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MEMORIES OF CROMBIE STREET

PART TWO...THE WAR YEARS



The years between 1936 to 1946 were monumental ones for the world, for Pittsburgh and particularly for me...living on Crombie Street and in my adolescence. In 1936, I was 8 years old...and the depression was one year younger...Roosevelt was just completing his first term in office and his NRA (National Recovery Act) with all its components was just beginning to deal with the problems of unemployment and poverty. The WPA had started to put people back to work and jobs, initially created by the government had helped to rouse the sleeping industrial complex...which in turn began to increase both its manpower and productivity. The unions were beginning to fight for the rights of their employees and names like John L. Lewis of the UMW and Walter Reuther of the UAW appeared constantly in our newspapers and on the radio. Strikes and union contracts became the watchwords of the day. Consumer goods became less scarce and people began to buy. Prices were going up (a suit at Specialty Clothing Company now cost \$17.00 instead of \$14.00...but that was with two pairs of pants!) and it seems that almost weekly we sat at the radio and heard President Roosevelt begin his fireside chat with the words "My friends..." in a way so unique and distinctive, that I can shut my eyes and hear it now! His messages were ones of optimism and brought some hope of recovery from a terrible time.

I don't really exactly recall when I began to hear things about Europe and the mounting evidence that war was about to occur but it must have been around then...when I was 9 or 10. We noted some increase in concern in the papers with almost daily front page stories...(one had to read the headlines on the front page before turning to the funnies) and particularly on the radio and the newsreels at the movies. Gabriel Heatter was our radio news analyst and he and some of the younger people who were just starting out (including the later-to-be-famous war correspondents Eric Severeid and Edward R. Murrow) told us of Hitler's rise to power; of the German brownshirts, the Hitler Youth, the Gestapo and the SS; of giant crowds listening for hours to speeches by their dictators ...interrupting frequently by saluting and shouting "Sieg Heil"; of the inaction of the other European countries and the futile attempts on the part of Neville Chamberlain and Eduard Deladier to slow the pace of German aggression; and ultimately the invasions of the Sudatenland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Poland all in the name of first nationalism and then the quest for "Lebensraum". It was sort of unreal though, all of that, almost like a movie or a book and I guess lots of people agreed with that. There was a mood of isolationism in our government and our people, most of whom were still licking their depression wounds were not terribly interested in things happening on another continent to people whose languages we couldn't understand. After a while, people tired of reading or hearing about Goebbels, Goehring, Himmler, Mussolini, Chamberlain (with the inevitable umbrella) and were more concerned with the economy, the dust bowl in Oklahoma (Steinbeck's famous novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* took place in the mid 30's), strikes, the floods (the famous Johnstown flood!) and of course, baseball with Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig dominating the national scene but in Pittsburgh we had our very own heroes, Pie Traynor and Gus Suhr.

I am not sure when I first heard about Nazi anti-Semitism and Hitler's attempt to destroy the German Jews but somehow it crept into our sensibilities and then became a glaring and blatant concern. I guess my first contact was related to the kids who began appearing in our classes in

Colfax Elementary School. Miriam Kornitzer, Hans Jonas, Mimi Oppenheimer, Rolf Winter and others drifted into our lives. They were Jewish (but not really "Yiddish" ...there's a distinction), had accents, dressed a bit differently at first and were "outsiders" at least for a while. The boys didn't know how to play baseball and the girls didn't wear bobby sox. Some of them told us stories...kid's stories of things that happened that made some of us at least wonder about Europe and the Nazis. Then in Hebrew and Sunday schools we were told of atrocities against our people and Rabbi Rose's sermons during Saturday Services (I had begun studying for my Bar Mitzvah and hence had to attend every Saturday...Mr. Baradon's orders!) became increasingly strident in expressing concern for our people in Europe. We heard the words "Concentration Camp" (I have admit to not being able to guess as to the meaning of the word "concentration" in this context and I thought it had something to do with the demand that the Jews concentrate and give serious thought to their errant ways!), Kristallnacht (the night they broke all the windows in the Jewish shops and houses) and then gas chambers...an unspeakable horror which was described only in a whisper and which most people couldn't believe really occurred (some today still don't believe that it happened!).

I guess my mother was the most vehement in her hatred of the Germans and believed the worst about the Nazi's treatment of the Jews. Maybe my father and the rest of my uncles and aunts did too, but I don't think they were in Mary's league in ability to see the worst in people. Mary hated the Germans (also the Poles, the Lithuanians and the Russians...but the Germans, or as she called them..."The Flukes" were the worst of all) and I guess based on her European experiences as a child, she really believed that they were quite capable of rounding up the Jews and putting them in camps. I am not sure that she believed that the Jews were being killed, at least at first, but I think that by the time we went to war in 1941 she was convinced that Jews were dying by the thousands in Europe and I guess we all agreed with her. It was a bad time for Jewish people in Pittsburgh and all of the US...none of us wanted to believe it was happening, and when we did believe it we didn't know what to do about it. Our government wasn't really interested in listening to what sounded to us by then to be deafening cries of despair and death rattles of our people.

When Hitler's Panzer divisions crossed into the lowlands and France it was apparent that the world was really at war. The Dutch and Belgian suffering was bad and the French capitulation was pathetic (what ever happened to the Maginot line?...one day it was there and the next day it was gone!). Britain entered the war and we all cheered...thinking that their fighting men and machines would end it in a short time. But the Nazi Wehrmacht was really a mighty force (much more so than the world appreciated up to that point in time) and so we read in the papers and heard on the radio or saw in the movie news bad stories about Dunkirk, mobilization for war, the bombing of Britain, blackouts, rationing and the inevitable deaths of so many young fighting men. It wasn't hard for the kids of the day to become very involved in the war. My friends, Leroy Weiner, Sonny Gottlieb, Alan Udell, Marvin Gusky, etc. and I were now approaching 13 and studying for our Bar Mitzvahs...but in our fantasy lives walking to or from the Beth Shalom we became Spitfire pilots, our planes roaring over the English Channel and downing Messerschmitts by the score; or patriots fighting with the Underground in France to liberate the French (usually beautiful young ladies of almost inevitably Jewish extraction) from the yoke of Nazi occupation.

When the United States began losing their neutrality by engaging in Lend-Lease (a Roosevelt and Hopkins way of justifying sending almost anything to England) they sent Liberty ships...freighters laden with first food and then munitions to our friends the British. We were their lifeline and I guess we all took their side... and even the isolationists and America Firsters came around.

Lindberg still maintained a posture of neutrality and Senator Harold Ickes with him but most everyone else cheered the Brits when they won a skirmish and cried for them when bad things happened. We now openly hated the Germans and to a lesser extent the Italians and people with accents or German surnames began worrying about possible reprisals. Some of the Liberty ships were sunk by the Nazi U-boats and the east coast cities became concerned about attack from the sea. I guess Boston and New York and maybe Baltimore and Philadelphia had blackouts and test air raids and even in Pittsburgh, we had an air raid siren that was tested every week (Monday I think!).

None of us really thought that we would go to war....although it became apparent to anyone who read the newspapers or listened to the radio that we were really supporting the Allies in the period from late 1939 on. We were rocked by the battle of Britain, cheered at the always understated valor of the British and listened with tears in our eyes when Churchill described "their finest hour". The war began to intrude...defense plants began to work two and then three shifts; the government in 1941 passed the Selective Service Act (which we knew as the "draft") and General Hershey took the first number out of the bowl to call up the lucky recruit; phrases like 1A (fully draft eligible) and 4F (not eligible by reason of health) crept into our vocabulary; and we were told to buy defense bonds and all the kids bought stamps in school...pasted them in books and when the total came to \$18.75 traded them in on a \$25 bond (all called initially "defense" bonds and stamps but then became "war" bonds and stamps). More and more Americans volunteered in England or with the Canadians to fight in Europe and the war against Germany now became our fight... admittedly without the deprivations of war for our civilians or the maiming and deaths for the boys in the front lines. Our first set of war movies started showing and were immensely popular and fanned the flames of our now very active adolescent fantasy lives.

