For my darlings Candace, Lauren, Maurice, Benjamin and Rachel ...

Zadie's Story...

For some time now, family members and friends have suggested that I record the story of my family's survival of the Holocaust, so that my grandchildren and others might have a testament of what we went through. I kept putting off doing so as I felt I wasn't a "true survivor," not having been in a concentration camp, or having had to live under German occupation or having had to face a German soldier.

However, visits to Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Paper Clips Project convinced me that I am, indeed, a survivor and that my story should be told. When Moishe, my brother-in-law and cousin, passed away in 2009, I became the oldest living Nayman and realized my future was shorter than my past. I knew I had better get going while I could. The more time passes, the more difficult it becomes to remember and there's no one left to ask. So here we are. Some names are in Hebrew or Yiddish and some have been Anglicized.

Mania & Me, August 1938

My Family

I was born in Stoczek Wegrowski, or Stok (as most Jews referred to it), Poland, November 5, 1935 (9 Kislev 5696). I was the second child to Yudel Najman and Sore Roize Rosenberg. My sister, Mania, was born November 13, 1928.

Mother,1927

My mother was the only daughter of Dovid Shloime Rosenberg and Esther Dobe Zelenetz. My maternal grandfather, who died before Mania and I were born, and for whom I was named, was a "Soifer" – a Scribe of holy works like Torah scrolls, Tefillin and Mezuzah parchments. He did this work as a holy calling, spending countless days and nights by dim light using a special quill, writing the holy words on Kosher parchment, never accepting money for his work. My father described him as the most gentle and kind person anyone had ever met, a true Tzadik. His genes were clearly passed on to my mother.

Father,1927

My father was one of five children of Motl (Mordechai) and Machla Najman. My paternal grandfather was known as Motl Farber, the paint man. My father's siblings were Dovid Leib (Rochel), Moishe's parents; Yechiel (Chaya Sore), children unknown; Zishe Bund (Chava), parents of Shulem; sister Zlate (Mordechai Yosef), parents of Marjem. According to my father, my grandfather Motl died in 1924 from pneumonia which afflicted many people. There was no doctor in Stok at that time and the one from nearby Yadow could not be summoned in time.

My grandmother Esther Dobe was the breadwinner in the house. She had a food counter in the front of the house from which she sold eggs, cheese, meat and other staples, primarily on Mondays, market days, when people from surrounding villages would come to trade, barter, sell or buy products. She travelled 45 kilometres every week to Warsaw – by horse and buggy to Yadow and from there by train to Warsaw. My grandmother always brought back a special treat for Shloimele – a cake, an orange, a banana, etc. She was always very kind to Mania and me, except for the day I sneaked behind the food counter and had a slice of Polish szynka (ham).

After my maternal Zaide passed away, my mother did as much as she could to share the work and help my Bubbe. My mother created a sensation in town because she insisted on going to the Beis Medrish (Shul) every day to say Kaddish, something women simply didn't do in those days. I didn't know until recently that my grandmother had remarried. That did not sit well with my mother because she revered her father and couldn't accept another man being part of her mother's life. The second husband was never part of my sister's or my life.

Lisa and Mother 1927

My mother was born August 21, 1904; my father, December 15, 1905. They were married in 1927. My mother was a beautiful woman, and we treasure the few photos we have of her when she was young. Unfortunately, her health was poor; she had serious stomach problems which required replacing part of it with the lining of a calf's stomach. To think that this kind of surgery could be performed at that time is incredible. At one point, my mother was thought to have died and was laid out for burial. Since there were no doctors available in most towns to confirm a person's death, it was traditional to pass a feather over the nose of a "dead" person to see if there was any reaction. When this was done to my mother, she flinched and was revived. The Rabbi suggested we add "Chaya" (Life) to her name, and she was often called Chaya Sore. My mother had to be on a strict lifelong diet and much medication, yet she persevered and imbued us with love and kindness.

Mother

Stok

Life in Stok was simple and difficult. Our house, like most others, was a wooden shack in which we ate, slept and worked. On the coldest nights, I, being the youngest, had to sleep on the "Pripechik" (stovetop) or with my mother. We had very little but we didn't need much. There were always books in the house, which my sister would often read to

me. My only possession was a hand-me-down white rocking horse that I used to sit on in front of the house; when it was warm, I would give the horse water from the “Qvart” – a can that was used to measure milk. I used to go Shul with some of the Landsleit, but not with my father, who was not much of a religionist. I would sit during prayer and watch the men “shokel” and recite prayers. I would often sit on the Bima and get a treat at the end of services.

Mother, Mania, Father, 1934

The village had a population of about 1,000. The Jews mostly lived in Novo Miasto, the new town, while most of the gentiles were in Staro Miasto, the old town. The two were aptly separated by a little river and a small wooden bridge. Most days were peaceful and quiet with everyone going about their business On Mondays, market days, the village was alive as Poles from surrounding areas came to town and my grandmother and mother carried on their affairs. Stoczek was fairly self-sufficient with its own Beis Medrish, which was attended by most tradesmen, as well as several “Shtibles,” where the very Orthodox congregated.

There was little religion practised in our house, particularly by my father. My grandmother and mother, however, were more traditional. I remember Friday afternoons one of the locals calling the Jews to the Mikveh. I would often bring our pot of cholent to the local baker, who kept his oven on to cook the cholent overnight; on Shabbes after services, we would pick up our pot and have a delicious warm meal. The same baker baked matzos for everyone. We would pick them up a few days before Pesach and store them in a drawer until the Seder. Earlier, we would all gather in the nearby woods for a communal burning of the Chometz.

We had a small hospital and a library with newspapers brought in from Warsaw and other cities. Various socio-political parties attracted many people, particularly younger ones who wanted to break away from the narrower, religion-centred lifestyle. Most of the groups were socialist, left wing or communist leaning, including Shomer Hatzair, Poalei Zion and Bund. My father was an active member of Bund. They were going to restore the world order so that the Arbeiter (workers) would rule, with the rich paying for everyone’s needs. The groups met frequently in some of the homes, including ours. While my father wanted only Bund meetings in our house, my mother insisted on having anyone from any “party” attend and freely express their views.

There were social activities for young people, including “Mayofkes”, wagon rides, outings and picnics in the nearby Majdan Forest. There were visits with family members from Kosov, where my mother’s cousin Isser Rosenberg lived. We had a relative in Lodz who had a candy factory which I once visited. He made the famous “Wedel” jam-filled hard candies on which I pigged out the only time I visited Lodz. Life just went on day-to-day until September 1, 1939, when Hitler invaded Poland without warning. We were aware of the German invasion, the speed at which the army was advancing and the early collapse of the Polish Army. Some of the young men in Stok took up arms – whatever was available – and joined the Partisan underground. My family decided to flee before the full onslaught. My father carried me, wrapped in a maroon duvet, as we fled to a nearby forest .From a distance, we could see the town on fire and the silhouettes of the Wehrmacht as they rolled in on motorcycles, trucks, cars and horseback. This indelible image was reinforced recently when I discovered some photos of the invasion of Stoczek taken by a Wehrmacht soldier on a Polish website commemorating the Holocaust.

My grandmother heard the hospital was on fire and returned to see if she could help; that was the last time we saw her. We were huddled in the field and were told to get going before daylight. We headed east and came across someone with a horse and wagon who agreed to take us as far as he could go. I believe we ended up in Bialystok, about 100 km from our town and close to the Belarus border. Bialystok was occupied by the Germans, but was turned over to the Soviets as part of their secret deal not to invade Russia. Bialystok became a refuge for many Jews from German-occupied parts of Poland. The prevailing wisdom was that it was better to be with the Soviets and communism than to remain in occupied Poland.

