business appeared to be a lucrative enterprise to my father. When he first arrived in Philadelphia, a year before my mother came, he had written home to my mother with details about the business and a request for a 2,000-ruble draft (a large sum in those days). Upon receiving the funds, he began soliciting customers until he acquired enough orders for his first wholesale purchase. He made the same arrangement as his brothers-in-law with the wholesaler, paying cash and receiving a discount on the merchandise. However, unlike his brothers-in-law, my father had not ascertained the credit rating of his customers. Thus he soon realized that some of them were so impoverished that they were unable to meet their regular, weekly fifty-cent payments, while others were "skips" who never intended to honor their obligations. After three months my father barely collected sufficient funds to cover his room and board.

Still, his wonderfully descriptive twenty-page letters to my mother contained graphic portrayals of America as a land of religious freedom and great economic opportunity. He detailed the comfortable manner in which his Philadelphia relatives lived on the good income derived from their customer-peddler business. He also requested another 2,000-ruble draft.

But after six months the tone of these letters changed, becoming more subtle. He wrote less about his business and more about my mother coming to America. He urged her to make every effort to dispose of our posses-

sions and leave Poland. Sensing my father's business distress, she salvaged as much as possible from the estate, leaving a large portion for distribution among the poor through the local charity organization, and we sailed to join him. On our arrival, my father soon disclosed his troubles to my mother. When he visited some of his customers, he confided to her, their poverty was so apparent that he never pressed them for payment for the goods: he considered them a charitable gift.

My aunt located an apartment for us a few days after our arrival, and my mother, with my eldest sister's assistance, soon set up house. Our house, and two exactly like it, faced an open yard, in the center of which was a hand pump for water and individual outdoor privies for each family. There was neither gas nor electricity supplied in the apartment; we used candles or a kerosene lamp instead. On the ground floor was the kitchen, with a wood- or coal-burning stove for cooking and heating the dining and living rooms. Our sleeping quarters were on the second floor. Four-legged guests were plentiful, particularly during meal time, and bugs took refuge in our beds. Contrasted with our large hundred-year-old fortress in Poland, this apartment seemed terribly cramped and inadequate for our family of ten.

My mother and the three eldest children decided that the first step in making our house more liveable was to eradicate our pests. On a weekly basis they stripped the beds and sprayed them with kerosene, then scrubbed the floors with a combination of water and kerosene. The house smelled like a refinery for a day or so, but we followed the procedure every Friday morning. All the youngsters were hustled out of the house and warned not to enter until the fumigation was completed. My mother

warned us never to play with matches, since kerosene fumes could ignite even hours after the cleansing operation was completed.

But children have a tendency to disregard warnings and satisfy their curiosity. One day my younger brother, then three years old, and my even younger sister, barely one year old, disobeyed my mother and took some matches into the bedroom not long after the room was cleaned. They lit one match, setting the entire mattress ablaze. My brother took one of the feather-bed covers and placed it on the burning mattress, hoping to smother the flames, but when this failed, both children hid under the bed. Fortunately my mother was home. She smelled smoke, ran upstairs, and pulled the children from their hiding place. Miraculously, both were saved (my brother received slight burns on his hands and feet; my sister, second-degree burns on her backside). After being confined in the hospital they recovered without too much scarring, but the finest bedcovers brought from Poland were destroyed.

Soon after the fire, we found a new location in a two-story building. A candy store occupied the lower floor, with living quarters in the rear. Our apartment above was accessible through a private entrance and had more modern conveniences than our original one. There was running water in the kitchen, gas for cooking and lighting, and an indoor toilet, for an annual rental of $120.

At age six, I entered public school, still unable to speak English. As a restless child who was compelled to sit in class like a dummy, I often fell into trouble by disturbing the classroom decorum and ignoring my teacher's reprimands. As a last resort, the teacher sent me home with a note, which I never turned over to my

mother. School became hateful to me, so I stayed away and played hooky. To keep out of circulation during school hours, I found a good hiding place underneath the steps leading to the candy-store entrance. (But I was prompt in returning home for lunch and at the end of the school day.)

On each step, there were boards with wide spaces between them so that objects could easily fall through. When children came to buy candy, they occasionally lost their pennies while walking up these steps and never made any effort to recover their coins. During my confinement, while digging in the sand, I sifted out many lost coins. I kept my prospecting a secret—I did not want to divulge to anyone, particularly my mother, that I had found Philadelphia's first copper mine.

As luck would have it, my good fortune was short-lived. One night before retiring, I hung my pants over a chair, with my loot and the teacher's undelivered note hidden in a pocket. My mother noticed a hole in one knee and decided to mend it. When she lifted them for the operation, she found one pants leg heavier than the other and, looking closer, saw that one pocket was closed with a safety pin. The next morning after breakfast, my mother gave me the third degree. After many menacing threats, I reluctantly told the whole story—where I found the coins and why I withheld the teacher's note. Her apprehension regarding the money, which if stolen deserved severe punishment, was gradually assuaged; my teacher's note, however, merited disciplinary action, which I painfully received. More important, my mother sought the assistance of my Philadelphia cousin, who taught me basic English in a couple of weeks. No longer did I feel lost in the classroom, nor did I stay away from school. My attendance became punctual and regular.

During our one-year residence in Philadelphia, my father continued in the customer-peddler business without any greater success than when he first started. Most of his investments were not repaid, and many of his customers continued to be poor risks. As conditions proceded from bad to worse, my mother decided to act. With the little money salvageable from my father's business, combined with the remaining funds brought from Poland, she went to New York to look for a good location to start a grocery store. After a couple of days, she found a site in a new five-floor walk up under construction on 111th Street, east of Park Avenue. She placed a deposit for a store with a basement and a five-room apartment furnished with running water, a coal stove in the kitchen, a coin gas meter, stone wash basins, and toilets in the hall. In 1902, we moved into our new quarters.

CHAPTER 3

In New York

My mother returned to her old-country position as family business manager. To furnish our grocery story, she contracted with a fixture concern to build the required shelving and supply the scales, counters, and iceboxes. She ordered all necessary merchandise for conducting the business from a wholesale grocer, a milk company, and a butter-and-egg merchant. Since credit was not available for our new enterprise, my mother paid cash and received a discount. This special consideration proved very significant. Word of our ability to undersell other grocery stores spread in the neighborhood, attracting many customers. Shopping at the Colish's meant a savings of a few pennies for the purchaser. Business volume increased so rapidly that we needed additional help behind the counter and for deliveries, so my sister worked at the cash box (there were no cash registers yet) and I became the delivery boy, without pay.

At the turn of the century, most immigrants couldn't afford the luxury of a telephone. Rarely did anyone ring up the butcher, the baker, or the candlestick maker to place an order. Usually the customer left her order with a two-quart milk can the previous night for delivery early

next morning, so my duties began at 5 A.M. I helped assemble the order before making the delivery. The average order consisted of a half dozen rolls (five cents); one-eighth pound of butter (four cents); one-half pound of cheese (five cents); one-half dozen eggs (six cents); two quarts of milk (eight cents); and two large herrings (ten cents). I sometimes carried the groceries up five flights for delivery. Often, as I was placing the order at the doorstep, a half sleepy head popped through the partially open door, saying, "*Mein keend brang mer noch tzvey zemmul*" (My child, bring me two more rolls). After the second trip, the same head might emerge with another request, "*Brang mer noch a halb fertel putter*" (Bring me another eighth of a pound of butter). If that wasn't enough, a third solicitation might follow for a "*halb funt szaltz*" (a half-pound salt, valued at one cent). Despite the number of deliveries, I rarely received a penny tip.

By the end of the first year, my mother developed an excellent credit rating. She was therefore able to make lot purchases directly from shippers at shipper's prices, so that when another grocer ran short of an item, he was able to obtain it from us. This gave my mother an idea. Why not sell our special cheese, eggs, and other dairy products directly to groceries at wholesale prices? Within a couple of weeks, we had established a good route and were making deliveries by horse and wagon. This project thrived, as did the grocery store, and by the end of the second year, we added another wagon to accommodate the increase in trade. We began purchasing Swiss cheese by carload lots so that other wholesalers, when necessary for their trade, bought part of the carload from us. In addition, we began manufacturing our own butter, and increased our own formula cheese production.

Our success in the trade led to still another business proposition. A large milk concern offered my father the sole distribution of kosher milk in the city. Unlike regular milk, shipped by freight in twenty-quart cans which were often opened and diluted with water, kosher milk was supervised from its source to its point of delivery by a *mashgiach* (a designated Jew who observes and certifies that a product is made under *Halakhah* regulation, or Jewish law), who sealed each can with a special stamp to guarantee its purity and *kashruth*. If the seal was tampered with or broken, that can of milk was rejected and sold by the grocer as regular milk. (Although pure food and drug laws had just been enacted in 1904, machinery for full supervision and inspection had not been effectively set up. In those days, milk was not pasteurized, cows were not tested for tuberculosis, and there was no inspection of milk during transit from its source to the consumer.)

After due consideration of the agent's offer, my father accepted the terms of the proposal by handshake, without a legal contract or my mother's consultation. He then announced in Yiddish and German publications the availability of kosher milk at eight cents a quart (regular milk then was four cents a quart). We received a couple of hundred calls, mostly from German Jews, who, having been in this country a generation or two and more affluent than recent immigrants, could afford the extra expense. Like all the business enterprises we had started since moving to New York, the milk route also proved successful. Soon we added a second wagon and hired another man to make deliveries.

Our fortunate circumstances, however, were due for a shock. Our milk suppliers had became envious of our success. Without notification, they began selling the

same kosher product unbottled directly to grocers for three cents less than our bottled milk. When my father reminded them about their verbal agreement, they ignored his protests, reminding him that he had no legal contract. They also refused my father's suggestion to arbitrate this matter, since there was nothing to arbitrate. One thing is certain: had my mother been a party to this transaction, she would have secured a legal contract with all terms specified so the milk concern could not break the agreement.

Our controversy with the milk company continued until the Depression of 1907 struck our country a severe blow. As factories closed and manufacturing concerns failed, a wave of unemployment spread across the country. The salaries of those still employed were barely enough to keep body and soul together. It was not uncommon to see destitute men and women lying in alleys, dying from hunger. Were it not for the soup kitchens and bread lines set up by HIAS (the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), the city, and charitable organizations, and for the free milk contributed by Strauss in Central Park, many more would have died. Half of the grocery stores closed their doors because they were unable to collect their outstanding debts and pay their creditors. Of the $50,000 outstanding among my father's customers (considered a large sum in those days), only five percent could be collected. The kosher milk routes also suffered. Affluent as many of these customers had been, they were now unable to pay eight cents for a quart of bottled milk, and instead bought unbottled kosher milk from the grocery store for three cents less. We soon discovered ourselves in financial difficulty.

To try to make ends meet, my mother instituted an

austerity program. We discontinued two routes, one for kosher milk and another for wholesale butter and eggs. We discharged several employees and began tightening our belts, hoping conditions would improve shortly. Unfortunately, conditions progressed from bad to worse. When my mother had resolved seven years earlier that we should enter the grocery business, we were ultimately successful; now she concluded we should produce our own kosher milk. In 1909 she learned of a fifty-acre farm for sale by the farmer who had built the farmhouse and barns himself more than fifty years earlier. She bought the farm for $5,500, with a down payment of $50 and $250 yearly amortization for twenty years. But before describing this new project, let me return to the subject of my schooling.

When we moved to New York from Philadelphia, I entered the second grade at P.S. 83 on 110th Street, just east of Third Avenue. The population of this district was mainly Italian, Irish, and Jewish. The Italians lived east of Third Avenue, between 108th and 112th streets. Most of them were barely able to speak English. It was not uncommon to find fourteen- or fifteen-year-olds in the third grade, since they were not promoted but had to stay in school until they turned sixteen to obtain their working papers.

The language problem of the Italian boys made them inattentive and disruptive in the classroom. Fights were common. Many of them carried knives—and they would use them. The only deterrent to their unruly conduct in school was Mr. Norman, a black teacher, whose name struck terror in the hearts of all pupils. I can remember one boy's reaction when his female teacher threatened to send him to Mr. Norman for punishment. He ran over to

her, dropped on his knees, and pleaded with her in his broken English, "Pleasa, tich, no senda me to Mr. Norman!"

The Irish neighborhood was southeast of 110th street, between 110th and 106th streets. The Irish boys were usually peaceful, but if anyone made a derogatory statement about the Irish, woe betide that individual. He received a good lesson that he remembered for a long time. As a rule, the Irish avoided the Italians, although they organized gangs to prevent incursions into their territory. Occasionally fights broke out, resulting in casualties, and the police had to be called in. At school, the Irish were average pupils with some ranking in the upper third of the class.

There was seldom any ill feeling or misunderstanding between the Irish and the Jews, who resided west of Third Avenue between 108th and 115th streets. Both pursued a common objective—to study, learn, and be promoted to a higher grade. A disproportionately high number of the Jewish pupils were represented in the top 15 percent of their classes. As could be expected, the Italian students became resentful. These feelings interfered with their class achievements and even led to violence. For example, every Friday morning there was a general assembly. Each class chose a bright student to recite a selected poem. In almost all cases, an Irish or Jewish boy represented his class. Since I had the honor to represent my class on several occasions, I became a target for the Italians. They taunted me verbally, calling me "teacher's pet," and they abused me physically. I still have more than a half-dozen scars from the wounds they inflicted upon me.

In this environment, a Jewish kid's life wasn't worth a few pennies, if he happened to possess that munificent

sum in his pocket. Our parents were unable to protest. They had neither the time, because they worked long hours to earn a livelihood, nor sufficient knowledge of English to register any complaints. We were left to our own devices to protect ourselves against our tormentors (who were often five or six years older). One of our schemes worked in the following manner.

We designated the library on 110th street, west of Third Avenue, as a safe haven from our molesters. After school, our lookout drew the attention of our waiting antagonists, and with a predetermined signal, told us when it was O.K. to run to the library. By the time the Italian kids spotted us, we had crossed Third Avenue, and while our pursuers chased us in vain, the lookout escaped. We then waited until they left or we received protection from adults at the library in order to arrive home safely.

After public school was over, I attended an old-fashioned *cheder* (Hebrew school) five times a week. The rabbi, our landsman, a man in his late fifties, wore a long gray beard, a black silk mohair coat and vest, and glasses set on the tip of his nose (or resting atop his forehead). His dark dingy classroom, illuminated by gaslight, consisted of several parallel tables with benches in between. While the rabbi taught one group of four or five boys, the others studied or read aloud, causing a constant disturbance. It was surprising anyone learned anything under such surroundings. The rabbi himself was often frustrated by his inability to maintain class decorum and render proper instruction to his students.

Of course, he had to contend with restless kids like myself, who sought every opportunity to incite chaos by throwing spitballs or igniting sulphurous stink bombs in class. Once the rabbi caught me, and I was dismissed

with a note to my mother advising her that I would not be readmitted in cheder. My mother was upset by this prospect. She knew how much the rabbi relied on the weekly stipends he received for each child's training; otherwise he would be forced to solicit gifts from individuals or from charitable institutions. He was a proud man dedicated to Jewish education, and he would rather go hungry than accept gifts from anyone. Aware of all this, my mother contacted the rabbi and assured him that I promised to stop disturbing his class if he permitted my return to cheder. Boring as Hebrew school was, I went back without causing another incident.

The only bright spot in my Jewish education occurred when my father hired a Jewish Theological Seminary student as an instructor for my brother and myself. For his services, the tutor received room and board on weekends, in addition to a small stipend. This teacher had a way with children that inspired learning. He could sustain our interest for a continuous four-hour session without our realizing how swiftly time had passed. On Saturday, after returning home from services, we had our dinner, then returned to the synagogue for our study session on the portion of the Torah read that week. If time permitted, we also discussed the commentary of Rashi on the *Chumash* (Pentateuch). Our teacher clarified many important highlights and we became well acquainted with the weekly *Sedrah* and its significant message. We looked forward to these sessions.

On completing our study, it was time for *Mincha* (late afternoon services). The little synagogue where we studied was conducted under Chasidic leadership. Chasidism was a revolutionary socio-religious movement started in Eastern Europe in 1735. Italian rabbinical humanist and physician Joseph del Medigo provides a judicious eye-

witness account of the religious intellectual climate that prevailed in Poland and Lithuania just before the Chasidic movement. "Deep darkness covers the earth and ignorance is terrible," he said. "Despite the fact that the country is full of *Yeshibot* [Talmudic academies] and *Batei-Midrash* [houses of study] even the study of Talmud is very much deteriorated. They are interested only in a career. . . . The highest and most important (the Torah) has become a secondary thing. . . . Of scientific knowledge they have no inkling. They detest all knowledge. God, they say, stands in no need of grammar, rhetoric, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy. . . . One must run away from these people. They might make us stray from the path of righteousness." If this was his portrait of the learned, who possessed both working knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic and were well versed in the literature of the Talmud, how much more dismal must have been the religious and intellectual state of the masses? At that time, the majority of Jews could do little more than recite their prayers in Hebrew, repeating words that they could not understand, reciting teachings and sentiments that eluded them but which, nonetheless, they accepted on faith.

Chasidism arose in the wake of the decimation of the Jewish community, when 400,000 were believed to have been massacred. Their synagogues and homes were destroyed and all their books burned. The simple-minded folk were convinced that the end of the world was at hand, for they were reminded of the ancient promise that when the suffering of the Jewish people reached its most desperate point, God—moved by his fatherly love and compassion—would send his earthly messenger, the Messiah, to redeem them. Following their disillusionment with the false Messiah (a Kabbalist,

Sabbatai Zevi, who betrayed his followers) the people became even more despondent until the *Baal Shem tov* (Master of the Good Name) emerged, extricating them from their miserable existence. Through joy, song, and dance associated with the mysticism of *Baal Shem tov,* the people could communicate with God and receive the same reward as those able to read from prayer books. A similar atmosphere prevailed at the synagogues where we studied. After the *Mincha* service, a table was set with herring, bread, cake, and wine for congregational participation. With song and dance they took hold of the herrings tail and encircled the refreshment table. Later they stripped the fish from head to tail, consuming every morsel with gastronomical dexterity and washing it all down with a glass of wine.

As was customary, I returned to cheder the day after synagogue for the rabbi to review last week's Torah portion by asking us questions about the events or the personality it described. I was considered one of the poorer students, so the rabbi did not expect me to answer his questions. To his amazement, I proved quite adequate to the task, more so than the rest of the kids. He said to me in Yiddish, *"Sagets vovatvet vastu"* (Fool, from where do you know this). I never divulged my secret to him, but eventually I became his star pupil.

Though my behavior at cheder had improved at my mother's insistence, my capacity for mischief in the streets was not diminished. Kids would not be kids unless they used their pent-up energy to get into trouble. At the age of eight, against my mother's admonition never to hitch rides on trolley cars, I hopped on the back of the 110th street horse-drawn trolley and started to rock it, annoying the conductor as well as the passengers. The police were waiting for such culprits, and they hauled

me off to the police station. When informed where her Sammy was, my infuriated mother sent my sister to direct the desk sergeant to teach me a lesson and keep me overnight. They locked me in a cell with several older boys arrested in a gang fight.

As evening approached, we were led to the basement for showers and a change of clothes. This was the first time I had ever taken a shower in the middle of the week; we bathed only on Friday afternoon, either in our kitchen stone basin or at the public baths. After showering, we were served supper, then assigned to one of twelve cots in the cell. The older boys were not ready for sleep, so they started a crap game. One kid was designated as the lookout to warn the others when the guard approached. I soon learned how to play the game (a supreme accomplishment in one day) by watching them. After breakfast my sister came to pick me up. She was rather surprised when I told her that I had had a good time, receiving a shower, a couple of meals, and a place to sleep. It was a different story when I reached home. With her knotted towel, my mother meted out my just deserts, extracting my promise never to hitch on trolley cars in the future.

What little time remained after school work, cheder, and delivering grocery orders I devoted to kite flying, one of my greatest pleasures. I built kites of all shapes and sizes—triangle, quadrangle, hexagon, octagon, and box kites, constructing them from the thin wood of discarded egg boxes and covering the framework with silk or paper. One day, while I was flying a kite on the roof of a five-story building, the tail became entangled with a backyard clothesline. I had to climb a utility pole to free it. Before I could reach my kite, the janitor spied me and threatened to thrash me if I did not vacate his premises

promptly. In my hasty descent, my foot skipped from one of the pole hooks and it caught my scrotum, tearing a deep two-inch cut across the surface.

I do not know how I reached home without assistance. When the ambulance doctor arrived to render first aid, he was surprised that I negotiated the three blocks without collapsing. The doctor sewed up the wound and placed me on the critical list for the next three days. A prescribed solution had to be applied to the wound every hour, twenty-four hours a day, and my mother ordered my older sister to carry out the task. After the third day, I developed a fever and the doctor prescribed an antipyretic to reduce the temperature. I was to remain in bed for the next two weeks.

Rumors were then spreading in the neighborhood that a balloonist was going to land on 106th street, the widest street in the area, five blocks from our home. My curiosity was uncontrollable. As I looked out my bedroom window, I noticed many people running toward 106th street. I stole from the house and followed the crowd. Sure enough, a balloon had landed on 106th street, and the mayor and some dignitaries were congratulating the balloonist. Completely exhausted by this brief foray, I found it difficult to navigate back to our apartment. Meanwhile, my sister had returned from the store to administer my treatment and was astonished to find me missing. She contacted the police, who after an hour's search spotted me resting on a doorstep a few blocks away from home. They drove me home and I got back into bed, this time under constant supervision. Fortunately I recovered without suffering any consequences of this foolish childish act.

As I said earlier, bodily injury was part of the routine at P.S. 83. Every few months my Italian classmates

attacked me for one reason or another, so I was a frequent visitor to the nearby hospital clinic. If the wound was superficial, a nurse applied medication and bandaged the incision; if it was deeper, an intern sutured the wound. Because of my regular visits, the admitting nurse came to know my first name. "Sammy, what's your trouble now?" she would ask. Soon I was extended credit—without a credit card—when I couldn't pay even the modest fifty-cent clinic fee. But I met my obligations regularly earning money by carving figurines in peach stones and selling them to the kids for five cents (and whistles from green twigs at two cents). I learned at a very early age to be self-sufficient; besides I feared disclosing to my mother how some injuries occured. My family became aware of my injuries only when I returned home bandaged, as once happened after an expedition to Central Park.

There is a beautiful lake not far from the 110th Street entrance to the park. I had decided to establish a home aquarium, and I reasoned the logical place to get goldfish was the lake. After carving out a long branch from a nearby tree, attaching a hook and line to it, and baiting it with a worm from our backyard, I proceeded to Central Park. Fishing was prohibited, so I had to be extremely vigilant about the park police. I had been fishing only a short time when, sure enough, some policemen appeared in the distance and I hurriedly withdrew my line from the water, only to stick my finger with the hook. Unable to remove the hook from my middle finger, I returned to the clinic. The doctor made two incisions, removed the hook, sewed up the wound, and bandaged my hand. That night, I was awakened by my mother, who told me that I had been moaning in my sleep as if I were in pain. With trepidation, I told her

about the fishing episode, anticipating my usual punishment. This time my mother was considerate, since she felt I had already received sufficient punishment, and she admonished me to be more law-abiding in the future.

Two incidents during my youth in New York influenced my decision to pursue dental studies. The first occurred during a visit by my grandmother in 1903. My grandmother lived near our grocery store, and she often combined shopping with socializing. After purchasing her groceries, she would climb the stairs to our fourth-floor apartment for "women's talk" with my mother. She usually brought me a gift when she visited, so I greeted her joyfully with a big "Hello Grandma!" whenever she entered our home. She would pick me up and carry me to her favorite chair, then pull the gift from her shopping bag and tell me stories about her life in Poland.

For many years, Grandma had been suffering from a severe bronchial condition complicated by prolonged coughing spells. Once, while talking with my mother, she began to cough uncontrollably and became debilitated for at least an hour. After her recovery, she turned to me and said in a restrained, raspy voice, "My child, be a good boy, don't neglect your studies, so that when you are fully grown, you will become a big doctor able to cure me and others suffering from the same illness." With the bluntness of a seven year old, I replied, "Grandma, by the time I grow up and become a doctor you should long have died."

My mother rose abruptly from her chair and hurried toward me. She tried to pull me from Grandma's grasp but failed, so she grabbed me by my arm and whirled me about-face. She angrily reprimanded me. "You must never say such things about anybody, especially your

Grandma, who loves you dearly." Then she got out the knotted towel. Grandma, however, urged her to calm herself. "Dora [my mother's first name], you shouldn't deal so harshly with your little Sammy," she said. "After all, he is only seven years old and doesn't realize the significance of his remark. Be patient with him. I'm sure that you'll be proud of him when he grows up." Unfortunately, Grandma died less than two years after this episode. But I never forgot her exhortation to study hard and become a doctor.

The second incident occurred near my eighth birthday. One day my teacher noticed I was inattentive in class. When she asked me what was wrong, I told her I had a severe toothache. She promptly sent me home with a note to my mother, advising her that I see a dentist. Still unable to read English very well, my mother had a friend translate the note, but she disregarded the teacher's recommendation and experimented with her own home remedies. When these afforded no relief, she finally sent me to the dentist.

Just as we patronized our landsman, my rabbi, for religious instruction, so we also used the services of his son, a dentist. His office was on a nearby corner, one flight up, over a store with a large electric "DENTIST" sign that was visible for blocks. A narrow staircase led into his large waiting room. To the right was the dentist's office and operating room and adjoining it was a laboratory where his mechanic worked. The operating room was equipped with an old-fashioned dental chair, a foot-propelled dental engine, an instrument cabinet, a sterilizer, and a gas-lit magnifying light—quite a contrast from the modern office. Despite this relatively primitive equipment, my dentist did excellent work. I still have a bridge that he constructed for me more than

seventy years ago, after I had dislodged a right central in a fall against a brownstone housepost. Very few modern practitioners can equal such an accomplishment.

At the turn of the century, most dental operators worked on a first-come, first-served basis. In a busy practitioner's office all chairs in the waiting room would be occupied. Mothers nursed cranky babies, or doled out the contents of a lunch basket to their older children. To make the waiting a bit less dreary, some of the children brought toys from home. Patients not having seating facilities paraded back and forth across the waiting room, some with large kerchiefs filled with warm salt bound around their faces, others supporting their aching jaws with their hands.

On entering the waiting room I was at a loss as to what to do under these circumstances. At first I decided to sit down on the floor and join the kids who were playing with their toys. When I appropriated a toy from another boy, his mother scolded me and took it back. I got up and started following the pacing patients in the room, hoping this would accord me a measure of relief from my painful tooth. This too failed, so I invaded the operating room, annoying the dentist by opening and closing the door to his waiting room. At first he ignored me, but when I persisted he took me by the arm and led me into the mechanics laboratory. There he unceremoniously seated me at the laboratory bench, warning me not to move. To keep me occupied, he offered me a plaster block and laboratory knife with which to reproduce a sample tooth under the mechanic's instruction. When I told him I preferred using my own knife, he was startled until I assured him that I used it only for carving figures in peach stones and whistles from green twigs.

As I worked on the model tooth, my pain gradually diminished. The more I concentrated on my carving, the more the toothache decreased, so that by the time I completed my job all discomfort had disappeared. (Of course, this is no recommendation for relieving toothaches.) When it came my turn for treatment, I could not locate the source of the pain, but the dentist found the offending tooth and removed it. Before I left the office, he examined my completed "masterpiece" and complimented me for its relatively fine reproduction. On my subsequent visits, he always delegated me to his mechanic, who kept me occupied with some menial job, for which I received a few pennies. Convinced of my dexterity, the dentist advised my mother to encourage me to study dentistry. The dentist's recommendation and my grandmother's wish for me to become a doctor, made a deep and lasting impression that lingered continuously with me. But my desire to study dentistry would not be realized until twenty-two years later—nine years after high school graduation and nearly thwarted by my involvement in a very successful business enterprise. Nevertheless, I knew what I really wanted to pursue in life, so I disregarded my mother's advice when the opportunity materialized and I started anew. I have never regretted my choice.

To return to our family business, I mentioned the great Depression of 1907, which affected the rich even more than the poor. Many wealthy families went bankrupt and were forced to give up their luxurious lifestyles. The poor, though destitute, survived on government or charitable assistance. Still, ambulances picked up many from the streets or in alleys, filling the hospitals with half-starving people. The Colish family did not escape hardship. We lost more than 85 percent of our assets

when the grocers to whom we had extended credit were unable to pay their bills, and we were unable to meet our obligations or our daily living expenses. A lawyer suggested that we, too, declare bankruptcy, but my father refused to follow his advice. "However long it may take," he said, "I will meet my obligations and repay all my creditors. I have suffered reverses before and I have conquered them. We can do so again if we all work together." The children pitched in whenever possible to help build up our family coffers, and eventually all our creditors were paid off.

At first I did all sorts of chores, including selling papers and shining shoes, until I got a job with a painter. My duties entailed delivering paint by pushcart from the store to each job site, checking the incoming bills, and making out the payroll, all for the grand salary of $1.25 a week. Although unable to read or write, my boss had remarkable intuition. He could enter an apartment, and after a cursory examination, determine the exact amount of paint required to cover fully its walls and ceilings. If he suspected any error in my addition, subtraction, or multiplication, he would say to me in his old-world Yiddish, *"Semale dos ist necht richtig. Tut es uber noch a mohl"* (Sammy, it is incorrect, do it over another time). He was invariably right. (Incidentally, his grandson became an outstanding engineer and the head of a large New York construction company.)

Since we did not work on the Sabbath, I made my paint deliveries on Sunday. This would require a full day, leaving little time for playing with kids on the street, so for five cents I engaged one of my friends as my assistant. We loaded the pushcart to practically double its capacity, thus enabling me to make fewer trips and finish earlier. My boss was skeptical about my ability to

make all the deliveries in such short time, and he checked into the matter and found all deliveries properly made. He was extremely curious about my method, but I never divulged my secret. I did not want him to know that I had become a subcontractor at such an early age.

I did tell my mother, though, who wondered why I gave her only $1.20 of my salary. She deducted twenty cents from the wages I contributed to our household and put it in my blue, or charity, box. In our home, every child had a blue box with his name tagged on it. We were obligated to fill the blue box from money we raised ourselves. It did not matter how we acquired the money, whether by collections at the subway station, door-to-door solicitation, or work wages. This was our challenge. The first child to reach his or her goal received a special prize from my mother.

After my third week of work, my mother gave me a five-cent allowance; twenty cents went into the charity box, and ninety-five cents went toward the house. That nickel was my greatest possession in many a moon and I planned to use it most advantageously. About six blocks from our house was an ice-cream factory that sold cones three times the regular candy-store size for a nickel. Naturally, I walked the distance to get the bargain, and I enjoyed every lick on the way home.

