

## # 37 PICTURES

I love to take pictures. In fact, over the past 50 years, I have never gone on a trip or to a “special occasion” (wedding, bar or bat mitzvah, party, reunion, or a get-together of more than three people) without my camera. If my friends or family are there, or someone else’s friends or family, I am there taking pictures. However, at 79, I am slowing down, and I have chosen not to take my camera to the last few gatherings. And Fran has been bugging me about what I plan to do with the thousands of photographs and slides that I have accumulated.

So when and where did this obsession with picture taking and picture collecting begin? As with so much in my life, it started with my mother, or perhaps my mother’s family. I doubt if the tradition of having a family picture taken was unique with the Goldsteins, but as I was growing up, it seemed that our apartment was inundated with photographs of my mother’s sister and her family in Paris, and her brother and his family in Vaslui, and her cousins in Toronto, as well as various cousins in New York. There were also photographs of my father’s family in Kishinev, but I never knew who they were. Our family in Paris was thoughtful enough to write the name of the person and the date on the back. Most of these portraits were taken in the “inter-war” period. My mother had framed some of the pictures, but the rest were in boxes, lots of boxes.

The most prominent portrait photograph in our apartment when I was a child was my parents’ wedding picture. It was sepia, in a large, polished cherry wood frame. My mother and father looked very serious, my mother in a dress (which she may have made) with a scooped neck and a floral design on the shoulder, and my father in a dark suit with a vest and a diamond stick pin on his tie. They were posed by the photographer with my mother slightly in front of my father, their heads touching. It was 1916, and my mother was 28 and my father was 34, but they looked older.

Photography studios were a fixture in neighborhoods across New York. My mother must have been our neighborhood photographer’s best customer from before I was born until my fourth birthday. In the mid-20s, my mother had a series of photographs taken of herself in different poses. She titled one “In Doubt” wearing a bonnet with a quizzical look on her face. Another, with her hair undone, staring at a strand incredulously, she titled in Yiddish “A Gray Hair.” And seated, with glasses and a babushka, she called, in Yiddish, “Beloved is God.” In December 1927, in her ninth month, my mother had a studio photograph taken. Her hair was bobbed, and she was smiling. By the ‘20s, amateur photography was catching on, and someone took snapshots of my parents, but my mother didn’t want amateurs taking her picture. Fortunately, several were taken, and I have them.

Soon after I was born, I became the subject of studio photographs. Besides the classic pose on a bear rug, there were photographs of me with my mother, with my father and with various props, all before I was one. My mother clearly wanted to record my development, and had pictures taken of me on my first, second, third and fourth birthdays. Thinking about this, I realized that, when I was four, it was 1931, my father

had died and we had no money, but my mother still went ahead and had studio pictures taken of me. And then, no more pictures.

There is no photographic record of either my mother or me through the '30s. I have one photograph taken by my cousin Louis Goldstein with his children in Copake, N.Y. in 1940, and in 1942 my mother splurged and went back to the studio photographer for my junior high school graduation picture. When we graduated from high school, we had to take pictures for the Yearbook, so most everyone ordered extra pictures for their family.

After World War II, practically everybody had a camera. I bought my first camera as a teen-ager for one dollar. I didn't know anything about film speed or shutter speed or lens openings. All I knew was that the film for my camera was size 127. I took pictures outdoors, looked through the view-finder, held the camera still and pressed the button that released the shutter. When all the film was exposed, I took the roll to the drug store and hoped that the pictures would come out.

When Sylvia and I married, our friend Sam Baron, who had a good camera with a flash attachment, became our official photographer. Sylvia's brother-in-law gave us a camera that was a cut above the one I had, possibly a Kodak Hawkeye. We took some great pictures with it, including pictures of our hitchhiking trip across the country in 1952.

To record for posterity the entry into the world of my daughter Carol in 1955, I bought my first 35mm single lens reflex, an Argus C3, at the Camp Gordon PX. Now I was into film and shutter speed and f stops and depth of field and available light and bounce flash. I shot Kodachrome and Ektachrome and black and white. For the next 20 years, I took countless pictures of Carol, Lewis and Martha: birthdays, vacations, and holidays. For the most part, I was shooting slide film, which meant getting a slide projector and a screen. I would print the best shots. About 1980, I began shooting only print film.

At some point, my Argus C3 died, and I replaced it with a Pentax K1000, a relatively inexpensive but excellent quality 35 mm camera. I was so pleased with it that when each of my children reached their teens, I bought them the same camera. I had become a fairly serious photographer, and over the years took a few photography classes and learned darkroom techniques.

For my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, my friends presented me with a Pentax Super Program, "an ultrasophisticated 35 mm SLR incorporating the latest electronic technology." It had a telephoto lens and a fancy flash attachment. I was very excited and spent the next several months trying to figure out how to use it. The 65 page manual explained that there were six different exposure modes: programmed AE (automatic exposure); aperture priority AE; shutter priority, AE; metered manual; TTL automatic flash; or programmed auto flash. There were also three different ways of focusing. I shot a test roll of film, but I misplaced my notebook in which I had recorded which shots I had taken at which exposure mode.

A few years before, I had bought a simple “point and shoot” Nikon One Touch 100 which took wonderful pictures and didn’t require a 65 page manual. I didn’t tell my friends, but I continued to shoot with my Nikon. A few years later, I bought a “point and shoot” for Fran, a Pentax IQ Zoom, which had a number of advanced features. Taking pictures was not Fran’s thing, so I laid aside my Nikon and started using the Pentax IQ Zoom. The fancy Pentax Super Program remains in my fancy Lemans SE camera case,

David’s birth, earliest years, school-days, birthdays, camp days, Bar Mitzvah, and graduations have all been recorded with Fran’s Pentax IQ Zoom. For the past few years I have been toying with the idea of getting a digital camera. Everyone has one these days. And the price has come down dramatically. But it means learning to operate another piece of advanced technology, and I am not up to it any more.

So here we are. I am overwhelmed with thousands of slides, poorly organized, boxes of photographs and scores of photograph albums, even more poorly organized. I even have several cardboard boxes filled with the envelopes containing the negatives of the pictures I have taken over the years. What in the world am I going to do with them? I will never make any more prints. I have too many pictures as it is. I have been advised to put my photographs on CDs. Then I can throw the pictures away. But I have no idea how to do it. And besides, it is an expensive process. I am drowning in photographs. Help!

February 20, 2007