

Coming of Age 2

Early Sunday morning, June 9, 1918, my father finished his morning prayers, removed the phylacteries from his forehead and left arm, and kissed my still petulant mother, my sisters, brother and me good-bye. I could see him with my Aunt Kranie in the front seat of the truck as they drove off. At about eight o'clock we learned by telephone that in York, Maine, another automobile had forced the truck off the road into a soft shoulder. My father had been killed instantly when his head struck the steering wheel, but Kranie was unscratched. She was returning with his body. "She won't enter the house. She killed him. He went only because of her," my mother screamed, then burst into tears and wept until the *chevre kadisha* (committee for Jewish ritual burial) arrived to prepare his body for burial. I tried to console Mother but to no avail. My sisters joined me in our common effort. "Lew would have been killed if he had gone along. Kranie's the murderer," she cried out and then stopped suddenly. "Leibel, you'll take the Latin exam tomorrow morning. The funeral will be at one o'clock. Go study."

When my father's parents came into our tenement, she ordered them out and then locked herself in her bedroom, sobbing and moaning. I persuaded

my grandparents to stay and told them of the "talk" on Friday evening. Kranie, her sister Channah and Channah's daughter Rose, Arnie's age, came into the house. Before long the house was crowded with family and friends. Goldie, Becky and I finally persuaded my mother to open the door; the two of them helped her dress, and she washed and made herself presentable. She looked like a shadow, and as she walked toward her in-laws, she stopped short, as though they were nonexistent and not entitled to feel the pain. Finally Dr. Davis arrived and gave my mother a sedative. We led her back to her room, where she finally fell asleep.

Toward evening, I conducted *mincha* and later *maariv* (the afternoon and evening prayers). Kaddish was not to be recited until the end of the funeral. My Latin teacher telephoned to say I would not have to take the exam (I'd be graded without one), and she had the principal's approval for me to remain home the rest of the week.

A special visitor arrived after my mother woke up. Percival Baxter, a high school friend of my father, had given my father piano lessons and let him use the family piano for practice in return for art lessons. My father had had no instruction in painting but a natural talent. Baxter seemed to use the right words of comfort and sympathy, but more importantly, he made my mother smile, even laugh for a moment, with a funny story about a cat who jumped on the keyboard while my father was playing the Baxter piano. When he said that two of his most cherished possessions were my father's water colors he had received as birthday presents and then kissed my mother's hand, she seemed to be revived and refreshed. (Years later, friends reported that at least one, perhaps two, of my father's water colors were hung in the executive mansion when Baxter became governor of Maine.)

All of us tried to sleep that night after the non-immediate family and guests had gone. My mother reminisced, reciting from my father's letters to her while she was still in Meretz, singing one of his favorite songs until she collapsed and was given one of the pills Dr. Davis had left for her. We tried to sleep after Mama had become quiet, but Becky, Goldie and I were up most of the night watching her. The next morning was to be filled with visitors. The throngs that attended the funeral and the rabbi's eulogy confirmed my belief that my father was widely respected and loved.

As we passed through the vestry to go upstairs into the synagogue, I saw the many names of those who were dead and whom my father had memorialized in calligraphy. At the cemetery we passed some of the wooden headstones my father had carved, and I recalled his prediction that the Maine winters would soon obliterate the letters and destroy the wood. My mother insisted upon holding Sidney in her arms throughout the services

while comforting the three girls hovered about her. Aunt Goldie, then eighteen, was constantly at my mother's side, calming her. My father's family stood next to Goldie, and my grandmother, Chaya Sorah, kept repeating "let bygones be bygones," but my mother remained silent. When we returned home she again poured out her heart, her cries and her tears. (Only once during her lifetime and those of my father's parents did she talk to any of my father's family. In the late twenties, when my grandfather learned that she might be leaving Portland, he came to see her and effected a kind of reconciliation.)

We children had been torn between mother, on the one hand, and father's family, on the other, but any effort by us toward reconciliation seemed futile. Sidney, a year and four months old at the time of our father's death, later paved the way to restore some warmth to the family relationship. On his way to and from school he would always stop at my grandparents' home for a cookie from Grandma Chaya Sorah. She made him promise that he would say Kaddish for her and frequently reminded him of that promise. After her death, Sidney got up at six every morning for the morning prayers, no child's play in Portland's cold winters. But he did it. He had asked my mother whether she objected to his saying the Kaddish. "You made a promise, keep it" was her answer.