When I returned home I learned a never-forgotten lesson. After dinner I asked my mother why, since we were in such a difficult situation ourselves, did she put twenty cents in my blue box, when for twenty cents we could buy four loaves of fresh bread or sixteen day-old loaves. Bread was our main staple, the major part of our daily meal. "My son, you are still very young and do not understand one of the basic tenents of Judaism," my mother replied. "It is a Jew's obligation, no matter how

little he possesses, to set aside a portion of his possessions for those less fortunate than himself. We at least are blessed with good health, a roof over our heads, and all our mental and physical faculties, while others are ill, crippled, handicapped, orphaned, or widowed, unable to provide for themselves. Torah teaches us to assist our less fortunate brethren and never neglect those in need. Their welfare is our concern."

I did not comprehend the full impact of her statement until many years later. The greater my involvement in charity work, the more clearly I understood this message of my faith and its importance to the Jewish people.

Long before the I.R.A. plan became popular, during my dental career, I set up my own regular monthly saving plan. This served as means from which funds could be drawn to assist a family member when a needy occasion occured.

CHAPTER 4

On the Farm

Life often presents us with difficult situations, and our capability of dealing with them depends on our ability to evaluate our own strengths and weaknesses and to learn from past experience. It also helps if we can receive and apply practical suggestions from others. Psychologists tell us that we are likely to solve our most difficult problems if we can make a sound, considerate evaluation of a situation and then apply a dogged determination to pursue an idea to fruition.

My mother possessed keen powers of analysis and zealous determination. Ever resourceful, she could anticipate a developing situation and devise a plan to resolve it. The more difficult the problem, the more intensely she applied herself to its solution.

When the 1907 depression struck a severe blow to our financial situation, my mother devised a practical plan. As I have already mentioned, our creditors were pressing us for payment, while our outstanding accounts were late or uncollectable. Meanwhile, we required cash to purchase merchandise for the grocery store and the kosher milk routes. In addition, our apartment and store

rents had to be paid, and our large family fed and clothed.

First, my mother discontinued one of the wholesale butter and egg routes and one of the kosher milk routes, combining them into a single unit and dismissing several employees. Then she established a family austerity program, telling us we would have to manage with considerably less than before. Finally, because the milk wholesaler reneged on his oral agreement with my father, she bought a farm in New Jersey to supply our own kosher milk.

The wisdom of this last measure was questionable because (at first) it actually intensified our problems. Not only was my mother unaware of the farm's neglected and run-down condition, she was also totally ignorant about modern farming techniques. Although my parents had operated an estate with considerable farmland in the old country, they had had no direct connection with its day-to-day operation. The actual work was performed by peasants, under the direction of overseers who were responsible to my father. The overseers were compensated according to their production quotas, which were set by my father. My parents' responsibility was limited to selling surplus farm products at the city market, and from the profits purchasing supplies for the general store and estate. Supplies and equipment were made available to everyone in the *shtetel,* Poles and Jews alike.

But the old farmer who formerly owned this New Jersey property had sublet the land annually to neighbors. Over the years they exacted the maximum from the soil without restoring its essential elements through fertilization. On some acres, the soil was so severely depleted of nitrates and phosphates that it took several years to restore them. Improper plowing on hilly areas

had eroded the topsoil, leaving the higher areas bare and unproductive, while rich soil was washed away by the rains after the spring thaw because of improper drainage in the lowlands. The property borders were overgrown with scrub, covering several acres of tillable soil. It was only long after my older sister and five younger children, including myself, moved in and began working the farm that we learned—to our dismay—about many of these problems we were forced to face.

My parents and the five older children remained in New York to conduct the grocery and milk businesses. Since the store was closed on the Sabbath, they visited the farm on weekends only, arriving Friday afternoon at the trolley station in Caldwell, where they were picked up, traveling the last five miles by horse and wagon. After Sabbath, my mother carefully outlined to my older sister Emma all the the work to be performed during the next week.

To start the dairy, my mother purchased several cows and a team of horses from a recommended livestock dealer. Within a few weeks we had made all preparations for our milk shipments to New York. Prior to the milking all of the equipment was sterilized. We then strained the milk into twenty-quart cans and sealed them for shipment. My sister delivered the milk to the Totowa station, five miles away, before 6 P.M. From there, it was transported by railroad to Hoboken, where my older brother picked it up at 10 P.M. for bottling in our 111th Street store basement. During the winter, when snow drifts blocked the road, we loaded the milk on a sled, and it took my sister several hours more than usual to negotiate the distance.

On one occasion, although she had taken protective measures against the elements, my sister became stuck in

a snowbank and nearly froze to death. Fortunately, another farmer on his way to the depot spotted her and took her to his home where he rendered her first aid until she recovered. My sister did not return home from her mission that night, and there was no way to communicate with her since we had no telephone (the closest was more than a mile away, at the stagecoach station). The next morning, the farmer brought her home and she was confined to bed for the next week. I remained home from high school to take over her duties until she had sufficiently recovered from this ordeal. I was then 14 years old.

Inexperience and hardship plagued us for the first couple of years on the farm. It is probably thanks to our immunity to disease and our determination to survive that I can still narrate this story. In the long run, apparently, our trying experiences proved more advantageous than harmful to me. Later in life, I learned to withstand adversity with relatively good composure. There is certainly something to be said for growing up the hard way.

My mother hoped that farm life would somehow keep me out of trouble, yet my restless inquisitive nature was not to be suppressed. As soon as we had settled, I began exploring the surrounding buildings, the outdoor kitchen, the corn crib, the chicken coop, and the barn. The barn had two sections, one for stabling the animals, the other for storing hay and farm machinery. Twenty-five feet over the hayloft there were poles, about nine inches apart, covered by a thin layer of hay. With careful maneuvering, one could cross from one side of the loft to the other on these poles. A horse-drawn hayrake and a mowing machine were parked directly below these cross poles. One day I climbed the left hayloft and started

crossing to the right side, unaware of the spaces between the cross poles. Suddenly, I lost my balance and fell through one of these spaces, landing head first on the sharp prongs of the hayrake. Fortunately, something prompted me to protect my forehead with my right wrist.

After the shock, while holding my broken right wrist with my left hand, I entered the house. When my sister saw me, she hitched up the horse and buggy and drove a mile to the nearest telephone (at the stagecoach station) to contact the closest doctor, in Caldwell. He arrived, also by horse and buggy, and examined my arm. The physician said "Had you not protected your head, you would have fractured your skull—resulting in permanent injuries, if indeed you survived at all. Without even suggesting X-rays, he manipulated the broken parts and presumably set the fracture, supporting the break with two thin boards and a bandage around my arm.

In a few days, I developed a fever and severe pain. My entire arm became so swollen that I found it impossible to sleep. As the days progressed my condition deteriorated, so my sister contacted my mother, who instructed her that I be brought promptly to New York for consultation. On my arrival, I was hustled to Mt. Sinai Hospital where the doctors examined and X-rayed my arm, diagnosing my injury as a compound fracture of the arm bones. Since the X-ray showed a partially malaligned bone, the Mt. Sinai doctor suggested refracturing the break and resetting of the bone in proper alignment. This operation was performed under general anesthesia, and the bone segments were wired together with a silver thread. The arm was placed in a plaster cast, with an opening to allow for drainage of the infected wound. I visited Mt. Sinai Hospital twice a week for six

weeks, until the X-ray examination showed that the fracture had completely healed. The cast was then removed, and I returned to the farm. During my disability I started using my left hand, and still continue to favor it now, although I have been able to operate ambidextrously since my arm healed.

After two months' stay in New York my classwork suffered and I hesitated to return to school. But my mother insisted—no matter how discouraging conditions might be—that I should not neglect my education. She constantly reminded me, "We are the people of the Book. Throughout the ages, no matter where we were dispersed, the Book assured us the perpetuation of our great heritage. And it will be the Book upon which our Jewish survival will depend." School books are equally important." Difficult as it was for me, I returned to class. Fortunately, a friendly neighboring classmate assisted me, and in a relatively short time I made the grade, as I usually did in the past.

Unless I indulged in payment for the luxury of a horse-drawn stagecoach (which cost ten cents), I trudged the entire five miles distance to high school and always arrived on time. The weather was never a deterrent to regular school attendance. I can recall when snowdrifts blocked our way, or later, in spring when the snow and ice melted, the main road was inundated with more than two feet of water, school was not missed. Returning from school on such a wet day, I removed my shoes and socks, rolled my pant legs up to hip height, slung my books over my shoulder, and waded home through the icy water. Those who survived these traumatic experiences (there were many who didn't) developed a natural resistance to the common cold and an immunity to other diseases. (Contrast this situation with today's, when

children who live only a mile from school are chauffeured by their parents or bused by the local authorities.)

The primary school for my brother and three younger sisters was local and easily accessible. It was only a mile away from the farm and the younger children had no trouble reaching the one-room schoolhouse on time.

Before going to school I rose at 4:30 A.M. and performed my morning chores: milk and feed ten cows, feed the other animals, currycomb the horses, clean the stables, and prepare the milk for shipment to the depot. By 7:30, my morning work was completed and I then returned to the house, washed, changed into school clothes, ate breakfast, and left for school before 8:00. On returning in the afternoon, I re-donned my work clothes and performed any special jobs that needed doing. After dinner, a modest meal by today's standards, I started my homework.

On cold winter nights, when the rest of the family huddled around the kitchen stove (the only warm place in the house), I put on a couple of sweaters, set a lantern beside my bed (we had no electricity then), nestled under the covers, and did my studying there. Still, I managed to maintain a high rating among the members of my class. In fact, for the first three years of high school, I was exempt from examinations in most subjects because my grades were over 90 percent.

I would have liked to go on to college immediately after graduation, but my family needed me to manage the farm and to help care for and support the four younger children who still hadn't completed their primary education. Therefore my college entrance had to be deferred for nine years. Also, by this time my older sister had left the farm and all of her responsibiliites were shifted to me.

My younger brother Charles then had a lackadaisical attitude toward his studies—though this was not due to lack of ability. He had a keen sense of humor, and he used wit and charm rather than the untapped intellect he possessed to extricate himself from uncomfortable situations. He absorbed information with minimal effort, and his "know-it-all" attitude in school at times annoyed his teacher, which eventually put him in a very uncomfortable position.

One incident typifies his character. After taking his final examination before graduation, my brother was informed by his teacher that he had answered one question incorrectly. He bluntly contradicted her, insisting that he was right and that she was wrong. For this display of impudence the teacher failed him and prevented his graduation from eighth grade. He would have to repeat the year before receiving his diploma.

When my mother learned that my brother would have to repeat the eighth grade, she made every effort to change the teacher's mind, but to no avail. The teacher insisted that my brother needed a lesson—one he would never forget: to respect his elders, especially his teachers. "During this extra school year," she told my mother, "he should have ample opportunity for reflection and realize that he cannot be a smart aleck in the classroom."

My mother then insisted that Charles return to school in the fall, but he was adamant in his refusal. He was embarrassed at having to face his classmates, and he truly believed that he should have graduated. Despite his distaste for farm work he consented to do his assigned share if my mother agreed not to force him to return to school. His return to school would have been a disaster anyway, for he disliked this teacher for whom he had little esteem.

As a result of this episode, attending school became distasteful to him. Although later he did receive his primary grade diploma, he stubbornly refused to continue with high school and returned to New York where he obtained a good job. Yet the environment in which he grew up, where study played an important role, had an indelible effect on him. Many years later, after he was married, he decided to study law. Never having earned a high school diploma, he had to meet his Regents requirements, which he did in only six months, and was then eligible for admission to law school. He worked during the daytime, attended classes and studied at night, and graduated at the top of his class.

Returning to his last year on the farm, my brother, despite good intentions, spent more effort devising ways to avoid hard work than if he had simply done the work in the first place. When working in the field, he invariably became thirstier than the others and had to saunter slowly over to the water pail under a nearby tree for a drink. Sometimes he would upset the pail just so that he could go and fetch another from the distant well and avoid a half-hour or more of backbreaking field work. He constantly complained of chronic headaches after performing field work for only a short period of time. These headaches disappeared as soon as he left the sun-baked field. His hunger intensifed with every moment on the job. My mother, still annoyed with him, told Charles that he must do a good day's work and also keep up with his studies at home so he could take his final exams again in June. "No child of mine, as long as he is physically fit and mentally able, will ever neglect his studies," she warned. In June, he returned to school for two weeks before the final exams. He passed with flying colors, and soon thereafter he left the farm to join our

brother-in-law's business, where he applied himself diligently, becoming an asistant manager within a relatively short period.

At first, our trial-and-error farming methods produced nothing but failures and there were several occasions on which we were ready to pack up and return to the city. We had plenty of fruits and vegetables in the summer and fall, but because our crop yield was so poor there was little left for winter storage. During the cold months, our diet consisted mainly of potatoes, turnips, some jellies, herring, and bread. My father purchased stale bread from grocery owners with whom he dealt. The bread was packed in canvas bags, delivered to Hoboken, and shipped to Caldwell's Erie Railroad station. From there it was picked up and carted to the farm as fodder for the poultry and farm animals. It served as a less expensive food than grain purchased from a local merchant.

But when our baker refused us further extension of credit, our only recourse was to invade the animals' bread bin. At times, the bread had become moldy, but that did not deter us from its use as food. It was soaked in water and reheated in the coal stove oven, then served with whatever complementary food we then possessed. But perhaps this moldy bread had unknown therapeutic value for us—after all, the wonder-drug penicillin was developed from bread mold.

For three years we saw no improvement on the farm. We knew nothing about the soil, and often our crops would ripen a week or two later than normal. When we brought it to market, we could sell only part of the load and would have to cart the rest back home to be dumped on the manure pile or fed to the cows. All our efforts in plowing, planting, cultivating, hoeing, harvesting, and

hauling to market went for naught, but the backbreaking pain still remained.

In desperation, my mother sold the grocery store and moved to the farm, while my father continued operating the wholesale and kosher milk routes in the city. For many nights thereafter, my older sister and I reviewed our failures with my mother. She decided to consult our more experienced neighbors, who recommended that we contact Rutgers State Agricultural College for an opinion. When we wrote to the college, they requested soil samples from different parts of the farm. Within a few weeks, we received a comprehensive laboratory report suggesting the proper soil preparation prior to planting, the most suitable crop for each sample, and the proper fertilizer available for these crops. Using their advice, I initiated a rehabilitation program that fall.

First, the land was cleared of overgrown shrubbery, thus increasing our tillable areas. Then we moved large stones from the fields and used them to build fences and laid pipes for rapid water drainage in the fields. These pipes would also help prevent soil erosion and provide water for irrigation during dry spells. Finally, we repaired or replaced all of the original old farm equipment and were ready for a new beginning by spring planting time.

That spring and summer the fields assumed a beautiful green color. We produced a prime crop, very much in demand by commission merchants for their exclusive customer buyers. For the first time we turned in a $2,000 profit and were able to make payment for previous losses and for our recent equipment purchases.

I learned three important lessons that year: the importance of soil testing for better yield, the necessity of using the right fertilizer for specific crops, and the need to

revitalize the soil through crop rotation. Encouraged by my success and under my mother's guidance, I applied for a correspondence course with Rutgers and continued my agricultural studies until I earned a certificate for teaching crop rotation and soil conservation.

Subsequently, I occasionally lectured to local farmers. During the question-and-answer period, an old farmer would invariably rise and say something like, "Men, this kid [I was only 17 then] comes down here to tell us how our farms should be run with newfangled ideas. I'm doing things the same way my father and grandfather did. They did O.K. and so am I. If it was good enough for them, it's good enough for me." However, when some of these men visited my farm and saw how it had been transformed, they shook their heads in surprise, saying, "Hey, kid, you really got something going here."

My talks or our neighbors' visits to our farm unquestionably influenced some local farming methods. I also know that the Colish family altered the local farmers' attitude toward their children's education. Before I set the example in scientific farming, most village children dropped out of school temporarily each year during the planting season and permanently after the primary grades. From early spring through September, many children had to assist full-time on the farm. But attitudes changed in the ten years after we began farming and school attendance increased dramatically; some local students even went on to college. After earning their agricultural degrees, some of the young men modernized their fathers' farms, built large chicken hatcheries, or instituted scientific turkey farming. The old farmers began to sit back quietly by the fireplace while the young folks took over, instituting more modern methods.

As I learned more about soil conservation and crop rotation and put my knowledge into practice, we produced larger and better crops. Our vegetables were in great demand by merchants who catered to an elite clientele. For years our entire strawberry crop was purchased by a commission merchant (who waived his usual commission), and our late green tomatoes and pickling cucumbers were snapped up by a wholesale pickling concern. Whatever inferior quality merchandise we had was sold on the open market.

The days were long then, and my appetite was enormous. I ate huge quanitities of food, but my weight remained at 130 lbs. because of the vast energy I expended. For example, breakfast, which I ate at 7:00 A.M. after two hours of hard work, consisted of a large bowl of oatmeal or farina, a half-dozen eggs, half a loaf of bread, and six cups of coffee. When the *shochet* killed one of our dry cows or a calf, he prepared the hind quarter according to the laws of Kasruth so that the entire animal was edible. (Normally, the hind quarter is not used unless a very experienced *shochet* does the dissection so as to remove certain nerves and blood vessels from the animal.) My lunch began with a large plate of soup, followed by approximately two pounds of meat, seasonal vegetables, and three cups of tea. At my evening meal I had dry cereal, rice, soup or cheese with sour milk, bread, herring, potatoes in jackets, and several cups of coffee. In addition, I consumed fruits and vegetables when ripened directly from the trees and vines between meals.

At harvest time, there was even more work than usual and everyone pitched in. Our family and the hired hands did the picking. I carried the filled sixteen-quart baskets

from the field and placed them on a horse-drawn wagon parked by the side of the field. The picking continued until nightfall, then we carted the load into a shed where the vegetables were washed, graded, and packed for market delivery.

During the season, we averaged two market loads a week. I left for Newark market at approximately 8:30 P.M. and arrived two hours later. After backing in to my regular stand, I stabled my horses and then went to the farmers' restaurant for some refreshment. A half-hour's rest on top of my loaded wagon, followed, then I opened for business at midnight. Usually, I sold the load by 6 A.M., at which point I collected the empty crates, barrels, and baskets, rehitched the team, and started home.

The return trip included several stops for watering the horses and for quenching my own thirst as well. All the farmers stopped at these cafés, where a nickel draft of beer also entitled them to a free lunch. I would stop three or four times before my last one, at a restaurant in the busy Caldwell trolley and stage coach terminal.

To amuse themselves while waiting, the travelers often organized impromptu contests to see who could consume the most coffee, pie, or ice cream. A crowd would gather, and many people placed wagers and cheered for their favorite contestant. Being a great coconut-pie lover with a formidable appetite, I participated in pie-eating contests on several occasions with excellent results. Eventually, I was named coconut-pie-eating champion (or CPEC, by modern abbreviated notation) and became the odds-on favorite to win any match. (By the way, the loser payed for this contested dessert.)

I arrived home by 10:30 A.M., put the horses in their stalls, unloaded the empties from the truck, and gave my

mother a detailed accounting of the sales. My mother insisted on accuracy in money matters in order that I develop a comprehension of the value of money and how to use it wisely. Although I had had little sleep for the previous eighteen hours I took only a two-hour nap before returning to my routine chores. Eventually, we bought a motor truck and I was able to take longer rest periods at the market stand and after returning home.

With our farm under control and turning in a good profit, my mother decided to expand our operations: we would remodel and modernize the old farmhouse and use it as a boardinghouse. The old farmer from whom we purchased the property had built the house like a fortress. Ours was the only two-and-one-half-story, brick-and-stone structure in the entire village. All the others were built with stone foundations and lumber. The ceilings of our house were over nine feet high, and there was a full basement, a kitchen, dining room, living room, entrance hall, and two bedrooms on the first floor, and six bedrooms on the second. The basement had two divisions, one with shelves for storing fruits and preserves, the other lined with bins for winter vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, beets, turnips, cabbages, and pumpkins. Due to the cellar's excellent insulation, the temperature never varied more than fifteen degrees during the year. The 8′ x 8′ white-oak cellar crossbeams were joined with the wall beams by mortise and tenon secured by wooden pegs. (No nails were used to fasten the crossbeams to the house frame.)

In our remodeling we thought it important to preserve certain irreplaceable features of the old house. Having no knowledge of building construction, we engaged an experienced carpenter who drew up plans and specifications for every construction phase. We reviewed them,

then submitted the plans to the local authorities, who approved our plan for a twenty-room hotel on a 70′ x 90′ plot. My mother appointed me manager of the project. Although I was only eighteen and had no construction experience, I had proven myself through my farming success and earned my mother's confidence in my ability to meet this new challenge.

Before we could begin construction, we had to find a new supply of fresh water because the existing outdoor bucket well was inadequate for the hotel. I contracted with a well-digging concern for an artesian well at six dollars a foot. At 163 feet the diggers hit a fine gusher from a rocky base. We plugged it until we were ready to draw a pipeline into an 800-gallon pressure tank that we finally managed to install in the basement.

The problem was how to get this huge tank through the stone cellar foundation, which was eighteen inches thick. For two days we tried to cut a hole with hand instruments, but to no avail. We were forced to use a stick of dynamite to loosen some of the stones without damaging the supporting structure. The blasting proved successful and the hole produced by the blasting was sufficiently enlarged with hand tools to permit the tank to be moved into the basement. Next to the tank a coal-burning steam heater and a boiler were installed. The steam-heat unit was attached to the water tank, which was in turn connected to the artesian well by a pipeline. The foundation wall was then resealed.

The ten-inch bricks from the old building also posed another problem. Manufactured by the old farmer in his pasture lot, the bricks proved so hard that we found them difficult to break and match to the size of standard ones. With great effort, we finally managed. Furthermore, since the dining room area was 50′ x 54′, heavy lumber

would be required to avoid a center post support for the crossbeams. (In those days, steel girders were not used). Therefore, to obtain this lumber, a helper and I drove ten miles to a forest where we selected the desired trees for our purpose. We camped out in the cold for two days, during which time we cut down six white oaks, trimmed them, loaded them on to a horse-drawn sled, and carted them to the lumber mill. There they were cut into 8″ x 8″ x 54′ beams. Two weeks later we loaded these six beams on the sled and delivered them to our home. They were stacked for curing until they were ready for use in the dining room ceiling.

Next, I presented my plans and specifications to the local lumberyard manager, who estimated the total cost for all supplies would be approximately $9,000. I proposed to make payments through a series of forty-eight monthly notes negotiable at our local bank. The first note would mature six months after we signed the contract, and the others regularly thereafter. This arrangement gave me sufficient leeway for covering labor costs. After the manager checked my credit rating at the bank, we signed a contract. My mother, as always, encouraged me. "With my guidance and the carpenter's practical advice," she said, "I feel confident you will accomplish this job."

As I mentioned earlier, we kept the old foundation largely intact but built a new one—without a cellar—to support the new and larger extension. In this way, the old cellar—double-insulated beneath the center of the house—could serve for vegetable storage and a safe location against freezing weather for the water system. The hotel's first floor would have separate milk and meat pantries, different basins for washing meat and milk dishes, a large kitchen stove, and an adjoining

washroom and toilet. From the dining room, which could seat seventy-five people, a hall led to the master bedroom and a large guest room. Each of the upper floors had twelve bedrooms, equipped with electricity, steam radiators, and individual washbasins. There were also four toilets and showers on each floor.

After harvesting our fall crops we began construction in earnest. The crew included our chief carpenter and an assistant, a plumber, and a stonemason who also did bricklaying. I learned many skills while observing these tradesmen and I was soon able to assist wherever my help was necessary. The carpenter was an excellent manager who knew how to get the best performance from his workers, so we completed construction by spring.

My greatest challenge of this project came when I decided to install the electrical system myself. Not having any experience in this area, I contacted the state underwriters department for advice, submitting the house plans and an outline for placement of outlets. In a return letter and brochure I was instructed in electrical terminology and legal requirements for a safe system. They also advised me that a twelve storage-battery system, charged by a five horsepower motor fueled with one gallon of kerosene per day (costing seven cents) would generate enough current to supply daily requirements throughout the house, as well as the barns and sheds.

I approached the wiring job with fear and trepidation. It took me a week to connect my first line from the outside Delco storage-battery system into the house's main fuse box. Following the underwriting instructions I made my connections from the fuse box with Bx Cable to every room in the house and especial wiring for all out-buildings. The state underwriters were notified after the job was completed and an inspector was sent who,

after examination, approved the electrical installation. A week later I received a certificate of approval. This was presented to the insurance company who subsequently issued a full coverage policy. The electrical system functioned perfectly for the next ten years.

By early spring, before plowing time, we had completed the house and were ready for boarders. My mother's faith in me had again been justifed, and her skinny eighteen-year-old son, who matured at least five years during this six-month project, now managed the entire farm operation.

CHAPTER 5

The Boardinghouse

For the first two summers of its existence, the boardinghouse was operated as a *Koch Alain,* in which families leased one or two rooms for the season with kitchen privileges. Our kitchen proved inadequate for a dozen or more renters, so I built an additional cooking shed, installing two extra stoves next to the Delco electric system plant. The renters did their own cooking and cleaning but purchased all their food supplies from us. Any food items not produced on the farm we bought in Newark and resold to them.

Throughout her life my mother enjoyed buying, selling, and making trades. Once, when we were in Newark after selling our farm produce and restocking the boardinghouse larder, she was drawn—as if by some powerful magnet—into an auction house. For a while, the singsong voice of the auctioneer almost lulled you to sleep, but my mother perked up when the auctioneer announced that two dozen boxes of shoes were on the block. Knowing that we would require shoes for the coming holidays, my mother made the auctioneer a very low offer for the lot, which he accepted. On arriving home, we opened the shoe boxes and to our dismay we

discovered that all of the shoes were for the left foot. Although my mother was embarrassed by her poor judgment, she always defended her purchase when teased about it later. "After all, wasn't it a bargain," she would say, "and you kids occasionally wore them." (Of course, we preferred going barefoot to wearing those uncomfortable shoes.)

Often, when conditions slowed down around the farm, she asked me to hitch up the carriage for a bargain-hunting ride through the countryside. On many occasions she got very good deals on chickens, ducks, geese, eggs, calves, and cows. Once she saw a spirited horse running around a farmer's yard and told me to inquire whether it was for sale. Initially, the farmer seemed reluctant to sell, but we haggled for a while and finally struck a deal. The horse was bought for what appeared to be a bargain price, brought home, stalled, and fed. When I entered the barn the next morning I could not believe my eyes: the horse could barely stand on his four legs. A veterinarian was called the next day, who after his examination told us that the horse was an incurably lame animal that had been doctored up by the farmer. The vet advised us to destroy the animal as soon as possible. This time my mother bet on the wrong horse.

On yet another bargain-hunting expedition my mother noticed a "For Sale" sign on the letterbox in front of a farm. I knew what was for sale, but I didn't volunteer the information to her because I wanted to see her reaction when she found out. We entered the farmer's yard and she asked to see the item for sale. He led us to his backyard and gestured toward some pigs wallowing in the mud. A wave of disgust crossed my mother's face, and she turned on her heel because she would have nothing to do with pigs. On the way home I was sternly re-

proached for playing such a trick on her. (I still had not outgrown my childish pranks.)

My mother's passion for risk-taking was only one aspect of her strong-willed character. Ours was a matriarchal family, with all decisions resolved under her domain. At home she was "top man," and her judgment was almost always right. On the rare occasions when she erred, she seldom ever admitted a mistake, and arguing with her was to no avail. Here is one episode that made a lasting impression on me. As I have explained, my mother supervised the boardinghouse, while I managed all outside farm activities. Obviously, my knowledge about duties around the farm was greater than my mother's. One morning after breakfast she inquired what duty I had planned for the day. I told her, but she instructed me to perform a different task, one that I considered much less urgent than the job I had originally scheduled. I tried to explain, but she was unmoved so I followed her instructions. When I returned to the house for lunch she immediately asked what I had done that morning. "What did you expect me to do?" I replied. "Of course, I followed your instructions, but I still believe that this job could have been delayed for sometime later. Meanwhile, I lost half a day for a more timely duty." She urged me to sit down and have my lunch, saying, "I have something important to tell you after you finish."

Her post-lunch speech went as follows: "Although you have developed leadership in conducting the farm program, you are still very young in worldly matters. There is a proverb that states, 'When one performs a wrong act, every effort is made by him for cloaking it before the public.' This can lead to shading the truth, which can become a lifelong habit. But when one acts

properly there is nothing to hide. A person who always acts properly and speaks the truth can travel across the country and back again over the same path without fear of having to alter the answers he may have originally given. The truth doesn't change. I knew my request this morning would not cause a major problem in your routine work, but I wanted to test your reaction and response. Proceed with the duties you deem most timely and important—I won't interfere—but never forget this discussion." Her lesson—to tell the truth and never fear its consequences—has been one of the guiding principals of my life. (However, I also believe that shading the truth is permissible in a special situation in which the unadulterated truth may do more harm than good.

The next year my mother discontinued the Koch Alain and started a boardinghouse. Most boardinghouses then did not provide modern facilities such as electricity, hot and cold showers, and a sink in each room—all at $8 a week for adults and $4 for children. Such luxuries were usually reserved for guests at large hotels. But we did at the Colish's, so it was not surprising that within a relatively short time we were booked for the season. Naturally, we needed more help in the kitchen and dining rooms than we did previously in the Koch Alain days, so my mother hired a cook, a kitchen maid, and two waiters. Not only were we open during the summer months, but we were also open during the winter for occasional guests who were recuperating from an illness, requiring rest and relaxation in a fresh-air environment.

My older brother Nathan was a Jewish Theological Seminary student who worked on the farm during his vacations. One year he invited four of his professors—Ginsberg, Marks, Davidson, and Friedlander—as guests who would perhaps spend their vacation with us if they

liked the surroundings. After their first week they were pleased with our service and decided to remain for the rest of the season. They especially like the apple orchard, only seventy-five feet from the house. There, after morning prayers and breakfast, they relaxed on the benches under the shady boughs discussing theological texts and their interpretation, occasionally indulging themselves with pure well water or cold lemonade.

