

❧ *Lori and Harlan Cohen* ❧

Their story begins in Beth El Hospital in Brooklyn, where they were both born, in January and May of the same year. That was all they had in common.

Harlan likes to say he's from Brooklyn, he really isn't. Harlan hails from suburban Wayne, New Jersey, also home of the Willowbrook Mall, Theunis Dey and Wayne Hills High Schools, which till this day, come up regularly in many conversations and the Milk Barn, the best ice cream this side of Paterson. Harlan's family story is one a television writer in the 1960's could only dream of. Fran and Bernie, who so many JCCP/CBT members knew and loved, were exceptional parents and role models. They had their own 60-plus year love affair, while raising four children, Elyce, Harlan, Shauna and Jared. Growing up in Wayne was about Bernie's antics, from taking the kids to the bakery instead of driving them to Hebrew School, to getting lost going to the hardware store, to Fran's bridge tournaments while Bernie traveled for business (he was a textile importer), her involvement in Jewish organizations in Northern New Jersey and of course, her famous cooking. It was always about the food and the food was endless. Fran even traveled regularly to Fair Lawn, to Harold's when there was a Harold's in Fair Lawn. There were also surprise trips to Aunt Natalie's on Sundays, sleep away camp at the New Jersey Y Camp, family vacations in the old Plymouth Fury station wagon, laughter, laughter and laughter and so much more to Harlan's picture perfect youth in Wayne.

While Harlan was growing up in Wayne, Lori lived in a few places. During her early childhood, she lived in Forest Hills, Queens, during which, the 1964 World's Fair came to Queens and then went, The Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show and then at Shea Stadium, also, Queens. She lived in a two-bedroom apartment, in a nice pre-war building, conveniently, just off Austin Street, then the fashion capital of the boroughs. Lori's mother, Sidelle, was the Queen of Austin Street, Queens. Lori's father, Mickey, worked in the family steel fabrication business in Long Island City. Lori's younger sister, Dana, was born in 1964 and the family moved to a house in Westbury, Long Island. Lori attended elementary school in the Jericho school system but she, her mom and sister moved away from Westbury in 1974, back to Queens, to Bell Boulevard in Bayside, after her parents' divorce. Lori graduated from Bayside High School and many people throughout the world know that. On any given vacation, if she's in a shop any longer than five minutes, it's because she's telling someone she graduated from Bayside High School, from Canada to China, from Los Angeles to Louisiana, always looking for that Queens connection.

As for their higher education, it was Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania for Harlan where he majored in history, philosophy and even Judaic Studies. Not much more to be said about Dickinson College, which is the reason he spent his junior year abroad in Israel at Hebrew University in Jerusalem where he was barred by the Israeli dance instructor from ever coming back to her class. Lori started college at Queens College but transferred after one semester to NYU, after Sidelle and Lori spent an afternoon in the Village during which Sidelle said "I bet you'd like going to school here." Thus, the sum total of Lori's college tour experience. Sidelle was wrong. Lori did not like going to school there. She LOVED it. By day, she was a poli-sci major because she was told that was a good major to have for law school. Lori's great aunt Sylvia (Sophia's

namesake), and her role model, who was one of the first women to graduate from Brooklyn Law School, advised her that law school was the way for a young woman to go. Aunt Sylvia and Gloria Steinem were on the same page. By night, Lori could be found at any number of New York City music venues, The Lone Star Cafe, a particular favorite.

After college, they both enrolled at Cardozo School of Law, which was a fairly new school at the time (Harlan and Lori were in the fifth graduating class). In August, 1981, in the very first class on the very first day, Lori Dreier was seated next to Harlan Cohen in Elements of the Law, a large lecture class with seats on metal rods that expanded away from the long lecture tables. Lori, who then had purple in her hair (it was the 80's after all), approached her seat, tried to sit down and immediately fell on the floor. Lori had the only broken chair out of 150 seats in the room. Harlan, in his Dickinson College tee shirt, helped her up. Lori immediately proceeded to ask him whether he would be taking *Accounting for Lawyers* anytime during the next three years and the rest is history. They became each other's closest companion and were married three years later, in September of 1984 (P.S.-they both ultimately did take Accounting for Lawyers).

Fast forward to 1991 on the 9th floor of The Sherbrooke on Prospect Avenue in Hackensack, where Harlan, Lori and a then two-year old Simeon were living. It was time to think about pre-school. They learned that the Jewish Community Center of Paramus had the best, that there was a waiting list and that to gain admission to the nursery school, JCCP membership was required. And that's how it started.

It was a warm day in early September, 1991, a few of us (you know who you are) stood outside, with apprehension, waiting for Morah Paula to come up the steps and open the door to the room downstairs where the moms would all sit on little chairs, at little tables and get to know each other and each other's children, eat challah, drink apple juice, hear Morah Paula read the megillah in her maroon bathrobe and so much more, indelible moments, all part of our collective DNA.

Harlan and Lori were fortunate enough to have Gabe and Sophia go through the nursery school as well and during those years, their JCCP connections grew. Although Simeon, Gabe and Sophia attended Solomon Schechter Day School in New Milford, and did not grow up in Paramus, River Edge or Oradell (the Cohens moved to Hillsdale in 1996), they are children of the JCCP. Through attendance at services, to involvement in USY as USY leaders and advisors, to assisting at the Hebrew School, to strong close family friendships, the JCCP became their second home, the second home to the whole Cohen family.

Harlan and Lori understood that involvement was the key to maintaining the JCCP as the one focal point in their lives. Lori has sat on the Board of Education for more than 20 years, has in recent years become active in the JCCP/CBT Sisterhood (and loved working on the Cookbook!) and yes, has made sure there are always enough lollipops on the lollipop tree at the Purim Carnival. (After all these years, she is ready to spill a secret - she does color the tips of each and every lollipop stick, over Harlan's objection!). Harlan is a recent past-President and helped to merge the JCCP with Congregation Beth Tikvah of New Milford to form our beloved (but tongue-twisting) JCCP/CBT. During his tenure, he worked tirelessly and around the clock during difficult times fraught with difficult decisions, including closing our cherished nursery school. Harlan and Lori are also former Co-Chairs of the Board of Governors.

In concluding, and we are changing the "voice" to personal, we thank each and every member of our JCCP/CBT family for all the times that you were there for us, including the difficult times, which unfortunately, have been many and, the times that you were all there to share in our simchas, from bar and bat mitzvahs to weddings. We look forward to more celebrations in the

years to come and are delighted to be recognized with Ruth and Stuart Smith, a truly exceptional couple. We are truly blessed to be members of this community and we thank you for this honor.