

## PARENTS

*by Mike Harris*

Everyone here has had parents and I warrant that all here have been or are parents. Some of us have been more “LUCKY” than others because there is nothing one can do about choosing one’s parents in life's lottery. I hit the jackpot! They also were skilled in the art of parenting.

First, as I already have mentioned, my mother and father were in love all their married life, proof of this, the dated love letters my father sent my mother all the time she was alive. Second, the smart division of family responsibilities. Mom bossed the home, Dad’s authority started and ended at the door. Third, mutual respect and consideration for each other in their spheres of influence and support of each other in their personal spheres. Fourth, the agreement to talk out conflicting views without visual conflict where children were about or concerned. This made for an idyllic environment for my brother and me.

To get back to the subject, a description of their attributes, Mom about 5foot 5, dark brown hair, brown eyes, not a raving beauty, but fairly attractive. Outstanding characteristic, everything she did, she did more than just well, and a backbone that did not know how to bend, smart –very, very smart.

My father escaped from Latvia, a Balkan country very dominated by Russia. His best friend was caught up in a round up and sent to Siberia. That prompted him to come to this country. While he was still very young my father was raised by the Hebrew orthodoxy. They recognized his smarts and undertook his education. There was a younger sister who stayed with her mother. His education by the rabbinate necessitated his being sent from one rabbi to a more learned rabbi as he progressed in his studies. He landed in Philadelphia, having crossed the Atlantic steerage class, got off the ship

and the ship sank at the pier, authenticated by the newspapers at the time. My father met my mother when she was sixteen and they married when he was twenty and she was seventeen. The key words that best describe my father are, “idealist”, “Zionist”, “teacher”, in that order.

In the new world flexibility was the key to survival. Because he had to work on the Sabbath, strict orthodoxy labeled him non-Jew heretic. There was no flexibility in the strict application of the order, but survival trumps all. He worked and sent for his mother and sister, however his mother passed and only his sister made to America. Here my mother finished training her sister-in-law and she became an expert tailor in her own right, and was soon making her own way.

My father wanted to be an actor. In the new world there was in New York City a thriving Jewish cultural community. He found that he was gifted, he was able to make a living for the family and indulge his desire to be an actor. He became a monologist, the premier interpreter of the characters of the writer “SHOLEM ALECHEM” better known for his two movies “YENTEL” and “FIDDLER ON THE ROOF”. He and my mother without formal education raised two boys. Taught them to think, set standards of deportment and made what I like to believe, strong, civil, decent human beings.

