

At the urging of Barbara, I am creating something of a history of the Katzman - Gorelick families. Hopefully, it will be of interest to the children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren, should they be interested in their "roots".

My grandfather, Louis Katzman came to this country from Russia in 1905; my grandmother, Esther Malikov Katzman followed him about 5 years later. My Aunt Pearl (Perelman Gorelick), my mother - Rebecca (Becky) Gorelick, and my Uncle Sammy accompanied my grandmother. My mother's two younger sisters, Eva and Marguerite (Mousie) were born in this country in 1910 and 1911. My grandparent's brothers and their families all settled in New York. Most of my father's family came to Omaha. He had some cousins in Erie, Pennsylvania, but I don't remember their names.

The first home I remember our having lived in was at 22nd and N Streets, and there were several Jewish families on our block. I recall the Sacks' had what I thought at the time was a huge house at the end of the block, nearer to M Street. They had two gigantic dogs, who barked wildly when anyone came near. Their names were "Chazar" and "Chazarina". I have been terrified of dogs for as long as I can remember, and whenever I had to walk by the house, I was paralyzed with fear. The Singers lived across the street on N Street, and adjacent to their home was "The Tin Shop" where, my brother-in-law Lou Singer tells me, his father operated a business constructing materials for gutters for homes, etc. Mr. Singer also operated a clothing business at 23rd and N Streets. I recall very vividly the courtship of my sister Reva and Lou Singer, since all he had to do was saunter across the street to continue the courtship. Directly across the street from us lived the Canars, and next door to them the Sol Epsteins. Across the street from the Singers, the Dave Epsteins lived. And so, in our immediate area six Jewish families.

We had a screened porch, and I recall one time as a very little girl, coming home with my family after dark and bouncing up the steps and onto the porch only to find some strange man sleeping on the glider. He turned out to be a cousin, landsman, or whatever of my father's who, upon finding us out, simply went to sleep on the porch knowing we would ultimately get home. I think this was a pretty common thing among Jews at that time. If they found themselves in a community where someone from their shtetl in Russia now lived, they were perfectly comfortable just "dropping in" and waiting around for a meal and a place to sleep until they were ready to continue their journey.

We had our own butcher shop in South Omaha, Schlaifer's. It always smelled wonderful to me. The floor was covered with shavings, just like the meat department in my father's grocery store, and for years I had a terrible time understanding how "sodas" which covered floors in meat departments, and sodas which you drank with ice cream were related. I was so adoring of my father, that when I discovered that his "sodas" was really "sawdust", it brought tears of love to my eyes.

My father and my Uncle Phil opened their first grocery store at 24th and E Streets and called it the "E Street Market". Their next store was at 24th and M Streets, "Phil's Market, and I spent a lot of time at the store, and began working there as a very little girl. At that time, people would call their grocery orders over the telephone, my mother would write down their needs, and I had such fun "filling the orders". My father had a delivery service, and I got to go with him in the truck to deliver the orders regularly. It was a wonderful and special time of my childhood. Daddy also had the contract to operate the Commissary at Fort Crook, and my Aunt

Pearl Perelman Gorelick ran that store. Consequently, we would make deliveries around the Base too and Daddy knew who all of the generals were, and equally as exciting to me, they all knew him! Being the baby in the family, I'm sure these were delicacies I got to savor even more than my sisters did.

Growing up, I spent a lot of time at my grandparents house, Louis and Esther Katzman, at 21st and H Street. That house is still there, as is the house on 22nd and N. The Lazars were close neighbors, and my Uncle Sammy married Rose Lazer in 1940. We used to follow the ice truck as it would go south on 21st street, grabbing chips of ice off the back end during the summer months. Our "Ice Cream Truck" of that time.

I spent many nights at my grandparents. My grandfather had a clock which hung downstairs in the kitchen, and would chime the hours. Their house seemed very big, with a long hallway on the second floor which extended from my grandparents room to the rest of the bedrooms. I was really a very scared little girl (once again, being the baby of the family, I was really catered to -- much to the annoyance of my sisters who often had to drag me along since my father was adamant that I was never to be left alone. I often tell my children that I never was left alone until I was married, and I don't think my father ever understood how my husband could do that!) Anyway, the chiming of the clock in the late hours of the night would waken me, and really frighten me. As I recall, the steps to the basement were narrow and wound around. I am amazed that my grandmother was able to haul laundry up from that basement to the back yard to hang it. Of course, during the winter months, it was hung in the basement where, it seemed to me, it took days for it to dry! I recall the basement was warm in winter and delightfully cool in the summer. One of the interesting features in my grandparent's home was the "back staircase". I suppose it might have been considered the "servants staircase", but that hardly applied in this case. There was no attic, but there was a small room on the upper level that was used as a storeroom. My sister Shirley and I spent hours in that little room pouring over all of the old pictures and other relics which my grandmother stored there.

