



Linda
A Grandmother's Story

*By Linda Ginsberg
with Sharon Ross*

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Front Cover: Linda, Castle Combe, Cotswolds, 2020
Back Cover: Linda, 1947

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Introduction

When Sharon, my middle child, asked if she could ghost-write my autobiography my immediate response was – *'I don't think that people will want to read my story! Go and ask your father: people will find his life much more interesting!'* However, she was quite persistent and said that *'Everyone's story has something we can learn from and has a plot with twists and turns!'* The idea of the book, she explained, wasn't to put it on the shelves of WH Smith's or Waterstone's, but to give it to my family and friends. Sharon insisted that these people would want to read my book.

She also said that she wanted to use my autobiography as a prototype for her business which would ghost-write stories of everyday people. She is calling her business, Prashker, which is my father's original surname, and I was rather touched that she wanted to do this. Ultimately, I want to support all my children in their endeavours, so sitting down to talk to Sharon about my life didn't seem like such a big ask. So, here it is – my autobiography. I do hope you find it interesting!

CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings

Now, I want to tell you how my story begins. I was born on 19th July 1945 at a nursing home in Ruislip, and was named Linda Henrietta Press. My first name was chosen after Linda Darnell, the American film star, as my mum loved the movies. In an age before television, she went to the cinema several times a week.

It is common in Ashkenazi Jewish tradition to be named after someone who has passed away and therefore my middle name was chosen after my paternal grandfather, Henry, who died when he was 47. Fortunately, my parents didn't think that Henrietta would be a good first name, because I wouldn't have liked it!

When I was born, my family became a unit of four – my mother Gertrude (everyone called her Gertie), my father Jack, my sister Helen, who is three years my senior and then there was me.

It's important here to give a bit of background about my parents: My father was born on 2nd

January 1909 but he wasn't registered until the 9th January and that is that date that appears on his birth certificate. He had four sisters, Sadie, Rosalind, Deborah and Theresa. Deborah died when she was 10 from diphtheria. He came from a very poor background and was an entrepreneur from an early age. As I understand it, his first foray into business was as a child. He used to somehow get sweets from a wholesaler – perhaps from a shopkeeper who felt sorry for him, and then he used to sell them to children at school. When my father was born, he was named Myer Isaac Prashker but he changed his name to Jack Press just before he married, to sound more Anglicised.

Gertrude Volkovitch (my mother's maiden name) was born on 28th August 1912 and was the sixth of nine siblings. By today's standard her birth story was quite incredulous. It was in the days before ultrasounds and after my Auntie Esther was born, the doctor quite unexpectedly said, '*Another one's coming*' and minutes later, my mother arrived! The babies must have been positioned on top of each other and therefore the doctor didn't hear two heartbeats. My Grandma Annie literally did not know that she was having twins until my mother was born! Auntie Esther and my mother had very different personalities and always appeared to be at loggerheads, although they clearly loved each other.

My parents were introduced to each by my Great Aunt Gertie. Her husband, Great Uncle Ralph was the brother of my mother's mother and we think that the reason they knew my father was because my

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paternal grandmother also came from the same town as him – Malawa in Poland (My Grandma's maiden name was Millward which comes from the name Malawa). My parents were married on 28th June 1939, just before the war broke out.

CHAPTER TWO

A Youngster

My first home was in Ruislip, to the west of London, and the earliest significant event in my life was when I was six months old. My Grandma Annie fell over while in the bedroom where my sister and I were sleeping, and an ambulance was called. However, the paramedics had a problem: they couldn't open the door because her body was in the way! Somehow, they made it in, and she died later that day in hospital.

Often, I don't know whether I truly remember something, or whether I remember remembering it. But either way, one of my first memories was whilst I was at nursery school. I must have been three or four, and there was a girl there who refused to eat her lunch. When she eventually ate it, she vomited it all up! It was really disgusting!

When I was five, I went to a primary school called Bishop Winnington. Helen walked me back from school one day – it wasn't far and it was considered perfectly acceptable for an eight year old to do this in those days. But on the journey she walked me straight into a lamp-post! One assumes that she didn't do it on purpose, but maybe she did! When I was a few years older, I sometimes walked home from school by myself. One day, I came home late because I'd taken a longer route to pop into the sweet shop, and I do remember that my mum was very worried about me! Now that we are in the age of mobile phones, mothers don't have to worry if they are in a similar situation!

I also remember (or was it remembering remembering?) one of my birthday parties where tables and chairs had been put outside and then it pelted with rain! I was very upset!

An important part of my youth was when my cousin Irving Taylor, the son of my mother's sister Fay, came down from Leeds in the holidays and when I travelled north to see him and his family. Irving and I played football in the street, and when he came to Ruislip, we played cricket. Meanwhile, my mum and her sister could have a catch-up.

Life was very different in those days. I used to go shopping with my mum several times a week. When we went to the grocer's shop there was a line of big jars and I would put my hand in the biscuit jar and pick out as many as I wanted. They would be weighed for us to buy. When we went shopping at Sainsbury's we would go to the dairy counter where there was a huge block of butter. The person

manning it would use spatula-like utensils to cut and shape the butter so that it exactly fitted the size of our butter dish. It was a delight to watch!

There were many independent stores and we would know the people who ran them. One day the greengrocer was particularly helpful to me. I was coming back from the train station and got stung by a wasp. We went into his store and the shopkeeper cut an onion in half and pressed it where it hurt and this drew the sting out! I couldn't believe that it worked! I don't think you'd get that type of service today!

Things were just different years ago – you could go shopping and leave a pram with a baby outside and didn't think twice about it! A busy shop could have half a dozen prams with babies parked outside! And the prams were different too. You didn't have to fold them to fit them into a car. It wouldn't be unusual for a baby to be held by its mother who was sitting on the front passenger seat. There were no seat belts.

I don't know why, but when I was about eight, my parents decided to take me to a doctor in Harley Street to get advice about my education. The doctor told them that I should go to boarding school. Helen believed that the doctor gave this recommendation because he had never seen a Jewish mother before and he decided that I needed to get away from my mum! Following the doctor's advice my parents decided to send me to a Jewish boarding school called Mansfield College, in Hove.

The College was a very small school and there were only 26 pupils there when I left. I was at the College for three years. One of my memories was

when we were walking in pairs – crocodile fashion. I just wasn't paying attention – I must have been in a dream. Then, all of a sudden, the other pupils did a left turn but I carried on walking ahead. They eventually realised I was missing and came back for me!

The facilities there were not that great by today's standards. We had to share baths with other children and we had to queue up to do a poo! There was a matron by the toilet that used to check if we had done something! I was homesick, but I'm just the sort of person who accepts things as they are and I accepted the College and got on with it.

The teachers were good. I remember Mrs Glastonbury and Miss O'Reilly. In the school play I had to waddle along dressed as a snake. When I came on the stage everyone laughed and it was just the most awful thing – I was mortified! Since then, I haven't liked snakes!

Whilst I was at Mansfield College, my parents went to South Africa for three months, so during the Christmas holidays Helen and I stayed with my Uncle Sam and Auntie Joy (my mother's brother and his wife) as well as Auntie Beattie and Uncle Lew (my mother's sister and her husband) for two weeks each. I didn't mind my parents being away: I just accepted it and got on with it and, actually, I had a lot of fun during that holiday. When I went back to boarding school, Helen stayed with our cousin Ruth and her husband Mervyn, who were about ten years older than her.

When I returned to school after a different holiday, we were told that a pupil called Judith Tomaschoff

had been killed. She had been on an El Al plane back to her homeland in Israel and it had been shot down for straying into Bulgarian air space. I think my parents knew about it before I returned to school but they didn't want to upset me so they didn't say anything. It was quite a well-known incident, as years later, when I met Malcolm, my husband, he was aware of it. Fifty-eight people died. There were no survivors. Judith was such a lovely girl. She was older than me. We weren't friends as such, I knew she was one of those people that would make a mark on the world and so her dying was just very tragic.

CHAPTER THREE

The Next Stage

When I was 11, we moved from Ruislip to Crooked Usage in Finchley and I stopped going to boarding school. My parents decided that we needed to live near a bigger Jewish community and my father wanted an easier commute into London.

I remember coming into the house and seeing a pipe appearing out of the ceiling and moving down the wall! It was quite surprising! Oil central heating was replacing coal fires in suburban homes and I'd never seen anything like it before. We had a big tank in the garden to house the oil. The smog had been so bad that on some days you could not see to drive your car safely.

Mum was one of those types of people that everyone loves. She had a very good sense of humour. But my father was my favourite. I adored my dad.

