

*My Life Story*

*By*

*Hyman Lotven*



*Story Keeper*



*Mary Byrne*

## Acknowledgments

The Ethnic Life Stories Project became a reality because it caught the imagination of many individuals throughout our community who worked to bring it to completion. We wish to thank the following for their many talents, their countless hours, their words of encouragement, their open office doors, and their generosity of time and money in support of this unique opportunity to embrace the diversity of Springfield.

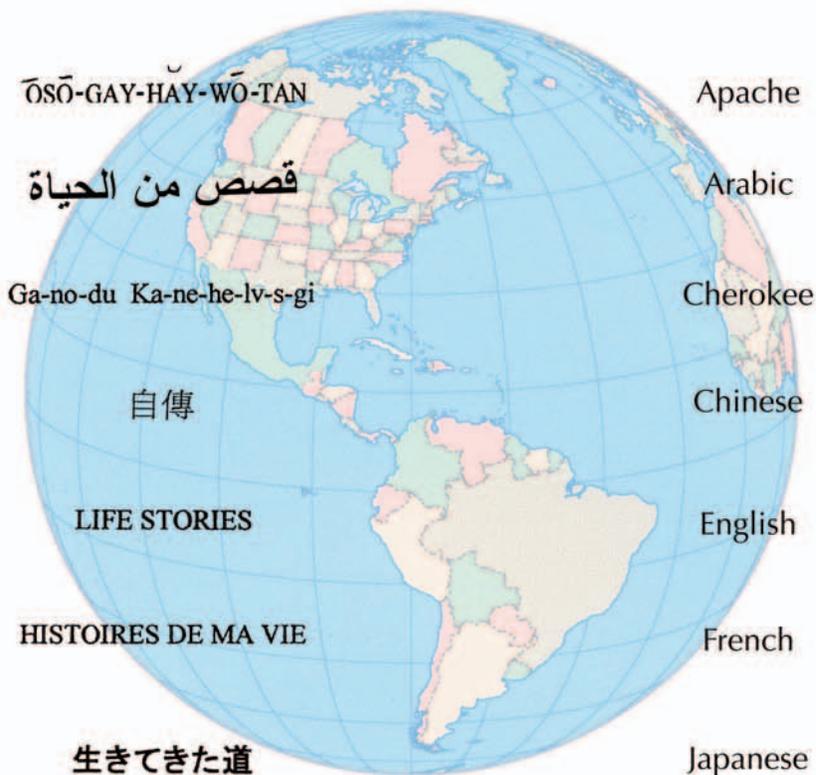
Drury University/The Diversity Center—John, Pat, Judy, Don, Tristan  
Springfield Public Schools—Phyllis, Ann, Jacque  
Southwest Missouri State University—John, Stan, Ruth, Robin, James,  
Karen, David and Bradley  
Springfield/Greene County Library District—Annie  
Ozarks Technical Community College—Patricia  
Forest Institute of Professional Psychology—Mark, Cathy  
St. John's Health System—Jay, Mike, Valerie, Myra  
Kinko's on Glenstone—Mitch, Irfan, Mathew  
Don and Marilyn  
Bob and Virginia, Debbie, Hyman and Regina, Jerry, John, John, Lorraine,  
Norma, Ruth, Sara, Starr\*, Sterling and Delores, Tom and Kimberly,  
Southwest Missouri Office on Aging, The Forest Institute, Yung

Storytellers—Yohannan Abraham, Janet Akaike-Toste, Martha Baker,  
Grace Ballenger, Olga Codutti, Taj Farouki, John Hernandez,  
Yung Hwang, Hyman Lotvan, Regina Lotvan, and Sterling Macer,  
Storykeepers—Pat Ames, Mary Byrne, Judy Dasovitch, June Huff,  
Starr Kohler, Idell Lewis, Edie Mello, Nina Merwin, Cheryl Nathan,  
and Barbara Patterson

Special acknowledgment to Charlotte, without whom there would be no Ethnic  
Life Stories Project

Jim Mauldin, Coordinator  
July, 2001

**The Ethnic Life Stories Project . . . giving the Springfield community a window to its diversity through the life stories of ethnic elders.**





Kapulah

Hyman Lotven  
Kapulah, Russia

לְחַיֵּים

## PREFACE

By Mary Byrne

When I first met Hyman at the kickoff luncheon of *The Ethnic Life Stories Project*, I did not know I would later become his story keeper. At the luncheon, we chatted easily about experiences we had in common. Having come from a family whose ancestors emigrated from eastern Europe, I knew something of the predicaments that motivate one to abandon everything familiar--risking all (albeit, not much materially) and betting it on the chance that there is a better place to live and grow. We also shared our knowledge of the perils of living in New York. Later, however, I would learn that this Jewish man from the other side of the world knew of perils far greater than unethical cab drivers in a big city. I would learn of his strategies for survival in a poor Russian village just before the Bolshevik Revolution, in a small American town (Springfield) as a young emigrant without a formal education, in an American army sent to Europe to stop a global war fueled by racism, and in a business world where the tactics of competitors bent on getting ahead can be just as dehumanizing and ruthless as shooting a bullet.

Throughout the telling of his story, Hyman never suggests that his survival in any of these contexts is due to his own cunning or self-reliance--quite the contrary. Although Hyman proudly describes his hard work and excellent management skills as contributions to his success, he credits the kindness of others who have mentored and supported him, thus, enabling him--not just to survive, but, to live with joy. I have never met a man who carries off such an extraordinary life with such humility. Hyman has learned that living well is not a matter of how much one possesses, but of how much one loves. It is my hope that as you read his story, you learn from Hyman the essence of what his life teaches: we do not, nay, cannot live with joy without each other.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, Jenny and Israel Mitchell Lotven for their love and devotion. They endured many sacrifices. I will always cherish and honor their memories.

To my adoptive country, the United States of America, a safe haven for immigrants such as my family and myself.

To Springfield, Missouri where I grew up, had the opportunity to get an education, earn a living and find happiness.

Many thanks to Mary Byrne, my story keeper. Her sensitivity and gentle ways helped me to overcome reliving painful memories.

Thank you to Jim Mauldin, the dedicated leader of the Ethnic Life Stories Project in Springfield, Missouri.

Hyman Lotven

## CHAPTER CONTENTS

Chapter I	My Family	Page 4
Chapter II	The Family in Russia	Page 7
Chapter III	The Family Moves to America	Page 9
Chapter IV	Growing Up in America	Page 11
Chapter V	Making a Living	Page 15
Chapter VI	The War Years	Page 18
Chapter VII	Regina and Marriage	Page 20
Chapter VIII	The Jewish Faith	Page 22
Chapter IX	Unexpected Turns	Page 26
Chapter X	Later Years	Page 27

## *Chapter I: My Family*

My full name is Hyman Frank Lotven. My name never changed from Russia except that most Jewish people do not have a middle name. It is customary when a child is very, very sick, the Rabbi gives him a different name, which is Cha'yim, which means life. My Yiddish name is Cha'yim Fival Lotven. Cha'yim is added to that when the child is sick. That's the reason I have a middle name. When I was a baby, I was very sick. They didn't think I was going to live. I was named for my grandfather, my mother's father.

I didn't really know when my birthday was but when I went into the army I had to have a date. I established December 15, 1911. That's my official birthday. The Jewish date varies so much and I didn't have a birth certificate. When I applied for a passport, I had to prove my birthday and I had quite a time. They said all I needed was when I started to school. I have a copy of it. What happened, in citizenship papers, my dad could not remember the children's birthdays. My brothers are all 18 months difference.

I was born at home. There were no hospitals in Russia. There were midwives. The little town had a midwife who knew a lot about medicine. Most of the Rabbis in Europe knew quite a bit about medicine. Since there were no professional doctors in those towns, the Rabbis would know enough about it to give cures, and so on. I was the last child that my mother had out of six children. There were four brothers and two older sisters. Jake was the oldest of the boys, Isadore was next, Morris was next and I was the youngest. My older sisters were Fanny and Yetta. Both are now dead.

### *My Mother*

My mother was Jenny Lotven who was born April, 1881. Both of my parents were raised in a little Jewish town in Russia. My mother lost her mother, Roseva, when she was quite young. There were three sisters. There was Roshke, Jenny, and Esther. We lost Roshke and her family during the Holocaust, the whole family.

