

Chapter Five

Life with Al

Apartments were still not available in New York. They still had not built enough houses and apartments after the war. Al had to move in with me in my rented room.

After we were married a few months, we were lucky enough to get an apartment in a new two-family house in the Bronx, not far from Al's parents and his brother Murray. Al was making \$75 a week and I was making \$65 a week. The rent was \$85 a month. My plan was to stop working and start a family, but we really could not afford that yet.

We did not have a car and had to commute with Murray. He picked us up every morning and drove us to the train on his way to work. We took a taxi home after we got off the train. After a year of this Al started to earn more money and I was able to retire. We were able to buy a Chevrolet as well. I became pregnant; my dream came true.

I could not have been happier. I remember Al driving me to the doctor on Park Avenue to confirm my condition. Tears of happiness were streaming down my face. I felt great and enjoyed being pregnant. Our first child was born in Doctor's Hospital in New York City on March 17, 1950, St. Patrick's Day. He weighed six pounds, four ounces and was a healthy baby.

We named him Richard Lewis. When I was pregnant, we watched the Children's Hour on Sunday and there was a cute little boy named Ricky. That is where his name came from. He was named after my father whose name was Louis.

He was a cute little boy. When he was six months old, he pulled himself up and was standing in his crib. I did not believe it so I put him down and he got right back up. He

walked at nine months and was talking when he was about a year old. He called me Charlotte because that is what he heard Al call me.

He was a very active little boy. He was always running and jumping. He and I were always talking, and I can remember when I was dressing him one day and weren't talking he said, "Mommy, why we not talking."

Once Richard was born, Al figured I was going to be busy taking care of him full-time. As a result, he started to play golf! Golf!!

He got up at 6:00 a.m., and I thought he was getting up to feed Richard. He was going to play golf! One Sunday he went to play despite a heavy rain storm. I could not imagine how he could be playing in such a storm. He finally came home, dry as a bone and told me they went to Connecticut to play to avoid the rain.

We bought a house in Creskill, New Jersey, and moved to the suburbs in the winter of 1950. Richard was eight months old. It was a beautiful little house with three bedrooms and one bathroom on the top of a small hill. Bill and Bea lived close by. Murray and his wife, Flora, and Al's Uncle Lou and his family each bought houses near us. The mortgage was \$85 a month including taxes.

The house had a large patio, which was about three feet off the ground. Richard would run across the patio and jump off the end. He was only a year and a half old at the time. We had a railing put up and that ended the jumping. I would put him on the patio with his toys while I cleaned the house. He would climb over the railing every time. There was no containing him, so I gave up.

Our second son, Spencer, was born on March 2, 1953, a day before my birthday. I always thought he was as great a birthday gift I could have received. After being used to active Richard, Spencer was a breath of spring. He was so good, and we referred to him as my best boy because he never refused to take out the garbage, or open the door for our dog Candy, or anything we asked of him. He was always willing to help.

Spencer was also a very good brother to Richard and to our third son, Bennett, who was born on February 13, 1954, just 11 months after him. Bennett will always be my baby no matter how old he gets. He was easy to raise.

We sold the house in 1955 and bought a new house in Fair Lawn, New Jersey. It was a split-level house with three bedrooms, one bathroom, and an unfinished room on the garage level. It did not take long to expand it to three bathrooms.

Al got busy finishing what was to be our den with a saw and a broken hammer. With my Brother Bill's help and a good plumber, Al finished the den and second bathroom. He did a great job despite no idea what he was doing and limited ability. It was a good thing he had a bright future in business.

This was a new development and we all moved in at about the same time. There were many couples about the same age as us with children about the same age as ours. We met such nice people who were to remain friends for many years.

Blanche and Marvin White lived on the next street. Al and Marvin were as close as brothers. They did everything together. They spoke to each other several times a day and played cards and golf together on a regular basis.

Our other friends were Helen and Henny Weil, Roz and Lenny Rosen, Ruth and Norman Rockwell, Jan and Eddy Silverman, Mimi and Will Marks, Flo and Dave Webber, Mickey and Paul Letterman, Marilyn and Shelly Gross. We all remained close friends for the rest of our lives and each retired in Florida within a few years of each other.

Marvin White's brother Howie lived in and worked at the Concord Hotel in the Catskill Mountains near Monticello, New York. We would go to the hotel for long weekends with Blanche and Marvin and sometimes just drove up (two hours) for dinner with Howie and Joan.

Our oldest son, Richard, went to Radburn School. The principal was Mrs. Branca, who was very tall and had gray hair. One day Richard came home from school and said Mrs. Branca was going to die soon. I asked him why he would say that. He told me, "she can't get any taller and she can't get any older because she had gray hair. So, she is going to die." Both Spencer and Bennett went through Radburn School as well.

I was busy raising my boys. We did everything together. They helped me build a brick retaining wall in the front yard and a patio in the back. They went to the nursery with me to get plants and helped plant them. They went to the dress shop with me but I don't think they were very happy about that.

We eventually joined the Alpine Country Club along with some of our friends from Fair Lawn. We had a great time at Alpine and met many wonderful people. Life was great! We played golf, cards, and enjoyed great food together. We spent a great deal of time there, eating, drinking, and dancing. The club was about 20 minutes from Fair Lawn.

It was the happiest time of my life.

When the kids were old enough for Hebrew School we joined the Fair Lawn Jewish Center along with the entire neighborhood. We had three beautiful Bar Mitzvahs at the Temple each with parties at the Concourse Plaza Hotel in the Bronx. We also had Al's parent's 50th Anniversary party at the same location. Surprisingly, none were threatened by snow storms

Richard had his Bar Mitzvah in the winter of 1963. He was in seventh grade at Thomas Jefferson Junior High School at the time.

He attended the Milford Academy in Connecticut instead of staying in Fair Lawn for high school. The Milford Academy is famous today as a post high school prep school for great athletes which are not quite academically ready for college. He did very well there as a student and matured a great deal.

He went to a small college in New Hampshire but did more skiing than studying and did not last very long there. He completed one semester. We then tried a local junior college but that did not work either. He had other interests more important to him than school.

Spencer was always more focused than his brothers. He went through the Fair Lawn schools and off to junior college in Boston. He graduated and went to work as an electrician and has been doing well ever since.

Our youngest son, Bennett, was an excellent place kicker on the high school football team. Al and I had no idea he was kicking a football in his spare time after school. We were not sure when he learned such a craft, but he did teach himself. He was very good and made several post-season teams. His friends still call him "Toe" to this day.