

LEWIS

Trying to remember my kids from their youngest days is hard. I have memories of Carol as an infant in Augusta in 1955, our return to New York in 1956, and our move to Brooklyn in 1957. Lewis was born June 7, 1958. As with Carol, it was not a difficult pregnancy. When Sylvia was in labor, I asked a neighbor to baby-sit for Carol, I drove Sylvia to the hospital and returned home to relieve our neighbor. Carol was almost 3. I was working for the JLC. We rearranged the rooms after a while so the kids got the larger bedroom.

As Lewis grew up—from infant to toddler to pre-schooler—he was bright and had several friends in our apartment house. Eric Zelwian, Freddie Plotkin, Bobby Timmons Jr. and a few more.. His favorite childhood story—the only one I remember—was when the kids sneaked into the Catholic Church on the corner, it was hot and he was thirsty and his friends told him to take a sip of water from a big basin. He did, and they laughed and said it was Holy Water and he was going to die, and of course, Lewis believed them and ran home.

I don't remember where Lewis went to pre-school. Carol went to a pre-school in a Reform Temple on Eastern Parkway near Grand Army Plaza. As the kids grew up, Carol teased Lewis, and when Martha came along, Lewis teased Martha. But for the most part, they played together amicably.

Lewis was a handsome boy with red hair and a pleasant disposition. He learned quickly and I believe he got along well with everybody. He had one year of school at PS 138, when we moved to DC, and the Shepard School. He told me that moving in the middle of the school year was disorienting, and he was put in the slow track class. When he was about 9, we sent him to the Chaim Weitzman Yiddish school in Silver Spring with Carol. I drove them on Sunday; Sylvia was the chauffeur on Wednesday. Sylvia did not enjoy driving them. Carol graduated; I arranged with the principal, who lived nearby, for Lewis to ride with her. He found it intimidating and embarrassing (his words) and we switched Lewis to the Tifereth Israel Synagogue Hebrew School.

Lewis was not rebellious. I don't remember him objecting to school—neither Hebrew School nor public school. When time came for his Bar Mitzvah, we hired a tutor and he was as well prepared as any other TI Bar Mitzvah boy. It was June 1971, less than a year before Sylvia and I separated. That spring, Lewis and I were busy finishing the basement. We had a lovely Bar Mitzvah reception in the afternoon, in our back yard, with lots of food from Posins. Friends and family came from all over.

Carol had gone to Paul, the neighborhood Junior High, after Shepard, and it was not easy. We managed to get Lewis into Deal, the “white” junior high, and Carol and then Lewis and Martha into Wilson, the “white” high school. By “white” we mean it was not more than 2/3 black. Nevertheless, Lewis was shaken down for his lunch money right off the bat, and never took money with him after that. He adjusted.

Lewis expressed an interest in music, selected the violin as the instrument he would like to play, and we sent him for lessons to a Mr. Essers in Bethesda. It lasted from age 8 to 12, when it ended, Lewis remembers, so that he could take Bar Mitzvah lessons. Washington, DC had a Saturday music program at nearby Cardozo High School, and Lewis played violin in the youth

orchestra and switched to tenor sax. After a few months playing the school's sax, Lewis felt he would like to have his own instrument. We went to the pawn shops and at Crown Pawn at 14th and P St. found one that he liked.

He did very well, and actually played with a group of friends in high school. A few of them became very serious about music, and I believe Lewis lent (or gave?) one of them his saxophone.

While still in junior high, Lewis became interested in print-making. We learned that there was a print-making program, run by the city, based in the National Portrait Gallery of American Art in downtown DC. Lewis joined the program, and made some wonderful pieces, and even won an award. He continued his interest in art, did a mural for the High School cafeteria, and did illustrations for the high school literary magazine.

Lewis played soccer in junior high, tennis in high school and biked. We played tennis together, and I enjoyed watching his progress. One summer he participated in a tennis program run by the city, and I realized that he had become a better tennis player than me. We sent all the kids to summer camp. First, to day camp, then to sleep-away. I don't remember the details. What I feel is that camp didn't make a great positive impression.