When the Bolshevik Revolution came in, they went through all the houses and anything made of metal they would take cause they needed it for the war effort. Knowing that they would take my mother's candlesticks which were pure copper, she took and buried them in the ground. They were a gift from her mother in law. When she buried them in the ground, they come apart. In order to tighten them up, she took material from her dress and put them in the screws. They were buried. After the war, knowing where they were buried, they were digging up places where they thought things were hid. When they got those candlesticks, my mother claimed they were hers. They had to prove whatever the value was. There was no problem. My mother went and got the dress that she tore and when she took the candlesticks apart the print was the same. She buried the candlesticks, my dad's prayer shawl and also my dad's Bible. That's the three things she brought with her when she came to the United States. In fact, my brother still has that Hebrew Bible.

My mother had the wisdom of Salomon because she was left with five children in Europe and had to take care of them. There were six at first. My oldest sister, Dad got her to the United States first. You see, it's not the United States. There was no welfare or food supplies where you get help. It was entirely up to her.

When Mother came to the United States, my dad worked seven days a week. After we bought the house you can imagine how careful my mother had to be with money. Food was an item that had to be taken care of. There was no surplus.

Also, we started getting married. My oldest sister got married and she was married only about a year. She met a fellow in New York, and it didn't turn out good. She had a 6-month-old baby at the time. She came back to Springfield to live with my dad. Here we come with five more children. He's got five children of his own, and he's got his oldest daughter with a baby. How careful do you have to be? My mother had the wisdom of how to deal with people. Like I told you, any woman who has four daughters-in-law and two sons-in-law that thought the world of her, must be a magician.

She was a very reserved and quiet person. Where she got all that wisdom, I don't know. When my wife came here, she'd never met her in laws. The minute she walked into the house, within three days she felt at home. Whatever little they had, they shared with her. My mother, believe me, didn't have that kind of money but my wife didn't have any clothes when she came here, only what she had on, even her underwear. My mother took her shopping immediately. She said, "Mother, I know you don't have that much money." She told her, "I know, but whatever we have we are going to share." When my dad got sick, the relationship between my parents and my wife was unbelievable. Whenever we went out and got dressed up, she always went downstairs and showed my parents. Whatever she bought, she showed my parents. When my dad was sick, she went to visit her parents in France. She said that they would do everything possible to get the money for her to go. When she left, my dad said, "I'm going to live to see her again." He died five months after she came back.

Unfortunately, you see, this is something we have lost, this closeness. They had to go through true hardships. Whoever heard of putting your parents in a rest home? My mother died at home. My father died at home. Regine's mother was only in a rest home three days because it got to the point we just couldn't keep her clean. But as long as we could handle her, put in a rest home? The relation is completely different. And we have to accept it.

### *My Father*

My dad's name was Israel Mitchell Lotven. He was born July, 1881. I didn't know my dad until I came to the United States. My dad came out of the Russian Army under the Czar in 1905. Don't forget the Bolshevik Revolution was there. We lived in a little small Jewish town by the name of Rozebeh. He had a wife and six children. I was the youngest and I was just a month old when he left. My dad made shoes by hand. He couldn't feed his family. He couldn't

make a living.

Back in those days, America was the land of gold. Back many years ago, according to history, if you come to the United States, you just get a rake and shovel for gold. Any man who was willing to work could make a living. My aunt's husband was here already. He wrote to Dad and told him that with his art, if he came to the United States he could make a living. So what choice did he have? He didn't have any money. Roshke sold some of her furniture to get 50 rubles to send my dad to America. That's all she had and she loaned it to my dad. I've got a picture of my aunt. She didn't survive the Holocaust.

He went to Germany and at that time he got on a boat to go to the United States because back then, you didn't need any papers or passports. All you had to do was reach the shores. He got on a boat to go to the United States thinking that the boat would land in New York, Ellis Island. His brother would meet him there and, of course, get him started. Instead of that, he got on a boat that was going to Galveston, Texas. The United States got so they wanted to divert some the immigrants so that not everybody would go to New York.

When he got to Galveston, they had a Jewish organization, the *HIAS*, which stands for *Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society*. They would take the Jewish immigrants and say "What is your trade?" When they interviewed him, he said he made shoes by hand, saddles and so forth. They told him that there is a man in Springfield, Missouri looking for two mechanics like that. He came here in 1912 and he and a fellow by the name of Mr. Sussman started working for this man. Bookman was his name. After he had worked for him awhile, since Pitcher, Oklahoma and Joplin was more prosperous than Springfield on account of the lead mines, Mr. Bookman left the store.

Oscar Bloom at that time had a big wholesale house of shoemaking supplies--machinery, and so forth. Shoemaking was quite a business back at that time. So Oscar Bloom told my dad who was a real good mechanic, "Here's what you should do. I'll help you take the store over. Buy what little machinery you had and I'll give you credit for the supplies you need and you can pay me back as you work." So he did.

Now, when World War I broke out, Dad never knew what happened to us. There was no relationship between the United States and Russia at that time. He didn't know what happened to his family. He couldn't help us any. There was no mail service or anything.

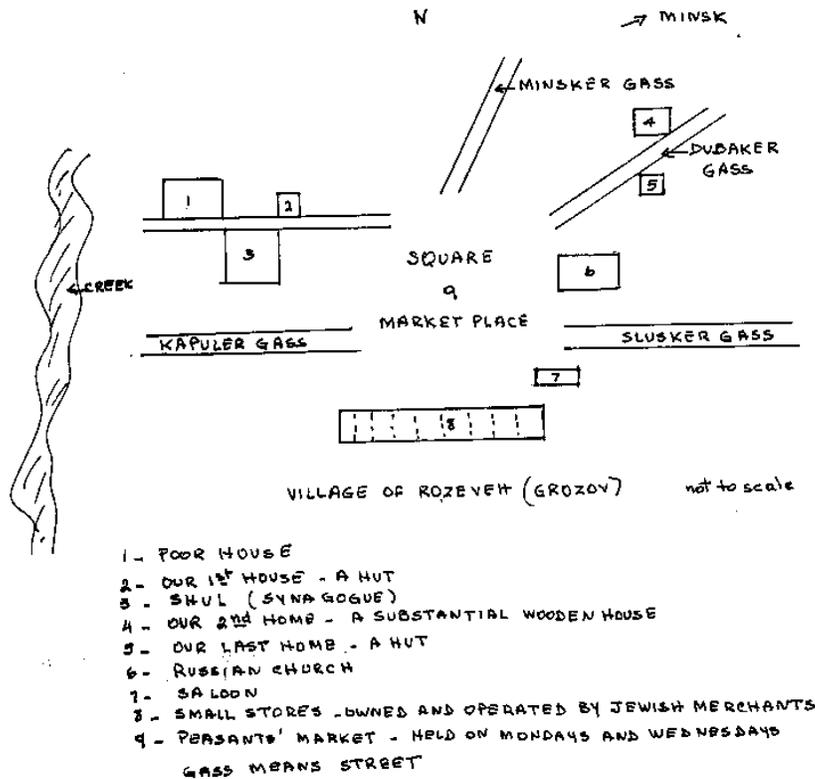
## Chapter II: The Family in Russia

Our house, back in Russia, had one room. We had a stove in the corner. In the summertime, all us kids used to go through the woods and pick up all the sticks that were left behind and we would pile it up so that we would have wood to burn when it got cold. We'd put some of it in the house so that it would be dry and some of it outside. The floor was dirt. It was not a wooden floor.

I was the youngest. We didn't have beds, just platforms. In fact, a lot of times we would sleep on the top of the big stove which was brick. We had straw mattresses. Potatoes, carrots and cabbages could be put away in straw so there would be something for the winter. We did not have money to buy regular meat so we'd get a little meat from the butcher, whatever was left over. It didn't make any difference what they gave us, Mother would make a meal out of it. Nothing was wasted. This stays with you. Our clothing was rags, not clothing. We had shoes. We'd put a rag around our feet in the wintertime, and then the shoes.

We lived in a town where only Yiddish was spoken. I didn't know Russian. When I met Regine, I only spoke two words of French. My Yiddish is all mixed up with English. My Yiddish was a little different than hers. I can understand Yiddish more than I can speak it. We've been to Israel many times. The old generation in Israel speak Yiddish. The young generation all speak English. When I go to Israel and start using it, it all comes back. It had been years since I had spoke it. I have to think and if I am not careful, my mind switches over to English. We spoke Yiddish, period, to my parents.

Being five children in Russia and a father in America who could not help us, any time we had a meal we would go to different houses. See, we were kids. The town used to feed us. Mother couldn't support us so the town used to feed us. Everyday, someone would give us a meal. We were assigned to different houses. I can remember to this day and I was only about six years old, I would go to this house and sit on the steps while they were having their meal.



Whatever little food they had left, they would give to me or sometimes they would bring it out to me and set it on the step. All four boys were treated that way. My sister, Yetta, Mother somehow kept her at home to keep her from doing this.