Somewhere in the USSR

The Soviets opened their border to the fleeing families provided they would go wherever they were sent, primarily labour camps, to build cities and work on other projects. We were on a train from Bialystok to the border at Brest-Litovsk where we had to switch trains because the railway tracks in the Soviet Union were different from those in Poland, ensuring that no train could enter or leave unless the Soviets approved.

We were packed into old filthy cattle cars and began a journey to an unknown destination. There was no food or water on board; a hole in the floor served as the toilet. The air was foul and the temperature unbearable as there were no open windows and the doors could not be opened from inside. One of the families had a goose on board as one of its meagre possessions. The goose’s constant honking and crapping added to the pleasure of the voyage which claimed numerous lives. The train was pulled by a steam locomotive which required occasional stops for water and wood. This enabled us

to leave our cars for brief times to stretch, go to the bathroom under the train and find water to wash up. We were also able to get food, “kipiatok” (hot water) and, sometimes, tea from kind people who came to the stations. Several weeks and about 2,600 km later, we arrived at Syktyvkar, the capital of Komi, ASSR. It was late fall 1939, the onset of our first unbearably cold winter.

Syktyvkar is just west of the Ural Mountains and just south of the Arctic Circle, at roughly the same latitude as Yellowknife. The area, adjacent to the permafrost region, was essentially barren with lots of forests. The need was to build up the lumber factories and housing barracks, primarily by immigrants like ourselves. My father had no profession or building skills, but became a glazer working on some housing projects outside the town.

We were housed in one of the barracks, occupying a small room with another couple named Mida, the two families separated by a sheet. Wooden planks served as beds, and we shared a Primus type burner for cooking. We would burn peat or “Kiziaki” (dried cow dung) in a metal barrel for heat. There were no sanitation facilities in the barracks, only some outhouses. There was no running water or electricity; for light, we used kerosene lamps. The rooms were separated by a long corridor which became the squatting place for those who did not have a room. One squatter was a young man whom my father found in the corner of the corridor; he struck up a conversation, asking “Amcha? – Are you a Jew?” Incredibly, the young man was Moishe, the only son of my father’s brother, Dovid Leib. So Moishe entered our life and our family.

Life in Syktyvkar was brutal, especially in winter, which seemed to last eight months. The barracks had sawdust between the plywood walls for “insulation” and plywood floors without a foundation base. There was no heat and we slept in whatever we had to wear, huddling together for warmth. I often slept with the Midas after Moishe “moved in” with us. The place was overrun with huge rats, so someone had to stay up at night to fight them off with a broom. Diseases were rampant and people were dying like flies from typhus, malaria, tuberculosis, malnutrition and hypothermia. Food was scarce, the only source being ration coupons that were earned by the labourers. We had to line up for hours to redeem the coupons for bread and a few other staples. If a family had a small child who could be pointed out “onveizen”, they were provided a little extra food. I used to be pointed out by Mrs. Mida and shared in whatever little extra she received. My mother couldn’t digest the bread that was rationed – it was more potatoes than wheat – but, on occasion, she was given a portion of white bread which she never hesitated to share with her Shloimele. I used to forage in trash bins for scraps of food. I would often find potato peels that were later cooked in fat to make them edible. I would sometimes find a weed called “Krapiva” which was like a poison ivy that was cooked like spinach.

My father worked on a building project a few kilometres away and I would bring him his “lunch,” usually consisting of some bread, some kind of watery soup and whatever else was available. I carried the lunch in a tin canteen that had several sections held together by a carrying handle. I had to walk across several fields and through a forest to get to my father. The fear of wolves was ever present. I was often chased and taunted

by the local kids. One time, I decided to confront one of my tormentors and wrestled him in the snow. He kicked over the container and spilled some of the soup. I realized that I could not bring my father so little soup, so I added some snow. My father wasn't happy that the soup was much colder and more watery that usual, but life went on. One day when I was alone in our room, I noticed that Mrs. Mida was cooking broth with "eidlach", a kind of potato/wheat dumpling. I was always hungry, so I tasted a dumpling, then another and several more. I didn't notice that the soup level in the pot was lower. Mrs. Mida told my father, who gave me the beating of my life.

The Soviets tried to take care of the children, hoping they would grow up to be good communists. Mania went to school, where she was a brilliant student and a member of KOMSOMOL, the official communist branch for teens. She also studied music and played the bass fiddle, a huge instrument which she had to carry from place to place. I was sent to a "Yaslo," a sleepover nursery school where we were reasonably well fed and slept on cots in warmed rooms. I was enrolled in the "Pioneers", the communist branch for children. I was given a white shirt and red neck scarf and taught the appropriate political songs and stories. About two years later, I became "Chief of Staff of the Pioneer Troupe", "General Shtaba Pionierskovo Otriada". This was my first leadership role. While life was brutal, there were some elements of culture and entertainment. We would be glued to the radio dish listening to the great tenor, Sergei Lemeshev, singing love songs. Other singers and choirs sang patriotic songs. There was even a small theatre where my sister took me to see an opera, "Halka", and several movies. I remember seeing "Serenada Solniechnoi Dolinny" – Sun Valley Serenade with Sonja Henie – with Russian subtitles, as well as the usual patriotic war films.

Mrs. Mida got an infection from a splinter in her finger and died because it wasn't treated in time. Moishe was able to find some food where he laboured. The only things of value we had managed to take out of Stok were the duvet and several Fraget silverware pieces my parents had received as wedding gifts. Fraget was well known around Europe; many collections can be found in museums in Moscow and St. Petersburg. We sold some of the pieces on the black market in exchange for necessities and a 22-kt gold coin from the Czarist era. These five- and ten-ruble coins were known as "Chazerlach" (little pigs), and were used as bribes that probably saved many people. A five-ruble coin was sewn into my jacket for emergency use. The authorities rarely bothered children, but my father or Moishe would have been executed if they had been caught. We somehow survived Syktyvkar for about three years. We still have two of the Fraget spoons, the only tangible items remaining from my parents wedding.

World War II and its impact on our lives

It was wartime, brutal and lethal, like no war before or since. While we endured and survived great hardships, millions of Soviet citizens suffered and perished. The daily news on the only radio station, "Govorit Moskva" (Moscow Speaks), was sanitized so the people would retain some hope. We heard great patriotic songs and stories about the heroism of "Batiushka Stalin" (Father Stalin) and the Soviet soldiers. We did not hear that the German army, with about three million troops and a huge arsenal of

planes, tanks and artillery, aided by Finns, Rumanians and Hungarians, was "Blitzkrieging" through Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. Hitler had broken his treaty with Stalin not to attack the Soviet Union.

The Wehrmacht laid siege to Leningrad for 872 days from September 1941 to January 27, 1944. Hitler decreed that this city had to be "erased from the face of the earth".
The siege resulted in about 1.5 million dead and about 1.4 million evacuees, mostly women and children. Many evacuees died of starvation and bombings. Starvation was incredible; after the birds, pets and rats were eaten, there were numerous reports of cannibalism – survival was all that mattered. We learned much later about the horrendous losses in the siege of Leningrad. Many museums and Czarist palaces were looted and destroyed. Syktyvkar was about 1,100 km from Leningrad, so we were far from the front.

Moscow was also under attack as Hitler declared the Soviet capital the most important political and strategic target, believing the collapse of Moscow would lead to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The German army came to within about 30 km of the Kremlin, but the Soviets, although badly outnumbered and poorly trained, resisted. Over one million Russians perished. But they held on and were greatly helped by the weather, first by mud, then by December temperatures of -50° Celsius. The German soldiers were not prepared for the Russian winter. January 1942 marked the first retreat by the Wehrmacht. The battle of Moscow was one of the most lethal battles in history.

Hitler then ordered an attack on Stalingrad, where an epic battle raged from 1942 to 1943. This city was an important target as it was Russia's southern communications centre, a major manufacturing facility and the gateway to the Caucasus oil fields. The battle for the city was one of the most brutal of the war, with constant bombardment and shelling and, later, hand-to-hand combat in the streets. The Russian army trapped about 300,000 German soldiers inside the city. The winter was brutal and the German army surrendered at the end of January 1943. An all-out assault by the Soviets and the liberation of Russia followed.

