

COULD YOU BELIEVE

by Mel Pollock, August 4, 2001 Age 83

In order for me to understand the various philosophies I have acquired over the many decades of my life, I need to try to reach back to my earliest memories and start there.

I think I do remember sleeping on the rows and rows of men's pants in our store in Gallitzin Pa, population 2800. It was warm and comfy since the pot-bellied stove was just a few yards away from almost anything. Also the drone of my mother's and father's voices was a very comforting sound. My father's name was Samuel Pollock and my mother's name was Lena Hollander Pollock. They worked late almost every day and into the evening and sometimes they would even catch a late customer. Between the two of them, they mastered 9 languages not counting English. My father's accent was pretty pronounced but my mother had none. That was because she was born in Leeds England, and came to America when she was a young girl. We all slept upstairs above the store and were heated by only the kitchen stove.

The town was covered by massive amounts of cinders created by the smoke from the railroads and railroad tunnels that were located on both sides of the town. The cinders also came from the coke ovens that seemed to be burning constantly. These were all signs of prosperity according to my father. My complaints about the stink were answered by my father's remark that "when you don't see smoke, then you should worry - smoke means business"

I could always get a nickel for candy from my Mother with very little coaxing but my father required an explanation of the need for the money and could always show me that since there was candy at home, there was really no need.

We had a movie theatre in our town called the "Victoria Theatre" and admission was only a dime. I could always get this amount from my mother but my friends were not that affluent. This meant that I would have to hang around in front of the theatre while my friends begged for pennies until they got ten and then we would all go inside. I thought that was pretty cool but I knew that my parents would never approve of that. It didn't seem to matter that the movie was started when we got in since we just sat there for the second showing until we came to the part where we came in and then left.

Our store had a screen door with a spring that made it bang when it closed and that closing sound is never heard anywhere today. The store must have been very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter but we never seemed to notice that.

My grandfather, that's my Mother's father, Jake Hollander worked for us and was able to do lots of things. He was a tailor, carpenter, painter, salesman and had a horse to peddle clothing and general merchandise around the countryside. I was told that I was his favorite and was quite young at the time he was spoiling me. I was told that he would get me up at two in the morning and feed me some of his homemade potato soup.

My father provided merchandise for his wagon and sometimes his thirst for alcohol got the best of him and he returned to his home completely under the direction of his horse. He of course was asleep from too much to drink. This practice was soon terminated but a debt of 200 dollars was shown as an account payable by grandpa for a very long time.

If there was a black sheep in the family, it was Uncle Barney, my mother's brother. He got that reputation as a young teenager in Altoona where he hung out with shady friends and played poker with so-called roughnecks. I was told his father punished him severely with physical beatings. He too was hired by Dad when he became an adult, but one day he took the week-end deposit to the bank and we never saw him again for many years. It would have been too big of a family shame to send the law after him so dad just wrote it off. He must have had a fondness for my brother and me since from time to time, over the years, we would get periodic awesome gifts from him. One gift I remember in particular was pup tents used in WW1 which he at once time manufactured and sold to the US government. He was involved in many businesses throughout the states and when the cash started to come in, he managed to forget to pay the bills and so there were many bankruptcies. We learned that he did try Medical school but figured that the income was not lucrative enough for him.

Under the name of our store which of course was POLLOCKS appeared the message "Everything to Wear for Men, Women and Children". The slogan which appeared on all the paper tapes that closed the packages was "I came from Pollock's, Gallitzin Pa, Have You Been There?". Clothing was pretty simple in those days especially when the clientele were all immigrants. Shirts were white and long sleeve, suits were blue serge or oxford grey, ladies housedresses were one style and a lot of different patterns. My folks were very kind to all the customers and helped them climb up their own ladders in this new country. My parents could speak all the languages of the immigrants so they felt comfortable shopping with us. That's more than you can say for his competitors.

At one time there were almost enough Jews living in Gallitzin to have a Minyan. Little by little they moved out but the ones who stayed on were the Isaacson family, who had a store like ours and was operated by Louis, the father along with his permanently crippled daughter, Cecelia, a maiden lady. Their other two children were boys, Harry and Bill who graduated from the local high school much earlier than I. Harry maintained a successful law practice in town and became solicitor of the Municipality for many years. The other family, Solomon Spector & wife owned a Jewelry Store and had no children. Now Mr. Spector's jewelry store was not your ordinary jewelry store; he sold all kinds of things even fishing equipment and many varieties of mouth organs. He repaired watches while constantly smoking cigarettes. His finger was brown and the ashes were all over the work bench. He worked on many watches at a time and only he knew which parts were which. Of course he became affluent over the years and I always remember Uncle Herman going to say hello to him when he visited Gallitzin. He would find Mr. Spector sitting in front of the store in his black chair asleep and would ask him how is business? This would all be in Yiddish and the answer was very bad. "Yesterday at least I sold a few fish hooks and a mouth organ, but to-day-nothing." Uncle Herman would ask "so how do you make a living?" So he said "Ich machnisht".