There is a story that my brother Jake still remembers. We had an uncle there that had a little money. When my mother would get desperate, he would loan her a ruble so she could at least feed her children. One time, during a discussion, my mother said, "Hopefully, someday I can pay you back" Jokingly he said, "Well, I'll tell you what you can do. For security, maybe one of your boys could come over here and I could keep him." My brother Jake took him seriously. He disappeared and we couldn't find him. He had gone over to his house and was sitting on the steps 'cause he heard that he wanted security and he wanted Mother to get some money.

Until we got to Poland, we lived a very rough life from hunger to everything else. My best experience was when we got to Poland. After we were smuggled there, we got to have three meals a day. You don't wait on the steps as a child until the people had something left and if they didn't, I got nothing. People don't understand hunger.

We were really excited to get out of what we were leaving behind. Several years ago, the postman said, "Oh, Mr. Lotven, I just got back from Russia. You know, that's the most wonderful trip. You should go there!" I said, "My friend, I was born there." Once I got out of Russia, I wasn't going back. All those people you see on TV when they are suffering hunger, all they want is just a meal. Tell an American child that the most important thing in life is a meal. It's not a car. Try to tell them that and see how far you get. They've never been hungry. It's been a long time since I was hungry and I've never forgotten it. Like my wife said, when she told that group of people, nylon hose is not important when you stand in line for two hours for some food.

### *Chapter III: The Family Moves to America*

In 1921, all of a sudden a couple shows up in this little town in Russia, a man and wife. They were smugglers. My dad sent money to the American Embassy. The Embassy knows the smugglers who smuggled the money into Russia. This man came to see mother to give her some money. When this couple showed up, they told us that in about a week, they would be back. You see, the Russians would let my mother and my sister go but they wouldn't let the four boys go because they were building the Bolshevik Army. This couple told her that one of these nights they would come in and take us out of Rozebeh and take us into Warsaw. Well, they were professionals, so that's what happened. They came and put us all in a wagon. It was wintertime. I was the youngest and they let me ride, but my other three brothers walked through the cold water. They got us across the border in Poland.

When we got into Poland, they had a place all ready where they could hide us in a little town there. All of us were in one room but it was warm and we had food. After about another day and night, they came back. They couldn't transport us on a regular train because we were too close to the border so they put us in a boxcar like for freight so no one would inspect. When we arrived in Warsaw, they hid us that night. They were professionals. They were paid by my dad. The next day, they took all of us and turned us over to the American Embassy. Then we were home free because my dad was an American citizen. They put tags on us and we had to go through a physical. We were in Warsaw about 4 or 5 weeks. Then the Embassy put us on a boat for the United States. When we landed in New York, they sent us here to Springfield.

Life was hard. But thank God, I was very fortunate that we survived. You could imagine what would have happened to us if we had stayed in Russia. I am fortunate that I came to this land. People do not appreciate. They do not know what it is to live under hunger, thirst, and fear. The United States had never experienced war on their land. They've seen it in movies. You will never know hunger until you experience it.

The Embassy told him that in six months time, his family was going to be in the United States. When my dad found out that we were coming, he didn't want to bring us to Springfield, Mo. He didn't want to bring his family into the Middle West. My dad was very religious. He thought that New York would have a better Jewish way of life. So he sold his shop and moved to New York. After he was there three or four months, he realized that there was no way he could provide for his family and have a happy home. Living conditions in New York was impossible. Housing was impossible. Life was impossible because then you had the old tenements, etc. So about three weeks before we came back, he came back to Springfield and bought back the shoe repair shop. Then Oscar Bloom helped dad when we got here.

All of us lived in three rooms in the back of the store for about a month. Then my dad bought a home on 816 State from Dr. Armstrong who didn't want it any more. It was three stories high and too much house for him. After my dad bought the house, he didn't even have a down payment. The bank and Dr. Armstrong made the loan on it. Dr. Armstrong was a

physician here that was in the loaning business. It was his profession after he retired. In all the years, my dad just paid the interest on the loan. He did not pay anything on the principal. Dad bought that house in 1921 and it was not completely paid for until 1947 when I got out of the army. I helped pay for the house.

My mother lived here for many, many years and voted. When World War II came out she had to register as an alien. What happened was, when the family came here, we were all under 18 years of age. We were automatically citizens because Dad was a citizen already. That's when the law changed that the wife had to take out her own citizenship papers. My mother had to take out citizenship papers, too. According to the United States, they were not married because a religious wedding in the US does not count. She's an alien. My father and mother couldn't read nor write English. The Federal judge told my dad to bring his wife on such and such a morning when they had the citizenship swearing in. When he came to my mother, the judge said, "I'll do the questioning." My dad taught my mother how to sign her name. The judge gave her a piece of paper and she signed her name and he made her a citizen.

## *Chapter IV: Growing Up in America*

I was almost nine and half years old then. There were four of us boys, Jacob, Isadore, Morris and myself. I was the youngest. We went into the shop and started helping dad. We helped him repair and shine shoes. Sunday, we'd put out a stand in front and people would walk by and we would shine their shoes. Would you believe I still have brushes here? You can't buy anything like that now. We went from there.

I started school in September 1921 after I got to Springfield. I didn't go to school in Russia. I was almost 10. All five of us started school in the first grade, at Baylor School. It is still in existence on Central. We were one of the very first families in here of foreign birth as children, one sister and four little Jewish boys. We became a curiosity. The teachers were very kind to us. We didn't know the language, no English.

After we started going to school, we had some problems with some of the students, especially boys. They would call us "little Jew boys". So we decided all four of us would always go to school and come home together. The boys found out that if they picked on one, they would have problems. It took a couple of fights to find out what they faced. We came from a rough life.

When we went to Campbell school, Mrs. Colley the principal told them, "Those kids are from Europe. They speak very little English and we are going to do everything we can possible to teach them. We had no problem.

Then we started jumping grades. We started picking it up and we jumped grades to get out to our level. My brother, Jake, he just skipped and hopped grades right out of there. My brother Isadore also did. From there we went to Jarrett. Morris, when he became 18 he left and went to Tulsa. He lived in Tulsa all of his life. My brother, Isadore, had to go to work right after Jarrett.

I went to school while I worked in the shop. See, what happened with schooling: my brother Jake, the oldest one, he's going to be 94, was outstanding in football. His name is still on the wall at Central. Dr. Meador was a professor at Drury. He asked Jake about going to college. Jake said he didn't have any money for college. He took my brother Jake and said, "You're going to Drury. I'll see to it that you go to Drury." So he gave him a job of cleaning, etc. and he graduated with Dr. Hall, Judge Collison,--all outstanding people. Those people were wealthy people. When he got out of Drury, he went for his Masters. When I got out of high school, I went to work. I would send my brother, Jake, five dollars a week. I was making big money. I was making \$18.00 a week. My brother Jake, when he got his Masters wanted to be a teacher but he was not quite five feet tall. Dr. Meador told him he wanted him to go to Washington and get a job with the government. "Your size will be against you as a teacher." So he did and got a job in Washington at \$100.00 a month. Dr. Meador told him, "I don't care what

they offer you in the Labor Department, take it." He was there 40 years. His pension today from the government is about \$48,000.00.

My other two brothers went to the 9th grade. My sister Yetta, went to the 6th grade. We didn't have any money and they helped Dad. Morris, the one that passed away, at 18 was offered a good job with the Kenny Shoe Company in Tulsa. So he went to Tulsa to work. Morris was, without a doubt, the sharpest salesman that I have ever seen in my life. During the war he had to quit selling because he had to go into defense. After that he went back into selling. My brother Isadore was the outstanding student at Jarrett Jr. High but he had to quit to help Dad.

### *The teen years*

I was ten years old when I came here and we didn't have much of a teen age because we went to work. My own family didn't realize that we went to work when you are ten years old. I don't feel I missed anything because that was the way of life. When we came from Europe and went to Ellis Island, they shipped us to Springfield, Mo. My dad didn't even have a home for us to go to. Six children, Mother and Dad lived in two or three rooms in the back of the store. There wasn't even a bathroom. Dad didn't have any money. We lived there two and a half or three months. The store still is on 427 Boonville. Whatever money Dad had, he had to pay to get us out of Russia and then transportation.

We didn't have what you would call a youth. I worked when I was 10 years old right after I got here. I got a job with a biscuit company on Water Street, sweeping the floor after school. One reason was for the little money they gave me and second, if there was a package of crackers or cookies that were broken, they couldn't sell it and they would give me this. All my dad could provide for was food and shelter. I wanted a bicycle so naturally I had to save to get a bicycle. There was no youth.