When Hitler began the invasion of Ukraine, Stalin implemented a scorched earth policy and obliterated the Ukraine, despite it being the Soviet Union's bread basket. He commanded that all rolling stock be evacuated; the enemy must not be left a single engine, railway car, pound of grain or gallon of fuel. The farmers had to send all their cattle to the East, and all factories, hydro facilities, valuable property and forests were to be destroyed. While millions of Russians and Ukrainians starved to death, it was the pivotal shift in the war as the Soviet armies were soon able to push the German armies westward.

Many Ukrainians initially welcomed the Germans as their liberators from the yoke of Soviet domination and Communism. Many participated in atrocities against Jews by the "Sonnen Komandos", with Babi Yar being one of the most notorious examples: 34,000 Jews were killed in two days, a rate even faster than in Auschwitz. There were about



1.5 million Jews in the Ukraine, of whom 600,000 perished. Years after the Ukraine was liberated, it was estimated that 10 million Ukrainians, or about 25% of the population, perished. Many suggest that Stalin may have been responsible for as many deaths as Hitler.

Somewhere in the Ukraine, around Spring 1944

There was a great need to start rebuilding the shattered republic, so we were shipped from Syktyvkar to a village in the Haivoron area in the Ukraine to work on rebuilding a burned out sugar factory. The Ukraine had a massive beet sugar infrastructure, but nothing was left standing.

Our train ride of some 2,300 km was similar to the one three years earlier, but we managed to stay intact. We were housed in a room in the sugar factory barracks and befriended a nearby farmer and his family, the Mogilas. Unlike many Ukrainians who were pathologic anti-Semites, the Mogila family, who may not have ever met a Jew, were kind to us, especially to my mother, often sharing their meagre food resources like milk, cheese and eggs. While we did not have a single photo from Syktyvkar, I discovered among Moishe's and Mania's pictures several from the Ukraine, including the Mogilas, one of Mania and one of me as well as my school class. I went to school a few kilometres away. In winter, when the lake was frozen, I could shorten the distance by trekking across the lake. In the nearby woods were many symbols of the fierce battles that raged throughout the country. There were numerous destroyed German "Tiger" tanks which were supposed to be invincible, but were knocked out by partisans and regular soldiers. Ironically, the first Tiger tanks were built in Kharkov, Ukraine. The later version, the "King Tiger Tank", was developed by Daimler-Benz. I used to play in the tanks, pretending I was destroying the German army. One summer day, I decided to play war all day. My mother asked me if I had had fun; I never discovered how she found out that I had skipped school that day.

One evening, my father was trying to move a kerosene lamp that was near my cot and dropped it. The lamp set my straw mattress on fire. I was awakened by screaming and was scared witless. Fortunately, my cot was near the window. Moishe heard the screams, saw the flames and pulled me out. He and my father stomped out the flames and we survived another day.

The Mogilas had a cow named Raika, a horse, some chickens and rabbits. One day, I was asked to take the horse to a nearby watering hole. I rode to the watering hole holding on to the horse's mane. The horse lowered its head and I slid down its neck into the water. That was the beginning and end of my equestrian career. Raika had a calf named Zorka and I became her best friend, taking her to pasture, watching her graze and playing with her. Zorka would come to my window to get me to come out and play. Zorka would follow me wherever I went. Mary had a little lamb and Solly had a calf. I eventually learned how to get Zorka to stay behind when I went to school. The next spring, Raika bore another calf. A farmer could only keep one calf, so Zorka had to be sent to a government collective "Kolchoz" and my first love affair came to an end.

One of the skills I acquired from the Mogilas was how to slaughter chickens. I was glad to do it for our neighbours in exchange for a piece of the chicken. I also learned how to butcher rabbits, which were plentiful. The Mogilas had a few fruit trees and were skilled at making a local version of moonshine, "Samohon". One day, I got totally plastered after drinking a few glasses of pear brandy with the Mogilas' son and daughters. I was sick for days but no worse for wear. The news reports on radio were much more positive as every day it was announced that the heroic Soviet armies, led by Marshall Zhukov, had advanced through Poland and were pushing to Berlin. I was in school when it was announced that US "Priezidient" Roosevelt had died. We didn't know what a "Priezidient" was and were told he was like the Czar of America. The war ended May 7, 1945, and our next stage of life began. The Soviet government declared that any immigrants who did not wish to remain and become Soviet citizens would be able to leave under the auspices of the UNNRA. The decision was a no-brainer; we left.

Lower Silesia, around Fall 1945

I believe we left from Kharkov by train and travelled nearly 3,000 km through Lvov, Bratislava (Czechoslovakia) and Vienna (Austria), before finally arriving in the Soviet Zone of Lower Silesia at a town near Walbrzych called Boza Gora, "G-d's Mountain". We were moved into a nice flat that had been occupied by a German family. They bemoaned the fact that they were evicted from their home by the Soviet administration to make room for a family of Jewish Displaced Persons. It really galled them as their son was an SS officer whose photos and decorations adorned their home. I can't say we felt sorry for them. The flat was palatial compared to anything we had lived in before and the little town was pretty. There were good furnishings, bedding, linens, kitchenware, etc., which we could use

while we were there. I also acquired my first ever treasure, an extensive collection of stamps that had been left in the house.

One day, as I was sitting outside, I was approached by a man who asked if this is where Sore Roize lived and I answered yes. This was our first encounter since before the war with our cousin Isser. He was a gentle, soft spoken man, who was a baker in Kosov and frequently brought me special treats, “katchkelach”, his version of “taiglach”. The reunion was wonderful, and another survivor was added to our group. Life here was much better and the Soviet soldiers were fairly good to us. I was enrolled in a Polish school and participated in various school activities and plays. I was the soloist in a play about a dying butterfly and still remember the song, “Widzialem Motila”. I did well in school and formally studied Polish for the first time, as all my previous classes were in Russian. The school was Catholic, so I was excused from class during the opening prayers. A friend told me there was a Cheder nearby where the Melamed was very nice and always offered sweets and other treats to the children. Since I never passed up an opportunity for food, I went to the Cheder.

After several weeks, I learned some Hebrew and became familiar with the prayers and Broches. I was given a “Tallit Katan” to wear under my shirt. One evening, when we sat down for our meal at home, I recited “Hamotzi” and received a great whack on the side of my head from my father. My mother naturally sided with me. At that moment, I decided to learn Hebrew and study Torah and our prayers. Our family was isolated here and there were no social or cultural activities that we could pursue. The Soviet soldiers left us alone and we marked time until our next adventure.

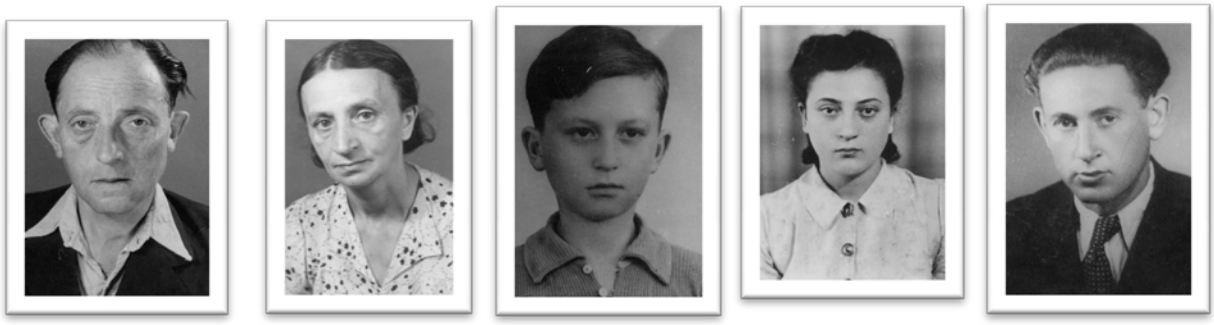
West Germany

In the summer of 1946, we were sent on our next destination, a DP camp in the US zone of West Germany. This train trip took us through several East German cities. The night before we reached the West German Zone, we were told to get rid of any papers, documents, etc., that could be linked to the Soviets. That night, I lit a little bonfire beside our railway car and, in tears, burned my stamp collection, while Mania destroyed her diplomas and other documents. As it turned out, the authorities never questioned us or looked for anything. Thanks to a rumour, I lost my only treasure.
The camp to which we were sent was a tent city in a place called Kam. I can’t find it on the map, but believe it was near Bad Kisingen. We were united with my mother’s aunt Rifke and uncle Avrom and their daughters, who subsequently immigrated to Palestine and lived in Netanya.

