

The Story Of Charlotte Hyman

From Phillipport to Boca Raton

By Charlotte Hyman

Chapter One

My Life Started in Phillipport

I was born on March 3, 1927, in a country house in Phillipport, New York. It was, and still is, a quaint little Sullivan County town in the Catskill Mountains about two hours north of New York City, on NY Route 17 near Monticello. Although my family only lived there a short time after my birth, I returned there for several summers as a young child and into my teens.

The town consisted of Shaustacks General Store, which catered to the Jewish community in the area. A dirt road which leads away from the heart of town and up the mountain leading to a beautiful white church complete with a steeple and bell. Beyond the church is a one-room school house which my sisters and brother attended. Mrs. Church taught everyone from kindergarten to eighth grade.

The high school was in Ellenville, a short distance from Phillipport.

Next to the school was the post office, general store, and ice cream parlor operated by Mrs. Stormont. Beyond the post office was a hotel with bungalows, then owned by Mrs. Katz, who did all the cooking. The main house consisted of a kitchen, dining room, and social room where they had shows and dancing.

Most of the houses at that time had wrap-around porches with rocking chairs and this hotel was no exception. Guests of the hotel would typically spend their evenings after dinner rocking on the porch and discussing the topics of the day.

Our house was about half a mile up the road. There was another general store near our house called Herling's, which sold food and served as still another ice cream parlor. Herling's also served as the local gas station and bus stop. The bus would not stop unless travelers raised a flag on a pole near the road.

Our house was directly across the street from Herling's. Farther up the mountain were farms and more houses.

My parents, Louis and Bessie Jolkover were both born in Russia. Momma came to America with her sister Fanny. My father, who I called Papa, had tuberculosis which was a common disease in those days.

Their intention was to work and save enough money to bring the rest of the family to the new country.

We became friendly with Lottie and Ernest Rouse, who lived close by. They were not relatives, but they were to become like family to me.

Lottie and Ernest lived in a beautiful house beyond Herling's with their Uncle John. Their house was one of the largest and most beautiful in town. Like Papa, Uncle John had tuberculosis. Lottie and Ernest came to live with him and care for him after his wife died. I remember when he died and was in a coffin in the living room. Someone lifted me up to see him in his deceased state. That vision has been planted in my memory and I can still picture him today as clear as if it were yesterday.

Phillipsport had no electricity or much running water in the 1920s. Every home had an outhouse complete with the current Sears & Roebuck catalog to pass the time.

There was a huge snow storm the day I was born. The storm left about three feet of snow on the ground and made it difficult to travel locally. Doctor Pearson, the only doctor in the area, came in his horse and buggy, along with his nurse, Lottie.

I was the youngest of four children. My older sister, Lillian, was 15 when I was born; my brother, William, 10; and my sister Sylvia, 5. Lill gave me my first bath and weighed me on a vegetable scale no doubt borrowed from Herling's across the street. I weighed nine pounds, six ounces and had a full head of black hair which eventually turned blonde. My hair remained blonde until I was in my twenties when it darkened considerably to brunette.

I was named Charlotte. I am the third daughter and youngest child of Louis and Bessie Jolkover. I walked when I was just nine months old and was talking before my first birthday.

Our house was close to the main road and had a stream at the end of the property. Ice cold water ran in the stream. Momma would wash our clothes in the stream and food was kept in a box in the water to keep cold. Our drinking water came from an opening in the rocks at the foot of the mountain.

The family had moved to Phillipsport because Papa had tuberculosis. There was no cure at that time. Phillipsport offered clean air and a healthy environment which helped him to cope. There was a sanitarium nearby where he visited from time to time for rest and rehabilitation. Poppa was a builder. He built and owned our house in Phillipsport and a two-family house in the Bronx. He drove a Studebaker. He died when I was only 18 months old.

The Great Depression started soon after my father died. Our family experienced a crash about the same time the country did. The financial struggle was devastating and changed our lives forever. Papa's death left Mama with four children, all under the age of 15. Lottie and Ernest had no children and wanted to adopt me, but Momma would not allow it.

There was a small insurance policy which enabled us to remain in Phillipsport for a while but when the money ran out, we left.