

In the 1920s and 1930s there were meetings of the Ku Klux Klan in New Bethlehem. Someone took my father to one of the meetings to verify the existence of the Ku Klux Klan.

Oh yes, we kept kosher, and that was before the days of freezers. The advantage of the small town was that we knew every Jewish person in all the small Pennsylvania towns within fifty miles.

We all went to Sunday School, and even moved for a time nearer the city to be closer to Jewish people. I, along with my siblings, can read Hebrew and know about the Jewish traditions. To celebrate the Jewish holidays, to participate in the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, to participate in services, and to express our Jewishness we had to travel miles to larger cities. Pittsburgh was near New Bethlehem.

There were very few Jews in New Bethlehem. In 1921 there were twenty families; in 1935 there were ten families; 1945 there were only four Jewish families; and in 1980, as in 1990, there was only one.

Some memories: When I was asked to read Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, my family encouraged the school to read other plays by Shakespeare as well. In 1915 my mother was not allowed to join the Campfire Girls because she was Jewish. *The Jewish Daily Forward* came to my grandmother in Clarion from 1912 to 1974. We are a four-generation B'nai B'rith family. My brother and I never lived in New Bethlehem after we graduated from college. It was our time to go elsewhere.

❖ IRWIN SEALFON—TYRONE, PENNSYLVANIA

My parents were born in Riga, Latvia. As far as I know, their parents were born there, too. My dad and three or more brothers came to the United States in the early 1880s, before Ellis Island. There were a total of eight brothers. As explained to me, soldiers came in the middle of the night and took three brothers away. The five brothers came to America, but two came in at another time and from another country, and the other three brothers came together (of whom my dad was one of three).

They arrived in Philadelphia, where a relative lived. My dad worked for his relative in a shoe store but he was unhappy in this work. With his two brothers, he became a peddler, and they purchased merchandise such as shoe laces, needles, thread, materials for sewing, etc. They became wandering peddlers and walked in 1905 from Philadelphia to Milwaukee, Wis-

consin. They slept in farmers' haylofts and ate cheese and bread and milchiga products, as they were Orthodox Jews. They then decided to return to Philadelphia and used another route to sell other farmers. On their way back they stopped in Tyrone, Pennsylvania.

They opened a junk shop in Tyrone. They had a horse and buggy and went from door to door buying paper, iron, copper, etc. They then went to Altoona, Pennsylvania, a much larger community, and talked to the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which at that time was the largest railroad shop in the world. The president agreed to sell them their scrap, and so they established a junk shop in Altoona. Two of the brothers moved to Altoona, and my dad remained in Tyrone.

They did very well, as World War I was occurring, and they could sell all the scrap that they could buy. The scrap was sold to larger dealers or to the mills directly. Jones and Laughlin had mills in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and Pittsburg was not too far away.

Tyrone is a small community of about 7,500 people. It is in the valley of the Allegheny mountains. The Pennsylvania Railroad had a spur line that ran from Tyrone to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, but later this was taken away and hurt the town economy. The mainstay was the paper mill, but its fumes and sulfur pervading the air and being in the valley of mountains caused a lot of bronchial and sinus illnesses. Finally, before we moved from Tyrone the state forced the mill to close, which also diluted my dad's income.

There were four Jewish families. My dad and his two brothers, the Meyer Antikol family, and Abe Antikol family. Later on a Yochelson family moved here. In the last administration there was a Yochelson in the high echelon of the Federal government, but I have had no connections to find out if it was the same family.

I had no choice but to sing Christmas songs at Christmas time. Actually, my dad was asked to join the Ku Klux Klan, which he obviously declined. They said he was a special Jew and a community member. The only barber was a black man, cultured and refined. The white customers were out to get him. His son later became owner of the Ethical Pharmacy in Washington, D.C. and was a stalwart in his community. Most people were Methodists and Presbyterians of Irish extraction with some Germans, Slavics, Hungarians, and Italians. After World War I, my cousin Julius, who

was a first cousin to my dad, came to Tyrone with his bride from Pittsburgh, and he became partners with my dad.