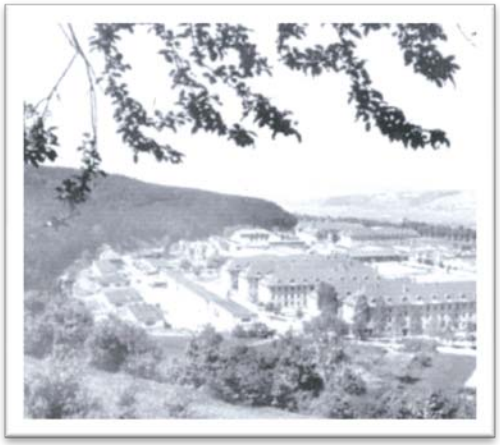



We were fortunate to have Isser take several photos of our “Tent City”. The DP camps were created by the UNRRA and administered by military personnel to resolve the problem of repatriating up to 20 million war refugees from various concentration and labour camps and occupied territories. The intent was to repatriate refugees to their country of origin but most people, particularly those from Poland, did not want to return.

Life in the tents was unpleasant. There was no sanitation or running water and the tents were like ovens in the summer heat. Everyone in our family, except me, became ill and had to be hospitalized for heat exhaustion and hypothermia. However, we survived to move to our next destination, Wetzlar a/d Lahn, about 50 km from Frankfurt. We were housed in the barracks of a sprawling former SS and Hitler Youth Training Camp. Our room was fairly spacious and the facilities were adequate. The camp had a central mess hall and large central washrooms with showers. Not far from there was an infamous POW camp, Dulag Luft, which housed captured RAF and USAF airmen. The main purpose of this facility was to obtain intelligence from these airmen, many of whom



were tortured and brutally murdered. At the famous Nuremburg trials, many camp officials were tried and convicted. We were in Wetzlar for about two years, during which we were reunited with my father’s nephew Shulem and his wife Shulamit, as well as other landsleit. Life in Wetzlar was pleasant and we were well fed and cared for by UNRRA. We received CARE food packages, medical care and adequate clothing. We were well treated by the US soldiers whom we chased for chocolates and Chiclets, “Hey Joe you got gum?” It was the first place I encountered a Black soldier. I went to a Hebrew school, “Beit Seifer Tarbut”, and began learning Hebrew in earnest, soon becoming fluent. We were able to communicate with known relatives, especially Uncle Sam in Brooklyn. My mother also began communicating with her cousin Lisa, Tuvia’s mother, in Tel Aviv, her cousins Rishke and Sore Roize in Mexico and others in Argentina. Among my most treasured photos is one of my mother and Lisa, two truly beautiful women, taken in Poland when they were probably in their twenties. I became so proficient in Hebrew that I exchanged many letters and photos with Tuvia.



Uncle Sam was the centre of our universe and ensured that all his nieces were able to contact one another. Every letter he sent there had a few US dollars, which certainly came in handy. Our camp had an active social life, with various plays staged in the assembly room. I remember seeing “The Dibbuk” and “Die Schite”, performed by our local “thespians.” We were able to see many Yiddish movies starring Morris Schwartz and Molly Picon, as well as Hollywood and British films. We organized a soccer team to play against teams from other camps. I had a bunch of friends with whom I played kick ball, went into town and watched movies. My mother, sister and I would often go for a walk into town, crossing a beautiful bridge over the Lahn River. There was a favourite coffee shop where we could get “ersatz café”, lemonade and

baked goods. I have a photo of my father, several relatives and me standing on a walkway with the Wetzlar Cathedral in the background. A Google search revealed the same background taken over sixty years later.

I was able to go to a youth camp near Wiesbaden and marvelled at the beauty of that town and the Rhine River. Queenie and I had a much different view of the Rhine when we visited friends in Zurich in 1989. Wiesbaden later became the medical centre of the US army and many survivors were sent there for rehab. I acquired an Adler bicycle which I rode whenever I could. We later acquired a Leica camera, the most famous product of Wetzlar and the reason we have so many photos of life there.

The city was home to the Ernst Leitz factory, where the 35mm Leica camera was invented, and was the manufacturing centre of the world’s foremost photographic equipment, lenses, microscopes and related products. It is noteworthy that while most buildings around Wetzlar were destroyed by US bombing, the Leitz factory was untouched.

The world later learned that the Leica camera was the main instrument the Germans used to compile their massive photographic archives of the war, the Holocaust and their atrocities. They were meticulous keepers of photo archives, records and statistics.

It was in the DP camps and places like Wetzlar that we began learning of the horrendous atrocities committed by the Nazis and their pathologic commitment to exterminate the Jews. Photos were circulated of the death camps after they were liberated, places like Auschwitz, Dachau, Buchenwald, Majdanek and our own "local camp", Treblinka, which was about 35 km from Stoczek and most likely where our relatives and landsleit perished.. We met survivors and listened to their stories, looked at the concentration camp numbers tattooed on their forearms, held the bars of soap that the Nazis made and stamped RIF, "Reines Juden Fett" (Pure Jewish Fat). We held lampshades made from Jewish skins and were horrified to see so many survivors physically and emotionally damaged for life. We considered ourselves lucky and could not possibly feel sorry for ourselves, as what we had endured paled by comparison to what we witnessed and learned from the Holocaust Survivors. We felt we could not identify ourselves the same way.

Several years ago, we learned of the remarkable feats of courage and kindness of Ernst Leitz and his family. After Kristallnacht in November 1938, Ernst Leitz realized the lives of Jews in Germany would be in peril. To save many of his Jewish workers and colleagues, he secretly established what has become known as "The Leica Freedom Train", a covert means of allowing Jews to leave Germany in the guise of Leitz employees being assigned overseas to sales offices in the US, Hong Kong, France and Britain. Leitz's daughter was jailed by the Gestapo after she was caught helping Jewish women escape to Switzerland, and other members suffered for their good deeds. This story was not told until recently because the family did not want publicity. Only after the last member of the Leitz family passed away did this story become known and become the subject of a book and film. I passed the Leica factory in Wetzlar many times, thinking only of the Leica camera, one of which I have

kept and will treasure forever. Ernst Leitz, like Oskar and Emilie Schindler and thousands others, including many Germans, risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Over 22,000 such people have been honoured as “Righteous Among the Nations” at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Life in Wetzlar and other DP camps across Germany was reasonably good and a sense of “community” prevailed. Various political parties and organizations tried to re-establish themselves, among them Poalei Zion, Shomer Hatzair, Bund and Beitar. There were elections, conferences and plenary sessions. My father attended several such gatherings as an ardent “Bundist”. Zionism became strongly rooted among many families who wanted to immigrate to “Eretz Yisroel”. Several Kibbutzim were established to train people who wanted to make Aliyah and work in cooperatives. ORT established several vocational training schools and I attended machinist classes for a while; perhaps that is why I wanted to become an engineer later in my life. Coincidentally, years later, we learned that our Mexican cousins Ayala and Julia headed ORT in Mexico and travelled around the world in its support. My political party was Beitar, created by Zev Jabotinsky, a right-wing nationalist whose mission was to free Palestine from the rule of the British and the threat of the Arabs. I have a picture of me in my Beitar uniform in Wetzlar. We attended meetings and listened to passionate speakers. We sang songs about the heroic exploits of heroes like Josef Trumpeldor and set our sights on returning to “Eretz Avoteinu” as the original lyrics of “Hatikvah” proclaimed.