Over thirty-five years later, on the day after my mother's death, the five of us children discussed her emotions at the time of our father's funeral. We agreed that her anger must have helped blunt the cutting edge of her grief to soften the blow of her burden.

Shivah (the week of mourning) for my father ended on Saturday night. Two days later, the bookkeeper at Murdock & Freeman came to our house and told us that Father's trusted manager, Ben, had withdrawn all money from the bank, emptied the safe, taken most of the syrup and disappeared with the company's truck. My mother uttered a long sigh, telephoned Joe Connolly, the family lawyer and friend, and told us that Mr. Connolly would call the police and the insurance company. But my father had been so devoted to Ben and so confident of his integrity that he excluded himself and Ben from the corporation's insurance against theft. On Thursday of that week, the factory building was burned to the ground in a four-alarm fire. The cause was declared to be arson, and the insurance was not enough for the mortgage. Our family was penniless. We were part owners of our building, but its value was less than the mortgage. My mother took the news much more stoically than I had expected. "The Almighty will help us." Everything she knew, she shared with her children. I suggested that I would immediately get a job and not go back to high school. My mother would hear nothing of it, but I did get a summer job working for an ice

man. I did not have to work on Saturdays and proudly brought three dollars to my mother every Friday afternoon. When Becky made a similar suggestion, my mother hugged her and said it wasn't necessary.

Within two weeks after my father's death, Mother emptied the "dark" bedroom trunk on a round table in the bedroom that contained the entrance door. Stripped of all furniture except the remnant-laden table, the room became a retail shop. Word spread through the neighborhood that Kuna Weinstein was selling remnants at bargain prices. Thus began her business career.

One day, when there were few remnants left, she departed, saying that she would not return until nightfall. As the evening shadows fell, a neighbor brought her home from Portland's railroad station; she was loaded with heavy bundles. She had made the rounds of mills owned by her and my father's acquaintances in the mill towns nearby and returned with cloth "mill-ends." Before too long, one of the stores in our building became vacant. With her reputation for integrity, she went to Boston to get credit and was able to open a dry goods shop, with haberdashery and household "white goods"—sheets, pillow cases, towels and a host of items varying from sewing aids and dress patterns to work and sport clothes.

The store had a large storage room in the rear, with a small toilet room. The low front entrance was at the back of the store, and anyone over five feet, eight inches, had to stoop to enter. The rear door led to the back yard. This room became kitchen, study, playroom, dining room and storeroom. We lived here until we went to bed in our tenement upstairs.

November 11, 1918, Armistice Day, saw unrestrained joy in Portland, beginning with the announcement of Germany's railroad-car surrender and lasting throughout the day and night. Bands were interspersed in endless parades: the Veterans of the Spanish-American War, army units from nearby forts, the National Guard, our high school, police and fire departments, bands from nearby cities and towns and, of course, our neighborhood Italian band. And the news that Uncle Sam Romanow, who had been drafted, would not have to report for duty, brought relief to his new wife.

On the first night of Passover 1919, the first Seder after my father's death, we assembled around the table for the family observance. We were all stronger than I had thought we would be as I conducted the family service, following the family tradition. Sid, who was only two years and several months old, asked the "four questions." I would recite a word in Hebrew; he would repeat it; I would recite the translation into Yiddish and he would repeat that, although far from perfectly, until all four questions had been asked and answered in Hebrew and Yiddish. Then I added in Yiddish, Sid repeating each word at a time, "Lew, now give me the answers

to my four questions." There was hilarity and I lifted Sid up to receive the cheers, holding one hand in the air. The only person who seemed distressed was Civie, the youngest sister, who had asked the questions a year earlier, so I quickly asked her to recite the four questions again.

Later, when we came to Moses' and Aaron's efforts to have Pharaoh free the Israelite slaves, I said that we would sing in English a Negro spiritual that I had learned at school: "Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land." That spiritual and Sid's original phrasing in Hebrew and Yiddish of the four questions became integral parts of every family Seder since 1919.