My grandparents home included an unusually large dining room and off of it a large sunroom. Holidays around that dining room table were delightful, and with the table extended as large as it could be, I am sure there must have been 30-40 adults around it. We children were seated at a large table in the sunroom. My sister Reva tells me that my Aunt Pearl would see that all of her husband's family, the Perelman's, would be included at Yom Tov meals, and since they all lived far from the Synagogue, she would locate rooms for them in neighbors homes so that they could sleep near my grandparents house, and walk to Synagogue.

It is of interest that, although the house had 3 bedrooms and a sun room on the 2nd floor, a gigantic sun room, dining room and kitchen along with a rather small living room on the main floor, there was only one bathroom.

Some of the special times I remember was sitting in the kitchen with my Bobie on straight kitchen chairs while we knitted. My Aunt Eva loved her to knit two piece dresses for her, and my Grandmother would sit in front of the windows in her kitchen, knitting dresses for her. Knitters will appreciate the fact that she knit with the finest wool, using size zero needles My grandmother taught me to knit when I was very small. I remember knitting squares for "Bundles for Britain", much to the envy of my classmates -- and knitting quite well I was told. I also remember when she would wash my hair. No "no more tears shampoo" in those days, let me tell

you. My Bobie used a bar soap which smelled so strong! And for a cream rinse in those days, I got good old fashioned vinegar. I remember my sister Shirley who had red hair got a lemon juice rinse. I always thought her hair smelled so nice. Well, compared with vinegar! And, since my hair was very curly, the snarls were unbelievable. Certainly, the vinegar didn't get rid of them! Oh, how I cried when she would comb my hair after it was washed. But, we sure didn't have any lice. They wouldn't dare come up against my grandmother's hard knuckle rub!

We never got to go places a lot during the summer. The polio epidemic ran rampant, and we stayed very near our homes. But, one of the things we did do as a family was picnic with other families Elmwood Park, and then stay on for the Community Sing. I sang to my children, and to my grandchildren, too, "Reuben, Reuben, I ben tanking", recalling the accents of those who sang with me. During the winter months, the Club met at different homes, and they had several tables of bridge.

I was just six years old in 1934, and remember very well when my Aunt Pearl's husband, Isidore Perelman, was shot and killed by a robber. He had a grocery store, and chased a man who had robbed him. The man turned, shot and killed him. In that same year, my Uncle Phil Gorelick died of leukemia. I remember this as a traumatic year for a little girl.

My Aunt Eva (Freund) was a stenographer with 20th Century Fox, and it was such a treat when she would take us to "screenings". I don't remember the year, but I remember very well when she told my grandparents she was taking advantage of a job offer from 20th Century Fox to move to Minneapolis. My grandfather, particularly, was very saddened that she was moving "so far away".

My Aunt Mousie worked at Brandeis in downtown Omaha in the book department. At that time, Brandeis offered a lending library, and she introduced us to the joy of books at a very early age.

Our Synagogue at 25th and J Streets, still stands. It had three sections on one floor (no balcony), with the women in the one section to the north as you walked in. We had no Rabbi or Cantor. Mr. Selz served as Cantor, and I don't remember who did the Torah reading, but I do remember very vividly Mr. Caner standing at the reading table, pounding it very loudly and shouting to the ladies to be quiet. I don't think the ladies made all that much noise. I recall when I would sit with my father, the men were busy visiting among themselves, but it was always the ladies who were to be quiet. However, when my niece Edie was just a few months old, my sister Reva brought her to Rosh Hashanah services, and my father paraded her up and down the aisles, hoisting her high like a torah, for all to see his first grandchild. Nobody complained. Everyone exclaimed on how cute she was. She still is!

Sometimes we children would get restless, and go to the basement to play. We'd get away with it until Harry Dvorsky would come down, do a little yelling, and we'd scurry back upstairs to the safety of our parents.

My Zaydie was a Kohane, and he always sat in the front of the Synagogue. All of the men wore hats in those days. No yarmelkes! The basement of the Synagogue had a stage, and the B'Nai Abraham Lodge held dinner meetings regularly. Entertainment for the dinner meetings was, what else but the artistic performances of the children of the members of the Lodge. Nobody ever had the chutzpa to walk

out before all of the children completed their performances. They knew what would happen to them when their children did their acts. Mrs. Weiner did a lot of the cooking, and I recall Ida Sacks and her mother were also busy in the kitchen. The food was superb! Kishka and lung and milze, and latkes -- brisket, potato kugel, all of that wonderful high cholesterol food. We sure didn't look for "healthy and light" in those days! Usually, though, for dessert was canned fruit. No fancy torte makers, those wonderful women. A nice banana cake, maybe, or a piece of strudel. What could be bad? Always, too, strawberry pop!