At times, they became so engrossed in their discussion that they paid no attention to the dinner bell announcing meals. On one occasion, after I had eaten my lunch, my mother asked me to remind the professors that lunch was being served. I approached them, but they were so deeply engrossed in their discussion that I was unable to attract their attention. I reported this to my mother and went back to my chores. Later that day I asked my mother what had happened with the professors' meals. She told me that after she had already cleared the tables one of the men knocked on the kitchen door and asked apologetically whether it was possible for my mother to drum up something for lunch. "Of course," she replied, "just wait a few minutes." She reset the table, warmed up the food, and they were served a complete meal. The great scholars were very grateful for my mother's consideration and expressed their feelings to her. It must have been a touching scene, but this is often characteristic of great men: they react humbly when someone offers them a thoughtful gesture.

Whenever things slowed down on the farm, I applied for any gainful employment available. One winter I learned that a new highway was being built from Denville to Dover, fifteen miles from our farm, and the construction company was offering $6 a day for a horse team, a dump truck, and a driver. I left home Monday

morning at 4 A.M., arriving at Denville before 7, and applied for the job. In the interview I learned that work started at 7:30 A.M. and ended at 5 P.M. five days a week. Since these hours would take me into Sabbath, I made a deal with the manager that by putting in an extra hour a day for four days I could leave at noon on Friday, arrive home before sundown, and still satisfy the required number of work hours. The manager was intrigued by my proposition (especially since I was the youngest applicant) and put me on a week's trial. On Friday, as he was paying me, the manager told me to return Monday morning.

For the duration of the job I ate and slept in a makeshift tent with the other laborers. I brought a week's worth of food from home and used the kerosene stove for cooking. The other laborers sometimes offered to share their food with me, but I politely declined, telling them I did not eat non-kosher food. When I explained the religious reasons for my practices to these hardened road workers they respected me, treated me kindly, and protected me from abuse by anyone at the camp.

On payday most of the workers traveled to a nearby saloon to spend their hard-earned money on liquor and on bottles they brought back with them to the camp. After work hours, I relaxed in the tent by reading, under lantern light, a book I brought from home. Most of the Irish and Polish laborers could neither read nor write, so they spent their time playing cards. I was often tempted to accept their card game invitations, but my mother's influence remained as strong as ever and so I always made an excuse and declined. When spring plowing time arrived I quit the job and returned to my routine farm work.

Another one of my enterprises involved the late peach crop. Some farmers, unable to hire enough pickers for their crop, sold the fruit on the tree. Two weeks before harvest time I visited these orchards and purchased those with the most abundant fruit. The next week I hired enough help from among our neighbors to harvest the crop. When all the peaches were picked they were carted to our farm, graded, and the prime variety were delivered to a commission merchant. The rest were sold in the open market.

Still another business venture involved purchasing two carloads of corn during World War I. I learned about a grain house that had an oversupply of corn, with insufficient storage space for incoming deliveries. I contacted the miller, who sold me two carloads of corn F.O.B. (free on board) Washington, Pennsylvania. This meant that when the shipment arrived intact at the designated railroad station (in this case, Caldwell, N.J.), my bank would honor the bill of lading at the price on which the miller and I had agreed.

Soon after I arranged this deal, the U.S. government placed an embargo on corn sales without an equal amount wheat sales. For every 100 pounds of corn the miller sold, he also had to sell 100 pounds of wheat because corn was in short supply for wartime needs, while wheat was plentiful. However, my shipment was excluded because I had purchased it before the embargo. I therefore had little difficulty disposing my lot to a local feed dealer on my terms. The transshipment was to be made from Washington, Pa., to Paterson, N.J., instead of Caldwell, and the carting from the railroad station to his feed store was his responsibility. I made a good profit on the deal, but it was also a good deal for the feed

merchant who was able to sell his surplus wheat at a better price because he had that much demanded corn on hand.

At age sixteen I had been given the responsibility to be constantly alert for opportunities to earn an honest dollar, as indicated by these three examples. My mother believed we children had a duty to contribute to our survival and family support, but she also felt there was a limit to our obligation. On one of my father's regular weekend farm visits, I overheard my mother say to him: "It's a pity that the children are suffering so much hardship. If we had enough funds we could abandon the farm and return to New York. Still we should consider how we overcame difficult situations in the past. We just worked harder. When considering the ongoing economic depression we should be grateful that we have maintained credibility with our business associates and maintained relatively good health. We cannot give up now."

Obviously, we were making progress on the farm, but we still faced enormous obligations. We had purchased livestock on credit, our farm equipment and buildings needed repair and replacing, and there were two mortgage payments to be made every month on the farm and the equipment.

Armed with this determination we continued to struggle to resolve our problems. We finally turned the corner financially when I undertook another enterprise—the fattening of geese.

The season for fattening geese was short—only from November 1 to February 22—but during these very cold months the geese ate ravenously and fattened up more quickly than at any other time of year. The lean geese

that were shipped by freight to market were sold to farms such as ours. They had spent the previous months on southern and western farms, grazing like cattle.

The fattening process itself was backbreaking work, but getting the geese from the train depot to the farm was at least half the battle. When the poultry arrived at the depot, loaders transferred the birds into crates that were then weighed by the stationmaster who indicated on each crate the weights of the empty crate and the gross and net weights as follows: 85E345E260. During the weighing process, two men loaded the crate on a truck, while another secretly placed his foot under the scales, thus decreasing the net weight. The cheater marked these crates for the truckdriver, who then knew which crates could be safely reopened and stolen from. These artful thieves routinely managed to lift ten or twenty pounds of birds from a crate without detection. The truckdriver later dropped the purloined fowl at a designated location and sold them, later sharing these receipts with the loaders.

Little could be done about this thievery. Organized crime dominated the poultry market then, and an informer usually risked violent retribution. I recall several instances between 1916 and 1922 in West Washington market. One in particular was the Baff murder. Baff, a commission merchant, refused to play ball with the mob and paid with his life. Although everyone knew who had murdered Baff, the criminals were never apprehended. The only sure way to get a fair deal from these workers was to give them gratuities whenever they performed a service.

When we first learned about these features of the goose-fattening business we were reluctant to get into it. But my mother's adventuresome spirit prevailed, and I

arranged for credit guarantees by our bank to the commission merchant—the average carload of birds cost at least $20,000, and we had only a small percentage of that enormous sum in our bank account.

Our next step was to build facilities for housing and feeding geese. The shed we constructed accommodated a thousand geese, cooped up in sixteen-foot cages. The supporting frame posts were 4″ x 4″ x 5′, set three feet apart. The floor was made of 1″ x 2″ x 16′ slats nailed to the posts, two inches apart and two feet from the ground. The front and back were 3′ high, made of 1″ x 2″ slats placed two and one-half inches apart, to permit ample space for the geese to thrust their heads through for feeding from a V-shaped trough between two cages. Finally, over each cage there were 12″ boards to prevent the geese from flying the coops and to provide a surface for the feeders to walk on when pouring corn and water into the troughs.

The corn was prepared in a second shed. Over a fire that burned twenty-four hours a day, a cast-iron cauldron holding a half-ton of corn steamed continually; four or five times a day, after the corn softened, we emptied and refilled it. To keep the fire going, we had prepared a whole season's requirement of firewood, chopped and stacked in two-foot lengths.

My mother made the goose purchases and it was my duty to pick up the lot at the railroad depot or the commissioner's stand. After leaving the market fully loaded, I usually encountered trouble at one steep hill. To make the grade, I had to shift the truck into low gear and take it very slowly. Local hoodlums would hide themselves along the roadside, just waiting for an opportunity. As soon as they heard me shift into low gear, they would burst from their hiding place and jump on the

back of the truck. With an iron they would open a cage slat and steal a few geese. I didn't try to ward them off because the odds were clearly against me. I therefore continued driving until I reached level ground, then parked on the road side to renail the broken slats. I reported the incident to the local police, who gave me some protection a few times thereafter. But the hoodlums returned when the police did not show up.

I tried reinforcing the crates with extra slats before leaving the market, but this also failed. Finally, as my last resort, I covered the entire load with an overall canvas, securely tying it to the truck's platform. Although I was endangering the birds' health by excluding air circulation into the coops, I had to apply some effective precaution against this gang thievery. As soon as I got into safe territory I removed the canvas.

Over the season, my decision to cover the cages with canvas proved less hazardous than taking my chances against the hoodlums without any protection. The geese had been weakened already by their two-week confinement in coops during the train ride to market, and it was not unusual to discover a dozen or more dead geese when unloading a car at the depot. My covering the crates with a canvas even for a short period further endangered the birds' health, but I lost fewer geese this way than if I had let the thieves ransack my truck. On arriving at the farm before being reconfined in coops for a three-week fattening process, the geese were put into a large fenced-in yard for several days of wing-flapping and honking.

For the first two years of the goose-fattening operation we purchased corn from a local feed dealer at a 25 percent market mark-up. I estimated if I could buy grain by the carload direct from the shipper I could achieve considerable savings. I was not in a financial position

for such large purchases since all my bank credit had been committed to the purchase of geese, so I contacted all local goose fatteners, presenting them with the following propositions:

1. We should organize a cooperative buying organization.
2. As a group, we should buy our own corn wholesale in carload lots, just as the local grain merchant did.
3. As a group we could establish a higher bank credit rating and obtain loans and make cash payments for corn purchases.

The group accepted my propositions and two members were selected to investigate the idea. They were to report their findings within two weeks. After their favorable report, the group arranged credit from a local bank and I was designated purchasing agent. I called several Chicago grain merchants and finally arranged with one merchant the purchase of a five carload shipment F.O.B. Chicago. On receiving the bill of lading our bank would honor his bill by a certified check. As a result of this deal I received a slight discount for the purchase. When the shipment arrived at the Caldwell railroad station, each goose farmer was doled out his allotment, sufficient for his entire season's requirements.

Encouraged by our success with the corn-buying cooperative (even taking into account the shipping charges and the interest on the bank loan we still saved 15 percent over what we would have paid our local grain merchant), I suggested we obtain a charter and register the buying association with the county seat, which we did. In our charter, rules and regulations were set up designating duties for each member; we even established a fund to assist any member of the group who suffered reverses during the year. I was selected as the purchasing

agent, so that later all seed and fertilizer group purchases were under my supervision. Here again, we bought fertilizer in carload lots directly from the manufacturer and seed from a wholesale house, rather than from the local hardware store.

It was not practical for the cooperative to purchase geese for all its members. Not all members purchased from the same commission merchant. Some had special arrangements to buy all their lean geese and return them to the same merchant. Others made purchases whenever they were available and were not obliged to sell the fattened geese back through the same commission house. In our regulations this condition was waived.

The goose-fattening business, though it was a relatively short season, was our most laborious venture and more speculative than any other farm project. Crops could be affected by flooding, drought, early frosts, wind storms, or even hail. But these natural conditions in no way compared with the variables affecting the goose-fattening operation—fluctuating market prices, loss through thievery, and disease.

For example, one season my mother purchased a half carload of unfattened geese not knowing that some among them had contracted a contagious disease. I carted them home and mixed them with a previous load that were still uncooped outside in a large yard. When I visited the yard the next morning to feed the birds I was shocked to see more than fifty dead geese. A helper and I removed them, then examined the remaining birds and noticed that some had become totally blind, while others were only partially affected. We promptly called the local veterinarian, who recommended prompt disposal of the entire batch since the disease was very contagious and could be carried to the geese then confined in

fattening cages. A hundred geese died within the next twenty-four hours. This loss was so staggering that for the next two years all farm and goose-fattening profits went to our commission merchant for its repayment. Fortunately, our commission merchant extended us credit.

When cooping the geese for fattening, we always kept the large and small geese in separate cages since the large ones dominated the feeding troughs. Any attempt at feeding by a small goose was thwarted with head pecks from a large one. Besides, by the time the big geese finished eating or drinking very little corn remained for the smaller ones, so they seldom gained any weight and were held over a longer period of time for fattening than their larger sisters.

Usually, the feeding process required three men. Two men carried two twelve-quart pails of cooked corn from the bin to the third man, who walked on the boards placed over the cages and distributed the food in troughs tied between every two coops. After feeding, water was distributed in the same manner. The number of feedings each day depended on the weather. During cold spells, when geese ate much more than in warmer times, thus receiving seven feedings per day and fattened in three weeks. But when the weather was warm they were fed only six times per day and required another week to fatten adequately for market.

During the goose-fattening season my visits into the house were limited to meals or the Sabbath, when all my work was delegated to the hired help except in an emergency. Otherwise, my rest periods (which added up to about three or four hours of sleep per day) were spent in the shed on the warm wooden covering of the iron cauldron, where I could hear the swollen corn pop over

the fire. No matter what the weather I never wore anything more than a sheepskin jacket, a warm hat with ear laps, and rubber felt boots. Meanwhile, our regular daily chores were not neglected. The cows and horses were tended on time, and the ice house was filled so that we would be well supplied for the summer.

Although I worked eighteen to twenty hours daily, I seldom suffered from fatigue or infections. My muscular 130 pound body was apparently impervious to disease, except one summer when I contracted malaria. I soon rid myself of the pesty infection by visiting a local doctor new to our area who examined me and gave me quinine, charging me fifty cents for both the visit and the pill. In two weeks I was back to my normal health.

The ice-cutting operation was less laborious than goose-fattening, but all of the work had to be completed during a specific time period. The ice on the local river had to be at least one foot thick before a horse and ice plow could venture onto its surface. Before deciding how to store our ice for the summer, I investigated which neighboring icehouse was most practical. I concluded that an icehouse built partially below ground level would be more advantageous than one built at ground level. Since under these conditions ice is less affected by hot summer conditions, I built such an icehouse, insulated the walls with sawdust, and had it ready by winter.

With our paraphernalia stacked on the sled and extra help in tow, we drove down to the river and began our cutting operation at sunrise. First, a horse-drawn ice plow made three-inch cuts in one direction fifteen inches apart, then another series crosswise, eighteen inches apart. Then, with the use of the hand saw, the ice was cut through in one direction, after which it was separated in the other direction with an ice bar, thus making

18″ x 15″ ice blocks. These floating blocks were then pushed to the bank and lifted to the sled with ice tongs on a wooden slide, then carted to the icehouse. Within a few days the icehouse was filled to the rafters.

Although the community supported two churches, there had been no synagogue in our village. Local services were conducted only on the High Holy Days, at a hotel, the owner of which donated his social hall for that purpose. My father, who still operated a wholesale dairy route in New York, visited the farm on weekends and holidays and was rather disturbed about this situation. "A community such as ours, cosisting of thirty Jewish families," he often remarked, "should have a house of worship not only for holidays but also for regular services throughout the year." A synagogue could be constructed, he believed, if a centrally located site was obtainable.

My father therefore called a meeting at our home inviting all Jewish farmers to consider his proposition. After much lively discussion, one generous farmer, who owned some ideal centrally located land, donated a one-acre plot for the synagogues contruction. A committee, chaired by my father, was chosen to contract with an architect for drawing up plans and specifications (the plan would include my father's proposals about the interior religious decor of the structure). The architect submitted a plan, which was approved by the members under the following conditions. Each member would be taxed $100 or contribute an equivalent amount in labor and materials toward this project.

Since I had acquired some experience during our boardinghouse construction, I was designated to install all electrical wiring system and assist in bricklaying and masonry. My father supervised the positioning of the

sacred objects, such as the ark, the eternal light, and the bimah. Together, all members worked every weekend for six months until the building was completed. (However, since then the structure has been enlarged to meet the increased number of Jewish residents in the community.)

As an honorarium for my father's service, the members offered him two permanent seats facing the East Wall, this is considered a great honor in a synagogue. He graciously thanked the *chevrah* (the committee designated to dole out honors) for their offer, but suggested that the east wing seats be sold to those seeking *kavod* (honor). "Insofar as I am concerned," he said, "God will hearken unto my prayers wherever I sit." Furthermore, he said, "You can still rely on my weekly Torah reading service as in the past without compensation." (He was the only man in town able to read the weekly Torah portion.)

Most of the children in the community received only minimal religious training from their parents. Realizing the necessity of a Hebrew school teacher for our community, my mother went to Newark where she interviewed several prospects and hired the most suitable one. His regular duties consisted of teaching different grades at specified hours five times a week and providing *bar mitzvah* training, all at an established monthly wage. He would receive additional compensation for any other duties. My mother offered him free board, lodging, and the use of a horse and carriage for his transportation from our home to the synagogue. Within a few years, our Hebrew school was the envy of neighboring Jewish communities.

Our sages tell us that no matter how far some Jews may have strayed from their faith, at some point in life a

traumatic experience may direct them back to their religious roots. When all else fails they turn to the Almighty for assistance. This wisdom was vividly demonstrated to us by our agnostic Jewish neighbor.

This family lived only a quarter-mile from our house, but my mother forbade us to have any association with their children since they did not observe Jewish practices nor did they associate with other Jews, preferring only Christian friends. They ridiculed Jews who observed the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, and showed their contempt for anything Jewish by working in the fields on Yom Kippur and resting on Sundays. Their male children were never circumcised.

One day two of our neighbor's children came running to our home pleading for my mother's assistance. Their mother was in great distress and their father could provide no relief while waiting for the doctor's arrival. My mother responded without a moment's hesitation. On arriving she found the woman gasping for breath, but she administered emergency treatment that she had learned under my father's guidance and was able to keep her alive for nearly two hours until the doctor arrived. The doctor, who provided the necessary medication for the woman's heart attack, praised my mother's skill.

A few months later this woman suffered another heart attack, and again my mother was called in to help. But this time her efforts were in vain—the woman died before the doctor arrived. Later that evening my mother told us that before she died, our neighbor had cried out, "Oh God, help me!" My mother used this anecdote to impress upon us that, "If we abide by Judaic moral and ethical principles throughout our lives we will not have to make a plea for God's salvation on our deathbed. Salvation manifests itself when we practice our faith

daily through the performance of good deeds and actions throughout our entire life, whether at home or in society." As usual, the full impact of my mother's words did not become apparent to me until much later in my life. Only when I disciplined myself according to this philosophy did I realize how much richer and fulfilling life can be when one is knowledgeable about Judaic beliefs and practices.

My brothers and I were eligible for the draft during World War I. My oldest brother, Harry, enlisted before the United States entered the conflict and was sent overseas with the first army division. He was wounded in combat and hospitalized for three months, then sent back to the front where he was gassed and wounded a second time. Although he completed his term of enlistment, his injury was so severe that he remained in the hospital for two years. After his army discharge he finally returned to the farm in 1920.

My youngest brother, Charlie, was a great horse lover. He obtained a job as stable boy at a nearby breeder's stables. Charlie's duties included grooming and exercising the horses. On one of his exercise jaunts, Charlie's mount tripped and broke a front leg. Charlie reported the accident to his boss, who insisted that the horse be destroyed. But at my brother's pleading, a veterinarian was called in to set the leg and Charlie attended the horse until it fully recovered. My brother left the horse breeder's employ after the war, and the owner presented him with this horse with the understanding that he be used only for riding and never be harnessed to pull a carriage.

My brother Nathan, a few years older than I, was a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary and spent his summers working on the farm. He was familiar enough with the operation to take over my role

as manager when I had to be at market or otherwise off the premises.

Because I was a farmer I was classified 4F. However, the navy had a training center for 20,000 recruits not far from the farm. When a call was issued by the navy captain in charge of a local training camp for volunteer mechanics, I applied for the job. After a long interview with the captain I was assigned to the garage as mechanic first-class in charge of repairs.

Most recruits at this camp came from rural parts of the south. Some arrived barefoot, having never worn shoes during their entire lives. Many had never seen an automobile before joining the navy. Although they were sharpshooters who could hit a bull's eye with a rifle from fifty feet away, they knew absolutely nothing about maintaining an automobile, even after they had learned how to drive. Since the camp was five miles from the local railroad station, where the recruits picked up all camp military hardware and quartermaster supplies, the trucks were in constant use. But when a vehicle broke down, it remained parked by the side of the road and its load was transferred to another truck. It was not uncommon to see many government vehicles lining the roadside. The camp had practically no one among the recruits who could make repairs. It became my duty to train some of the able men to repair trucks and keep them in good running order.

The captain assigned a group to me in the garage. Here a vehicle was completely disassembled, and each working part was labeled and numerically tagged. The entire list was given to each member and they observed how it was reassembled, with an explanation given for how each part functioned. After two months of regular sessions several recruits developed into qualified me-

chanics. With a complete set of tools they were sent out in pairs to retrieve the broken down-trucks. Before long, abandoned trucks were a thing of the past on the local roads. I remained a volunteer until World War I terminated.

On January 12, 1920, my father, who still conducted the wholesale butter and cheese route in New York, died suddenly. After *Shivah,* the seven-day mourning period, a problem developed. Who was going to continue my father's business? My older brother Harry, who had finally been discharged from the army, was still somewhat disabled from his mustard gas affliction. Under these circumstances, my mother decided that it would be more practical for Harry to assume the farm duties and I would conduct my father's business. Living in a country environment, she thought, Harry might regain his health more quickly than in the city.

I therefore returned to New York and moved into my father's apartment. My first duty was to scrutinize my father's business records. My father was an exacting and meticulous individual, and I found a detailed and accurate accounting of all his debted customers as well as his creditors. Thus I was able to operate my father's business without much previous knowledge about it. Within a few weeks I recovered most of his customers who had changed their business association after his death and retained all the others.

However, on one of my weekend farm visits, my mother informed me that the farm program was not progressing as in the past. Although Harry was a diligent worker, his inexperience had led to delays in preparations for spring planting. In addition, the hired help needed better direction. Under these circumstances, I suggested to my mother that since Harry had had

experience in the butter and cheese business before joining the army perhaps he should take over my father's business and I should return to the farm. My mother agreed. Harry and I made the switch. I still had enough time to prepare for spring planting. Harry returned to New York and was married there, while I finished what would be my last year on the farm.

CHAPTER 6

Returning to School

A dozen years had come and gone since we purchased the farm—years of self-denial and sacrifice, years of frustration and hunger—but through diligence and determination we had turned it into a successful operation, and it took considerable courage for us to sell such a prosperous, well-established business and for me, once more, to start anew. When I first suggested to my mother that we sell the farm, she was completely surprised. It meant leaving behind a profitable boardinghouse, a well-developed truck garden and dairy farm, modern equipment, a large truck and a touring car, and many comforts and conveniences not normally present on a farm.

For days, my mother and I had many discussions during which she tried to convince me, in her ingenious manner, about the folly of my intentions to pursue dental studies. She insisted that having successfully developed a well-organized farm project, it was time I enjoy the fruits of my labors. Did I plan to discard all of my accomplishments and start all over again? "I had given you more credit than that," she said.

I replied, "When I observed and assisted the slow-growing vegetation and saw it grow and ripen, I found

farm work routine and tedious. You may remember that while I was still a youth I derived great joy when I carved a figurine in a peach stone or made a whistle from a green branch stick. It was a creative endeavor, not a tedious chore. Furthermore, you remember how many times I spoke to you about continuing my education after high school graduation. And you insisted that the younger children finish their education before I continued mine. Well, I abided by your wishes. Now Yvette [the oldest of my three younger sisters] has completed her business course and has become the buyer for a dress house. Rose [the middle of the three] is a bookkeeper, while Sylvia [the youngest] is a school teacher. Now it is my turn for study. This was our understanding after my high school graduation."

I also reminded my mother that many times she had expressed her views about the importance of study. "You recited excerpts from the most important prayer in the daily prayer book [the *Shemah*], a prayer that is recited three times daily, which tells you to teach your children daily wherever you may be, at home or in the outside world. The *Shemah* is to be repeated throughout your lifetime until your last conscious utterance. The idea of continuing study throughout your life is one of the most important in the lives of our Jewish people. It is my turn now!"

Furthermore, I explained, in a society where everyone strives for financial success, many employ devious methods to attain it, and their path in life may be strewn with frustrations. For others, work is only a means to an end, not the end itself, and I didn't want to travel in this company. Unless I enjoyed my job, I would never be contented, no matter how lucrative it might be. It had been fifteen years since our old family dentist first

observed my dexterity and encouraged my mother to send me to dental school after high school graduation. Today many young men and women, asked on entering college about their intended profession, respond with uncertainty. From early boyhood, however, I had decided on dentistry and my conviction intensified with maturity.

If the farm were sold, I argued, the family could be reunited. In all my dealings with my mother, this was the first time she conceded an argument—but with a stipulation. After that year's harvest, we would rent out the farm for five years, with a purchase option at $35,000, a high price in those days. Meanwhile I would register in the pre-dental course at New York University.

We soon received a good offer for the farm and accepted it. I left for Brooklyn and rented an apartment on Eastern Parkway with enough room for my mother, the girls, and myself. We could live on the income from the farm rental, our savings account, and my sisters' salaries. To pay my tuition I obtained a job after school. Then, after our tenant turned so large a profit from his first crop, he bought the farm for $35,000. The money was divided equally between my mother and myself. With my mother's $17,000 share I purchased the four-family apartment house in which we had formerly been renters. The maintenance, amortization, and interest would be covered by income derived from the three tenants. My share was deposited in a bank, to be set aside for payment of my college tuition, purchase of my dental instruments, and furnishing my dental office after graduation.

In 1922 my brother Nathan occupied a pulpit at a nearby Long Island town and occasionally visited us in Brooklyn. Once, after one of his visits, he described to me

a proposition one of his very friendly congregants had recommended to him. An ideally located parcel of land could be purchased for a very reasonable price, he had been told. Actually, it was going for a song at a mere $15,000. Having full confidence in the trustworthiness of this congregant, my brother, without further investigation, asked me for a $15,000 loan to buy the parcel. His congregant assured him that it could be turned over at a good profit within six months. The next day I gave my brother a cashier's check for the full amount, which nearly depleted my entire savings.

After six months there was still no buyer for the parcel. In the interim, a $5,000 mortgage on the property had become due. My brother's salary barely covered his living expenses, I had no cash on hand, and my mother's share of the profit from the sale of the farm had been invested in the apartment house. Having no one to turn to for the necessary $5,000, my brother appealed to his "trusted" friend for an extension of the payment, but to no avail. The mortgage was foreclosed and the property was lost. Thus I was forced anew to devise a plan to finance my college career.

First, I obtained a night job as a relief man at Nedicks, traveling from restaurant to restaurant each night, working until 1:30 A.M., wiping down the floors and cleaning the grill in preparation for the morning counterman. (This job paid better than that of a regular counterman.) Later I became acquainted with a local contractor who paneled apartments. It took two of his men one day to finish a four-room apartment, for which he paid them $40. I told the contractor about my building experience on the farm, and, after looking over one of his jobs, offered to do the same work for $30 during evening hours, from 7 P.M. to 7 A.M. He agreed

to try me out, and after I completed one job he hired me for the next six months at $180 a week, a salary almost four times what Nedicks paid me.

By June I had completed my pre-dental courses and paneling jobs. The contractor was planning to erect several brick buildings in the summer and hired me as a bricklaying end man. The end man plumbed the building corners and lined up levels for each bricklayer. He also set the work pace (in those days the union did not control the number of bricks a workman could lay down each day). Although I worked only five days a week instead of five-and-a-half, I received the same salary as those who worked the extra half-day. By September, I accumulated enough money to pay my dental school tuition and buy the required dental instruments. I continued working for the contractor at odd jobs during the year to cover my living expenses.

The next two summers I worked as waiter and assistant salad man at a resort. In addition to dining-room duties, student waiters were obligated, after a hard day's work, to socialize with the female guests (the ratio of women to men guests was four to one). Fortunately many of my friends vacationed at the hotel and insisted on sitting at my tables. Not only did I have my own social clique, but my friends also assisted me in clearing and setting the tables. This was against house rules, but the owners overlooked it when my friends threatened to check out and organize a boycott against the hotel if I were fired. The owners realized my financial worth and next year unhesitantly offered me a job.

Another summer I sublet a soda fountain concession at a very busy drugstore not far from the Jamaica racetrack. The horse owners, jockeys, and stable boys hung about at the soda fountain, making deals among

themselves to rig races. After they made their killings at the track, they spent their money lavishly—flush one day, broke the next. Usually I supplied them with all their desired desserts, for which they paid handsomely. I also catered local parties, so that by summer's end I had earned enough money for my next year's schooling.

Finally prior to my senior year in dental school, I took a job at an Orthodox children's camp as counselor and dentist. The camp catered to a wealthy clientele, and the kids in my bunk (at least the twelve to fourteen-year-olds) were a bunch of spoiled brats. The six assigned to my bunk absolutely refused to follow regulations and were impossible to discipline. Rising on time, making beds, properly arranging their clothes, and raising the flag were not customary duties at home. (I suppose their hired help cleaned up their discarded toys and clothing.) During the first week, when they refused to comply with my orders, I consulted with the camp directors, who gave me full power to set the situation right. In short, I punished the kids, excluding the more obstreperous ones from their favorite sports activities and all social events. Writing to their parents didn't help the boys either, since I had previously reported the misbehavior to their parents before they wrote to complain.

Difficult as it was for them to accept camp regulations, my boys soon came to realize that I meant business. Eventually my "bunkers" developed into a cooperative group, and each boy received a special award for improved deportment at season's end. On his return home, the transformation of one camper so impressed his parents that they invited me to their magnificent home for dinner after camp closed. The boy's father, a very successful businessman, and I discussed many things during the meal, including my past experiences. I

told him how I was working my way through college and had helped support my family on the farm. As I was leaving, my host thanked me again for my influence on his son and even offered me assistance towards completing my studies and opening an office. Although I never accepted his generous offer, we remained friends for many years thereafter. On subsequent visits, however, I observed my camper reverting to his former habits. His miraculous transformation proved short-lived. (By the way, the family eventually became my patients.)

My problems were not all financial during my college career. At first I was a rather poor student. For nine years following my high school graduation, I had totally neglected my studies in order to concentrate upon the farm's development. However, when I finally entered college I found it difficult to concentrate on studies. In the first place, after losing my college fund I was forced to obtain a night job, from which I did not usually return home until 2:30 A.M. After only a few hours of rest I set out for my 9:00 A.M. class, remaining at college until 3:00 P.M., and sometimes much later. Because my time was so limited I had to study on the subway while traveling to and from school and work. At times the rhythmic noise of the wheels lulled me to sleep and I rode past my station to the end of the line. When the conductor awakened me I asked him to be sure to wake me at my station if I fell asleep on the return trip. (He never made me pay a second nickel for the ride.) On the farm I had had very little opportunity for reading or study after high school graduation; I read the local newspaper and little else. Hence I found it difficult to wade through scientific textbooks with terminology that was foreign to my daily existence. As hard as I tried toward the end of the first semester, I just managed to

pass three subjects while failing three others. My adviser called me into his office and informed me that I was being dropped from the pre-dental class.

This bad news was a severe blow to me. I approached my adviser and actually pleaded with him for another chance. He offered me very little encouragement, but referred me to the assistant dean. I still remember vividly how my knees trembled as I approached his office. He offered me a seat and asked me to relate my story.

