

tendance was the norm. Because the rest of life was in an alien and sometimes hostile environment, Jews banded together, both physically in neighborhood enclaves and spiritually and emotionally. Trips to New York City, where many had relatives, served to recharge Jewish batteries, but day-to-day existence was also enriched by the sense of family. Inter-dating, let alone intermarriage, was unheard of. Scranton and Wilkes-Barre contained a sufficient supply of dates during high school days.

Pittston in those days had a sufficient number of Jews to form a "critical mass." Today, very little, if any, of the community remains. Most families at one point or another relocated in or near Wilkes-Barre, which is now the focus of Jewish life. The Greater Pittston Jewish Cemetery remains, in some respects, the only physical token of the city's former Jewish life. But those of us who have moved away still carry within us many happy memories of life as a Jew in a small town.

✿ EUGENE MILLER—McDONALD, PENNSYLVANIA

My father, born in Poland on March 4, 1867, came to United States about 1889. This date stands out only because he told us of seeing the devastation of the Johnstown flood, which occurred that year when he passed through on the train from New York to Pittsburgh.

My mother, born in Czechoslovakia on February 8, 1887, came to America about 1894 or 1895. My parents were married in Pittsburgh in 1895, and I believe it was an arranged marriage by mother's uncles and aunts. It was a good marriage, lasting forty-three years, until the death of Mother in December 1937 and father's demise thirty days later. The children resulting from this union were six boys and five girls. One boy and one girl died very young, before my birth. I was number eight in the line of eleven children.

My folks came to McDonald, Pennsylvania in 1912 while I was an infant to open a small grocery and produce store. We have a picture of father in his store (dated 1915), framed and on the wall.

The town of McDonald had a population of 3,500, with about ten Jewish families. The town is situated on the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad with easy access to Pittsburgh about twenty miles to the Northeast, so we had many people in town who commuted to Pittsburgh for work. We had three main industries: farming, coal mining, and oil drilling. We lived in the center of the famous Pennsylvania crude oil fields.

We lived in a big house, five bedrooms but only one bath (this was the cause of much dissension). On the whole, living in a large family was much fun with little bickering.

Our neighborhood had big homes, large yards, lawns, and gardens. My father was a gardener, and in my later years I became one. School was about three-quarters of a mile from our house, and everyone walked. There were no school buses.

Shopping was no problem, except for kosher meat. Groceries came from father's store, clothing from Levinson's, shoes from Broidas, kosher meat from Pittsburgh. Someone made the trip every Thursday, by train, for the latter. In later years, in my own marriage, a large freezer stored six months of kosher meat procured from Pittsburgh, Cleveland, or Columbus, Ohio.

There was no lack of Jewish merchants in McDonald during my growing up time. We had a tailor shop and a hardware store, furniture store, dry goods store, five-and-ten-cent store, and two other groceries. Also two shoe stores and one ice cream parlor—all Jewish-owned. We also had quite a few stores owned by non-Jews, and we all seemed to get along. This seems like a lot of stores for a small community, but we had many surrounding farms as well as the coal miners.

Our neighbors were mostly friendly; we noticed no anti-Semitism except for occasional teasing by other children, which did hurt.

Memories of the Ku Klux Klan are vivid. We saw many cross burnings in the mid-1920s. The Ku Klux Klan used the surrounding hills to good advantage for this purpose. We felt some apprehension, but I remember standing on the curb and watching the Ku Klux Klan parades without any fear and, due to wise local authorities, the Ku Klux Klan marched without head or face covering.

We had our own little synagogue and usually had a young immigrant rabbi who doubled as *shochet* as well as Hebrew teacher. Mother insisted I go to *Cheder* six days a week until I was fifteen years old. We also had a Sunday school. There was no interaction between Jews and Christians that I knew of, other than public school, except for the following anecdote.

My father had a pot belly stove at the back of the store, and I remember a fabulous group of men who gathered around the stove on winter evenings, sitting on orange and apple crates, discussing anything that came to mind. The discussions were most interesting, as were the men. There

was Father Burgoon, Catholic priest; Reverend Irons, Presbyterian minister; Bill Weitzel, Municipal Building custodian; Louis Levinson, clothing merchant; and my father, Sam Miller—and me, auditing the conversation. My presence at these impromptu meetings occurred due to my habit of going to the store every evening to walk home with my father at 9:00 p.m., store closing time. The walk was only three short blocks, and Mother knew where I was.

Lou Hyman, my friend and confidante, was only two months younger than I. We became very close. We were in the same class in school and *Cheder*. We saw each other every day, even during vacation time. I spent a lot of time at the Hymans'. Lou's father, Dave Hyman, also my friend, was well versed in Judaism. He was our cantor for the High Holy Days.

Being Jewish was very important to us. We went to synagogue on Saturday mornings. My father always took time out for services, as did the other Jewish men in our community. We observed all holidays and enjoyed them. One brother and I carried *shalachmonas* portions to our friends on appropriate holidays. Father always bought an *etrog* and *lulav* for *Succoth*, and it was my job to drop these off at Jewish homes on the way to school so they could observe the ritual. My mother put our grape arbor to use as a *Sukkah*.