I used to beg my father for stories about how he managed to get here at such a young age. He usually put off his stories but every once in a while, he would let a few slip out. His background was very bleak...he came from a small shtetl located near the Buge River which was a frequent borderline between Poland and Russia. They had no running water, no toilet facilities and little or no heat and sparse amounts of food. What they did have a lot of besides poverty was quite a bit of harassment from Cossacks in the

frequent pogroms. His schooling was scarce - maybe a comparative 5th or 6th grade. His Hebrew School training brought him only bad memories of being struck often by a large ruler in the hands of his teacher.

My father was one of eight siblings and his youngest brother Benjamin had the distinction of being born in spite of his mother's death at his birth. Dad said that the siblings helped raise the youngster and feed him by chewing their food and putting pieces of it in his mouth to help him survive.

My father once mentioned that he became interested in Communism as an alternative way of life and went to several secret meetings until he was caught and jailed. He never did explain how he happened to escape but he did and managed to make his way to America aboard the USS Piza on June 22, 1907. In this country, he was quickly transformed into a Capitalist. He had relatives, a sister Mottel in or about Coney Island and found meager work until he located a landsman in the wilds of central Pennsylvania. The town was called Irvona and any town always had a "Jew" store. He met my Mother when his employer took him on a train trip to the closest big town hub of Altoona, where the wholesalers were to be found. My Mother was educated there and of course mastered the English language and went on to a business school. Her handwriting was the most beautiful I ever saw. She happened to be the main bookkeeper for the biggest wholesaler in Altoona, Jacob Berman & Co., and was unmarried. My father told me that it took him no time at all to decide that if he was to really succeed in life, this was the kind of person he must have. He said that you have to set your priorities, and that if we wanted to know about romance and that sort of thing, there would be plenty of time for that but first things first. My Mother and Father were married in 1914 when his job helped him accumulate \$200.00. As a wedding present, my mother's boss gave them \$500.00 worth of credit and told them where there was a vacant storeroom available in a village 10 miles way up the mountain in a town called Gallitzin. I think they were there a week later. My only sibling, my older brother, Arthur was born 9 months to the day after the wedding.

As soon as it was humanly possible, my father began to bring his brothers to America. I was quite young at the time but I know that the first two were in their late teens or early twenties. A third brother Boruch, couldn't handle this new found land and returned to the little shtetl to be the sole operator of the tiny shop the family still owned in the little Polish town called Czernawczyce. He was one of many of our family members to die in the Holocaust.

The two brothers, Hyman & Ben, after arriving were immediately sent to get private tutoring locally so that they could learn to read and write. There was fierce competition between them as they vied for approval from my Father. He now had two slaves working for him for room and board.

It seemed to me and many of my generation that when we were looking for praise and affection from our parents, it was hard to come by. I think it can be explained by the fact that if we were praised, then fate would have to give us bad luck shortly thereafter. So if I wanted praise, I would have to hear it from a salesman or a friend of my parents. However, if I did something wrong, I would hear about it right then and there.

My parents bought the big brick house next door to the store shortly after his brothers arrived. It was owned by Bill Bracken, one of the owners of the big coal mine in town and a typical WASP. My folks paid the unheard of sum of 8 thousand dollars for

that house because Mr. Bracken knew how bad dad wanted it and I think a little anti-Semitism crept in too.

The first "could you believe" came when he showed his brothers the newly acquired brass bed in his bedroom and proceeded to polish the top of the bed post with the sleeve of his suit coat. His final statement on that issue was perhaps only Tzar Nicholi might have a bed like this. My uncles were in awe.

The goal of his brothers was to go into business on their own and my father said he would let them know when they were ready to do so. They eventually learned and continued to ask dad if they were ready yet and as the story goes: A woman customer came in one day to buy a suit for her deceased husband to be laid out in. They sold her the extra pair of pants that came with the suit for \$4.95 and my father said now they were ready.

One of the brothers, Ben, made his way to the big city of New York and eventually became the owner of 10 big shoe stores in the Metropolitan area. I remember going with my father on the excursion train to New York and standing across Broadway at the corner of 83rd St. next to my Dad and his brother as the men were erecting the POLLOCK-FLORSHEIM sign above the store and actually seeing my uncle nudging my father and saying "could you believe" This was the guy that they fed pre-chewed food to keep him alive. Eventually, he became known as "Mr. Shoes of New York" since he had a personal friendly relationship with Mr. Florsheim himself, as well as owning so many shoe stores in the metropolitan area.

In retrospect, I can understand my Father's behavior as he reached goals in life. He went to the barber shop for a hot towel and a shave every day and took extra time to nap there. That seemed like a foolish waste of time and money to me but I understand now that this was a status that he reached here in America. Could you believe?