After about a year in Wetzlar, we and others began worrying about our future and what the next destination would be. Those who wanted to immigrate to Palestine knew it would be difficult under the British mandate. When the Partition of Palestine was declared November 29, 1947, there were pitched battles across the land, and making Aliyah became virtually impossible and extremely dangerous. The choices were a DP camp in Germany or a detention camp in Cyprus. The uncertainty in Palestine and the difficulty of getting visas to North America or Western European countries created huge morale problems. As the Jewish people thousands of years earlier lamented, “we were freed from Egypt only to die in the desert”, so did many feel that they survived the Holocaust only to suffer further in DP or detention camps. We abandoned any thought of Palestine, fearing my mother could not endure another debilitating voyage and the extremely difficult living conditions Lisa Saar described in many of her letters. She was simply worn out, as photos from camp show. We tried to get into the US, but that proved futile despite Uncle Sam’s help, so the next target became Canada. Although we knew very little about our future home, we felt that being the neighbour of America was

beneficial. Moishe was the leader in our efforts to get into Canada and had many meetings with Canadian Immigration officials. Canada was notorious for its “none is too many” policy on Jewish immigration. The stories of interviews by Immigration Officials were horrifying. A person would walk into a room with an official behind a desk and be told to sit, but there were no chairs. Many sat on the floor, only to be told they would not qualify for Canada because people didn’t sit on the floor there. At one interview with my family, we were told that my sister and I would be able to go, but not my parents, because of my mother’s ill health. A family friend suggested Mania and Moishe “get married” to see if that might improve our chances of getting in as a family group. They obtained a local “Marriage Certificate” and reapplied. We learned that Canada was accepting a limited quota of tailors who would be sent to Winnipeg to work in the growing garment industry there. Several prominent Canadian Jewish manufacturers, Horace Cohen, Max Enkin and the Posluns family, had petitioned the Government to allow tailors to come in and undoubtedly had to provide adequate

financial guarantees, or “blood money”, so that they would not be a burden on the state. My father had to become a tailor even though he didn’t know one end of a needle from another. Our cousin’s husband, a master tailor, agreed to pose as my father to take the tailoring test. Armed with my father’s “tailored” credentials and a marriage certificate, Moishe again appealed to an official. With a “gift” of our only Russian gold coin, this official was finally persuaded to grant our family a visa. By 1951, Canada had admitted about 158,000 DP’s under the Bulk Labour Program. Israel and the US had each welcomed about 650,000.

The next stage was preparing for the trip, scheduled for Fall 1948. Right after Rosh Hashanah, which we could easily interpret as a “New Life” and not just a “New Year”, we gathered at the railway station, accompanied by relatives and friends who came to see us off. We were given ID documents, deloused, given some CARE food packages and put on a train to Bremerhaven. This time we travelled in actual passenger cars, rather than cattle cars, and our spirits and expectations were high. The train ride of about 430 km took us through Frankfurt, Kassel, Hannover and Bremen. We boarded our “Noah’s Ark”, the USS General Samuel Davis Sturgis, which was built as a transport ship for the US Navy in World War II. She had previously carried officials from the US, Canada, Australia and other countries to Tokyo to witness the Japanese surrender. The Sturgis carried DP’s and refugees all over the world. The ship could carry 3300 people.

Coming to Canada

Our family, together with hundreds of other families (the Canadian government has never revealed the number) boarded around October 8 and headed for Halifax, a journey of nine days. Yom Kippur occurred en route and a “Shul” was set up in one of the messes for services. The ship’s facilities were adequate. We slept in typical bunk compartments, although it was stifling. There was ample food and the officers and crew were friendly. We could move around the ship and I tried a few words of English on some of the sailors. The initial stages of the voyage around The Netherlands, through the North Sea, the Straits of Dover and English Channel were comfortable, but things changed drastically as we hit the open waters of the North Atlantic. The weather was cold and stormy, tossing the Sturgis like a tin can. Very few passengers had ever been

on a ship, let alone on a stormy ocean, and seasickness was the order of the day, every day. It was almost impossible to keep food down and we were told to drink lots of water and juices to prevent dehydration. My mother was very ill and was cared for by the medical staff on board. I spent most of the time on deck gazing into the unknown while adding whatever was in my stomach to the Atlantic Ocean. On, Shabbat, October16, we landed at Pier 21 in Halifax. After various official checks, we were issued temporary passports, deloused and sent to the train station. I was fascinated with the various signs in English, especially one that urged “Drink Coca Cota” (I thought the swirl was a T, not an L). I had my first taste when I found a bottle containing a few leftover sips; I certainly didn’t have a nickel for the “real thing”.

I saw Georges Island with its famous lighthouse in the middle of the harbour. For me, it was the symbolic equivalent of the Statue of Liberty which I had seen in many pictures. 25 years later, almost to the day, my second trip to Halifax was on Simpsons’ company jet and my view of Georges Island was from a suite of the Nova Scotia Hotel. The Halifax Mail Star dedicated a touching article about my first trip to the city.

Before boarding the train for Winnipeg, my mother was able to phone Uncle Sam, who told us he would meet the train on its stopover in Montreal. He was at Central Station to greet us. Our joy was boundless. He arranged to have us “sponsored” by the Petrushka and Krantz families, whom we knew from Kosov. We were allowed to leave the train and our Canadian life began in Montreal. Our family had to be split up as accommodations were tight. My parents and Mania stayed at the Petrushkas’. I was sent to the Krantz home. We had arrived Erev Succot and I went to services with Henoch Petrushka.

We were soon able to find lodging on Waverley Street, sharing a flat with a widow, her two children and their dog. Mr. Petrushka suggested that I be enrolled in Talmud Torah, the best parochial school in Montreal. He also told me that I would become Bar Mitzvah on November 11. My mother spoke to Uncle Sam who immediately sent a Tallit and Tefillin, which Mr. Petrushka taught me to put on. Right after Succcot, my mother took me to meet the president of the school, who told her that we would have to pay a tuition fee of $250. That would have been the end of my schooling at Talmud Torah if it weren't for the principal, Mr. Magid. He saw me sitting in the hallway and asked why I was there. After a few words of totally inadequate English, he asked if I spoke any Hebrew. We continued in fluent Hebrew, as I briefly described my background. He declared that anyone with my command of Hebrew must attend this school free of charge and sent me to be registered in Mrs. Goldie Freedman's office. She asked about my schooling and the spelling of my name, which at that time was Salomon Najman. She suggested our family name would be mispronounced, so we should change it to "Nayman", and gave me the first name "Solly". Later, when I needed a more mature first name, it became Sol with the middle name David added.

I started school October 27 and was sent to Grade 4 for about a week, then Grade 5 for a brief stint, and, finally, to Grade 6 for the remainder of the school year. The school had Shabbat Services led by Junior Cantors, students who had become Bnei Mitzvah and had good voices. On November 13, Shabbat Lech Lecha, I received an Aliyah as a new Bar Mitzvah. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to learn my Haftarah, so I have never recited it. I became a junior Chazan and joined the Bar Mitzvah boys in daily services at school. I was way ahead of everyone in all subjects except English, but not for long. My turning point occurred when our English teacher asked us to write an essay, "A Prince Is Born", after the birth of Prince Charles on November 14. I could barely put a sentence together, let alone write an essay, and failed. I resolved to learn English and French as quickly as possible. I was helped immensely by the Petrushkas' daughter, Evelyn, a brilliant high school student who graduated as the top student in the Province.