When we went out, I walked with my father and my sister walked with my mum. I would also walk with my father when he was with his friends. He always used to talk about politics – I don't remember him talking about football, like many men do. Or maybe because I have no interest in football whatsoever I have blanked out those conversations from my memory! When I went to synagogue for the Yom Tovim (High Holy Days) I sat with the men, in the front row on my father's lap and the Reverend would occasionally give me a wink!

I also used to spend time in my father's office, which was at our home. I called it his 'Sorting Room'. It wasn't an office in the traditional sense. He owned a market stall, after his shop was bombed in the war, and on it he sold seconds of stockings from a company called Ballito. They didn't come to him in an organised fashion and he had to sort them by colour and size, match them into pairs and finally put them into a cellophane bag. I didn't help him with this task; I just remember being there with him, spending time with him and playing with a box of coins.

My sister Helen and I were different. Helen was arty. She loved to do drawing, cooking and needlework – those traditional womanly things that I wasn't very good at.

Apparently, at some point my mother said to my father, 'Would you like to try for a boy?' But my father said that he was quite happy with his two girls. He had grown up with only sisters.

The next big event in my life was sitting my 11-plus exam, which if I passed would entitle me to go

to a grammar school, but I failed. My parents still wanted me to have a decent education and were not so keen on the local secondary modern so instead they sent me to Pitman's. It was a private school – there was no entrance exam and you could do secretarial training. I was there for a year and then Helen told my parents that the school was no good for me and that I wasn't learning anything. I think I was getting into trouble, but I can't remember what it was about. So, I left there and went to Clark's College, which was nearby. I met my friend Vivian Blake (who later became Vivian Grant, and now lives in Canada) at Clark's. I stayed at the college until I was 14 years old.

The headmaster said that I should do A Levels after my O Levels and then go on to do a secretarial course. But I said that there was no way that I wanted to be at school until I was 20, so I returned to Pitman's. In the sixties, there were two career choices for women like me – a secretary or a hairdresser. I knew I couldn't become a hairdresser because I didn't have any artistic flair, so that's why I chose a secretarial career. Some women did go to university but not many. Actually, my father did offer to buy me a tobacconist shop (it's what you would call a newsagent nowadays) but I was never very good at getting up early in the morning so I didn't think it was a good idea!

It was when I was at Pitman's at this time, that I met my friend Phillipa Kaye (who later became Phillipa Gold). I asked her when her birthday was (or maybe she asked me) and it turned out it was the

same day as mine, and after this we became best friends! I'm still friendly with her today – more than 60 years later. We used to go to ballroom dancing lessons together in a shop in Temple Fortune. I was useless at it! There might have been boys there but they weren't really on my radar.

Also, around this time, I would occasionally call into Elizabeth, the wife of my cousin Victor, on my way back from school. They had two baby boys called Phillip and Marc. I just used to go in to say 'Hello'. Elizabeth seemed quite happy for me to do so and she must have asked me to pop in at any time.

We were traditional Jews, not religious ones. We definitely went to synagogue on the Yom Tovim. We went to the Temple Fortune Odeon cinema which was an overflow for Kinloss Gardens Synagogue where I eventually got married. I can't remember having a special Friday night or Yom Tov meal apart from Passover. I must have done those things – I just can't remember. I recall saying Ma Nishtanah (a special song sung by the youngest child) at the Passover Seder service and I hated doing it. I now listen in admiration to my grandchildren recite these few lines each year with such confidence and am very proud of their performance.

My father's accountant had a client who owned a factory which made belt-backing – the smooth material on the back of belts. The factory was near King's Cross and the owner was looking for an investor. My father decided to invest, and he worked there every day, overseeing the manufacturing process. He did

that for about three years and then they were bought out by another company. I don't know if he made much money from selling it but, generally speaking, my father did well in his business ventures.

My mother never worked. She used to help my father selling stockings in the market, but then he told her not to bother coming anymore! I'm not sure that she was good at it!

At this time, the country was still recovering from the Second World War. There were dishevelled car parks everywhere – houses, shops and office blocks because they had been bombed (They were then flattened and this was the beginnings of the National Car Parks Ltd). Before I moved from Ruislip to Finchley, there were still orange juice rations – it was actually more like orange squash concentrate. We had to go to the council offices to get the juice. It was the last remaining rationing.

CHAPTER FOUR

Out to Work!

At 16 I left school. I couldn't wait to leave! It was the happiest day of my life! In those days it was easy to get a job – there was not the competition for work that there is today. My first job was for J. Roussel – a French company – as a shorthand typist. They had two shops in Regent Street – one selling male trusses and corsets and another for women. I used to work in an office around the corner from the shops. I remember on my first day I typed out a whole load of letters spelling the word 'manager' incorrectly and I had to get Tippex correction paper to rectify the mistakes (It was similar to white carbon paper – you retyped over the wrong letters and the white obliterated them). It was all rather embarrassing.

At 17 I took driving lessons and I passed the test first time! Several years later, in 1965, my sister got

married to Maurice Davis who lived in Luton and for some reason every time I saw Maurice I cried. *Every single time* he said something to me it upset me and I don't even know why I was upset – maybe it was because I didn't like change. Even today I couldn't say why I was so upset. It was at the time of Churchill's funeral and mum, Helen and I went to Losner's bridal shop to choose dresses for the wedding. I remember that the shop had rented a TV so the assistants could watch the funeral.

After some time at J. Roussel I decided I had done my apprenticeship and got a job at a wine merchant called Grierson, Oldham & Adams who had an office off Haymarket in London. I stayed there for four years – why, I don't know, as I didn't drink wine and learnt nothing about it!

Then I thought that I needed to do something different, so I got temporary work through an agency which specialised in publishing. After many short-term jobs, eventually I got a six-month contract with the publisher Paul Hamlyn – it was the best job I ever had! It was very modern!

In those times you addressed your boss as 'Mr' (and they generally were Mr, not Miss or Mrs) but at Paul Hamlyn's you could call your boss by their first name! Although I still think the lowly secretaries called the owner Mr Hamlyn. My boss, Richard, was the advertising manager, and the first thing I had to do when he arrived in the morning was park his car! It wasn't anything fancy, but that is what I had to do. The company was devising a scheme of

selling books door-to-door and I found the work interesting.

At this time, I was involved with charity committees. They'd arrange social events to raise money for charity and one of the events was in aid of a home for the blind. We actually visited the home and I made a bit of a faux pas – I went up and spoke to a lady and asked her if she was married and had children. All the other people on the committee pointed to her hand because she wasn't wearing a ring on her finger! It was so embarrassing!

When I was about 20, I had glandular fever and I was off work for about three months. It was really bad and I just stayed in bed – that's all I wanted to do. Then after a while I could walk around the house, but I still couldn't go to work – it was debilitating. I didn't have the energy. It was like a heavy flu. Eventually, I went back to work but then I had to have another week off because I was exhausted from it all. But in time I recovered and went back to normal.

I have only ever voted Conservative. That is what my parents did and so that is what I did and I still do.

CHAPTER FIVE

To Israel

When I was 23, I decided to go to Israel on a scheme called Shnat Sherut (Year of Service), which was a programme run by the Zionist youth group Hanoar Hatzioni. I thought ‘I don’t want to be married, looking out of my kitchen window and telling myself that I didn’t do something adventurous’. It took a lot of courage from me to go.

As part of the programme, along with a dozen or so other people my age, I went to the David Eder Farm in Sussex to get acclimatised to life on a kibbutz. It was a bit ridiculous because it wasn’t really like my kibbutz-life at all – there were cows on this farm but not on the kibbutz I went to in Israel. But staying there did mean that I bonded with the other people who were going on the trip, including Heather Weiner and Linda Oriel, who became my very good friends.

I paid for the trip to Israel myself. I never had a problem with money, like some of my friends did. I lived at my parents, and I didn't pay them rent but on the other hand I wasn't a big spender. I wasn't that into clothes and so entertainment was my major expense. Indeed, I had surplus money so my father arranged for someone to advise me on how to invest it. I just signed on the dotted line – I had no idea what I was doing.

So, we went to Israel by boat – it must have taken about a week to get there. We arrived in Haifa and went straight to Kibbutz Mei Ami, a Nahal kibbutz, in Northern Israel where we would be staying. It was originally funded by people from Miami, hence its name! Soldiers from the Israeli Defence Forces carried out their military service at the kibbutz. The soldiers not only performed guarding duties but also did farm work.

I did various jobs. Sometimes I worked in the kitchen. Other times I would get up early to weed the fields or pick peonies so they could be sold at the market. The people that ran the kibbutz couldn't believe that I was so slow at my jobs! They thought that I was faking being slow so that I didn't have to do much work, which wasn't true! I was just slow! My parents came out once to see me whilst I was in Israel.

When people think of kibbutzim, they imagine that everyone gets up early, works in the morning and lounges by the swimming pool in the afternoon. But Kibbutz Mei Ami didn't even have a pool! It didn't

have anything at all.

