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My Father was a typical father of Eastern European Jewish vintage of the time and place. My mother was in complete charge of all things home and children. My father did nothing for my upbringing, except love me without a limit and provide me with whatever I needed to make my way in the world.

My father emigrated from Kaisadory in Lithuania sometime soon after the end of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905. His father ran a dairy farm. Of course, he did not own it. He worked it for a landlord. My father spoke several languages, Polish, Lithuanian, Russian, learned transporting dairy products down some river or other, and of course Yiddish and English.

My father was sent to a nearby town to attend school when he was seven years old. It was against the law to teach Russian to Jews beyond the pale. Nevertheless, they studied Russian in that school and hid their books when the Russian soldiers were about.

The practice was for each student to eat dinner at a different home every night of the week. One such home was his married sister Gittl's house. "That was the worst meal of the week," he once told me.

When he was twelve years old, because of horseplay or a fight with the son of the Russian officer in command in my father's shtetl, his collar bone was broken. The Russian officer was so mortified that his son had been responsible for the injury that he gave my father a document that excused him from military conscription. A valuable document that made it easier for my father to emigrate when the time came. (In those days, Russian soldiers rode into a town, indiscriminately conscripting boys 12 – 13 years old off the street to serve in the army as an infantryman for a period of twenty-five years.)

America: Originally, upon landing in America, my father was sent to Idaho for a career in farming. Jews, it was felt, were too "cosmopolitan" and would benefit from returning to the land like ordinary folks.

My father settled in Chicago, where other relatives and landsmen had settled, married my mother, and had three children: Evelyn 1918, Shirley (14 months later), and Teddy (Theodore Melvin, aka Tevye Melech) born eleven years later, 1930. No one is perfect, no matter how hard we try.

Fruit Pie factory: An early job was in a fruit-pie factory. There was a huge vat that contained strawberry filling. The vat was surrounded by walkways for the workers to stir the contents. My father and other workers stood on the walkways and removed the tarp. The filling was covered by roaches. The foremen ordered the men to stir the roaches into the filling. My father never ate a fruit a pie.

Cigar Making: At one time, he worked as a cigar maker in a shop with some of his friends and acquaintances. The cigar makers hired a person to read the daily newspaper to them, so they could continue rolling cigars, for which they were paid on a piecework basis. I think that reveals more about the immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe than any other single fact.

Business was so good that my father and some others started a cigar making business, shortly before cigar making machines were introduced.

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Grocery Business: My father owned a series of groceries stores in Chicago. Work hours were MTWTF from 7 to 9, Saturday from 7 to 5, Sunday from, 8 to 12. That is 84 hours a week, or from eight to faint, as my mother used to say. They had little time off. Neither ever had a vacation, except for one time. They wanted me to have the luxury of a vacation, so when I was five years old, my father took me on vacation in South Haven, Michigan. I got sick, and we came home early.

The Thief: I was 12 years old, hanging out in front of the store. A boy my age from the neighborhood entered the store and sort of moseyed around. He put a Twinkie in his pocket and walked out. I saw all this and so did my father, but he did nothing. I went into the store and asked my father, "You saw him steal the Twinkie. Why didn't you say something?" "If I catch him," my father said, "he will be a thief."

I understood the import immediately. A child's misdeeds may be overlooked, but once caught in the act, cannot be denied.

The Scale Inspector: One day an inspector came to inspect the scale in the store. As the inspector placed his weights on the scale, my father stood by. After a while, the inspector turned and said, "*Vos tsitters du* (why are you trembling), the scale is against you."

Henry the Eighth: In the four years that I was in the service, almost all the Jews and their businesses moved from the West Side to the North Side. My parents and their business stayed. Poor people moved in. One family, last name Henry, had seven children. The wife gave birth to another. My father called the child Henry the Eighth. The family were poor, even before another baby to feed. My parents never let them go hungry. They ran a tab that they never expected to be paid, and they never were.

My father died on January 3, 1956: He was 67 years old. He had a heart attack the previous November, as he was cleaning out the rat droppings from the refrigerated display case in his grocery store. He spent a month in the hospital, a few days at home, and then had a second, fatal heart attack.

I was discharged from the U. S. Air Force in March 1954. After a month in Chicago, I emigrated to New York City and enrolled for the summer semester in the Columbia School of General Studies. In 1955, just before the Christmas break, I went back to Chicago for to visit and to help my mother in the store.

The grocery was on the corner of 15th & Kedvale. There were three (sort of) rooms in the back: a large kitchen with the usual kitchen accoutrements plus a fold out double bed where my parents slept. A small room in back of that, which we referred to as the living room, where I slept on a fold-out couch from age 11 until leaving for the service at age 20, and an even smaller room that hardly qualified as a bedroom, completed the suite. Of course, there was also a toilet and bathtub off the kitchen.

When my father came home from the hospital he slept on the fold-out couch in the living room, my mother on the fold-out double bed in the kitchen, and I slept on a narrow bed in the third room.

On the night before my father died, we watched a boxing match together. When I woke the following morning at about 8:00, my parents were awake and both in the living room. My father was not feeling

well, and had been up since 5:30 a. m. I don't remember the sequence of events, but we three geniuses finally called the doctor. By then we had moved my father to the double bed in the kitchen.

The doctor was on his way. Over the phone, he instructed me to call for an ambulance. Between the living quarters and the grocery, there was a narrow space, which led to a side door entrance and was used to store cases of soda pop. That was where the phone was also, so it could be used for both grocery and personal purposes.

In those days when you picked up the handset, a female voice said, "Number please."

I said, "The fire department, please."

"Is this an emergency?" she asked.

"No," I said, "I just need an ambulance for my father."

While waiting for the doctor and the ambulance, I lay on the bed next to my father holding his hand. I don't remember what I was saying. He was clearly in distress, and I was trying to comfort him.

"Jenny," my father cried out, "*Ich shtarbe*." My mother was cowering in corner of the kitchen as far away from the bed as she could get. She could not approach the bed.

The doctor came. The ambulance came. They put my father on a stretcher and took him out the double doors of the grocery. The doctor gave me the keys to his car, and he and my mother rode in the ambulance.

I followed the ambulance at ambulance speed, matching my horn to its siren, to the hospital. There my mother and I waited. After a short time, a police officer came into the room and beckoned me to follow him. In the corridor, after walking a few steps, he put his arm around my shoulders. "Your father died," he said.

I stopped on a dime. There, a few feet in front of me, lay my father's corpse, on a stretcher on the hall floor. He never made it to a bed.

I turned immediately back to my mother in the waiting room and broke the news. The doctor drove us home. My mother was in the back seat, lamenting the event. "Why are you carrying on like that," said the doctor, "he was an old man." I wanted to punch him, but he was driving.

I was depressed for six months after my father died.