



## CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

### *IRIS*

#### *In the Beginning*

Golda, my mother, was born in Montreal. Lena, her mother, was born in Riga, Latvia, and had come to Montreal when she was five. Israel, her father, was a tailor; I am named after him even though my one attempt at sewing, when I was in fifth grade, turned out to be a disaster. (So did my attempt at baking popovers around the same time, which might explain my lack of domesticity since then.)

Sam, my father, was born in Lithuania and came to the United States with his parents when he was one. When the American Immigrant Wall of Honor opened at Ellis Island in the 1980s, I put my father's name on it. I'm not sure he would have been pleased because he wanted people to think he had been born in the United States. My father lived in Bennington, Vermont, where his father, Abraham, was a rabbi. We saw the house where my father grew up when we visited Bennington a few years ago. We also met with Joshua Boettiger, who was the rabbi in Bennington from 2006 to 2012. My father especially would have enjoyed knowing that Boettiger was the great-grandson of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the president who my father most admired. Boettiger's father was one of Roosevelt's grandsons, who had married a Jewish woman. When he was five, Boettiger told his parents, "I don't know whether to be Jewish or Christian. I think I'll just be Republican." "Anything but that," his mother said.

I had only one grandparent, Lena, when I was born. Israel had died when my mother was a teenager; my father's mother had died when he was three and his father when he was 13. My father didn't talk much about his teenage years as an orphan but I had the impression he had moved from one relative to another and mostly raised himself. He did talk about being annoyed by nephews who called him Uncle Sam even though they were older than he was. He also described walking miles to school in the snow each day.

**My father got a scholarship to the University of Vermont for college and medical school. He said he really wanted to be an accountant, but he went to medical school because that's where he got the scholarship. He worked on a tourist boat on Lake George in New York State to support himself. He loved to describe his conversations with passengers: In one, a passenger insists on being served French peas. My father, who had no idea what nationality the peas were, brought whatever he could find in the kitchen and with great authority announced, "These peas are French, sir." The passenger was grateful, my father got a nice tip, and all ended well.**

**My mother grew up as the golden girl, Golda, in her family. She was considered the smartest, the most beautiful, and the most virtuous. I remember her having very high standards for how she, and others should behave. She went to a teacher's college and became an elementary school teacher. She spoke of being embarrassed by her nude baby photo, which her boyfriends saw when they came to the house. According to family legend, all the boys in Montreal wanted to be her boyfriend, but they lost the competition to my father. It turned out that my father belonged to the same fraternity at the University of Vermont that my mother's brother belonged to at McGill University in Montreal; I believe my parents met at a fraternity party.**

**They were married in the 1920s, a few years before the Depression. Both had grown up in low-income circumstances. My father bought a medical practice in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where I grew up. My parents went to Philadelphia for my birth because my father thought the hospitals were better there.**

### ***My Neighborhood***

**We lived at 532 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, three blocks from the Bethlehem Steel. My father's office was part of our house. Each day my mother wiped soot from the windowsills. When I was born she had stopped teaching (except for me). My father was the neighborhood doctor and most of**

his patients were steelworkers. He charged \$5 for a house call and \$3 for an office visit. He had been in the Army briefly in World War I and just missed the age cutoff for World War II. When the younger doctors had been drafted my father took on a lot of their work. I remember him making 50 house calls some days, while still having office hours, which were held every night since steelworkers didn't have the luxury of taking off for medical care during the day.

One of the families my father took care of was Chuck Bednarik's family. Bednarik, the son of a steelworker, was ranked #35 in the NFL list of all-time great football players. He played at Liberty High School in Bethlehem about seven years before I went there; he then played for Penn and the Philadelphia Eagles. He is considered the last NFL player to play a 60-minute game and is known as one of the hardest tacklers ever; in his most famous tackle, he took Frank Gifford out of football for 18 months. He died in 2015 of what the Eagles described as a "brief illness," and what his daughter described as dementia related to football injuries, which he had suffered from for many years.

My father treated people whether or not they could pay, and many grateful patients brought cakes and pies to our house. He also gave people in the medical field "professional courtesy," which means he didn't charge them. The Keen family, who owned the drugstore across the street, was one of those families. I bought comic books at the store, but spent many hours each month hanging around the store (or loitering as some would call it) reading the rest of the comic books free. One day the Keens threw me out. My father was not pleased: "I give them free medical care and they throw my daughter out of the store?" I don't know what happened next.

