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HAROLD HAYMAN O.B.E

I was born in Fulham, West London in December 1918, to Phillip and Ada (nee Levene) Hayman. Phillip had been born in Jakobstadt in Latvia in 1883 and came to England in 1906. He was a twin and the last of a large family. Ada was brought to this country from Lithuania as a babe of about nine months, arriving in London in January in 1888. Her early days were spent in the "East End" in a large and very poor family. Her work before marriage was rolling cigarettes, which in those days were all hand made.

As did many of his contemporaries, Phillip went into tailoring and worked at Bradleys in Notting Hill; I am not sure how he met my mother, but they married in 1911 and lived in the Bayswater area where my sister was born. They moved to Fulham in 1917 and lived in a flat opposite his twin brother. Hence I was brought up with two cousins, one of whom was twelve months older and the other eight months younger than me.

Fulham was a Jewish backwater, but close enough to Shepherds Bush to have access to two Kosher butchers and a deli. Prayers were held in local houses until 1926 when the Fulham and Kensington Synagogue affiliated to the Federation was formed under the aegis of a wealthy professional, a lawyer by the name of Neville Laski. This was my cheder and that of my cousins. We all went to an experimental elementary L.C.C. school, which was considered the 'nice' school in the area boys and girls mixed, no rough yobbos, small classes, mistresses and not schoolmasters. It was 50 yards from Craven Cottage, the home of Fulham Football Club, and it was then that I became a supporter of that team, as I am today!

I took the Junior County Scholarship the forerunner of 11 + at the age of 10 1/5, and was awarded a scholarship to Christ's Hospital School, a Boarding School in Horsham, Sussex which, as its name implies was a Christian foundation. The dress for the boys (and today, girls), was a rough dark blue tunic and skirt with orange/yellow stockings and heavy black shoes; can you imagine the feelings of a young Jewish boy who had never left home, and who was anticipating his Bar Mitzvah (and the presents that went with it!), in a couple of years time. The outcome was that I failed the interview and joined Latymer Upper School, still one of the better independent (in those days Grant Aided), schools in London. This school, also a Church of England foundation, but one that attracted Jewish boys from a fairly large catchment area, had an enlightened Headmaster, an ordained Minister, who insisted that Jewish boys attend an after school class in religious education once a week, for which purpose he brought in a local rabbi!

After my Bar Mitzvah, at the Fulham Synagogue, I joined the Hammersmith Company of the Jewish Lads Brigade. It was here that I met one who was to become a lifelong friend, the late Sidney Spector. I was a poor cadet and my ideas of PT particularly gymnastics was



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limited to playing football for the Company. The Hammersmith Company converted into the Hammersmith Jewish Youth Club, and Sidney and I became Junior Managers, spending our 1938 summer camp at Ballard Down near Swanage, this being my first incursion into this area.

I decided on a science and maths curriculum and took the Matriculation and Higher Schools Certificate examinations; this was in the thirties, a time of great recession and, as my family was not immune from the financial problems in its train, going on to university full-time was, for me, out of the question. Consequently in 1937, I joined the firm of J Lyons & Co. as a junior chemist in their laboratories. To try to obtain a degree I enrolled at Birbeck College of the University of London, where classes were held in the evening. There were many of my age studying in this manner, but there was also a strong element of mature students and this led to my downfall, but certainly improved my Contract Bridge!

There was a very strong Jewish Social Organisation, "Young Israel Society", always known as "Y.I.", which met in Synagogue Halls. The Clubs had cultural and sporting, as well as social programmes and, since my older sister was Secretary to the National Chairman, I gravitated towards Y.I. and joined the Ealing Club. In January 1939, Y.I. sponsored a dance at the Hammersmith Town Hall in aid of German Jewish Refugees and it was here that I met Gilda. War broke out in 1939 and Sidney and I were in the first batch of conscripts for the Army; he was called up immediately, but as I was studying for a degree in Chemistry I was 'reserved' for the time being. The day after my 21st birthday, my father suffered a cerebral haemorrhage in the street and died; as his was a one man business, our family income ceased and the 35 shillings (£1.75) per week I was earning did little to augment the family funds so I obtained employment at Woolwich Arsenal at the princely wage of 250 p.a.

Gilda and I became engaged in January 1940 and later that year the bombs started dropping on London. One of these hit and destroyed Birbeck College, somewhat disrupting my degree course! - and the eventual outcome of this was that my 'reserved occupation' ceased and I was drafted into the Army. Gilda and I were married on St David's Day 1942 at Ealing Synagogue and my most vivid memory is of the fruit cake with a white cardboard cover which, because of the sugar shortage, served for icing on the wedding cake. I had five days leave from my army training, which we spent blissfully in London. In due course I was commissioned into the Royal Engineers and, prior to being posted to India, where I served until the end of the War, Gilda and I spent a second honeymoon in Bournemouth at the Avon Royal Hotel, then a kosher establishment run by a Mrs Smith, a member of the Fisher family of Shepherds Bush. After my spell in India I was transferred to Headquarters Allied Land Forces South East Asia, serving in Ceylon and Singapore as a Staff Officer. In the latter station I came across my old friend, Major Sidney Spector! Gilda had been working for Imperial Chemical Industries in London and the branch she was in required a Technical man in India. Knowing that I was in the area and that I had the knowledge for that work, they asked her if I would like to be considered for an appointment there. I was interviewed



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in Calcutta, offered a job and, when I accepted, ICI expedited my demobilisation in the UK in June 1946, with the rank of Major.