I went to work for a "ship's tailor," Abraham Bernstein, who ran a men's clothing, jewelry and pawn shop diagonally across Middle Street from our store and house. My hours were from a little after three to ten. School let out at three, and at six I had a half-hour for supper. Bernstein's daughter Etta was my classmate and spent considerable time in the store. When there were no customers we often helped each other with homework. A ship's tailor, at least around 1920, sold the crew clothing, supplies and family gifts, including jewelry and trinkets. The captain paid their bills (probably receiving a "commission"), to be collected at trip's end. Once we had an attempted robbery by three armed sailors. I ducked under the counter and pressed the police "panic button"; the police arrived within minutes. Etta was the only person with me and became hysterical; she had to be taken home. On another occasion, when I was alone, a somewhat inebriated Mediterranean sailor opened his trousers and pantomimed indecent suggestions. The panic button again came to my rescue. Thereafter, I refused to go alone to the wharves with baskets of samples of merchandise.

Portland could be a rough town in those days, and Middle Street was often the scene of gang wars, with ethnic groups banded against one another and some gang wars within the same ethnic group. We maintained good relationships with most of our neighbors, and our enlarged home was frequently the temporary shelter when a ship came into Portland harbor with new immigrants. All the children gave up our beds and slept on the floor. Once, when a ship loaded with Greek and Italian immigrants disembarked in Portland, even my mother slept on the floor so that the newly arrived would have beds. Directly across from mother's store was the Siciliano Pharmacy. My mother often reminded us that when a doctor could not be reached, the Italian pharmacist (who, as an immigrant boy, slept in our house and who later became a physician) had kept her alive with some anti-asthma medication, and our families had become intimate friends. One evening during Passover, when Civie was about eight years old, my mother sent her to the Sicilianos with a pot full of matzoh balls from a huge pot

of chicken soup she had prepared. Civie, with her cargo, was walking across Middle Street when shooting began between two gangs. She stood on the streetcar tracks, probably trying to decide whether to protect herself with the heavy matzoh balls. When the shooting stopped, she completed her errand and ran back home in a panic.

Another neighbor had a son, William Vacchiano, whose constant trumpet practicing kept the neighborhood awake at night or brought us the equivalent of reveille in the morning. (In November 1988, at a New York Philharmonic gala celebrating the forty-fifth anniversary of Leonard Bernstein's last-minute debut as the orchestra's conductor, Bill, retired first trumpet of the Philharmonic, and I had a joyous reunion.) And an Italian band that played for festivals and funerals and sometimes gave open-air summer concerts rehearsed constantly. My brother Sid, when he was old enough, became a regular attendant and parade follower.

I worked for Abraham Bernstein during all of my high school years. Sea cargoes kept Portland's wharves loaded, and ship's tailoring was very successful. As the major clerk I worked six hours every afternoon and evening during the school year and six days and evenings during the summer. Friday evenings and Saturdays were excepted because Bernstein was an Orthodox Sabbath observer. Moe Huberman often came to the store, especially if he thought the next day's assignment was tough, and largely through his insistence I remained on the debating team, the school band and orchestra, the Glee Club, the magazine and yearbook staff, the Classical Forum, the French Club, the Public Speaking and Correct English Clubs, and other activities (this breathless list I extracted from our Senior Yearbook). I must have joined the Salesmanship Club to show Mr. Bernstein that I wanted to improve in my job. It now seems incredible that I could have participated in so many activities while working every afternoon and evening, but my classmate Etta often took over selling or talking to customers for me. When the ship's tailor establishment was locked for the night, I would usually go across the street, help trim the windows of my mother's store or lock up—but it was Rebecca who was mother's chief helper. Our Friday evening singing and plays continued and Sabbath was still the holy and happy day.

At high school I continued the college course I had started in January 1918, although I had abandoned any idea of going further than high school. My mother had five mouths to feed in addition to her own, and all my earnings went into the family pot. As for school, I did my work and juggled my activities, rehearsed during school breaks and found time to play Dick Deadeye in *Pinafore*, Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*, and a wide variety of other roles. I also landed on the winning state high school

debating team at Bates College, played the violin, then viola, in the orchestra and the baritone horn in the cadet band, all with the support of the principal, my teachers and friends, my family, Etta Bernstein, and above all Moe Huberman. There were always books in at least two pockets of my coat and trousers, and I forced myself to use every available moment to read and study.