I do know that when I was five one of their sons, Harry Keen, went to Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War. He sent a postcard to us saying he was fighting to "make the world a safer place for Iris". He never

made it home. I once found his name when visiting a museum exhibit on Americans who fought in the Spanish Civil War. He is also described on the website of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives.

My neighborhood friends were my best friends. Although the steelworkers' families at the time were all Democrats, many of them are now the parents and grandparents of the people who voted for Trump. My friends' fathers worked in the blast furnaces of the steel mills. I imagine it was the closest anyone could come to working in Hell. Their mothers cleaned the steel mills. The Bethlehem Steel had few if any safety precautions. Accidents were part of the working day, just as domestic violence and alcoholism were an ongoing part of life after hours. My best friend's father came home drunk each night. Some nights he beat up his wife and kids. Other nights he gave his kids \$10 bills—an enormous sum at the time. One night he put his hand through a window and lost three fingers. I remember saloons on every corner and wives pulling husbands out of them. Our neighbors could have been characters in a Joyce Carol Oates novel. The current Trump voters might be looking back to these times as the good times. I'm not so sure.

Because my father was the neighborhood doctor, I had an insider's view of what was going on in my friends' homes. But I didn't realize at the time how much my father was trying to change their lives beyond giving medical care. A few years ago I got a call from Margaret, my best friend's younger sister, who told me that my father talked repeatedly to her mother about getting her and her other children "out of here" by making sure they went to college. Margaret had been one of the lucky ones. She also had been the last baby my father delivered before he gave up obstetrics. General practitioners really were general practitioners in those days.

It might seem strange after everything I have described that I loved my neighborhood. I guess I was able to love it because I did not

personally go through the hardships my friends' families were experiencing and because my friends, despite the traumas they went through, were able to be kids like any others. My best friend was Elsie. Whenever my parents discussed moving to a more upscale neighborhood, I used all my theatrical talents to show them the anguish I would feel if I had to leave my neighborhood. "I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE ELSIE!!!" It was only in my last year of high school that my parents started to build a house in a new neighborhood. My mother didn't live long enough to move into it.

Our "playground" was our back yard and the neighborhood porches and streets. I don't remember ever going to an actual playground. One time I fell playing in the empty gravel lot across the street. I screamed so loud when my father tried to get the pebbles out of my knee that they stayed there for a very long time. I haven't noticed them recently.

My friends and I bought five cent ice cream cones. We played double-dutch jump rope. I hear there are now international double-dutch tournaments. We played jacks and Monopoly on my back steps. We roller skated until I broke my wrist trying to skate down a steep hill on one skate. (My skates suddenly disappeared after that escapade.) I walked across the bannisters of Elsie's porch—when my parents weren't looking. I wasn't allowed to have a bike because the street I lived on had a lot of traffic and trolley cars. I finally learned to ride—but never well—on someone else's bike.

Each year, we dressed up for May Day celebrations; I always anointed myself queen. Elsie, her sisters, and other friends were my attendants. One of these friends came from a family of 13. I never saw her mother. They lived down a long alley and it was reported that her mother stayed up all night to make sure all 13 kids came home. I found plays in library books, assigned parts (I gave myself the lead), and rehearsed my friends relentlessly. The entrance charge was a

penny. Our next-door neighbors refused to pay. We hung a white sheet so they couldn't see the play. In the evenings we sat on Elsie's porch and talked to the people walking by.

Sometimes we wanted more excitement. We snuck into the Portuguese club up the block when they were giving parties. That's how I got the skills to crash swimming pools at Maui hotels, which I seem to have passed on to my grandchildren. I danced the polka with old men with beer bellies at the Hungarian club—at least they seemed old to me; they were probably 30. We stood at my second floor bedroom window and dropped stuff on the heads of people walking by. Not to worry, everything we dropped was very light—like pieces of paper. We didn't want to knock them out; we just wanted to annoy them. We made crank calls. My favorite was the one to the Lehigh movie theater, affectionately known as the bughouse. We would call and ask, "Is this the bughouse?" The answer was always yes.

One day we organized a garage sale, which consisted of all the junk, including comic books probably worth a fortune now, that I had accumulated. We were happily raking in the cash, a penny at a time, when my father came out to tell me the police had complained and we needed to close the garage sale immediately. The police, of course, hadn't complained. My father simply thought it was inappropriate to earn money from people who had less than we did.