My father had a fierce desire to assimilate and become as Americanized as possible. Of all the Jewish merchants in our town, my father alone craved for assimilation. He became socially acquainted with all the prominent gentile business leaders in town and in the county, and all the politicians. They opened the doors for this Jew by allowing him to become one of the bank directors of the local bank. A Jewish bank director was unheard of in those days. They even taught him about buying stocks on margin. This was shortly before the market crash. Unbelievably, he managed to strike up a friendly relationship with none other than Charles Schwab, the world-renowned steel magnate and played golf with him on Charlie's own private golf course. Charlie's summer home and estate was located in nearby Loretto. I knew my father didn't know that much about the game of golf and when I asked him about his score, he said that if you give the caddy enough of a tip, he would take care of that.

The other brother, Herman opened a ladies ready to wear store in Williamsport PA and was to become one of the prominent stores in that community. I remember the time he gave us his outdated huge neon sign vertically spelling out POLLOCKS which we trucked to Gallitzin to be erected in front of Dad's store. It must have been 16 feet high. That also got a "could you believe."

After operating the Pot Bellied store for about 15 years, my father managed to take over the big main Department store in the town via the "40 thieves" out of Pittsburgh who were there for the sheriff's sale. Those were a group of businessmen who went around outbidding anyone who might try for the building and content of any kind of

bankrupt situation. In this case it was Weston's Department Store, one block from where we were on Main St. They offered my father the whole purchase, building and merchandise for what they bid if he would give them an additional five hundred dollars for their effort. It was a big deal. In my mind it was like buying the Macy's of Gallitzin.

That was quite a thrill for me at about age 14 or 15 to have my father hand me the keys to the padlocked mammoth building and tell me to go in and look around all by myself and see what I thought. This was a great day for a family show of affection. The building went from Main Street to Jackson Street in the back and was three stories high. It had a grocery department that I headed to first. I remember opening those Oneida Biscuit boxes with the glass lids and ate a sample of each cookie out of every box. My father's intention was to give me a taste of retailing not knowing where my tastes really were. Inside the back door, there was a hand operated rope pulled elevator complete with a rope brake. I really enjoyed those rides. I guess that was my own first "could you believe".

My father's two sisters, Mollie Solinsky and Sonia Taubman lived in New York City and he visited them when he took the excursion train to shop for merchandise. Aunt Sonia was married to a watchmaker and her great joy was that she had two boys. During Dad's visits, he became aware of how badly spoiled they were. Sherman, the youngest was still on the bottle at his 7th year and was the worst of the two. He pushed whatever he didn't want to eat on to the floor. He did not hesitate to kick his mother from time to time. She just couldn't scold them or punish them because they were the answer to her dreams. My father suggested that Sherman might like to go on the train with his Uncle Sam this one summer and see what cows and horses looked like up close. Sherman was sold a bill of goods and with a great deal of reluctance, his mother permitted this to happen. It was quite late in the evening when Cousin Sherman and Dad arrived in the kitchen of our house. I was there for the greeting. I must have been 5 years older and I watched my mother practice her Psychology when she opened his little bag and held up the bottle with nipple attached and said "what's this?" Sherman explained what it was and she smashed it into little pieces in the garbage can. "Not in this house" she said. That was the answer she gave for all the other bad habits he brought with him from New York City, like a light burning in his bedroom all night, his table manners and his habit of urinating on the sidewalk. It took a short summer of my mother's guidance to transform that misguided lad into a young mannerly gentleman. Sherman made no friend, only our dog, a collie named Pal who didn't seem to mind New Yorkers. The two of them ran away daily but not too far since he was not allowed to cross the street. They sat in the alleyway next to the local bank and I often gave him the sign of recognition when passing by. His mother cried when Dad brought him home because he said please pass the butter along with a "thank you".

My years in elementary school in Gallitzin were crucial in forming the conservative outlook I acquired and held on to for many years. I was totally involved with Scouting. Almost became an Eagle Scout with all the merit badges. I faithfully observed the Scout Law and obeyed the Scout Oath at all times. I was also a member of the First Aid Team sponsored by the United Mine Workers. I marched and played the drums in the American Legion Junior Drum and Bugle Corps. We even became the national champion American Legion junior drum and bugle corps. Our local Physician,

Dr. Alfred Bergstein, Jewish, was our benefactor. He bought us two used Greyhound Buses and all the equipment. He was a non-practicing Jew.

I was a law and order guy. Every day in school we had to say the accepted daily prayer (Catholic). We had to memorize and sing all the Christmas Carols. I remember keeping silent when the typical Christian words came up in the songs. I was always aware that I was in the minority and I accepted that fact. During the last four years of high school, I was the only Jewish student in the whole school system. An announcement was made one time that all students would be dismissed early on Friday afternoons to attend the church of their faith. I became a bit of a problem for the school officials, so they told me to go home and have my parents provide some religion.

I became elected to President of my senior class and managed that by getting my boy friends to nominate three popular girls and me, the only boy.

I started going to Sunday School in Altoona and since it was a problem for my father to get me there during the winter season, his lack of interest in Judaism gave him the option to ask me if I really wanted to go thru with a Bar Mitzvah. I jumped at the chance to get out of it and so I did.

