Chapter 1. Early years.

Where are you from people in the US are always asking. (I cannot shake off my curious accent). Glasgow, Scotland I answer. What a Scottish (Scotch) Jew? I did not know any such "creature" existed is the usual response with great surprise. How did Jews ever arrive in that part of the world? When I was born (1931) there were about 15,000 of us. There may have been as many as 10 synagogues in Glasgow. Today the number of Jews in Scotland is about half as a result of emigration. My grandparents had emigrated from various parts of the Czarist Empire. My father's family, the Taylors, had arrived around the turn of the century from Kovno or Kovno Gebornia (province). According to some records my grandfather Taylor was born in Vitebsk, in the Pale of settlement. My grandmother Taylor was born in Moscow. I have no idea how or where they met. My grandmother arrived with her mother, the "Bubby", Ellen Katzen, who I remember as a very old lady, who only spoke Yiddish. As a child I was always afraid of her. The story told in the family is that they were on their way to the " Goldene Medina", got off the boat, saw that the natives (goyim) were friendly, and decided to stay. Another version is that they thought they were already in America. After all the natives do speak a weird form of English! My grandparents (The Taylors) were quite religious; in fact the Bimah in one of the synagogues is dedicated to my grandfather. They arrived as three brothers, with families. The original name was Schneider, but was changed to Taylor by two of the brothers and the third for some reason took the name Shein. Both Taylor brothers had 10 children, so that the family grew very fast. These were in order of birth in my immediate family, Abie, Hymie (my father), Sadie, Kitty, Louis, Norman, Wolfe, (who died before I was born from appendicitis), Flora, David, and Minnie. As of this time of writing, Kitty is still alive in Toronto. The family settled in the Gorbals, which at that time was the haven of Jewish and Irish immigrants. Although they were poor, they kept up certain standards. However the Gorbals became infamous later on, in the 1940's as one of the worst slums in Europe. By that time they had moved out as had most of the Jewish population to the South side of the city (Queens Park, Langside etc). The Taylor's were a very close-knit family. This was true of my generation, but unfortunately does not seem to be true of the next generation. There seems to be very little contact among the children of the cousins.

My mother's maiden name was Mitchell. According to the census of 1901 my grandmother (Fanny Jordan) was already in Scotland living in Paisley. I have been able to trace her voyage from Latvia using the Latvian census of 1889 and the Scottish census of 1901. Her maiden name was Jordan and she was born in Talsen in what was then Courland but today Latvia. Her native language was German. She arrived in Scotland with her mother (widowed) joining two married sisters, Sophie and Ada who were living in Elgin, their husbands being related, either brothers or cousins and were peddlers. There was another sister Kitty who was slightly older than my grandmother. Sophie eventually immigrated to the States and Ada to Australia. My grandfather on the Mitchell side came from the Ukraine, exactly where is not clear, although the name Zhitomer has cropped up in conversation. From old documents the original name was Mechelman or Michelman. The Mitchells were a large family, some stayed in Glasgow, others went to Belfast or Dublin. Although the Mitchells were not religious, in the sense of attending shul on Shabbat, my grandmother was strictly kosher at home. My grandfather on the other hand was not averse to having a ham sandwich, which he ate while working in his store. I was not supposed to say anything to my grandmother.

My mother, Jessie was born in 1911 and my father Hyman in 1910. My mother was born and went to school in Paisley, a small town not far from Glasgow, and my father was born in Glasgow, and according to the stories I heard they met at the Plaza dance hall. My parents were traditionalists, if not religious. They kept Kashrut, different dishes for Pesach, and my father went to services occasionally on Friday evenings, but kept his business open on Saturdays. They did go to Synagogue for the High Holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I suspect that both my parents left school to work at the age of 16.

My mother had two siblings one of whom played an important part in my life. This was my aunt Betty. The other was her brother David. I got to know both of them very well. I kept contact with both David and Betty until their deaths.

I was born in 1931. I do not remember much before the age of 5, and even after that age my memory is very sketchy. I spent a lot of time at my grandparent Mitchell's. I think I

was taken there every Friday evening and stayed the whole weekend. I do have fond memories of creeping into bed with my grandparents. They doted on me, the first grandchild. It is funny what one remembers, since one of the strongest memories was that there was a chamber pot under the bed that was used by both my grandparents and emptied in the morning. I was also looked after by my mother's young sister, Betty,who must have been about 16 when I was born. From what I remember she was quite a rebel, and always arguing with my grandmother. Betty would not accept the traditional ways of doing things. She and her brother David lived at home. I will devote a chapter to her later on. I was basically adopted by her, and she may have had a greater early influence on me that my parents. According to Betty my favorite pastime was playing the gramophone, which I would take from room to room, playing the same record over and over. I do remember the gramophone and the RCA dog on the records. My uncle David must have been very impressed with my playing the gramophone as a child, since this was his wedding present to us 25 years later, and therein lies another story. However apparently I always loved music.

My grandmother's house was spotlessly clean. She was extremely fussy, and she had a procession of maids in uniforms in the house. These were live in maids, country girls who would do the washing, and cleaning. My grandmother however did the cooking.