Then came Sunday December 7th in the year 1941...it was mid afternoon when the news of Pearl Harbor reached Pittsburgh and I (and almost everyone who lived through it) shall never forget how stunning the news was. I had just turned 13 (my Bar Mitzvah had occurred in October of 1941) and was playing basketball at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement on Centre Avenue in the Hill District. We were in the middle of the game when someone came in and announced loudly that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and we were at war! President Roosevelt came on the radio and talked about the "day of infamy"...and we who had sort of watched and cheered the war from afar as interested spectators suddenly became major players and in what sounded to anyone who thought about it, a very bad game. We now had a war on two fronts...Europe and the Pacific and it didn't take long to realize that we were woefully unprepared for either. Our Pacific fleet had been badly damaged at Pearl Harbor and our troops although partly trained were really no match for the seasoned German Wehrmacht or the fanatical Japanese. Our airforce was not really combat ready and our bases throughout the US and elsewhere were poorly organized and inadequately staffed for a war effort. The Government was stunned; the Military were in chaos; the people didn't know what was next and feared land or air attacks on our major cities ...and Pittsburgh shared in all of that...we just didn't really understand the meaning of war and what to expect....we were deeply troubled by all of that and particularly concerned that the newsreels showing destruction of cities, bombing of civilians and long lines of refugees going from place to place could now be about us instead of the Poles, Czechs or Chinese. It was terrifying in one sense but in another it represented a challenge...a chance to get into the game and play (but only to win...no one ever thought we could lose!) instead of watching from the sidelines.

Pittsburgh and the war:

In 1941 and 1942, Pittsburgh which had always been a large producer of steel became the world center for production of this crucial material...iron ore from the Mesabi range, coal from the coal mines in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and nearby Ohio came together in the blast furnaces and bessemer converters of companies such as Jones and Laughlin, Bethlehem Steel and National Tube in the city itself and up and down the Monongahela valley to make the raw materials from which were fashioned the tools of war. Every plant worked three shifts and the skies were darkened by their output. It seemed like everyone in the county worked in the mills or in jobs that supported the people who worked there and there was a remarkable singlemindedness of purpose...make more steel to lick Hitler and the Nazis...to teach Tojo a lesson ...to build bombers and tanks that ultimately would triumph in North Africa, Italy, France, the islands of the South Pacific and south east Asia. Employment was not only full for the steel workers but because of the shortage of males as a result of the draft, women and part-time teenagers had jobs either in the mills themselves or in restaurants, food and department stores, theatres and even the city government. Everyone was working...it was a period of intense activity and the cheerfulness related to this productivity was felt throughout not just the city but all of Western Pennsylvania.

It wasn't all good though...there was the draft and all the young men who were called to Service some never to return. Red, white and blue banners appeared in windows on Crombie Street and all the other streets of Squirrel Hill (and everywhere) signifying that a member of the household was in the military service; and increasingly over the years more of these had gold stars indicating that the person had died. All the able bodied men were called up to the United States Army or enlisted in the Navy or Marine Corps and my brother Milton was one of the first on Crombie Street to go. Milt was called up at the same time as Fred Kelly who along with his brother, Gene Kelly ran a dancing school for the young ladies (and occasionally boys) of Pittsburgh. Milt and Fred and a lot of others were inducted into the Army in that first wave and after a period of basic training, because Milt was a college graduate with a background in science (my mother wanted Milton to be a doctor), he was stationed at Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas, a chemical warfare base. No one ever really figured out why Milt went there or if he did anything while there, but one thing was true, he really hated it. His best times were when he came home on leave and met with his friends Lenny Hahn, Al Ainisman and Rube Snyderman to tell them stories of how miserable the Service was. Milton, always graceful and handsome was really a spectacular sight in uniform and a source of mixed feelings to the Mankins....pride (Pop and me) and deep foreboding and concern (Mary and Aunt Rosie). In addition to Milton, lots of the family went into the military: Bob and Milt Watzman, Davy and Eddie Simons, the two Korman boys from New York, Bob, Benny and Jack Lechtner from Erie and our cousin Bob Cohen the general practitioner was in for almost the entire war, and came out as a psychiatrist. Arthur was exempted probably because of his eyesight (he and I are both quite nearsighted) or maybe because he was in college at the time. He finished at Pitt in 1941 and went to graduate school at the University of Minnesota so had pretty much left the scene when I entered High School at the height of the war. I was 13 in 1941 and was 17 on VJ Day so really just missed. My cousins Sandy, Gerald, Morty, Sidney and Bernard I were all too young to see service although a number of us like Gerald, Sandy and I were drafted during the Korean campaign. None of the family were killed or wounded although several went overseas and saw combat. That was not true for some of my brothers' friends and even some people I knew in high school...it was sad when you heard about people dying in the war. It was high drama and heroic when it happened with appropriate background music in the movies but really just sort of tragic in real life when you realized that a guy you knew all those years died somewhere in a country he never even heard of before and was never going to come back.

Back home some of the things that happened were fun...some pretty scary...and some just silly. We had rationing and using ration books for meat, sugar and even shoes became a way of life. The real problem was gasoline rationing, especially for my father who in large measure made his living as a traveling salesman. There were all degrees of rationing for gasoline (A thru E) based on your need for an automobile and my father had a C rating, which was pretty good since his work depended on it. Lots of others were quite restricted in their travel. Food rationing was less of a problem to us...mostly because Mary was so frugal about what she cooked and really hated meat. So "Meatless Tuesday" was not a problem and as long as she could get some chicken or some delicious Lake Erie whitefish (neither rationed), we ate well. I am sure anyone who knew my mother could picture her doing her shopping on Murray Avenue and even when things were scarce, coming home with provisions ...she was hard to deny! I remember Milt coming home on leave and Mary spending all of family ration tickets for a two week period on a beautiful rib roast (Milt's favorite)...but she didn't do anything like that for us. I should also point out that anytime you have rationing like that you also can count on black market activity and Pittsburgh was no exception to that rule. There was a black market in all kind of stamps and even more so in buying the products without ration books. I don't think people made very much money on this kind of activity...it was just part of the antisocial response to any kind of law...to figure out a way to break it... and of course get away with it!

Another thing we had in Pittsburgh was blackouts....and I am not sure why we couldn't light our electric signs or use automobile lights late at night but apparently someone was concerned with bombing or whatever, so we did. We had air raid tests complete with sirens and everyone going to the basement. Air raid wardens wore their hats and arm bands and told us where to go. I don't know what we would have done if an enemy plane had actually appeared on the horizon but all of us were prepared to identify it. We took lessons in profile identification so we could tell a Messerschmitt from a Fokker from an American or British plane. We actually made models of these just to learn what a B17 looked like and how to distinguish it from its German counterpart. We even learned to identify Japanese Zeros and I guess that was the ultimate in silliness for Pittsburgh but it seemed like the right thing to do at the time.

The ladies volunteered their time at the high school for things like rolling bandages (did anyone ever use those thousands and thousands of rolled up strips of linen?) and of more purpose, entertained our Servicemen at the local USO canteens by baking cookies, passing out donuts and even dancing with them. It was all right for ladies in their 20's but some of the girls in our high school classes at age 12-15 put on their snoods, too much makeup and wore silk stockings in order to "pass". I think most of that was innocent but we all watched the movies about the Stagedoor Canteen in New York and knew the words of the song about losing your heart at it...and it isn't hard to guess the way a bunch of teenage boys rewrote those words! Everyone was supposed to write to servicemen and letter writing to my brother became a weekly chore for me...it was actually kind of fun telling him the news of the week although he rarely wrote back. Some of the girls in our class adopted servicemen and wrote them long and passionate letters, sending them pictures with more makeup than they have used since and hoping that they would grow up before the guys came home. I wonder if anyone saved those letters and what a treasure they would be to read now....fifty years later!