Still worried, I began my description, but I became more relaxed as I went into my past history. I told him how and why I had decided to study dentistry after my eighth birthday, and why I had delayed my studies. As we spoke I referred the dean to my high school record, which I had submitted to the college with my application. I pointed out that it demonstrated that I was among the top one percent of students in my high school class. All I required, I argued, was to obtain someone who could instruct me how to improve my study habits.

The dean listened attentively to my story and apparently he was impressed. He advised me that he was assigning a tutor to me and that I was to report to him regularly about my progress before the semester's end. I was placed on academic probation. If I failed to demonstrate marked improvement I would be dismissed from the class.

I was still faced with my job and my subway travel home from classes. Nevertheless, I was confident that with proper tutoring my grades would improve. As a result of excellent tutoring, I progressed rapidly and made passing grades in all my subjects by the year's end. When the dean saw my record he called me into his office and congratulated me. I promised I would keep him posted about the progress of my dental studies.

Before parting I expressed my gratitude for his assistance. I would be eternally grateful for what he did, for my dental career depended upon his compassionate decision.

When I entered the New York College of Dentistry, I found that many of my classmates came from average working-class homes. Before registering in a class a student had to show the instructor that he had a complete set of the instruments required for that course. Most of these students paid their own way through school by working nights and weekends, and many lacked extra cash to purchase the instruments required for our practical work. Since this was a common problem, I recommended at our first freshman meeting that our class form a student co-op to buy dental lathes directly from a manufacturer rather than the local dental supply house. I explained that we would have to pay cash, since we had not as yet established credit with the house. The class unanimously accepted my idea when I told them about my past experience with cooperatives at the farm.

As usual, when you open your mouth and make a good suggestion, you are delegated to carry it out. This was no exception. I was elected class treasurer with full authority to investigate my recommendation and report within ten days. I called several manufacturers, one of which offered us 150 lathes at a discount of $20 each. Since some classmates did not have ready cash, I suggested that other class members chip in a few dollars each, so that we could consummate the deal. We placed a deposit when we signed the contract, and agreed to make the final payment upon delivery of all lathes in good condition. The maufacturer received his requested credit guarantee from the school's administration, and we

received a waiver from the administration allowing us to enter classes temporarily without the required instruments. Within two months all the lathes had been received, paid for and distributed to the students.

In the early 1920s New York College of Dentistry was a proprietary school (later taken over by New York University as its dental division) and was ill-equipped. Students powered their way through dental school with foot energy, which we used to propel our drills. Since each student required a foot-propelled engine while in the operative department, their procurement became my next project. I selected a committee to scout pawnshops and second-hand dental equipment stores for used engines at a specific price. (Most students sold their foot-engines after graduation.) In the interim, just as with our lathe purchase proposition, I collected money weekly so that students who had operating class received their units first. In a short time the committee met its quota and everyone had his own engine. Our costs were less than half those quoted by the dental supply house.

Purchasing dental instruments and carrying cases proved a more difficult task. Instrument manufacturers and jobbers refused to do business with me, since I was competing with their regular supply house. However, I managed to ferret out a few complete sets at an average saving of $35 each. Overall, our freshman class saved approximately $7,500, a considerable sum during a time when government subsidies were nonexistent. Eventually, practically all my classmates became successful professionals. Over the past half century some have passed on to their final resting place, others are still practicing, while many are enjoying retirement.

Because of my service during that first year, I was chosen president of the sophomore class. Up until 1923

students not only had no voice in administrative policies; they were even barred from making suggestions. The school's professors were equally impervious to change, many following procedures instituted decades earlier. (Not that their fundamental principles were unsound, but their application to modern methods were ignored.) Many students disagreed with the outdated procedures of their classroom studies, and this problem surfaced at our first sophomore class meeting. After long discussions we selected a committee to draw up recommendations which, after review and acceptance by the other three classes, were presented to the administration. Our petition was totally ignored for two months. Finally I requested an appointment with the dean, who, after our conversation, agreed to meet with representatives of each class. Subsequently two representatives from each class joined with six faculty members and presented the administrators with a petition. The matter resolved itself only when the Dean granted ex-officio student representation at some faculty meetings.

During my junior and senior years, in addition to being chairman of the dance committees, I was the student representative at faculty meetings. The editors of our 1927 graduation yearbook, *The Dental Violet,* made the following comment about me:

> He was a worker and also a good ripe one. He represented a person who was a tireless worker and his existence seemed to be consumed in accomplishing whatever may present itself. He is a whole-hearted, sincere factotum whose activities for Alma Mater and student body are known to us only too well.
>
> His decided manner, his willingness to do good, his devotion to the dogma of action brought him to the fore early in his school year, saving thousands of dollars for classmates through his cooperative organization ability

and carried through the sophomore year. The junior and senior years brought no lull in his desire to accomplish everything possible for the common good.

The statesman—warrior, moderate, resolute—a whole personality: indomitably fighting for the underdog.

Delta Sigma Theta, a professional fraternity, attracted a different kind of student than most fraternities since scholastic achievement played an important role in being accepted. A special committee examined all candidates' freshmen scholastic records, and only the upper 10% of the class were selected for fraternity admission. Practically every month an instructor who was also a fraternity member conducted a roundtable discussion on a different dental subject, and members gathered regularly at the fraternity house for study sessions. Many fraternity members, being top members of their classes, were selected after graduation as dental instructors and became very successful practitioners thereafter.

During my sophomore year I was accepted into this fraternity. Although I had developed basic study techniques in college, they were greatly enhanced in these surroundings. My grades steadily improved and, using the mechanical experience I had developed on the farm, I completed three years practical requirements in less than two-and-a-half. Because I had free time during my senior year, the chief of the prosthetic department designated me as his "troubleshooter" to help students who were encountering difficulty during construction of a prosthetic restoration.

Each student was required to construct successfully a specific number of fixed bridges—full and partial dentures—before he became eligible to take the state examination and graduate. Occasionally a student would encounter a technical difficulty with an uncooperative

patient, stalling his progress toward completing his prosthetic requirement; as troubleshooter my job was to assist him. First and foremost, an evaluation was made concerning the fit of the dentures. If they were well-fitted and still the patient complained, then, most likely, we were dealing with an uncooperative individual. An exploration was made about the patient-student relationship. The patient was interrogated, and after a session or two the cause of the disagreement usually surfaced. If an antagonistic relationship had developed between the patient and the student, then the patient was referred to another student, under the troubleshooter's supervision.

The student and the troubleshooter would then proceed through the normal technique, recording each step during the operation. The patient's history was reviewed. Usually the patient's objection referred to esthetic matters. In those cases the patient was given a mirror and an opportunity to see the unfinished wax form for approval.

Another type of uncooperative patient were those who had dentures constructed long after extractions had been performed. Such patients may have accommodated themselves to eating without dentures, and would remove them during meals. Thus patients were given instruction on how to overcome their eating habits. As a matter of fact, dentures put in place immediately after extractions prove more successful since the patients accommodate themselves much faster than those who delay replacement.

If the dentures were ill-fitting, then a review was made to ascertain the cause. The student's entire technique was carefully examined. If the procedure was accurate, then the ill-fitted denture was attributed to failure in the

mechanical dentistry procedure. Such patients were referred back to the instructor, who could issue a remake request. The troubleshooter assisted the student throughout the entire procedure, until completion.

When the problem could be corrected by realignment of the teeth, the student would proceed with the standard technique. They were realigned. One must have empathy with denture patients, especially those who have gone long without teeth. Having a bulky object inserted into one's mouth is not the most comfortable feeling. Each patient's reaction must be closely observed when inserting a denture for the first time. The closer these reactions are observed, the more time will be saved in performing later adjustments.

CHAPTER 7

Community Activities in Brooklyn

Wherever and whenever Jews or Jewish organizations in our community needed assistance, my mother was there to help. She believed that government welfare was beneath Jewish dignity: Jews in need must be supported by their coreligionists. No one who came to our home for a contribution or to tell us about someone in need ever left without receiving due consideration.

Living in such an environment, it was natural that I should follow in my mother's footsteps. Working for worthwhile causes was an essential part of my daily life. I did not need the Yom Kippur reminder to direct my life by *teshuvah* (repentance), *tefillah* (prayer), and *tzedakah* (charity). Seeking out the needy, helping the poor, and caring for the ill were routine, not extraordinary activities in our household.

Not long after moving from the farm to Brooklyn, my mother became involved in community affairs. Coming from an ardent Zionist background she decided to organ-

ize a Mizrachi chapter on Eastern Parkway. (Mizrachi is an Orthodox Women's Zionist organization.)

From her more affluent acquaintances she selected several women to form the nucleus for the group. At the first meeting, held at our home, she described in her convincing manner the importance of Zionism for the American Jewish woman. She spoke about the value of participation, and convinced thirty women to sign membership applications. Their names were submitted to the national organization, which issued the formal charter. Thus a new Mizrachi chapter was born on Eastern Parkway.

Officers were selected at the next meeting. Although she was offered the presidency, my mother respectfully declined the honor, since she believed that the chapter would derive greater benefits if she operated from the sidelines rather than as the chief officer. As was characteristic in all her activities, she was the power behind the throne. With this arrangement, the Eastern Parkway Chapter soon developed into the most progressive chapter in Brooklyn.

The National Mizrachi Organization was establishing a new rehabilitation center in Palestine (now Israel) for children who had recently emigrated from Europe. At that time rumors were spreading that Great Britain, the mandate power over Palestine, intended to close the door to Jewish immigration, and it was therefore essential to complete this housing project quickly. On receiving this information, the Eastern Parkway Chapter called a special meeting, pledging to raise one half of the project's budget. An intensive fundraising drive was undertaken by my mother as chairlady, who through her daily efforts raised the quota in half the time allotted by the national organization. Finally, the project was completed and

$10,000 was turned over to the National Mizrachi Committee for the purpose of salvaging several hundred young lives from dangerous areas of Europe and placing them in the Palestinian Mizrachi Rehabilitation Center.

While my mother was still working on this project, HIAS (the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) informed my mother about the plight of thirteen rabbis and thirty-five orphaned girls between the ages of twelve and fourteen who could be saved from Hitler's Germany if some Americans guaranteed they would not become public charges when they were admitted to the United States. (In those days Jews were still permitted to emigrate from Germany.) Since the Eastern Parkway Mizrachi Chapter was not able to obtain sufficient guarantees from its membership, my mother contacted other charitable organizations in Brooklyn to take part in joint action for this urgent cause. She encountered little difficulty in finding sponsors for the rabbis because there were many positions available for them in synagogues either as Hebrew teachers or as *shamuses* (the men who conduct the daily *minyan* and care for all the religious objects in the synagogue). Not long after arriving in this country, all of the rabbis were employed and otherwise settled.

But the girls posed a more difficult problem. Their sponsors would have to guarantee support until the girls became self-sufficient. Eventually my mother recruited thirty sponsors and turned over to me the responsibility for finding sponsors for the remaining five. I was able to place them among my patients who were members of our civic group. After the required legal documents were signed by the sponsors, HIAS obtained the visas and paid the refugees' transportation expenses. My mother and some of the sponsors met the escapees when they arrived in New York. After immigration clearance, these

fortunate new residents traveled by bus to our home where they had their first meeting with their sponsors.

As anticipated, the rabbis who had some knowledge of English secured positions as Hebrew School teachers while the others eventually obtained positions as assistants in synagogues. Helping the girls required more effort. In the first place, tutoring in English was essential before they could enter school. In addition, they could not obtain working papers until their sixteenth birthdays. The girls for whom I recruited sponsors were fortunate in that their sponsors were businessmen. While these girls were tutored in English they were also being trained in a specific trade. When they became eligible for work papers they were already skilled and could be hired by their sponsors. The other girls also obtained jobs after graduating from high school or trade school. Some of the girls continued living with their sponsors even after they were able to support themselves, while others moved out, often pairing together in a rented room to share expenses. Our door was open to all these girls, and hardly a week went by when my mother did not receive a call or visit from one of them. When they encountered problems they sought my mother's advice and aid in resolving them. They also shared their happy occasions with us. I can recall the gratitude shown by one girl who visited us to announce her impending engagement. Her eyes sparkled and her face glowed as she told us about her plans. But underneath were more painful emotions that even the happy prospect of marriage could not erase, and her face saddened at the thought of the fate the rest of her family had met at the hands of Hitler's butchers. After this pause she wiped her tears, drew close to my mother, and thanked her for her consideration and kindness. For my part, I provided

dental treatment for the rabbis and the children at a minimal charge. A few were treated at no charge until they became independent, self-supporting citizens.

Directly across the street from our home was a saloon. A *chevrah* purchased the lot on which it stood and planned to build a synagogue. After paying for the land and leveling the building, however, the *chevrah* did not have sufficient funds to construct a foundation. So the rabbi approached my mother for assistance. He informed her that the foundation would cost $4,000. Once that was built, the bank would grant the congregation a mortgage for the synagogue's completion. She considered the rabbi's request and pledged to raise the funds.

She raised $3,000 (among her Mizrachi women), and then asked that I do my share to raise the final $1,000. I contacted my civic group members, who issued a $1,000 check from the treasury and turned it over to my mother. With the $4,000, the foundation was completed and the congregation received the loan for completion of the syngogue. The building was finished and dedicated before the Jewish High Holy Days. At the *Chanukat Habayit* (dedication) my mother received a substantial contribution from another of her Mizrachi friends, which went toward the purchase of a large chandelier for the syngogue foyer.

After the holidays my mother approached the rabbi about the establishment of a Hebrew School, but the rabbi discouraged her since the synagogue income barely covered current expenses and Hebrew schools as a rule operate under large deficits. Undaunted, my mother sent a questionnaire to all congregants and her friends inquiring about the number of children available for classes. As it turned out, there were many, and my mother was finally able to convince the rabbi that the

Hebrew School was essential for the synagogue. But the rabbi insisted that its success would depend on regular subsidies from the Mizrachi chapter.

The rabbi began registering the children, interviewed their parents, and gave my mother guidelines about the number of teachers needed and where they could be hired. My mother interviewed several propects, selecting only those teachers adaptable for our synagogue's Hebrew School program. Their salaries were fairly reasonable, which diminished the subsidy from the Mizrachi chapter. Eventually, the Hebrew School became another successful Eastern Parkway Mizrachi project and remained so until the neighborhood changed and the synagogue was sold to another religious group.

As the saying goes, my mother had the knack of drawing blood from a stone, especially tightwadded, well-heeled women who normally spent large sums bejeweling and clothing themselves but who had to be cajoled into contributing for worthwhile charities. Though she hounded them constantly for contributions and was never refused, they still respected her and welcomed her at social events.

Another of my mother's projects was doling out small loans of $100 or less. To supply these funds, I aided in organizing the Hebrew Free Loan Society among tenants in my building. This group borrowed money from the local bank and turned it over to the society. Their only obligation was paying the interest on the loan, which they could deduct from their income taxes. Any excess principal remaining at the end of each quarter was proportionally returned to the contributors. There was no expense involved in the operation since all associated with it were volunteers. These loans aided families in starting a business, dowering a bride, or paying a

medical bill or funeral expense. Among the hundreds of loans we made only a few were not repaid. Considering that none of us had banking experience, this was an excellent record.

My mother attracted a group of women around her during religious services. Unlike most women her age, my mother had received an excellent Hebrew education and she could read and translate Hebrew fluently. As I sat alongside the *mechitza* (the curtain in an Orthodox synagogue that separates the men and women) I would listen to her reciting her prayers from the *vebisher siddur* or *machzor* (a special daily prayer book or the one for holidays) in her sing-song manner. The women around her listened intently, too. When my mother reached an especially solemn section of the prayer, tears welled up in her eyes and the other women, though they could not understand the words, took out their handkerchiefs in response to my mother's emotion.

When I first moved into my new office at 1281 Eastern Parkway, most tenants in this fifty-nine-unit building were affluent businessmen who were in a position to aid the needy. I organized a civic group for social reasons, but my real intentions were eventually to direct them toward charitable activities. (As previously mentioned, I obtained sponsors for five of the immigrant orphans from among this group.)

In this neighborhood there were women who *shnorred* (or begged) for the poor. Every day, these women (we also called them "bloodhounds") trudged through the streets carrying heavy packages they had collected for unfortunate families who existed in misery in hovels or basements. One of the bloodhounds was my patient, and I invited her to our civic group meeting to determine whether we could come to a working agreement. We

proposed that if her "searchers for the poor" could ferret out needy families and come up with a list of their requirements, the civic organization would finance their support. For each family the searchers brought to our attention, we provided monthly assistance in the form of food, clothing, and sundry items. I was delegated to deliver these goods in a borrowed station wagon or small truck on the fourth Sunday of every month.

Two weeks before Passover the shnorrers made an intensive holiday food drive, soliciting all the local stores and storing these items in the butcher's freezer. All supplies collected were checked by our civic organization and wherever shortages occurred, they were supplemented by materials purchased and delivered by me. We assembled baskets containing sufficient matzos, chicken, fish, eggs, fruits, and vegetables for the entire week, and then set them aside for delivery.

On one occasion I took my four-year-old, Faith (of whom you will soon read more), to observe how some people actually existed (and I mean barely existed!). I decided that if she saw these hovels herself it would make a greater impact than any description of their living conditions, no matter how vividly they were described. Holding her with one hand and steadying a basket of food on my shoulder with the other, I led her downstairs into a cellar room occupied by a poor family.

On entering it took a few moments to accommodate ourselves to the dimness. The only beams of daylight came from a half-sized dirty window below ground level, and at night the room was illuminated by only a few meager candles. In one corner stood a rickety table and four folding chairs, in another a kerosene stove for cooking. A broken-down dresser occupied the third corner, while in the fourth lay a torn straw mattress and

pillows. When the door was opened, heat and coal fumes flowed in from the nearby furnace. The odors from the garbage storage area added to the pollution of these ill-ventilated living quarters. There seemed to be no facilities for washing or bathing.

When we delivered the food basket, the gloom on their faces disappeared into the dark, dismal surroundings. They thanked me profusely and expressed their thanks to all those instrumental in bringing them a happy holiday. With tears of joy trickling down their faces, they then blessed us. My daughter was so moved by this experience that when we returned home she said, "Dad, I've saved some money in my bank. Will you help me buy something for the poor little girl we just visited?" I was overjoyed by her reaction to this visit. It left a lasting impression: a positive attitude toward rendering assistance to individuals less fortunate than ourselves.

The civic association continued to function for many years until the original members and their families moved from the neighborhood. Most eventually purchased homes or moved into apartments outside of our district. The association finally disbanded, but I continued to assist the poor, with the help of the bloodhounds, until I moved to Rockville Centre.

As the years went by and the population of the area changed, many Jewish parents transferred their children from public school to Hebrew Day School. There they received training in their secular subjects as well as Hebrew. But not everyone could afford the tuition. Among my patients were widows and divorcées who were their families' sole source of support. One working mother approached me for assistance on behalf of her two sons. After preparing their breakfast and sending the boys off to school every day, she would not see them

again until she returned from her job at 5:30. She was concerned about the boys' supervision after school dismissal until she returned home, a period long enough for them to get into trouble with neighborhood rowdies. If her sons attended Hebrew School, she reasoned, the chances of getting mixed up with a bad crowd would be greatly reduced. Moreover, at the Hebrew School the boys would receive a good secular and religious education.

I interviewed these boys and recommended them to the Crown Heights Day School, advising the administrators that I would supplement any tuition not paid by the boys' mother. Word of this arrangement quickly spread through the area, and I received several requests from other women in our neighborhood; first consideration was given to the most needy cases. By the time I ended my Brooklyn practice, two dozen children were sponsored partially or fully at the Crown Heights Day School through graduation.

There were two other boys, who attended the Hebrew Institute of Rockaway, whose tuitions I paid in full from the primary grades through the completion of high school. I was especially proud of these boys since they eventually developed into active members of the Jewish community and a credit to our heritage.

As for myself, no financial reward could equal the pleasure I received by sponsoring these unfortunate children and assisting many poor families to keep body and soul together.

CHAPTER 8

In Private Practice

After graduating from dental school in 1928, I was faced with two problems: finding a suitable location for an office and raising $500 for a down payment on my equipment. I solved the first one by converting the front room in my family's apartment into an operating room, and using the adjoining living room, which could be separated from the dining room by a sliding door, as a waiting room. This room had a private exit into the hallway. Here, at least, I would not be concerned about rent payments. Financing the equipment was another matter. My total capital was $50 and I knew no one to approach for a loan—except a very friendly classmate.

He and a few other students had studied together, usually at my home, where my mother provided us with refreshments and sometimes a welcome meal. After graduation one of my friends fortunately married into a wealthy family, and his father-in-law fully equipped his office in one of his office buildings and referred his affluent friends as patients. Within a relatively short period he had developed a fine practice. I therefore contacted him and explained my predicament. Apparently he remembered what I did for the freshman class

(he was one of the students for whom I arranged financial assistance to pay for his lathe and engine). He also mentioned how he enjoyed my mother's cooking. On many occasions at school we lunched together, sharing our lunch and then going to the coffee house. Sometimes the only money we had, aside from our subway fare home, was a nickel. To determine who would get to drink the cup of coffee that day we tossed the lonely nickel; the loser would finish his meal with a glass of water.

Without hesitation my friend sent me $500 the next day, refusing to charge me any interest. "Just pay me back when you have the funds," he wrote in a note. Now I was able to place a deposit on my dental equipment, with the following stipulation—that it be paid on an installment basis, dividing the $4,000 balance into thirty-six equal monthly payments with prepayment option for part or all of the residual obligation. The first payment was to be made six months after the equipment was installed.

Even under those conditions I was barely able to meet my monthly payments, so I accepted a job at a five-chair dental office in Harlem. On my first day I watched four dentists perform dental practices that were inconsistent with those I learned at school. For example, they seldom filled caries; rather, they extracted extensively decayed teeth and replaced them with gold-shell crowns and false teeth bridges, or they disked down partially decayed teeth and restored them with gold crowns.

In those days among blacks a gold crown was an indication of affluence. Many black patients insisted on restoring small cavities with gold crowns, especially on the front teeth. (Some patients even had gold crowns placed on healthy teeth.)

I decided not to follow their routine. When I arrived at eight the next morning, the janitor had not as yet completed his morning duties, so I requested him to prepare the sterilizer for daily use. He informed me he had never cleaned it during all the years he had worked in the office. I was told that it had never been used. I therefore scoured its rusty surface myself, put bicarbonate of soda in the tray, and placed all the previous day's used instruments, which were soaking in an antiseptic solution, in it. Meanwhile patients began flocking into the waiting room, where a secretary took their history and assigned them to an available dentist for treatment. I received my allotment for the first two-and-one-half hours, treating them as best I could under these difficult circumstances.

At 10:30 A.M. the owner arrived, entered my cubicle, and observed my extraction of a difficult tooth. As he gestured to me after the extraction, his hand accidentally touched the hot sterilizer. "What's this," he exclaimed, quickly pulling back his hand. I replied, nonchalantly, that it was a sterilizer. The owner looked puzzled. "In this office," he said, "the sterilizer is not used; asepsis is accomplished by placing used instruments in a pan filled with sterilizing solution." I reminded my boss that heat sterilization is much safer, since more bacteria are destroyed by heat than by cold sterilization. During lunch time he told me that he did not object to my using the sterilizer, which I did during the two weeks I worked for him. Although after my two weeks he offered me a raise in salary (and I certainly could have used the extra money) I informed my boss that I was quitting since I could not tolerate working under such conditions.

Fortunately I soon found a better job in an office near the Brooklyn docks. Most of this dentist's patients were

seamen who returned to port three or four times a year. He did a lot of restoration denture work for these seamen, using the fastest methods to construct a partial denture, a full denture, or an immediate denture with multiple extractions . Having a dental mechanic on his premises he was able to construct a denture in less than forty-eight hours regardless of how long the mechanic remained after regular hours to produce one. During shore leave seamen had a tendency to overindulge in hard liquor, thus leaving them insufficient time for standard denture construction; others occasionally lost their dentures in a brawl, or misplaced them while drunk. Without false teeth a seaman was unable to leave port on his next voyage and a new set had to be made for him as soon as possible. Thus my boss performed several steps in a single day, permitting just enough time for mechanical processing before completion. Fortunately seamen received their accumulated salary due them when on leave, enabling them to pay in full for their work. When one of them was unable to pay, my boss extended credit until the seaman's next shore leave. From his past experience the dentist knew he would be repaid on their next return to port.

My proficiency in prosthetic dentistry proved advantageous in this type of practice. In a relatively short time I assumed full responsibility for my boss's practice, except when it concerned his very personal friends, whom he treated himeself. Otherwise, he spent most of his time taking bets on sporting events. In his private office two girls constantly answered ringing telephones. His attempt to entice me into this operation never interested me since my principal concern was to liquidate my equipment obligation as quickly as possible through income derived from my dental work.

At any rate, within two years my private practice had increased beyond my expectation and required more office space. About this time, I received an offer from a long established physician to share an office with him in a newly constructed, 59-unit apartment building on Eastern Parkway. It was ideally located on a corner with a professional ground-floor entrance. The floor space was more than twice as large as my original office, and included a large waiting room, an X-ray room, a dental laboratory, a restroom, and a nurses reception center. The operating room could be divided into four cubicles accommodating four complete units. Under these circumstances a larger practice could easily be developed, especially with all the new apartment tenants. I accepted his offer, moved my equipment, partitioned off a laboratory, and outfitted a darkroom.

As I expected, I doubled my gross income the first year, progressively increasing it thereafter until after the stock market crash. The Depression affected the living conditions of the entire community—the poor and affluent alike. Many of my patients with bridge work or dentures in unfinished stages discontinued treatment. To salvage a large percentage of my practice, I called these patients, telling them I would temporarily waive their present obligations providing they returned and completed their dental work, but any additional work would be on a cash basis.

Practically everyone who returned was pleased with this arrangement, and this good public-relations tactic spread to others in the community. Before very long the real estate manager of a local savings bank—a friend of mine—called me about several of his friends who required extensive dental work. These people had lost their jobs and were not in a position to pay for their

work. I suggested that, if they were willing to cover the mechanic's expenses, I would carry the balance on my books until conditions improved. He thanked me for my offer and sent me several patients for whom he guaranteed payment. These patients formed a new nucleus from which I received many recommendations. Eventually practically all these patients paid their obligations due me.

The real estate manager's bank had recently repossessed a group of duplexes because the owners were unable to meet their payments. One day he called me and offered this proposition. Each house, with a bank mortgage of $6,000, could be bought for $50 above the mortgage plus legal fees for taking title and recording the sale. The purchaser was required to make all necessary repairs on these neglected homes in consideration of a six-month waiver on mortgage payments.

When I discussed this proposition with my wife, she discouraged me, saying, "Are you practicing dentistry or are you entering the real estate business? If you assumed responsibility for these properties or delegated it to an agent, your hospital and office involvement would materially suffer. You have given up a profitable business before to study dentistry. I know this real estate operation will interfere with your dental practice. Besides, the former home owners who are now your patients will resent losing their properties to you." I took her advice and recommended the properties to two friends, who made the deal with the bank manager. After making necessary repairs, they rented out the houses as apartments, the rent covering their total investment capital, quarterly payments, and interest. Gradually each home was sold for an average of $12,000, netting them a profit within three years of $65,000.

The Depression affected me as well as the general public. One day the health adviser at Thomas Jefferson High School, a patient of mine, told me about hundreds of students requiring dental care who were refused treatment because they were unable to pay for it and clinics would not accept the fee offered by the school dental fund. I informed the health adviser, "If the students were excused from school during study sessions for dental treatment and it wouldn't interfere with classes, I would treat them for the school fee." The health adviser agreed and dozens of students flocked to my office from Thomas Jefferson. Soon thereafter, Girls Commercial and Tilden High School officials contacted me and I made the same arrangements with them.

During the Depression many dentists closed their offices because they were unable to meet their daily expenses. New graduates were selling apples on the street. Two dentists, friends of my patients, were among those selling apples and my patients inquired whether I would hire them. Both were interviewed and hired to help with the extra work. In addition, two unemployed girls were hired. The dentists each received $75 a week, while the girls received $30. (In those days, these were considered good salaries.) The dentists worked on an alternating schedule. One operated from 7 A.M. to 4 P.M., while the other worked from 4 P.M. to 11 P.M.

As for myself, operated with an assistant during the second shift while spending five mornings a week at Mt. Sinai Hospital as director of the prosthetic clinic and assistant in surgery (of which you will read in the next chapter). I operated there five mornings a week, returning to Brooklyn for afternoon practice with an assistant until 11 P.M. Our daily patient average was between

thirty and forty visits over a three-year period, totaling over three thousand patients.

From a financial standpoint the children's treatment did not prove profitable, but from the human viewpoint it was a great success. These children were able to graduate from high school because their teeth were in good condition (this was a school requirement then), but when economic conditions later improved many of these children returned to me as regular patients, expressing their deep gratitude for my dental service. Later I also helped both my assistants to establish their own practices, turning over to them many of the patients they treated during our association. Occasionally we lunched together, and in our conversations I sensed that they were applying the dental principles we had practiced together, especially with reference to care for the less fortunate. Both later indicated their desire to specialize. One developed into a very capable surgeon, while the other became an outstanding crown-and-bridge man.

Eastern Parkway was then considered "doctors row," with a dentist's office on practically each corner. It was a beautiful, tree-lined highway lined with rows of benches. People loved to sit under their shady branches during the hot summer nights. But after the Depression the neighborhood began to change. Blacks began moving up from Dean and Fulton streets toward Eastern Parkway, while whites moved out into homes on Bedford Avenue and its vicinity. Eventually, Eastern Parkway turned into a jungle. You couldn't sit on the parkway benches during the day, let alone at night, and walking along the intervening paths invited a mugging. Even my building's decorative foyer became bleak and desolate. The furnishings and carpeting were ripped up

and the crystal chandelier destroyed. The landlord installed front-door locks, but to no avail. Attacks by knife-wielding assailants upon tenants in the elevator were not uncommon. In 1945 I decided to purchase a home in Rockville Centre, Long Island, and commute to my Brooklyn office until I established a practice in my new town.

Meanwhile conditions went from bad to worse on the Parkway. Practically every dentist within a four-block radius of my office was victimized by robbers or drug addicts. In encounters one lost an eye, two others received stab wounds and broken bones, and another was murdered. I installed iron bars on all my street-level windows and inserted a peephole in my entrance door.

Fortunately I was not molested, but I realized it was unwise to operate under such conditions, and so I completed as many active cases as possible in the next three years and discontinued practice in Brooklyn. Of the few cases that remained unfinished, some transferred to my Rockville Centre office while others switched to another local orthodontist.