My next milestone was my first job. Mr. Petrushka arranged a weekend job at Levitt's, Montreal's foremost Kosher Delicatessen. My shift was after Shabbat for about five hours and Sundays from about 5 to 10 pm. I was paid 30 cents an hour and earned $3 each weekend. My main responsibility was making hot dogs and fountain drinks. A toasted bun and broiled hot dog with mustard and relish was a great treat. The drinks were prepared from syrup to which soda was added, with cherry cola being the most

popular. The famous smoked meat was hand carved and served on freshly baked rye bread, usually accompanied by hand cut fries and homemade coleslaw. There was nothing better that tasting a hot dog or smoked meat right out of the smoker, which was at the back of the restaurant. I was in heaven, earning $3 and being able to eat all I wanted; I just couldn't bring anything home. I would write my friends in Wetzlar that my weekend salary would have enabled me to go to dozens of movies and buy countless treats. Was I ever rich!

School was of utmost importance and it wasn't long before I became fluent in English and French. My English teacher was very helpful and gave me a book of Shakespeare's works. I soon forged wonderful lifelong friendships with Moishe Shiveck and Arnie Lidsky. I was always made to feel very welcome in their homes. I helped Moishe with some of his schoolwork and his grandmother helped me with my appetite. She frequently chided Moishe in Yiddish, "why can't you eat like Shloime", to which Moishe replied, "Shloime had not eaten in ten years" Through Moishe I met Seymore Obront, who also became a dear friend. I had profound respect and admiration for Seymore and his unique qualities as a family man, businessman, philanthropist and friend. We were devastated when he passed away suddenly in October 2009.

I participated in basketball, hockey and soccer, my best sport. Arnie, being the tallest, played centre on the basketball team and was our goalie in hockey. I also participated in track and field events and won several relay races because Simon Bramson was one of the fastest runners around. Many of the boys became Bar Mitzvah during the following year and I was invited to their "Boys Parties", which frequently featured deli from Levitt's. I often sang at school socials, usually with Dinnie Segal, and I taught Arnie and his sister Gloria the basic Box dance steps. My first date was with Essie Goldstein at Lindy's for banana splits and sodas. I spent $1.21 on the evening, including a 15 cent tip and was rewarded with my first real kiss.

We moved several times in the following year from St. Urbain to City Hall to Henri Julien near Pine, which became our home for many years. Shortly after we moved in, we welcomed Uncle Sam, Aunt Adele and their son Murray. We received a kitchen table and chairs that had been handmade in Uncle Sam's furniture factory in Brooklyn as well as a new "Norge" refrigerator to replace our ice box.

Mania and Moishe were officially wed October 15, 1950, at the Bucharest Club on Main St. with Cantor Syrek officiating and Mr. Petrushka reading the Ketubah. We had wonderful neighbours. Phil "Butch" Rosenblatt, who lived two doors away, became one of my best friends and was my Best Man. Mania and Moishe lived

with us until David was born. Then they moved to DeLapeltrie Street, and were neighbours of Isser and Mary.

Next door to us was the Morin family. Madame Morin was a virulent anti-Semite who often taunted me, “Va t’en en Palestine, Maudit Juif”. One day, as I was tossing a football in front of my house, she called the police saying I was disturbing “her peace”. The police came and I was ordered to move, even though I was in front of my own door. I refused, and one of them shoved me in the back of the cruiser. I was wearing my school pin, on which he scraped his hand, causing him to bleed. He whacked me on the head a few times and told me that I would be charged with failure to move and resisting arrest. Arnie Lidsky and Eddy Solomon arrived, as we had planned to go to a movie. They saw me being driven away to the police station. They followed me there and watched as I was booked. I think they had to post bail. A few weeks later they came with me for my trial. The Judge asked if I had refused to move and I said yes. He then asked if I would be willing to move now; again I answered yes, and the case was dismissed. Long live Quebec justice!

I worked during most of the summers except one year, when I went to Camp B’nai B’rith for several weeks. After graduating from Talmud Torah in 1950, I was enrolled at Herzliah Junior High. I was privileged to have Irving Layton as my English teacher; he became one of the most influential people in my life and the lives of countless others. Herzliah was a great school, and many graduates achieved great fame in life. I had no problems academically, but my behaviour was often questioned, especially when someone used a derisive term about me. The worst was “mockie” (a neo-Canadian). Normie Zeitz once called me that. I held him by his feet upside down from the school’s second floor window, threatening to drop him the next time he used that word. This caused quite a commotion and I was called into the office of our Principal, Mr. Ogulnik. He ordered me to call my mother and tell her to come get me as I was to be expelled. I knew that this would not be welcome news for my mother. When the office telephone was thrust into my hands, I pretended to dial my home number, but dialled the school number instead, resulting in a busy signal. I repeated the same ruse several times. I finally told Mr. Ogulnik that my mother was very sick and had probably removed the receiver so that she could get some sleep. This seemed to placate him. He gave me a conditional “pardon” and made me promise never

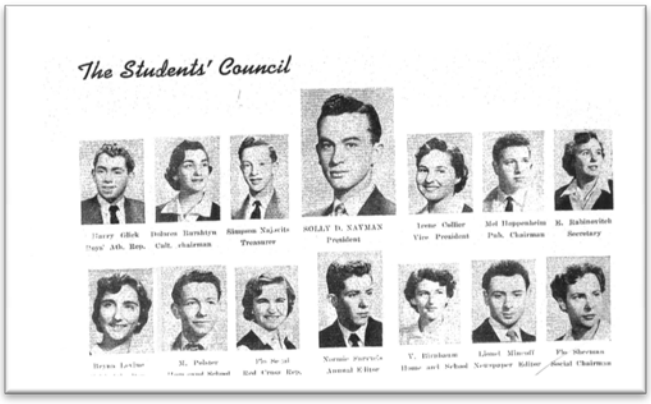
to repeat my offence.

School life was exciting. Irving Layton immortalized our class in his poem, “To the Girls of My Graduating Class”. His teaching was essentially freeform, with many days spent discussing and debating world events on Fletcher’s Field rather than in the classroom. His great passion and zest for life rubbed off on many of us. Our social activities became more frequent at school, the “Y” and parties, especially Sweet Sixteen’s. Movies and sports events were my outlets outside school.

Hockey became my passion after I saw my first game at the Forum December 12, 1949. The Canadiens beat the New York Rangers 3-1 with Maurice Richard scoring a goal; I was hooked for life, and Maurice “The Rocket” Richard became my idol. I went to as many games as possible, lining up several hours before game time to get a ticket in the standing room sections. I would always stand at the visiting team’s end, switching sides between periods, to see the Habs and Maurice on the attack. Among the highlights of every game was the “Bugler” in Standing Room who would get everyone into a frenzy with his “Ta-ta-ra-ta-ta-ra Charge”. My passion for the Bleu-Blanc-Rouge is also in the DNA of my sons and grandsons.

The Montreal Royals were the Brooklyn Dodgers’ farm team. Many greats played for the Royals, including Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Dan Bankhead, Don Newcombe, Bobby Morgan, Sandy Amoros and Roberto Clemente. Walter Alston managed the Royals before moving to the Dodgers; Tommy Lasorda pitched for the Royals before playing for and managing the Dodgers. We hoped against hope for a World Series championship, but “wait till next year” became the Dodgers’ fate until 1955. Several of the Royals players lived near us, including Chuck Connors, later “The Rifleman” of TV fame. The players would often give us tickets. I also started following football, with the Montreal Alouettes and New York Giants being my favourite teams.