During my junior year, the Maine Centennial (the hundredth anniversary of Maine's breaking away from Massachusetts and becoming a state) included a Horribles' Parade, and my costume and conduct as a drunk were so realistic that they won me not only twenty Maine Centennial half-dollars, but a purported "arrest" for a few minutes by a police officer. He grabbed me as I turned into India Street from Congress on my way home. Although I protested that I was not drunk, he led me to a police call box for a paddy wagon, when he suddenly stopped, asked me to open my mouth, smelled my breath and said, "You aren't drunk, what's this all about?" I told him and showed him the half-dollars. He let me go, saying, "You haven't been arrested; get home and change, but fast."

I loved the mornings at high school and the homework I sneaked in between work and sleeping. I still found time to join a high school fraternity whose dramatic director I became—and which presented plays for certain institutions and charities. A newspaper picture showed the cast of *The Pot Boiler* in action: Oscar Cox and Moe Huberman, in lead parts, and I, as the frantic dramatist and director, writing the potboiler only as the rehearsals developed the plot.

(Oscar was graduated from Yale Law School and, while serving in a federal office many years later, found the obscure nineteenth-century congressional act that gave Franklin D. Roosevelt the basis of Lend-Lease; he later became administrator of the Foreign Economic Administration. Moe was in the Department of Justice. He developed a highly successful law practice and taught at Hastings Law School in San Francisco. He and his wife, Jane, and their four children came East for a family reunion. One night after dinner, Moe, his son Robert and I walked through our home, and I described for Robert various Jewish works of art, artifacts and old Hebrew books. Several months later, Moe died of leukemia. Only he, his wife and his physician had known of his illness.)

As Moe persisted in his efforts to persuade me to apply for college, I kept insisting that my first responsibility was to my family. "But you'll be of much greater help to all of them if you're a college graduate," he replied, but I was stubborn and convinced that the family needed all I could earn then and there. Two jobs came along: a cub reporter evenings (seven to midnight every night except Friday) for the *Portland Press Herald*; a day job,

seven-thirty to six, for Reliable Furniture Company near Monument Square in Portland.

But the jobs were not to begin for about a month, and I joined a summer stock company through the help of another amateur, my friend and classmate Stuart Bigelow. Our first week's play was *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The director picked Stuart for the title role. Rehearsals went very well, but on opening night, in the final scene, when the calm Dr. Jekyll becomes the violent Mr. Hyde in his laboratory, and where Jekyll-Hyde is confiding to his fellow doctor (me), Stuart thrashed about and caused a crash of scores of bottles carefully collected by our properties staff, almost starting a fire as the curtain fell to thunderous applause. The next week we performed *King Richard III*, in which Stuart played the title role and I had a variety of small parts: a duke, an archbishop, a lord and a "sir."

For two weeks I was violinist in a four-piece dance orchestra on a boat that sailed to South Harpswell from one of Portland's docks at about eight in the evening and returned about two or three in the morning. The pianist and drummer were tolerable, but the saxophonist (who was also the band-leader) was no better than the violinist. During the second week he began crooning and got a good reception from those who were on the dance floor (and not in the staterooms). He had been at the University of Maine and had made its "Stein Song" famous, but was transferring to Yale. His first name was Rudy and his father owned a drugstore in the heart of Westbrook called Valle's Pharmacy. Rudy's uncle ran Valle's Restaurant, the first of a later large chain. When my mother learned of the unannounced boat activities, including the occupied staterooms, she insisted that I give up my job. Because I was getting bored, I did not resist.

At the *Portland Press Herald* I was sent out on spot stories, but I kept abreast of Jewish and other "ethnic" news about new Americans who came from Eastern Europe, Italy, Greece and way stations. After my first story went into the desk, I was summoned by the managing editor, Nat Gordon (who had hired me). He had red-lined practically every adjective and adverb. "We're not writing essays; we're publishing a newspaper. Cut out the flowers," he added. Since I was paid by the printed inch, I saw my prospective earnings dwindle.

Several weeks later, however, on a late Sunday afternoon, I wrote a story reporting a Jewish funeral of torn and worn-out Bibles and other Hebrew and Aramaic books, and other portions of the scrolls. In my report I outlined the traditional Jewish respect for the Book, with a summary of Jewish literature and an essay on the Old Testament, its commentators and the Talmud. Nothing appeared in the Monday paper. I kept away from Nat Gordon; I was heartbroken. But the next Sunday morning there was my

article on page one, with my byline. The editor had made no corrections.