In the class of 500 that I graduated with, there were very few people that I knew because I didn't have time to get involved in their activities or whatever that may be. The minute I got out of Jarrett Jr. High School, I'd go to work that afternoon. I'd work on Saturday and Sunday, picking up whatever I could. Dad gave me food but I also wanted a bicycle. I worked and bought a bicycle. I also worked in yards.

In High School I was a shoemaker. I would help Dad with a pair of shoes. When I graduated in January of 1933, this was the bottom of the Depression. My Dad wanted me to stay and get a trade. I told my dad I was definitely not going to be a shoemaker. Dad said,

"How are you going to find a job whenever grown men cannot find a job?"

I did find a job on the Square, the Vanity Shoe Store, to sell shoes and I was a fairly good salesman. I worked there about nine months until the manager wanted to leave and they made me manager.

### *Relaxing, Dating and Entertainment*

On Sunday, Missouri used to have a Fruit Belt League. We'd play baseball in all the little towns like Bolivar and Ozark. This was the big Sunday deal. That's the only relaxation that I had and I got to be pretty good as a ball player. Morris had a job offer so he had already left for Tulsa. My brother Jake was lucky that Dr. Meador helped him so he could go to school. The relaxation that I ever had was to play ball on a Sunday on the Fruit Belt League. Back in those days, Saturday was 90% of your business. We'd open the doors at 7:00 and close at 9:00. I went to Temple on Friday because on Friday night they used to close early. I went to Temple all my life. My father, also living in Springfield was always very, very orthodox and on Friday we all went to Temple. It used to be on Walnut Street next to the Little Theater where the Vandervort Theater is now. That was the original synagogue. Being Jewish and living in the Christian Community and being raised in a kosher home, you mix very little because of the food. You are not invited and you don't make an attempt to get invited for dinner because it wouldn't be a kosher kitchen. This was my way of life and we lived in our own world. We didn't have time to socialize. My parents never ate one bite outside of the home. I have the basket in the attic that my mother took to my father for lunch to his shop. I worked at the Vanity and I would walk down and have dinner with my father. Until I went into the Army, I didn't eat out, period.

Walking or streetcar was the primary transportation when I was young. I used to walk from 816 State Street to Central High School, about 2 1/2 miles. Now, if you live a mile away from school they pick you up on the bus.

I was a great dancer in my young days. I dated. I was very careful in dating. I would seldom date a girl more than once or twice knowing that I couldn't, in any way, form or shape get involved. This was a no, no, period, if she wasn't Jewish. In Springfield, we didn't have much choice where Jewish girls were concerned. If I hadn't got married over seas I probably would have come back home with my parents and more than likely my brother and I would have been bachelors. Intermarriage was out of the question.

The synagogue did not provide any social events in those days. Not like they do today because most of the members consisted of Europeans that came here. D.M. Oberman employed more that 50% of the congregation. It was a pants factory. They didn't have time to socialize. Making a living was a problem. My dad come in this country without any money, without the language. What the American's don't understand is why we have so many Chinese Restaurants. Coming to the US without knowing the language, the whole family works, from the kids on down to the grandfather. Everybody works. The whole philosophy was different.

I used to have a lot of fun. I used to go to dances and everything but it never interfered with my living. The dances were at Half A Hill and the Shrine Mosque. Half a Hill was real famous. All the old timers will remember Half A Hill. It was on Battlefield and Lone Pine. Back in those days it was the days of the big bands, Paul Whiteman.

The school had very little activity as far as dancing was concerned. Back in those days, Dr. French used to be a teacher at Central High School. They fired him because Hygiene was just to wash your hands. He said Hygiene is not that, that you have to teach the girls and boys about sex. Back in those days, condoms used to be hidden in the drug store. What you see on TV today, if its good or bad, I'm no judge, but if you don't think you had little girls getting pregnant back in those days, you did have. It was hidden. The old saying said, *"I know what the devil will do so I guard myself against it. But those saints, be careful of the saints."* Be careful of anyone that is perfect. Those you got to watch. Look at our last president Clinton. He didn't do anything else that Roosevelt and some of the others done--or Kennedy. The media brought it out. They hid the other ones. In my youth and the present youth are more open. Nothing is hidden. Little girls are taught that there is such a thing as getting pregnant or boys are taught that there is such a thing as venereal disease. Mr. French, I'll never forget, they fired him because he wanted to change the system of teaching hygiene.

Most radio programs back in those days was Eddie Cantor, Jack Benny. I was really laughing about that because when I was in Africa sleeping on the ground, my greatest dream was to come home, get in that big chair and listen to the radio. If I could just accomplish that, I would be so comfortable. I listened in the evening after work when I didn't have something else to do. Otherwise, in the evening I always had something to do. I would be going bowling or in the pool hall or dancing.

## *Chapter V: Making a Living*

I got out of high school in January 1933. That was a rough time to get a job. It was impossible even for grown men. My dad wanted me to become a shoemaker. The shoes that Regine got married in, I made them by hand. I told my dad that there was no way I was going to be a shoemaker. I just didn't like it. He told me, "How are you going to find a job if grown men can't find a job?"

I hate to say this but Frisco fixed it like that. That's where everybody was going at that time. Frisco Railroad used to be the biggest thing in Springfield. So Wohl Shoe Company, out of St. Louis, opened a shoe store on the square in the Holland Building in January of '33. When they opened that shoe store, they sent a man by the name of Scher from St. Louis to manage it. He was hiring sales people who only worked on commission. I went up there and applied for a job. He was Jewish and I was Jewish too, so that helped a little bit. He said to come in and work on Saturday. That's when you waited on people. I came in and worked Saturday. I outsold everybody. I had a little experience because I was selling shoes for Dad. About nine months went by and this fellow Scher wanted to go back to St. Louis. He said, "Why don't we turn the job over to Hyman? I think he can do a better job than I can." So I took managing the store. Wohl Shoe Company had two places in town. One was Netters. They had the high priced shoes and then I had the cheap shoes, two or three dollars. I did pretty good until Pearl Harbor came along. They gave me a week to go into the army. I had no choice.

When I came back out of the army they were suppose to give me my job back. They told me that they would rather I came to St. Louis and work in the office. So I did. Mr. Wohl was the owner of the company. If you go to St. Louis, this man's name will be on Barnes Hospital, a Jewish hospital. He was one of the finest men in the world. He taught me more about business than a professor could. He only had one son who, unfortunately, got killed in Africa and he took care of the boys that came out of the army.

So Regine and I went to St. Louis. I didn't think that I would stay there. But look, it was a good job. We went up there and lived with my sister to see what we were going to do. I was there about two weeks and I talked to Mr. Wohl and said that I really appreciated but I couldn't sit behind a desk for eight hours. I just can't do it. I think I'm making a mistake. So I called up my dad, and it isn't easy to give up a job when you don't have nothing. Dad said, "Come home. You've got a place to live." My mother and my wife, I'm so proud of this, came out of the same pot. They were so close. Whatever my wife wanted she was king. My dad had very little money. So Mr. Wohl said. "Hyman, why don't you do this? Go back to Springfield. We can't take the manager out of there but go help him and your check will be coming in." That's why I'm here.

Then a fellow by the name of Arthur Rosen had a big department store at the corner of

College and Campbell. That building still stands. 80% of his trade was rural. Back in those days, rural was quite a trade, you know, overalls, boots and so on. Arthur Rosen called me and asked me to come and work for him until after Christmas. "I'll pay you the same amount of money that Wohl Shoe Company is paying you." Also at that time, they had what they called a GI training.

I knew Arthur before I went into the service. He was a German refugee and was given the store by his in-laws. I worked for him until after Christmas. Arthur invited us to dinner and told me that he wanted to open two more stores, one in Carthage and one in north Springfield. He had asthma and had to go to Estes Park, Colorado during the summer because he couldn't breathe. I signed a contract for bonus profit sharing; you know, if he makes money etc. He taught me the business. I have bought everything from overalls to toys to bed sheets to towels. He was one of the best teachers I ever had. I was with him about 13 years.

After I sold the house, I bought this house. We paid for it in five years because we had saved our bonus checks. My wife and I just lived on regular income. Arthur's son, Mark was coming into the business. Arthur said he just had to get out because of the shape that he was in. I knew I couldn't get along with his son.

Irving Schwab had helped me bring Regine's family here. Crank Drug Company was formed here in Springfield. It started on the corner of Commercial and Boonville. The building still stands. Then they built six stores here. Number two was where the Brown Derby liquor store is now on National. Number 3 was at the Professional Building. Number 4 was on St. Louis Street. Number 5 was on Glenstone where the Old Country Buffet is now. Number 6 was at Sunshine and Campbell. The rest of them were at Little Rock, North Little Rock, Wichita and Newton, Kansas.