Mei Ami was next to an Arab village called Umm al-Fahm, which is now a city. It was some way in the distance, but we did go there to have a cup of coffee with the residents of the village one day. The conditions there were very basic. I might have complained about the conditions on our kibbutz, but theirs were much worse.

I didn't really have a love life at the kibbutz. I knew that I only wanted to stay for a year and I definitely did not want to make Aliyah (immigration to Israel). Even though I had a little liaison with an Israeli man, I knew that it wasn't going to come to anything and I wasn't interested in the English men from our group.

When I went to Israel it was after the Six Day War (5-10 June 1967), but I wasn't concerned about the security issues. It just didn't bother me. The news was always heard loud and clear on the bus radios. My Hebrew was not good, but I got the gist of it – either the soldiers returned or a number was given of how many died. A feeling of joy or sadness was transmitted throughout the bus.

Towards the end of the year, the soldiers running the kibbutz, who were all about 21, decided that us volunteers should go on patrol with a gun. But my friend Linda Oriel and I refused. It was the norm for Israelis to handle guns, but it wasn't for us, and the thought of it made me uncomfortable.

So, because we wouldn't do this, the soldiers decided to expel us from the kibbutz! I argued with them about the expulsion, and I said that I would be

OK as my brother-in-law, Maurice, had a good friend in Israel, who would take me in. However, I said that Linda Oriel didn't know a soul and were they really going to just deposit her at the end of the road with nowhere to go? And so, after that discussion, the soldiers arranged for us to go to another kibbutz which was much larger, and our job was to pick cotton in their huge fields. We did that for a month or so.

At the end of the year's Shnat Sherut programme, it was the Winter. I didn't like the idea of going back to a cold England, so I decided to stay for another six months. Linda and I got a bedsit at Beit Brodetsky, a place where olim (new immigrants) lived, in Ramat Aviv near Tel Aviv. It was owned by the Jewish Agency (Sochnut) and some of our other friends from the programme also decided to live there for a while. I got a job quite easily at Steimatzky, the bookshop, in their head office at the bus station.

Before we came back to London, Linda and I decided to have a beach holiday in Naharia, in the North of Israel. We then started our long journey home, first on a boat and then on a train via Marseilles and Paris and the last leg of the journey was from Calais to Dover.

On the boat we met a fellow called Noah – he was from Indian extraction and in the Israeli Navy. He was the type that befriended everyone, and he was going to America via the UK.

I phoned my parents and I said that I was going to bring this fellow home to stay for a few days before

he went to America. There wasn't any romance. I liked his personality and thought that because he was a Jew, I should be hospitable to him. I can still remember my mum's face when we arrived. She just couldn't believe that I had brought a man from Indian extraction home with me! Today mum's reaction would have been seen as totally unacceptable, but her response was quite normal for someone of her age in those times!

When Noah stayed with us, I took him to a pub. I'd never been in a pub before. It was completely alien to me – there were lots of people drinking. Today in most pubs you can have a meal, but back then, in the majority of pubs all you could do was drink. I was just as much a visitor to the pub as Noah was! We didn't keep in touch but meeting him was an interesting experience!

CHAPTER SIX

Returning Home

I got my first car soon after I arrived home – it was a yellow mini. I called the colour ‘shitty yellow’. I really loved that car. I didn’t want to go all the way up into London every day, so I got a job as a secretary in a company called Shibaden, which was part of Hitachi, and the office was located in Hendon Central. It was quite an interesting time to work for a company that produced TVs as well as other equipment. On 21st July 1969 Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon and I watched the coverage at work.

Life marched on and I settled back into British life quite quickly. Sometimes I would go to dances in the evenings, or to my friend Phillippa’s house – she was married and had two children by then.

I hadn’t met anyone romantically. I wasn’t bothered by it, but my mother was! She wanted me to ‘find someone’ and settle down. Helen also had two

children by then – Richard and Howard. It was a nice experience being an aunt!

Then one day in December 1970, my mother woke me up in the middle of the night because she thought my father had died. I remember quite clearly looking in my wardrobe for something to wear, and it was a bit weird, because the first thing I thought to myself was – ‘Should I wear these black trousers and top?’ If he was dead I would have to wear black but if he was alive I could wear something else. She called Dr Shah, our doctor, who lived at the end of the road and he came straight away. In those days you could just call your doctor like that. When he arrived, he pronounced my father dead.

My mother told me later what happened. My father woke up and he said to her that he didn't feel well – in retrospect it could have been chest pains – and she went downstairs to get some Andrews, for indigestion. When she came back, he had already passed away. It was later confirmed that he had suffered a heart attack.

And then the Jewish way of mourning took over. I was an onlooker; I just took part in what was happening around me. Everyone was upset at the news of my father's passing. My Uncle Moshe, my mother's brother, was assigned to go to my workplace to tell them that I was not going to work during the shiva (mourning) week. It was felt that it was better if he did that in person.

Women didn't go to levoyas (funerals) then, so we sat at our home whilst it was taking place. There were no men at the levoya who were sitting shiva

(directly mourning) as my father had only sisters and daughters.

I suffered a lot afterwards and I often think that if I had gone, it would have been difficult and I would have been a mess, but I would have gotten over the shock of my father's passing quicker. The grief never really got out of my system – I used to cry myself to sleep thinking about it – even after I got married. Even now, when I think about that time, I am tearful.

It was just me and my mother in the house after that. My mother was naturally gregarious in company, but obviously she grieved, just as I did, in private.

She didn't drive and she would never dream of getting a taxi – that was too alien to her – so I would always take her wherever she wanted to go. If I was going out in the evening, to friends or to a dance, I would take her to see her friends and they would play Kalooki, a card game. I would pick her up on my way home – she didn't mind what time I returned. But sometimes I came back too early and would have to sit and wait until she had finished her game of cards before we could leave!

Before my father died, my parents booked a holiday with Helen and Maurice. But after his passing it was decided that I should go in my father's place. On the holiday, Richard or Howard (I can't remember which one it was but they were both very young) asked me to go to the toilet with him and he pulled his pants down and I thought – what do I do next? As I didn't have a brother, I had absolutely no idea what to do with a boy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Meeting My Husband, Malcolm

The next big event in my life was meeting my husband, Malcolm. Here is the story – I do apologise because it is a bit long-winded! Malcolm was friends with a guy called Barry Manning, who he met at a charity committee; he lived in Old Bedford Road in Luton and Malcolm started to go with him to watch Luton Town Football Club. Barry lived with his parents, two doors away from Helen and Maurice. Barry's grandfather died and Maurice used to go to make up a minyan (the quorum of ten men needed for a Jewish prayer service to take place) during the shiva week.

Barry and Maurice weren't friends per se – they were very different characters – but Maurice did the right thing and, as a thank you, when Barry married

Lynda in 1972, Helen and Maurice were invited. As one of Barry's closest friends, Malcolm, of course, went as well and they put him at the same table as Helen and Maurice because as Malcolm and Maurice both supported Luton Town Football Club they had something in common.

So, it was at the wedding that Maurice and the now Lynda Manning discussed whether Malcolm and I might be a good match and they concocted this plan for Malcolm and I to go on a blind date. In fact, at first Maurice suggested that I go out with Lynda's brother but she did not think that this was a good idea because he lived in Birmingham and it would have been impractical. However, Malcolm lived near me in North Finchley so that sounded more promising.

I guess then Maurice spoke to Malcolm about the idea and somehow an arrangement was made that I met Malcolm at the launch of Michael Freedland's, new biography of the singer Al Jolson. Michael was one of Maurice's closest friends and I already had a ticket to go with my mother to the event but it was decided that Malcolm should go in my mother's place. (I suppose she was quite happy to give it up for a date for her aging daughter!)

The event was on 14th October. I remember the date because afterwards Malcolm told me that it was a week after his birthday. It was arranged that we were going to meet in the bar at the Cumberland Hotel beforehand, which coincidentally, about 25 years later, was the hotel where my eldest daughter Jackie had her wedding party. I had a little disagree-

ment with Maurice en route to the Cumberland. He wanted me to go into the hotel by myself because he needed to drop off some spare tickets to a nurses' home. I said that there was absolutely no way that I was going into the hotel by myself, so in the end we all went in together. I was not happy that I had been told that I had to go on this date and was not given a choice about it. There were various people who I knew at the bar – friends of Helen and Maurice but when I saw Malcolm sitting there, I said to myself 'Not bad!' He had dark hair and I much preferred men with dark hair.

