

October 14, 1998

Laurie and Josh Levy
 13 Woodcrest drive
 Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Dear Laurie and Josh,

Please accept the enclosed check as our celebration of your joyous union. We hope one day to meet, and mesh...because you, Laurie, occupy a far deeper place in my psyche than you could ever imagine...Much more than our third degree of cousinship could possibly convey.

To understand why, you need go only as far as the family photo that used to stand on the side table near the entrance to your Grandma Ruth's living room. Taken over 30 years ago, it shows sisters Rose (nee Lieberman) Harris and Mary (nee Lieberman) Dember, with their children, Rose's Archie and Ruthie and Mary's Lester. (Rose was the oldest of the six children of Jacob and Sarah Lieberman. Your great-uncle Archie was the first of their grandchildren. Ruth, three years younger than Archie was born several months before me, in 1913.)

October 23, 1998

(Sorry for the delay; personal and technical problems)

For me, Archie was always a role model (except for his and your grandfather's --and Dad's -- passion for the Yankees; as a born-and-bred Brooklynite, I was foreordained to swear fealty to the Brooklyn Dodgers. Which might help to explain why I took absolutely no joy in the Bombers' Series triumph this week.

But Ruthie, of course, was (is) my lifelong love. Even as a child she was warm and mothering, an unflinching comfort. The Morris Harris family lived in the Bronx, the Dembers were Brooklynites (I was born in the same house where my Mother came into this world, in 1888.) On holidays, Rose and Morris and kids would trek south for the long, long subway ride to Williamsburg or Bensonhurst -- along with the rest of the Lieberman clan, to the home of Joe and Mary Dember who always lived with Matriarch Sarah. (Jacob had died about 1922 or 23.)

The Harris's advent was ever a highlight of my ^{rather lonely} existence. (My late brother David didn't come along until I was eleven.) So Archie and Ruthie were the closest to me in age and in fact.

As a teenager, Ruthie ^{was} pretty, shapely, popular and a very good student. And a terrific dancer. Yes, she taught me the fox-trot and the waltz and the Charleston. She was incredibly patient and protective.

Naturally, Ed Zuckerman, Ruthie's chosen, was ^{an} inevitable favorite of mine -- and all the rest of the family -- for all the years that I knew him. He was bright and witty and extremely likeable. I well remember their wedding in the Bronx. My Ruthie made a beautiful bride; Eddie was a dashing groom. I was so happy for them. Jay, the first ^{born to} child of my generation of cousins, was an absolutely adorable tot. Who could ever forget his carefully coached performance, ^{about age two or so,} with his Uncle Archie as ringmaster, earnestly pawing the ground with stiffened leg, dutifully counting to two, three or even four, on command; as any ^{show} pony would. And that killer kneeling bow at the end of the act! Wunderbar!

(over)

And I remember Jay's wedding, too. With mixed emotions. It was the first time I'd met your mother. I was so eager to tell her all about how we loved him as a child. But the strangest thing happened: For some reason that has haunted me for decades, your mother would not make ^{eye} contact with me. It wasn't that she remained expressionless, let alone ^{not} returning my loving smile, but I ^{is suddenly} felt as if I'd needily intruded at an inopportune time. It was one of the stranger experiences of my lifetime. To this day, I sometimes recall the incident, still puzzling over it. I've never confided this social contretemps of mine to anyone before. I don't why I do so now. Perhaps out of a keen sense of lack of closure.

Through the years, of course, Ruth and I have exchanged family progress reports. To be sure, I've been especially interested in your career choices, Laurie. As you may know, I've spent a working lifetime in advertising, public relations, promotion, marketing, ghost-writing -- you name it.

And, though he always averred that he'd never follow in my footsteps, my older son, Irv, has long been a free-lance writer in all of the aforementioned "disciplines," specializing in the world of computers, numbering ~~companies~~ both large (Compaq, Hewlett-Packard, etc.) and small (Landmark, Answersoft, Object Space) among his clients. He's been living in Houston for about 15 years or more. He also works with firms outside of Cyberspace. He's even more ~~alcoholic~~ alcoholic than I am, if that's possible. Jon, my younger son, still works in the field of the rehabilitation of rural housing. He lives on 25 mostly-wooded acres some 20 minutes from T. H. and is deeply involved in environmental concerns.

So much for this genealogical stroll down memory lane. Beula and I wish you both a long and happy life together, Mazdov!!!

With love,

Les and Beula Desuber