My article had two consequences. First, Myer Karlin, who wanted his son Sam (three years younger than I) to continue his Jewish studies, arranged for a teacher to come by train from Boston every Sunday for over a year to give us five hours of study of Talmud and Midrash, medieval poetry and other Hebrew and Aramaic works; I was to get a "free ride" because I was the key to Sam's participation. Second, I received an invitation from Alexander Brin, editor of the *Boston Jewish Advocate* (who had re-published my book funeral article) to write a weekly column or two on Maine Jewish news which I accepted.

The furniture store where I worked was owned by two partners, Sam Eisenberg, obviously the boss, and one of his relatives, who did nothing but criticize Sam and me, the only employee. I kept the books, sold furniture, checked so-called credit and was a jack-of-all-trades, which included loading and unloading our only truck. Occasionally I was given a group of cards of delinquent accounts and coached in collecting techniques. The address of one of my early cards was a garish house on Cumberland Avenue. A woman, probably about thirty (I was then sixteen, and I thought she looked old) invited me in. She was wearing a kimono that was open almost to her navel. I told her that she had not made a single payment since she bought four bedroom sets and that she'd have to pay eighty dollars that day. Giving me a broad smile, she asked, "Won't you take it out in trade?" She let her kimono slide off, showing her as naked as Adam's Eve. Frightened out of my wits I ran out of the house as fast as I could, then I calmed down, walked to the store, and told the story to Sam. His only retort was, "I'll take that card."

That winter, I made a trip to collect bills that took me to a half-dozen cities and towns, beginning at Gardiner and ending in Augusta, cities north of Portland. I had left by bus at six in the morning, with the temperature about zero. I had two layers of long underwear, three or more sweaters, a heavy overcoat, mittens and a woolen cap that covered my ears. At three in the afternoon I stood at the busiest corner of Augusta waiting for the bus that was scheduled to take me to Portland. I did not know that reports of a blizzard had been sounded, and I was surprised that no stores were open. The bus did not come. Several cars passed me but would not stop, despite my frantic waving and yelling—and it was several hours before a young man stopped, picked me up, and immediately shut the door after me. By that time, my fingers, toes, nose and ears felt numb.

I had difficulty catching my breath to tell the driver that I was sure that my ears were frozen and that I was bound for Portland. He replied, "It's at least ten below, and we're in for a tough storm. I'll take you to Brunswick,

and you can stay at my house; we'll have a doctor look at your ears." He was Elijah in disguise. But I was so cold that I could barely make myself understood. So I listened. He had been visiting a brother in the state "insane asylum" in Augusta but was warned about the drop in temperature and the imminent storm. He had not seen another car on the road. Only in his house where his wife gave us hot soup did I begin to feel myself a human being and not a small iceberg. He got my mother on the phone; I spoke to her and could hear her sigh of relief. The doctor wouldn't come, but after hearing my symptoms over the telephone he said that he was sure that my ears were no more than "frostbitten." The young couple put me up overnight, and when I learned that my host was a recent Bowdoin dropout, I used Moe's arguments about the value of college and a degree. He listened, but I never learned what happened. Whenever the temperature approaches ten above zero these days, my ears begin to remind me of my Augusta experience.

One Saturday afternoon in late June of 1923, my friend Albert Abrahamson came to visit me. He was my high school classmate, who went on to Bowdoin College. He brought a bundle of copies of the *Menorah Journal*, a monthly magazine that his older sister Leah, then at Wellesley College, had brought home, thinking we would like to read them. She belonged to the Wellesley Menorah Society, one of the many Menorah groups in colleges throughout the country. I was fascinated with the first volume and particularly with its lead article, "Call to the Educated Jew," by the Boston lawyer Louis D. Brandeis. Almost breathlessly, I read another article, "Jewish Students in European Universities," by Harry A. Wolfson, then an assistant professor at Harvard, and "History of the Menorah Movement," by Henry Hurwitz, its editor. An article in the October 1922 issue, "The Affair at Harvard—What Students Did," by Harry Starr (who had been president of the Harvard Menorah Society), moved me deeply; it showed how responsible and representative student leadership could help achieve a solution of a difficult problem. President A. Lawrence Lowell was forced by the outcry of faculty, alumni and students (especially the Jewish students) to withdraw his proposal for a Jewish quota on admission. "If I ever go to college, and maybe I should, I've just got to go to Harvard. That's where the action is and that's where Moe is," I said to myself.