Malcolm said that he would give me a lift to the cinema, in his yellow Clan sports car, where there was a special showing of the original black and white Al Jolson film *The Jazz Singer*. I wasn't excited by the car, like other girls might have been, but it did amuse me! He had come down specially to meet me from Washington, near Newcastle, where he had been visiting his client, Clan (which explains how he got the car). Knowing Malcolm as I do now, he probably didn't think that much of the long drive, but I was quite impressed at the time! After the cinema we went to have a coffee with the rest of the group. He then took me home and we arranged to meet again.

So, it was either the second or third date that Malcolm said that he would take me out for dinner. But he said that it would be best if I met him at The Motor Show at Earl's Court because he was working there and so he arranged for his friends, Jennifer and Laurie Hartman, to pick me up and take me. It

was quite bizarre really – I hardly knew the guy and he was getting his friends, who I didn't know at all, to pick me up for a date! Actually, they were very nice and they really put me at ease on the drive up to Earl's Court (Jennifer and Laurie divorced many years later).

The Motor Show certainly wasn't a place that I would have chosen to go to, but it was an experience – all these things are experiences! It was a very practical arrangement for Malcolm. It meant that he could work and then go on a date, which is typical of him – looking at the logistics of the situation without taking other factors into account! But I guess I was quite comfortable with that arrangement, otherwise we might not have been able to meet for a couple of weeks. He was obviously quite keen because he dropped somebody else to see me!

I think the next date after that was at the cinema and it was quite unusual because my future parents-in-law turned up! I'm still not sure if that was just a coincidence or whether they came on purpose to check me out. But I don't remember them saying that they went to the cinema again!

We saw each other once or twice a week from then on. At one time, Malcolm was phoning me every day at work and I thought 'What's going on here? Why does he keep on phoning me for nothing?' I was probably quite naïve about the situation. I didn't realise that he was smitten!

Over Christmas, Malcolm went on a pre-arranged holiday with his brother Warren. When he came back, on New Year's Eve, he proposed. As I under-

stand it, Malcolm asked Warren to be his Best Man whilst he was on holiday, before he proposed to me! I was quite shocked when he asked me. I certainly wasn't expecting it and I said that I would need to think about it. Malcolm didn't get upset or despondent about that and he just came back the next day and asked me again and I said, 'Yes'.

One of the things that attracted me to Malcolm was his hands. I liked his hands. But also, I guess I just felt comfortable with him. I wanted a man who was going to look after me and I just trusted my instinct. It is true that he has looked after me all these years and so I definitely made the right decision!

We had our engagement party at Helen and Maurice's house and the arrangements for the wedding just sort of happened around me. It was decided that, before we got married, my mum should move from Crooked Usage. She needed to be less reliant on me to take her out and about and therefore having better public transport links and being nearer to the shops became much more important for her. So, my mother and I moved to a two-bedroomed flat in Charlton Lodge, Temple Fortune, six months before my wedding. I think that was a good idea because she got used to her new surroundings before I left.

Malcolm and I got married at Kinloss United Synagogue in Finchley on 2nd December 1973. We chose Kinloss because it was in a good location, was a suitable size and it also had a function hall for the party. I got my wedding dress from Losner's in Stamford Hill, on 'first hire and return'. This meant I had

the dress made specifically for me, I wore it and then returned it to the shop for other brides to hire. My only requirement for the dress was that I wanted a train because it was the only day when I would ever wear one.

Rabbi Abrams, who was the Rabbi from Neasden Federation Synagogue where Malcolm grew up and was a member, married us. He was a very nice man. At our wedding, he met the old Reverend of Ruislip United Synagogue – Reverend Wilner. He was now living in Wembley and told Rabbi Abrams about an opening at Wembley United and that if he applied for the job he would be ‘favourably looked upon’ and later he got the job. I have always wanted to make a shidduch (a match that leads to a couple getting married) and this was as near as I have got! At this time, it was unusual for a rabbi to move from a Federation synagogue to a United one, although they are both orthodox synagogues.

The wedding day was mostly a happy one for me, like it is for everyone getting married but I was sad that my father wasn’t there with me. It seemed natural for me to ask Maurice to walk me down the aisle – I didn’t have any brothers and he was my nearest male relative. I had known him since I was 15 and he had always treated me like a sister.

Malcolm investigated the destination for the honeymoon intensely – it was very much pre-internet and he spent hours looking through holiday brochures. In the end, we went for a week’s holiday in Majorca – not exactly exotic but he’s made up for it since!

We got to the hotel and there was a bit of a kerfuffle with the booking and it took a while to find the room but when we got there Malcolm said, 'Pick up your bags! We are not staying here!' I hadn't noticed it, but the beds were 'L' shaped and he wasn't having any of that! So, we changed rooms!

During the honeymoon Malcolm decided that we should go to the airport to look at the aeroplanes and he also took us on a walk around the town to inspect the parked sports cars! I just went along with his unusual behaviour. I realise that Malcolm sometimes does things a bit differently, but I'm used to it and it all seems quite normal now! The sports cars and aeroplanes were really quite interesting!

When we came back from honeymoon we lived with my mother for a few weeks whilst our house was being decorated. We had bought a three-bed house in Corringham Road, Wembley, just before we got married. We looked everywhere for a house and in the end our home was found by my Aunt Theresa. It belonged to a friend of hers, who was moving. We liked the house and it was in an area that fitted our criteria – it had a reasonable sized Jewish community and good transport links.



Linda Darnell - The film star who I was named after



My parents' wedding – 28th June 1939



Me - c 1947



Me and my sister Helen - c 1947



Me and my sister, Helen, and my father - 1948



Me and my father – 1959



Me and Phillippa Kaye – 1960



Me - 1960



Me - 1962



Mum and I at Kibbutz Mei Ami - 1968



Our engagement party – 1972



Me together with Mum and my nephews
Richard and Howard – 1973



Our wedding - 2nd December 1973



Our daughter Jackie with our parents – 1974



Going on holiday with two young children – 1977



Working in our office in Caddington Close - 1978



1. Our children Jackie, Sharon and Paul - 1980



A family holiday in Israel - 1984



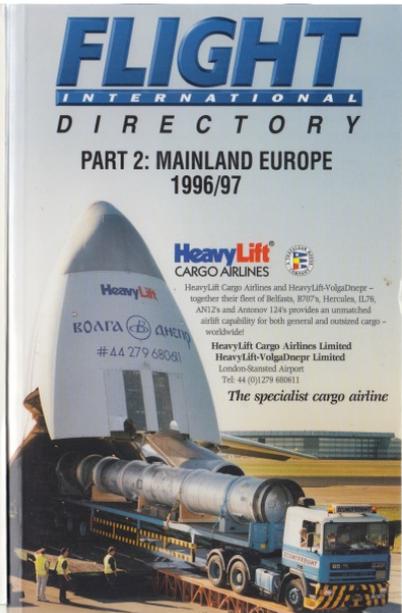
With mum and the children outside her flat in
Charlton Lodge – 1985



The Avenue - 1986



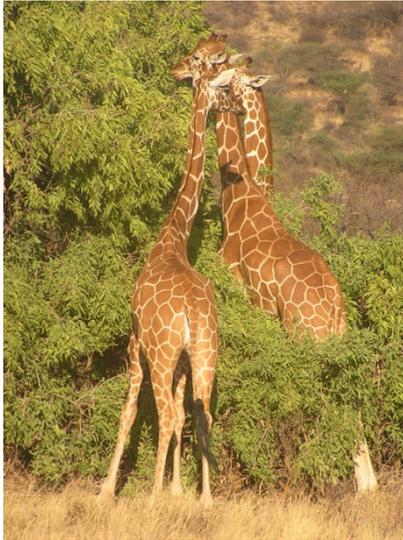
Our son, Paul's, Barmitzvah - July 1992



UK and European flight directories - 1996-98



Me with Jake - My first Grandchild 2001



Safari in Kenya - 2001



With mum at her 90th Birthday in The Ritz – 2005



Family gathering - 2006



Malcolm's 60th just after Gabriella, our first Granddaughter, was born - October 2007



Our Grandson Jake's Barmitzvah - 2014



Malcolm and I on a cruise ship - 2019

CHAPTER EIGHT

Starting a Family

We weren't young by the standards of those days – I was 27 and Malcolm was 31 – so we didn't bother with birth control and Jackie was born nine months and seven days after we got married.

I was still working in Hendon Central and Malcolm was working self-employed as a public relations consultant and had contracts with Clan Motor Cars and Oxford Airport. He also had the use of an office in Old Street, London. Malcolm had a secretary at the office but he didn't like the way that she did certain things, so I also started to do a bit of work for him.

I kept on falling asleep at work, so when I was about seven months pregnant, I gave in my notice – there was no such thing as maternity rights. But, in any case, I wasn't thinking about going back to work.

The pregnancy went along quite undramatically. I

do remember feeling sick and exhausted one evening and we were supposed to be going out and Malcolm insisted that we did. It was probably better that way because when I went out, I didn't think about being sick and exhausted.