Cranks was owned in Springfield by a group of doctors. They started building stores that were too big for drug stores. They wanted to go to general merchandise. They told me I could put in anything I wanted at store Number 6. I put in anything that could be self-service, even lady's brassieres, panties, notions, towels. And don't forget we had profitable items like Kleenex. After it opened up we got the biggest surprise of our life, the volume we were doing.

I went ahead and took over Number 5 and the rest of the stores. This went on for quite a number of years until we sold out to Katz. We were basically built for service. You know, you went in and we would wait on you. On the way back from New York one time, Carl Petty said to me, "We're going to sell out. Self-service is coming out. Our customers are not used to self-service. We are going to be left with customers we can't afford."

He hit it on the head. Near where Kraft Cheese is, facing Meadowmere, all of that used to be our warehouse. We used to ship four trucks out of there twice a week. His sons, Reggy and Carl said, "Dad, no way, you are too young." Of course, I was older. I was almost Mr. Petty's age. Mr. Petty called me and said, "Hyman, we are in a different age, what do you think?" I said, "Mr. Petty, look, so far you have been right in everything and I'm not going to go

against your judgment--no way." So sure enough, about a year after that, Katz Drug Company bought all eighteen stores with the promise that they were not going to close and all that bologna. I didn't care because financially I was in a different position than I was when I got out of the army. Katz closed them one by one.

Mr. Salenski was president of Katz Drug store. They were out of Kansas City and had 40 stores. They wanted me to come to Kansas City but I didn't want to move. To my surprise they said I wouldn't have to move so I worked for them for about three years. I was supervising the stores and helping the main buyer in Kansas City. I was gone all the time. Finally, I took a job here for them for a while in a store.

A fellow by the name of Max Wood who used to manage store Number 5 for Cranks, came to me and wanted to have lunch with me. He said that he understood that December was my last day here. He said, "How would I like to go to work for SMS? I said, "Work for a college? Are you crazy?" I had very little formal education but I agreed to an interview. Bill Watson was business manager. When I walked in, he said that they needed someone for the new bookstore they were building. He said two men who knew me from Cranks recommended me to him.

He hired me. After I was there a couple of weeks, I saw their problems right away. The general buyer for the whole school used to be my teacher at high school. He wanted me to come in as an assistant and take over the job buying but he didn't realize my age. You had to retire at 65. I was only four years away from retirement. I recommended a fellow by the name of MacIntire. He used to be our cosmetic buyer at Cranks.

## Chapter VI: The War Years

I do not believe in war movies. Not too long ago we had a neighbor that invited us over to the house and one of the young men said to me, "Mr. Lotven, *Private Ryan*, you definitely ought to see this movie. It is the most wonderful movie in the world." I told him, I didn't have to see the movie because in the movie they were shooting blanks and in the real war they are shooting bullets. Regardless of who wins the war, there is no glory in it. When a man is a hero in the war, he is not given a choice to do what he is to do. Now if you say, you've got a choice to commit this heroic deed or you can go home, there won't be that many heroes. You are a hero because you have no choice. Also at times during hardships, especially when you are an adult, life is not that important any more. In war, when you see how many people are killed, are lost, it gets to the point where dying is not feared. It could be a blessing. So let's quit glorifying war movies. There is nothing to glorify, period.

There were two brothers that went to war, me and Isadore. We went to war right after Pearl Harbor. I started at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis and then I went to Camp Lee, Virginia. I was on detached service. Then I went to Camp Stoneman in California, Fort Ord, and St. Louis Obispo. We trained to go to the Pacific, Japan, until one morning we got orders to go to Camp Shanks in New York. We were shipped out of Camp Shanks in a company of 250 men. We were on a French boat. The boat went so fast and zigzagged so that no torpedoes could hit it. We landed in Casablanca. There were about 5000 troops on that boat. That was early in the war, real early.

One day when I was in Casablanca, my commanding officer came to me and said, "I think your brother is here too." The trucks overseas never carried their company name. It was all in code. I didn't see my brother while in the states. He was in the east and I was in California. I was going through the ration belt where we draw the food. I knew sooner or later they've got to show up to draw food. The commanding officer gave me the code of his company. When I saw the truck drive up with that number, I was going to ask the driver where he was stationed 'cause I hadn't seen my brother in almost a year and a half. When I ask him, he said, "He's in the back. He came to get food with me."

I was with him in Casablanca. I wanted to go into the same company he was in but they made a rule because of a tragic accident when four brothers got killed on a boat, that companies would not let two brothers serve in the same platoon.

We went to Oran, to Tunisia. We went separate but we were crossing each other. I knew the company's name. I saw him that way. From there they shipped us to Italy. He knew where I was when I was shipped to Marseilles, Lyon and Nancy. He was on his way to Germany.

Isadore was sent to Germany. I wanted to go to see him in Germany but I couldn't go

unless I was shipped there. My commanding officer said he was going to Germany and that if I signed up to be his chauffeur, I could go there for a few days. When the war was over Isadore knew that he would be shipped out right a way so he came to Nancy before he was shipped and he met my wife's sister. We married sisters you know. After the war, I brought my wife's brother, and then her mother and her sister. After they came here, Isadore and my wife's sister got married.



## *Chapter VII: Regine and Marriage*

An American cannot understand hunger. Can you imagine being hungry? When Regine came out of hiding, what she looked like? When I met her, she had few clothes and only one pair of shoes. I was lucky that I had control over food so I told Captain Weaver about this family. He said, "Hyman, you got the key. What are you asking me for?"

This is a story that you wouldn't believe. I saw this. They were four survivors. Well, there were five. The only survivors were her mother, her father, her sister and her brother. Her uncles, aunts, grandmother, everybody was wiped out. Some people don't believe that. My nature was that, by God, we've got to get something done. And I did. I made sure they had something to eat by hook or crook. You do what you have to do. Her mother spoke six different languages. When she came back to Springfield, she lived with my sister in law and sometimes with us until she passed away at 96. She had a nervous condition she got through the war and couldn't work.

The French people did not look very kindly of me taking them away. I only knew Regine about a week. I told her parents that as soon as Japan falls, we'd get married. I was not getting married as long as I was in the Army. When Japan fell, we got married by a Jewish Chaplain. I realized then that if they shipped me out she wouldn't be taken care of, so I went to Versailles and had a friend there that was a full colonel. My discharge was in France. I was then hired by the army as a warrant officer. After I got married they would ship me to Germany for six months, what I signed up for. I couldn't do that because I couldn't take her with me, see. So I had a friend in Reims, France in the army depot. I went to see him and he said, "I will tell you what to do. I will order you to come and work here for ten days and you will stay here for six months."

So after I got that fixed, we hired a room in a house to live in. But when they found out she was from France they cancelled our room. So finally she found a woman who had a small house and one empty room but she didn't have any coal for the winter. I promised this woman that she would have coal, that I was in control of it. I said that I would see that she would get coal. You see, people don't believe stories like that. Well, I did. Every week I would take four German PWs and take barracks bags. I lived there almost a month or six weeks and then I went back to Versailles. I talked to the colonel there. The colonel knew what I was doing. You know if you have friends in the right place you are all right.

I told the sergeant, "My brother Isadore is already in the States and his wife is still here." The colonel said, "Well, he is at home now." You had to be in the states before we could send for her. He looked it up and kinda hinted to the sergeant. "The sergeant made a slight mistake". He filed it back where it belongs and then he put it in the front. When we got the orders, she was to be shipped to the United States to my parents. They shipped her out of France. She came here and my parents took care of her. Life does not mean one thing. If you got a choice you try like hell. If it is important, you don't take no.

I found the papers in a box accidentally after my mother in law passed away. I didn't know they existed. According to law, I was supposed to be able to have a home for them and support them. My mother in law was a Polish citizen. I didn't have five or ten cents to my name. I had friends here. Mr. Wilson had a bank. Arthur Rosen had one of the biggest department stores in town. Guy Cowden was head of the school board. I've still got those letters of support. My dad signed over his home to my name. Dad gave me the house so it would be in my name. I then had collateral. I was a rich man but I didn't have a dime to my name. This is life.

### *Our Wedding*

We didn't have anything to make a wedding with. We were in France right after the war. We didn't have a Chupah which is a wedding canopy. The chaplain was the son of the Rabbi in Tulsa, Tofield. His father and my father knew each other in Europe. We didn't have a wedding canopy so we took a prayer shawl and had four people hold the end of it. We had the army kitchen bake the cakes. We were in an old synagogue that survived. Regine had a suit made and the



shoes that I made. That's all she had. The underwear I got from the PX.