At my Rockville Centre office I discontinued accepting new patients for my orthodontic practice. As I was nearing my 72nd birthday, and not certain of my longevity, I decided to discontinue my practice entirely after three years. I would not accept any new patients in order to finish all my active cases, since it normally takes three years to complete a case. Well, my 75th birthday arrived and I was left with a dental office but no patients. I therefore decided to close my office and store my equipment in the cellar of our home.

A very close friend of mine supervised a local Muscular Dystrophy Institute. During his administration he expanded the institute's program, thus requiring addi-

tional dental equipment. But his budget had no allowance for this. He called one day and explained his problem. I advised him that I had a complete dental unit, including an X-ray machine and an instrument cabinet which he could have as a gift if he removed the equipment from my basement. He was grateful for my gift after it was set up in the institute.

After a few weeks I felt uncomfortable being unemployed. From age eleven my life was spent in productive labor. Sitting around and waiting, like many retirees do, for the ultimate eventuality was not for me. The yearning to assist people in my chosen profession haunted me, and being in relatively good health, I decided to return to general practice. I contacted a dentist in the same building where I formerly had my office. (Incidentally, in 1927 he happened to be a dental student for whom I performed some "troubleshooting.") He informed me that his office was available on Wednesdays and Sundays and I decided to sublet his space.

For five years we operated harmoniously together until he suddenly died. As a result he left a considerable amount of unfinished dental work and uncollected accounts. In an effort to help his wife, I volunteered to complete all his cases, collect outstanding accounts, and continue his practice until it—and the goodwill—could be sold (an active practice is more attractive to a potential buyer). After six months the practice was sold at a good price and I presented the widow with $8,000 in collected debts. I turned over the records to the new purchaser.

The new owner requested that I remain with him as I had with the old one, working two days a week. By this arrangement I was to introduce his new patients, whom I had treated for the deceased dentist. But a problem soon

developed. Many patients, treated by me in the interim, refused to transfer to the new operator. It was unethical for me to continue treating them, since their records were the property of the new owner and I had assumed temporary responsibility for their care. In some cases these patients attempted to devise methods to circumvent my ethical duty, but I refused to waver or accept their propositions. For example, they would call me for a relative or friend's appointment, stating that they were new patients, having never visited the deceased dentist before, but I referred them to the dentist who had purchased the practice. I remained with this dentist until 1979 when he sold his practice to a young dentist with whom I still share the office.

CHAPTER 9

At Mt. Sinai

In 1929, a year after my dental school graduation, while I was developing my private practice, I joined the dental clinic of Mt. Sinai Hospital, the dental school having recommended me for their prosthetic department. This department was subsidized by a $10,000 annual grant from the Shultz Cigar Company. Shortly after I started on the job, I realized how inefficiently the clinic operated, mostly because it used obsolete techniques. At the next semi-annual staff meeting, I suggested that costs could be reduced by cutting the number of remakes through the use of modern materials, better techniques, and closer scrutiny of technicians. After a general discussion, the director of the clinic assigned five men to my experimental operative group for one year. I would be authorized to purchase whatever materials I needed and to use my recommended technique. I would then present the director with a detailed progress report at year's end.

First I outlined the procedures our group would follow. We would operate as a team, each member contributing his best effort toward better denture construction. Initially I stressed the importance of detail rather then speed, for speed will come automatically

when techniques are perfected. I stressed that I would always be available for consultation with my staff members, and that I would regard all suggestions impartially and evaluate them according to their merits.

At the year's end, a comparative report between my group and three others showed that our production was 25 percent greater than all the other groups combined. We had just one remake while the others had ten, resulting in the most economical cost-ratio of any previous team over the last fifteen years. Two weeks later I received a letter from Mt. Sinai's administrator praising me for my job and offering me the chairmanship of the prosthetic department. I refused the job, for I couldn't replace the current chairman who had become my friend, and who had operated the department for fifteen years. I told his supervisor that it was improper for me to assume the duty under the present circumstances.

Unfortunately, a four-year waiting list for denture construction, due to the abnormal amount of remakes at the clinic, had developed over these fifteen years. Some patients were still dissatisfied after two or three remakes (although nothing better could be constructed for them) while others had legitimate complaints. The administration had no choice but to make a change. A month later, after an administration meeting, I was informed that the chair of the department had taken a sabbatical, leaving the position open, and this time I was unable to refuse Mt. Sinai's offer. I requested full authority to select a new laboratory mechanic and to introduce new materials into the clinic. I promised to make every effort to keep my operation within the budget.

The prosthetic department was divided into four five-member units, each of which selected its representative with whom I met monthly. At each session, a compara-

tive evaluation was made of the unit's progress. When a unit demonstrated less than average progress I visited during that group's day and observed its operation. Usually, after a few days the source of their problems was ascertained and suggestions made for correcting them. I was on regular call whenever a problem developed. By this method, all units maintained normal production quotas, with each of them benefiting from the others' experiences. At the year's end we were well pleased with our results, as was our chief when he examined our report.

As a continuing education program, all staff members were invited to attend lectures by medical specialists. In many instances the lecturers made a special effort to relate their specialties to dentistry. This enhanced our dental knowledge, which benefited our patients. We were made aware how medical problems influence dental treatment and how certain dental conditions present clues to medical problems. The lectures also set a pattern for our discussion sessions afterwards, in which one member took notes while another member, an invited speaker, or I directed the discussion. These discussions continued throughout my eleven years at Mt. Sinai.

Six months after I took over the clinic, the entire staff was using the latest materials and techniques, the laboratory mechanic was constructing better dentures, and remakes practically faded into thin air. Our annual report showed an increase in production of 25 percent and a diminished backlog of waiting patients. Within two years we cleared up the waiting list and doubled our output, all without any budget increase. What little extra time I had was devoted to experimentation.

For many years vulcanite rubber was the only material used for dentures. Later a material called Hecolite, a

camphor-based product that was much lighter pink in color (more like real gum tissue) became popular, but that material warped when it came in contact with heat. Since Hecolite was the material used before I joined Mt. Sinai, its instability must have been the main reason for the abnormal number of remakes in the previous ten years. If Hecolite dentures were cooled too rapidly during processing, many more adjustments than normal were required.

Meanwhile, about the time I first arrived at the clinic, the Vernon Bischoff Company had been experimenting with nonbreakable glass dentures at Mt. Sinai. These dentures fit much better, were unaffected by heat or mouth fluids, and were easier to clean. Their one disadvantage was that patients claimed they were uncomfortable. Patients complained about their weight, some claiming that their lower jaws became tired when they wore glass dentures.

Soon thereafter we received word of a new product, acrylic resin, developed by DuPont. The Vernon Bischoff people, acting as middleman, began contacting clinics that were experimenting with glass to find out if any of them would experiment with acrylic resin if they supplied the necessary processing paraphernalia and 250 acrylic resin slugs. I agreed to deal with their representative and test the product. Since no one had any practical experience with acrylic resin, I suggested that the first tests be made on stone models. If the finished product fit well on the stone model, I would continue the experiments in the clinic on patients.

A new vulcanizing machine was installed and I produced and polished six dentures. We then refitted them on duplicate stone models; five were perfect while one required a little adjustment. We later learned, after

processing three more cases, that the imperfection was due to a timing error during the cooling process. Having satisfactorily produced these eight acrylic dentures I obtained the 250 acrylic slugs and introduced them into our clinic under the name of Vernonite.

After a year, Vernonite proved far more serviceable, both from a functional and an esthetic point of view, than any other denture material used in the past. When word spread about our success with Vernonite some representatives of other local clinics visited our operation. They were very impressed when they observed how far advanced we were in prosthetic technique. I also presented my year-end report to our chief, who in turn presented my paper at the annual Greater New York Dental Society Meeting. Coincidentally, Dr. Wright, Dean of the University of Pittsburgh and a professor of prosthetics, presented practically an identical report about Vernonite at the same meeting. He further stated that this material was a great advance for dental prosthetics. This lecture before at least 1,500 dentists influenced most to transfer to Vernonite as a dental base in their practices. Within three years Vernonite practically supplanted all denture materials.

DuPont realized how Vernon Bischoff had developed a very good, profitable product for them, and soon thereafter introduced a modified form of Vernonite, calling it Lucitone. Originally, the Vernon Bischoff people received a royalty from DuPont to market Vernonite since it had access to many clinics throughout the country during the glass-denture experimentation. With the new improved DuPont Lucitone product the Bischoff company would lose its royalties. Arbitration between the two organizations over royalties on the new product failed, so Vernon Bischoff sent letters to all its

experimental clinics complaining about DuPont's unjust actions. When most clinics protested to Dupont, we soon received information from Vernon Bischoff that DuPont had reconsidered its action and planned to continue to give royaltiesto their concern on Lucitone but on a diminished rate from Vernonite. Despite this controversy, acrylic resins ushered in many scientific advancements in dentistry. Today, with more advanced products, dentists can produce stronger, more aesthetic dentures within relatively few minutes.

The clinic developed into a smooth-running organization, and I had more opportunity to accept greater challenges by developing devices to aid patients with cleft palates, with noses destroyed by disease or through accident, or with facial and jaw distortions from cancer surgery. One woman referred to me from the cancer surgery division was a particularly baffling case. The body of the left jaw had been resected during the surgery, leaving approximately only one and one-half centimeters of its lower border from cuspid to second molar. Her facial muscles had collapsed, causing a deep hollow impression on the left side. Only two cuspids remained in her lower jaw; her upper jaw contained six natural teeth. Bone transplantation had been ruled out by her surgeon.

Although I searched Mt. Sinai's vast library and contacted recognized prosthodontists, I could find nothing that had been done in the past that might apply to this woman's case. Without having any experience, I made an appliance that proved unsatisfactory after several weeks of adjustment. I was at a complete loss. Then one night, aroused from my sleep, I had an idea. I jumped out of bed and sketched an appliance that I thought would work.

The next day I presented the sketch to my hospital superior, who, after close inspection, said, "What is this all about—a Rube Goldberg contraption?" I explained its purpose, and he wished me lots of luck. "You'll need it," he said. "But let me see this appliance after you put it in operation." Undaunted, I proceeded to construct the appliance according to my sketch. It proved unsatisfactory after my first insertion, but I learned where I made my miscalculation. The second try proved successful, and after I made minor adjustments, the patient was able to function with the device fairly well for many years.

I had been discussing this case at home with my wife (of whom more in future chapters) for many months. When I told her I thought we had at last solved the problem, she said she would like to see the patient, so I arranged visiting privileges for her during one of the patient's regular adjustment appointments. The nurse seated the patient in the treatment cubicle, and I gestured to my wife to observe the patient's expression as she removed her appliance—the entire left side of her face collapsed into a sunken hollow below the cheek bone.

"Now you can realize how I felt when I looked into a mirror after my operation before these teeth were made for me," the woman told my wife. "For over five years I secluded myself from society. I hardly ever ventured from my apartment during the daytime. Since the dentures have been made for me, my embarrassment has disappeared. I do my shopping regularly and socialize with my friends without hiding my face as before. So you can appreciate my gratitude to two men who brought greater joy into my life—the surgeon who performed my operation and your husband who rehabilitated my mouth functionally and corrected my facial deformity. They

have given me a new lease on life." Cases such as this one gave me considerable gratification during my association at Mt. Sinai Hospital.

Having stabilized the prosthetic division, I joined the surgery department one morning a week. I operated as the surgery chief's assistant for five years, and once he offered me a position within his lucrative Fifth Avenue practice. Financially, this was an excellent opportunity for me, for he intended to retire in the very near future and turn his practice over to his son, with me as a partner. I told him that I would give his proposition some thought. That night I discussed his offer with my wife. "Where will you derive the greatest satisfaction from dentistry?" she asked me. I pondered her question carefully. I had received great satisfaction and valuable training while working in both departments, but if more and better orthodontia and preventive dentistry were practiced, a fair percentage of prosthetics and surgery could be avoided. I decided not to accept the surgeon's lucrative offer, and instead proposed to register at New York University's program in orthodontia. My wife congratulated me and wished me success.

In 1940 I entered NYU's department for a course in theoretical and practical orthodontia practice, and received my qualified certification in 1941. After graduation I was assigned as an instructor, supervising six seniors who observed my treatment procedures. I reviewed with them each case classification, the patient's history, etiology prognosis, and treatment plan, and answered their questions during my treatment. None of my students ever failed the course, since I made certain that they acquired basic knowledge of orthodontia. I served in this clinic for five years.

CHAPTER 10

My Personal Life

For seven years after establishing my practice I still resided with my mother. She occasionally hounded me about getting married: "It's time, it's time!" she said. "At your age I had seven children. When am I going to see another grandson?" Before considering marriage, however, I wanted to be sure that I could support a family comfortably. Besides, my charity work, my association with the hospital clinic, and my private practice left little time for socializing.

Sometimes a patient or a friend of my mother's would introduce me to a young lady, but nothing ever materialized from these dates. I once went out with a young woman whose father, a wealthy manufacturer, offered to give me a share in his business if I married his daughter. But I was not attracted by this offer, generous as it was. Years before I had chosen to dispose of a successful business myself to pursue dentistry and make it my life's work. Compatibility, not business considerations, were what I sought in marriage, and the young lady in question, though good-looking, was rather spoiled and demanding as a result of her affluent upbringing. Her values were worlds apart from mine, and I didn't think

that two people with such different ideas about life could have a successful marriage. I will always congratulate myself for passing up this offer, for later I met and married the woman I knew was my true life's companion.

As I have previously mentioned, my oldest brother had taken over the farm briefly after my father's death, but he then moved into New York City to operate the kosher milk route so that I could return to the farm. Eventually, my brother sold the route and opened a grocery store in Ozone Park, Queens. One day he invited me over for a business meeting. From past experience, I knew this meant he needed a loan. I had never refused him financial assistance in the past, and I responded no differently this time. He told me that business had slumped, and some creditors were pressing for payments. I granted him a short-term loan, then he invited me into his living room (in back of the store) for refreshments.

Much later, I learned that my brother had another motive for his invitation. He had made an arrangement with a neighbor who wanted to introduce a young relative to an eligible young man. While we were having refreshments, the neighbor walked in with his guest, Daisy Kartch, a teacher who lived with her sister in Paterson, New Jersey. In the course of our conversation, Daisy told me she was planning an eight-week European vacation and a visit to Palestine after the end of the school year. (This was in 1934, when Palestine was still under British mandate.) I was so impressed by my new acquaintance that I requested her phone number, which she courteously gave me.

On my way home that night I could think of nothing but Daisy Kartch. This was so different from my reaction to other young women—especially the daughters of my

mother's friends—to whom I had been introduced. Daisy had then—and still has—many qualities of which I had dreamed. Her beauty, her refined demeanor, and her capacity for intelligent conversation were unmatched by any of my previous dates. So consumed was I with thoughts of Daisy that I was unable to sleep and spent a very restless night. The next morning my mother cautiously broached the subject of our meeting (apparently, she was in on my brother's scheme). I told her that Daisy had impressed me immensely and that I intended to contact her shortly.

Before Daisy left on her voyage we had four dates. After each one, I became more convinced that Daisy would become my lifelong partner. On the first three occasions we met in New York, had dinner, went to the theater, and then I accompanied her back to Paterson. On the fourth date, however, we returned to my home so Daisy could meet my mother. By the time they finished their conversation it was much too late to set out for New Jersey, so Daisy spent the night at our home and left the next morning.

My mother was greatly impressed with Daisy. Although we made no formal marriage arrangements before she left for Europe, I knew our future together was assured. I decided that a movie camera would be an appropriate bon voyage gift, so I accompanied her on board and presented her with the camera and a dozen rolls of film just before sailing time.

As I watched the ship glide majestically down the Hudson, I found myself already growing lonely for a companion I had come to cherish in just a few months. With each passing day I became more lonely and more eager for her return. I decided I would propose marriage to her as soon as she got back so that at her welcome

home party our engagement was announced. We set the wedding date without further delay—January 20, 1935.

Before the wedding we rented and furnished an apartment not far from my office. After the honeymoon Daisy occupied herself with meticulous and methodical home decorating, while I continued with my practice as well as my civic, charitable, and clinic work. Our first child, a healthy robust girl we named Faith, was born in September, 1935.

Faith was an ideal baby and we enjoyed her fully. Daisy, however, did not come back to her usual self after childbirth. Since, with time, there seemed no improvement, we decided to see her family's long-time physician and surgeon in Paterson. Examination revealed a large mass on one ovary and he recommended its prompt removal.

I took Faith to Newport. R.I., where my sister Mamie had rented a summer home. My mother was there visiting with her. Nearby my sister Yvette had her summer home. I returned to Paterson where Daisy had already entered the hospital.

On July 9, 1936, the hottest day on record for that date, as she was about to be conveyed to the operating room, the doctor pleaded with her to postpone the surgery. (At that time there were neither air-conditioning nor fans in the operating room.) But Daisy insisted that he proceed as planned. As I watched the surgeon and his two assistants operated under these brutal conditions for ninety minutes, while six nurses mopped their perspiring brows. An eight-pound growth was removed. Several other systs were also removed from the other ovary. Daisy remained in the hospital for two weeks. During this time, the physician suggested to her that since it was

problematic that she would ever conceive again, we should plan on an adoption as soon as possible.

Daisy came to her sister Jennie's home, where she received gentle, loving care. As she grew stronger, she missed the child and wanted to have her near. I returned to Newport to pick up Faith and also Ella, our young helper. Daisy was delighted with the arrangements and all would have been fine except for a little game that Grandma and Faith had been playing at Mamie's. After Faith was put to bed, Mamie liked to visit with Yvette. Faith would feign being asleep, but has soon as Mamie was out the door, Grandma would pick up Faith from the crib, settle in a rocker and sing songs to her. Faith was back in the crib when Mamie returned.

Naturally, the child expected the same at Jennie's. When it did not happen, she cried. This disturbed everyone, but Daisy gave strict orders that there was to be no picking up and no rocking. Eventually, seeing that crying accomplished nothing, Faith went to sleep when put to bed as had been the procedure at home.

When the surgeon gave permission for Daisy to travel, I located a small pleasant hotel in the Catskills where the proprietors graciously gave us the use of their private suite. At first, Daisy had her meals in her room; but eventually she took her meals in the dining-room and began participating in the social life of the hotel. Ella continued to care for Faith. Toward the end of August we returned home.

On one of her regular visits to the surgeon, Daisy complained of nausea, particularly in the mornings, symptomatic of early pregnancy. He was surprised, but delighted that his post-operation diagnosis proved incorrect. He ordered Daisy to discard all the medica-

tions he had prescribed and find a capable gynocalogist, to avoid traveling in any vehicles and not to come to Paterson. Paterson could come to her. When we visited a gynocologist and he did a thorough examination, he stated that it was a most unusual case. He therefore made preparations for any possible problem. Fortunately, it was a perfectly normal delivery. Marcia was born on July 27, 1937.

At birth Faith weighed six pounds and nine ounces. At the end of the two week stay in the hospital, she had gained about a pound. On the other hand Marcia had weighed seven pounds but had lost a pound at the end of the two weeks. The problem was her unusually small stomach pouch, which was able to accept only minimal amounts of food. Feeding times had to be more frequent and the quantity very limited. The problem, again was to keep her weight up, hopefully to gain an ounce or two.

Faith thrived and grew. At three monthes, she was the size of the average year old baby. She spoke very early in complete sentences and distinctly. When she was about a year old, our superintendent came to fix a knocking radiator. When done he said, "She no knock no more." Faith said to her mother, "Does he mean it won't knock any more?" "She just a baby. She not talk so good yet," he responded. When about fifteen months old, she observed the moon in the daytime. "Mommy," she said, "You said the moon shines at night and the sun by day. I can see the moon and the sun is shining." Daisy had the job of explaining. Another time, when Daisy was confined to bed with a bad cold, Faith stood in the doorway with the morning paper and said, "Would you like me to read the paper for you?" "Oh, that would be lovely." Whereupon Faith read all the headlines. "How did you

learn to read?" "When you read to me I follow the words in the book." She was just three at the time. (Subsequently, she taught her sister how to read.)

Marcia walked very early. When she started to talk well, it was always in rhyme and meter. She drew well. Interestingly it was either something beautiful, like Cinderella in her ball gown, or a tipsy man leaning on a lamp post. The physical proportions were quite accurate.

Because Faith was a large child for her age and Marcia small, many people thought there was about five years difference between them, instead of only twenty-two months. The result was that anything Marcia said or did was considered remarkable. As for Faith—"What do you expect. She is a big girl, now." This was a real problem to cope with as Faith was always hurt.

There were other differences, too. Faith would stop anything she might be doing to welcome visitors. Marcia just went on with her activity and had to be told to greet the guest. They both received the same allowance money early. Faith would save most of it to buy gifts, while Marcia would save to buy things she wanted for herself. It took a bit of training to develop moderation for both the girls.

All the children's illnesses, such as mumps, chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, tonsillectomies, as well as the common cold, were weathered quite well by both girls. In 1943, a polio epidemic spread throughout the country, concentrating heavily on the eastern seaboard. Through the news media, Government and local agencies alerted the public, providing them with measures for their protection. As yet, no vaccine had been produced for protection against their dread disease. We were relieved that our children were away at summer camp,

segregated from the contacts of the Brooklyn area where we lived. However, after about three weeks, we were notified that the Board of Health was closing the camp. Two campers and a counsellor had contracted polio. With fear and trepidation we awaited our children, hoping and praying that they were in good health.

Our fear were allayed on seeing their smiling faces. It was not until the next morning that those fears were back with us. About sunrise Faith was calling for assistance. Unaware of Faith's condition, Daisy called from our adjoining bedroom, "You are a big girl now. Go to the bathroom." (She was eight years old). When Faith continued calling for help, Daisy went to her assistance. The child could not raise her head and complained of a headache. After taking her to the bathroom, Daisy took her temperature, it was normal. Much as we disliked calling our pediatrician at this early hour, we decided to call and report Faith's condition. He promptly arrived and examined both children. Marcia was well but to be observed. Faith, he feared, had polio. He immediately called the local physician responsible for polio cases in our area, who arrived within a half hour and confirmed our pediatrician's diagnosis. Immediately, an ambulance was called for and Faith was conveyed to Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn.

No greater dedication has ever been shown than that of the doctors and nurses at the hospital, working in thirty-six hour shifts to help the stricken. That Faith was a co-operative patient aided the doctors and nurses in their treatment. Fortunately, hers was an abortive case. When we cam to take her home, the same nurse who had come with the ambulance was the one to check her out. She stood there with tears streaming down her face. "These are tears of joy, she said." Of all the children I

have brought to this hospital, she is the first to be leaving on her own power."

I was grateful for Faith's recovery and the excellent care she received, so I volunteered my dental services in the polio clinic at King's County Hospital. In treating polio patients, who were lying in the iron lung flat on their backs, exceptional care had to be taken during dental operations to prevent any foreign particles, such as amalgam, from dropping into their throats. Any obstruction to breathing could prove serious. Therefore, I was assigned an intern and two nurses to assist me during each treatment. Usually, hand instruments were used in cavity preparation and filling, while a portable drill served only when extensive work was required.

Most polio victims were children, but some adults also contracted the disease. One woman I treated was a very unusual case. She had been stricken during her fifth month of pregnancy. Completely paralyzed from the hips down and unable to breathe normally, she was placed in an iron lung. Hers was the first case of its kind at King's County Hospital, and the obstetricians were uncertain about treatment of the impending birth. Experts in Washington suggested that as a precautionary measure a special infant iron lung be manufactured and ready for use in case the newborn had acquired the disease. At the Caesarian delivery many doctors were present, and to everyone's surprise the woman had a normal baby who developed into a healthy lad. I continued treating this woman during her entire iron lung confinement until she eventually died from a kidney infection.

I continued serving the clinic for several years until the state assigned a dental intern to take over my responsibility. Reflecting later on my experience at

Kings County Hospital, I felt happy and rewarded that I had volunteered my services. I will always remember the smiling faces of the iron lung patients who were grateful for anything I could do to relieve whatever painful sensations they still had while being confined. No financial reward could compare with the personal satisfaction I got from this experience.

After Marcia's birth our living quarters proved increasingly cramped, so we rented a larger apartment in order to accommodate a live-in girl to help Daisy with heavy housework and child care. We were living there throughout Faith's illness, and when she had regained her strength Daisy felt comfortable leaving her with the girl for a while so she could assist me at the office.

But even the household help and the diversion of the office could not counteract the accumulating effect of Faith's illness. It resulted in breakdown of her health. For three months she was under constant doctor's care, running a high fever. Eventually, the doctor suggested that we either take a long vacation alone or move to a new neighborhood.

A long vacation was impossible. I could not leave the office for that length of time, nor did we want to leave the children with our helper for an extended period. But moving to a new community was a real alternative, for our neighborhood was changing and many of our friends had already left for Westchester and Long Island.

CHAPTER 11

In the Temple

As the doctor suggested, we began looking for a house on Long Island. Gas was rationed at the time, so we wanted to relocate close to stores, a school, and a synagogue. Finally, in 1945, after a year's search, we found just what we wanted: a five-year-old brick-and-concrete house with a slate roof, ideally located on a main village street near major bus routes. After settling into our new home in Rockville Centre, we joined the local synagogue and registered our daughters in Hebrew School. We attended Friday night services regularly and soon became acquainted with the rabbi and many members of the congregation. When I learned that a daily *minyan* (ten men gathered in prayer) had never been formed, I decided to organize one.

The rabbi told me that several attempts to start a minyan had failed, and that services were conducted only on Friday nights, on Saturday, and during holidays. Not to be dissuaded, I designated myself a committee of one and called upon local businessmen whom I had come to know: Joe Goldman, Meyer Widlitz, Samuel Ruth, Max Stehr, Lou Rose, Mr. Rafiel, and Mr. Fleischer. Together we proposed to the rabbi that he contact those congrega-

tion members who are obligated to recite the *kaddish* (a prayer for the deceased) for completing the minyan. Two weeks later, the first daily minyan in Rockville Centre held its first session and still functions to the present day.

The Jewish population in Rockville Centre was rapidly increasing about this time, and the synagogue had to "expand" to accomodate the growing membership during the high holidays. In the old synagogue's lower-floor recreational area, after Meyer Widlitz and I constructed a temporary ark with an eternal light, a *bima* (platform), and a dais. We rented 250 additional chairs for the overflow worshipers and conducted the first parallel service at Temple B'nai Shalom. Meanwhile the synagogue acquired some adjoining property on Hempstead Avenue with a private house which we could use as our Hebrew School. When the new house was examined by the village fire department, it was ordered closed until we could meet village regulations. Before its reopening, we were told, a monitor had to be stationed on each floor while classes were in session, and fire extinguishers had to be placed at specific locations. As co-chairman of the Hebrew School, I was delegated to scour around for extinguishers and to enlist volunteer monitors. After complying with village orders, the building served as a Hebrew School until it was demolished in 1949 to make room for our new synagogue.

We hired a ritual director to conduct the daily minyan, read the Torah, assist members who had difficulty reading Hebrew prayers, and to train bat- and bar-mitzvah children for their *haftorah* (the portion of the Books of the Prophets recited after the Torah reading on Sabbaths and Holidays).

The ancient Hebrews supported the Temple through sacrificial offerings. After the Temple's destruction, the

synagogue was supported by dues-paying members and contributions. At some point a custom arose where all holy day *aliyot* (the honor of "going up" to recite the blessings before and after a portion of the Torah reading) were auctioned off by the shamus in his characteristic sing-song manner. Sometimes members of the congregation vied for the same honor while everyone listened with delight as the price rose. In modern times, particularly in Conservative and Reform synagogues, this format has been discarded. Today every member of the congregation contributes to the synagogue according to his or her financial ability.

Originally at our synagogue, on the eve of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, the rabbi in his sermon made a fundraising appeal, suggesting to his congregation that they use the flap cards placed on their seats to indicate their contributions and turn them over to the usher. Synagogue officers came to consider this procedure too commercialized and undignified for the holiest day of the year. Now a committee solicits a contribution from everyone a month before the holidays. It has developed into a major fundraising project; I have served on this committee from its inception until the present day.

While serving as a synagogue board member, I suggested we establish a Hebrew day nursery which would prepare children for Hebrew classes. The board rejected my suggestion since it would require a $2,500 investment for equipment and an anticipated deficit in its operation. For the next three years I continued lobbying for a day nursery, pointing out the merits of other synagogue nursery programs. Eventually, my persistence gained recognition. I was delighted when the board asked me to investigate similar nurseries and report my findings

within six months. I surveyed schools in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and Nassau County, and found that some had full day schedules, some had half-days, some provided transportation, and some provided lunches. Their courses presented basic knowledge about the Sabbath, Jewish holidays, Hebrew, and the culture and history of Israel. All children were required to present a health certificate and to have semi-annual physical checkups.

A committee, in conjunction with the rabbi and the Hebrew School principal, selected the most practical nursery program for our synagogue, and the board appropriated the necessary funds. By its third year the nursery became self-supporting, surpassing all our expectations. From that time until the present it has been profitable and has developed into one of the most highly rated nurseries on Long Island. Because our nursery students were further advanced than other first-grade children, a special aleph (first grade) was established in our Hebrew School for these children which continue together in their Hebrew studies. throughout their schooling. After three years this first group's advancement was on par with children studying for five years. Eventually some members of this group conducted their youth services as cantors or Torah readers, while others became leaders in youth groups.

My involvement in synagogue activities increased with our new and much larger building on Hempstead Avenue. I was selected membership chairman and devised a plan for Rockville Centre's tremendous building boom. Developers had purchased farms around the area after World War II, dividing each area into plots and selling them to future homeowners or building on them themselves. Within two years much farmland was

transformed into beautiful landscaped suburbs and tree-lined streets. Many of these new homeowners proved good prospects for synagogue membership.

Unlike in urban neighborhoods, Jews in suburbia were generally in the minority. Only about 18 percent of urban Jews might be formally affiliated with a synagogue—attending services during high holidays, bar mitzvahs, or weddings—while at least 75 percent of suburban Jews joined one. This provided a house of worship, religious training for their children, and a meeting place with their coreligionists. As far as our membership drive was concerned, we had an easy target and an anxious group awaiting solicitations for affiliations.

I divided the village into six districts, assigning a committee member to each one. All recruiters received a mimeographed sheet with information explaining the benefits and obligations of synagogue membership. The potential member thus knew exactly where he stood regarding our synagogue, and vice versa. Recruiters also presented potential members with a *mezuzah* to attach to his front door. Every week we conducted evaluations and filed progress reports. All difficult cases were assigned to me, and after a visit I was usually able to sign them up as members. When warranted, we waived certain membership obligations, keeping such privileged information among the rabbi, the new member, and myself. Our consideration for these members eventually served us well. When conditions improved, thse new members gratifyingly paid their past debts and many made generous contributions.