Most of the families in my neighborhood were from Eastern and Southern Europe. My friends' families spoke Windish and Hungarian. The Windish-speakers came from Slovenia. When I mentioned Windish to people years later, they insisted I had invented it and Windish wasn't a language. But it was, and a lot of the neighborhood spoke it, along with English. Our neighbors also had picked up Pennsylvania Dutch expressions—youse, out'n the light, the soup is all—are the ones that come to mind now.

**Elsie did not have a lucky life. Even her driving test ended badly when she went through a stop sign and crashed into a police car. She got pregnant as a teenager, married the father a year later, and a couple of years after that he was killed driving drunk with a girlfriend. She then moved with her young daughter to her childhood home and lived with her mother and grandmother. She spent her life working in a factory. She never remarried. Friends begged her to come to our 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion, but she refused to show up. She didn't feel good about her life. I never saw her again.**

### ***My Schools***

**I started Quinn (!) school across the street in first grade, where a lot of the day was spent copying letters. I was bored because my mother had already taught me the alphabet and how to read. I also got sick frequently and so my parents took me out of school and, the next year, I started second grade at Moravian Seminary, which was a private girls' school connected to the Moravian church, a fundamentalist branch of the Protestant religion. My father drove me there over the Hill to Hill bridge, which crossed the Lehigh River and connected the South side of Bethlehem, where we lived, to the North side, where the school was located and the rich kids who attended it lived. Each day my father and I competed to see who could predict the temperature that would be shown on the large round thermometer at the entrance to the bridge. My mother often walked over to pick me up when school was over and sometimes we walked home over a picturesque walking toll bridge.**

**I was still six when I began second grade. Each day we attended chapel and each day the minister told us that if we didn't believe in Jesus we would go to Hell. I knew he was looking at me because I was the only one in the room who didn't believe in Jesus. I considered converting since it seemed lower risk than remaining Jewish—after all, the Jewish religion didn't threaten Hell for Christians. By the time I**



was seven, however, I decided the minister didn't know what he was talking about. Gene says that's why I still question authority.

At chapel, I sang the hymns, but stayed silent for the words Jesus, Christ, and Holy Ghost. The biggest honor was to be chosen to sing "Jesus mine, in me shine" at Christmas. One part of me wanted that honor even though I felt it wouldn't be right for me to sing "Jesus mine." And I knew I would never be asked anyway because I was Jewish and because I couldn't carry a tune.

The school held a candlelight service in the church each Christmas. Each of us carried a real candle. One year, my parents came to the service with my aunt Sylvia, who worried that her fur coat would catch on fire. Years later, the school abandoned the real candles and replaced them with electric candles.

In seventh grade the teacher asked me whether I minded if we read *The Merchant of Venice*. Yes, I minded, but I said I didn't mind. A classmate, Janet Johnston, then announced to the class that her father said I was Jewish.

The kids I went to school with were the children of the Bethlehem Steel executives and their world was very different from my neighborhood. They lived on large estates and they belonged to country clubs. One day, Janet asked me how many cars we had. I told her we had one—this at a time when we were one of the few families in our neighborhood who owned a car at all. "ONLY ONE?" Janet asked, incredulous. "We have three. And how many horses do you have, Iris?"

Moravian Seminary had large grounds and we went sledding, and played field hockey and basketball. Ultimate Frisbee hadn't yet been invented. I enjoyed the games, but found the gym equipment terrifying. I couldn't climb ropes; I couldn't jump over horses. As I remember, my parents got me excused from these gym classes.

**During World War II the school held air raid drills. We all went down to the basement and sat on the floor in a dark room. It was a nice break from classes. Many years, we had only four students in our class: Janet, Kathleen (also the daughter of a Bethlehem Steel executive), Marian, and me. Like me, Marian was an outsider, not part of the country club set. We became great school friends. She had type I diabetes and missed a lot of school, but when she was there she helped make our tedious classes fun. The highlight was Bible reading, which we both found hilariously funny and responded to with barely disguised gales of laughter. Certainly they were heard, but I guess with only four students in the class the school couldn't afford to expel two. I could also be annoying in school in quieter ways. When I was told my Latin pronunciation was all wrong, I asked my Latin teacher how she knew. I learned quickly that Moravian Seminary did not encourage inquiry.**