You have to get married by the French Government first so we went to City Hall to get married. A Jewish wedding was made by the chaplain.



After we were married, it was on a Tuesday, I wanted to buy her some flowers. All the flower stores are closed on Tuesday. We went by a grocery store and she saw some nice radishes. So we bought a package of radishes.

After we got married we couldn't get a place. It was almost impossible after the war so she stayed with her parents and I went back to camp. The next morning, Captain Reed said, "What's the matter, Hyman, couldn't you get a place to go with your wife?" I told him "no". He said "No, that's not going to work that way." The next day he gave me the key to his apartment and he went back and took my cot at camp for about three or four days. You do what you have to do. You have no choice. Its not like you are sitting here and you're warm and you aren't hungry. When things get rough, you find a way. There's a lot of good people in the world, too-- a lot of good ones and a lot of bad ones. You just sort them out. I went from being a shoemaker, to shoes, to dry goods to drugs and ended up working for the university. How ridiculous can you get?

## *Chapter VIII: The Jewish Faith*

People got married in the Jewish faith at around 19, 20, 21, 22. Back in my grandparents' days there was the matchmaker, period. That's how they met up and they got married at a very, very early age. During my dad and mom's time, that system had changed. They did not believe in a matchmaker like in *Fiddler on the Roof*. In Judaism, you have the Orthodox, the Conservative, the Reform, the Traditionals. Now in Israel, Mea Shearim, is the area where ultra-orthodox (Hassidim) live. It is followed to this day. The extreme Hassidic Movement will have no problem having 8-12 children because they are married so young. The Hassidic Movement young men did not serve in the army. They believe there should not be an Israel until the Messiah comes. As time goes on, young people are not staying with them. It has happened in the Christian Faith too.

If I hadn't met my wife in the way that I did and everything, my brother Isadore and I would probably have been bachelors. No question about it. There are very few Jewish girls here. Dad was still living. My brother and I were more traditional Jewish. My brothers Jake and Morris did not maintain the tradition and lifestyle that they were brought up in. They waved away basically from it. Isi and I didn't. I knew there was no way to get married because of my habits and kosher food. Intermarriage was out of the question. Mixed marriages in Judaism are now almost 52%. In fact, our membership here in Springfield, I'd say 50% of them are mixed. Now why? In an intermarriage and the children go to a Christian Church, they will always be referred to as a Jew. Our best workers are converts to Judaism. When children come home from a Sunday school, they come home and ask why is Mommy called a Jew. In our temple this subject never comes up. We have quite a few couples that, after they had children, they became members.

The most important things in my life are; #1, to keep my family together; #2, to my work, and; #3, to my synagogue. We found out that when my brother and I got out of the army in '46, the Orthodox and the Reforms were still fighting the civil war here. The two groups were both Jewish. Like in Ireland, they are all Christians but they are still killing each other. With only 48 or 49 members, we realized that unless we got together we wouldn't survive. The Orthodox Synagogue was where the Vandervort Theatre is--the Masonic Building on the 2nd floor. That was the original synagogue that was established by my father and Mr. Karchmer and a few of the others. The Reform Movement had a place. In 1933 the Reform Movement built a synagogue, which still stands on the corner of Belmont and Kickapoo. We formed the United Hebrew Congregation in 1946. The Rabbi that we had at that time was Rabbi Jacob. He also taught at Drury. We had separate services on Friday night. We would have it back in a small room in the center and they would have the front, in the sanctuary.

After so many years we joined under one service. What basically happened, the extreme Reform Movement would not join with the Orthodox and after a few deaths and the younger people started coming in, then we joined together until we built this new temple. This new

temple, although it is under Reform guidance in New York, is very traditional because if you walk into there on a Friday night you will find that 99% of the people will wear their skull caps and prayer shawls. That's what the younger people wanted. I got off the board about three or four years ago because I told them that I think the young people should take over. I still take care of the cemetery and take phone calls from people moving into the area.

With the building, we have grown into a wonderful congregation. That thing cost a million and a half dollars with only 124 members. My brother Jake bought the 17 acres and donated it to them. You go by the Hall of Fame toward Rogersville. The first road is 189. The next road is 193. You make a right turn. You go up a mile and a half and you can't miss it. It's on the left side. My father's name in the synagogue is on the kitchen, on the youth group, and on the garden. A group of people built at least 65% of it.

In Judaism nobody knows who gives what. I think we only owe \$10,000 dollars of it. In Judaism, the name is mentioned what part we build, but no amounts. My wife's name and my name will be in the synagogue saying that we build this part of it or somebody else built this part of it and so forth. We put the member's name on, I don't care if they only gave \$5.00. No name will be left off the temple at that time.

Our family has kept contact with each other. Brother Jake is 94. Isadore is 92, Morris passed away and I'm going to be 90 in December.

I identify with Isadore the most. We've been together all of our lives. I had a great admiration for my mother. If it hadn't been for my mother, I would not have stayed in Springfield. I was very much tied to my mother.

My dad was extremely religious. He would pray in the morning. You see, what happened to my dad was he wouldn't work on the Sabbath. Back in those years, your whole week of business was on the Sabbath when the farmers would come in. Rabbi Epstein, who he had known since they were boys, was in St. Louis. He went to talk to Rabbi Epstein and asked him, "What should I do?" The Rabbi told him that in Judaism, providing for your family comes first. You tear up all the other rules. If it comes to providing for your family, he told my dad he had no choice. You are still a practicing Jew but you have to work on the Sabbath.

My brother is the only one who did prayers morning, noon and night. He follows that to this day. He doesn't even know his own grandkids now but he can recite those prayers by memory. Jake and Morris didn't follow traditions like in a kosher home or anything like that. Isadore always has. I didn't eat outside of the house until I went into the Army. I didn't eat anything not kosher. When I had the Vanity Shoe Store on the square, my mother used to bring lunch to my dad on a streetcar. I still have the basket in the attic. It's a wooden basket. It is still up there. I never wanted to give that away. My mother would get on the streetcar and bring my dad the lunch and I would come down from the Vanity and have lunch with my father and Isadore at the shop in the back.

When you are in the army you are exempt from any obligation but I managed to stay pretty close. During the Six-Day War, that's why they attacked on Yom Kippur because they didn't think the Jews would react. Well, that's not according to our belief. A doctor will work on the Sabbath to save a life. They say there is an old joke they tell about when a cow got stuck in mud and they found that the Rabbi on the Sabbath was digging the cow out. They ask him how come you are working the Sabbath? He said because the cow is more important than the Sabbath is. That's Judaism.

When you walked in, there is a symbol on the right side of the door. It is called a Mezuzah. The translation of the Hebrew prayer within the Mezuzah is: *"You shall love your God with all your mind, with all your strength, with all your being. Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your heart. Teach this faithfully to your children; speak to them in your home, and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a symbol before your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and, on your gates."* This is actually what is inside of that. Now, according to Orthodox in Judaism, when I walk in or out the front door, I will kiss it. The mat you walk on, it says, "shalom" which means "peace." Jake and Morris never did follow it. My brother, Morris, never did follow it. He married the granddaughter of a Rabbi but they just didn't ever follow it. Neither did Jake. When Jake came back after his wife died, he reversed back to it.

### *The Kosher Tradition*

Rules in the house was that we maintain the kosher tradition. If you notice whenever the kitchen was built, everything right here is for dairy products. Anything left is meat products and we will never mix them. Whenever we eat meat, we never put butter on the table if we have meat on the table, nor milk. If we eat meat, it will be six hours before we eat dairy. Now fish, it can't be lobster, can't be shrimp. It's gotta have scales and fins. Not catfish, it has no scales. Also the fish has to come from a clear water lake. Catfish can live in anything. And oysters, we can't eat oysters. My wife does not maintain this when she goes out with people. I do. I was invited out to a dinner to Le Mirabelle restaurant. My brother ordered trout. Made it delicious, but the trout will be fried in butter or olive oil or something like that.

You know about the kosher marks on some packages. When you buy something, how do you tell if its kosher or not? If there is a U or a K on the box, that means it is kosher. The place where the food is processed is properly inspected and there is no animal fat of any kind goes into it.

The animal in kosher meat is slaughtered with a knife. The jugular vein is cut. It can't be shot or hit in the head. When the blood goes out of the animal, beef or something like that, the first thing the butcher does is take out the lungs and inspect the lungs for any form of disease or anything like that. Most butchers only use the upper end. They do not use the rear end of the animal. There is, in New York and places like that where the rear end is used but they know how to take all the blood vessels out. The meat is then soaked for at least 30 minutes. It is then salted, then washed. Many years ago they didn't have freezers. In fresh meat, if it is not frozen,

after three days they cannot sell it. Now, if it is frozen, naturally it can be kept indefinitely.