I learned all about the facts of life by hanging out in my older brother's crowd. He had friends in Altoona that he ran with. They were building a shack in someone's back yard and were stealing hardware items from the Altoona 5 and 10 cent store. I remember this seemed so easy so I thought I would try it too on a glass marble that caught my eye. I first looked around to make sure no one was looking and just as soon as I put that marble in my pocket, a huge hand came down on my shoulder. I think that clerk promised me life imprisonment and finally escorted me out of the store with a promise never to return, and I didn't. That never happened to my brother or his gang.

My social life during my teen years was hanging out with the local kids and dating nice looking Catholic girls who were in abundance.

There was a period of time when I did hang out with Jewish Kids in Altoona and we were members of AZA and one of my good friends was Eddie Levine who will figure prominently in my Army Life to come. I liked baseball and other athletic games. I don't think I was very good at it but I always got to play since I owned the only baseball, bat, catcher's glove and a lot of other equipment that my mother bought for me. I was one of the few affluent kids around. If I wasn't picked to play, I could take my equipment and the game would be over. I was able to make the Varsity basketball team in my senior year of high school. I would get to play only if the score was lopsided.

Since Gallitzin was located on top of the Allegheny Mountains, sled riding was a popular pastime usually from Halloween to the end of March. People put away their cars for the most part so sledding down the main streets was not too dangerous. My friends and I shared a large bobsled and the ride from the top of Church Street was so long that one ride was all we got in an evening. To this day, I can put myself to sleep with the vivid memory of that exciting ride. I can even recognize the houses as we pass them by. I think being the only Jewish kid in the school prevented great amounts of anti-Semitism. I managed to get involved in fighting over "dirty Jew" remarks. Our local American Legion Hall had a boxing ring set up and they felt that street fights should be brought to the ring and settled with some kind of supervision. This Polish kid, John Kudzma, seemed to really carry a grudge along with a big pair of shoulders and long reach. My memories in that ring were seeing stars every time his boxing glove hit my face and that

was pretty often. He was doing so good that he let his guard down and I hit him with all my might with a wild lucky swing that landed on his chin and he somehow broke his leg on the way down to the canvas. I was a hero that day and gained a lot of respect.

My brother who was four years older was on his way to become a physician...the dream of every Jewish parent. I, on the other hand seemed destined to follow the footsteps of my father. I learned to drive in a Graham-Paige car with a five-speed gearshift and a tendency to buck like a horse.

I can remember when my father gave me my first lesson in retailing. He came to me when I was about 16 and was driving and told me that he had bought a half railroad car load of Christmas Trees that were soon to arrive for the holiday season. He said that if I would sell them at the corner of the store building in a small grassy area, he would let me keep the profit I would make. That sounded like a pretty good deal and I saw the invoice and knew what they cost so it was just a matter of picking them up at the railroad station and pricing them and making the deliveries if necessary. The store owned a nice 1936 Chevy panel truck. I remember pricing the trees at a dollar, two and maybe up to five for the really special ones. I put together a string of lights and had an exciting display. On the day before Christmas, I showed my father the breakdown on what I had sold versus what he had paid and my profit was about \$60.00. He looked at the paper carefully, pulled out his pencil and asked a few questions like had I thought about the cost of the rental space, the use of the truck including gas and wear and tear, the use of the store's charge system, the wages of part time help etc, etc. He added this up and said that as he figured it all out, I owed him about 6 dollars but since I was who I was, he would call it square.

There were lots of little stories about that giant of a store with all its modern equipment. The carrier system which consisted of as many as 8 carriers which rode on wires connected to the main office located on the mezzanine where my mother held sway and let the clerks know if the customer had to come up and discuss any payment on her charge in arrears. That was signaled by two pencil taps on the wire and the clerk knew to send the customer up to talk to mother. These things worked by the triggered release of large rubber bands that shot the carrier up the wire to the office. The carrier was a round wooden cup with a metal clip attached to the bottom that held the paperwork. The clip would be released by a twist of the wrist and the money or the change could be put inside. Our main man, Joe Hmel, was the only repair person able to make the adjustments to keep those things going. Sometimes the elastic needed to be tightened so that the carrier had the gumption to make it all the way up. In those first days, we had just one cash register so we waited our turn for change to be made and if the delay was lengthy, the clerk would hit the wire with the pencil a couple of times to hurry the transaction and hear Mother shout, "Keep your pants on!"

There were many quaint stories to remember and I am sure I will not remember all of them. One time a customer, Mrs. Kent, came in and was buying baby clothes. Rose Beck, one of our mainstay clerks, a maiden lady, was waiting on her and asked whom she was buying the baby clothes for. "Betty's Baby," she replied. Rose said, "I didn't know Betty was married." And the mother said, "She isn't. And mind you, she don't smoke or drink either". Strange how that could have happened.