After losing my childhood, I was determined to live my youth and the rest of my life with gusto. While some of our family and landsleit bemoaned the loss of the “Old Country” ways, I would have none of that; there was no looking back for me, only fast forward. One of my favourite songs was Frankie Laine’s “I’m Gonna Live Till I Die”; this may have become my motto. There were many great movie musicals at that time, and I was particularly inspired by Mario Lanza. His song “Be My Love” was one of my favourites; I often sang it at parties. Yes, I could hit a “High C” at that time. Binnie



Katzman was my pianist.

After graduating in 1952, I entered Baron Byng High School. The school was Montreal's largest; almost all the students were Jewish kids from the surrounding neighbourhoods. The kids who lived west of Park Avenue and in Outremont generally attended our rival, Strathcona. I was active in school, sports and social life. I was on our soccer team, one of the best in the city. Our basketball team won the city championship several times. Good grades came easily and I won several prizes in inter-school debates. Mr. Henderson, our Principal, appointed Bryna Levine and me to represent our school on Eaton's Junior Executive for the 1953-54 school year. This group was comprised of representatives from all the city high schools. We met at the great Eaton's store on Ste. Catherine Street every week to discuss community events, participate in charitable functions and learn about retailing. Who knew then that it was to become my life's work? We had blue blazers with an Eaton logo on the breast pocket, a lapel pin and tailored grey flannels to wear at school functions and our store meetings, and received $2 for every meeting attended. Another benefit was summer employment for those who wanted to work in the store. I worked there during the summers of '53 and '54. This certainly was better than the job I had previously had as delivery boy at Campus Market on Prince Arthur. Among my best friends at both Herzliah and BB was Morris Greenbaum. He had also arrived in Canada in 1948, was a brilliant student and achieved the highest graduation marks in the province; he later became a noteworthy architect. Morris suggested I run for Student's Council President for our final year.

I was reluctant to do so as I wasn't very well known, especially among the grade eight and nine students, and I would have to run against Norman Samuels, one of the most popular guys at school. His campaign manager was Bryna, one of the most popular girls. Morris offered to be my campaign manager and to recruit a significant team to back me. I agreed

and we started campaigning, meeting kids, talking to them and handing out “Vote for Solly Nayman” pamphlets. One day, Morris bought a chicken at the Rachel Market around the corner from the school, tied a “Vote for Solly Nayman” streamer around its neck and set it loose in the school’s hallways where it ran around like “a chicken without its head”. Mr. Henderson and the teachers were not amused, but, given Morris’s academic status and my Eaton’s position, the misdemeanour was disregarded. The next critical step was the final campaign addresses at the school assembly. Because of the size of the school, there were two assemblies, one for grades eight and nine, the other for grades ten and eleven. I asked Irving Layton to help me polish my speech. I spoke first in the morning and, despite being extremely nervous, held my own. I spoke second in the afternoon and was able to counter some of Norman’s points. I won the Presidency of The Student’s Council of BBHS, the number one school in Quebec, in a landslide…by one vote. Norman, being a good sport, had cast his ballot for me. This was a remarkable breakthrough for me and gave me great confidence to tackle challenges throughout my life. My year as President was gratifying and maturing, and taught me much about leadership and team work.

After graduating from BBHS in 1954, I worked another summer at Eaton’s, then began my first year at McGill Engineering. University life was great and I enjoyed it fully. Unfortunately, my academic ambitions hit a snag when my beloved mother passed away March 17, 1955, just when several critical exams were scheduled. It was the same day as the storied Richard Riot. I lost several exams during Shiva and would have had to repeat several subjects the following year. This and lack of funds compelled a major decision. I chose to work during the summer and then decide what to do about continuing at McGill or, perhaps, enrolling in evening classes at Sir George Williams (now Concordia). Eaton’s was not accommodating former Junior Executives full-time, so I decided to try Simpson’s down the street, a store I had visited only once previously, to get their ad in the school’s “ECHO” annual magazine.

One of the perks of being school president was the solicitation of all the annual ads, for which I received a commission of 10%. The $250 I earned was certainly welcome. When I went to confirm the Simpson’s ad, I was sent to the Personnel office to meet a Miss Sherman. She was very attractive and pleasant, and happened to be Jewish. In May 1955, I went to see her about a job at Simpson’s. Given my experience at Eaton’s and having been a Junior Executive there, I was hired immediately. My summer employee number was S-50, perhaps a harbinger of Sol’s 50 years in the industry. I was assigned to the Hardware Department as a salesman at the stupendous weekly salary of $36 plus 1% commission. I quickly became the top salesman in the department and soon drew the attention of my supervisor, especially by coming in late many mornings. I used to get a lift from one of the ladies in the store who was frequently late. After being sent home without pay one day for being late, I became almost obsessive about punctuality forever. At the end of the summer, I was offered full-time employment and a raise to $38 per week. The need for money prevailed and I began full-time work and evening classes in Chemical Engineering at SGWU. As it is said, the rest is history! I was offered a promotion as a Section Head in the Sporting Goods

Department and, soon thereafter, Assistant Manager. I also had my first encounter with a certain young woman named Queenie Greenspoon.

From School to Career and Family

Retailing was in, school was out. My advancement at Simpson's was rapid, from Sporting Goods to Toys, when I reconnected with Bubbie. I then became Department Manager of Candies and Tobaccos, at a salary of $5,500, and became engaged to Bubbie, who was an outstanding teacher at Talmud Torah, my first school in Montreal. We were married August 27, 1961, at Shaare Zion Synagogue. On December 30, 1963, we welcomed our first son, Gary Mitchell; Stuart Ross was born November 29, 1965. I tried to be as close to the boys as possible and rarely missed a family dinner or their bath time, their last bottle and bed time. My rapid rise at Simpson's continued. In June 1968, I developed a new contemporary advertising/marketing strategy for the Montreal market. In October 1969, another promotion brought us to Toronto. We were back in Montreal a little more than a year later. We had barely begun living in our first house in Dollard des Ormeaux, when we were transferred yet again to Toronto, this time for good, in August 1972. A succession of promotions followed. I ran the Downtown Toronto store – one of the greatest stores in the world – for nearly five years, perhaps the most gratifying assignment of my career. I enjoyed beating up our main competitor, Eaton's, especially after they opened their new store as the anchor of the Eaton Centre.

I enjoyed hosting such famous personalities as Sophia Loren, Charlton Heston, Conrad Black, Edward Heath, Isabella Rossellini, Peter Ustinov and John Diefenbaker.

Simpsons (the apostrophe was dropped to find favour with Francophone customers) constantly provided me with every available opportunity to further improve my skills. In 1970, I was sent to the University of Western Ontario for its famous Management Training Course; in 1980, I was off to Harvard.

After various moves in merchandising, I was appointed Vice President Merchandising, and people stopped asking "what's a nice Jewish Boy like you doing at Simpsons". Julian Benbow's sketch of me holding the Simpson Tower summed it up well, "He's got the whole world in his hands"

Saturday, November 18, 1972

Message to the ambitious—
hard work and curiosity

By AL HERRON
Staff Reporter

Hard work, curiosity and "a sense of urgency" are the attributes Saul D. Nayman, Montreal sales manager, to a national sales manager, at 1 Jan. 1 of Robert Simpson Limited, recommends to young people with ambitions.

Mr. Nayman should have cheered he speaks. He and his family arrived in Halifax in 1948, with no money, no English or French, although the young Saul spoke six other languages — and all his worldly goods in a knapsack on his back.

He was born in Poland, but the family fled to Russia ahead of the German invasion. After the war, he went to West Germany, where the family lived until they emigrated to Canada in 1948.

Mr. Nayman speaks both French and English fluently. He do his wife and two children.

He started work at Simpsons in 1955 as a summer employment while at university (McGill). He says Simpsons thought I should consider remaining as a career. So presented me. I said no. I abandoned formal studies and have never regretted it.

"I've envisioned the company's own training courses as good as a college degree course."