Our Passover *Seders* were great. We had our own large family to celebrate with, and the *Seders* lasted way into the night. When it came time to have *Seders* in my own family, I missed the large family, but we did have friends in when they were available. After our children grew up and left home, we joined friends for a communal *Seder*, which was held at our house each year.

A very early outstanding memory (I was about five) was the wedding of my oldest sister, held in our home (catered by my mother). She served about sixty people at a sit down dinner with help from older members of the family and friends. A party was held for all *Bar Mitzvahs* at home as well, but I remember only three of them, mine included.

My mother was a wonderful baker of challah, pies, cakes, cookies, strudel, and one great memory that returns time and again is that when I smelled bread baking or furniture polish I knew it was Friday. Everything was cleaned; floors were scrubbed. Everyone bathed; the baking and cooking odors permeated the house. The traditional *Shabbat* meal, gefilte fish,

noodle soup, chicken, etc. were served. *Shabbat* candles were on the table. Father made *kiddush* and we all made the *hamotzie*. Everyone was seated at the table and we enjoyed.

Incidentally, the *gefilte* fish was made from scratch, and frequently my mother drafted me to chop the fish. The results were well worth the effort.

Though I lived in other small towns, McDonald was the place where I really grew up and the town I remember most fondly. This chronicle cannot do justice to how I feel about living in small towns. I miss the walks in the hills and the woods; I miss the friendly greeting of people, friend or stranger; the slower pace of life; the absence of heavy automobile traffic.

My wife, Dorothy, grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, but she learned to like living in a small town. She turned out to be a great cook and baker, to which my weight can attest. Dorothy also makes most of her own clothes. These talents, I feel, are the result of small town living.

After all these years I have only two sisters left, both younger than I. However, in 1989 we had a family reunion of the progeny of Sam and Annie Miller (my parents); about seventy-five people attended. Our daughter and son-in-law had a new baby too young to travel, but they allowed us to take our grandson. He met many cousins whom he had never known before.

We still keep kosher, which is easier to do now that we live in a city. We've joined an Orthodox synagogue which I attend every week. Dorothy has been a member of Hadassah for many years, and I received a fifty-year membership certificate from B'nai B'rith three years ago. We're also Zionists and have made three trips to Israel. Living in small towns probably made us more conscious of all these things we couldn't take for granted. Also, there is no crowd to hide in.

There are many questions you ask which I really cannot answer. Our children grew up in a small town and had many non-Jewish friends. Our daughter still stays in touch with several of these old friends. Dorothy and I also made some non-Jewish friends, and we still see them when we go back to Ironton.

You ask about anti-Semitism, and there were some incidents which I had forgotten, but mostly good memories prevail. Growing up, I had many non-Jewish friends. I played baseball and football in high school. Frequently I have wondered about the lack of anti-Semitism. (Possibly due to my size in younger years—I was one inch shy of six feet and weighed in at 175 to 180

pounds.) Since adulthood I have been very self-confident. Also, it was no great problem to squelch with a word or phrase those people who thought it cute to kid me about my Jewishness.

The great Depression of the 1930s was devastating to my father. His business deteriorated, and he suffered a heart attack. Fortunately, our large family kept us solvent, and we all ate regularly and paid the rent. Our older brothers married at this time, but they still contributed to the family's welfare. I graduated from high school in 1930 and didn't get a steady job until 1933, though I did many things in the interim, such as caddying at a golf course, shoveling concrete, or anything else to make a buck. Our sisters also worked and contributed their share.

The Holocaust was something else. We lost everyone on both sides of my parents' families except for those in the United States and two cousins living in Israel. We always visit one cousin in Beer Sheba when we go to Israel. He has a beautiful family, with several grandchildren. The cousin's name is Baruch, and his lovely wife is Gila. The other cousin in Israel lives in *B'nei B'rach*, and we've never seen him.

In closing, I feel that living in small towns far outweighs any advantage of city living. With so few restaurants, we ate better. We read more due to lack of entertainment. We enjoyed talking to friends and when we got together we had great discussions. If I had to do it all again, I wouldn't change a thing.

I must apologize to my brothers and sisters for referring to my father and my mother. It should be our father and our mother. Thanks for this opportunity to unload.

✦ ROSE B. ORENSTEIN—FARRELL, PENNSYLVANIA

I grew up in a small town, Farrell, in western Pennsylvania, right on the Ohio border. There were about 300 Jews in a community of approximately 13,500 people. It was a steel mill town (a blue-collar town) made up largely of middle and Eastern Europeans—Serbs, Croatians, Poles, Italians, Greeks, Slavs—that kind of a mix.

My father came to Farrell from Romania in 1905 and settled there because that's where his older brothers were. Three years later he went to New York to look for a wife and found my mother. She had come from Poland as a teenager a few years earlier and lived a hard life on the lower