The day before Christmas was the busiest day of the year. People just waited and since many of the gifts were bought in our store, customers simply decided which gifts to buy for each person by quizzing the clerks to find out if anyone bought a scarf or a slip for Mary yet. This way there was very little duplication. Our mainstay, Joe, was not only our carrier repairman but also our salesman, window trimmer, janitor, tailor, and had the back door key to let him in late at night to bank the huge coal furnace down stairs without access directly into the store. Joe was a bachelor and couldn't handle females socially. In retrospect, I wonder if he might have been called gay if he were living to day. One of his bad habits was that he liked beer and he was not getting paid that much so it was hard for him to support his beer habit. The Polish Hall and bar was located conveniently directly across the street from the back door to the store. Joe would periodically store little caches of goods under the steps and conveniently sell them to support his habit. He was caught several times and at first Dad would take him up to the local Polish Priest and have him confess to his wrong doings and take a pledge that he would never do it again. Dad made quite a few trips up to the church with Joe and so did I after dad's retirement. Joe had a snag front tooth that made it difficult to eat properly but was a distinctive mark. When we would discuss Joe's dishonesty, Dad would finish off the conversation with what little he stole could never come near his overall worth so he let it go at that.

The hunting season was a ritual what with the windows being trimmed almost the same way each year with the various stuffed animals people would lend us prior to hunting season and the trip out to the edge of town for cut up pieces of evergreen branches to stick around the merchandise such as duck and wool hunting coats and pants, shirts, underwear, socks and boots. Each item was put in the same position that it was put in last years window trim. Lots of fall leaves too. My father stocked neither guns nor ammunition that I am sure he could have sold. I think he was morally opposed to that sort of thing.

There were many interesting characters that shopped with us. The majority spoke with a thick foreign accent. Mike Zarumbeck parked his horse and wagon right in front of the store and would get Joe riled. Joe knew that the horse would soon leave piles of manure and customers would track it into the store unknowingly. Of course it was Joe's job to shovel it away. Mike would tell me stories and continue to remind me in his thick accent that he was "not born for this country but came from Old Country."

When the time came, I enrolled at Penn State in the Liberal Arts program, then called Commerce and Finance or C&F. Most of us knew it as Crochet and Fine Knitting Work. Had I graduated, it would have been with the class of 1940. My brother went to Penn State four years before me and decided that fraternities were not necessary so I lived in a rooming house with different roommates. One was Stanley Miller and the other Dave Sloan. These two will figure later in my army life to come. For the first year at Penn State, I learned everything but business. I think I would have liked to take courses such as Art and Theatre but my father ruled that out as foolishness. I had considerable free time and when my Father found out how much free time I had, he had me switch to Engineering so we could get more for our tuition which by the way was \$72 a semester. By this time my father operated two department stores, one in a town that was 8 miles from Gallitzin, called Portage. He had very poor luck in finding honest managers so he suggested that since graduating engineers were making 35 dollars a week, he could match

that if I would consider being a manager of the Portage store. I leaped at the opportunity because this freed me from the prospect of failure in the engineering course.

I remember being embarrassed at how young I looked as a big store manager and its important position. I immediately bought a vest and a pair of glasses with clear lens to make me appear mature looking. All the employees had been working there for some time and here is this kid still wet behind the ears running the show. My major qualification was that my father owned the business. Animosity prevailed and thanks to my Dad's good judgment, open warfare was averted. I started off by making a suggestion that the shoes in the shoe department be rearranged in a more logical manner. Flossie, the head honcho refused and I threatened to fire her. She called my father on the phone in back of the store and after a while, came out and rearranged the shoes according to my plan. Harmony ensued thereafter. I never knew a word about that conversation and I never asked. It was hard for me to believe that Dad would back me so completely. By the way, I never did attain that \$35.00 wage that was thrown around when I left College. I did get \$17.00 with hope for a raise. I remember a traveling salesman mistaking me for a young kid loafing in the front of the store and asked me to carry in his cases and I obliged. He paid me a quarter and I went back outside. It was then he found out that I was the manager with a wounded ego. He said " I guess I'm thru before I start". He was right.

In the early 1940's my mother's health continued to fail with her diabetes and one summer my parents and my brother decided to visit dad's sister, Dora Faierman who lived in Montreal. This trip took them via Williamsport PA, where Uncle Herman lived. Mother was feeling poorly so she stayed a few days. My uncle married a girl from Atlanta Ga. who had her niece visiting with her and my mother called me to say I should drive up there because there was a girl I would like. I was shocked to hear my mother say such a thing so I decided I would do as she asked and that is how I met my wife. I wouldn't say this was an arranged marriage but maybe a little nudging and shoving. My mother was very pleased that I was thinking seriously about marriage especially to a nice Jewish Girl but my father was not so enthused. His advice to me was to look for a girl with lots of money and he could care less about her religious beliefs. I must admit, my mother had a good eye. My wife-to-be had a southern accent that you could cut with a knife. Our first event was a swimming date. It was quickly arranged and neither of us got a good look at each other so we drove to the swimming area, planned to meet at pre-arranged area after we changed into our suits and it was a good thing that I got a peek at that flowered swim suit or I would never have found her in that crowd. I was blown off my feet by the way she filled that bathing suit. It was love at first sight. We agreed to be serious about our future.

