

My Family and Childhood

The day dawned with high temperatures and clouds in the sky in Canton, Ohio. A thunderstorm was predicted for the afternoon. It was May 31, 1929 and a baby girl who would later be called Sunny came into the world along with her twin sister Ida. Her given name was Sarah Jean Galpert and her parents were Abraham and Dora Meltzer Galpert. That baby girl was me.

My parents were both immigrants, born in Russia or Lithuania. My father came to this country around 1915 or 1916; my mother came in 1918.

I never knew my mother's parents but I knew my father's mother because she lived with us. My grandmother was Ida Galpert, a strong personality and powerful influence in our home. She was very short but a little dynamo. I also had an aunt — my mother's sister — named Alice Meltzer Heller who married her own uncle, but it was not an unusual situation at that time for family to intermarry.



My twin and I were the last of seven children: Nathan, Maure, Sam, Sylvia, Trina, Ida and me. All but the first two children had hearing problems. Sam was born deaf and he was very sweet and very bright. My family operated a hardware store and my father also worked as a painter and paper-hanger. My mother ran the store and of course, we kids helped. Until I reached third grade, we lived above the store. The neighborhood was a mix of many ethnicities and a fun place to live.



My mother and Aunt Alice were very religious and therefore our household was kept kosher. My father, however, thought it was “malarkey.” Still, we kept separate dishes for meat and dairy with another double set of dishes that were used for Passover. While it was a lot of work to use these cupboards full of dishes, it was a ritual that was very familiar and very routine. An aspect that was fun for us kids was that after daily use, the dishes needed to be soaked for several days for the holiday which meant “no baths!”

Bacon, a non-kosher item, was a food that my mother never cooked, but one day a doctor told my father he had to eat bacon to help his digestive problems. So down in the basement he went where he was forced to cook the bacon on a little hot plate. Unfortunately, the smell still wafted upstairs, not something my mother cared for in the least!



In third grade, our family moved to a better neighborhood and a larger single-family home. My father converted the house into three apartments and we lived in one of them. He was very good with his