Patriotism became our watchword and loyalty to country, the President and our armed Services were uppermost in our minds and indeed in our hearts. We still did the Lord's prayer in school in the morning but along with it we saluted the flag and on every possible occasion sang the Star Spangled Banner....just imagine a bunch of teenage boys with voices cracking tackling that

song!...but we did it with feeling and a stirring in our hearts. Most of the boys couldn't wait to grow up so that they too could join the military and I remember trying to learn to read eye charts without my glasses so that when the time came I could qualify as 1A1. It was a time of unity for the American public, perhaps the last such in our history till now. We all worked together, black and white, bosses and workers, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant for the war effort and anything that anyone did which in any way threatened to sabotage our production of war materials or compromise our soldier's ability to fight the enemy was not only viewed with scorn but was roundly condemned by everyone...almost as one voice. It really was one voice and I guess the voice that we listened to most was Franklin Delano Roosevelt who told us what we needed to know in a way that mesmerized us and drove us to even greater heights of patriotism. It was a bad time for the world and for the people who were killed or tortured but it was a good feeling to be a part of the war effort in Pittsburgh in those years. I shall never forget them...and I think anyone who went through them will remember them as vividly as I do.

Taylor Allderdice High School:

I graduated from Colfax Elementary School in June of 1940 and in September, at the age of 12, I entered Taylor Allderdice High School to spend the next six years there in Junior and Senior High. As noted in the first chapter, Taylor Allderdice (named after a little known and scarcely remembered former President of the Board of Education of the City of Pittsburgh) was only two blocks from Crombie Street so it took me all of 5 minutes to get to school on any day and it was easy (and in fact knowing Mary, absolutely mandatory) to come home for lunch most days. I don't recall eating lunch in the lunch room very often although occasionally Mary would give me 35 cents to buy a meal in one of the lunch periods (the school was so big and the lunch room so small that there were three periods...early, middle and late, each a half hour in duration). I actually liked the meatballs and spaghetti (15 cents) and especially the mashed potatoes which came with a serving of thick grayish colored meat gravy (10 cents) and I still remember the rolls and butter (5 cents) which were quite tasty.

Allderdice was an unusual school by Pittsburgh standards, chiefly because it had a heterogeneous population of students. It was big...about 2000 students and in the war years each class consisted of about 300 students. Just about half of the students came from Squirrel Hill and the other half from Greenfield and Homewood. Squirrel Hill was (and still is) principally a white collar Jewish neighborhood with middle class people south of Forbes Street and upper middle class north of Forbes (an important social dividing line which figured prominently in our lives as we entered the dating age!). Greenfield and Homewood were for the most part heavily Catholic and principally working class people, many of them blue collar. Most of the families in Squirrel Hill hoped and indeed expected their children to aspire to a college education and professional careers; most of those from Greenfield had far less concern for education or aspirations for their children. Needless to say the kids from Squirrel Hill were more than just competitive over grades...they were at times frantic...those from Greenfield for the most part didn't care very much. There were obviously exceptions. Not everyone in Squirrel Hill was a scholar and there were also many Gentile families living both north and south of Forbes. Conversely, some of our most talented students came from Greenfield. There was also the intermediary zone...the other side of Murray Avenue past Forward. The kids who lived there were close to the Greenfield side and had a more difficult time with cultural relations than those who lived on Darlington (near the Manor theatre) for instance or even more so those that lived on Inverness or Bennington, north of Forbes. I should point out that a lot of the kids from North of Forbes attended private schools...Shadyside Academy for the boys and Winchester or the Ellis School for the girls, so the rest of us only met

them at social events.

Cultural relations between the two groups of students were sometimes strained. The words "cultural relations" is perhaps a polite euphemism for some pretty blatant anti-Semitism which was acted out by the boys in the form of fights and some really hostile acts. I learned about this shortly after entering Junior High when I was beaten by a group of kids in the Men's room...not badly...I had a few outwardly evident bruises ...but the real ones were inside chiefly because I very quickly realized two things: first, that I was not only not invincible but in fact, quite vulnerable; and second, that I could be hated for something I had no control over. I learned an important lesson very early...not everyone is going to love you! Just to put all this in perspective for the most part there was a little of this going on all the time but it was not really very overt or blatant nor did it significantly interfere with education or social events. In my whole time there we had only one real skirmish that we called a "race riot"...the kids from Greenfield came over to Squirrel Hill in gangs looking for people to attack...it didn't last very long and no one was hurt. I guess what I found most unpleasant about it was the undercurrent of hostility. There were some people from the other side who I thought were good folks and with whom I wanted to be friendly but felt constrained not to approach them and I am sure that was the same for some of them.

In Junior High, we were assigned to home rooms where we met every morning, pledged allegiance to the flag, said the Lord's prayer, and then went out to our various classes going from one to another but back to the home room for a study period, usually right after lunch. We also had assembly periods when the entire class and some times large groups of students met in the auditorium to hear presentations, attend pep rallies, see the class play or listen to musical performances. The Choral Group under Miss Steiner were regular performers as were Orchestra A under Laura Ziegler. We had some virtuosos who performed as well. One of the most memorable of these performances was that of Marshall Levy and Nancy Freedman playing a piano duet (two pianos) version of "Tea for Two" with a lot of improvisation ...what talent some of the kids had! The motto over the stage in the Auditorium was important..."Know Something; Do Something; Be Something" ...it's hard to forget that message.

Some of the more memorable teachers for me included Miss Quatroocchi who taught civics and social studies, Mr. Wagner, math, Miss Simpson, a stern and forbidding Latin teacher, Miss Brennan a really outstanding teacher of German, and Miss Bergman (who subsequently became my home room teacher in senior high school) who taught Spanish and was sort of dippy. Then there were the coaches. Ernie Schlesinger was the football coach, John Irvin was responsible for track and field and the swim team and "Puss" Irwin coached the basketball team. The Principal was John D. McClymonds who joined us soon after I entered senior high school. He was famous in my mind for his opening comments at each graduation ceremony (annually at first but after a while during the war when classes were accelerated, every six months). The words were "Classes come and classes go and after a while they all seem to merge into one...". Then he would add a statement how this class was a bit different, etc. Being in education and graduating resident classes every six months for the past thirty years has heightened my appreciation for Mr. McClymonds observation and remarks and oddly enough I find myself using them quite frequently (like every six months or so!).

The most memorable of our teachers for most of us was Lon H. Colborn, the chemistry teacher. Mr. Colborn taught chemistry to anyone who wanted to learn...but he also had a special qualitative and quantitative analysis class...by invitation only...which met twice (or was it three times?) a week during the entire lunch period (1.5 hours). It was a special time for us in that class,

partly because of the excitement of the subject material ("qual" and "quant" were just starting to become a standard technology then and required a lot of sometimes fascinating detective work); the other students (surely Allderdice's elite, at least in terms of intelligence); but also because of Mr. Colborn himself. As I look back on my educational life, he stands out as most influential in guiding me into a world of productive science....and furthermore, everyone who came in contact with him (and there were lots of us), felt the same way. The mysterious part of all of that is no one is ever sure how he exerted his influence on his charges and why so many of them achieved the way they did...and they really did achieve. He once published his private memoirs and it was hard to believe if you hadn't been there, the numbers of deans, college professors, scientists, physicians and prominent business people...all united by that year in Colborn's Qual and Quant class! It is true that he carefully chose the substrate and in fact was an "intellectualist" if such a word exists...but it was more than that. I guess he taught us to ask questions, doubt the answers and where there were no answers seek them. That's a formula I have tried to imbue in my students but I am afraid far less successfully than Lon Colborn. I think we all owe him a lot...certainly I do.

