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RACHEL SAMUELS

My story begins at the time before I was born, but the background is of importance because I feel deeply grateful in being able to enjoy the country in which I was born and brought up, from early childhood until now, when I am of an age of appreciation of all the experiences over the years I have lived freely.

My parents were born in Riga, Latvia, and came to England about 1890, at a time when many Jews left for America and England to make a better future for themselves and their families. It was a daunting experience, travelling in cold trains and crowded small ships, with little money and only hope to keep them alive. They arrived at an absorption centre and were then able to contact some relatives and were taken to a place of safety when united with them. As a very religious man my father found work with the Jewish tailors who allowed him to observe the Sabbath and Holy Days and although the wages were very little, my mother was happy to do some work too, and thus keep the home together.

After the birth of five sons my mother prayed hard for a girl and her joy was indeed great when I was born on 24th November 1906. I was able to understand and speak Yiddish from an early age as my father found it difficult to learn and speak English, but this was a bonus for me really since I sang all the songs and was able to sing to the children nearby when I was very young indeed and I was asked to care for them whilst their parents went to work. These songs live in my memory now and the records I still possess with the singers recorded so many years ago give me pleasure when I need it most. Thus I grew up to look up to those who could teach me everything I could grasp and have tried my utmost to make the most of life in all phases.

My two eldest brothers went to the Jewish Free School in the East End of London but the other three and I went to the local council schools where there were a mixture of boys and girls of all backgrounds. I eventually graduated to modern secondary school which I hoped would lead me to University to take up a teaching career and thus keep in touch with children. Unfortunately, the meagre grant which was allotted for students was so little my parents could not afford to allow me to continue and I decided to take up business studies to enable me to earn my living and support my parents instead. I happily passed the Royal Society of Arts exams in book-keeping, shorthand, typing and German and left school just before I was 16 years of age. I found a position with a furniture manufacturing concern which was Jewish owned and allowed me to observe the faith. The first world war had almost already claimed my eldest brother, but he returned safely after four years and the second brother served as a Minister of religion. I was able to entertain the many friends of my brothers who came to the house daily and who continually asked me to make fish and chips to keep them happy. Cooking and baking were always necessary for such a large family and the High Holy Days and Passover were always celebrated with a large circle of



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friends and families who came to the house.

My eldest brother got married in 1924. In 1926, the year of the General Strike, my parents were proud to be given their first grandson. We lived in the East End of London but my father walked all the way to Shepherds Bush to attend the Brit Milah ♦ no mean effort!

Again times were hard and my two youngest brothers left for America to make new lives. After years of hard work they succeeded and married happily. One of them returned to England to take the girl he knew from childhood as his bride. It was only years later that I was able to take my mother to America to see them and her second grandson. By this time I had left the firm I originally worked for and found a position with a firm who owned a factory in Wembley, and from then onwards I started a new phase of my life.

The directors were very hard working and clever and I found the work exceptionally interesting and fulfilling. I graduated from keeping the books to becoming a buyer under the Merchandise Director. It was then that the Second World War broke out in 1939 and Head Office moved to Worcester. By then the firm had grown very considerably and bought the major part of the Great Universal Stores, but that's another story.

We all returned to London a year later, only to find that the war had really begun in earnest, with heavy bombing of towns, beginning with London. We moved Head Office to Manchester, only to receive further bombing attacks there. By this time I had to take over many positions from buyers who went into the services and it was then that I met my future husband, Harry, in Manchester. He had tried to reach me four years earlier after I interviewed him selling goods for the catalogue, and he was told he had to make an appointment with my secretary to do so. He gave up but when I heard, by chance, that he had died in hospital during the bombing, I remembered his name and expressed my sorrow about it. However, he was alive and taken to his brother's house and through a friend he contacted me one evening, unexpectedly. The rest was dramatic and most unbelievable. We found great pleasure in our meetings, either chatting about books we read or the music we enjoyed. It was when I was asked to leave for the States for the Firm that he decided to tell me that he would like to marry me if he could. By this time I realised that a new life with such a lovely man was a chance I could not miss and thus, despite the war raging and uncertain times ahead, we joined our lives in August 1941 with the marriage taking place at my parents' home in Letchworth, Herts. It was a very modest affair with only 34 people in attendance with my father's tallit as the Chuppah and the meal prepared by my sister-in-law. We left for our honeymoon an hour later to a little hotel in the country. A week later we were back at work, me at the Firm and Harry at his factory in Heywood. We rented a furnished house and eighteen months later bought a little three bedroomed house in Prestwich, Manchester. Although the war still raged, we decided to have a family and were blessed with a son who was born in August 1944.



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Eventually the war ended but we moved to Southport because I was ill and had given up working for G.U.S. Our son grew up and went Grammar School and after he wanted to join my husband's business we decided to send him to College to learn the trade. By now, however, I had joined my husband in his firm and through our combined efforts we made a reasonable success of it. We retired eventually when Harry was 73 years of age and I was 72. We gave the reins over to our son and hoped he would carry on, having already married and produced two sons. A daughter followed and then another daughter, and thus we had a new family.

Harry and I travelled whenever and wherever possible and found life in Dorset very peaceful. In Southport Harry had been the founder of the Southport New Synagogue and we joined the Bournemouth Reform Synagogue when we moved to Poole. The years were pleasant here but sadly five years later Harry died in my arms after a gruelling illness. Grief can only be suffered silently for friends will soon get tired if they are required to listen to the sadness of others. Thus, after the first two years of loneliness it has been necessary to look again at some future which can be meaningful. Travel is surely one answer, reading and writing another, whilst knitting and sewing and giving pleasure to others is the rewarding aim in life.

The world is a peaceful place and I love everywhere I roam. The people in it are to blame for the sadness which arises. Anno domini must take over for sure, but whilst I can retain some faculties and marvel at the wonders of this earth, I shall hope to live peacefully. My latest interest now lies in the Monster (computer), installed in my study, which gives me some pleasure whenever I become sorry for myself. My grandchildren are certainly a bonus and the recent visit I made to the other end of the world to see one with my youngest granddaughter at my side made life worthwhile again.

"Life is sweet, brother", a motto I try to believe.