Although he arrived in Canada with no material assets, Mr. Nayman says: "My greatest personal asset was freedom and the opportunity to live in this great country. It's a wonderful country for those who want to work and presents unlimited opportunities."

He continued: "I wish more young people realized the great future there is in retailing. Young people should ... [illegible] ... never stop wanting to learn, even after a formal education. "But the single most important aspect is a sense of urgency — a complete dedication to the needs of our customer — a wanting to do things with a human feeling, a personal feeling."

He said his own next 20 years are dedicated. "They're committed to Simpsons."

Saul D. Nayman

Bubbie and I were blessed with success in our endeavours. I worked for the family, while she worked for the community, especially the healthcare sector, becoming President of the Mount Sinai Hospital Auxiliary. We were active members of Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, where I served on the Board for many years and where our sons celebrated their respective Bar Mitzvahs. Our sons recited their Haftorahs perfectly and the evening celebrations were attended by all the senior leaders of Simpsons. The proudest man at both evenings was my father as he danced with Betty Kennedy, a much admired TV personality and the wife of our Chairman, Allan Burton. Sadly, Bubbie's father had passed away in May 1974 and was badly missed by the boys, whom he adored.

Sol D. Nayman, formerly General Manager, Merchandising. Fashion Division, has been appointed Vice-President, Merchandising;

Shortly after Stuart's Bar, our Company was acquired by Hudson's Bay Company. I was appointed General Manger Corporate Marketing of HBC, and was mandated to restructure and integrate the buying/ merchandising/marketing platforms. While my divisions outperformed virtually all others, the corporation was not performing well and was losing market share rapidly to specialty retailers and category killers. In early 1985, many of the most senior executives at HBC were terminated, later including me. I decided to go on a ski trip with the boys and begin an earnest search for a new career after nearly thirty years. Enter Saul and Joe Mimran with whom I began an incredible relationship and founded Club Monaco. After opening the first store on Queen Street in September 1985, we grew at a pace of almost a store a month and had opened 48 stores in the first four years. We were relentless in our drive to create a successful, enduring Brand with global recognition. My constant challenge was HHIU, how high is up.

On March 19, 1986, my father passed away in Montreal after being hospitalized for several months. He had a difficult and unhappy life. His "castles in the sky" were just that and his dream of a Bundist socialist society never materialized. He worked hard, but had little to show for it. It was ironic that after entering Canada as a "pretend tailor", he ended up in the industry. My father was a simple man, but he was highly intelligent and well read, devouring every word in the "Forverts" or "Kanader Adler", his favourite Yiddish newspapers. He was active in the Workmen's Circle and was close to his

Landsleit. He wrote many wonderful articles including a very touching story in the Stok Memorial Book. To my great regret, I don't know if I ever heard my father say "I love you" to anyone.

We took Club Monaco public in 1987 and were later acquired by Dylex, at the time the most successful specialty retail corporation. However, Dylex soon began a rapid decline in market share and profitability as a result of poor strategic execution and a sharp economic downturn.

Bubbie and I had just returned from Florence and had dinner with our sons to celebrate my 52nd birthday. I was not in a celebratory mood as I had taken a huge "paper hit" in the market and was telling the boys that our lifestyle may have to change. Gary shook me back to reality. I was bemoaning my financial state at age 52, but he reminded me that my mother was dead at that age. I had survived greater challenges and setbacks in the past and would continue to do so.

Despite a weak retail environment and poor results at Dylex, Club Monaco continued to grow, and we soon entered the US as well as Japan and Korea through master franchising agreements. I travelled extensively through Japan and Korea and even learned to speak Japanese. But the best was yet to come.

At Club Monaco, we had been trying desperately to get away from Dylex and we were finally able to so early in 1997, by taking the company public and buying out Dylex. Although the price was prohibitive, we were glad to be on our own and able to chart the best strategic direction for our brand.

In March 1999, we sold the company again, this time to Polo Ralph Lauren. Although results were initially favourable, Polo's poor corporate performance and differences in personalities led to Polo replacing the entire senior management team, beginning with Joe and me in August 2000. Following a couple of other endeavours, my "office" is now the Donalda Club where my daily work load features Pilates, Yoga , spinning or other fitness activities as well as about 120 rounds of golf. My objective is simple, to be younger next year!

The Next Nayman Generations

Gary graduated from what is now known as the Richard Ivey School of Business at Western in 1986 and is a real estate broker. He married Nicole Pinto March 24, 1991; on January 10, 1995, we celebrated the birth of our twin granddaughters, Candace Brooke (Chinka Miriam) and Lauren Danielle (Lana Daniella). When I held the girls for the first

time at Mount Sinai Hospital – one in each arm – I thought that I had gone to heaven. Later that year, we were saddened by the deaths of Bubbie's mother on December 21 and my sister on December 28.

On August 10, 1996, Lauren was diagnosed with pneumococcal meningitis at Toronto's world famous Hospital for Sick Children and her life hung by a thread. The illness left her deaf. On November 22, Lauren became the youngest child in Canada at that time to receive a cochlear implant. Because of her cochlear implants and extensive Auditory Verbal Therapy, Lauren is fully mainstreamed at school. On May 5, 1999, we welcomed our first grandson, Maurice Noah (Moshe Baruch), and I had the privilege of being the Sandik at his Brit Milah. On January 27, 2007, Candace and Lauren celebrated their B'not Mitzvah. It was an extraordinary milestone of joy and pride for the family and friends as the girls accepted their roles and responsibilities of Jewish women.

Stuart graduated from the University of Toronto Law School in 1991 and was called to the Bar in 1992. He had articled with Stikeman Elliott and spent a summer at their London office. Stuart was to join the firm in Toronto but accepted an offer he couldn't refuse from Shearman and Sterling in New York and moved there in 1993. There he met Hillary Cooper and they were married May 17, 1998. On June 29, 2003, they welcomed their first child, our second grandson, Benjamin Aaron (Baruch Yehuda), and I had my second Mitzvah as Sandik. On July 6, 2007, Hillary gave birth to a daughter, Rachel Ava (Rachel Aviva).

We are extremely proud of our grandchildren. Candace is highly athletic, excelling in several sports, and is a swim instructor. Lauren is an equestrienne and an extremely talented artist. Maurice has also shown artistic talent and is an expert on automobiles. Benjamin may be the world's youngest expert on dinosaurs. Rachel was recently the youngest rider in the Hampton Classic and won her first Blue Ribbon. All five excel in school.

Witnessing their childhood has more than adequately compensated me for the childhood that I lost. Every time I make them smile because of my "shtick" – uppies, lappies, piggies, pokops, massages and other seemingly inane actions – provides me with boundless joy and, hopefully, gives them some pleasure. It takes so little to

gladden my heart when they are around and I will drop everything to be with them or speak on the phone, or Skype or even Text.

I have been blessed well beyond my wildest dreams. I survived the Holocaust with my immediate family and built a new life in an extraordinary country, Canada. Whatever success I have achieved has been inspired and supported by family, friends and business associates. To borrow Newton's immortal phrase, "If I have seen further than Descartes, it was by standing on the shoulders of Giants". I love our sons and the wonderful "daughters" and grandchildren that they brought into the family and I rejoice in all their achievements. Of all the "Giants", clearly there is no greater one than my beloved Queenie, who has stood by my side for five decades.

This story is my tribute to all who enabled me to become what I am and a memorial to the beloved members of our extended families who perished in the Holocaust and to those who have passed on since then. Each of you, my grandchildren, is named in memory of loved ones. You are the future of the Nayman family. I hope my story will inspire you to be forever proud of your Jewish heritage, to love and support each other, to grow up to be

good people, to strive for the highest personal goals, to make a difference in this world and always to be proud of being a Nayman. I love you all beyond words. May G-d bless you always.

Zadie

November 5, 2010