Taylor Allderdice was a good school and at least at the time the academic record was really quite exceptional. There was ample opportunity to learn and the teachers for the most part were interested in teaching their students. They weren't always good at teaching but they all tried hard and most often succeeded. We had clubs...science club, chess club, Spanish club, math club, geography club, etc. all run by the teachers and enthusiastically attended by them and the students. Our teachers tutored at times and really worked to get everyone through. But I think the difference between our student body and subsequent ones is that we really read...read for school, read for learning, read for entertainment or just read to read. We had a good library at Allderdice and it was really well used, but most of us had as our fondest possession our Carnegie Library card and waited eagerly for Saturday or after school or an off school day to go there, browse amongst the stacks and take out as many books as we could carry. I don't think there was anyone in our entire school that couldn't read...and among my friends from Squirrel Hill, most of us read with a passion and a desire that I don't think has ever been equalled in my experience since.

Bar Mitzvah...the Great Event:

If you are a Jewish male, there are some ceremonies that happen to you that are for the most part out of your control. The first of these is the "Bris" the ritual circumcision which occurs usually at under 1 week of age. It is a remarkably ceremonial event with a special person to hold you (the Bible said it should be your father...but even for the old time Jewish people that was a bit much so now it is a "Sondek", a designated father substitute!), another special person to make the incision in your foreskin (the "Mohel") and a whole bunch of relatives and friends to watch, congratulate the mother (who is in another room!) and the father (who usually faints!) and then eat cake and have a little wine in honor of the occasion. If you are the first born male in your family you have another party in your honor, also in the first week or so of life, this one a lot less painful...no cutting, just a lot of Hebrew prayers. That's called the "Pidyen ha Ben". The third ceremony is the Bar Mitzvah...the coming of age...the event at age 13 that signifies in the eyes of the community and the Lord, that you are now a "man" and can enter all the prayer rituals and participate as an adult when the prayer system requires 10 men (a "Minyan") to start a Service. Speaking as a Jewish male who underwent two of the three rituals (I was the third born so was spared the Pidyen ha Ben) I have to express my admiration for Yiddish timing....just imagine if the Bar Mitzvah and the Bris were reversed in time and the circumcision occurred at age 13!

So on to the Bar Mitzvah...every Jewish boy's nightmare! The preparation began when I was about 8 and started Hebrew School. We went every afternoon five days a week, except in the winter when Erev Shabas (the sabbath eve which began at sundown), came too early in the day for school to continue. Shortly thereafter, my Mother and Aunt Rosie began telling me about the great Bar Mitzvahs in the family and how proud they were going to be when I did mine. I was too young to remember Milt's (he was 12 years older than me and hence I would have been 1 year of age) but I remember Arthur's. The picture is a bit vague but I do remember that he was so short at the time that he had to stand on a box to give his speech! The actual preparation began when I had to start attending Saturday Services to watch the others and was formally introduced to our teacher, Mr. Baradon.... indeed a fearsome and formidable individual. He had the task of shaping, instructing and somehow turning out for public display, one Bar Mitzvah "Bocher" (young lad) a week...and if my level of enthusiasm was representative, not an easy task at all!

First we had to learn to read Hebrew...difficult at best. The words go from right to left (rather than the English left to right); the consonants are characters which don't look a bit like English...but have sounds like ours with some missing and some added; and the vowels are subscript characters added onto the consonants. The printed words are hard to read...the script is next to impossible without a lot of practice. Furthermore the modern Hebrew writing world plays a trick on you because just when you think you are really getting good at reading Hebrew or Yiddish (a middle European polyglot language which originally had no alphabet but adopted the Hebrew characters....but with almost completely different sounds and meanings to the words!), they take away the vowels and then it really gets tough! Reading is of course one thing...understanding is another and after a year or two of Hebrew school most of us could read the language pretty passably...but very few of us knew what we were reading. Understanding the words we said was not a requirement of the Bar Mitzvah at least at the Beth Sholom. At the time in the 1930's most people thought of Hebrew as a dead language like Latin and unless one wished to become a Rabbi or a Cantor, there didn't seem to be much advantage to learning it (as opposed to Spanish or German, for instance both of which we thought would be very utilitarian in our future lives). In a way that was too bad because it robbed us of an opportunity to speak another language which over the intervening years has become an important one in the world and the principal way of communicating with a lot of our kin.

After we had learned our Hebrew well enough to first sound out the characters and then apply some word recognition and then develop an appropriate accent (some of the sounds are little difficult for the western tongue!), we had to learn some special things in preparation for the event. How to "lay Tefillin"...put on the phylacteries ...an ancient ritual designed to renew your faith by offering a solitary prayer to God each morning. Next we had to turn to learning the Bible reading and the explanatory passage that we were responsible for on our Bar Mitzvah Sabbath. The first, the Bible reading is a brief passage from the sacred scrolls (the Torah) that is assigned to our specific Saturday, which is supposed to be sung in traditional melody by the Bar Mitzvah boy. Because of the difficulty of reading it from the Torah...(there are no vowels and the characters are slightly different) and also the problems of interpreting the marks which signal alterations in the pitch of one's voice during the chant, frequently the celebrant himself does not do this but needs the services of a "specialist" ...a reader of the Torah (it is an honor if his father does it...and an even greater joy to the family if the Bar Mitzvah Bocher does it himself!). But the interpretation which is really an expansion of the tract in the Torah (known as the "Haftorah") is all for the Bar Mitzvah boy. He has to stand on the pulpit in his new Bar Mitzvah suit...all alone and deliver a passage which to him seems eternal in duration which must be sung accurately and sung well. Everyone in the Synagogue listens carefully, particularly the parents (praying that they won't be

disgraced), the old timers in their long "Talassim" (prayer shawls) and the quaking pre-Bar Mitzvah Bochorim waiting for their turns in the next few weeks! It was a test not only of the ability to perform in that setting but of the stability of one's voice which in about 50% of us would start out as tenor and change suddenly during the chant to either squeaking boy soprano or croaking basso profundo!

Then comes the final test...the speech. The Bar Mitzvah boy now must address the audience in English and give a speech, politely expressing gratitude to one's parents, the Rabbi, Mr. Baradon, the congregation and the entire Jewish community for allowing him to join them as a "man". This should be drawn out as long as possible to reduce the need for the next section, which consists of an attempt to put the section of the Torah read that day into prospective with current events, such as the World Series, the National Recovery Act, the Spanish Civil war, etc. This usually doesn't work but one can end strongly by declaring your manhood ...(I think the words I said were "Today I take my place in Jewish society as a man and I pledge that I shall remain dedicated to Jewish principles"...it's a wonder some bolts of lightening didn't come out of the ceiling every Shabas!). Winding that speech up left only one ordeal...the Rabbi's remarks.... directed at the entire congregation, but delivered standing face to face with the Bar Mitzvah Bocher and only a few feet away. I and all my colleagues prayed that his breath wouldn't be too bad and that there would be no snickers from the other Bochorim in the first row...it just wouldn't do to start laughing hysterically at that point in time. Then...wonder of wonders...it's over...you've done it...you have completed the Bar Mitzvah ceremony and it is time for the parties. First the party in the Sisterhood Hall which takes place immediately after the closing benediction. The adults come to taste the wine and eat some strudel (Mary baked for weeks for this occasion!) while the children (excuse me...I was just designated a man!) run about and play...interrupted only by a series of relatives who press envelopes containing money gifts into your hand or give you a gift wrapped box (small is a fountain pen...large is a sweater!). Finally on Saturday night, the evening party for the family, in my case held on Crombie Street. After I received all the hand shakes from my uncles (and a few more gifts!) and kisses from my aunts, I spent the evening as I usually did on such occasions talking to my cousins Bernard and Sidney or teasing my cousins Joanne and Lucille. As I recall the event, it was a happy time for me...as I think it is for every Bar Mitzvah boy. I am sure there are words for the way I felt like the "rites of passage" or some such, but it is for every Jewish child, an exceptional event ...a milestone...and maybe it really is a turning point...a time of change in life ...of putting away the more childish things and turning to the serious business of being a "man".