With chickens, the neck cannot ring off. It is killed by this man that is trained for it. You cannot put it in scalding water to take the feathers off. It's got to be hand picked. Now they have machines that blows it off. You open the chicken up and take out the lungs and liver. If the lungs or liver had any disease or anything like that, you don't use the chicken. You hear about people who eat hamburger and get sick. Well, that cannot happen in kosher meat because of the way it is processed.

Eggs: if you open an egg and there is a bloodstain in it, a lot of eggs will have that, you throw it out. Some woman called me one time and asked why a Jew doesn't eat brown eggs. Well, a Jewish friend of hers opened an egg and it was brown so she threw it away. It wasn't because the color was brown. It was because of the blood spot.

Basically kosher is really is more for health. Pork is the most deadly meat you can eat if it is not processed right. A lot of people right now who produce things want to have that kosher mark on them. They can get it providing they will let those men go through their plant.

We get our meat from either Kansas City or St. Louis. We used to get it completely from St. Louis but since I have a nephew, Howard, in Kansas City and I don't drive on the highway any more, he brings it down when he comes to see his parents. He comes down once a month to see his parents.

### *Celebrations*

We celebrate all the Jewish Holidays and all the American. We're just like everybody else. In Judaism you celebrate things in a wild life style. My nieces wedding started on Saturday night over Labor Day, went to Sunday, through Monday and into Tuesday. A Jewish wedding is something else again. In Judaism, the Rabbi doesn't marry you. The law says legally you must have a Rabbi or judge or an official. But according to Judaism, you marry each other in front of three witnesses. You pledge your love and your future to each other.

Bar Mitzvah: Now days they say they make a Bar Mitzvah bigger than a wedding but in those days, there was only the religious ceremony and you were given your prayer shawl by your parents. That was it. No parties.

My parents did not try to preserve any of the Russian culture. No way.

## *Chapter IX: Unexpected Turns*

The unexpected turns in my life, besides Regina, was that I was very fortunate that the only time I ever applied for a job was when I got out of high school. I have come from a shoemaker, shoe business, general merchandizing, drug store and SMS. I never applied for any of those jobs. Every one of them was offered to me. Why I became an expert in so many fields, don't ask me. I had the knack of going into a business and visualizing what it really needed, regardless of what the business was. I understood the basic of it, regardless if was in merchandizing, the drug business or even SMS. I can size it up and hire other people who could do this work for me. I had the knack of organizing because no one man as an individual could do all of this. I could picture in my mind what it needed. That is exactly what happened when I came from the shoe business to Arthur Rosen. When I walked in there, I had the knack of putting tale ends together for him. There was no use of me going in there with my hands tied. It would be a waste of money. Don't forget that I was leaving a job to take another job. It was only for a financial gain for me. Arthur Rosen had that big store. He had room for expansion.

When I went from Arthur to Cranks, I went from three stores to control to 18. What Cranks did, after they interviewed me was hire someone else because I would not agree with them in what they wanted to do. Six months after they hired this man, they came back to me because this guy was really fouling it up terrible. Carl talked to me and I said, "Carl, I told you my plan and you wouldn't buy it. This guy comes a long and he tells you there's nothing to it. Well, you see what's happened." Now, I'm in a worse shape than I was to begin with because I got a mess. Cranks is a family organization and there is too much family in there. Bill Barkley that has the car washes here now, he was Mr. Petty's son-in-law. He was supervisor. After I made an agreement with them, Mr. Petty realized that something had to be done.

When I went to work for Cranks, I took over Store Number 6 on the corner of Campbell and Sunshine. Four women came to me and said, "We've been here a long time and we are not going to listen to you." They got the biggest surprise of their life. They went back and talked to Mr. Petty and he told them that if they weren't going to listen to me they could just check out. They were so set. The same thing happened to me at SMS. You are not going to take a job where somebody is going to tie your hands. My wife, a lot of times, tells me that I'm just too hard headed. My brother Jake who is 93 years old, worked for the Bureau of Statistics for Labor for the government, always tells me that he knows everything about business. He knows more about the stock market than I do but I said, "Jake, the difference between you and me is, if you write a page in your book and you don't like it, you tear it up or rewrite it. If I go up to New York and spend half a million dollars and buy the wrong merchandise, I can't tear it up."

There is no problem going into business. Staying in business is the problem. Springfield is so conservative. If I'm in a conservative market I got to buy conservative merchandise. Don't tell me what's hot in New York. It don't mean a thing. Tell me what's hot in Missouri, Arkansas and Kansas. So many people have ideas, but if it doesn't work, it's not worth a damn. Like having a Cadillac without gasoline.

## Chapter X: Later Years

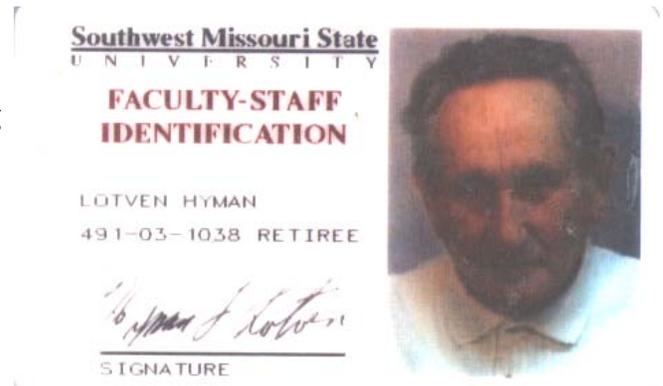
The main thing that I basically miss in my life is my work. I have always enjoyed my work. I enjoyed going to work and I enjoyed what I did all my life. There is only one thing that I would have done different. I would have tried to get a little bit of what I call a formal education, which unfortunately, I did not get. I'm not saying schooling is the answer to life but had I had proper schooling, my work would have been easier.

Number two, the main thing I miss is that Regine and I unfortunately lost our first child many years ago and that was settled as far as the family was concerned. However, we never had an empty house. We always had my nephews or people from Israel, or friends that we accumulated. When we built this house a number of years ago, we had complete plumbing and sewerage and everything because my plans were to extend it out with more bedrooms. It didn't work like that. We had a lot of young people with us. One time I jokingly told my nephew Howard, who is an attorney in Kansas City, that he wasn't welcome here anymore--kidding him about it. He said that I made one big mistake because he knew where the key was.

Somehow we have managed to keep the family together. To this day, I have nephews who live in San Diego, Julian and Jay David, my brother's kids, and one that even lives in Mexico. He never misses a year without coming down. When you talk about wealth, you'd be surprised what you can do with money. You'd be surprised what you can't do with money. I'm not a multimillionaire but I'm comfortable. They say that greenbacks are not cabbage. The only difference between greenbacks and cabbage, at least you can cook and eat the cabbage. Back when I got married and came out of the army I didn't even have a job. Thank God I have lived old enough to see the day that money is not a very important commodity to me.

When I went to work for SMS, a few years ago, I was discussing what job am I going to take. You couldn't compare the salary at SMS to what I was offered. Regine, with her background and everything, gave the best advice in the world. She said, "Honey, when is enough?" I feel I've got enough right now. I've got a home. We don't own anybody any thing. That's enough. A lot of people don't know when they've reached that and unfortunately, I was one of them. I was so involved on the Ferris wheel. I was fortunate enough to be married to a woman who gave me a shove.

As I look back on my life, the happiest days of my life was spent at SMS. Just imagine coming to work and seeing nothing but young people instead of what I used to face with the market and with the problems with the stores and the complaints. So I guess I am a wealthy man more than I think I am.



## *Life Mission*

My mission in life is very simple: make a living, keep my family together, be honest, basically have a goal in mind, live with a very clear conscience when I go to bed and don't be persuaded by money. One thing, it is a livelihood. Second, to sell your life for money, for your future and your family and your friends is not the answer. Not bragging, I think I've succeeded. My family to this day, are still talking to each other. I think I got that from my mother. My mother had four daughters in law that thought the world of her.

My nephew told me one time, "Do you know what your problem is? Your family always comes first." He is so involved socially that he doesn't have time for a family. If, God forbid, something would have happened to Regine, I still would have taken care of her mother and her sister. I've had many offers to leave Springfield but my parents and my brother was here with three children. And I was fortunate enough to marry my wife. Regine knows that is my nature. If I had married a woman who criticized or in any way give me a hard time, I would have divorced her immediately. If a person is realistic in life, you don't get disappointed. You look at a situation as it is and not as you want it. Don't go against your better judgment. See the world as it is.

