

Esta Carps

Esta grew up in Norway, Maine, where her father worked in a lumber mill building pallets, wooden frames used on trucks and trains to steady whatever was transported in bags and boxes. He worked from 5 A.M. to dusk. Esta became a kindergarten teacher working in Winslow; her sister Bert married Dr. George Gould and opened a clinic in Richmond, Maine.

There were nine in Esta's family. The parents were concerned about their religious education and worried about the possibility of intermarriage. Her father had come from Radeshkovitz, Russia, and his brother came in a basket to San Francisco. They had no Jewish education, of course, but Esta's mother was related to Harry Isaacson of Auburn. Every afternoon after school Esta attended Hebrew school when the family moved to Auburn. They even bought kosher food from Lewiston.

Esta married an accountant and moved to Biddeford. Her daughter is a social worker and her son is a lawyer in Boston. When her husband was transferred to Waterville, Esta found the Jewish community closed to newcomers. Although there was a general prohibition against marrying cousins or close relatives, some families (the Levines, Alfords, etc.) had intermarried and had their own social life.

Soon Esta began to teach kindergarten in a Catholic parochial school under Betty Turner, the principal, who was a Baptist. She was accepted there both professionally and socially.

She remembers her childhood as a happy time in Norway. There was visiting among Jews from Waterville, Rumford, Skowhegan, Andover, and Lewiston-Auburn. The salmon croquets could be stretched to serve any number. Doctors did not charge if the baby came before they did. Mrs. Sarah Jolowitz and her brother, Henry Jacobson, translated the Jewish letters that came from Europe. Mrs. Jolowitz even baked bagels. Men traveled in groups to meet Jewish girls. Esta was not impressed by these travelers but she did not marry a non-Jew, as her parents feared. After she retired, she left Maine to live in Florida.