After Pearl Harbor, things changed. I decided to enlist in the Air Force as a pilot since Jimmy Stewart portrayed a lot of glamour in advertisements and I was extremely patriotic and very gung ho. I was soon to be drafted anyhow. This would be much better than the infantry.

Beverly and I became more and more serious and Mother was helpful in seeing that I was able to obtain an engagement ring. She arranged for the purchase at a wholesaler in Pittsburgh and Bev & I went over on the train to make the buy. I guess we were officially engaged while on the ride back to Gallitzin. I was accepted as an Aviation Cadet but for some reason or other, the Air Force didn't have enough room for me at first

so I stayed home for four months in a sort of limbo. Received pay and waited to be called up. It finally happened in August of 1942 and I was shipped off to Nashville Tenn. The first days of Army living were very depressing along with the rain and lots of mud. Our arrival was one of the saddest nights I can remember and all of us were crying ourselves to sleep. It was not at all like Jimmy Stewart's movie about what the Aviation Cadets would be like.

I soon learned what the Cadet's life was like when I finally arrived at the Pre-Flight School in San Antonio Texas. It was built around extreme discipline in all activities.

After being on the service for a few months, I was allowed to come home when my mother died in October of 1943 at age of 55 years. This was a hard time for me what with life taking all these new directions and the Army kept me so busy so I guess I didn't have a lot of time to get depressed.

At Primary flight school in Coleman, Texas, I tried very hard to become a dashing pilot but airsickness would not let it happen. They had no medication for that in those days and perhaps it was for the best because I wouldn't be writing this now if I had become a pilot. I did manage to get in 17 hours of flying time but no solo. We didn't have Dramamine in those days and we tried all we knew to cure the problem including aerobatics but they had a reverse effect.

Washing out of pilot training was a real downer. There was considerable glamour in being an Aviation Cadet and now I was in the lowest position one could get in this man's army. As luck had it, one of my good friends, Eddie Levine who was my buddy from Altoona in AZA was stationed at the next base, Goodfellow Field, Texas where I was moved. Eddie was a buck Sgt. and managed to get me put in the bunk next to his. Since I had some business background, he was also able to get me a job as a pay roll and service record clerk that, by the way, called for 3 stripes too. The soldier who sat at the desk next to me doing the same thing that I was learning to do had already acquired his first stripe but was on the job for about 6 months. We were all in this very large room representing our squadrons and way up in the front was a lazy Captain who came in and took all the letters from his "in" basket, signed above his typed name and put them all into the "out" basket and never reading them. I immediately typed a letter addressed to my Squadron Commander suggesting that I be promoted to PFC and typed the lazy Captain's name at the bottom after mentioning what a good job I was doing. All worked like clockwork and so after the first week on the job, I was wearing a stripe. The guy next to me was not talking to me at this point even though he had no idea how this happened. Anyhow, I went through this routine two more times that month and was soon wearing three stripes, a full fledged Sgt. By this time the Captain found out what was happening (someone complained) but he could do nothing since he legally signed every promotion letter. He warned me however, that I would get no further promotions. I was never one to pass up a good opportunity when it showed up while in the service.

As an enlisted man, I continued to try to become an officer by applying to other schools such as Metrology and Communications. I was disqualified for any air crew duty due to air-sickness so they sent me to Washington University in St. Louis Mo. to be a Meteorologist. I continued until they closed the program as there was an abundance of weathermen.

I was then transferred to Yale University in New Haven, Conn. to study communications but my ability to turn a radio on and off was just not enough to satisfy the Air Force.

At this point I decided that we should get married and I called Bev to see if she could manage to get up here and we would have a simple ceremony. Just the Rabbi and us. It didn't quite work out that way since her mother and all the aunts came along. In turned into a big wedding, about nine of us. There were a lot of wedding stories that Beverly is better prepared to tell. We were married on May 18, 1944 when I was leaving the cadet program at Yale. It was a small wedding with Bev's mother, Grandmother and a few aunts along with my Father who couldn't decide until the last minute. He was very much against the idea and now I see his concern. Why not wait till the war is over? He wanted to make me an equal partner in the store but if something happened to me in the war, he would have Beverly as a partner or whatever bum she would marry later. I actually signed an agreement that provided a degree of partnership for her depending on how many children she first had with me. The fourth child would give her a full partnership.

I remember arriving at our little apartment after all the ceremonies and I sat on the edge of the bed and the springs fell to the floor. An embarrassing sound for the apartment owners living downstairs. We had a happy few months of married life until I was shipped overseas. I wouldn't say I married a gourmet cook but I remember our first meal at home. We liked shrimp cocktails so Beverly, now living close to the great Atlantic Ocean bought fresh shrimp and served them. I questioned why they were gray so she said that was because for the first time we could have the fresh kind. You can imagine how much in love I was when I ate them, black line and all. Eating out the next day, I questioned the waiter why the shrimp he served was pink and he said they get that way when you cook 'em and he assured me that I wouldn't want to eat them raw.