When I was in California, they gave me seven days to go home and see my parents. I didn't even have a seat on the train. My dad's store was on 427 Boonville where the railroad tracks are. When I came in, that train stopped because during the war they would take all passenger trains and put them on the side in case a troop train came through. They came first. When they put that train on the track there was no telling how long I would have to wait. I got off and I walked that track for almost two miles. I visited my parents for 24 hours and then I got back on the train to California.

My brother, Isadore and I were always a little more closer to my parents than the other two brothers. When my dad got sick, I didn't have anything. I think I had \$250.00. Don't forget then, they didn't have Social Security. Isadore was not in a position. My brother, Morris, may he rest in peace, made a lot of money in his lifetime, but unfortunately, his wife and him were both terrific gamblers. They gambled away, you wouldn't believe. My brother, Jake, was financially pretty well off and then I was already working and making a pretty good living. So we supported our parents whatever little they needed.

We shared. The whole idea has changed. The whole world has changed basically and we have to accept it. It is hard for the modern world to even visualize 'cause for less than 40 years we have been on a high fly kite. We waste more food than people overseas eat. After I quit working for the SMS bookstore, I was in the food service at SMS. I worked for them about six months is all. They wanted to put in a system over at the dormitory. The food that the cafeteria threw away, you wouldn't believe. To this day, my wife does not throw away food. Her sister won't either. Even when we have a supper over at the temple, people will take a plate that big and throw away half of it and think nothing of it.

The lowest point in my life is when I was going on a troop ship to Africa. The United

States packed 5000 GIs on that boat with no provisions. Cattle were shipped better than we were shipped. I don't blame the government. In World War II you couldn't tell Roosevelt what was happening in Germany 'cause he wouldn't believe it until after Pearl Harbor. The best way to describe that is when we were in Africa we didn't have anything to do and we had a conscientious objector with us in the Army. We used to have a discussion that he would just fight war if the private and the President of the United States would come out with the same amount of money after the war. But when war is built on making billions he cannot justify war. He would not salute an officer. He would not stand up for the flag. Patriotism is one thing, but unfortunately it is sold by the dollar bill. Why should I give my life for somebody to make a million dollars?

Now it is coming out lately, with the computers, what they did during the war for money. The guy in the FBI spied against us for money. I can not justify it. Even with Israel today, everybody's got a cure for Israel as long as they're not there. How do you deal with a bunch of crazy people? It has become now that the best business in the world is religion. OK, I don't believe in Christ but even Jesus didn't sell his soul for money. They have a way of taking his name and building hatred out of it. Where is your spirit? When it takes \$50,000,000.00 to pay for a president, how can he be honest? Nobody gives you a million dollars and don't expect it back.

I saw something that made me sick to look at. There is a new football league formed in Las Vegas. I don't know what they call them. It's not professionals. They changed the rules to be more violent. I saw it. It started Saturday. And something else I saw. There were 70,000 people there. When the camera went around the audience, people held up great big signs that said "hate". I know that I am not the average person, but can you imagine the word "hate"? Isn't there enough hate in the world now? You don't have to promote it. Most of us are in the minority. We are the oddballs. But promote hate? I think Sinclair Lewis was asked one time why did he promote hate so bad and he said that's the best business you can get into.

My entire life has been to my congregation. I have had every job nobody else wants. I've never looked for any awards. I used to be on the board. I told them that if they want something from me they gotta call me. Too many people don't realize when they get old, keep your advice to yourself. There's an old saying about advice: if you are wrong, they will never let you forget it. If you are right they will hate you for it. I do the laundry. I kept the place clean. I still take care of the cemetery. The congregation knows that if they want something from me, they can call me. If they make a mistake and they call me, I'll try to help correct it. If they need a little money, they also call me.

The best friend that I have ever had in my whole life has been two people. One was Harry Federow and one was Ben Arbeitman. I always felt that if I needed something and went to them, no questions asked, outside of my brother, of course.

My relationship has mostly been with the Jewish Community but unfortunately, at my age, most have passed away. Ben passed away and Harry is in a rest home. The value of their

relationship is very hard to explain. If I called them at 2:00 in the morning they'd be there and visa-versa. If you've made three true friends in a lifetime you are a successful man.

I wish future generations the best of luck and try to keep from destroying themselves. Technology will come to such a point where some screwball will push the wrong button. But who knows, they are gonna make home made babies now so how can you possibly think about what the future will hold?

The home is tore all to hell now because people have put their comfort and their want ahead of home life. There is no home connection anymore. Prosperity will destroy you. Rome did not fall from hardships. It fell from prosperity. Since World War II, the whole system of livelihood has changed. The man made the living, the wife stayed at home and took care of the kids. Now the kids got to take care of the parents. I know that's a problem but the answer I don't have. That's a hard thing to teach. There is a 52% divorce rate now. It is a difficult thing to correct. It is not a machine, you can't fix it.

### *On feeling welcome*

When we came to Springfield, don't forget, we were one of the very few families back in those days that came from Europe. People that will listen to this will remember Jesse Smith. Jesse Smith was the county collector here for many, many, many years. He was quite a violinist. No one ever ran against him for that office. He was without a doubt the most honest, most honorable person. When he heard that my dad's family was coming, he was at the depot, the old Frisco Depot. For many years, this was a standing joke between him and myself. When he was running for reelection, he never tried because nobody ever ran against him. Every time he would see me he would say, "Hyman, you have to vote for me because I welcomed you in Springfield when you came here." This was a standing joke between him and me for many years. Any old timer will remember the name Jesse Smith.

When we came here this was not a usual thing for Springfield, Missouri. A man lives here and he brings his wife and five children here who he hasn't seen for ten years. We got quite a welcome.

I have always felt welcome in Springfield.

### *In regard to the cemetery vandalism this year*

Too many people today get carried away with importance of the cemetery whether they are Jewish or Christian or whatever they may be. In Judaism, if you are going to do something for anything, do it for the youth, the sick, the living. The last thing is the cemetery. Now, it's a necessary thing. We don't spend fortunes on cemeteries. If we have a fortune to spend, we spend it on the living.

Naturally, our young people got upset about it. That's why, when I did my entire

discussion in the paper, I minimized it. It is stone. It is brick. It is mortar. This is the same way when we built the new temple. I was interviewed about how I felt about giving up the old synagogue. We take our Holy Scriptures, our Bible, our memorial plaques. We take them all with us. The building is a building. It has no feeling. You don't get carried away with things like that. Many times a lot of synagogues move to another location. They sell it to a church. The building itself, the brick and mortar has no feelings.

People have shown an interest in my wife's background. They were not so interested in what the Bolsheviks did to the Jews or the Poles until Hitler came in. The Poles have been persecuting the Jews for centuries. The Pope said he was sorry what Christianity has done to the Jews and he's the first Pope who ever said that. This I never tolerated, "We will let you join. We will make an exception even if you are a Jew." I felt, don't make any exceptions to me. I am quite independent on myself in what I believe in. I think that's the reason that my father, may he rest in peace, had a lot of respect there. They knew that when the holidays came, I don't care who did what, my father would close his store. In fact, the neighbors would go to put out Mother's lights on Friday night because they knew Dad would not put out the lights because it was the Sabbath. They would never bring in any dish except fruit into our house and we were very close to our neighbors. People will only respect you when you respect yourself, when you stand for something and are not just a "joiner". When you are a joiner, you don't know where you belong.

#### *On being a speaker for the community*

This was not my talent and not my aim to be a front runner. Whatever time I had, I gave to my synagogue, my Jewish Community because it is number one.

#### *On Mainstreaming*

If you join the main stream rather than your own culture, then you become nothing. You have to go to the modern world but you don't have to give up your culture; what you live, what you believe in. You've gotta give up driving a car when there are airplanes, but it doesn't mean I have to give up my habit of eating kosher either--or associate with any crowd that does me a favor because I am a Jew. I have said no to a lot of things. There is a happy medium. The Amish are still in horse and buggy. That's a little ridiculous for the year 2001. You can't be everything to everybody.

The only thing I could tell the Springfield Community when somebody comes here regardless if they are black, white, yellow or turquoise, is that they be given the same welcome as they do their own. It took Springfield a long time before they accepted the blacks. I know. I live here. Yet there is suppose to be more churches per block. Is this the teachings of Christ? Practice, don't preach. You know what the devil is gonna do but be careful of the saints. Watch purity. Anybody that tells you they are pure and they have the answer, be careful, they are leading you into problems. That's the only advice I can give them.



*Springfield, MO*  
*2001*