

From Yiddishe Mama To Jewish Princess

Editor's comments: Mr. Shipley is a new columnist for the "CJN" and will periodically have his column appear; the material will range from the light to the serious. Jim is a former resident of Charlotte where he owned and operated WWLV/WDRV (1979-81). He publishes a series of articles in various newspapers, among them THE HERITAGE in Central Florida and THE CLEVELAND NEWS. He has been involved in many aspects of radio, TV, film, recording industry, marketing and advertising.

A few weekends ago, I sat dozing in the sun beside my folks' pool along condominium row in south Florida. My mom was seated with the "girls" under the umbrellas, playing *Spite and Malice*. Fine thing for Jewish ladies to call a friendly game. I wondered when these ladies, who have married grandchildren, stop referring to themselves as girls. Answer: never.

The conversation this day was about food. Not food in the restaurant or dinner party sense. Not diet. Food. Food they remembered from their mothers.

They spoke with pride, with humor, and now and again in recipes. What recipes! Most of them spoke of mothers who never measured and who, the day they left this vale of tears, never released all their secrets.

But these ladies under the umbrella did cook. Believe me, they can still simmer a succulent stuffed cabbage or mold a masterful matzo ball.

What is the last of a breed? What's the end of the line? Is there a shift in mores and tradition that happens so slowly that we don't notice it until everything has changed and what was, just isn't any more?

When's the last time any mother under 40 was referred to as a "Yiddishe mama?" There was a time when the Jewish jokes were about mothers stuffing their sons with food and the fine points of kreplach soup. Now, it's "What does a Jewish mother make for dinner?" Answer: "Reservations."

When did this change come about? What happened to us? Was it the emergence of the

Jim Shipley **Shipley Speaks...**

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Jewish middle class after World War II? Is that when the image of the Jewish mother was replaced by the Jewish princess?

When we moved from the ghetto to the suburbs, did we have to leave all that behind us? What of the future?

Let's examine the situation and see if we really have a problem here. The center of Jewish life has always been the family. The family meant home. Home meant the kitchen. In the kitchen, mama reigned supreme. Perhaps that's why, in Jewish tradition, food and the attendant culture means so much.

The centrality of Jewish life is the Shabbat. Shabbat is welcomed in with a ritual dinner no matter how humble the home. Come Shabbat, dinner is more special, the house is full of odors and cleanliness and preparation. If there are strangers — let them come on this night and eat. The Bible tells us this.

So, am I suggesting that the salvation of the Jewish people, the way to reverse assimilation and intermarriage, lies in the recipes mama did not pass on? Not necessarily. Our history, our teaching, our Torah are much more what we are about than our gastronomical tract. But through the steam emanating from a good chicken soup is not a bad place to start the conversation and interest the next generation.

If any ethnic group is to survive and retain its identity, it must have its traditions based in the home. The family and what it stands for is the root stock from which the future generations will spring.

If Friday night at home is more fun, more stimulating, more delicious than anything else — the kids will be there for dinner. The dates will start later, the leave taking will be less hurried. Trust me — I have been there.

Mama — are you sure you didn't leave anything out of the knadlach recipe? Now is the time to pass along *all* the secrets of the recipes.

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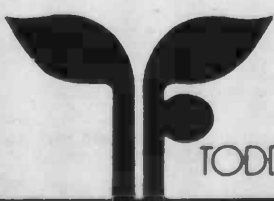
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