All the people I knew went private, but I spoke to my doctor, Dr Faith, who had been Malcolm's GP when he lived in Neasden, and he said that the local hospital at Northwick Park had a new maternity wing and it was just as good as anything private, so I decided to have my baby there.

I went for a check-up on 9th September 1974 and they told me to stay. I phoned Malcolm and asked him to come. They induced me but, when Malcolm arrived at the hospital, they asked him to wait outside and then forgot about him. I was plutzing (beside myself) because I didn't know where he was and I was angry as I thought he was taking too long to get to the hospital. Eventually, he did come in, but he didn't look down the other end! During the labour Warren, also came for a short time – to support Malcolm! He stood outside my room!

It was a quite straightforward birth and there were no complications. As soon as our baby was born Malcolm rushed out to phone Tom, Dick and Harry and then he came up to the ward to see me! The baby was taken straight to the nursery as soon as she was born as that was the normal thing to do in those days.

Our daughter, Jackie Michelle, was named after my father, Jack, and Michelle was after the Beatles song 'Michelle, Ma Belle', because that was the song

that Malcolm heard on the radio on the way to the hospital the next day.

Jackie was an easy baby. She had a rounded face and I think it was that made her very beautiful. When I went to see Dr Faith, for Jackie's first check-up and immunisations, I remember that he said that she was socially aware. It was an interesting observation because she is socially aware to this day.

I had a maternity nurse, who slept over when I returned from hospital. I must have had post-natal depression (although I didn't know it was called that at the time). and I said to Malcolm that I thought the nurse was poisoning the baby and Malcolm said, 'I think I'll stay home today.' He was a calming influence for me and, somehow, after that day my feelings about the nurse went away.

Along with the use of an office in Old Street, Malcolm also had an office at home which was unusual at the time. However, it was quite normal for me to live in a home with an office because that is what my father did. Malcolm would also often go out for meetings and so motherhood could sometimes be a bit isolating. I remember on one occasion Malcolm had been out all day and when he came back, I said, 'I haven't spoken to a soul all day'.

But I did try and get out and about a bit. Unlike today, synagogues didn't have mother and baby groups, so I went to a church group where I was greeted by a priest which I found a bit strange. My friend Jennifer and her sister Patricia had girls of a similar age and from time to time I would meet up

with them. I would also meet up with my school friend Phillipa.

It is interesting that at that time I bottle-fed Jackie – that was the thing to do. But by the time my youngest, Paul, came along, which was only four and a half years later, I would have been embarrassed not to have tried breast-feeding. The thinking behind the way in which you fed your baby had changed dramatically in that short time and it seemed as if everyone was breast-feeding.

Like many people in the Jewish community, I employed Nurse Evans to come and give me some advice about how to look after and feed my baby. She would come to the house, weigh Jackie and give me her wisdom – it really was like the service you would want the baby clinics to give, but they don't. At first, she came once a week but after a while she came once a month.

One piece of advice she gave me was to put Jackie in her pram in the middle of the garden everyday, with a cat-net over it, to give her fresh air. I thought this was good advice and diligently followed what she said. But when, 25 plus years later, I advised my own children to do this with my grandchildren, they didn't think it was a great idea!

In the spring of 1975, Malcolm, Jackie and I went on the long drive to Plymouth because Malcolm had an interview for a public relations contract with Bill Bryce, the joint owner of Brymon Airways. Bill Bryce was a bit of a character – like the Richard Branson of his day. I guess Malcolm was a bit of a character himself, so he got on with him well. Malcolm was

given the contract and he went on working for the airline for many years.

When Jackie was about 18 months, I had a miscarriage. The baby was about 13 weeks. In the middle of the night I didn't feel well, and dialled 999. There was some sort of NHS strike and the ambulance man spent sometime investigating which hospital would accept me. When I got to the hospital, the Central Middlesex in Park Royal, they induced the baby and I had to go through a labour process. As soon as the baby came away, a feeling of relief came over me: I just felt better. There was something wrong with the baby. I didn't see the baby – I didn't want to – but I remember the nurse's face when she looked at it, which was like she was saying 'yuk'. It obviously wasn't healthy. The miscarriage didn't affect me that much. I already had Jackie. If that had been my first pregnancy, I am sure I would have felt differently about it.

Afterwards one of Malcolm's clients arranged for us to have a holiday in Tenerife. Whilst we were there, his old boss Colin Chapman, who founded Lotus Cars, died. He was 54 and died suddenly of a heart attack. But communications were not as they are today, and it was many months before we learnt of his passing.

I became pregnant again quite quickly after the miscarriage. As with Jackie in the latter stages of pregnancy every time I went to the hospital for a check-up, they asked me to bring my bag in case they thought that the baby was coming. On the 13th November 1976 I went in for my appointment and

they asked me to stay. It was quite a straightforward birth and Sharon Rachelle Ginsberg was born later that day! She was named after Malcolm's maternal Grandmother Sonya, and his paternal Aunt Ray.

Being a mother of two just seemed like the natural next stage of life and I just got on with things. Sharon was an obstinate and determined baby. At the stage where you go from having a daytime nap to staying awake all day, when I put her down to nap all she would do was scream and scream. So that was it. No more daytime naps for Sharon! She had made that decision!

I didn't really have a clue with babies and children. I thought that all babies were the same, but Sharon was very different to Jackie. I didn't think I would employ Nurse Evans again, but I decided to because Sharon kept on spewing up food when I started to feed her and I didn't know what to do! I wasn't what you would call 'a natural mum' – it didn't all come instinctively.

Financially, things were harder, and Malcolm wasn't earning as much as he would have liked. I said if the worst came to the worst he could be a mini-cab driver or something like that, but he said that he wouldn't have been satisfied until he made a success of what he was doing.

However, things picked up and after Sharon was born, we moved into a new four bed detached house in Caddington Close, New Barnet. We needed more space because Malcolm wanted to work full-time from home as he preferred not to travel into his Old

Street office. Again, we chose a house that was near a Jewish community and had good transport links.

I guess Malcolm was well aware that the house had extension potential, because he always thinks of that sort of thing. So, a couple of years later we had an extension on top of the garage which gave us an extra bedroom and also a bigger office so that Malcolm could have space to employ a secretary. The person he recruited was called Wendy Long and she worked for him for about 20 years until she decided to retire to France with her husband. Malcolm's workload was increasing, and I obviously had the children to look after, so it made sense to employ someone in addition to me.

We had a bedroom that wasn't being used which I thought was a bit superfluous and it made me think about having a third child. I was worried about the amount of extra cooking that it would entail and so spoke to my friend Phillippa, who had three children, about my concerns. She said to me, 'One more doesn't really make a difference' and Malcolm was quite happy to go along with this idea and so on 31st May 1979 our third child, Paul Michael, was born, again at Northwick Park Hospital. I had two births there with no complications, so felt that I wanted my third child to be born there. When I had Jackie, as I said, Northwick Park was a brand-new hospital but by the time Paul was born it was actually in need of a deep clean – there was dirt all over the skirting boards. But I was happy to have him there and again Paul's birth was quite straight-forward and

there were no complications.

Malcolm was extremely pleased to have a boy. I guess he thought he could go to football matches with him! He did try to encourage Paul throughout his childhood, but in the end Jackie was much more interested in football than Paul ever was. Even Sharon had more interest in football than Paul!

He was named Paul because we liked the name. I saw that my nephew, Richard, struggled to learn to write his name, so I wanted a short one. The middle name – Michael, was after Malcolm's aunt's husband – Mick, who had recently died. Paul was quite amenable as a baby – being the youngest, he did of course, have to fit in with Jackie and Sharon's routine, so in that way he had to just go along with what everyone else was doing.

Jackie started to go to the nursery school at Salcombe Preparatory School in Southgate and Sharon started soon afterwards. When it came to Paul's turn, Oxford and St George's, a Jewish nursery, had opened in Whetstone, so he went there.

Malcolm was, as I said, working for Brymon, which flew relatively short distances. However, he always liked to take advantage of working for an airline and if he was going somewhere, sometimes he would take us and we would make a weekend of it. We went to Plymouth, Newquay, the Isles of Scilly and we stayed quite a few times at the St Pierre Park Hotel in St Peter Port, Guernsey. We also went to Israel because Malcolm was working for a British airline called Monarch who flew there. They were nice times and it was very enjoyable.

CHAPTER NINE

The Children Grow

When Jackie was about nine and Sharon was about seven, we decided to move the girls from Salcombe to Littlegrove – the local state primary. We weren't happy with Salcombe. Sharon's handwriting was an issue and they said that they didn't have time to deal with it. They also were trying to move Jackie up a year because she was a September baby but I didn't think that moving her up would be good for her. I didn't like their attitude. Paul was due to start primary that year so all three children went to Littlegrove, although for various reasons, they didn't stay there long.