During my four years as membership chairman, over 300 families joined our synagogue. When I turned over my duties to another volunteer, I spent six months

teaching him the "selling techniques" I had developed. I can recall his enthusiasm when he told me he had signed up his first member. (During his tenure as chairman he performed a good job.) My next office, as cochairman of the religious committee, involved the presenting of honors on Saturdays and holidays.

Saturday honors were perfunctory, since a dozen or so were routinely apportioned. During the three holidays, however, 220 honors were distributed among the 1,700 attending services. I developed a system to assure a smooth holiday service. Several weeks before the holiday, I selected a group from our roster and notified them by letter (with a return card enclosed) about their honor. When they returned their cards I told them when they would be called for their honors. Nevertheless, many honorees arrived late and someone had to be selected as his substitute. This required a chairman well acquainted with the roster. For several years I conducted this synagogue function, an exhausting responsibility that permitted me little time for devotional prayer during the holidays. I was happy when someone else took over my duties.

As chairman of hospitality, my next duty was welcoming new members with a dinner-dance. New members wore name tags and mingled with the congregation after a formal introduction. We served a variety of good food and a band played past midnight. Under these friendly surroundings, social barriers were removed and a happy atmosphere prevailed. Our open-door policy encouraged good fellowship and a greater interest in synagogue activities by new members. Some became officers in a relatively short period.

Another duty of the hospitality chairman was visiting the sick. This practice had a long history, dating back to

our people's captivity in Babylonia. Under those trying conditions, mutual aid became rooted in Jewish tradition. The Talmud (Shabbat 127a) says that visiting the sick and aiding the bereaved are the fruit in this world, while the principle remains for all eternity. These practices were given great prominence by Jesus Ben Sira in the second century B.C.E. when he said, "Above all do not delay visiting a man when he is sick." Later the talmudic sages widened the scope of man's duty to man, saying, "He who visits a sick person helps him live longer." It has since been the moral obligation of Jews to visit the sick at every opportunity, and to give them whatever material and personal service necessary. When leaving, we are to wish the ill *refua shelemah* ("May God grant you a speedy and complete recovery"). Rabbinic sages in the Middle Ages broadened this obligation to include visiting sick Gentiles as well as sick Jews.

In conjunction with the sisterhood cheer committee I made regular visits to shut-ins and hospital patients. (My commitment increased during a six month period when our synagogue was without a rabbi.) After my Brooklyn office hours, I would visit congregation members confined in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens hospitals, arriving home after 10 p.m. On my days off, I visited Nassau Hospital patients. Fatigued as I may have been after a busy day, it gave me great pleasure to serve my fellow man and raise the spirits of sick persons. Our sages' advice merits our attention—visit the sick. Because I believe in this so strongly, I drew up some general rules for our cheer committee to follow:

> You needn't know the patient you visit. Your regard for a human being is all that is necessary. Visit strangers without hesitation.

If the person you are visiting is in the hospital, check at the nursing station to make certain a visit is proper, and that the patient is capable of receiving guests.

It is not necessary to bring the patient (even a friend or relative) a gift. Your best gift is your visit. When its impossible to call personally, however, a gift or card is always appreciated.

On entering the room, appraise the patient's mood. Start the conversation with "Hello," or "How are you today?" and wait for a response. Let the patient take the initiative. Listen for clues to what concerns the patient most, then pick up your conversation from there.

Don't prepare a long speech. Avoid allusions to any similar illnesses you or a friend may have had, regardless of the outcome of the illness. Preserve your voice and refer to subjects of a pleasant nature. Tell an interesting story or an appropriate joke. Take the patient's hand and stroke it reassuringly.

Speak with sincerity or be silent until the occasion warrants a remark. A smile can dissipate a patient's depression.

If a patient rages against his fate or talks about dying, don't interrupt him. Comfort the patient after he has quieted down, but don't dismiss his feelings.

Don't discuss business, since business troubles often aggravate illness.

Most important, enter the room relaxed, regardless of how you may feel about the person you are visiting. Don't prolong your visit, and leave with a pleasant gesture. The ill fatigue easily and require considerable rest.

Over the years our cheer committee joined with other congregations to serve the sick. Rabbi Katz from Freeport, for example, makes weekly rounds and has helped shut-ins have a more meaningful experience of Jewish holidays by telling them stories about Purim, Passover, Shavuot, High Holiday, and Succoth. The bedridden have ample time for thought and a little reminder about our heritage serves a useful purpose. Leaders like Rabbi

Katz present reports of their year's work at an annual luncheon, which usually ends with an exhortation to seek out more volunteers for this workwhile service.

There are always one or two experiences that stand out in my memory among the thousands of calls that our hospital committee payed to the infirm. I recall my visit to Mr. P., for instance. Mr. P. was an energetic, strong-willed man who had developed a very successful wholesale business. His entire life revolved around this enterprise. Eventually, due to overwork, he developed a severe heart attack and was placed in intensive care for two weeks.

On my first hospital visit to Mr. P., his wife met me in the hall. She told me that she had pleaded with her husband, even before his attack, to curtail his business activities since they were financially comfortable, but that she had failed. With tears in her eyes, she implored me to help her make him slow down. "Maybe you can do something with him," she said.

I vowed to her that I would make every effort to help her. I explained that my visits must be brief while her husband was in intensive care, but that later as we became better acquainted I would suggest how he could take better care of himself. Sure enough, Mr. P. and I became fast friends. He even offered me a managerial position in his business (in jest, as it were). I did make him keep one promise—to modify his routine and give more consideration to his health and his family.

He returned to his office, working shorter days, leaving later in the morning and returning earlier in the afternoon, a schedule he followed for six months. When he fully recovered, however, he returned to his past routine of long hours. I was not surprised when his wife called to tell me he had suffered another attack. This

time, despite his characteristically domineering personality, he humbly assured me he would retire from his business after his hospital discharge.

As it turned out, he did go into semiretirement, only occasionally visiting his business in New York and leaving his California plant under an associate's direction. A few years later, during a trip to inspect his California plant, something upset him. After he returned to his manager's office, he collapsed and died from a third heart attack.

During *shiva* (seven days of mourning), I conducted services at his home. On the last day his wife told me that her husband, after his second heart attack, added a codicil to his will, stipulating a substantial contribution to our synagogue in my honor for the advice I gave him during his hospital confinement. Mrs. P. and her family extended their gratitude to me for prolonging his short life.

The hospitality committee also ministered to families in mourning. I and members of my committee represented the synagogue at the funeral and later at the minyan at the mourner's home. Jewish law prescribes certain regulations for the mourner, one of which is the *kaddish*. During shiva, mourners abstain from work and never leave the house except for prayer at the synagogue Saturdays and holidays. They recite the *kaddish* daily for eleven months after interment and annually thereafter on the day of death. When sitting shiva, I often gathered the required ten men for services in order to recite the *kaddish*. Occasionally I conducted the service if the rabbi or cantor could not attend. The service ended with the evening prayer, "May God comfort you among all the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." (Reform con-

gregations observe a modified ritual, reducing shiva to three days.)

No single individual composed the *kaddish*. It grew organically, over the centuries, from the talmudic age to the present. Originally it was recited in Aramaic, the spoken language of Jews for about a thousand years after the Babylonian captivity. Only later was it introduced into the liturgy at the conclusion of a biblical prayer or at the end of the service.

An interesting footnote to this history of the *kaddish* is its quick assimilation into the Christian liturgy. Early Christians recited the *kaddish* in their public worship, for they believed that its Messianic passage referred to Jesus. This section developed into the *Gloria* and the *Sanctus* of the Latin Mass of the Roman Catholic Church, and was closely paraphrased in the *Paternoster* (The Lord's Prayer).

The *kaddish* contains no reference to the dead. The earliest precedent for its use as a mourner's prayer is found in the *Machzor* Vitry (a prayer book dated 1208). Since the *kaddish* always had as its underlying theme the hope for the redemption and the ultimate healing of suffering mankind, it came to be interpreted as the proper prayer with which to request that the dead be protected from *gehinnon* (hell). Formerly the *kaddish* was recited the whole year of mourning, for the wicked were said to spend no less than twelve months in gehinnon. In order not to count one's parents among the wicked, the period for reciting the *kaddish* was later reduced to eleven months. Regarding a parent's *jahrzeit* (anniversary of death), the sixteenth-century Kabbalists explained that, "While the orphan's *kaddish* for eleven months helps the soul to pass from gehinnon to *Gan Eden* (Garden of Eden), the jahrzeit *kaddish* elevates the

soul every year to a higher sphere in Paradise." The *kaddish* has thus become a great pillar of Judaism. No matter how far a Jew may have drifted from his heritage, the *kaddish* restores him to his people and the Jewish way of living. Recited on the occasion of death, the prayer seems to express the sentiment, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1.21).

I remember an unusual case, that of a member of the New York City Special Detective Squad, that exemplies this aspect of our hospitality committee. One morning this detective arrived at our daily minyan, his first appearance in a synagogue in thirty-five years. Observing his uneasiness, I introduced myself and offered assistance. He told me that one of his parents died recently and he wished to know what prayer he should recite. He had forgotten what little Hebrew he had acquired in his youth, and he wanted to recite the prayer in English. I presented him with a prayer shawl and prayer book and opened it to the *kaddish* in transliteration.

He attended services regularly for a few weeks, and actually expressed a desire to learn how to read Hebrew. I suggested that if he remained after service for ten minutes, our ritual director would be happy to provide him with that service free. Within a relatively short period he read Hebrew fluently, although he was still unable to cope with the speed of the daily minyan. (Most minyan members who conduct the daily morning services are fluent in Hebrew and can complete the service within a half-hour, by 7:30 a.m. This gives those attending the service to recite *kaddish* ample time to make their usual commuter train.) To help him overcome this last hurdle, I selected certain daily prayers and eliminated

others in order that he could keep pace with the service. Before his *kaddish* period ended, he joyously joined our regular service. In appreciation, he made several contributions to the synagogue and continued in attendance fairly regularly. Meanwhile he volunteered his services as the police protector of the synagogue premises and joined the men's high holiday choir.

After five years, he gave me his application for membership in the Temple. His case presented a problem, for he was married to a non-Jew, rendering him ineligible under our membership statutes. However, because he had so sincerely demonstrated his willingness to return to our fold, I sponsored his application to our synagogue board. When his application was rejected, I contacted our rabbi, who agreed with me that he be accepted as a member after the constitution was amended with the following clause: A Jew may be admitted into membership but the non-Jewish partner cannot be interred on our grounds unless legally converted to Judaism. I presented our rabbi's recommendation to the board, who formally drew up the amendment and presented it to the congregation. They passed it, and our detective friend was accepted into our synagogue.

Since that time he proudly recites his *haftorah* annually before his admiring congregation, family, and friends. He seems to glow after its beautiful rendition. On many occasions he told me, "Doc, since I entered the synagogue my life has become more meaningful, especially my retirement. During my winter Florida vacations, I assist in the little congregation I attend and I'm highly praised. In a great measure I can attribute these joys to your wise guidance. God bless you." My only response to him was that I was following our sage's Judaic concept. "The Talmud states that it does not

matter how lavishly or how well a host entertains his guest, but how much he puts of himself into the act," I told him. "At home, as a child, I was taught to behave with warm hospitality to strangers and the needy. You came to the synagogue as a stranger requiring advice and assistance, and I was duty-bound as your host to supply you with that assistance. If I rendered that service to you, both of us are well rewarded, you in fullfilling your obligation to your parent, and me in my suggestions and directives."

According to our rabbis, in order to survive, all humans must practice mutual aid. Hillel the Elder, founder of Pharisaic Judaism, expressed the concept of mutual aid in terms of enlighted self-interest two thousand years ago: "If I am not for myself, who then is for me? And if I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, when then?" The rabbis sought to illuminate the interdependence of all people with the following story:

> Once a number of men set out to sea. In an idle and mischievious moment, one of the passengers started to bore a hole in the bottom of the boat where he was sitting.
>
> "What are you trying to do?" cried his fellow passengers.
>
> "What does it concern you what I am doing?" replied the man. "I am not boring a hole under where you are sitting."
>
> "It may be only under your place," said the others. "But should the water fill the boat, it will capsize. Then all of us will drown!"

Even today, at our morning minyan, I meet Jews who have drifted away from their heritage and have come to the synagogue to recite the *kaddish.* Like the detective, many are unfamiliar with Hebrew and the timing

required to recite the *kaddish.* I sit next to these mourners and help them follow the service. At the appropriate time I direct them to the English transliteration. If they attend regularly over the required eleven months and wish to learn Hebrew, our synagogue supplies the instructor free. In this way, the *kaddish* has become, after the Shemah, the most important influential prayer in Judaism.

Rabbi Routtenberg once said, "If you want a job well done get the one-man committee, Sam Colish, and you will be assured of a good result." Realizing the contribution, however insignificant, that our synagogue had made toward supporting the Jewish Theological Seminary, the great institution that trains rabbis, cantors, and Hebrew School instructors for the Conservative movement, he contacted me to initiate a fundraising drive. I arranged a parlor meeting, to which I invited key synagogue members and a representative from the Seminary to inform us about the scope of its activities. I was selected chairman, and we arranged a breakfast meeting for all those involved with fundraising for the Seminary.

At that meeting, we decided, a deserving synagogue member would be honored and a guest speaker invited. The first program proved very successful, since several members became patrons and each contributed $1,000 toward Seminary support. This amounted to a tripling of all prior annual contributions. The format we established has continued functioning in a somewhat modified form over the past twenty-five years, resulting in ever increasing support for the Seminary.

For my efforts I was twice honored by the Seminary, once in 1957 and again in 1967. Dr. Louis Finkelstein, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, wrote:

Dear Dr. Colish:

I was very pleased to learn from Rabbi Katchen [the Seminary representative] of the fine breakfast that was held in Rockville Centre on Sunday morning and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest thanks to you for all the help you have given us in this effort. I am indeed grateful we have the benefit of your service, and I know the success we achieved was due in large measure to your support of our cause. I hope you will continue your efforts in our behalf.

With warmest good wishes.

Cordially,
Louis Finkelstein
President, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
March 11, 1953

The following letter was sent to Sam Rosenthal, chairman of the Seminary fundraising effort, from Rabbi Joel S. Geffen, director of fundraising for the Seminary, on June 14, 1957.

Dear Sam:

I was delighted to learn that Dr. Samuel Colish is to be honored at our annual Seminary dinner at Temple B'nai Sholom. Will you please convey to him our very best wishes upon this happy occasion of his life. All of us who have been closely associated with Dr. Colish in the sacred work of building a strong foundation for Jewish religious life in our land have admired Dr. Colish for his genuine sincerity and devotion to our sacred cause. Dr. Colish has been one of the pioneers in developing the Nassau-Suffolk Division of the National Planning Committee of the Seminary, United Synagogue and Rabbinical Assembly. May God bless Dr. Colish and his dear ones with many more years of good health and happiness and continued dedication to Judaism.

With warmest personal regards to Dr. Colish, Rabbi

Routtenberg, to you as our able chairman, and to all loyal workers, I remain—

Sincerely,
Rabbi Joel S. Geffen

I also received the following from Edward Rosen, executive director of the Seminary.

Dear Sam:

All of us at the Seminary were proud that you allowed the dignity of your name to be associated with that of the Seminary. I am sure that the weather and the train delays prevented some of your many good friends from being present last night. But I honestly believe that the large turnout was a tribute to you. In addition, we should all be pleased that everyone remained until the end of the best program the Seminary function ever presented in your community. I want to thank you for the courtesy and kindness to me personally, and also for the fact that you asked me to send you the list of former contributors who have not repeated their gifts as yet so that you may induce a group of men to call them and receive their contribution before the fiscal year ends.

Every thanks and best wishes once again.

Very cordially,
Edward Rosen
June 19, 1957

In less than a week all previous contributors were contacted, with practically 100 percent results. On June 26, 1957, I received another note from Mr. Rosen.

Dear Sam:

Bless you for the wonderful job you performed in such a relatively short period. You not only covered all past contributors, but you acquired several new ones.

My very best to you once again.

Very cordially,
Edward Rosen

I received the following communication from Rabbi Amram Prero, a former Rockville Centre resident who now lives in Texas. He was National Director of the American Zionist Youth Commission.

Dear Sam:

I feel a sense of keen loss in being unable to participate physically with you and our B'nai Sholom friends in this two-fold *simcha.*

It is a constructive joy to help in strengthening of the Jewish Theological Seminary. For this instiution is a tower of sustenance to the Conservative Movement, to which we are all dedicated by conviction, and to the Jewish community at large. It is a simcha indeed when Jews convene to share in the *Mitzvah* of ensuring the solidity and growth of this remarkable and heartwarming Seminary.

Additionally, we honor Sam Colish, who has done much for so many wholesome and positive aspects of our Jewish life. I know of the prodigious work he has put forth on behalf of Zionism, and I am aware—as we all are—of the super record of service with which he embellished our congregation. It is a simcha of no small proportion when Sam Colish's friends, who share his ideas, join to express deserved appreciation.

The contribution that I enclose is therefore both a token of my high regard for the Seminary and my profound friendship and respect for Dr. Colish. I do hope that this evening will bring yet another simcha—a substantial increase for the Seminary from our Rockville Centre community.

Cordially yours,
Rabbi Amram Prero
June 18, 1957

I subsequently replied to his letter, thanking him for his accolades and advising him that at the affair we raised the largest sum ever for the Seminary.

A typical letter from one of my many contacts was this one, from Mr. Fines.

> Dear Samuel:
>
> After our conversation today, I find my conscience disturbed and hence my resistance lowered to a point where I am not only enclosing a check for the Seminary but another for the Temple.
>
> I guess you have more than sales appeal. Good hunting.
>
> Sincerely,
> Cornelius

This was the pattern of my synagogue activities. Throughout my life I have made every effort, while still conducting an active dental practice, to follow my early home indoctrination, where concern for the Jewish people especially the more unfortunate among us—played an important role. Earlier, I described our home in Poland, where solace and comfort were offered to the needy in the stetl and to all who crossed our threshold. My parents continued this policy after arriving in this country. Naturally, we children continued this humanistic tradition. Whenever a Jewish cause arose in our community—Zionism, United Jewish Appeal, Jewish National Fund, Israel Bonds—I naturally volunteered my services until we achieved our goal.

For instance, when we first moved to Rockville Centre there was no Zionist District so I decided to organize one. First, let me give some historical background. Before the end of World War I, Sir Arthur Balfour, as a tribute to Weizmann's great contribution toward Great Britain's successful war effort, issued a declaration promising a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Not long after the war, however, England reneged on Balfour's promise and closed all doors to Jewish immigration. Pressured by the

Jewish underground and Zionists throughout the world, England relinquished its mandate when the U.N. Security Council unanimously voted the establishment of the State of Israel. Thereafter, with the support of Zionists and other Jewish organizations, Israel's population increased fourfold, with Jews from all over the world establishing new homes there.

My first step toward establishing a Zionist District in Rockville Centre was to contact both rabbis in town, who after affirming the necessity of a district helped me to interest a dozen synagogue members to join the effort. At a preliminary meeting at my home, I was designated membership chairman. Within a few weeks we had recruited twenty-five members, who attended a general meeting at which time we selected a temporary chairman and made application to the National organization for a Rockville Centre Zionist District charter.

On receiving the charter all officers were elected, with each one serving as chairman or a volunteer on one of these committees: American Zionist Fund Raising, the Jewish National Fund, the Israel Bond Program, or the membership committee. During my five-year tenure as chairman of membership I signed up 450 new members. Ours was the most rapildly developing district on Long Island, and twice I received awards from the national organization for achieving the greatest membership increase. Locally, I was first honored in 1952 and again at the 1966 Chanukah Ball of the Long Island Region, where I received a plaque honoring my "lifetime of selfless love and devotion to Zionism and everything Jewish. For outstanding leadership, wise counsel, and readiness to serve our cause at all times."

Membership was not my sole responsibility in our district. Fundraising, as usual, was my other duty. The

Long Island Zionist Region anticipated purchasing a building for its new home in the Jamaica section of Queens. At the first fundraising drive, I contributed $5,000, and subsequently raised another $5,000 for paying off the mortgage. The building purchased by the Zionist Foundation in Jamaica served for many years as an ideal regional meeting place, lecture hall, and social center for our young people, who gathered there for Hebrew studies, meetings, and Israeli dancing. Unfortunately, the neighborhood eventually changed and we felt it was unsafe to be there after dark. The foundation thus sold the building, and the Long Island Region rented new offices in Lynbrook.

However, these facilities did not provide adequate space for continuing the youth program, so the Foundation decided to try something new. It would purchase a camp that would, at least for the summer, replace the youth program they had conducted in Jamaica. With the $40,000 they raised from several Zionist districts they made a down payment on a camp that they hoped would soon be self-sustaining. For the first few years the camp's income covered the mortgage and general expenses, but there was no money for essential improvements. This required additional funds, and the Foundation came to me for a $10,000, interest-free loan. Later, when the mortgage became due again, I gave the camp additional interest-free loans of $16,000 and a $2,500 loan for a total of $28,500.

Despite the financial problems, I felt my investment in the camp was worthwhile. For eight weeks each summer, all of the campers were imbued with Zionism and love for our Jewish heritage. This indoctrination influenced them to become more active in their synagogues, their communities, and, later, at college. They brought joy to

their parents and elicited praise from their community leaders.

Later, the Long Island Region sponsored two other fundraising projects to benefit the Hula and Neveh Ilan areas of Israel.

The Hula area was an uninhabitable, mosquito-infested region, which had a great potential for agriculture if properly drained. According to Israeli agricultural experts, it would require $250,000 to rid this malarial swamp of mosquitoes and turn it into fertile farmland. An Israeli representative solicited the Long Island Region to raise the necessary funds, and we sent a delegation to Israel to evaluate the situation. The delegation returned with a favorable report, and the Long Island Region Board accepted the recommendation and undertook the project. The Rockville Centre District quota was $25,000, which I raised in six months. The other districts met their quotas as well, and through our collective efforts the malarial swamps of hula were transformed into a beautiful experimental station for fruits, vegetables, and fish hatcheries.

As a footnote to this accomplishment, I offer this anecdote. On one of my trips to Israel, I was touring the Gallilean Hills overlooking the hula area with a group that included two women from California. As our guide vividly described the area as it had been before it was drained, I overheard one woman remark to her friend that hula now reminded her of the rich agricultural valleys of California, with their fruitful growth stretching for miles.

In 1945 the Haganah informed the Long Island Zionist Region about a land tract bordering Lebanon that could be purchased from a sheik for $350,000. This rocky area, then leased to Bedouins for sheep grazing, had

beneath its surface several natural caves that could be easily enlarged to serve as fortifications against a Lebanese invasion. We sent a delegation to Palestine again to investigate this urgent request, and the delegation returned with a favorable report, so we set the machinery in motion to raise that large but necessary sum. As usual, the Rockville Centre District assumed 10 percent of the obligation, and by the spring of 1946 turned over $35,000 to the Region. Soon thereafter the land was purchased, and the Haganah constructed a camouflaged chicken farm on the surface, while fortifying the underground caves with gun emplacements for future defense.

As anticipated, when the U.N. established the State of Israel, it was attacked from all sides—Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. The Lebanese, unaware of Israel's border fortifications, moved a battallion south into Israeli territory unhampered for several kilometers. At the proper moment, the armed Haganah force drove out of the caves, encircled the battallion, and cut them off from the main force. Those Lebanese who survived the attack were either captured or fled back into Lebanon. In all future Arab-Israeli conflicts, Lebanon remained neutral never again attempting any aggression against Israel, principally because of their sad experience at the Neveh Ilan.

I was also involved with the United Jewish Appeal. When U.J.A. began supplementing the fundraising activities of the National Zionist Organization, I was delegated as the Rockville Centre district representative to the local committee. I served as chairman for several years, and as co-chairman for twenty-five years while training new men to assume leadership positions. Each year, our fundraising totals grew. As a result, in 1971 I was honored by the Rockville Centre Jewish Commu-

nity at a U.J.A. dinner for my outstanding leadership and noteworthy humanitarian achievements.

The selling of Israel bonds was another of my projects. In 1950 the Israeli government received approval from the S.E.C. to float a $20-million, 4 percent bond issue. Originally, a committee in New York was selected to sell these bonds and decided to turn them over to a broker for a 10 percent premium. The broker planned to sell them to his clients or to corporations in large blocks, thus limiting the holdings into a few hands.

When I learned about this deal, I contacted the committee, stating that from my fundraising experience I believed this arrangement would prove impractical in the long run. I argued that by broadening the base and interesting many bond purchasers, we would ultimately sell a greater number. "Not only will the original purchsers continue their annual investment in Israel Bonds," I said, "but they will also take a personal interest in Israel and its growth." In addition, I pointed out, a 10 percent premium was an exorbitant fee for the State of Israel to pay for a Jewish obligation that could be performed by volunteers and a national professional Bond Unit for considerably less.

At first, the committee rejected my recommendations since the cash flow toward aiding Israel's defense and its economy through the broker's deal would be greater than by public issuance. They estimated that it would require at least five years to dispose of this issue to the public. But after considerable discussion we finally compromised. We decided to conduct a two-year trial of public issuance, involving a national publicity campaign to all Jewish organizations, urging them to make a concerted effort to sell Israel Bonds.

Soon thereafter I started the first Israel Bond drive in

Rockville Centre. Six ardently Zionist men joined me at a parlor meeting to form a committee to solicit bond purchasers. While driving home from this meeting I sold my affluent passenger a $20,000 bond. In the next two weeks we contacted thirty-five more individuals, who together purchased $18,000 in bonds at a Temple meeting. Thus we turned over $38,000 to the National Bond Committee as the result of our initial effort. This direct public sale pattern soon spread to other communities, and the first issue was oversubscribed in less than three years, at an interest rate of less than six percent. Four new issues followed, eliciting even greater public enthusiasm. The bond drive became an annual function in practically all Jewish communities throughout the country. Over the years I trained other active committee members, who later assumed the chairmanship of local bond drives. I then served under them as honorary chairman.

For my efforts I received the following citations from the bond office and the Long Island Zionist Region. In 1957 I was honored "for distinguished service and inspired leadership in the historic effort to mobilize Israel Bonds investment funds to build and develop a secure and economically independent State of Israel. In 1959, I was chosen Long Island Man of the Year at the Long Island Zionist Regional Convention: "He exemplified by his labors in behalf of Israel Bonds the cause to which he was a founder in Long Island." Daisy and I were honored at a bond breakfast in 1962 "for the leadership and inspiring program to open the Negev to new life and growth, to make the desert flourish for establishing new frontiers from all corners of the earth, and the opportunity to live in freedom and peace with dignity on the ancient soil of Israel." In 1965 I received

an award for passing the million-dollar mark in Israel Bond sales, and in 1973, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Israel, I was honored with "a founder award for twenty-five years of leadership in the Israel Bond program to advance the national economic development and to bring dignity to Jews all over the world."

Dear reader, as you peruse my fundraising activities, my synagogue involvement, my organizational and professional obligations for more than half a century, you may wonder what has compelled me to be involved in so many humanitarian causes. Have I done these things for personal glory or reward, or was I motivated by an inner impulse to render assistance to my fellow man without thought of recognition?

It would be less than human for me to deny that I have enjoyed accolades such as those I have quoted, but they were not my motive. What motivated me was the sense of satisfaction I received from the accomplishment of a good deed. My sense of satisfaction was so great that I often felt I benefited as much as the person or group to whom I was dedicating my efforts.

It is said, some people enjoy accumulating wealth and what it can do for them; some crave clothes to beautify their bodies, while others want food to satisfy their ravenous appetite. Still others seek entertainment and physical pleasures to the exclusion of all else. Although I understand these self-indulgent values, I never tended in that direction. From the time I was a young boy my parents taught me what makes a good and righteous person, Jew or Gentile. My father would say, "Performing a duty is analagous to praying. When you pray it does not matter how much you pray, but how much *kavanah* (intention) you put into your prayer, and how it affects your relationship with the outside world. This

applies equally to a job. It does not matter how great the productive volume may be; what is important is how each item is perfected. The desire for such perfection develops only from an inner impulse—the heart—bringing enjoyment to both the producer and the receiver." My father also encouraged study, saying, "Knowledge is important only to the extent that you share it with others. It is of no value if it is interred with you in the grave."

The Bible states that man's life span shall be three score and ten. However, with modern medical and scientific developments we can expect to live at least 10 percent longer, and statistics show that there are now approximately 15,000 Americans over 100 years old. As a result there are many new nursing homes providing care for senior citizens. Although some of these elderly persons are ill and clearly need the services of a nursing home, others might not be there had they lived their lives differently.

As a volunteer associate dentist at a nursing home, I observed and spoke with many of these residents, and was saddened when I learned that these retirees never developed hobbies in their active years. Their main concern then was earning a livelihood for themselves and their families, and they had no interest in community or religious affairs. Perhaps they read the local paper, watched television, or listened to the radio, but little else attracted them. After retirement stagnation set in, aging pains became magnified, and life became one agonizing experience after another, a grim hanging-on to mere existence. Many of these pathetic souls confided to me that they would prefer death to the monotonous, painful remains of their former lives. Working with the elderly made me realize, with renewed gratitude, the

importance of my early training. It showed how rich life can be when one becomes involved and active, and I believe my sense of dedication to my chosen causes has given me the strength I have enjoyed into my tenth decade.

On my 75th birthday I was honored at a large gathering at the Temple. Rabbi Routtenberg began his summary of my activities with an anecdote. "Wendell Philips tells this lovely story," he said.

> "A young lad, the son of the village doctor, sat on his doorstep. One of the townspeople came by and asked,
>
> 'Is your father at home?'
>
> 'No,' the boy replied. 'He is away.'
>
> The villager was persistent.
>
> 'Where do you think I will find him?' he asked.
>
> 'Well,' the boy replied, 'You got to look for him someplace where people are sick, or hurt, or in need or something like that. I don't know where he is, but he's helping someone somewhere.'
>
> "At seventy-five, Sam Colish is a multifaceted personality who still has a bewildering number of interests and involvements," said the rabbi. "It is impossible to capture the totality of this beloved leader in our community in a brief sketch. If we were compelled to reduce our estimate of Sam to a single phrase, then it must be, as the young boy said, 'He's helping someone somewhere.' Of some people it is said, 'Life has been good to him,' but of Sam, one must say, 'He has been good to life.'
>
> "The three basic standards of Judaism—God, Torah, and Israel—have been woven harmoniously in Sam Colish's public career. The words, 'O Lord I love the habitation of Thy house,' have found vivid expression in his intense loyalty and devotion to the synagogue. Temple B'nai Sholom has been immeasureably enriched by many contributions Sam has made—in all areas—to its good and welfare. No task was too difficult, no job too menial for him to undertake if it meant strengthening the House of God.
>
> "His love for Torah has led him to fulfill the mitzvah of

'to learn and teach.' An earnest and zealous student himself, Sam has moved to spread the knowledge of Judaism to his fellow men. He is the moving spirit behind five Home Study Groups, which he supervises and hovers over with loving care. 'Only an educated Jew can be a truly committed Jew,' Sam says.

