



CONCEALED REVEALED

“Concealed/Revealed” invites readers to write essays of up to 300 words that focus on personal experiences that have been transformative, provocative, or just plain unforgettable. Names will be withheld upon request. Future topics and deadlines will be posted in each edition of the column (see box, below left). Essays should be submitted to jewishcurrents@circle.org or mailed to us at 45 East 33 Street, NYC 10016. You will be contacted if your essay is selected for publication.

Jewish Men

“A mighty man is not delivered by great strength” —Psalm 33:16

In late June 1943, a most important, large transport arrived at the Budzyn camp from Warsaw, by way of Majdanek. From that remnant of Warsaw’s Jewry we learned for the first time of the uprising in the ghetto of Warsaw, which had occurred two months earlier.

Among the Warsaw newcomers was a certain Mr. Dua, whose life had crossed mine for a short period some years back. In 1936, I had worked briefly in a shop that manufactured plastic eyeglass frames. Mr. Dua was then co-owner of the shop and the skilled designer and builder of most of the equipment used there. I enjoyed working there because the working conditions were quite remarkable. The crew worked eight hours a day, with proper rest breaks and decent salaries, a rarity at that time.

Unfortunately, the militant chemical workers union, a clandestine, underground organization, foolishly decided to call a strike for better wages for the senior employees. The workers were ordered to occupy the shop. For the next several days, food was delivered to us in baskets, which we had to pull up by ropes to the upper floor where we were ensconced. I was young and this was an exciting action. But the end of the strike was predictable: After seven days of the sit-in, the owners called the police and

we were evicted. All the workers were replaced, and I lost a decent job.

Mr. Dua did not recognize me at Budzyn, and I had no desire to stir up unpleasant memories. Eventually, Mr. Dua became ill with edema and died soon after, a victim of starvation. I was at his bedside often, but I never revealed to the unfortunate man that I was once his evicted worker. I preferred to keep that to myself.

Another of the Warsawians was a certain Mr. Schulz, who owned a well-known restaurant at the corner of Karmelicka and Nowolipki, across from Weingart’s drugstore, where I worked before the war. Schulz’s restaurant was, at one time, the scene of a notorious Nazi propaganda film. The Germans had forced Mr. Schulz to serve a luxurious meal to a large group of Jews; that scene was then contrasted with shots of people starving on the street outside. Mr. Schulz, who never knew hunger before, died of starvation at the Budzyn hospital.

Isak Arbus

New York, New York



I was about eight, my brother Gerry about ten. We attended High Holiday services at a very Orthodox *shul* my father’s father had helped found in Omaha early in the 20th century. Gerry and I came to services with rubber bands, to play outside shooting bent paper matches picked up from the sidewalk at other kids. Sometimes, though, we had to sit inside with our father.

One day, probably on Yom Kippur, by

prior plan Gerry and I very nervously asked Daddy a question: “Why do we read this stuff? We don’t know what it means. What’s the point of just reading it faster and faster (our tutor’s explicit goal ‘so you can keep up with the older men in the shul’)?”

Our father put his arm on our shoulders and said, “You see all those old men, my boys?” And there they were. In stocking feet and full-size tallises, rocking back and forth and davening in that familiar melismatic slur.

“Yes, Daddy, yes, we see them.” They were probably around 60 and 70 years of age, but to Gerry and me, they looked no younger than 120, at least.

Then came the great lesson from our father: “They don’t know what it means, either.”

Even at my tender age, I knew Daddy was saying, *This is our tradition; this is what we do as Jews. My father did it and his father too. And I do it and expect you to do it.* But what I took from his words were, *Beats me, my sons, I’ve never thought about it before and see no reason to start now.* End of conversation.

This was probably a major step on my path to secular Jewish identity.

Gordon Fellman

Cambridge, Massachusetts



I am one of those Jewish girls that laughs too loudly, talks too much and dances like nobody’s watching. Except everyone is watching. Sam (not his real name) was a DJ at a party I invaded in November. I

Topics and Deadlines for

“Concealed/Revealed”

“Idolatry” . . . April 1st

“On the Boardwalk” . . . June 1st

Submit to: lawrencebush@earthlink.net