Neighbors, Friends and Heroes:

In the late 30's the people in the Crombie Street neighborhood began to change. Our next door neighbors the Kopelmans moved out and took my "first-best-friend" Myron away. I remember saying goodbye and feeling sad. Jerry and Dorothy Solomon moved in...he was a lawyer...she was a good hearted but not very bright lady who my mother loved to mimic. They had two daughters, Rita two years older than me and Phyllis two years younger. I liked both of them...Rita was sort of serious and shy... she was smart in school. Phyllis was less smart than her sister and it seemed to me, a little crazy...in retrospect I think she had petit mal seizures for at least a while...when we got older she was a little wild. We played together some of the time but with Selma Rogal still living in the next house up the street, the combination of that many girls and all that girl-talk was too much for me. I on the other hand was increasingly concerned with sports, particularly basketball and softball and other more "manly" things so concentrated my street social activities on my male neighbors. My next "best-friend" Leroy Weiner moved in

across the street and almost at the same time Sonny Gottlieb moved in two doors away from him on Tilbury Street. Leroy and I were the same age but Sonny was a year younger. He went to the Poale Zedek Synagogue (the Orthodox Shul at the corner of Nicholson and Shady), was more religious than Leroy and me and wore a yarmulke (skull-cap). About half way up Crombie Street was Herbie Limsi, two years younger and sort of a flake but fun; and at the top of the street near Beechwood Boulevard were the Coffey twins about two years older than me, from a blue collar background and very good athletes. Most of my activities with this group of neighbors (especially Leroy and Sonny) occurred during the summer times when we had some time and although we saw each other in the winter, especially for sled riding (I remember when Arthur persuaded my mother to get us a sled...a Flexible Flyer!) it clearly was a much busier time.

Fall, winter and spring days were pretty full...school 'til 3:05 (it's funny how I remember the exact time when the Taylor Allderdice final bell rang...what a moment of joy that was on many days!), Hebrew school, Saturday Services and even Sunday School. Between those activities, working at Specialty Clothing Company during the busy seasons, homework and trips to the library there wasn't a lot of time left over for socializing with friends on Crombie Street during the school months. But the three months of summer...now that was great fun and oh, how we relished every moment of it. No school, no Hebrew School, no Sunday school, no work at Specialty (the slack season!). We knew every inch of Frick Park (at the top of Crombie Street), went on long walks to Schenley or even Highland Park, joyfully went to the movies on Saturday afternoon (poor Sonny Gottlieb couldn't go because of Shabas), played softball and basketball at Colfax field, learned how to ride a bicycle (actually my brother Arthur taught me that!), went to the library together and read the funnies on Sunday morning in each other's houses.

I don't think my Crombie Street friends ever all got together at the same time and it seemed to me that my relationships were staged in time. We went through phases of "togetherness"...so that for a few summers Leroy, Sonny and I were inseparable; and then it was Herbie Limsi and Ernie Barash who moved in next door to Selma Rogal; and then the Coffey twins and some of their friends, etc.

I remember one summer when I was about 9 or 10, my Mother and Father decided that I ought to go to summer camp for two weeks and they chose Camp Kadimah, a Jewish camp not far from Pittsburgh run by a man named Solomon Osheroff. I don't think I cried when I went away...unlike a lot of the other kids who were homesick...and I remember not liking the meals very much but enjoying the outdoor activities and hoping that I could grow up to be a Counsellor some day. I remember having to write a post card home every few days (Mr. Osheroff insisted on that...it was the way of being sure that the parents would think well of his camp!). This is also where I first learned camp songs like "Pufferbelly" and "Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah". I met a few new people there including Jackie Breskow who first initiated me conversationally at least into some of the more lurid aspects of sexuality. He talked about girls and their parts incessantly and although I had some knowledge prior to that (mostly out of books) Jack and some of his friends and I had some late night conversations (after our counsellor, Jerry Hydowitz, (a hero and later to become an internist colleague in Pittsburgh) had left us for the night) which clarified (or so I thought) some of my confusions about sex and the acts of love (or should I say lust!). I came back from Kadimah with a sunburn, lot of dirty laundry and some very dirty thoughts.

School friends were different. I saw more of them but it wasn't as close as it was with the neighborhood kids....we shared views and events but not as many secrets. Many of the school

friends appeared in my life every day either in my home room or in classes and we ate lunch together, stood outside at the wall on Tilbury Street in a group or just hung around. I think in general either I liked everyone or these were a nice group of people...because it is hard to remember any real villains amongst my group. Aside from my street friends the first group that I grew close too were my Bar Mitzvah Club members...those who were Bar Mitzvah at the Beth Sholom in the same year as I was. There were in this group some very bright and capable people in many ways disparate in objectives and life styles (and as it turned out, subsequent careers) who still, because of the ordeal of the Bar Mitzvah, clung tightly together like passengers on a small boat in a storm. Melvin Feldman, Murray Love, Melvin Passekoff, Morris Tufshinsky, Marvin Gusky, Lloyd Whitman, Earl Latterman and a lot of others who went to Hebrew School together, were schooled not-so-patiently by Mr. Baradon and met as I recall every Sunday morning to learn the rituals, have a breakfast provided by the mothers (including Mary) and exchange greetings and stories about sports events and school happenings...and in a hushed whisper, always a breath away from a giggle, talk about girls (never in those days did we talk to girls...just talked about them!). Once the Bar Mitzvah was over the group drifted apart to start their adult lives but still when we chance to meet today, smile affectionately at one another, perhaps remembering the shared experience of old days at the Beth Sholom.

The friends I made in school were people with whom for the most part I shared a common view of things and had concordant objectives and goals. The people I chose to be with (or perhaps since at the time I wasn't very outgoing, chose me) would by today's standards be known as "nerds". We were bright...the "intelligentsia"...the people who read widely, knew the answers in class, got A's on our tests, always did our homework, joined the science or the chess club, were on none of the athletic teams and later proved to be some of Lon Colborn's super-achievers. Melvin Passekoff, Sheldon Edelstein, Howard Corey, Herbie Labbie....I liked being with them...they were very stimulating and exciting in an intellectual way, but still at time I longed for and spent good times with my Crombie Street friends and Colfax School softball and Irene Kaufman Center basketball players...and others who challenged me less but with whom I was sometimes better able to communicate.

Girl friends were really just that...girls who were friends. I was friendly with my neighbors Selma Rogal, Rita and Phyllis Solomon and a few other young ladies, such as Hermoine Rubin (Leroy's cousin...one of my first crushes), my cousin Lois Skirboll who moved to the corner of Tilbury and Shady, Bernice Danovitz from Nicholson Street and sweet Sondra Silverman (very bright and warm and caring) who lived down the street from us on Tilbury. We shared things but didn't "date" or even I think talk about it...we were just class mates, homework sharers, occasional movie goers (always in a group) and friends. I remember being a little stunned when I saw some of my "girl friends" at Beth Sholom on Rosh Hashanah wearing their new dress-up clothes and I suddenly realized that they were almost women and subtly perhaps our relationships changed.