**I won the academic prize for two years; the third year I was told I wouldn't get it because the school had decided to set a two-year limit. My mother was not pleased. We had an enormous workload, even in elementary school—as I remember, little of it very productive. There were frequent assignments of 10-12 pages, to be written in ink, with no mistakes or erasures permitted. This meant rewriting pages repeatedly until they were perfect. My mother spent many late nights with me, imitating my handwriting, helping me rewrite.**

**I begged my parents to let me go back to public school but never gave them my strongest argument, anti-Semitism. For some reason, I was embarrassed to tell them about any of the incidents, or my reactions to them. If they had known, they would have taken me out of the school. Although I never did tell them, I finally got out after ninth grade, threw away my ugly uniforms, and started public high school. I was free!**

### ***Family Life***

**My first memory is sitting on the pavement in a white outfit when I was about two and refusing to move. Or perhaps what I'm remembering is the story of my stubbornness repeated by my mother and grandmother: "...and her white outfit got so dirty..."**

**The day before my fourth birthday, I told the Horvaths, the owners of the dry cleaning business next door, that my birthday was the next day. They gave me an elaborate electric train set, which we set up on the dining room floor. It disappeared the day after my birthday. My parents had returned it to the Horvaths because, as they explained to me, it was too expensive and I shouldn't have asked for a present by announcing my birthday. I suspect from the Horvath's perspective it was a way of thanking my father for free medical care.**

**Around the same time, I had a Shirley Temple haircut and modeled for Hess's department store in Allentown, a town very close to Bethlehem. It was always fun going to Allentown, especially when my mother and I took a quaint train/trolley car (not sure which it was) to get there. The best part though was getting to keep the dresses.**

**I also started going to Lehigh football games. Lehigh University was a few blocks up the hill from our house on a beautiful campus. My father loved football and he, my mother, and I went to every home game. I'm sure I was bored at the beginning but quickly became a fan. Lehigh was always the underdog, which made it more fun when they won. The big competition was the Lehigh-Lafayette game.**

**Coincidentally, in 2014, a student in my class who had gone to Lafayette told me the Lehigh-Lafayette game that year was being played at Yankee Stadium in New York to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> game of the series—the first had been played in 1884! The Empire State building was lit up that night in the colors of both schools—brown for Lehigh and maroon for Lafayette. (The score--Lafayette: 27; Lehigh: 7)**

**In the days before television, the radio was our home entertainment center. My mother, grandmother, and I loved the soap operas. I**

usually missed them because I was at school and in those days the choice was listening when they were broadcast or not hearing them at all—no recording options! When I was home sick my addiction for soap operas took over and I felt as if I was leaving close friends behind when I had to return to school.

My father's favorite was Jack Benny, which—unlike the soap operas—was broadcast in the evening so the men could hear it. A continuing joke: Benny, pretending to be younger than he is, always claims to be 39. As a child, I wondered why on earth anyone would consider 39 young. Now I know. About 10 years ago, we had dinner with Joan Benny, Jack Benny's daughter, and Art Buchwald, who she was then dating. She's a classy, attractive person with the look of Hollywood, but in a subdued way. She has given many talks about her father and other comedians of the time. She told us he was an extremely generous man, unlike the "cheap" Jack Benny portrayed in his show. I am reminded of the line from *Hamilton*, "Who tells your story?"

When I was a few years old, my mother showed me a photo of Hitler in a newspaper and said he was a very bad man. I put a pencil through his face. Soon afterwards, World War II started. We had ration cards during the war; we lowered our shades when sirens announced air raid drills; we saw gold and silver stars in neighborhood windows. On one occasion, when I was home sick, I spent hours each day listening to radio reports of the Battle of the Bulge. I was at Elsie's house when I heard on the radio that Roosevelt had died. I ran home to tell my parents and grandmother. They looked to Roosevelt as the person who saved them from the Depression and from Hitler. They burst out crying.

My mother had an older brother, Lionel, and younger twin sisters, Sylvia and Beatrice. My favorite aunt was Sylvia, Elayne and Michael's mother. They lived in Montreal and visited us occasionally. I remember seeing Elayne for the first time when she was about one

and lying on our kitchen table. Although Elayne was seven years younger than I was and visited our house only a few times, she still remembers it in much more detail than I do.