We travelled to India and arrived in Calcutta in March 1947, where we met a fairly substantial sized Jewish Community who took us under their wing. In Calcutta we had the best of all worlds; we mixed with the expatriate community in our daily round, and the indigenous Jewish community who gave us an insight into the way that the local population lived. Of course our first three year contract, which included the time of the Declaration of Indian Independence, was tough in parts; there was little in the way of air conditioning to counteract the heat and high humidity of the Bengal delta and even less in the way of money to make life more comfortable. But we were part of ICI, a paternalistic organisation, and so we were far better off than many of our contemporaries. And we had the anticipation of six months paid leave in England at the end of it.

In the ultimate, we spent nearly twenty years in India, being stationed in Calcutta and Madras, and as we became older and I became more senior life became much easier. I was the Regional Manager of during the last five years of our stay and this brought us into contact with many important people who were visiting South India. We had members of the M.C.C. touring teams staying in our house, entertained Group Captain Leonard Cheshire (founder of the Cheshire Homes), at dinner, hosted parties for the United Kingdom High Commissioner in my capacity as Chairman of the South India Branch of the United Kingdom Citizens Association, and we were presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on two occasions during her visit to Madras in 1961. It was during this spell that Gilda was elected President of the British Women's Association of Madras.

The Jewish population here consisted of two American families, a couple from Calcutta we had known when we lived there, an old German refugee and ourselves. One of the American couples, who had four children and were Reconstructionists, a right wing sect, had brought tapes of all the festival services with them and we were able to enjoy some 'yiddishkeit' in spite of the nearest synagogue being some four hundred miles away in Cochin. Gilda and I did not have any children which was in some ways a blessing, as we would not have been able to experience life in India. Those who had a young family in India found their family life disrupted, often irrevocably, when the mother left with the children to return to England for their schooling. In 1965 started to replace their expatriate staff with Indians and so I had to go. Being uncertain of our future, we decided that instead of coming back immediately to the UK, we would see the United States.

We spent 21/2 months travelling through the USA, Canada and ultimately Mexico, by bus, train and air and, when we were in Chicago I learned officially that I had become an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.). Great excitement! Also during our stay in America I was called to the UK for an interview with a potential employer, Benzole Products Ltd., and from that time we knew that I had another job! Even greater excitement!! We celebrated by upgrading our cabin on the Arcadia which brought us home



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from Acapulco via the Panama Canal, and we were back in England in mid-July. We decided to live in Chiswick, West London, an area which I knew well and where we had family and friends. The 'job' blossomed into the Managing Directorship of the company and its subsidiaries and this entailed much world wide travel. I was fortunate inasmuch that Gilda was able to accompany me on some of my journeys and that I was able to meet in business circles people who have become friends over the years, and who we see in our or their travels. In 1981 I was appointed a Commissioner of Taxes, adjudicating between the Inland Revenue and the taxpayer. In India I had undertaken extra-mural duties and wished to do something similar in England; I allowed my name to go forward as a magistrate and, in March 1968, I was sworn in as a Justice of the Peace in the Willesden Division. This was an interesting area, having within its boundaries Wembley Stadium, Kilburn with a large Irish population and many immigrants from Africa and the West Indies. In 1983 I was elected Chairman of the Division, the first Jewish Chairman in the Middlesex Area, and held the office until 1986. By this time I had retired from the Board of Benzle Producers and Gilda and I were considering selling our house with its time consuming garden and moving into a flat. But where, and we had two dachshund dogs to be housed also!?

Consequently, I did not stand for re-election at Willesden, and this was just as well because, early in 1987, after we had purchased our flat in Poole, I was diagnosed to require a heart valve transplant and a by-pass operation which was done in London. It took us nearly a year after buying our property in Branksome Towers before we ultimately sold Little Orchard in Chiswick. This, at a time when the Bank Rate was between 10 and 15%, caused us much heart burning, and so we were very pleased when we moved finally into the Bournemouth area.

We have often been asked why we chose this area for our retirement home and there are a number of reasons. During the early '70s we had a holiday flat in The Avenue in Poole and so we knew and enjoyed the locality; also Sidney and Natalie Spector were living here and they had introduced us around. Then there was the question of proximity to London, where we had both relatives and friends, and the fact that I still had contacts business and social which needed to be maintained. And, finally, we found a property which had all that we required and where the dogs were welcome!! Since moving here we are both satisfied that we made the right decision; the Bournemouth Bench accepted me until I reached the retirement age of 70 and the local Commissioners of Inland Revenue appeared pleased to have the benefit of the experience which I gained whilst I was one of their number in Kensington.

The facilities available in this conurbation leave little room for criticism and we are delighted to be here. Both of us were brought up in traditional, as opposed to orthodox, Judaism; indeed, had it been otherwise, we could not have lived in India. Consequently, when we arrived in the area and wished to join a synagogue, we were able to consider the opportunities available, and decided that in our advanced stage of life, it would be advantageous for us to do things together, whenever we wished. The Reform Synagogue



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seemed to give us this advantage and we asked to join. Truly, we cannot fault our choice; we have been made most welcome, have many new friends and hope to have many further years of happiness with the congregation.