My mother and her two sisters-in-law volunteered for war help and became active in the Red Cross making bandages and blankets and fabric items needed for the war effort. Along with the other women, she received a citation for her work.

As the mill and railroad business declined, the partners dissolved, and my dad and mother moved to Baltimore about 1922. Julius remained in Tyrone, opening an wrecker and auto parts company, and remained there until his death. One daughter married Hyman Ziff in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania and resides there now. The other daughter lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The houses are in need of paint, due to the discoloration by the sulfur fumes from the mill. Houses were usually of wood paneling with a dining room, kitchen, living room, three bedrooms, and one bath. Later some houses were built of brick. There was very little lawn. We had a firehouse across the street.

Tyrone is the home of Fred Waring (noted musician) and his famous orchestra and chorus, the Pennsylvanians. The mayor was the owner of the movie house and also owned a pharmaceutical company that made cloverine salts, which were sold throughout farming areas. Farm magazines were sold door to door by kids, including me. The mayor also owned a movie house in Baltimore and, as Fred augmented his orchestra, he was asked to make a trip to Baltimore and play on the stage during some performances. His theme song, "Sleep Sleep Sleep" was introduced there and, as you know, Fred Waring and his orchestra became world famous.

My grandfather later came from Europe and lived with us. My first cousin, Bera Edelstein, was brought over in the early 1900s from Belfast, Ireland. He was the rabbi there but there was no money to pay him, so he was brought over and worked in the junk yard.

We later had the opportunity to study Hebrew and learned the *Chumash*, the *Gemorrah*, and each of us had a wonderful *Bar Mitzvah*. The rabbi's son, Hisson Mayer, was the *schochet* and later studied at Johns Hopkins University and was associated with Dr. Knight Dunlap, head of the Psychiatry Department at that time. He later became head of a mental institution in Washington, Pennsylvania. His request was to be buried in Jerusalem and

his sister followed his wish. Our neighborhood was friendly and Bob, who was about my age, always played without any problems with the Christian kids. The fact that it was not a Jewish community left us missing something. For meat, my dad would go every Thursday night on the street car to Altoona, stop and purchase corned beef and salamis, and have the chickens killed; he purchased kosher meat, as we kept a kosher household.

On the High Holidays they hired the Red Men's Hall and got a Torah from one of the two Altoona *shuls* and had the Jews, who were usually from communities with one Jewish family, such as Bellville, Housdale, Vail, come together to make a ten man *minyan*. All stayed at our local Jewish homes, and it was like a happy Jewish reunion. My cousin from Belfast would conduct the Orthodox services for two days on *Rosh Hoshonah*, and we all fasted on *Yom Kippur*. Every Saturday night was *Havdallah*, and we kids got our allowance, so we were always there for the *Havdallah* service.

It was two blocks to the nearest A & P store and about a half-mile to the main center of town. Schools were one-and-one-half miles away, and we walked.

All the children of the three brothers were born in Tyrone. Isadore (deceased), Gilbert (deceased), Robert (living in New York City), Edward (deceased), Samuel (living in Phoenix and Scottsdale, Arizona), and Elsa Zilber (living in Arizona).

The Jewish families usually met once a week, but we often visited the Sealfon families more than the others simply because they were blood relatives.

It was difficult having services Friday nights, but we observed all the major holidays. Passover was a special treat, from the preparation of foods through the entire *Haggadah*.

Matzo was mailed from Baltimore. Mother made her own gefilte fish, *taglich*, *borshst*, etc., so the preparations took weeks. It was much more a religious reality than our now going to the stores to buy food pre-prepared. Making the dishes was time-consuming and hard work. We children had filbert nuts and played a game by rolling them down a decline, and when one hit the opponent's, he won all the filberts.