I mentioned elsewhere that when Sylvia and I separated, it affected Lewis more deeply than either Carol or Martha. During the seven years, from the time of the separation until I left for Boston, I tried to spend as much time as I could with my children. Initially, it was with all three of them. Then, one weekend with one, and then another. We would bike, go to a movie, visit museums. I remember taking them to hockey games. My apartment house had a swimming pool, and that was fun. After graduation, Lewis went on to Wesleyan University. It wasn't a good fit. After two years, he left.

In 1979 I moved to Boston. A year before, Lewis moved to Cambridge, got a part time job with Democratic Socialists of America, quit after six months, took a writing class, worked at a movie house in Cambridge, and returned to DC in 1979. During the summer of 1980, he traveled in Europe. When he returned to DC he worked in a book store and record stores and took art classes at Montgomery College from 1981 to 1984.

My kids absorbed my politics, and that pleased me. When Lewis was at Wesleyan, he joined a group of students protesting a nuclear power facility in New Hampshire. Did he do it because his folks were opposed to nuclear energy, or because he felt it was the right thing to do? The demonstrators were arrested, and were held for two weeks in a National Guard Armory. Either I didn't know, or didn't remember, but Lewis missed all his freshman year finals. It totally undermined his academic career. He had to study all summer, took four finals on his return, and could not get an extension on one, failing a psych class.

When Lewis decided to return to college, he applied to Cooper Union. That was it. Just Cooper Union. A very hard school to get into. He didn't get in. The following year he applied to the Rhode Island School of Design, and a few other schools. He was accepted at RISD and off he went. We saw more of each other, now that he was in Providence. He also met Marion Ware. Lewis's major was print making, and Marian's was video art.

Lewis made some wonderful prints, and I framed them and bragged about them to my friends. I sold copies to as many people as I could: etchings, lithographs, monoprints. Both Lewis and I get a kick out of seeing his work in their homes.

Lewis and Marion graduated from RISD, and together went to Rochester, NY where Marion wanted to continue her studies for a Master's degree. They found an apartment and Lewis found a job with Eastman House as a preparator. When Marion completed her program, they drove to San Francisco, which must have been a fun trip. I am not sure what they did for money. Marion got work from time to time as an X-Ray technician. In San Francisco, Lewis found a job with the Airport, hanging art. I was unaware that there was such a position. I don't know what Marion did. Unfortunately, Lewis' job ended, they left San Francisco and took a long drive through the west and the south, ending up in Pittsburgh. That turned out to be a disaster.

(As I write this, I realize that it is difficult to tell someone else's story. I don't know all the facts, I forgot a lot, and I certainly don't know Lewis' thoughts and feelings.)

From Pittsburgh they moved to Maryland. Lewis got a job with an art store, Contemporary Art Gallery, as a framer, then manager. After that, with a decorative painting company, doing faux painting, and subsequently manager, sales rep and designer. Marion landed a job as director of the Carroll County public TV station, which she began to like less and less. They found a house in Westminster, then another house. Lewis and Marion seemed happy; they cooked, gardened, and Lewis was involved with Tai Chi. They decided to marry, and did that in Italy. They moved again to Catonsville, and bought a summer place on Indian land near the Eastern Shore, Lewis lost his job, and while collecting unemployment compensation, was persuaded to go into business for himself.

Lewis and Marion's 20 year relationship was straining. It was a difficult time for Lewis. I did not know how difficult. He was able to get work at the Hirshhorn as an "exhibitions specialist," but it was sporadic. Marion indicated that she wanted out of the marriage. Lewis returned to Washington with no prospects, and moved in with Sylvia. Lewis had heard of a job opening up at the National Gallery and applied. He was selected. The marriage was officially ended. The houses were sold. He met Nina. He is happier than he has been in a while.

Lewis is approaching his mid-fifties. . He is a wonderful, talented, intelligent human being. There is an awful lot inside him that I do not know about. However, he now has a steady job, a steady friend, and a great deal of insight. I hope he will be happy.

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