One year, when Sharon was about eight, we went on holiday to Spain (or it could have been Ibiza). Malcolm and I went down for dinner and left Jackie in charge of Sharon and Paul – it was considered

quite a reasonable thing to do at that time. Jackie called us in the middle of the meal to tell us that Sharon had hit her head in the bathroom and we came back to check on her. She was bleeding and there was a small cut – if it had been anywhere else, she might have needed stitches but her hair covers any scars. Children injure themselves all the time so I thought nothing of it. Sharon thinks that this injury caused her epilepsy, which she was diagnosed with many years later although I'm not so sure because it wasn't a major fall.

In 1986 we decided to move again. Malcolm's office in Caddington Close was next to Jackie's bedroom and this was creating tension within the house as Malcolm wanted quiet and Jackie, as a growing teenager, did not comply with his wishes!

Malcolm's business was also expanding, and we wanted to have more people working in the office. So, we decided that we should move to a place where the office could be separate from the children, and we found a house that we liked in Potters Bar – 4 The Avenue. It was a house built in the 1930s which needed quite a bit of work doing to it. Again, the area had good transport links and it also had a small Jewish community. As soon as we moved, we started building an extension to the side of the house with two large offices and a kitchenette.

Literally as the extension was finished, Jackie had her batmitzvah. On the Saturday morning of this special weekend, whilst we were in synagogue, the workmen came in to fit the windows to the new extension. It was so stressful! For her batmitzvah

Jackie did a course with a few other girls and, on the Sunday, there was a ceremony at Barnet United Synagogue where she talked about what she had learnt. After the ceremony we had a tea party at home. I very much enjoyed our children's bar and bat mitzvot – they were an excellent excuse for family and friends to get together, which I think is especially important.

Before we had even decided to move to Potters Bar, we moved Paul to Lochinver Preparatory School, which happened to be in Potters Bar. I moved him from Littlegrove because I felt that he was a sweet quiet boy, who liked to please and at Littlegrove he would stay at the back of the class and wouldn't push himself forward.

Going to Lochinver gave him a certain amount of confidence. It was through Lochinver that I met my friend, Barbara Silver, whose son Simon (who later became a Rabbi) was also at the school. Sharon changed schools and went to Stormont Primary School, which was private, in Potters Bar. Littlegrove was now too far to travel at her age. Jackie moved to Queen Elizabeth Girls' School, a state secondary school in Barnet. I thought Jackie would benefit from a girls' school because her attention would not be diverted by the boys!

Life was busy with three children, a husband, a house and a full-time job working for Malcolm. If everyone around me is content then I'm content – I'm quite easy going really and I just try and find an interest in the things that are going on around me.

One day, when Paul was about eight, he came

into our bedroom in the middle of the night and said that he had a pain in his tummy. Fortunately, Malcolm was at home and he took him to Barnet General after we initially called a doctor who didn't come. I decided that it would be better if Malcolm took him because if I went to the hospital and Paul needed to be carried in, I wouldn't be able to do it. Paul had an emergency appendix removal operation that night. He made an excellent quick recovery.

CHAPTER TEN

Working Life

Malcolm started an aviation directory business in 1978, when we were still in Wembley. It started because he had a conversation with the publisher of the magazine *Flight*, who had previously published an aviation directory and basically Malcolm said that he would do it for them. He had no experience with that type of thing, but he just thought that he could do it! There was the *Flight Directory of British Aviation* and he also published the *Flight Directory of European Aviation*. They were published in alternate years and both became bibles of the industry and were very successful.

I did a great deal of work for them: typing the information and then proofreading it. When I started, I worked on a typewriter, then as technology changed, I worked on an electronic typewriter and eventually I used a computer.

It did not occur to me to not assist Malcolm in work. There wasn't anything else that I wanted to do. Whatever Malcolm asked me to do, workwise, I did – although sometimes I argued the point! I guess if he didn't think I was good at something he wouldn't ask me to do it again! He looked after me and I looked after him. That is the way our marriage works. It also meant that I could work from home, when it suited me. Nowadays you would call it 'flexible working' and a lot of times I worked in the evenings late into the night. It was difficult to sit down and do nothing at home because there was always some work to do.

It was in the days before the internet and we used to send out thousands of forms to people asking them to confirm their information, which was then listed in the book. The postman used to come in a van every day with sacks of mail and some days I would spend the whole day opening the post.

The production process for the books changed dramatically over the years. When we first started, we used to send the printer our typed sheets and they would have to typeset all the information.

Then at some point, when we lived in Barnet, we started using a different process. We would save all the information onto a floppy disk and initially we took and later posted this disk to a specialist company in Somerset. There I would see the information from the disk go into their machines and a proof of the book would come out of their printers on a roll of shiny paper. The proof looked like photographs of each page of the book. It really did

revolutionise things for us because it meant that the printer didn't have to retype all our work.

When we were living in New Barnet, we started inputting the data onto a database, called Cardbox. Later, when we lived in Potters Bar, we employed Susan Simms to do the programming work for the book. We produced the last directories in 2001/02 and we printed 2,500 copies which sold for about £80 each. There was no such thing as Amazon and people either bought the book directly from us or through specialist bookshops like Foyles or airport shops via our publisher. We sold the rights to the directories back to *Flight*, but they never printed any more editions and the information in the books became accessible only online.

Malcolm was always up-to-date with modern technology. Initially, we had something called the 'Superbrain'. It was a computer – a screen and keyboard all in one machine. After that, the next big change was having a mouse. I remember saying to Malcolm when I saw one 'it would never last! Fancy calling it a mouse. It sounds ridiculous!' How wrong I was!

We used to have a telex machine in the office in New Barnet, and when a message came in from abroad it used to ring a bell and wake everyone up! Malcolm was working for a Japanese airline called All Nippon Airways (ANA), at the time, so that happened quite often.

Indeed, communication has changed vastly in my lifetime. I remember seeing a mobile phone in about 1988, when they were building the runway at London

City Airport. Malcolm took me there because Brymon were heavily involved in the project and a colleague had a mobile phone – it was the size of a brick! I was slightly amazed by the technology! (In 2017 Malcolm would go on to write a book *London City Airport – 30 Years Serving the Capital*).

There was also the time when Malcolm was on a flight somewhere and he had a mobile phone with him. He took a 'selfie' and whilst on board sent the photo to a journalist at *The Times* which they published because it was such an innovative thing to do!

Another mobile phone story that happened to me was when at around this time, when Malcolm went on a press trip to Las Vegas with Richard Branson on Virgin Atlantic. Richard Branson had given all the journalists a Virgin mobile phone with credit on it and Malcolm decided to call me whilst sitting by the pool! I was quite startled! He never usually phoned me from abroad because of the cost of an overseas call was so expensive.

I used to attend some functions for Malcolm's public relations business. When I first got married, I was very shy in making conversation with someone at these events. But as I grew older, I didn't think twice about it. I have been entertained by wonderful celebrities at these events including Sophia Loren, Andrea Bocelli, Cleo Laine, John Dankworth, and even the Queen and other royals (though they never saw me!).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Children Grow Some More

Jackie was a challenging child sometimes! I remember watching a video of her on a holiday in Guernsey, when she was about eight, and I saw her make her way forward so that she was right at the front of the shot. It was quite typical! It is good really – that type of go-getting attitude has got her where she is today – a team leader at Jewish Care. But it was sometimes difficult for a mother to deal with!

Sharon, as I said, was determined, obstinate and, also stubborn. She was very different to Jackie and I found that difficult. If Sharon didn't want something, she wouldn't have it and that was it. I thought that she looked nice in blue but she didn't and that was that – there was no talking her round – she never

wore blue. Of course, she was right, because I realise now that blue doesn't go with her dark hair and olive skin colour.

When we were considering secondary schools for Sharon, we went to look around Queen Elizabeth's in Barnet and a teacher came up to Sharon and said 'Oh, you are Jackie's sister?' – and that was the end of that – there was no way she was going there! She didn't want to be known as 'Jackie's sister' (Although we did try and get her in because it was easy to get there by bus). But that determination and sticking up for what she believes in has also been useful in Sharon's life because she has been quite ill with mental health problems and epilepsy, but she won't let it get the better of her.

Paul was quite precocious, but he was a sweet-natured child. He went to City of London School for Boys for his secondary education and unfortunately some boys bullied him. I'll never know whether we sent him to the right school – but considering his nature maybe whatever school he went to he would have got bullied. Sharon went to Chancellors School in Brookmans Park and then to the sixth form of St Albans School for Boys in the sixth form. The whole thing of trying to figure out which secondary school was best for each child was very stressful!