Somewhere around the 10th grade, I found myself involved with a special category of friends...my AZA buddies. AZA stands for American Zionist Association and they and their female counterparts, the BBG (Bnai Brith Girls) were really not devoted to Israel or interested in Aliyah or life on the Kibbutz, but an opportunity for Jewish boys and girls to get together in an organization, hold dances and most of all play softball and especially basketball (I was crazy about that game...despite being only 5 feet 8 inches tall and not very good). We played everywhere...at Taylor Allderdice in an evening league, the Irene Kaufmann Settlement, the "Y" (Young Mens and Womens Hebrew Association in Oakland) and in tournaments in far off places like Altoona, Canonsburg, Elwood City, Beaver Falls, etc. against similar AZA groups from those places. My

AZA friends included my second cousin Stanley Skirboll (a really nice person...unlike some of my relatives, we had a lot in common), Jerry Simon (our tall man on the team, all of 6 feet 1 inch), Lennie Schaffel (the lover...he had a long standing torrid relationship with Roz Robbins), Milt Hirsh (a little older and had a desperately needed car!), Bernie Naimark and a lot of others. We weren't very good at basketball or softball but we had a lot of fun in going through the phase of what now is probably termed male bonding, I suppose. We also became seriously interested in the opposite sex and had some tentative sexual adventures (rather tame, I am afraid by today's standards!) which became the subject of endless discussion. It was the right time for that I guess.

To say the least and to use an arcane phrase of yesterday, during the six years at Alderdice, I could not (then or for that matter, today) be considered a "social lion". I was a little shy, introspective, short and (yes, I admit it) fat and despite my father being in the clothing business didn't have a lot of clothes to wear...and frankly didn't care much about clothes. There were a number of people at Alderdice who had all the trappings of social awareness and success and I watched and in truth, envied them. In my mind they fell into two groups: north of Forbes people (I could call that group "genetic" in a sense that their parents were polished people with wealth and the same graces); and the "young-men-in-the-know" coterie (more "acquired" since many of their parents were immigrants like our family). Marcus Aaron, Martin Hamburger, Henry Grinsfelder and Carl Adelsheim were in the former class...they dressed in Brooks Brothers clothes, didn't speak Yiddish (and didn't speak to anyone who spoke Yiddish) went to Rodef Sholom Temple and had the social graces that one associates with country club kind of wealth. I was sure they wore a coat and tie to dinner. The other group typified by Hank Neaman, Herbie Arnold, Jerry Prince and Alfie Rosen had the kind of physical and social ease and grace I aspired to...they dressed well in the mode of the day, were athletic, physically impressive and laughed a lot and loudly. They all had reindeer sweaters (I didn't!), had worn tuxedos at one time or another, smoked (wow!) and could jitterbug (I had none of those attributes when I entered the 10th grade). I looked at those two groups of people with some envy...at times I designated them as "heroes" but not always since they had some glaring faults; but I guess I admired their social ease, which seemed to come so naturally to them and was seemingly so difficult for me.

I had some true heroes then too...they were people who were very popular at school principally because they were accomplished or remarkably talented. David Jandorf (a really great trumpet player), George Roth (a magnificent violinist from Orchestra A), Hank Neaman (a football player and really graceful person...he did everything well), Jerry Kramer (a fellow oboe player in the orchestra who seemed to know everything and everyone), Byron Yanks (later went to Julliard, changed his name to Janus and became an internationally known pianist), Irwin Schaefer (basketball player, bright...later a medical school classmate) and Nancy Freedman (a piano player and singer...one of my first from-a-distance crushes).

It is hard for me now to sort out how many of those friendships were really true friendships (and how do you define that anyway?) and how many were just knowing someone. At the time they were important to me and my image of myself and I guess having a lot of friends was important to all of us. As we grew older and drifted off to college, high school friends played less and less of a role in my life and I lost track of many or really most of these people. Now almost fifty years later, I mostly read about them when they die or something happens to them and then remarkably a memory springs into my mind; but the image I see is always as they were ...young, graceful and full of promise...not as I discover they really are when I meet them at reunions or by chance. I don't like seeing them as they are now...it profanes an important set of memories...and I really don't like thinking about the ones, like Leroy Weiner or Hank Neaman or Murray Love or Sonie

Silverman who have died....I would rather remember them the way they were during Allderdice days.

Work and Play:

The work ethic was something that I came by honestly...my mother was the hardest working woman I have ever met. My father worked hard at Specialty Clothing Company but took some time out for baseball games, trips to visit relatives, vacations (at least during his hayfever season) and every Saturday night when he played Pinochle with his cronies. Not Mary...she never really relaxed ...and in fact that became worse with age! I started to work when I was very young and have never stopped and I think it is all because of her!

My first "job" consisted of going to the store on Sunday and making boxes (putting together cardboard suit boxes for the lucky customers) but that was only during the busy season. Sometime around the time when I entered Junior High School I started delivering papers for Frank Marcosky...he was the local Fagin who came around in his car full of newspapers and passed them out to a bunch of us kids who delivered the Pittsburgh Press on routes (for some reason all routes when we talked about roads like Route 19 were pronounced as "rootes but when we talked about the streets we delivered papers to, we called those rowtes...I never knew why!). I think my first paper route paid about one-half a cent a paper (but the paper only cost 6 cents delivered!). When the war started it was hard to get delivery people so I graduated to a Post Gazette morning route. I got up each morning at 4:30 AM and actually delivered about 100 papers all to homes north of Forbes (and now received 1-2 cents a paper!). That route was a specially good one because of the really spectacular tips at Christmas time. I enjoyed the solitude and the quiet of the really elegant north of Forbes streets during those morning deliveries...and even more stopping in Herman's Bakery on my way home at 6:15 right after they opened and buying some sweet rolls while they were still warm. I would come home, have a bath, have my sweet roll and coffee (my mother let me have one cup of coffee in the morning) and then went off to school. I don't know why I wasn't more fatigued during the day but somehow it didn't affect me much and I never went to bed before 10:00 PM.

A little later, I started working at the Nixon Theatre (our only legitimate theatre in Pittsburgh at the time) as an usher and really enjoyed that. I must have seen the Student Prince 20 times! We did see some good shows though and I guess I got to really like stage performances in that setting. I also took part time jobs as a soda jerk at the Manor Pharmacy, sorting mail at the Post Office over Christmas, as an usher at Syria Mosque and as a busboy at the Pittsburgh Athletic Club (talk about seeing how the other three percent lived!); but my two continuous "real" jobs were at Polonsky's Hebrew National Delicatessen where I cut meat, waited on customers, made sandwiches, etc.; and of course at the Store...good old Specialty Clothing Company where I was now considered to be qualified to do everything from sweeping the floors to waiting on trade. Everywhere I worked I worked pretty hard and got paid for it which gave me a little financial freedom. I bought a typewriter that I needed and some special things like a new bicycle (I had been riding Arthur's all these years) and a new first baseman's mitt. I also met a lot of people whom I otherwise wouldn't have met and made a few special friends; and I also learned some things about business and aspects of that way of life that I was otherwise sheltered from. Had I to do it all over, I might not have done so much but at the time, there was too much Mary in me to pass it up!

If Mary made me work hard, then the half of my gene structure that come from my Father said "hey kid, play a little too" and I did...at least I tried. It was wartime in Pittsburgh...school, Hebrew School, Sunday School, homework, paper routes, work activities all made for a busy life...but there had to be more. There were things to do that were called fun...and they included going to Kennywood Park...the amusement park beyond Homewood. There were two roller coasters, one scarier than the next, a Merry-Go-Round, the Old Mill, a Ferris wheel and all the other things one did...and that was fun. Taylor Allderdice held a school picnic annually at Kennywood with reduced rates for all the rides and everyone enjoyed that day. Mary went along for the first few and then decided I could go on my own...but I still had to take along a bag lunch....she didn't want me buying hot dogs and things that weren't good for me (or weren't Kosher....although she gave up on trying to save my soul from that particular devil somewhere around the 8th grade!).

