

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



a match, and they tied the knot in 1944. My father had an instant business, and mother had a good catch.

Titusville's population was approximately 6,500. It was a Polish-Catholic coal mining town. The people mostly worked in the Cyclop-City Steel Mill. There was one black family in the community, and before I graduated from high school I was the only Jewish child going to school there.

When I was under six years of age, there were about thirteen Jewish families who attended our small Orthodox synagogue. I was the youngest Jewish child in the community until Louis Weder married (what my father called) a shiksa, and they had three little boys.

I lived with mother, father, and grandmother in a neighborhood that was mostly Catholic, with a few Protestants. I remember the homes seemed nice, but when I was growing up that's because we all lived about the same and "second-hand" or "nearly-new" was a way of life. Mother always said, "Don't complain, there's food on the table." There were children to play with, and when you're young that is the most important thing.

The thing that was good about the neighborhood was that everyone knew you. Doors were never locked (and still aren't) and, of course, everyone knew everything about you.

Titusville offered no artistic or cultural stimulation. You believed what your parents said because they were your only point of reference. My family especially missed Yiddishkeit, and Dad would play Yiddish cantorial records on his now-obsolete record player. He also played records by Al Jolson. Mother played the piano. They taught me all the Hebrew and Yiddish songs by rote, and to this very day, I can sing and play them on my guitar (I have even entertained Jewish organizations in the Phoenix area where I now live). We missed ethnic foods, athletic clubs and other Jewish kids!

Everything in the town was "down-the-road," and when the rabbi died (I was about twelve years old) the nearest synagogue was in Oil City, about twenty-five miles away. The three towns of Titusville, Oil City, and Franklin became the tri-city area, and we began to know a few other Jews there. Shopping was at the W. T. Grant store and an A & P supermarket. There was also a bakery. (In fact, I still call Mr. Warner, the baker, to send Mom a birthday cake. The nice thing is that I only have to say my name, and I don't have to give a credit card number.) There are still a few privately owned busi-



nesses, including that of my father. When scrap metal lost its fascination for him, he began to sell tires.

I can't remember any hard times because we never realized that people lived better as long as food was there (remember, pickles are green vegetables).

Our neighbors were all very nice and very Christian. Mother would visit all the churches every year to speak about the Jewish holidays. Like the "token" black family, the Hollanders, we were the "token" Jews. Mother would invite practically everybody over to taste Passover food and then would feel bad every year when no one would invite her back for anything. It became kind-of-an-expected-thing that they would come to be entertained. I remember when a friend went with me to the synagogue, and my dad had told her she had to tell the rabbi the "password" or she couldn't get in. He said the password was "Miami Beach." She believed him. The neighbors were nice, but I always sensed that they thought we were different.

One time the girl sitting in front of me in the second grade bent my index finger backwards until it broke and then called me a "dirty Jew." Mother called her home and we got an apology. After a while the "Jewish remarks" would roll-off my back. At my twentieth class reunion a few years ago, a boy named Howard, who is now a minister in Kentucky, came up to me and apologized for the remark he made to me when we where in the eighth grade that "Jews are cheats." I had even forgotten this incident. I guess that I had built up a moral fiber and strength because of such incidents.

Howard's father came to our house at my father's invitation (I was about eight), but I remember him kneeling in front of our fireplace to pray to Jesus "to save our family." Perhaps the fireplace served as a direct tunnel to heaven! It was surprising to all of us, but the man did not think he had been offensive and resumed eating and drinking the food that my mother offered him.

My friend, Tom, told me at our class reunion that the boys would not ask me out because I was Jewish (I did get asked, but my dad never would let me go with a *goy*. I felt I didn't look Jewish, whatever that means, but everyone knew I was Jewish).

At age thirteen, my family decided that I should join BBYO. I loved going, but would have to beg, cry, and plead with my dad to drive me to



the meetings. Those youth conventions were the most wonderful and happy times of my teen years, and I made some of my closet friends then. These kids felt as I did and were from other small towns (when we moved to Arizona, I became a BBG advisor).

Most of my time was spent in school. I was a joiner and a worker, so I kept busy on every committee available. I was a good student, and there was always someone around who needed help.

Religious observance was important to my family, but I learned early that a good education would be my ticket out of Titusville to a world of people with broader outlooks and opinions. One summer I wrote a letter to a Jewish summer camp and asked for a job. They hired me as a junior counselor. I got eaten alive by mosquitos, but it was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life. I believe it was there that I learned so much about being Jewish, and I developed a lifelong appreciation and respect for my faith.

At home my family observed all Jewish holidays in traditional ways (my parents still celebrate in traditional ways). This was especially hard to do in a small town where kosher food had to be ordered and picked up in Erie, Pennsylvania, some sixty-five miles away via a very poor road.

It was important to have a sense of pride and understanding. I also was able to verbalize the reasons for our traditions to friends at school. I became the "authority" on Judaism, and this forced me to find out the things that I didn't know.

In 1969 I moved to college at Pennsylvania State University, where I joined the Alpha Epsilon Phi sorority. I was lucky and received a scholarship from the high school in Titusville. It was given by an old spinster lady who was Jewish. The scholarship was to be given for academic excellence and Jewish students were given preference. I studied education and met my husband who was in Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity. We have been married over nineteen years.

We decided to move to Arizona, where it was easier and less demanding to be a Jew. There are other families who celebrate traditions with us as well as kosher delis and sections in supermarkets that sell lox, matzohs, etc. City life, with its drawbacks of traffic and needing locks on doors, is heaven for Judaism and for those of us who had to struggle to be Jewish when none of our friends were.



That's just it—nothing in Titusville changes except young people continually move away and when the older generation is gone, there will be no more Jews there. The people there all seem very old. When I go there for a visit, it's like taking a step back in time. There were many happy times—the proms, school functions, music recitals, and being a kid. The happiest time was truly going to BBYO meetings in all the surrounding towns and sleeping over at other kids' homes.

Looking back, Titusville had some advantages. I have a very strong moral fiber and tolerance of others when they make rude remarks. I feel like I better appreciate my advantages when I receive them because they weren't given to me when I was young. I was never street smart or a smart-alec and have learned to work for my goals because nothing in a small town came easy. I learned a lot of things that I may not have if circumstances were more affluent—mainly because if you didn't have it, you'd make it or learn it.



The Eugene Miller family fruit and grocery store in Carnegie, Pennsylvania in 1915. Eugene's father is behind the counter