Paul also went to the chedar (Sunday School) at Potters Bar. For his barmitzvah we hired a marquee for the garden. As the Potters Bar synagogue was too small for the number of guests that we wanted, the marquee was used for the service on the Saturday. On the Sunday, it was used for the party – it was a black-tie affair. Malcolm did most of the

organising for the barmitzvah – he was good at that type of thing – although I did put in my ‘two pennies’ worth when I thought it was appropriate! Malcolm and I thoroughly enjoyed the occasion and have great memories and photos of the weekend.

We had some very nice holidays: America, Israel, the Isles of Scilly, Guernsey and the last family holiday we had – when Jackie was 18 – was to Australia. Malcolm was working for ANA and he managed to get five tickets to Australia as part of his contract. On the way back from this trip I stopped off in Tokyo for a couple of days with the children without Malcolm as he had to go straight back for an important meeting.

One of the highlights of the Australia trip was walking along the beach with Sharon. It was just a special moment. Another memory was going into a museum and they displayed things that were from my childhood – kitchen equipment and the like. It was quite bizarre to think that my life was now becoming part of history.

Because the children were getting older, we knew that it would be the last time we would be together on holiday as a family unit, so I was really pleased that we were able to do it. Since then we have been on holiday together as a larger family unit – with the children and grandchildren.

My mother and my in-laws always played an important part in our lives and helped out when they could. Often, we went to my in-laws for Sunday tea and they used to come to us on High Holy Days. I always had a respectful relationship with my in-laws. We had similar values – family was all important.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Kids Fly the Nest

When Jackie was 18 (in 1993) she went to Derby University to study Drama Therapy. She had a very good careers advisor who found the course for her. It was quite difficult for me – all of a sudden, I didn't have day-to-day involvement in my child's life. Although she didn't have a mobile phone (because they were not in common use at the time), I did speak to her regularly and she did come home to watch football matches, but it was a big change and I had to acclimatise to it.

Whilst Jackie was at university, she had a lot of problems with her skin and I took her to a specialist hospital in London. I remember going up on the train and trying to hold back my tears because I was so upset about her situation. It was quite traumatic –

the doctor tried to find a space on her back where it wasn't blotchy and itchy to put a plaster to do a skin allergy test and it was almost impossible. He just about managed to do it – she was simply covered with red blotches. Her skin is now much better than it used to be, and she knows how to deal with it when it does flare up.

Sharon left for university two years after Jackie and went to Lancaster University to study Psychology – it was a long journey to visit her! I already had one child at university, so the second child leaving was not as hard. I just got used to the different stages in life – the changes happen and then after a while they become the norm. As one thing finishes another starts and Malcolm always has a way of keeping me busy.

One day, after Paul had left secondary school, he took Malcolm and I into the TV room and asked us to sit down because he had something to say. I can't remember his exact words, but basically, he said 'I'm gay'. It wasn't something that a parent wanted to hear because it was so hard to be gay. In those days (although it was not so long ago) you couldn't have children if you were gay and there was still a lot of stigma attached to it. People went to prison for being gay when I was a child.

For Malcolm and I, it was a big thing to come to terms with but for Jackie and Sharon, because they are of a different generation, it was a nothing. It did take us a long time to process the news but, in the end, we just said, 'so be it' and I think it does make

a huge difference that, eventually, Paul married someone who is Jewish because Eli, his husband, who is a lovely person, makes Paul very happy and fits in with the family well.

In the summer of 1997, we were in Lisbon on holiday with my mother and Jackie when Warren phoned in the middle of the night and said that my mother-in-law was very ill, and that Malcolm should come home immediately. He, of course, went straight home, and my mother-in-law passed away later that day. Unfortunately, she died before Malcolm got to the hospital. It was my birthday. Sharon was in India at the time, travelling with a friend, so we didn't tell her until she came back. She took it badly when we told her at the airport after her flight back.

After my mother-in-law passed, my father-in-law lived with us for a short while and then he moved into Nightingale House – a Jewish care home, near Wandsworth, South London. It was a long journey for Warren and Malcolm to get to, so eventually my father-in-law moved to Waverly Manor in Finchley – a home run by the organisation Jewish Care. I don't think he was as contented there, but he was getting older and frailer; he wasn't a happy man after my mother-in-law died – she did everything for him. He passed away about a year later.

Jackie finished her degree and I was very proud of her and then she came to live at home again. One day she had an appointment at the dentist – and she hates the dentist – it is her worst place and he wanted her to relax, so he said, 'What are you doing now Jackie?' and she said that she was looking for

a job and she explained about her background and then he told her about the youth worker position at West London Synagogue. Eventually, she was interviewed by Rabbi Hugo Gryn, the great Rabbi and holocaust survivor, and she got the job. She didn't know that much about him, but she realised that she was in the presence of someone great. The following week, he passed away.

Paul was at university at around this time but decided not to continue with it. It turned out he was quite depressed, but I didn't realise what was going on at the time and I'm not sure that I would have known how to deal with it. I didn't mind that he didn't have a degree – neither Malcolm nor I had been to university, after all. He never moved back home afterwards, although he always had a bedroom in our house if he wanted to use it.

When all the children had left home Malcolm and I didn't argue so much – there was less to argue about! We went on some nice holidays – just Malcolm and me. One of my favourites was going on a safari in Kenya. I wasn't expecting to particularly enjoy the trip because I'm not very into animals, but it was exceptionally memorable. We went for ten days to three different lodges.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Kids Settle Down

Jackie married Mike Kramer on 16th July 2000 at West London Synagogue. Of course, it was a big moment, something very special. It was the natural course of things and I was happy for her. Family life was important to Mike's family and I was pleased that she was marrying into a family that shared those values.

On 25th July the following year, my first grandson, Jake, was born and he was the apple of my eye! He was a ventouse delivery (suction device to assist birth), and it meant that he was in hospital for longer than the other babies born on the same day. I felt for the other new mums who went home pretty quickly after their babies were born. When I gave birth to my children, I was in hospital for at least five days, but these new mums hardly got any training or space to acclimatise to their new lives. Because Jake was

in hospital slightly longer, Jackie got more care and the midwives used Jake as an 'example' to show other mothers how to bath a baby. They even have a video of it!

The baby paraphernalia – the changing mat, the toys, cot and later on the toilet seat and stool, started to fill various corners in our house – but it was nice really. Sometimes I used to pick Jake up from nursery and I would also babysit. I did what was asked of me, when I could.

We decided that we needed to move somewhere smaller in 2000 and found a new development in Potters Bar called Parkfield View. We were supposed to buy a four-bedroom house but a five-bedroom property was also available for not that much more money, so we went for that instead! Two bedrooms were used as offices, one room for us and two spare rooms for the children and grandchildren. Paul never stayed but Sharon did later when she was having an extension built to her house.

Having settled into our new home, we were looking forward to another holiday in Australia. It was the football season and Malcolm went to a football match with Warren. They had to walk from the car park to the stadium and normally, he would have no trouble keeping up with his younger brother, but this time he couldn't and he was breathless.

It was so unusual, that he went to the GP and the doctor said, 'Seems alright, but I'm not 100% sure – I'll send you to see someone.' And the consultant that he was sent to said, 'Everything seems alright, but I'm not so sure. I think you should have an

angiogram'. After reviewing the results, the doctor told us that Malcolm needed a quadruple by-pass, so we cancelled the holiday and he had the operation at The Wellington Hospital instead! I phoned my cousin Irving Taylor, who by this time was a Professor at University College Hospital, to tell him about the surgery, and told him the name of Malcolm's surgeon – Mr Yap. Irving said that Mr Yap was his registrar when he was at Southampton Hospital and that he had 'Magic Hands'. I was just so relieved that he had said that. It just made me feel so much less stressed about the whole thing. Thankfully, Malcolm made a good recovery.

At around this time, my mother decided to move from her flat in Charlton Lodge to a warden-controlled flat in North Finchley. It needed less maintenance and was smaller than her flat in Temple Fortune.

The next significant moment was Yom Kippur – there must have been ten people who came to us to break the fast. My mother had gone to my sister. Helen phoned and said that my mother had had a stroke. I didn't say to Helen immediately that I would go over, but by the time I had got off the phone and had gone into the dining room, where everyone was sitting, I just said, 'You can all dish up. I've got to go!'

I went off to see my mum. She was semi-paralysed down her left-hand side. Mum had just been on a cruise with us and she thought that she was feeling so well that she didn't need to take her tablets. Not taking her tablets was probably the

cause of her stroke. She made a bit of a recovery but after that mum needed carers. She was 90.

Not long afterwards, on 6th April 2003, Sharon married Michael Ross at Reading Synagogue. They had been dating for a while. I remember Michael said that they didn't need to have a big party which was quite nice of him but, as I said, the truth is that I like a big party – it's a great excuse for all the family to get together. In fact, about five years later I organised a get-together for my family, which was just lovely, around 70 of us, and it wasn't even a wedding or barmitzvah!