Major league baseball was one of my favorite activities during the season and we could usually get really cheap seats in the bleachers (I remember them as costing 75 cents!); and then depending on the Pirate fortunes for that year, drift over to sit in unoccupied reserved or even box seats. It's funny to remember it that way, but we started going to baseball games before night games were possible and Forbes Field had no lights until after the war. So to go to a game during the school year either required that we "play hookey" (I wonder where that phrase came from?...what is a "hookey"?) or go on weekends. But there was the summer time and for a dollar (75 cents to get in, 15 cents for the hotdog and 10 cents for two cokes!) it was a great way to spend the day. There is something really exciting about the umpire standing up there and shouting "play ball!"...it still stirs me.

As to athletic activities I didn't like football very much but really loved basketball and softball. I played those as often as I could and wherever I could. I wasn't terribly good at either but enjoyed the scene and rapid pace of basketball and the intellectual aspect and remarkable grace of softball. But amazingly as I look back on it, kids like me in Squirrel Hill at the time really had a limited opportunity to become involved in sports activity. I never played golf as a child or adolescent nor have I ever made a serious try at playing tennis, handball or squash. Hockey was not a game played very often in Pittsburgh and despite the cold winters few of us ever became very accomplished on ice skates. I didn't ski then and in fact never have. I did learn how to roller skate and I actually did that pretty well and I and some of my friends played hockey on roller skates on Nicholson Street (it's the only one of our streets that was level and had little traffic!).

Music was another part of our lives that added an important dimension. My mother loved the violin (don't all Jewish mothers?) and bought one for Milton and tried to get him to play ...and failed...skipped Arthur (how come he was so lucky?)... and tried me....and failed again! Alas poor Mary was destined to never have a violinist in the family. For reasons not clear to me somehow, somebody at Taylor Allderdice decided I ought to play the oboe. I had no particular reason to do that and in fact never owned an oboe...I used one owned by the school. I took lessons first at school and subsequently on Saturday mornings at Carnegie Tech and got to be pretty good at it. I became second oboe in Orchestra A (Jerry Kramer was first oboe and played rings around me!), played alto saxophone (same keyboard) in the marching band and because of the war and the scarcity of oboe players, I appeared intermittently with all kinds of musical groups...theatre orchestras, woodwind quintets and little symphony orchestras (never the Pittsburgh Symphony or anything big-league...I wasn't that good!). Some of my friends played in jazz combos and dance orchestras. Marshall Levy became Buddy Marshall and played the piano with his own orchestra...made up of Allderdice people...Leroy Supowitz, Henry Hile, Sterling Yates and of

course Nancy Freedman (who later became Nancy Reed when she went on to sing with Stan Kenton's band).

The music of the day was special to all of us...some of it was patriotic but some was jazz; and most of the ballads were soporily romantic. It seems to me that everyone of us learned every word of those songs...and in many cases I can still remember them clearly. Just singing the first lines sometimes brings back memories of people and places. "Seems to me we stood and talked like this before"... "Gonna take a sentimental journey"... "Missed the Saturday dance"... "Til then, my darling please wait for me"... "My mama done told me"... "They tried to tell us we're too young"... "Pardon me boy, is that the Chattanooga choo choo"... "Straighten up and fly right"... "Don't sit under the apple tree"... They all bring back images and scenes.

What did we do during the daylight hours, particularly in the summertime? There were the parks...Pittsburgh was blessed with three major parks: Highland Park with a zoo that at the time matched any in the country; Schenley Park which had a swimming pool and a track for running, a golf course and a fantastic Westinghouse Memorial fish pond; and Frick Park, near Crombie Street which had a lot of hills and a really extraordinary old golf course and the ruins of a clubhouse that were fun to explore. At the end of Schenley Park was the Carnegie Museum (dinosaur bones and lots of exhibits), Carnegie Library (I lived for my days in the library and what a wonderful day it was when I traded my child's card for an adult one!) and the Carnegie Music Hall...a beautiful place but vastly underutilized at least in those days.

Evenings at leisure consisted of movies (by this time we now had an "art theatre" in Squirrel Hill...the Beacon at Beacon Street and Murray Avenue); slow dancing in the dim light with girls (see below) at Savers on Route 51 (juke boxes, dancing, cokes, sundaes, no liquor); and eating out at the Villa d'Este and Highland House in East Liberty, Jack Canter's in Oakland and Poli's, Joseph's Steak House and the Chinese restaurant in Squirrel Hill (all were among my favorites). It was in the Chinese restaurant that I first ate shrimp....I was sure that a bolt of lightening sent by Mary would come out of the ceiling for this deliberate act of breaking Kosher...I waited first for the punishment...and then for the guilt and contrition....but instead I just enjoyed it! There was a bowling alley on Murray Avenue where we could bowl with duckpins (25 cents a line...and you didn't have to wear special shoes) and drug stores to loiter in front of...the Beacon Pharmacy at Beacon and Murray, Phillips Pharmacy at Phillips and Murray and Rosen's Drugs at the corner of Shady and Forbeswe might have a soda or glass of coke but mostly we just "hung out"....waiting for someone or something...I don't think I ever found out who or what and after a while I stopped doing it.

And then there were the parties...birthday parties, Bar Mitzvah parties, weddings, family celebrations of heaven's knows what and school dances (boys on one side girls on the other looking at each other...a few couples out on the floor jitterbugging...more slow dancing...it was the only chance some of us had to dance with a Gentile girl from Greenfield!). We also had party-parties...no particular reason for them...just a Saturday night party at someone's house...wear a tie....bring a date or come stag....a little drinking...some necking if the host's parents weren't home or were asleep. These occurred with increasing regularity in my last few years at Allderdice and it seemed to me that they were our principal source of social interchange....and where we learned the rules of the "boy-girl game" (see below).

Just a word about addictive materials and substance abuse (new words... we didn't use them then)....a lot of the kids in our class started to smoke when it became fashionable around the age

of 16 or so (some earlier...and some like me abstained). We didn't drink very much during high school and aside from a few beers at parties, I don't know any of our crowd who really got drunk...even on a dare. We didn't know anything about marijuana...although it must have been available... and uppers, downers, PCP, Quaaludes, cocaine, heroin and crack never appeared in our lives and most of us never even heard the words or could identify what they meant. It really was truly a time of innocence for us.

I don't really know that my experiences with work or for that matter, with play were much different than lots of other kids of the period...it seems to me that all of my friends had jobs, delivering papers early on and in some sort of part time employment afterwards either on a regular basis or during the summer or holidays. Everyone did something then partly because it was patriotic and partly because we all wanted to "hustle" to make a buck. It was in a way distracting from the main purpose of our lives...which in retrospect was to get a good educational experience in order to be competitive when we went to college; but those part time jobs served an important educational purpose in their own right. Some of the lessons I learned about the trades that I plied or about the businesses that I was involved in remain in my mind today and were of considerable use to me in later life. As to playing, I don't think we differed from other generations of kids....except perhaps in terms of what could only be called an extraordinary innocence. None of the AZA boys smoked or got drunk (nor did our friendly (and virginal) BBG girls) and our leisure activities such as they were, were remarkably directed at what at the time and since could only be called "good clean fun". As described above it may have seemed a bit Victorian in morality (Victoria must have had a Jewish mother!) and frenetic in pace... but it was good times for us...even in war time Pittsburgh... and in retrospect I don't think I or any of my friends would have wanted to change it.

Boys and Girls Together:

I suppose in all of nature the most primal urge (after staying alive) is to reproduce the species; and the best documented and most clearly defined expression of that in all of history is the "mating dance" of adolescent males and females. Our generation was no exception and I think that it would be inappropriate of me to even suggest that the people on Crombie Street and my friends and fellow classmates at Taylor Allderdice did not hear the music or begin to make the moves of that wonderful dance. But just as with every generation there were some modifying factors that made our dance a little different from that of our parents or even more so perhaps, of our children.