"Some people retire at sixty-five, and some at seventy-five, but not Sam Colish. He renews his strength, his faith, and his commitment each year as he dedicates himself to a life of service. So happy birthday, Sam, from all of us with every good wish for many more years of health and happiness together with your beloved Daisy into a rich harvest of your golden years."

In reply to Rabbi Routtenberg's laudatory remarks, I humbly offer (in verse) my philosophy of

Life

Life goes on from day to day,
Rising, working, sleeping in routine way—
A trouble here, a joy there
While mingling with people everywhere.

Life goes on from day to day
With hopes that sometimes you can say,
These cherished things I have acquired,
Material things I always desired.

Life goes on from day to day
Looking for futures in bright array—
Finding too late in dismay
How our planning, thinking led us astray.

But when life goes on from day to day,
Whether it be at work or play,
For purposes charitable, good, and kind,
Then man realizes contentment and peace of mind.

Futures are not his concerns,
His daily task within him burns,
Accomplishing them with heart and soul—
All these things should be man's goal.

CHAPTER 12

The Education of Faith and Marcia

Before we proceed with a history of Jewish studies and a description of our home study groups in Rockville Centre, I would like to devote some time to a description of our children's education, and especially Daisy's role in their intellectual and moral development. While my primary responsibility was my practice, Daisy's domain was the home. Under her guidance, the children gained an early understanding of material values and developed excellent study habits. Each received a weekly allowance, which she could spend as she saw fit. But regardless of how much they spent for themselves, gifts for others, or save in their piggy banks, they had to set aside some portion for charitable donations. Daisy discouraged the girls from borrowing from anyone and only occasionally permitted an advance on their weekly allowance, with the clear understanding that she expected prompt repayment. Thus the children developed skills that would help them manage their future financial matters. When a vendor passed through the block selling his wares,

that, but Faith and Marcia relied on their piggy banks for purchasing their own treats. Thus our children could occasionally indulge in these special purchases, but they also learned in their early years about the value of the dollar and about giving and receiving.

I might also mention that Daisy was a fine seamstress and kept the children's clothing in excellent condition. The girls were always neatly dressed, and Daisy took such good care of the clothing that it still had many years of wear left after our children had outgrown it. Daisy always passed the used clothing on to a needy family.

As a result, under Daisy's tutelage, both children could read before entering kindergarten. Faith's advancement once contributed to a traumatic experience. One day her kindergarten teacher was reading a story from a book that we also had in our library at home. To determine if the children had been listening, the teacher asked for a volunteer to retell the story in his or her own words. Having read the story many times at home with Daisy, Faith raised her hand. The teacher called on her, and Faith gave a good resumé of the story. Faith also volunteered that she could read it by herself. The teacher reprimanded her in front of the class, insisting it was impossible for a five-year-old to read from such an advanced book. When Faith persisted, the teacher further embarrassed her, saying, "It isn't nice for little girls to tell lies." When Faith came home for lunch she refused her meal and then would not return to school. At first Daisy through perhaps Faith was ill, so she took her temperature but found it normal. She questioned the child, but she refused to tell Daisy why she didn't desire to return to school. Finally, Faith broke down in tears and told the whole story.

Daisy kept Faith out of school for a few days and also called the teacher to discuss this incident. Daisy thought the teacher's behavior was irrational and insensitive. When Daisy met Faith's teacher, she said, "If you were so sure that a five-year-old could not read from such an advanced book, then why did you not test her by asking her to read rather than embarrassing her before the entire class by calling her a liar?"

Frustrated and angry, the teacher (who was not Jewish) retorted, "You Jews pressure your children beyond their capabilities, disregarding their age and aptitude for study." It was useless to continue any discussion with such a narrow-minded individual. At first Daisy intended to report the teacher's conduct to the principal for her slur against Jews, but she decided to ignore the situation and remove Faith from that teacher's influence.

By the time Faith entered kindergarten she had already amazed us with her intelligènce many times. For instance, when Faith was only three, we were invited to my sister Mamie's fiftieth birthday party. Mamie lived only a few houses away from our apartment, and the children often visited her, always receiving goodies. Among those also present at the birthday party was Grandma, and the children gathered around her to listen to her vivid storytelling. Faith was sitting on her lap, and she must have been thinking about birthdays and ages, for she suddenly asked, "Grandma, how old are you?"

Grandma, like most women who refuse to divulge their age, hemmed and hawed, but Faith persisted, so she finally replied, "I am fifty-one years old." Faith looked inquisitively at her, thought for a moment, then said, "Grandma, how is it possible for you to be fifty-one years old when Mamie is fifty? Nobody can have a baby

when they are one year old." We were all amazed by this extraordinary display of intelligence by a three-year-old.

Faith and Marcia later attended a more progressive school in Brooklyn, within walking distance of my office. When we moved to Rockville Centre, the school principal examined our children's previous school records and the results of their I.Q. tests and recommended to Daisy that both be advanced a class. Daisy objected to the principal's suggestion because she thought it was psychologically and socially better for the girls to attend classes with children of their own age. However, since they were entering a new school without social ties, and since Faith had already been skipped and adapted well to a more challenging intellectual environment, she consented. Later, when a new class for gifted children was organized in Rockville Centre, Daisy consented that Marcia, one of those chosen for the class, join this special group.

In this class, the students—who were only ten or eleven years old—normally completed their regular assignments in three days, and on the remaining two pursued independent projects. When they had completed these projects, the students would present them for display at the county seat, where some received county awards for excellence in originality and execution. Other features of this special program were field trips to various Long Island industrial plants, after which each student wrote an essay on what he or she had observed. Furthermore, these students were given opportunities to study a foreign language—Marcia then studied Spanish. The children in this class were the brightest in the elementary school, who carried on their brilliant careers later into high school. Marcia finished among the top ten in her graduating class.

Faith and Marcia developed different study habits. Certain subjects came naturally to Faith, and in these she achieved high grades with little effort. In others, however, she required study. If she neglected studying, her grades were only average. Marcia, on the other hand, was a plugger who applied herself to all subjects with equal resolve. Overall, both girls did very well in school and had no difficulty being accepted at Smith, a top women's college.

Faith entered Smith in 1952 and soon adapted herself well to college life. She made many friends in her residential house and joined the Smith choral group, which gave her a pleasurable experience during a concert tour of Europe one summer. The tour proved valuable in two ways: the girls gained performance experience and also got to do extensive sightseeing. When Faith returned from her vacation, we greatly enjoyed hearing all about her tour awards and the sights she had seen.

In 1954 Marcia began applying to colleges and arranged interviews at Smith, Radcliffe and Brandeis. It happened that these interviews coincided with my nephew's engagement party and Faith's return to school after a winter vacation. We therefore decided to accomplish everything together on one trip—go for Marcia's interviews, and attend the engagement party, and return Faith to school.

This was in early January, and the night before we planned to leave it rained and the roads became icy. To check conditions on the Merritt Parkway, we called the AAA and they assured us it was clear from New York to Boston. With that information, we left home at 6 A.M. and had no problems until we reached the Connecticut-Massachusetts border. There, the ascending Connecticut

roadway was clear to the hilltop, while the downhill Massachusetts slope was icy and unsanded. On the way down the hill the car began skidding, so I shifted into low gear and gently pumped the brakes to reduce our speed and regain control of the car. Although we were going only 15 miles per hour we continued to skid toward the ditch. Near the foot of the hill I noticed two concrete posts and I headed toward them, hoping to stop the car by side-swiping them. Unfortunately, I could not control the car and we hit one post head-on. The car catapulted upside down into a shallow ditch, so I shut off the ignition immediately to prevent a fire.

We were stunned, and remained immobile in the car until passing motorists helped us out through a broken window. We were shaken up, but no one had been injured. While we were waiting for the state police to arrive, many people stopped to look at the wreck, and none could believe that four people had really escaped from it uninjured. One driver took a picture of the car and sent it to me. Even now, as we look at it, we marvel at our extraordinary fortune in surviving such a mishap.

A generous motorist stopped and offered Daisy and the children a ride to Boston. There, Marcia had her interviews.

I remained with the car still waiting for the police, and when they arrived on the scene they, like everyone else who had seen the wreck, could not believe that the three other members of my family were able to continue their journey without injury. The police thought surely an ambulance had picked them up and taken them to a local hospital. As they examined the catapulted car, with its wheels upright and the hood buried in the snow, they said it was incredible that we came out alive and uninjured. One officer contacted a tow truck, which took

the car to the nearest service station. From there I called my sister in Fall River, Massachusetts, who was arranging her son's party. She sent a car and her chauffeur to pick me up with all our luggage, and to bring me to Boston. I checked into a hotel, and later Daisy and Marcia arrived after their interview at Brandeis. At the party our major conversation was about our miraculous salvage from this accident, knowing that we were lucky not to have been killed instantly. Apparently, our time to leave this world had not yet arrived.

Marcia entered Smith in 1954. Meanwhile, Faith, a sophomore who did very well in science, decided to transfer to the University of Michigan, which had excellent science departments—far better than Smith's. She enrolled at University of Michigan in her junior year, initially majoring in chemistry. After a semester of nothing but mathematics, chemistry and physics she transferred to the Department of Political Science, eventually receiving her A.B. in that field. In her senior year, Faith applied for admission to law school. I had suggested that she apply to several schools, but she ignored my advice (as headstrong young people are wont to do) and applied only to Columbia. Fortunately, Faith was accepted at Columbia, entering law school in the fall of 1956.

Suddenly, after a successful first year of legal studies, Faith decided for personal reasons to quit. Daisy and I were shocked and sadly disappointed when we learned what she had done. She found that, even with her abilities and academic standing, the interesting entry-level jobs available to her required an ability to type. She had no problem in arranging a temporary leave from Columbia, and I then happily paid her secretarial school tuition. She registered at school and after completing a

six-week course, obtained a secretary with the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. After several months, she realized that she missed the intellectual stimulation of law school and returned to Columbia.

Faith's decision to return to law school—the same advice she had refused when I offered it—is, I suppose, typical of young people. They demonstrate their adulthood by showing their parents how much more significant their own ideas are. But now Faith faced the embarrassing situation of having to admit that she had been mistaken in not listening to me in the first place. It became more apparent with each passing day that she wished to tell us something. Observing this, I casually inquired about her job. She was evasive at first, then finally broke down and told me about her change of heart.

Of course, I was sympathetic and emphasized to her that she should not permit personal problems to interfere with her legal studies in the future. I reminded Faith about the old adage, "Don't thrown the baby out with the bath water." Admitting and then rectifying an error in judgment is a sign of maturity, I pointed out. "I hope you have learned from this experience," I said. I exhorted her to apply herslef with renewed vigor to her studies and become a credit to family, the profession, and society.

Faith did just that, studying diligently and earning the regard of her classmates and professors. Professor Jack Weinstein, now a judge in the U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of New York, in Brooklyn, had special regard for Faith's work. She did a research paper for him on divorce court procedures. Her paper, "Conciliation Procedures in Divorce Actions" received high praise from Judge Weinstein, who later recommended it to one

of his colleagues as a valuable reference source in his discussion on divorce. After graduating from Columbia Law School, Faith received unqualified recommendations from her professors when she applied for a position with the Securities Exchange Commission.

After two years, she decided to return to New York and accepted a position at a Wall Street law firm, where she found herself the only woman lawyer among seventy-five men. The opportunities for partnership were not then available to women so, after four and a half years she resigned from this firm and and moved to other positions, gaining broad expertise in federal and state securities regulation. Finally in 1977 she opened her own office. One by one, clients came in and recommended her to others. Today, she has a busy law practice and she has become nationally recognized as an expert on securities regulation, due in part to her extensive involvement in bar association activities in this field.

Marcia, as I have mentioned, was singleminded and was always a person in love with the life of the mind. She did well at Smith, majoring in history and graduating in 1958 magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. Marcia decided to make her career in academic life. To that end, she pursued graduate study in history at Yale University, receiving her MA in 1959 and her PhD in 1965.

Before her doctoral thesis had been completed Marcia began her teaching career, spending a year at Skidmore College and moving to Oberlin in 1963. There she has remained, except for research leaves. She became a full professor in 1975, chaired her department for a total of five years between 1973 and 1986, and in 1985 was named the first incumbent of the newly created Frederick B. Artz Professorship at Oberlin. She also began to produce scholarly work before completing her PhD, publishing

her first scholarly paper in 1962. Since then she has published three books, one of which has appeared in a revised second edition and in Italian translation, and some three dozen papers and reviews in medieval and Renaissance history, her field of specialization. She is frequently invited to lecture at other colleges and universities in the United States and abroad, and to speak at scholarly conferences. Her scholarly activities have attracted the support of several competitive fellowships and awards. Marcia also contributes actively to a variety of professional associations and serves her chosen field as well through consultantships, editorial work for journals and monograph series, and the evaluation of candidates for research grants for both private and public foundations. Her wider participation in civic affairs has included service on the Executive Board of the Ohio Humanities Council and heading her local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

I firmly believe that the success Marcia and Faith have achieved in their professions can be attributed to their early training under Daisy's guidance. As they observed how Daisy joyously performed her household duties and I mine at the office, they could not help but be left with a special impression. Daisy taught the children organizational principles—starting with simple things, such as how clothing should be picked up and put away after wearing, how toys should be stored after play, how their allowances should be used wisely and always with regard for the unfortunate and needy. During their spare time, both Faith and Marcia occasionally assisted me in the office, where they could observe my relationship with my patients and see that regardless of patients' ability to pay for dental services they were never refused treatment.

CHAPTER 13

On Jewish Studies

Little is known today about the origin of adult Jewish studies prior to the development of the synagogue from primarily a house of assembly to a house of prayer and study. Before the destruction of the Temple, all religious rituals associated with prayer and worship were performed by the Priests and the Levites. The Israelites visited the Temple only during specific periods of the year to offer sacrifices and listen to the Priests and the Levites perform their duties as prescribed by Mosaic Law.

But after Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Judeans and destroyed the Temple in 586 B.C.E., he took the wealthy, knowledgeable Jews captive to Babylonia and Temple rituals ceased to be performed. The poorer Jews remained in Palestine. While under Babylonian domination all religious freedom was denied to the captives. But in 538 B.C.E., when the Persian king, Cyrus, conquered the Babylonians, he bestowed freedom on the Jews. He issued a proclamation granting the exiled Babylonian Jews the right to return to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. He did that in appreciation for the loyalty the Jews demonstrated to him during his Babylonian con-

quest. Thus, approximately one hundred years later, Ezra and 1,500 followers returned to Palestine. However, on his arrival Ezra to his dismay found an assimilated Jewry, dogmatically practicing paganism. No matter how much Ezra attempted to induce Palestinian Jews to discard their pagan ways, his efforts were in vain and frustrating. He therefore contacted his coadjutor, Nechemiah, an influential member of the Persian king's court, for assistance. Thus, Nechemiah petitioned the king to designate him as governor over his controlled Palestinian province, and the king assented to Nechemiah's request.

On arriving in Palestine, he immediately assembled the elders of Palestinian Jewry, ordering them to direct their fellow Jews to discard their pagan gods and return to monotheistic practices. He warned them that if they did not comply with his order, severe penalites would be imposed upon all those who disobeyed. Their properties would be confiscated and the more rebellious would be imprisoned or put to death. All of their idols were to be destroyed, and their wives divorced unless they willingly accepted monotheism.

This edict paved the way for Ezra to institute his program. The synagogue then not only became the house of assembly but also developed into a house of prayer and study. Willingly or otherwise, all Jewish merchants, after marketing their wares on Mondays and Thursdays, were required to attend services at the synagogue, where Ezra or one of his followers read a portion of the Torah for them. Eventually, some of the merchants remained for further discussions, which gradually led into study sessions. Thus, this may be considered the first event, historically, in the development of adult Jewish studies.

As a consequence of this event, the Great Assembly greatly expanded its activities in the synagogue, resulting in an intensification of Jewish studies. Here the sages, the disciples of the wise, gathered together to lay down Jewish principles and enrich the structure of Jewish tradition based upon the Bible. They were not content to rest snug in their wisdom, but consistently tried to enlarge and deepen its scope of study. Not only were they versed in Judaism, but also educated and intimate with the philosophies and cultures of their times. This was a period, prior to the destruction of the second Temple, when important changes were taking place in Palestine. After Ezra's death, the Soferim (the men of the book) began interpreting and supplementing the written law so that it could be acceptably applied to their changing daily lives. This, according to some historians, must have occurred 300 years before the Tannaim (the fathers of the Mishnah). Much of the literary wisdom that appeared later in biblical canon and in the writings that were included in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha was produced in this period. This may be considered the second period in advancing adult Jewish studies. From these scholars two main schools of thought arose, the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel. The Shammai represented the Sadducees, the priestly class or the wealthy group, while the school of Hillel represented the Pharisees, or working class. The Sadducees were literalists, refusing to accept any observances not specifically included in the Laws of Moses, but the Pharisees supplemented the Torah with a belief in immortality of the soul, in resurrection of the dead, in new ceremonials, and the application of priestly laws of purity, which the Levites possessed and practiced, to the daily life of every Jewish family. To them the oral law

was as much an expression of the will of God as the written code. Hillel the Elder (founder of Pharasaic Judaism) stated that each generation, with the assistance of logic and reasoning, was entitled to derive new meaning from the Law.

Later, it was a disciple of Hillel, Johanan ben Zakkai, who gained permission from Vespacian to establish an academy at Yavneh after being smuggled out in a coffin through the guarded gates of Jerusalem. Yavneh was thus established as a new center of legal authority from where all future major decisions were to come. Here a new religious personality arose—the rabbi—who was to exert great influence in shaping Jewish tradition. When Jerusalem finally fell, these scholars became the dominating influence in the life of the Jewish people.

The rabbis were not professional teachers, since most of them earned their living as artisans, businessmen, workers, or scribes, and devoted only their leisure time to scholarship. They were not clergy or priesthood, but a voluntary profession in which anyone who could meet the standards might gain admission. Some time after Johanan ben Zakkai's death, rabbi Akiba was admitted to the Yavneh Yeshiva and became the outstanding scholar of his time. Were it not for study at Yavneh, our scholars conjecture that Judaism might not have survived during this critical Jewish period, which followed Jerusalem's fall.

After the Bar Kokhba rebellion, the center of Jewish study was transferred from Jerusalem to Galilee, where Judah, the Prince, resided. A wealthy man and a great scholar, he gathered together the digest and interpretation of Jewish law and edited it into a systematic form. In 200 B.C.E. it was canonized as the Mishnah and climaxed 500 years of biblical interpretation by the

Soferim, Pharisaic teachers, and the Tanaim. This constituted one of the greatest contributions to the classic age of Judaism. All this resulted from adults gathering together in regular study.

When Judah the Prince died, most Jewish studies shifted from Palestine to Babylonia. Under Rav (Abba Arika) there was an intellectual awakening in Babylonia at his established school of study in Sura and at his colleague Samuel's, in Nehardea. When the city of Nehardea was invaded and the academy was destroyed, he built a new academy at Pumbaditha. At both academies, and later in Palestine, the Amoraim (expounders) amplified the Mishnah to develop the Gemarah. Students of all ages came in large numbers twice a year, during the month preceding Passover and the fall holidays, to hear the scholars expound their interpretations. These meetings were called *kallahs.* The *kallahs* provided a remarkable instrument for popular education. Finally, at the end of the fifth century C.E., Rabina edited all their tractates and arranged them in our present form. This work, in combination with the Mishnah, was known as the Talmud.

While the Gemarah was being developed in Babylonia, another one was written in Palestine. However, the Babylonian Talmud is more often studied by rabbinical students than the Palestinian one. Both are written in Aramaic and Hebrew and are composed of halacha (legal arguments and scholarly debates) and aggadah (folklore and narrative tales). This great social and legislative contribution to society is the result of 300 years of intensive Jewish studies.

Considering the acrimony between Arabs and Jews since the eleventh century, it is hard to imagine that in Spain these two peoples lived together in harmony for

several centuries during the Middle Ages. But it did develop, since a flowering Jewish literature was produced in the great schools of study and beautiful synagogues were constructed. The Bible was translated into Arabic with such great accuracy that future scribes used this text as a guide for rewriting new Torahs. (According to Jewish law, a Torah must be rewritten on special parchment with specific utensils properly prepared for usage. There cannot be a misspelled word or misplaced letter in the entire Torah, otherwise it is not kosher for service in a synagogue.) As a result, this period was designated as the Golden Age of Jewish history.

Some of the products of that age are men like Judah Halevi, the greatest philosopher and poet of the Middle Ages, whose poems have enriched our synagogue's liturgy; Solomon Ibn Gabriel, the versatile Bible commentator; philosopher and poet Abraham Ibn Ezra; and the most outstanding Jewish philosopher, scholar, and physician of the Middle Ages, Moses Maimonides. Judaism prospered in Spain for several centuries until Jews were forced by the church, which usurped power from the court, to convert to Christianity. Thousands of Jews who refused to convert were slain. Many, called Marranos, went underground and escaped death by wearing a cross in public while observing Judaism secretly in cellars or basements. Still others fled to more religiously tolerant countries, bringing with them their acquired Jewish knowledge to the nation of their dispersal.

Thus, wherever Jews settled, they pursued their Jewish studies as much as possible. Torah study under all conditions became a way of life. When forced into ghettos, they built a fence around the shtetel. In these *shtetlach,* cheders developed. Men gathered at the synagogue not only to pray but also to study. In the larger

cities, yeshivas were established. Occasionally, an itinerant *Magid* (preacher) delivered a *drosha* (sermon) at a Sabbath service as he traveled from village to village. Except during pogroms or repressive government acts upon a local Jewish community, this characterized the pattern of Jewish study and education until the period of emancipation.

The door was opened to the outside world for Jews by the French political enfranchisement in 1791. This was followed by a period of Jewish economic expansion and secular cultural development. In Germany, Moses Mendelssohn demonstrated the possibility of ending the Jewish ghetto isolation that characterized European Jewry for several centuries.

Now, what factors contributed to the entrance of Jews into western society? First, in European countries there was a prevailing political, industrial, and religious change that altered the outlook of human thought and life. Several new states were nationalized. Commerce and trade grew, new sciences developed, and the authority of the church over government decreased. Also, the rise of capitalism, with its emphasis on private profit, increased wealth, and higher living standards were also important contributing factors. Jews, who had been excluded from agricultural operations except on rented properties, as well as from many forms of commerce during the latter part of the Middle Ages, now found new fields of endeavor where opportunities presented themselves. Within a relatively short period, their success became so apparent to non-Jews that native industries welcomed them as allies or aids in their industry. Not only did Jews begin to play important roles in commerce, but they also became financial advisers and contributors to the state. It became fashionable for courtiers to attend Jewish wed-

dings and social gatherings in their elaborately furnished homes.

A second factor was the ascendance of the Age of Reason. Mendelssohn, living under those changing times, stated that Jewish doctrines were to be tested by reason and accepted only if found to be in accord with the rational design of the universe. Therefore, when guests (many of them non-Jews) were invited to Jewish homes, in addition to chamber music for their entertainment, there were discussions on the humanities, comparative religion, philosophies past and present, and means of assisting unfortunate members of society. Although Germany is credited with being the birthplace of modern Judaism, in Holland some medieval Sephardic Jews recommended the inclusion of secular studies in the regular Hebrew studies at the famous Etz Haim Yeshivah, and their recommendation was incorporated into the program.

Furthermore, the Haskalah Movement in Germany was organized to adjust Judaism to the developing times. German Jews assembled secular books in their lirbaries and art objects to beautify their homes. Jews like Herzl, a disciple of the German philosopher Kant, joined Mendelssohn's circle and gave lectures on Kantian philosophy. These and other programs were recommended by the Haskalah movement to bridge the gap between the Jewish world and its secular surroundings. In doing so, it developed a double-edged sword. It opened the ghetto gates to broaden Jewish knowledge of the outside world, but unfortunately became an instrument for Jewish assimilation. Many of the several thousand Haskalah Jews who managed to attend German universities or secular secondary schools abjured. After Mendelssohn's death, his own children, except for Joseph, all converted

to Christianity. During this period in Germany, Jewish studies stagnated while in East European countries, where the German movement had little effect, Jewish studies still continued regularly.

Only when the Reform Movement was transported to America, under the capable leadership of Isaac Mayer Wise, did adult Jewish studies make any further headway and establish a strong foothold. Briefly, Wise helped the organization of many synagogues and the Hebrew Union College (a seminary for training rabbis) and edited a weekly publication to clarify the character of Judaism as well as to defend human rights under democratic principles. From this publication eventually developed programs consisting of weekly lecture courses throughout the Reform movement. This represented the first regular adult Jewish studies effort in America.

It was not until Conservative Jewry severed its relationship with the Reform movement that a more comprehensive adult Jewish program was initiated under the dynamic leadership of the great scholar Solomon Schechter. As head of the Jewish Theological Seminary he reinstituted a more traditional Jewish philsophy than that practiced by the American Reform Convocation. As a leading Jewish scholar, Dr. Schechter was well aware of the unhappy events that had occurred in Jewish history when Jews neglected traditional practices. He knew what happened to Jews under other cultural influences. He knew what happened in Germany when Jewish studies were neglected in favor of secular ones. He also believed that the Reform movement swayed too far from traditional practice. He therefore issued a directive to all Conservative congregations urging them to establish adult education programs as their first

priority. The Seminary would supply suitable material for each congregation. Yet despite his sustained efforts, many of his Conservative education programs experienced spotty attendance, due in part to a new Jewish immigrant phenomenon.

In the process of Americanization, many Jews had discarded shtetel customs and neglected Jewish studies. Their main concern was to get a job, support a family, and see that their children received a good secular education. Their children's Jewish training was delegated more or less to a Hebrew School or private teacher (if they could afford one) or a rabbi's old-fashioned, often boring cheder (such as I attended). Only those seeking positions as Hebrew teachers or rabbis attended yeshivahs. Certainly immigrants were not interested in organizing Hebrew day schools to provide their children with a comprehensive Jewish education. Growing up under these conditions, the new generation demonstrated little interest in Jewish studies. They may have developed successful businesses or become professionals or expert scientists, but they possessed only the most superficial information about their Jewish heritage.

Faced with this problem, in our synagogue our rabbi joined with the adult education committee to devise programs that would make Jewish studies more attractive to his congregation. At first he attempted a lecture series program. In our synagogue, as in many others, initially certain speakers drew large audiences, but these crowds eventually dwindled down to a few die-hards. To develop greater participation, the selected speaker distributed lecture outlines to his audience before his lecture. By this means participants were able to pose logical questions about specific points of the lecture.

Although an excellent speaker could attract great numbers of listeners, attendance diminished radically when an inferior one made a presentation.

One day a member of our education committee came up with a "brainstorm." Because involvement maintains interest, why not organize home study groups—small groups that would meet regularly in members' homes for study? The idea was presented to our Rabbi Routtenberg, who told us that the Jewish Theological Seminary staff had been racking its brains to develop such a program but had not developed a modus operandus. He said the idea was excellent and merited exploration.

Our committee deliberated regularly for several months and devised the following plan:

> The name of these groups will be designated as home study groups.
>
> Each group should consist of a minimum of six couples and a maximum of nine. Husband and wife should participate equally together.
>
> Sessions will start at 8 p.m. and continue for two hours. If an assignment is not completely covered, the remaining material should be added to the next session's agenda.
>
> Meetings will be held twice a month, each group developing its own schedule, and will be rotated among the members' homes.
>
> Each group should select its own leader, who will conduct the sessions and represent his group on the adult education committee. At the opening of each session, he (or an assigned moderator)will review the assigned subject, then pose questions for the group until all material has been thoroughly analyzed to everyone's satisfaction.
>
> A professional individual like the rabbi, the cantor, or the principal of the Hebrew School may be invited as an observer and only participate when a difficult problem arises. If such a question arises without an expert present, a group member is appointed to research it or bring it to the rabbi for clarification.

Every group member is advised to be on constant alert for prospective families ready to join a study group.

In the fall after the Jewish holidays, we presented this pilot plan to our rabbi and four groups were formed. For three years we struggled through this program by trial and error. When members dropped out I had replacements ready on a waiting list. If two groups were severely depleted they were joined together, since we were all using the same text. Despite our problems, we *added* two additional groups to our original four and counted about one hundred members—many more than ever attended any lecture series.

After completing a text, the education committee invited its author or an authority on the subject to speak at the collation at our Friday night services. He or she presented a broader viewpoint on our studies, and later entertained questions from the floor. This modified lecture series had a two-fold purpose: Study group members were provided with a more comprehensive summary of our study subject, while non-participating members of the congregation were enticed to join after listening to our discussion.

One big problem still facing us was the selection of a suitable text that would provide a continuum for our studies. We wanted something that would present historical Judaism in a rational, universal context. Originally, our rabbi chose several books, assigning each to a group leader to read over the summer months. In the fall, after the leader's report, one was selected and used for the next year's study. However, every group member was delegated to be on constant alert for an ideal text for our study group.

One day while checking a B'nai B'rith magazine

advertising study material I noticed a book written by Simon Novak on Great Jewish Personalities. While curiously thumbing through it in our library, I was immediately struck by its practical application for our study group. I purchased one and read it. The next day I contacted our rabbi, explaining and leaving it for him to read. At our next home-study group committee meeting, our rabbi completely agreed with me and recommended it be selected for study.

The education committee unanimously adopted it as our master text, and now we were on a direct path to solving our major home-study-group problem.

This book and four which subsequently followed (with corresponding study guides) provided us with six years of material. When we finished this series, our groups focused on specific topics. One turned to the prophets, another to the Bible, while another to the *Heritage Reader* by rabbi Morris Adler. The Adler study group was very much impressed with his philosophy as he expressed it in his introduction: "Modern man can find a way towards wholeness by examining the abundant bequests of the past, reverently but critically, with mature independence. He can suffuse his life with its echoes without losing his own voice in the process. It cannot be either-or, either the past or the present. It must be both in behalf of the future." Members of this group had studied the past diligently, but they felt a great desire to continue the broad perspective we had all pursued for six years. At any rate, the hit-and-miss method of our original text selections was discarded, and all groups had cultivated a cogent bond with Jewish history. All this developed without professional leadership, and no member was ever intimidated from taking part in group discussions.