Lionel was Zoe and Micki's father. Micki is renowned now in our family for getting us six tickets for *Hamilton*! Like us, Micki and her husband, Dohn, are opera lovers and we often spend opera evenings with them in New York. Micki was three years younger than I was when we were children; she is now seven years younger. I forgive her because she got us *Hamilton* tickets.

Beatrice lived with us from time to time. I remember her agonizing for weeks about whether she should keep or return the blouse she bought. She loved classical music and I probably heard my first opera selection on her recordings. The soprano Bidu Sayao was her favorite.

My grandmother lived with us for most of my childhood. My mother found it difficult emotionally because she had been raised to be the "perfect" daughter, who would faithfully meet all demands, and the demands she now faced greatly limited her freedom. In the early part of her stay with us, my grandmother cooked classic Jewish meals--tzimmes, parogen, matzah ball soup--all delicious and all kosher. Although she spoke perfect English, she liked to speak Yiddish to my mother, especially when she didn't want me to understand what she was saying. It worked because of my poor foreign language skills, although I did manage to pick up the most colorful of the words.

My parents belonged to the Jewish Community Center. Like Gene and me, their identification with Judaism was secular and neither was interested in religion or ritual, even though my father's Dad had been a rabbi and my mother bought the kosher food my grandmother wanted. I remember a lot of my parents' social life happening around bridge games. Their best friends were Nat and Dorothy Cristol. and my best friend apart from my neighborhood friends was their son, Allan. We had a ping pong table in the attic and he and I spent many

hours playing ping pong each time we got together. I eventually came in second (never first!) at several resort tournaments. My mother advised me never to beat boys in ping pong or they wouldn't like me anymore.

Allan's birthday was shortly after mine and each year my parents gave him \$25. The Cristols, who struggled financially, gave me \$5 for my birthday. One year they told us they couldn't afford the \$5. My father, true to his interest in being an accountant, was amused at their decision: "What are they thinking?" he said. "They make a 500 percent profit on their \$5 and they have chosen not to make the investment?"

We all enjoy a good scandal, and a husband-wife doctor team provided one for our neighborhood. They ran a private hospital, where they performed illegal abortions. They were eventually convicted and sent to jail. This happened at a time when there were very few women doctors and, hearing the discussion about them, I had difficulty separating out whether the criticism was about the illegal abortions or the fact that a woman had dared to enter a man's field.

My mother was my father's only assistant in his medical practice and her role was mostly to answer the phone--"Dr. Comens' office." He had no accountant—he loved being fully responsible for doing his own books. My mother was a traditional housewife, who took care of all my father's domestic needs. I never saw him cook a meal or wash a dish. Both seemed totally comfortable with their roles.

However, I wasn't totally comfortable. I knew from the time I was quite young that I did not want to be a traditional housewife. My father gave me mixed signals. He clearly had negative feelings about the woman doctor in Bethlehem, even apart from the illegal abortions she performed. He also insisted that I take a typing class, not because he predicted the invention of the computer but because he wanted

me to gain secretarial skills in case my other plans failed. However, he and I also shared an interest in sports—first, football, and later baseball was added—and those interests, not shared by the other women I knew at the time, somehow made me feel I had the freedom to make choices that differed from those my mother and grandmother had made.

I am thankful to my parents for bringing movies, concerts, operettas, musicals, and plays into my life. When I was seven, my mother and I went to see *Fantasia*. My mother loved the combination of classical music, dance, and color; I don't know if I appreciated it as much as she did, but I do know that from that time on I have been addicted to movies. We went to classical concerts, mostly piano, and I took piano lessons for many years even though I was hopeless—a combination of no talent and no practicing. We took numerous trips to Philadelphia, where we saw my father's favorite operettas—*The Student Prince*, *The Merry Widow*, and anything that Gilbert and Sullivan wrote. And we saw musicals and plays before they opened in New York. Lunch was at Horn and Hardart, an automat, where treasures like macaroni and cheese, baked beans, and creamed spinach could be found in small glass containers.

We took a cruise to Bermuda when I was four. All I remember is conversations with the ship's parrot and getting seasick. Throughout my childhood, we took trips to Montreal to visit Sylvia and family and other aunts, uncles, and cousins. Sometimes we traveled by train overnight and took a sleeping compartment; other times we drove through New York or Vermont. When we crossed the border into Vermont, my father always remarked about how much more beautiful the scenery had become. We occasionally visited my father's uncle in Vermont—or perhaps it was one of the older nephews who called my father Uncle Sam—not sure. We visited New York to see Lionel and family.