These maids came from mining towns, from very poor backgrounds. They were delighted to live in such clean and " genteel " surroundings. My grandparents also always had a dog, the first I remember vaguely was " Arispa", a golden retriever, whom I loved dearly. Unfortunately he snapped at me, and left a small scar above my eye. I think this was an accident, but my grandparents decided he was too dangerous and placed him in a " shelter". By all accounts although a beautiful dog, he was very ill behaved. The next dog was "Punch", who was some kind of terrier. He was not as cuddly as Arispa but he lasted much longer.

My grandparents for these days were quite wealthy. They lived in a very nice " tenement", with spacious rooms. The table was always set beautifully and the whole family would gather on Fridays or Sunday nights for dinner. The one thing that does stand out from these early days were the dinners at my grandmother Mitchell's house.

These were always fried fish, the best fried fish I have ever tasted. I remember that the fish were flat so that they must have been sole or flounder. The whole family would gather including my grandfather's brothers and sisters.

This was a tradition that carried on for many years. Not only the immediate family would gather but also my mothers Aunts and Uncles on both sides of the family. In particular I remember Aunt Annie and Uncle Jack Jukoff (my grandfather's mother was a Jukoff), and my grandfather's brother Robert and family. The evenings were noisy and usually ended with card games. The most popular came was pontoon (21's). Many an evening was spent playing this game.

I enjoyed staying with my grandparents. It was much more peaceful than at home, for there always seemed to be fights going on, between my father and mother. My mother had a terrible temper, and a vivid imagination of my father's misdeeds. Also by the time I was two and half, Beatrice my sister was born. As a child she was quite sickly and required a lot of attention. I do remember she had " fits" and had to be placed in hot water in a tub. I do not know whether this was related to bronchitis or some other ailment. She certainly grew out of it and became a very healthy child. Adelaide was born when I was about 5 years old.

We lived in a very poor part of the city. I think this was a strain on my mother who had been brought up in a very "posh" environment. The area was run down and quite slummy. My parents were quite poor, having, lost everything during the great depression of the 30's. As today they had to move out of their apartment since they were unable to pay the rent, and for a short time lived with my grandparents. I was born in this apartment which was somewhere near Eglington Toll.

Now looking back I think my mother suffered from depression, she was always crying, and mopping around. My father would constantly ask her " Jessie, why are you greetin" the Scottish for why are you crying. The house was always in a mess, and smelt of cats and fish (they both went together). Later on we also had a dog, Carl, a German shepherd, but this was much later. Life was very tough for my mother. She had come from a very privileged background, with servants and now had to do everything herself. Laundry for

example was a big deal, since the clothes had to be soaked, boiled, washed by hand, and then put through a mangle to squeeze the water out.

Later on we lived in Pollok Street. This was a in a lower class neighborhood, but not terribly slummy. I do remember that the neighbors polished their brass door handles and doorbells until they shone. However I also remember houses marked with crosses as a sign of infectious diseases, either smallpox, or diphtheria. There was a multitude of infectious diseases that one could get, scarlet fever, measles, scabies, just to name a few.

Later on one was checked in school for the presence of lice. I remember the ‘ beastie comb”, a sturdy comb made out of metal with very fine teeth to entrap the lice.

I started school in 1936. I went to school with my little school bag on my shoulders just down the road. The school was called Scotland Street Elementary .The famous architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh built this school between 1903 and 1906, I remember it as being a large building with leaded glass towers and a large entrance. It is now considered an architectural gem and is a museum, both because of its architecture and history of education in Scotland. The classrooms were large and spacious, with lots of light. The teacher had his or her own desk, and there were two large blackboards. Each desk had an ink well and pen with nib. I do not remember very much until 1939 when in that September war broke out. After 1939 we would bring our gas masks to school. At that time I, my mother and the other 2 children, (Adelaide my sister was born in 1937) were evacuated to Mauchline, a small town in Ayrshire now famous for the poet Robert Burns having spent a few years there. Our stay there was very short, only a few weeks since nothing happened for the first year or so of the war. There were no air-raids, and thus no reason to stay away from Glasgow and home. This period was known as the phony war.

My friends during this period were mostly children of neighbors. I seemed to have a preference for playing with the girls since I found the boys rather rough. (It may have been that I was encouraged to play with the Jewish neighbours children in an area with few Jews, and that these were predominantly girls). We used to play “peever” jump with skipping ropes, play with “ jawries “ and the usual hide and seek and tag. I do not remember having a doll or soft animal, although I assume I must have. In fact there was a story that as a three or four year old the family went on vacation to the Isle of Barra by

ship. Everyone was sea sick, the passage was very rough. I used the can on wheels set up to collect vomit as a pram for my doll, so I must have had one. My best friend appeared to have been a girl called Doris Pikovski. My life was fairly uneventful until I started going to Hutcheson's grammar school at the age of 10. I do not know who's ideas it was that I sit the entrance exam for Hutchie. Either it came from my teachers at the school, or from my parents. Anyhow I was thought to be a very precocious child, and I appeared to have done well in the exams, so that I had not problem gaining a fellowship to this prestigious school.

Next chapter Hutchie.