

# Genizah

For Jakob Stein

Item, copies of Italian Citizenship *de jure sanguinis* application along with grandfather's original Naturalization papers, father's birth certificate with misspellings of proper names and surnames, and grandmother's passport featuring her "naso aquilino"—won't need them where I'm going.

Item, long metal box of slides made by father in the 1950s, no slide projector anyway.

Item, loose b/w photos of 1950s family life, may be dropped down the hatch and watched as they scatter, like ashes.

Item, framed and unframed high school, college, and grad school certificates, never took a second look at them anyway while alive, would you?

Item, sheafs of medical records that record stages of distress & decline in my waning years, too depressing to think they will survive me.

Item, several sheets of bright yellow *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* stationery Mitch sent me 40 years ago unless Mitch wants them back. (He might.)

Item, a boy's sweet memories of Israeli TV series, *Shtisel*, along with a boy's fond memories of *The Twilight Zone* and unfond memories of *Ben Casey*, whose steady succession of brain tumors may have made me vulnerable to fast multiplying cells.

Item, the loveliest of days we spent in Savannah, the weekends we shared pea soup for dinner in New Brunswick & Allentown, the night the pipes burst in the Barn, and we hosted the whole cast of George's Plumbing, somehow finding a way to pick up and serve pizza in a place where food delivery was a pipe-dream.

Item, warm remembrance of the best and only Halloween party we ever threw, with guests flocked in opposing corners, perhaps because it seemed scandalous for hetero pros to see a boy named Phil wearing a dress (on Halloween no less) way back in 1983. But who had the bright idea of paddling the leaky rowboat in the muddy pond and losing one of its useless oars? Was it Phil? (Charon, are you listening?)

Item, speculative thoughts about the welfare and whereabouts of first real Bronx girlfriend and sometime best friend Michael Chieco, whose mother destroyed his collection of Beatles records in a fit of pique that didn't prevent his wearing spot-on imitations of John Lennon's sneakers and granny glasses. (Why did we kick him out of the band? Best lead singer we ever had.)

Item, missing tickets to Woodstock, priced at \$18 for 3 days of fun & frolic in the mud and stinking cowpies along with fond but fading echoes of Santana, Joe Cocker, and Canned Heat.

Item, vivid memories of SF hikes and hot-tubs with Vicki & Laura, of drinks at the Persian Aub Zam Zam Room where Bruno made great martinis but was leery of gays, of the night the waitress at Pabellón Español looked me in the eye and said "Men, they are always *hongree*" (I was, I am).

Item, every bad photo of me ever taken from fat boy pre-teen years to fat-head look as I approached demise. If new set of teeth can be prised from my mouth before cremation, please send it down the chute or return c/o Dr. Yum, Allentown.

Item, memory of night Jakob Stein impulsively climbed out the window of the Oak Room in downtown Santa Cruz only to be caught hitching an hour later by yours truly who drove the abashed scholar-poet home.

Item, solitary standings at the end of the world in Bennington, the quaking aspen leaves it took Chaucer to help me see, that wonderful day when the French prof rescued us after we got lost on the way to Auvers-sur-Oise, the wild ride on rented bikes the boys and I took at Fontainebleau, every day of the months we spent living in London where "we were so happy for a time."

Item, remnants of sea glass gathered on the shores of Fort Bragg, bony drifts of wood sculpted from logs beached beneath Mendocino cliffs, galleries altered and redesigned by incoming and outgoing tides.

Item, Anasazi pottery shards pocketed on two spirit quest climbs to Tsankawi, precious memories of Zuni and Canyon de Chelly, hopefully preserved in the back chambers of my sons' minds where they are in no danger of being lost.

Item, the hardbound copy of Pound's *Personae* purloined from Alan Cheuse, inclusive of "two gross of broken statues" and "a few thousand battered books."

Item, today's sudden squall of belated January snow prompts me to ask, "Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?"

Item, "Time has a wallet on his back in which he packs alms for oblivion." So do I.

—Tom Cartelli