First, despite what people say about the times, the late 30's and early 40's were a time of innocence for teen age children...and innocent we were. We derived information about sex from novels (never very explicit) and from whispered conversations with our peers (who sounded like they knew more but often knew less). There were no classes in sex education, no handbooks and no parental or even older sibling guidance. No one ever told me anything and I am sure that was the same for most of us. So, we all had a lot of misconceptions. Second was our fear of bad things happening. We knew about diseases (at least by name) and everyone feared "the clap" or "syph" but really didn't know why. What was perhaps even a greater threat was the enormous and overriding concern about an unwanted pregnancy...what a disaster that would be in say the 9th or 10th grade!

Then there was the thing about being Jewish. Jewish girls never went "all the way"....we could expect gluey open-mouthed kisses in the back seat of a car, tentative groping mostly through lots

with women since. In retrospect those were the good things about our version of the mating dance. It wasn't all good, though...and I am afraid that some of us, boys and girls both felt inhibited by all the emotional baggage that we had to carry. I guess the concern lay in the possibility that somehow all of that could have altered our future ability to give and receive love...but as I think of them I believe that the people in our group were caring and confident enough to overcome any such deficit if it existed. They were then and are today in my mind...very special people!

The End of the War and the End of Youth:

At the end of the year of 1944 it was apparent that the Allies were winning the war. Rommel had been defeated in North Africa; and in Europe, we had successfully invaded Italy, Mussolini had been shot and hung and the Russians and the Russian winter had defeated the Germans on the Eastern Front. In the South Pacific, despite all the difficulties associated with multiple battle sites and the islands, we were closing in on the Japanese. The United States was tired of war...too many people had died, too much sacrifice, too much in cost of our resources. Pittsburgh was no exception...we read the paper avidly seeking evidence that the forces of Germany or Japan were ready for surrender.

Then it came...on Monday, May 7, 1945 the Germans surrendered...the Panzer divisions stopped and the mighty Wehrmacht laid down their arms. Pittsburghers were overjoyed ...celebrations happened spontaneously on the city streets and at Taylor Allderdice kids ran out of their classrooms into the halls shouting for joy. It wasn't quite over yet...the war in the Pacific still continued...but on August 6 and August 9 atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (an awesome event and little did we suspect how this would serve as a turning point in human history) and on Tuesday, the 14th of August the Japanese surrendered. We had won the war! What a great moment...I remember that we were at Colfax field when we heard... we sang and danced...parties were everywhere...girls kissing boys...boys kissing girls...people hugging Servicemen that they didn't know...everyone thrilled because the boys would soon come marching home...except... for those that died. Sadly, there were a lot of kids that didn't come home. Acquaintances, friends, classmates, coworkers at my various jobs, basketball players, people I had met along the tortuous course of our growing-up-days...were dead...struck down in their prime in some corner of the world with an unpronounceable name where no one knew them and few cared that their young hearts no longer beat and that their beautiful dreams of their future had died with them. Taylor Allderdice has erected a plaque on the wall of what used to be the Shady Avenue main entrance (there has been some remodelling so I am not sure it is an entrance anymore) which lists the names of all the kids that died between 1941 and 1945. It is a tragically long list and there are just too many friends there. I cried when I saw it and cry now when I think of it.

What about Crombie Street...what had happened to us during the war?

Hymie and Mary had grown older and to me as I looked at them, they no longer seemed indefatigable and invincible. My father's pace had slowed perceptibly and by 1945 he had angina and was just becoming disabled by it. There was no real treatment for angina at the time other than nitroglycerine and for him as it was for his brothers it was the beginning of his downward cardiac spiral (his took a lot longer than his brothers...Hymie was 82 when he died...22 years after the onset of his angina!). Mary on the other hand continued to arise at 5:00 AM, clean the house, do the laundry (we now had what passed for a washing machine...vintage 1940!), sweep the porch and work in the garden....before she went to the store to work all day. The iron lady was however beginning to fray...after all in 1945 she was almost 60. In the winter evenings

sometimes, she would sit in front of the radiator in the living room with a shawl (which I believe was her mother's) on her shoulders and doze...

Milt came back to Pittsburgh in 1944 to go to Dental School under the auspices of the ASTP program and he brought a wonderful surprise...his wife Cecille....what a charmer! Cecille was from Fort Worth and quite extraordinary in her beauty. She moved into Pittsburgh and our family...it couldn't have been easy for her...and managed her life with Milt (not the easiest person to deal with) and her three children remarkably well. Milt went back into the business (Specialty Clothing Company conquers all!) and even while he was in Dental School at Pitt, he worked weekends in the store.

Arthur "escaped" from Pittsburgh during the war...after his undergraduate work at Pitt he went to the University of Minnesota for graduate school in Physics and created a life for himself outside of ours. He never returned to Crombie Street or Pittsburgh except to visit. In Minneapolis, he met Shirley ...a truly remarkable, bright and very sweet lady who to this day remains all those things plus mother to four children (and a fifth child, Arthur, if you ask her!). I remember once in the summer, during the war visiting Arthur and Shirley in Minneapolis before they were married. I was about 14 or 15 at the time and we all went out for the day on Lake Minnetonka...and I paddled a canoe while they sat on a seat in the middle of the craft urging me on. That trip was very special to me...I took the train to Minneapolis by myself (including a scary change at Union Station in Chicago!) and felt very grown up!

Rita and Phyllis Solomon grew up...Rita continuing to be a bit shy and retiring and Phyllis a little wild and flamboyant; Selma Rogal became a lady...and a very nice one indeed; Leroy Weiner remained my true friend until he died of lymphoma a few years ago. The AZA boys continued to play together through college days then drifted apart...some moving to other parts of the world. The face of Crombie Street changed some. The neighbors built up their homes and there were several new homes constructed and at one point (I can't really remember when) the cobblestone street was converted to asphalt. With Arthur and Milt both out of the house, 6307 Crombie Street was suddenly roomy enough and except when we had visitors like my cousin Mary from Erie (who spent hours in our only bathroom) it was comfortable for the three of us.

In June of 1946, we had our Senior Prom...I took my then current "flame"...a really intelligent and nice person, Norma Sue Goodman. It is hard to forget that scene. The Prom was held in the Ballroom of the William Penn Hotel...Pittsburgh's finest. The lights were dim...I had rented a tuxedo (I think my first!)...Norma was wearing a powder blue strapless evening gown and looked wonderful. The members of the Senior Class danced slow dances to an orchestra and smiled and waved to one another as we circled the floor. I believe many of them thought (as I did) of friends, of our past few years together and most importantly the future. It was for us, a magical but sobering moment...the end of high school days...the end of our youth.

After graduation, I went on to Pitt along with what seemed like thousands of returning veterans who entered college under the GI bill. I lived at home at Crombie Street, still saw some of the old friends, studied in the basement of the house, watched that new medium...television, travelled to AZA tournaments, played basketball and began dating as a serious pursuit. But all of it was a little different now...I had lost some of the wonderment and innocence of my youth.

Recently I visited Pittsburgh for my son's graduation from Pitt Medical School (was I ever a proud father!) and came a day early to see him act and sing in their class show the night before

Commencement exercises. To my surprise and pleasure, the show was held in the auditorium at Taylor Allderdice High School....it was the first time that I had been back in many years. I sat in that auditorium and a part of me watched the show...but my mind wandered back to June of 1946 and our commencement in that very hall. The auditorium made me remember Marshall Levy and Nancy Freedman playing the piano duet, the Choral Group singing a Christmas medley; the pep rallies before the football games, the class plays that occurred twice a year.... but I especially remembered that day when Orchestra A played the Processional as we marched in wearing cap and gown (complete with Allderdice green and white tassels on our caps) to our own graduation ceremony. I could really hear Mr. McClymonds say those words that I had heard so many times before... "Classes come and classes go and after a while they all merge into one...". I looked up at the words above the stage " Know Something; Do Something; Be Something" and I suddenly knew that Mr. McClymonds was wrong....we were different....we were special....we were creative...we were beautiful....we were the Class of 1946...and we did have a significant effect on our world.