Sharon was in a psychiatric hospital just before she got married, but the psychiatrist told me that her illness was nothing to do with the wedding and that reassured me. Still, it was quite worrying – I didn't understand why she was depressed. Michael started a new job the week before he got married which I thought was quite impressive because it meant he yhad a good work ethic.

In 2005 Jackie's second son, Alex, was born. Three days afterwards she took him to a football match! I shouldn't have been surprised that she did that, but I was! Apparently, it was an important game!

My mother was getting frailer. An outing for her at this time was going to the local Waitrose. I used to ask her if she wanted to go somewhere else for a change but she said no, she just wanted to go to Waitrose. It was enough for her. She didn't want for much. Mentally she was fine, but she couldn't fend for herself physically.

Helen took charge of all the arrangements that

were needed for mum. I think it is better if one person is in charge and Helen had experience because she had looked after her mother-in-law when she was ill. I was happy to go along with what Helen thought was best. I guess if I thought I didn't like what she was doing, I would have said something! I visited mum frequently.

Whenever I was there, I did whatever I thought needed doing, but quite often I would just fall asleep in the chair, but mum was quite happy about that. She was one of these Jewish mothers that felt like she was doing me enormous good, because she was letting me have a sleep.

Then one day she fell when getting out of the car and she needed to have a hip replacement. The operation reduced her mobility more and gradually she deteriorated and was having lots of mini-strokes.

Mum complained of having severe piles so I took her to see a consultant. When we got to the hospital she told him that she had a terrible stomach ache. I said, 'But mum, that's not why we are here' and the consultant said, 'Just one minute I'll go and get my colleague to have a look'. They decided to do an exploratory procedure to see what the matter was.

I remember very distinctly that I was driving in Hadley Wood when I spoke to my cousin Irving on the phone. He had found out about what had happened to my mother and he said to me 'You know Linda – this is not good'. The doctor said that the easiest way that you could explain what had happened to my mother was that she had had a

stroke to the bowel. There was nothing that they could do about it. She passed away just before her 95th birthday. It was the nature of things. She lived a good life and she just couldn't go on any more.

Gabriella, Sharon and Michael's first child, was born on the second day of Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, on 14th September 2007, about a month after my mother passed. She was named after her. Natan, their second child, was born on 24th May 2011 and almost exactly two years later their third child, and our fifth and last grandchild, Abigail, was born on 16th May 2013 on the second day of the Jewish festival Shavuot.

In 2012 we decided to downsize again and moved to a three-bedroom flat in Lodge Close, Edgware. I am proud of the fact that every time I have moved, I have got a new kitchen – so this was my fifth new kitchen. The idea of the flat is that we could potentially stay here until 'the end' (unless Malcolm gets itchy feet and decides that we have to move again!). It has room for a carer to live with us, if need be. But hopefully that is all a long way off!

The people that owned the flat were exceptionally good to us, because we didn't quite have all the paperwork in order to buy the flat, but they let us move in anyway, without having exchanged. They were a Jewish family and they found us honest – it was only for about three weeks but even so, I don't think we would have done that! We are very happy in our flat, as we have been in all our homes.

After all of this, the next significant moment was when Paul married Eli Kaufman on 23rd November

2014 at Finchley Reform Synagogue. It was in fact the first gay synagogue wedding in the UK and a picture of them under the chuppah even appears in a secondary school religious studies textbook!

As I said, the fact that Eli is Jewish makes a big difference, because we feel at home with him and he, I hope, can feel comfortable in our environment. Eli's family come from St Petersburg and have lived in Israel for many years. Paul met Eli in London but they have now moved to Amsterdam and have a good life there.

About a year after Abigail was born, Sharon started to get depressed again. But it was worse than the other times and she ended up in hospital again. I think her medication made her the way that she was. I really didn't like her! But thankfully, she is so much better now. She has realised that it was her epilepsy, which she was diagnosed with in 2007, that was making her depressed, so now she is trying to treat that. I think she's done very well and I'm very proud of her.

In the last few years, since we moved to Lodge Close, I became friendly with Shirley Gibbons who lives in the flat opposite. She is older than me, but we talk regularly. It reminds me of the relationship that my mother had with her much younger friend Ruth Jacobs who she often used to speak to on the phone.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Travelling

In recent years we have gone away a lot, especially on cruise ships. Much of this is because Malcolm is offered trips as he writes about his experiences in his online newsletter, *Business Travel News*. He also writes for other publications.

I realise that I do get a bit blasé about the travelling. I do like the cruising, especially because I don't have to do any cooking or cleaning. I have no responsibilities. I don't have to think. Malcolm just tells me what to do (although obviously I don't do everything he says!). I also realise that I wouldn't go anywhere if it wasn't for Malcolm organising it. There are many interesting talks on the ships – I'm not one for sitting by the pool.

At a function once we were at Malcolm said to me 'We've been offered a holiday in India but you don't want to do that, do you?' And I said 'Oh I wouldn't

say that' so we went to India. I have seen many places – and it's all been very interesting (although unfortunately, I can't remember them all) but there are still many places that I haven't visited. You have never seen everything or done everything; there is always more to life. Usually, the things that I remember about the trips are the people that I meet – like the tour guide we met in Israel on a trip in 2019. He was just so fascinating and had led such an interesting life. It's often the unexpected things that I enjoy.

We've been to Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, China, India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, the Falklands, USA, Canada, obviously Israel, various countries in South America and Europe and also extensively in the UK. It's quite a long list! Although not all our holidays are cruising – sometimes we travel more conventionally!

CHAPTER FIFTHTEEN

Twenty-Twenty

In 2020 Sharon and Michael got divorced and hopefully things will improve for them both in the future. Jackie also had a difficult time when she got alopecia, but she is also strong and taking it in her stride and I like her new look with a head scarf!

The coronavirus pandemic certainly makes this period one to remember, but the truth is that I haven't been so much affected by it. Malcolm has been home more than usual, which is quite nice. I have been able to see Jackie and Sharon and the grandchildren – although obviously not Paul, as he is in Amsterdam.

I do feel sorry for those people who live alone or have lost their jobs. My nephew, Richard, and his wife, Bonita, have become ill with Covid-19, but thankfully not seriously.

In these strange times I put my chair outside my front door and Shirley puts her chair outside hers and we have a chat that way, instead of going into each other's homes.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Grandchildren Grow

I do love my grandchildren so much and am proud of them all. They are an extremely important part of my life and they give me a lot of pleasure and sometimes aggravation!

Jake is now 19 and I do admire his steadfastness – he knows what he wants and sticks to his ideas. He hasn't had it easy, due to lack of understanding at his primary school about his dyslexia, but he is very well-adjusted. Although it would be nice, when he comes to stay here overnight, if he would fall asleep without his glasses on and without his computer on his lap!

Alex has also had his difficulties (mainly at primary school), but he is quite self-aware and exceptionally caring. He has taken an interest in sport and his own fitness and hopes to work in sports coaching in the future.

Gabriella is very adult and conscientious about her schoolwork. Natan is amazing with all his knowledge. He just reads and takes it all in. Abigail, who is now seven, is quite fun and sharp – she looked at me typing my pin number onto my phone, remembered it and then used it when I was over the next time!

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

It's Not the End!

I am getting older now! I am slowing down. I have aches and pains! I can't think properly! I can't *do* properly! It's not nice. Somebody has to come along and change the lightbulbs because Malcolm can no longer do it – he doesn't feel safe climbing up a ladder. Still, I must not complain – I have lived my threescore years and ten and really every day is a bonus. Malcolm is still working and so I am still working for him. Because everything I do is slower it takes me the same amount of time to do less work. Often, I still feel like I am 12 years old, but my bones tell me that I am a lot older!

I have now got myself a Blue Badge, which means I can park almost anywhere. What I really like about it is that I don't have to bother with the parking meters, which always confused me. And the disabled bays are wider, so it is easier to park and

get in and out of the car. Unfortunately, my walking has deteriorated which is a shame as Malcolm and I cannot go on long walks together anymore, which I used to enjoy.

There is still much more to do. It's not the end! I'd love to see all my grandchildren grow up and even have children of their own! I have been blessed to have three children and five beautiful grandchildren, who occasionally drive me mad, but are all such good human beings. Malcolm and I are very proud of them. I am grateful for every day. Perhaps my life has been sheltered in some respects, but that is how it was. I hope that there is much more to come, and I am looking forward to it!

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This is the story of Linda Ginsberg née Press – from growing up in London post-war, to marrying Malcolm; raising three children, and latterly moving to Edgware and travelling the globe. But as she says, 'It's not the end...there is much more to come!'