My dad became a citizen in 1906, and we have his certificate with us. My dad went to school in Philadelphia. I believe it was the Baron de Gratz school, and he was able to read and write very well. In our house we spoke

Yiddish, but on the outside, English. My mother was educated in Yiddish and taught me to read and write Yiddish letters before I entered the first grade of regular school. In turn, we would study together, and she was self-taught in English and could read and write very well.

We had one paper, the *Tyrone Herald*, and when we moved a very nice article was written about the Sealfon family. We supported families who were poor and contributed to the many drives for the hospital, Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc. I feel that this was known throughout the town, and we were really liked and respected.

In the summer the merchants closed their stores. We had a large van drawn by six horses, and it would take us out to Steveson Park where we had a picnic each Wednesday. One doctor always remained in his office, and one pharmacy of the three would stay open. Also on Sunday the pharmacies took turns staying open. There was a camaraderie among all of the people. When a house burned down, all the people would get together and rebuild the home. Then a party was held. The three doctors took vegetables and chickens in payment many times and were an integral part of the community.

These close values are still remembered by me and are lacking in today's lifestyles, with envy and greed more prevalent. This is true not only with people but with nations. I don't think people respect our Congress and feel that they use our tax fund to their own advantage.

A handshake in Tyrone was a man's bond. We had a lawyer, but any contracts were simple, with very little legalese. The lifestyle was easy and relaxed. The hospital was always in debt. Fred Waring brought his orchestra into Tyrone and gave a big concert, advertised for twenty-five miles around. He always raised enough money to keep the hospital in good financial straits.

Considering every possibility, I can say that my life and that of my family was pleasant, relaxed, and enjoyable in Tyrone. We had the respect of the neighbors, but rarely visited each other in our respective homes. Gentiles felt uncomfortable being in our home, not knowing what to expect. These people had little contact with Jews. They were always invited but refused to come.

In the winter we used to climb the mountain and slide down on sleds my cousins and I had made. As I went down the mountain on my sled, I didn't notice a car coming up, and I ran between his wheels. Fortunately, I

had a headache and a few scratches but had no serious injury. Bobsledding was with the Gentile boys, and a close camaraderie existed.

There was another Jew who came in later, named Warshower. He was a lady's tailor and furrier. He was friendly but remained somewhat aloof. He was a nice person and didn't associate much with either Christians or Jews. In speaking with the Ziffs in Philipsburg I was told there are one or two Jewish families in Tyrone not related to the original settlers. We had an Epstein family there, too. The daughter married a man from Charlotte, North Carolina. One son became a chemist but couldn't get a job because of his Jewishness. He finally connected with a Jewish owned concern in New York. Ben Epstein moved to Altoona, where he was in the used barrel business.

One incident which could have been included as anti-Semitic in a subtle way was that I happened to excel in arithmetic and spelling. When we had spelling bees, I didn't realize until later that I was given the hardest words. In arithmetic, when I was the first to complete the problems, and raised my hand, I wasn't noticed, although I kept waving and waving. The teacher kept looking at her papers, and when Jack Stein, who was of German extraction, waved his hand, she noticed him.

This is all that I can recall of my young days. This is not in chronically arranged order but written as the memories came back to me now that I am eighty-six years old.

✿ **EILEEN B. SMITH, ED.D.—TITUSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA**

I was born in Titusville in 1951. My mother was born nearby in 1911 in Erie, Pennsylvania. Her mother, Ella Leibowitz, my grandmother, was from Buffalo, New York. She was one of thirteen children and my grandfather, Abe, who was born in Lithuania, was the oldest of eleven children.

My mother's family moved to Titusville in 1917. Titusville was an oil town, in fact, it had the first oil well in this country. There were many Jewish families at that time in Titusville. Mother's father Abe was in the scrap-metal business.

My father was a junk peddler, and after World War II, when he was discharged from the armed services, he "peddled" his way to Titusville, where he met my grandfather Abe. Abe saw my father as a good match and schlepped him home to meet the woman who was to be my mother. It was