

January 14, 1981

Roz dear -

We can't complain about postal service this week, when a letter from you dated the 12th can be answered on the 14th! Many thanks for sending "That Fortnight in September"; I'm sure I'll (maybe we'll) enjoy it. We're partial to the English writers. After we receive and read it, I'll report.

Now let's see how much this ole elephant can recall about the Finkelstein family. Of course you know that your grandparents were Jennie (Gellah, I think, although "Zelda" is <sup>in</sup> my mind somewhere) and

Samuel (Shai Menachem). Oldest was Hyman, who at an "advanced" age - what they called "advanced" then, could have been 40 - married Lena (later known as Big Lee, contrasted to Little Lee, your mother. I remember vaguely being at that wedding, perhaps at age 4 or 5, so that would be about 70 years ago. Offspring, again as you know - Jack, Oscar (killed in the war) and the other Roz.

Next oldest, Abe, really married late in life, to Fannie, much younger. You know the children - Eleanor, Pearl and the handicapped boy. Believe he arrived between the girls. (Henry)

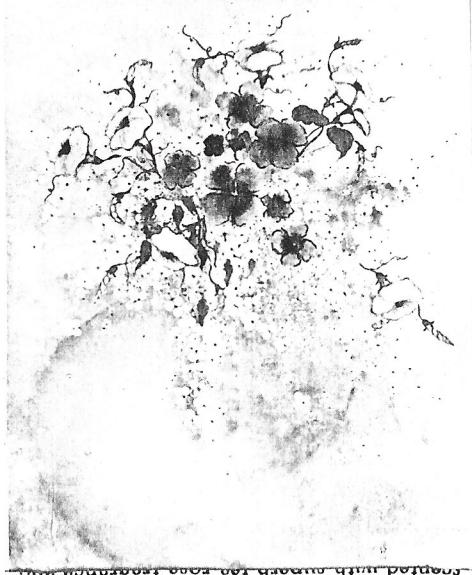
I think Kate was next in age - married Max Goldstein - children Morris (our Moe), Harry and Eva. The latter two died too young, Eva (Schwartz) at age 37. She and "Mac" had daughter, Joan.

Then Mitchel who married Ida Borsuk, who happened to be a distant relative of my father. Mitch too was an "old bachelor" when he married. He survived Ida and remarried a woman who was apparently very kind to him for the remainder of his life, about 5 years.

My mother, Anna (Chanah) came next. Did you know there were a girl and a boy between my brother Jack and me who died at birth; six years between us. (Mother's twin brother died at birth)

Then, the youngest, Joseph.

I don't know if they all came over at once - I rather think so. The children were put to work at very early ages, my Mom and her sister in a shoe factory, and I suppose other forms of sweat shops. Since age 7, my mother was a "contributor", working six days a week - and we know the seventh wasn't spent frivolously. The stories of life in those days would sadden even strangers, let alone You 'n' Me - yet Anna and Katie had many jolly stories to relate about their experiences and they never felt "under privileged". My mother and father met at work, they were married on the barest of budgets and my father studied optometry, which in those days was not the



complicated or lengthy course it is now. My mother went to night school and learned to read - print only, for the rest of her life. I used to print my letters to her rather than use script.

Your Dad must have gotten himself at least a useful education because of winding up in Guggenheim office - we know he was, of course, literate. Mitch spent most of his working years as a billboard painter and he had a good life, traveling around the country. The Beechnut signs were often "his". When his work took him to Galveston, he visited us and took Jack and me out for rides in the truck he used for the work. (But we were quite well)

off by that time, had one of the first Chevrolets, so there!)

How we got to Galveston: When I was 8 (so it was 1914) my father fell for a land-in-Texas scheme; he would not only become wealthy but the climate might cure his chronic bronchitis. He went down first, leaving my mother, Jack and me at Grandma's, to follow when he had the nest established. #1 - he found the promised land to be swamp, suitable only for growing rice. #2 - it was near Galveston which means it was anything but dry country. However, he established an optometry office and was doing quite well for a few months. At that time everybody did well in that area in any business for which there was a need. However (again) came the flood of 1915 and washed all his expensive new equipment out, leaving a few feet of water in his shop. He survived and decided we should come down anyway, as the opportunities for good living were so much better than any he'd encountered before. When we got there, he and my mother, with credit from the wholesale houses, started a grocery business and made a good living at it. Grandma came down to visit (on the Mallory Steamship Line) stayed several months and when she talked about returning home we decided we couldn't bear it and sold out and came back with her - 1921. I was 15, so you were 5, and that's when we became acquainted. He started his optical business again, etc. etc. He was less than 50 when he died, but my mother lived to be over 90 - but sadly senile toward the end. She remarried - you may recall meeting her husband when I had the family get together for that purpose - in our little apartment on Haven Avenue, before Riverside Drive - and as we are in this apt. 48 years, that goes back a bit.

Back to the Finkelsteins - Hyman was a self-taught violinist, and Katie had a sweet singing voice. (over)

I have only kindness to remember from all my aunts and uncles. Joe and Mitch were the young uncles, read the Saturday Evening Post when it cost a nickel a copy - often had a nickel for Jack and me when a nickel was a big big coin.

Oh yes - Grandpa was a windowshade man - went around taking measurements, would go back to his factory and give the specifications, then later bring the shades and hang them. Once when I was visiting your mother (and probably you) at your grandparents' home, this other grandfather of yours was putting up shades there.\*

I recall many small incidents about Trotskies and Tracies too - a grand and handsome bunch - and your mother, of course, was a true blue-eyed doll. Most of them were good singers, including your mother, although after some deaths in the family she said she couldn't any more.

\* Grandpa Finkelstein appreciated working in this country compared to God-knows-what that he had in Europe. He loved his work and said that traveling on the elevated was really a great pleasure ("A fargenigen") He was a neat, red-haired man of few words, I think intimidated by Grandma. I used to slip him a Hershey bar occasionally gratefully received. He died a few years before Grandma, don't recall his year, but hers was 1929.

Hope you find this helpful or somewhat interesting.

Have a fine time in Florida - stay well, all of you.

Love

W.abel

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\*\* This is what comes from trying to write on the edge of the typewriter table! - am not that shaky - yet.

HAVE YOU READ "EVERGREEN" BY BELVA PLAIN? IF NOT, DO. NEVER MIND THAT THE BEGINNING ISN'T COMPLETELY INVITING.