We went by train to Miami Beach a number of times; the trip sometimes took two nights and a day, but it seemed short to me when the train was filled with cute guys in uniform. When we passed through the Southern states, we were shocked by the extent of the rural poverty. We had never seen anything like it. Occasionally, the Cristols also came to Miami Beach. Then Allan and I spent hours each day roaming through empty lots looking for discarded bottles we could turn in for two cents a bottle. I would like to claim that we collected bottles because we were environmentally conscious, but I'm afraid our only motivation was the money and, perhaps, the challenge of finding the bottles. I assume we also went to the beach but, if so, I have no memory of it. I remember only the fun of the empty lots. I remember too that some of my parents' friends took a boat to Cuba to gamble—before the revolution.

When I was very young, we spent summers in the Laurentian Mountains near Montreal. After that it was the Poconos every summer. My mother, grandmother, and I stayed for the entire summer. My father came up each night and went back to Bethlehem the following morning (about an hour drive each way). I found the Poconos incredibly boring; if “sports” were available at all they were uninspiring—shuffleboard, croquet, badminton, and, if I was lucky, ping pong—but no one to play with. My mother and grandmother spent all day (or so it seemed to me) sitting on large white wooden lawn chairs. I know I drove my mother crazy. Occasionally, we would go to a hotel that had a tennis court, or a lake for swimming or rowing, or we would watch outdoor movies with the mosquitoes. At one of our hotels a German shepherd named Prince entertained guests by shaking hands.

Polio epidemics were the main reason my parents arranged for summers in the mountains. They were anxious to get me out of the city, where the virus was more likely to spread. As far as I can remember, I was never allowed to swim in a city pool.



The main excitement in all our years in the Poconos was a cross-burning one year by the Ku Klux Klan in front of our hotel. Not the kind of excitement anyone chooses to have.

We sometimes went to Atlantic City--a vacation I loved. The Atlantic City we knew was the classic Atlantic City, before gambling casinos, before Trump. The hotels were architectural masterpieces—the Marlborough Blenheim, The Claridge Hotel, the Hotel Traymore, and more. These hotels were too expensive for us to stay at, and, unfortunately, most have been torn down because they were too expensive to maintain.

I went horseback riding on the beach until I got thrown off and ended my horseback riding career. My father and I loved roaming the boardwalk and playing the arcade games, especially skee ball. And it was in Atlantic City that we saw our first television set, which was in a bar on a side street off the boardwalk.

Gene also went to Atlantic City in the summer. I wonder if we ever saw each other there!

### *Postscript*

My mother died as I was graduating from high school after having a breast biopsy that turned out to be benign. She never woke up from the anesthesia. I don't know whether it was an allergic reaction, an overdose, or something else. (I do know that she would never be given that kind of anesthesia now for a simple biopsy.) As usual, my father had taken her to Philadelphia for what he assumed would be the best medical care. He was so devastated that he left our house and everything in it and we drove to Sylvia's house in Montreal, where we spent the summer. We never lived in the house again, although my father continued his medical practice there after we returned in the fall. The following summer, he married Louise. For the second time, he had chosen a wife who was perfect for him. I

acquired a stepsister, Carol, Louise's daughter, and gave up my status as an only child and the entitlement to being a spoiled brat.

- Diana is named after my mother. Her middle name is Golda.
- Pam is named after my grandmother. Her middle name is Lynn.
- Sam is named after my father. His name is Samuel Nathan. My father's name was Samuel Nathaniel. Leigh chose Nathan as Sam's middle name because it is the name of an Australian man he admires. It is a nice coincidence that it is also so close to my father's middle name.
- Tess is named after Louise. Her middle name is Louise.

Few parents would have chosen to give their children the experiences I had in my neighborhood and in my school. My parents didn't choose them either. They just happened. And I feel very fortunate that they did because I had the opportunity to live in three different worlds as I was growing up: my family's world and two that were very different from my family's and from each other. My childhood experiences served as a bridge to my work in public policy, which began years later and coincided with the Civil Rights movement. I have worked since the 1960s with generations of African Americans, Hispanics, and women, groups who have been the beneficiaries of that movement and now are integrated into the civic, political, and economic life of the country to an extent that seemed unimaginable when I was a child. The country is a very different—and much better—place than it was then. Although the Trump administration can cause a lot of pain, it cannot turn back the clock—much as it would like to.

