

PREFACE

These stories are a compilation of articles published in *Der Bay*, an international Anglo-Yiddish newsletter, from October 2006 through December of 2009. They were written by its editor, Philip “Fishl” Kutner.

They are a storyteller’s stories of his Mama as he recalls them years after she had passed on. Mama lived all of her life in practically all of the 20th century. As the eldest in his extended family, the author felt the need to keep this history alive. These stories are told as if he were telling them to his grandson and granddaughters.

Many of Mama’s experiences were also shared with Papa, Fishl’s brothers; Sol, Bobby z’l, and Semele. To this list must be added Fishl’s wife Sally, of 62 years and children Shelley, Ken and Debbie.

Mama was an extraordinary lady and these are her stories and the days to tell these stories are few. Mama was not special in her lifetime, but her stories today are very special. She came from a place that no longer exists, lived a life that no longer is lived, had norms that are often the opposite of those held today and did things that are not done anymore.

What seem like hardships today, were everyday happenings in those times. The War that was to end all wars—never did. The Great Depression is only a memory today, and we are told that safeguards have been put into place so that there will be no more Great Depressions, and the lessons we learned will never let it happen again—ha! Life expectancy when Mama was born was 50% less.

At first, Mama was confused and did not accept (go along with) all the change. Later she said, “*Vos vet zayn, vet zayn.*” (What will be will be.) I am not sure she believed it or was too tired to go against the great tide of ever-speeding changes that were swirling all around her.

The stories that tell her experiences, beliefs, problems, joys, sorrows, likes and dislikes are here recorded for posterity. As in the past, with all recollections of times long since gone, there must be truths half-truths and errors. However, these stories have been recorded to the best of Fishl’s recollections and trying to be as accurate as an aging mind can be.

There is an obligation for each generation to record the times, events and attitudes of the families with whom they have traveled their life’s journey. It is an appreciation of the challenges they overcame. It is like the author’s story of the punch hole cards and the yellow strips of paper on which he first recorded Basic computer programs. Merely recording the dates and locations of life-cycle events, results in a skimpy review of history.

It is for the family elders to share their recollections and for the younger folks to record and transmit them to their offspring. This is one such attempt, and the author hopes it will not only record the events, and give a description of the lifestyle but stir others to follow suit. The eldest person in the family has the opportunity as well as the obligation to see that this is undertaken by someone else—if he or she is unable to complete the task.