Two months later, Moe persuaded my mother that the whole family would benefit from my going to college. She and he argued well, and by that time it didn't take much to convince me. Moe said that he would talk to Harvard's Dean of Admissions and that I would have little problem getting into Harvard in the fall of 1924, though there would be some question

about making it the following month, September 1923. A few days later he told me that Henry Pennypacker, former headmaster of Boston Latin School and then Dean of Admissions to Harvard College, had informed him over the phone that he had seen my record. But, since I had no high school science (high school laboratory work was always in the afternoons, and I had my job to go to), I would not be permitted to take the late examinations at the beginning of September. But Moe didn't give up, and he persuaded Pennypacker to let me take the exams with the condition that if I was admitted I would have to take two science courses during college instead of the one required. Moe urged me to quit both my jobs and concentrate on studying, but he reluctantly accepted my answer that I would continue working except for a leave of absence during the week of examinations (the week before the Harvard fall term began).

Then began some four or five weeks of intensive restudy of Latin, French, English, math and ancient history. English was the toughest because it meant rereading all the high school texts—plays of Shakespeare, novels of Dickens and Scott, and others. There were also memory or judgment tests, but I couldn't study for them. My two jobs continued, but about ten days before the first exam I realized that there was no future in my furniture job and its poor business. I had a near-promise of something better and no one was upset by my departure. Thus, the hours of that last week were fully used to the very last possible minute.

After a long lesson from Moe about the technique of exam-taking, I bade farewell to my family, caught the train to Boston, spent the nights of exam week with one of father's cousins in suburban Winthrop, and took the exams in Harvard's Memorial Hall, using every spare moment cramming, including the two hours on the narrow-gauge railroad, subway, trolley and bus from Winthrop to Cambridge and back. On Friday I returned to Portland and on Sunday said good-bye to Moe at the railroad station as he was about to leave for his Harvard junior year. He yelled his last words to me as the train started: "I know you'll make it. You've already got a room. Ken [his older brother] and I have two rooms; I'll tell you more later."

My sister Rebecca, who was to replace me at the *Portland Press Herald* (I had told the managing editor that she was a better writer than I, and that was no overstatement), called me to a corner and gave me a small roll of bills totaling over seventy dollars, all of her savings, which she had accumulated penny by penny from sweater-knitting and gifts, and which she had withdrawn because she knew I could make it. I told her that I didn't need the money and that I had enough for the first quarter's tuition. "You'll need more for rent, food, books and lots of other things. And I just know you've passed," was her quick response. I couldn't resist. Later that day

came Moe's telegram: CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ADMISSION. BE HERE MONDAY FOR REGISTRATION. (Moe later told me that as he waited in the lobby of Harvard's administrative office in University Hall, a secretary posted the list of successful applicants. My name was not among them. He was about to leave "with a heavy heart" when the same secretary added three names—and mine was among them.)

That busy evening extended almost to morning, with telephone calls, visits to my two sets of grandparents, my aunts, uncles and cousins, and a long talk with my mother, who kept repeating that business was improving, that the family needed no help from me in the foreseeable future. But the farewells at the railroad station (where a day earlier Moe and I had talked) were painful. I did not know it then, but I was not only saying good-bye to my family, but to Portland. My mother was then thirty-seven, Beckie sixteen, Arnie twelve, Civie nine, Sid six, and I eighteen. I returned occasionally during my seven years at Harvard, and during three of my six school vacations I worked in Portland, but Cambridge and greater Boston were to be my home and have been now for over sixty-five years.

Mother's last words at the station were: "Lew, Leibele, we'll manage very well. Just take care of yourself. I know you'll do okay. And, be a mensch." I thought how fortunate I had been with my parents. My mother was tender but could be tough. Alas, she had been unkind to my father's parents. She had tremendous pride and dignity and would quote an apt statement from the Talmud or the Midrash—and, more often, from her great-uncle, the Chofetz Chayim, or other rabbinic relatives. She was indefatigable, imaginative and infinitely courageous. She was a natural linguist and, in addition to her Yiddish, Hebrew, English, Russian, Polish and Lithuanian, she added street Italian and Greek and even some Chinese words she learned from the laundryman around the corner. She was shrewd in business and a comforting counselor to relatives and neighborhood friends who sought her advice on family, money and health problems. Although she treasured tradition, she was not as devout as Father. A number of times when I was late to catch a train or make another deadline, she would say, "You'll put on your *t'fillin* [phylacteries] tomorrow. Make your schedule. God will forgive you."