My Aunt Frayda Katzman (my father's sister, but not related to my grandparents) lived very near the Shul. We could walk across J Street, down the alley, and into her back door which, during High Holidays was always left open for us to go into the kitchen and help ourselves to her magnificent food. She always had a table overflowing with goodies for us. My sister Reva reminds me that one of her Passover treats were the most delectable lemon eclairs -- this at a time when such pastry delicacies were unheard of. My cousin Mashie Katzman used to keep chickens in the back yard, but I am not sure if my Aunt Frayda would take them to be Kosher slaughtered, or if he just had them for pets. He came to visit about 15 years ago, commented on my back yard and suggested I get a goat to keep the lawn clipped. I am not at all sure he was kidding! That was my cousin Mashie!

My husband inherited the job of Secretary/Treasurer of the B'Nai Abraham Lodge when Mr. Flancek became physically unable to continue the job, and at the time of the inception of the NJHC, he turned over the books of the minutes of those meetings to them. They are wonderful to read. My husband, when he became an officer in the Lodge, recalls the meetings at the old Jewish Community Center. At the conclusion of the meeting, the table was covered with newspaper, and the corned beef, pumpernickel bread, pickles and strawberry pop were set out for all of the lodge officers to "dig in". He always took pleasure in seeing Mr. Ostravich enjoy this part of the meeting. Needless to say, the business portion of the meetings were short and sweet!

As a little girl, I remember the baker coming to my grandmother's. The bread was stacked on end in a large basket - unsliced, of course. It always smelled and looked marvelous, and I was always treated to a bismarck. They really were the most wonderful delicacies. And, very often, my grandmother would slice a piece of fresh challah and spread it with - are you ready? - schmaltz. I remember right now, it tasted marvelous! And, mashed potatoes were a real delicacy with greibens and schmaltz. I remember, too, my Uncle Sammy Katzman who was an over-the-road truck driver coming down from his room for breakfast -- late in the day. Breakfast to him was steak and potatoes. My grandmother didn't know from broiling; the steak was pan fried in, of course, schmaltz, and the potatoes were fried, once again, in schmaltz. The aroma was mouth-watering! We didn't eat much salad in those days. My father always referred to lettuce as "rabbit food", and we were not much on vegetables. Maybe some corn, beans or peas. I never remember eating broccoli or cauliflower or vegetables like that. Even though my father owned a grocery store, still the corn, beans and peas were the staple veggie at our house. I do not ever remember eating turkey. We ate a lot of duck, goose and of course, chicken. The fatter the better. My grandmother would always schmear a little schmaltz if she felt there wasn't enough "tam".

My Uncle Sammy loved cars, and since he remained a bachelor until his late thirties, and lived at home (in those days, I think children lived at home until they either set up their own homes or brought spouses to live at parents homes), he had

a lot of cars. I recall the time he built a four car garage behind my grandparents home to house his Packards.

Behind my grandparent's house, off the kitchen, was a "foreheishka" -- a little covered, enclosed porch. It wasn't heated. Bobie used to keep the crocks there when she made dill pickles and sauerkraut. I want to tell you, my mouth still waters to this day as I recall the smells.

I was only thirteen when my mother died suddenly at the age of 41. The cemetery, as many of you know, is located south of Giles Road on 42nd Street. My Zaydie, several times a week after my mother died and until he was unable physically to do so, would walk from 36th Street where the last bus stop was, to the cemetery. My mother was a beautiful lady. We have a picture of her in a regal costume. I am told that some visiting Rabbis came to the Shul one year around Purim, and held a Queen Esther contest. My mother won hands down, and no surprise if you only look at her picture.

Down the street from my father's store, Ida and Harry Harris had a Women's Ready-to-Wear. I could go into their store at anytime, and feel like I was coming home. In the back of the store was a beauty shop, so you had a mixed smell of new clothing and permanent wave solution. It was incredible!

And, of course, we had our neighborhood theaters. The Rosalind and Tivoli. We would go to the show with a "serial card", and maybe a dime or so for spending money. Irv Epstein's father had the ice cream, popcorn and candy concession for the Rosalind, and I did so love the penny candy. I used to buy black licorice -- the long kind and I loved it so because I could unwind the "braid" around it, eat it first and then eat the licorice.

I had a wonderful childhood. Times were hard, but I never knew it. My parents and grandparents enveloped me with love and security as a little girl, and I now have these spectacular memories. I hope that those who read this in the future will enjoy reading it and derive one-half the pleasure I have in writing it.

Zena Gorelick Fishbain
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