I was luckily transferred to at Daniel Field in Augusta Ga. for some time and it was like a honeymoon since Beverly was able to be with me. It was also not to far from Atlanta GA by bus so we took the trip often and brought back boxes of food since Bev's folks were in the grocery business. My salary at this point was \$68 and the apartment cost \$67.50 so we needed a little subsidy. I was a sgt. in the Air Force Supply dept and soon could see friends being re-assigned to the infantry and moved to nearby camp Gordon. This was at the time of the battle of the bulge which my brother was unhappily involved in. I made it known to my first sgt that I would like to stay with the Air Corps even though it may take me overseas. I was lucky to become one of a group of 15 officers and 15 enlisted men who were needed to open an Extransit Depot overseas and first had to go to school to be trained. The whole deal was to keep us overseas for 180 days until the job was done. First we were sent to Newark N.J. to learn how to open such a depot. It turned out that there was no school to train us so we checked in every morning and took off for New York City. Hitchhiking in uniform was simple. People were eager to give a soldier a lift. It sure was fun for Bev & I to go to all the Broadway shows which cost a Soldier little or nothing for tickets. Good things come to an end so one day I was transferred to Miami Beach to process for overseas duty. We still didn't know where we were going but we boarded a converted Pan airliner and were off to India. We landed at the Azores, then Casablanca, Tripoli, Cairo Egypt, Abadan, Iran, Karachi, Agra in India and then to the final destination, Calcutta. My airsickness did not make the trip too pleasant. I tried to

hide in a Red Cross Aid Station on one of the storm stops but they found me and dragged me back on board. We finally arrived at our destination and found that the Extratransit Depot was already set up a few months earlier so here we were, half way around the world with no assignment. The 180 days of temp duty were the first to go.

We used mosquito nets during the night and I avoided Malaria. The people in charge had a hard time figuring out what to do with the 15 of us enlisted men and so we were assigned to Camp Hoogly, a converted molasses factory, lived in tents, had servants to clean up and Bearers as personal servants for a tidy sum of 2.50 per month. Our new found assignment was to travel to the King George Docks and check Air Force Cargo as it arrived in merchant ships practically every day. Here we had Indian College students help us do a very small amount of work, which was already done by the transportation corps. This was how I learned about 75 words of Hindi, which I still remember. Those guys wanted to learn better English and I wanted to learn the language so that I could ride a rickshaw and tell the coolie where I wanted to go using his own native tongue. A two-mile ride would cost about 8 Annas or about 4 cents.

When I arrived, I thought to myself that this was going to be an opportunity of a lifetime for me and that I would take advantage of it. Most of my tent-mates just wanted to go home and had no desire to go into downtown Calcutta for dinner at an exclusive British type hotel. This was a formal event but luckily, a uniform was considered a formal dress. The Great Eastern Hotel offered a full course meal and every table had their own waiter and wine boy. The entire meal came to 5 rupees or \$1.50. It was a 6 course meal with dessert and if you wanted more they brought a whole new cake or pudding to slice you a new piece. I didn't smoke and since cigarettes were plentiful, a tip of a pack made us feel like royalty.

My good friend Jimmy McGoldrick went with me on these trips and often on a Friday night it included a visit to the Synagogue of Calcutta. This was one of many exciting visits I enjoyed there. I almost converted my friend, the Irishman. By the way, the Synagogue had sand for floors and tiny peep lights at the ceiling that looked like stars.

Buying typical Indian items from street merchants was fun and involved a kind of art in bargaining. I never was able to really strike a great bargain. I found out in the army, it's not what you know but who you know that counts. I got word that a Captain Sloan from "Hastings Mill", kind of like the pentagon of India, wanted Sgt Pollock to call him as soon as possible. That was pretty scary since I never imagined that was my roommate from Penn State who came to India earlier and let our other roommate, Stan Miller know about it. Stan found out that I too was in India and wrote Dave about it. It was a wonderful reunion and he was able to get me transferred to his unit that was a huge converted Jute Mill and housed all the brass in the China-Burma-India Theater. What a break, because the other 14 guys with me were sent off to the boonies and life there was not too pleasant. I was assigned to a Capt Dickerman and it was our job to create charts showing the amount and location of Air Force supplies in the CBI theatre. Visiting dignitaries viewed these charts from time to time.

The base had about 250 Americans WACS to make the stay a lot more homey, but believe me, my heart was always firmly connected to my one and only. I was in a position to show my captain how efficient I was although it was all a lot of BS but I pretended that it was exciting. Capt. Dickerman was completely snowed under and I

quickly got two more stripes. I am now a Tech. Sgt. I used that rank whenever I thought it might do me some good.