As for Father, he loved people and people loved and trusted him even to their last penny. And he trusted others—sometimes with dire results—as in the case of his bottling shop manager. Religion, the synagogue, charities, the community—all were important to him, on a par even with his family. He made me his companion and I was with him every spare moment as early as my ninth birthday; and he confided his plans and his future. He hoped that I would become a rabbi because he saw himself in that role. He

lacked *s'micha* (rabbinic license and authority), but he gave sermons, chanted and cantillated, performed pastoral duties, helped organize and develop the Zionist District, the Minyan Club (the requisite quorum of ten for group prayers), collected for countless good causes, and was the local unofficial ombudsman. My father took risks, but he would talk them out ahead of time. His devotion to Jews in Portland, and everywhere, was limitless, and his frequent meetings gave Mother little time for herself.

Becky was an excellent writer, a very hard worker and Mother's surrogate. Arnie was extremely warm, affectionate and bright. Civie, also intelligent and imaginative, was the house slavey, the Cinderella who was deprived of the opportunity of a glass slipper but on whom my mother always leaned. She had a keen mind and a warm sense of humor. Sid was only six, independent and rebellious, brilliant even as a child, often a loner, and also an innovator; and he was to remain in a household with four older females of whom he complained, "Every one of those four bosses me around."

Later, as I sat on my hard train seat and watched the landscape fly by, I thought back as far as I could remember and recognized how little time I had had to contemplate my future: what jobs I would have to handle to make ends meet and perhaps even help the family. What did I really want to be and do? I pulled out of my pocket a small paper-covered volume in Hebrew and English of Pirke Avot ("Sayings of the Fathers") and began reflecting on which sayings had left their greatest impact on me.

Certainly Hillel's words, preached at the time of Jesus' youth, were at or near the top:

If I cannot be for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?

That led to lines from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., which I had copied into the flyleaf of the volume:

As life is action and passion, it is required of a man that he should share the passion and action of his time at the peril of being judged not to have lived.

There were also these lines by Horace Traubel, intimate friend, literary executor and biographer of Walt Whitman:

What can I do? I can talk out when others are silent. I can say man when others say money. I can stay up when others are asleep. I can keep on when others have stopped to play. I can give life big meanings, when others give life little meaning. I can say love, when others

say hate. I can say every man when others say no man.

But each quotation, no matter how meaningful, I said to myself, must not become a slogan and determine my life, even though it might be a guidepost on a specific path for my future. I decided that I would live each day fully and, to the best of my ability, not aim too high. I would make mistakes, but I would try not to repeat them. And fun was to be high on my agenda. The quotations, the admonitions and teachings of my mother and father and their forbears, all rushed through my mind. How fortunate I had been in my parents! But I had to work hard at my studies and jobs to prepare for a full, active, functioning and happy life—one in which I could help others as well as my family and myself. The Jewish people clearly needed help—non-Jews as well and even all humanity—but that was too broad, distant and overwhelming a vista. I would take each day in stride and do my best. The last few months had been trying and the previous day exhausting and I had slept only a few hours. The next thing I remember was being awakened from a deep sleep by the conductor's stentorian announcement: "Boston, North Station, last stop." I grabbed my suitcase and bundles. I was on my way to Harvard Square, Harvard College and a new world.

Harvard College 3

My four years at Harvard College began in September 1923 and were followed by three years at Harvard Law School. To say that those seven years opened up new vistas for me would be an understatement. From a small town immigrant boy, I grew into a graduate of a great college and law school. I was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar on October 22, 1930. Thus I began the practice of law that would extend for almost sixty years, including over three years in the Army.

During my undergraduate years I was fascinated by French literature, then by chemistry and finally by mathematics, my last college major, but when my plans to do graduate work in the field of Space, Time and Relativity in Heidelberg (then the center of study of Einstein's theory) went sour, I joined my roommates and other friends who were at the law school. My basic interest became people, their interrelationships and institutions, law and government, instead of mathematical equations, formulae and theories.

Throughout those seven university years, my love for Judaism and the Jewish people became intensified. I was active in the Harvard Menorah Society and other Jewish groups, and I served as Hebrew school teacher and