As an added attraction, we arranged weekend *kallahs* for the study groups at a nearby hotel. Under typical Sabbath surroundings, more than one hundred men and women joined together as one large family to study and relax. We attended seminars Friday night after dinner, and the rabbi or an invited speaker elaborated on our study subjects Saturday afternoon. Afterward we relaxed until dinner and enjoyed the hotel's evening entertainment. Unfortunately we encountered bad weather several weekends and decided to conduct future *kallahs* at our own synagogue. Besides, here we could welcome non-group members, some of whom would participate in the entire program.

Initiating our study program and developing it into a well-organized, comprehensive study project was a major accomplishment. Each member gained an opportunity to evaluate Judaism and its contribution to modern society. In many cases it influenced the family's community interests and attitude toward synagogue. One family underwent such a change in exemplary fashion.

This couple had two small boys. Their father, a college graduate, received his bar mitzvah training at one of those "bar mitzvah mills" scattered throughout the city, which were really catering establishments operated by a cantor. The boy visited the cantor a couple of months before his bar mitzvah and usually learned little more than how to recite the blessing when called up for his *aliyah*. The most important part of the service was the catered party following it. It was more *bar* than *mitzvah*.

On the other hand, his wife, also a college graduate, had a strong Jewish background and received extensive training in Hebrew. When I approached them about

joining a study group, the wife seemed eager until her husband rejected the idea. Under these circumstances, I felt it best not to prod them until a suitable opportunity presented itself, and one soon did. Some of his friends had decided to join a new group I was forming, and I invited him and his wife to be observers at one of their sessions. Seeing how our study technique operated, he more or less committed himself to join.

For the first six months, however, he made every effort to disband the group, and I made every effort to keep it together. Realizing he was fighting a losing battle, he gradually became more receptive. After the second six months, his attitude toward Jewish studies changed completely. He came prepared for each session and participated in discussions with great interest. He learned to read Hebrew (something he didn't know). Later he attended a cantillation class for learning *trope* (a recitative associated with the weekly Torah and Haftorah reading), soon becoming proficient enought to chant his Haftorah on his bar mitzvah anniversary. Tears flowed down his mother's cheeks as she listened to her son's beautiful rendition.

When he introduced me to his mother after services, I congratulated him for his excellent job. His mother told me, "I never believed the day would come when I would see my son perform as he did. I am only sorry my husband is not alive today to share with me this happy occasion." She added, "I am eternally grateful to you for encouraging my son to study in your home study group. It has been a turning point in his life."

Since that time his whole family has been active in the synagogue. Both sons attend Sabbath and holiday services in their special prayer shawls and skull caps (their father himself trained them for their bar mitzvah). They

have developed into good Torah readers, leaders in the United Synagogue Youth movement, and activists in Israel affairs. At home, the family observes traditional Friday night ceremonies, with candle lighting, *kiddush,* and *zemirot* after the meals. The wife has become active in Temple sisterhood and has edited our bulletin. They contribute generously toward all Jewish causes.

Perhaps the most challenging and rewarding of all the study groups I organized was the one affliated with the B'nai B'rith Rockville Centre Lodge. Israel's statehood induced a change in the national organization's attitude toward the state. A directive was issued to all districts that greater effort be made for purchasing Israel Bonds, contributing to the United Jewish Appeal, and in general for doing a better public relations job for Israel. Soon after I joined the Rockville Centre Lodge, I volunteered to serve as chairman of the Israel Affairs Committee and Adult Education. First, I organized a committee to assist the local telephone squad for U.J.A. fundraising, then for purchasing Israel Bonds. Within a short time we increased our U.J.A. contributions fourfold and sold twice as many bonds. We also followed our U.N. B'nai Brith representative's instruction to lobby for Israel through our congressional representative.

My second duty proved more difficult. I found great resistance toward establishing a study group, therefore no advance work was made until a good opportunity arose. The time finally arrived when the lodge proposed honoring Daisy and myself by its Anti-Defamation League fundraising committee. We naturally refused the board's offer unless ten lodge members committed themselves to form a study group. Within a week, I received ten signatures and a group was organized. Subsequently, Daisy and I were honored at an Anti-Defamation League

breakfast, one that broke all previous fundraising efforts by the lodge.

Interest in the newly formed study group rapidly increased. When a member dropped out for some reason he was quickly replaced by someone on our waiting list. Our success even drew national attention. The Rockville Centre Lodge study group was judged the best metropolitan program and the second best (of more than one hundred) in the nation. As chairman of our program I received honorary recognition at the convention; subsequently representatives from many other lodges called me requesting details concerning our procedures. Over the years I have received many favorable reports about our study format and the sustained interest among the group members.

Once something very interesting occurred during a lodge study session. We were at the home of a member, whose father (in his eighties) was visiting him. I naturally invited the old gentleman to join our discussions. A certain legal matter presented itself and the old gentleman stated that this legal opinion was given by Maimonides (we had just finished studying about Maimonides). The son, however, disagreed with his father. They sparred for a while until his son, who was well prepared for our assignment, provided the authoritative text, demonstrating that the legal opinion was rendered by another scholar. With a surprised look on his face, his father threw in the towel. After refreshments, as I was leaving, the father grasped my hand and said, "This has been one of the most revealing experiences in my life. I never imagined my son studying Torah—he preferred playing with the kids on the street rather than attending Hebrew School. As a matter of fact, he had to

be threatened with punishment six months before his bar mitzvah before he started to prepare for it. Now I have seen my son studying our Jewish heritage. When my time arrives to meet my Maker, I can leave this world knowing that my son will follow the path I have tried to pave for him, praying every day that he will never deviate from it. Let me thank you and the others for affording me this joyous blessing."

The son has since become very active in the United Jewish Appeal and purchased a substantial number of Israel bonds. When an Israeli representative suggested he build a manufacturing plant there similar to the one he owned and operated in the United States, he agreed. Later, the fully equipped plant was turned over to the Israeli government. After each study session, except when he was in Israel, he would describe in detail its construction and operation—how many jobs it provided and how profits derived therefrom subsidized schooling for needy Israeli children. He always attributed his interests in Israel to our study group and the greater understanding it gave him of our great heritage.

To paraphrase Solomon Schechter's philosophy, "a Jew is true to his heritage to the extent that he regularly seeks to acquire knowledge about it through regular study." The Home Study Group Program has provided our synagogue and other institutions with a means to create and sustain interest among their members in Jewish studies. My wife and I are happy to have helped build this program, and equally happy to have deeply touched the lives of so many. Some of those we assisted have devised clever ways to show their gratitude, as this couple from one of our study groups did when they sent us this poem:

A toast to Daisy, a toast to Sam,
The grandest people what ever am.
They steered us through the intricacies
Of Philo, Saadia, and Maimonides!

Then they set our sights
Even higher and higher
As we poured over Moses
And Jeremiah!

We laughed at stories
As he could make 'em,
Our charming humorist.
Shalom Alechem!

Two others whom we might label the "M's"—
Count them! They add up to four—
Moses Mendelssohn and Moses Montefiore!

And Samson Hirsch and Isaac Wise
Chaim Weizmann and Louis Brandeis
All of these and many more
Of Whom most of us knew little before!

So, tonight, your pupils most grateful
Say "Mazel tov!" dear Colishes, devout and faithful
And a Happy Anniversary we wish you
May many more cheerfully ensure!

Love,
Leah and Phil

CHAPTER 14

With Daisy

Before Daisy accepted any local volunteer job we agreed that I would not be expected to assist her in any duties she undertook because of my own Temple and community commitments, as well as my active dental practice. With this proviso she accepted her first assignment as sisterhood's chairlady of the Hebrew School. Her duties were twofold: registering children at the school and checking Hebrew School collections. On first examining the school records, she was surprised to find that several members were delinquent in their payments, some for over a two-year period. What was even more disturbing was that some among the delinquents were affluent Temple members. She therefore mailed each delinquent family a letter diplomatically reminding them about their Hebrew School account. After a reasonable period, those who did not respond were contacted by phone. During these conversations she informed them that their children would not be permitted to register for the new term unless arrangements had been made for meeting their past obligations.

Well, the abuse she received from these delinquent members was enough to make anyone quit the job, but

not Daisy. Although aggrieved, she nevertheless stayed on her assigned duty until every family met its obligations. Stricter collection rules were established for the future, resulting in greater punctuality in payments thereafter.

This goal accomplished, Daisy accepted another assignment: running the Judaica shop at the Temple. As was her earlier job, this was a tough one, and its effect on Daisy soon became apparent. Occasionally, when Daisy had an especially bad day, I discovered on my return home from the office that dinner was still unprepared!

Before Daisy took over, the main income of the Judaica shop was derived from selling stationery. Daisy believed that the shop's function should be selling Jewish objects, not stationery. She therefore contacted firms dealing in Jewish religious objects from catalogues and selected items for display in the shop. Some of the items she purchased outright, while others were accepted on consignment. The shop was then publicized through the Temple bulletin, mailings, and word of mouth among the sisterhood members.

Interest in the shop grew rapidly, and congregants began making purchases not only for themselves but also as gifts for relatives and friends. The children followed their parents' example. They would have objects set aside as gifts for parents, brothers, sisters, or friends, and then use their savings as payment. By year's end, the income of the Judaica shop increased three-fold. What is more significant, members adorned their homes with traditional Jewish objects produced in America or imported from Israel and wore the Star of David and Chai on chains, rings, and pins. As a result of this new operation the shop developed into a dependable source of income for the sisterhood.

One of Daisy's most significant contributions to the Temple and community was her educational (and entertaining) programming. At the Temple, she was confronted with a regular secular program that had been presented by her predecessors. It had been the practice for the chairlady to outline an annual program with some Jewish content that would be presented to the rabbi, who reviewed it before it was produced. But that version was then discarded and replaced with another totally unrelated to Jewish themes. Daisy opposed this practice. Under no conditions would she accept the chairladyship unless the Temple program dealt with a Jewish theme. The matter was brought before the sisterhood board, and Daisy was given full power to conduct the Temple program in accordance with her wishes.

After hand-picking her committee members, she delegated them to perform research on Jewish themes and then prepare skits illustrating them, or to obtain material from the Seminary for presentation on Jewish holidays. Attendance increased with each entertainment program, eventually reaching "standing room only" for some productions. The rabbi was so overjoyed with the quality and religious emphasis of the new program that at the end of the first year he and his wife, who was quite talented, offered their services to beautify future programs.

As Daisy anticipated, under her direction the entertainment program developed into one of the most outstanding and educational features of Temple activities. Some of the shows she and her coworkers produced ranged from a cantata performed with the assistance of the cantor and his wife, to "Susson Showboat" and "South Persia," based on the Broadway musicals "Showboat" and "South Pacific." The popularity of the musi-

cals became so great that some were presented two or three times to standing-room crowds. When "South Persia" was presented at the Jewish Theological Seminary for a meeting of the National Women's League/ Women's Conservative Movement, it was so enthusiastically received that many women requested copies of the script for their own congregations and the musical became recognized in the Conservative movement as an ideal sisterhood program. For weeks after, "South Persia" was performed at the seminary and became a frequent topic of conversation among those who had been privileged to see it.

Another Jewish program Daisy directed was the Tercentenary, sponsored by the Rockville Centre Community Council, commemorating the 300th anniversary of the arrival of the first Jewish settlers in America. This pioneer group landed first at New Amsterdam, but Governor Peter Stuyvesant did not permit their disembarkment. It was only when the Dutch West India Company, pressed by the Jewish merchants of Amsterdam, intervened that they were given limited permission to settle. A large committee researched this information, as well as many other highlights from the 300-year history of Jews in America and their contributions to the growth of the nation.

After several months, this material was organized into a dramatic presentation of sixteen scenes, each about ten or fifteen minutes long. Actors and actresses were chosen from the Jewish Community Council Membership, and included doctors, lawyers, accountants, educators, business people, and homemakers. They were assigned scripts and rehearsed the scenes as individual units, until the last two weeks of rehearsals. With so many people

who were used to being leaders working together, there were too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Disharmony prevailed in the early full rehearsals, but Daisy and her assistant soon restored order.

In the area of prop construction, I was called upon to establish some order in the chaotic situation. The designs and sketches of the scenery crew, many of whom were professionally trained, were excellent, but their actual construction proved impractical. Since I had a complete set of woodworking tools in my basement, with enough space for construction, our house became the base of operations.

The first scene involved a boat's prow, beautifully carved and painted in the style of a Spanish sailing vessel. The actors representing these 23 immigrants were standing in the boat as it is being propelled by them, creating the illusion that they were sailing into New York Harbor, as the narrator downstage describes their voyage from Brazil.

Another scene depicted a synagogue during Yom Kippur service. In front of two dozen chairs was a dais on which stood two lecterns in front of an ark. During the service a synagogue officer approached the bima and made a strong appeal for assistance in their revolt against England. Pledges, large and small, to be fulfilled after the holiday, were made by the congregation.

Although these props had been produced by professionals, they were so bulky that, even if they could have been removed from our basement, they would prove difficult to manipulate back stage. Now Daisy was faced with a problem: she could neither embarrass those who made the props nor request my assistance because of our understanding—my disassociation from her projects.

Time was running out and Daisy was becoming greatly disturbed. I therefore voluntered my assistance.

My first job was the boat. I disassembled it and then divided it into four five-and-a-half-foot sections, which I joined together with hinges. Rollers were attached back and front. The boat could easily be folded into five-foot parts and removed from the cellar. Later they were extended and rolled on and off stage by the new "immigrants." The second problem was the ark. It was so bulky that it required four men to move it into position. I reduced its size substantially and attached four rollers to its base. I also added a light provided by a small storage battery, and which symbolized the eternal light.

Overnight, it seemed, I became the prop expert. It was my duty to organize a group of several assistants to work backstage and make the seven required scene changes. My committee met two weeks before the Tercentenary production at the Rockville Centre High School auditorium for rehearsal. We made placement markings on the stage floor for each prop, and we carefully choreographed the setting up and removal of props and scenery. While the actors and actresses were in front of the curtain portraying a scene, the technical crew was working swiftly and silently to ready the stage for the next scene. The three-hour rehearsal went very smoothly.

The Tercentenary pageant played to a full house, which was thrilled by the performance. Entertainment professionals in the audience remarked about the high quality of the production. For weeks afterward, it was a major topic discussed around town. Rockville Centre had never seen anything so well performed by a local group, nor has it seen anything as good since. As for myself, my unexpected involvement was the penalty I paid for being a good handyman.

Another of Daisy's special projects was the Interfaith Group. Originally, the Interfaith Group programs consisted of lectures by Christian and Jewish representatives. But when Daisy became our Temple representative and took over the program chairlady duties, she suggested and developed a novel approach. To foster better understanding between Christians and Jews, she proposed that the group prepare a skit for each important religious holiday. The skits were designed to elucidate the origin and significance of each holiday, how it originated and was observed, and how it related (or did not relate) to a holiday observed by the other religion.

Arrangements for these programs were made at our home by a committee representing the Protestant churches and both synagogues in town; there was also a lay Catholic member (the local Catholic church did not then recognize the Interfaith Group, hence the Catholics had a layman rather than a clerical representative). At these luncheon meetings, Daisy usually served her famous homemade gefilte fish and noodle pudding. Everyone relished these delicious dishes, especially the local judge, who was the Catholic representative. Once, because of a previous commitment, the judge was unable to attend a meeting. Knowing how much he enjoyed her cooking, Daisy delivered some of the pudding to the judge's home. Apparently, the judge and his wife were deeply impressed by Daisy's thoughtfulness, as indicated by an event that took place several years later.

One day while Daisy was driving along a main street in Rockville Centre, a police officer instructed her to pull over. He requested her driver's license, telling her that she had been speeding in a school district and that she had run a stop sign. She denied breaking these traffic laws, but to no avail. The officer wrote her a ticket.

The case came before our local judge—the Catholic layman in the Interfaith Group—who asked Daisy how she pleaded. Daisy again denied breaking any traffic regulations, and the judge postponed the case two weeks for the police officer's appearance. After listening to the officer's version and Daisy's response, the judge dismissed the case and reprimanded the officer, warning him to use better judgment in the future. "I happen to know Mrs. Colish and believe her story," he said. "She impresses me as a law-abiding resident who would not violate a traffic regulation. And so the case is discharged."

As Daisy was leaving the courtroom, some acquaintances stopped her, wanting to know why the judge had dismissed her case. "In the first place, the judge believed me because I was telling the truth," Daisy replied, "and this officer has a reputation for issuing more traffic tickets than anyone else on the force." Besides, the taste of Daisy's fine Jewish cooking probably still lingered in the judge's mouth.

CHAPTER 15

From the Heart

When a local practitioner suddenly died I offered assistance to the widow. An interrupted dental practice soon loses its goodwill value, so I suggested to her that the records be turned over to me before the practice was placed on the market for sale by an agent. In that way, the practice would be kept alive and of greater value. However, a relative advised her contrarily and the practice was turned over to an agent, while I nevertheless completed the unfinished work and collected all outstanding accounts, using my own dental office facilities. Since the dentist's records were not available to me, follow-ups normally performed were not done. Thus his patient roster decreased and the prospective offer through the agent for the practice was cut to 50 percent of what it could have been had I controlled the records. As a dental practitioner, I was in a better position to assist in turning over the practice than a nonprofessional relative—a patient-dentist relationship is very important under these conditions.

After the practice was sold I turned over to the widow all $6,000 I had collected, without deducting a fee for my services. This was money she never would have recovered

had I not completed the work. I subsequently received this letter from the widow:

Dear Sam,

This is a hard letter to write, as I really don't know what to say to you. You have been quite a guy and you must know how deeply I appreciate what you are doing for us. Finishing up all Ed's work and not touching a penny of it is unusual for one to do in this day and age. Of course you know that the monies you have turned over to me have always come at the right time.

I shall never forget you for acting so wonderfully in our time of need, nor will I ever forget you because you are a "right guy." Thanks a million. This statement is quite inadequate, but I am sure you now how I feel about you.

Sincerely,
Honey Rappaport

When another local physician, who had rented office space from me died suddenly, I offered his widow my assistance as well. She had assisted her husband in his practice, so she was able to collect his outstanding accounts, but after several months I was able to find a buyer for his equipment. In the meantime I had not charged any rent for the office space. When all affairs were settled, she wrote me this note:

Dear Dr. Colish,

I want to thank you very much for the extreme kindness in allowing me the privilege to use the office in my best interest and for the expression of your marvelous relationship with my late husband. Your generosity is greatly appreciated, particularly your help in assisting me to dispose of his equipment at a relatively good price.

Sincerely,
Laura Appel

I have received many thank-you notes during my long practice, which I believe illustrate a happy relationship between patients and doctor. Some of them that particularly touched me follow. Andrie, for example, was an apprehensive six-year-old who became my patient through the recommendation of a neighbor already under my care. Her mother had taken her to two other dentists, but the child had refused to cooperate. After a couple of visits, I managed to calm her and begin her treatment. Her mother wrote me:

> Dear Dr. Colish,
>
> I feel impelled to write you a few words of thanks for being so kind and giving of your time so generously. Andrie is just fine and I apologize for the hard time she gave you, especially for her dilatory tactics, and for all her questioning preventing you from performing your work. Julie, my neighbor who recommended you, told me the kind of person you are, and she is so right. You really did a good deed, Dr. Colish, and again thank you so much. Best regards from the family.
>
> Fondly,
> Blossom Gruber

Susan, age eight, suffered from a marked crossbite (her lower teeth overlapped her uppers) requiring orthodontic treatment. She came from an Orthodox background, and so required early morning appointments before Hebrew day school started (besides, traveling after dark around Eastern Parkway was dangerous). I corrected her crossbite in nine months, after which I received a letter from Susan's mother describing Susan's discussion with her Hebrew teacher:

> Dear Dr. Colish,
>
> Just had to take a minute to let you know what Susan's teacher had to say about your ability.

Teacher to Susan: "Your teeth look like plastic teeth" (teeth so straight they seemed false).

Susan: "No, they're mine. They were straightened by an orthodontist, a special kind of dentist."

Teacher: "How come the other dentists don't fix teeth so good for other children?"

Susan: Because my orthodontist speaks Hebrew to me while I was in the chair. *Hashem* [the name for God], blessed him and me, and I have perfect straight teeth."

Teacher: "He must be an unusually talented person, bless him."

Have a pleasant *Pesach* and may you always enjoy good health.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Jack London

Eight-year-old Elaine was a very inhibited child who lived in a broken home. Her mother supported the family herself. Elaine was terrified about dentists, more so because she visited my office alone, without a parent to assuage her fears. I decided to make her feel as welcome as possible, and after several friendly visits, there was a marked change in this talented young girl. She wrote me this letter:

To my Dentist,

Oh Dentist, oh Dentist, please do not fine me,
I'll brush me teeth hard, you wait and see
They'll be so white, they'll sparkle and shine,
Then maybe you'll excuse me and not give me a fine.
I'll do my best to polish them good
And my teeth will gleam just as they should.

After her next visit, she wrote me another poem:

Dr. Colish means no harm,
But when he drills be patient and calm
So try to come to the dentist man,

Because he tries to help you all he can.
So if you sit in the chair very still
You'll have nice teeth, I'm sure you will.
Listen to me and take my advice,
Dr. Colish will treat you very nice.

I was told by her classmates who were also my patients that Elaine had become more extroverted after her first visit to my office, and that she now composed poems regularly for the school bulletin and took part in school athletics.

An eleven-year-old needed extensive rehabilitation for her long neglect of her teeth, but her family was poor. I therefore recommended her case for consideration by a civic group I had organized several years ago to aid the needy. The group agreed to pay 75 percent of her costs, provided I reduce my estimated fee equally. I treated her and never sent the family a bill. Long after her last visit, I received this letter from her mother:

Dear Dr. Colish,

Things are a little better with us now, so I am enclosing $10 toward the payment of the reduced fee for my daughter's dental work. As soon as I am able I will send you more. Thanks for waiting so long. I shall never forget what you did for [our daughter]—she feels wonderful. God bless you!

Sincerely,
H.L.

The daughter added a postscript, "Love and Kisses," telling me she will always remember what I had done for her.

Michael, age eight, had neglected his temporary molar and had to have it extracted. As a result, his permanent

six-year molars were drifting forward, leaving insufficient room for his erupting bicuspids. The boy would end up with severe malocclusion. My treatment returned the six-year molars to their proper positions. His mother wrote me:

> Dear Dr. Colish,
>
> I want to thank you for the wonderful care you showed my son Michael and also for the results which came out so well. Your patience, courtesy, and interest will never be forgotten. You are most dedicated. May God grant you many more fruitful and healthy years, so other mothers can benefit as much as I have. Mitchell and I wish you and yours a happy Passover.
>
> Kindest regards,
> Mrs. Frances Steinway

The three S. Singer children, two boys ages twelve and fifteen and a girl age fourteen, all suffered from severe malocclusions. Not long after their treatment started, Mr. S. Singer, an affluent businessman, went bankrupt. His family broke up, Mr. S. Singer left town, and Mrs. S. Singer was unable to meet her financial obligations. The children were conscious of their mother's distress and told me they would have to stop their visits. When I heard this, I called Mrs. S. Singer and told her about the importance of her children's dental health, and temporarily waived my fee until Mr. S. Singer could straighten out his affairs. After completing the children's treatment, I was still carrying unpaid fees of $4,500. A year later, Mr. S. Singer sent me a package from Maryland, which contained an oil painting he had painted and a note:

Dear Sam,

You are a prince among men and I want you to know I will be ever grateful for what you did for my children and for proving that there are still men around like yourself.

Sincerely,
L.

Payment was never made and the painting is stacked away in my closet with others for which I have no wall space in our apartment. Someday it will wind up in a gallery or a garbage can, but my conscience is clear and I don't ever regret the dental work I performed for his children.

The six upper-front molars of Mrs. Ina Lente, age fifty-four, had flared into buckteeth. Adults are normally poor subjects for orthodontia because their age is accompanied by poor alveolar bone structure or missing teeth or bridge work. In Mrs. Lente's case, however, I was able to correct her problem within a year. She sent me this note (just after I had completed her treatment):

Dear Dr. Colish,

Though you are an outstanding orthodontist, a credit to the community and your congregation, you are a terrible bill collector. It is a sad state of affairs when the patient has to hound the doctor for a bill. I am very grateful for the work you did on my teeth and feel you have been very generous with my bill.

With kindest regards to you and Mrs. Colish and hope you are feeling much better.

Most Sincerely,
Ina Lente

Another adult patient, forty-eight-year-old Mrs. Theresa Kerins, called me very late one evening complaining of a

bad toothache. I had discontinued my orthodontia practice and had returned to general dentistry. She had been refused treatment by two other local dentists, but I told her to meet me promptly at my office. As soon as she entered my office, she froze. I sedated her, then took her history, which included a story about a bad experience with another dentist who had made her mortally afraid of all dentists. When she was sufficiently relaxed by the sedation, I led her into the operating room, X-rayed her teeth, found the offending molar, and under local anesthesia drilled out the decay and filled the cavity with an antiseptic medication, finally filling it permanently. I treated her other caries on a subsequent visit. Mrs. Kerins was so appreciative, she wrote a letter to the editor of our local newspaper, which appeared on March 8, 1974:

> Dear Editor,
>
> There is a gentleman living in Rockville Centre who I believe deserves a word of mention and praise. Aside from being an ardent resident of this village for a great many years, he recently celebrated his seventy-eighth birthday. May I also add he is "fit as a fiddle," in perfect health, and doesn't look a day over sixty. His slender physique and distinguished appearance, combined with his marvelous sense of humor, make him more outstanding. You'll still find him putting in a full day of work and enjoying every minute of it. In my opinion, there isn't anything too difficult for him to tackle and his skill and patience make him tops in his profession.
>
> At present he shares an apartment with his charming wife in Rockville Centre and also an office nearby. Recently he informed me that he is busy writing his autobiography and I know when completed it shall be a worthwhile contribution to the literary world. His experience alone here in the United States as well as abroad (and I coin the phrase) "could fill a book." The gentleman I am referring to is none other than Dr. Samuel Colish, my

dentist. I am certain he is no stranger to many of your readers and perhaps others who have had the pleasure of being his patient at one time or another.

In concluding this letter, I take great pride in saying that Dr. Colish should hereafter be known as one of Rockville Centre's "Pioneers." Men such as he stand for a symbol we all should strive toward—the future pioneers of this country. Men such as he have made villages like Rockville Centre what they are today and have paved a way of life we should be proud to follow always.

Thanking you kindly, I am,

Respectfully your,
Mrs. Theresa Kerins

In addition to receiving notes and cards from my dental patients, I received many kind letters during my service on my synagogue's hospitality committee from people I visited while they were in the hospital or from those who were in mourning. The few reproduced here typify the hundreds I have received, because they represent the joy that comes from caring about our fellow men.

Dear Dr. Colish,

It was good of you as the Good and Welfare Committee chairman of B'nai Sholom to write us during Lynn's illness. We all appreciate your thoughtfulness and your kind wishes. Lynn is doing very well now, thank God. Not only the parents but also the child appreciated your visit and enjoyed your gracious note. With warmest greetings for you and your fellow congregants,

I remain,
George B. Lieberman
(Rabbi Lett.D.)

Dear Sam,

Many thanks for your help and time you gave us during our sorrow. We greatly appreciate it.

Irving and Susan Beyer

Dear Dr. Colish,

In behalf of my brother, my Dad, and myself, we would like to express our gratitude for making such a difficult time a little easier.

Thank you again,
Rosanne Bienstock

Dear Dr. Colish,

I must say "thank you" again for conducting services during the shivah period at my home. I shall always remember the time and effort you gave to bring prayer and comfort to us at a time of great need. Today we celebrate the Rosh Chodesh [new month]. May I extend the best to your family for this month and years to come.

Sincerely,
Bea Hanft

Dear Sam,

Thank you for your visit to Ronny in the hospital. I know that this cheered him and helped his recovery go speedier. He is at home now and doing well. I thank God.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Ronny Koval

Dear Sam,

Thanks for visiting my father and putting his mind at ease about his physical condition. Although fully confident in my medical ability as a physician, still his reaction to your visit, psychologically, had a more positive reaction towards his recuperation than my assurance. You may recall while you were speaking with my Dad, I listened to what you said to him outside his his room and marveled at your ability to soothe and comfort him. That is why he relished your return visits so much.

Thanks a million,
Ben
[Dr. Benjamin Lamstern]

Dear Dr. Colish,

Your kindness in helping us at a difficult time is most appreciated. Thank you for leading the service at our home in memory of my father. Your thoughtfulness and generosity of spirit were very comforting to all of us.

Sincerely,
Elaine Goldsam

Dear Dr. Colish,

For all my family and myself personally, I want to extend to you our deep thanks for your concern and devotion in seeing to it that we had a minyan during our shivah week. Had you know my mother, you would have known that she was worthy of it. Her love of God and the synagogue and all things Jewish were part of her life.

With deep gratitude,
Sylvia Landow

Dear Sam,

I was glad to hear from you even though you asked me for money. It reminded me of an eleven-month period in which I was privileged to sit with you, a man who taught me so much about our religion, and whose acquaintance I value highly. It is good to know that you are in there, as always, doing the best for others. It is with pleasure that I am enclosing you a check in gratitude. I wish you, Daisy, and your family good health and happiness for a New Year which you so richly deserve.

Most Sincerely,
Irving Luckowitz

Dear Sam,

Thanks for assisting me during my Kaddish period. I have never before been associated with a synagogue, but now influenced by what I have learned about Jewish values from you during the eleven months, I am submitting membership to Temple B'nai Sholom. Furthermore, my wife and I would like to join one of your study groups.

With best wishes,
Sam Horowitz

Conclusion

A basic concept of Judaism is rooted in the doctrine of human responsibility, that is, free will. The great ancient historian Josephus stated that the doctrine of free will was maintained by the Pharisees, or liberals, in contrast to the Sadducees, who attributed everything to chance, and the Essenes, who ascribed all man's actions to predestination and Divine providence. Free will, we believe, is granted to every man. If he wants to be good and righteous, he has the power to do so; likewise, if he inclines toward the wicked and unrighteous, his free will permits him to act on those inclinations instead. We have the will—and the knowldege of good and evil—and we must all make our own choice. As a Jew, I have made mine.

In great measure, my longevity can be attributed to the pleasure I have derived throughout my life from assisting my fellow man. Even in my dental practice, working primarily for material gain was never my policy. Whenever a patient required assistance, I gave it, even if I had to wait for the payment or was never paid at all. Nor when I volunteered for a worthwhile cause did I do so for the praise I would receive. Seeing people happy has made me happy. This has been my life's reward.