

SEQUEL

“Following the Muse”

The years after the War were busy. Trying to grow up in an androgynous body, big hands, big feet, big ears, flat chested, took a lot of energy. Wanting so much to be glamorous, slender, lithe and lovely. And a dancer. Enamored by wonderful romantic movies with characters in gowns, tuxedos. Music on the radio, blaring big bands. And the challenge of high school.

Abraham Lincoln High School on Ocean Parkway, on the way to Bay 7 at the beach in Coney Island, past the Guardian Angel Catholic Church where we were part of the congregation and where June and I spent our most intense Catholic time.

We joined the Sodality, had an installation in which we wore blue dresses and white veils. As part of our membership required, we spent some hours at the church on Saturday cleaning the pews and sweeping around them. We were not allowed to clean the altars nor were we to be concerned with flowers. That was the job of the church ladies. It was satisfying work in the quiet around us. Occasionally, the priest who had been a Navy chaplain in the War, padded up the aisle in his cloth slippers reading his holy book and sending us a cheery hello. He never wore his collar or for that matter, a regular shirt. His uniform was black trousers and a sort of t-shirt. All of our dealings with him were special because he wasn't standoffish and smiled a lot.

It was a unique church. The interior was Gothic in style with a polished wooden main altar and two minor altars in front of which stood the red votive candle holders and above the statues of the Virgin Mary to the left and St. Anthony to the right. Over the double door entrance high above under the peak of the church was a round stained glass window through which the sun shone onto the choir loft and onto the pews. This little church sat across from a large synagogue that had a long staircase to the entrance.

We had left Our Lady of Grace church on Avenue X after Father Cafiero became a Monsignor and after the renovation of the interior

of the church. They had painted the beams across the top of the church in bright colors of cherubim and seraphim. It looked like a circus. And the drive was on to pledge funds for the planned Catholic School. Not for us. How could Mama and Papa pledge funds for five years as they struggled from weekly paycheck to paycheck to keep our lives going?

Eleanor married Al Cicak in Guardian Angel on October 1, 1949. All the sisters were in the wedding party. The reception was held at the Bossert Hotel in Brooklyn. The newlyweds went to Canada for their honeymoon and stayed at the Fontaine Bleu Motel in Niagara Falls. It was the first marriage for the sisters. Jo-Ann was not quite 5 yrs. old. We wore sea foam green gowns, the first gown of my life. For all my good memory, I can't remember the wedding or the reception. I was almost 15 years old and just coming out of androgyny into womanhood.

Gene Shepherd, Hurling epithets out of the window
William Saroyan's "My Father Sits in the Dark"
Dreiser, Theodore "An American Tragedy" "Studs Lonergan"
James Joyce "Ulysses", "Finnegan's Wake" Lenny Bruce? Woody Allen? Long John Nebel and UFO's, Barry Gray, Tom Lehrer and Red Foxx records.
TV "Time for Beany" with characters Captain Huffenpuff, Dishonest John and Cecil, the Seasick Serpent.
John and Marsha on radio
Stan (The Man) Freberg,
Ed Sullivan Show appearance with "Dayo), "Man, that's piercing
Spoofs: Dragnet and St. George and the Dragonet
Autobiography: "It Only Hurts When I Laugh"

Have you ever read or seen something that touched you so much that tears crept up but not out? It's as if there had been so many experiences that pushed you to tears but you didn't cry. If tears are allowed to grow and spill over, the crying may never stop. And if it should, would it diminish your perception of who you are? Would it then be possible to build up your image as you knew yourself or will the diminution of you become permanent so that it leaves you fearing to ever cry again? Please don't ask me to cry.