One of the inconveniences was a rope bed and no mattress. In snooping around the camp, I found a building that stored extra mattresses that the officers hadn't used. A Gurka Guard guarded this building with one of those curved knives as a weapon. I reassured him that it was OK for my Bearer (servant) to put it on his head and take it to my tent. I won that battle and it sure felt good to lie on a mattress for a change. However, that time it didn't work for I heard over the intercom that a mattress had been taken and there would be a complete camp inspection unless it was returned immediately. It was and I learned how to sleep on a rope bed with lots of blanket padding.

Life on this base was quite good and even the food was way above par. When you hang out with generals, lots of good rubs off.

On my desk was a phone that had a lot of authority so when I heard that Joe Rybak, my army friend from St. Louis and New Haven was also sent to India by way of California, I decided to reach his outfit located in the hinterland. His commanding officer was happy to call Joe to the phone to speak to someone from Hastings Mill and maybe Joe could find out what was going to happen to his outfit through this call. Joe was as shocked as I was when I got my call from Dave and I managed to get his superior officer to permit Joe to visit me in Calcutta for a weekend while he was supposed to get the scoop on his outfit thru me. We knew less than they but we did have a wonderful reunion.

The war in Europe ended and it was just a matter of time that we would close out the theatre of operations and be reshuffled to the Far East or go home.

We were finally processed to go home and were sent to a departure depot called Kanchapara. This was a trying and boring time with everyone focusing on going home. The war was over and all the processing was to begin. This place didn't have too much to eat so I used my rank to get into the mess hall at night and find the key to the food lockers. I always asked to see the Mess Sgt. knowing that he wouldn't be in so the people thought I was a friend of his and let me make some sandwiches. I even noticed officers doing the same thing so at least I didn't go hungry. We also learned that when our time came to leave and if we were assigned as advanced party on the boat, we would all be assigned to permanent duty working during the entire trip back. I also heard that the one best duty was to be assigned to the transportation office aboard ship. As luck would have it, my group was the one assigned to permanent duty and we were sent to the ship a day earlier than the rest of the returnees. The ship was called the SS General Ballou and the 28 days that it took to get to San Francisco were the worst days of my life in the Air Force.

I managed to con the person in charge of us that I was working in the Transportation Office and all I needed to do was to find the place. I looked around and finally found it, opened the door and asked if they could use a good clerk/typist and they said they had enough of them. My name was missing on the work roster and they wanted to know why. I told them there was no work yet to be done but that's where I was to be. I went back up to the office and explained that there was nothing for me to do and would they mind if I just hung around. No Problem. One of the first things I discovered was a band that fit over my sleeve that said "Chg of Quarters". This really helped keep me alive. The trip home started nicely but the second night out became bumpy and I retired to my hammock type bunk third up from the floor. When we got to the South China Sea,

we got involved in a monsoon. The boat moved in all directions at once and was worse when the propeller came out of the water and shook the whole vessel. I was deathly sick for three days and remember thinking that wouldn't it be better if the boat sunk. What saved me was my sick friend Walter Weiner standing by my bunk and forcing me to eat part of a bologna sandwich and it was just what I needed because I had nothing left in my stomach. I survived and managed to fall all the way up to the top deck and hang on. My arm band came in handy because I didn't have to sweat out the chow line and get sick like everyone else. I simply pointed to my armband of authority and moved into the head of the line. Since there were so many of us, we had to eat standing up with someone nearby throwing up in a nearby barrel. Not me. I got what I wanted and took it up to where the air was. I guess I got my sea legs after a few weeks and it was only just bearable until we could see the Bay Bridge.

The railroad train ride across the country was just a blur to Fort Dix via Gallitzin and I insisted in opening my window as we went by the town only to get a face full of cinders. I was discharged on St Patrick's Day and met Beverly in Philadelphia and what a wonderful day that was.

There were a lot of celebrations and picture taking in Gallitzin where I settled in and began to operate the store as my future way of life. My Father re-married to Rose Goldberg who was affectionately known as Aunt Rose to all.

I remember my father going over the accounts payable and listing a maximum credit limit on each one. He would point to one and say that this guy was no good and neither was his father or grandfather so his limit was small. One person only had the name "Mrs." along with a Yiddish sentence that he translates for me as "The woman who always sweats on her forehead". Even in the wintertime he added.

There was a hectic life for a while with so many living together and we considered moving into an apartment after Larry was born, the first of 4 children to be born in Gallitzin. It was a lucky break that some years prior, we were able to sell out the store in Portage.

Running the Gallitzin store was pretty good since we closed every nite at 5 pm and at noon on Thursdays. I played a lot of golf at the Cresson Country Club and remember the annual dues were 72.00. I became a member of the local Lions Club and was elected to the School Board. I guess I got a good portion of both the Catholic and Protestant votes to get elected. As I was one of just a few Jews in town, I guess I was no threat.

It was easy to see that the economy in the town was not too bright since the mines started to close down but with taxes of that huge building at \$444.00 a year it took very little volume to make a decent living.