

Chapter Three

School Years in the Bronx And Momma's Death

We moved back to the Bronx in September of 1933. My older sister, Lill, married Ben Cohen and moved out of our apartment, which was now on Vyse Avenue. My brother Bill was living and working in New Jersey and eventually met his future wife, Beatrice, who we called Bea.

I started school at P.S. 66 the year after I lived with Lottie. Then P.S. 66 became a high school and I was sent to P.S. 54. Some of the mothers protested this change of schools because there was a dangerous street crossing on the way. The protesters did not want their little darlings in such jeopardy every morning and afternoon. Not much came of the protest and nobody got hurt crossing the busy street.

My mother was able to transfer me to another school closer to our home. The disappointment was that I was no longer going to school with children in my area. There was only one other girl from my neighborhood who was familiar to me.

Junior high school was even farther from our house. I can remember walking home from school with the snow piled high around me and when I got home my feet were so cold I would rest them on the radiator to bring back the circulation.

We did not move again until 1941 just before entering high school. This was a one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx which was called Sound View. It was on the western tip of Long Island. Momma loved the location. There was a little park nearby where she could sit by the water and read her Jewish newspaper.

We got new beds and were busy fixing the new apartment. Ten days after moving, Momma became very sick and was taken to Mt. Sinai Hospital in Manhattan. We did

not have a telephone and could not call Lill, who did not have a phone either. Sylvia went to the hospital with Momma and I was sent on two trolley cars to get my sister Lill and her husband, Ben.

Momma had not been well for many years, but the doctors didn't know what was wrong with her. They were treating her for a bad heart but that was not the problem. She became worse while the doctors worked with the misdiagnosis. She had told us many times of a very high temperature she had as a child in Russia. I always thought her heart was weakened by whatever she had. Unfortunately, she died on July 15, 1942, after only a few days in the hospital. I was 15 years old at the time.

She was a good woman and a good mother. She worked hard all her life. She was a good seamstress and able to make all our clothes. She also redesigned clothes given to us by friends and relatives. She never went out without looking good. Her hair and makeup always perfect.

Sylvia and I went to live with my sister Lill and her husband, Ben in their one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx. We were all shaken and upset about Momma's death which was so unexpected. I slept on the couch and there was a folding bed set up in the living room for Sylvia.

I spent the rest of that summer of '42 at Lottie's house in Phillipsport.

I was supposed to go to Morris High School in the Bronx that fall. After Mamma's death I was in no state to take the required academic courses, so I opted to go to Central Commercial High School in New York City. There I could go to school part-time and get a job and help with our finances.

Sylvia moved and took a job in Washington, DC. I was out of school at noon every day and worked in the afternoon. I worked for a publishing company initially. I later worked for Dr. Cohen, an orthopedic surgeon. I always hoped to become a nurse but after Momma died I no longer had the luxury to pursue my dream. I thought working for a doctor would be as close as I could get.

Lill, Ben and I were able to get a two-bedroom apartment in 1943 on Morris Avenue in the Bronx. I had a boyfriend at the time who was able to pull a few strings for us. I

finally had a room of my own and no longer had to sleep on a couch. I finally felt like a real person.



Mom died on July 15, 1942. I was only 15 years old.