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# Chapter Two

## The Bronx

Momma sold our house in Phillipsport and the house in the Bronx, and we moved to an apartment in the Bronx to be near her sisters (Celia and Anna) and brother (Sam). Momma was not well enough to work and had to apply to Child Welfare to support us. Franklin D. Roosevelt was President at the time. He started WPA (Works Progress Administration) and CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) work camps so people had work and were able to survive through those difficult days. When my brother Bill was old enough he went to work at a CCC camp building roads for the state. When my sister Lill was old enough she worked in a millinery (hat) store in New York City.

Lill was beautiful and took advantage of her good fortune. She modeled for an artist and her picture was on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post on the January 22, 1927, issue. She was 15 years old at the time. That picture is proudly displayed in my current home in Boca Raton, Florida.



She had many boyfriends who wanted to marry her. She rejected all of them, but we were happy to accept gifts and gestures from the more capable suitors. One boyfriend installed a telephone in our house just, so he could talk to her. Another sent me a sled in the shape of an airplane. I loved that sled and had one wonderful winter with it.

We moved often, as many families did, to take advantage of government programs designed to ease the depression. When a family moved to a new apartment they received two months free rent and a complete paint job. We took advantage often.

### **Summer at Lottie's**

When I was four years old, pale and very thin, Momma sent me back to Phillipsport to spend the summer with Lottie and Ernest before starting school the following year. She put me on a train alone bound for the country. I remember sitting crouched at the window, frightened and nervous about what was in store for me. Momma was a good mother and she meant the best for me, but I did not feel loved or wanted that summer. The lonely train ride was more than a scared four-year-old could handle.

Lottie was waiting for me when I arrived. Seeing her happy face helped my sad feelings immensely. She had a two-door Ford with a rumble seat. She and Ernest were very good to me, but I don't remember her ever kissing or hugging me. Ernest never spoke to me. I am sure they liked having me live with them, but they did not seem to know how to act with me. They never had children of their own and I was a very new experience for them.

My sister Sylvia came to spend Christmas with me at Lottie's. We went to midnight mass at the church with Lottie. At home we had a Christmas tree complete with presents which was a treat for the two little Jewish girls from New York City.

Unlike many houses in Phillipsport, Lottie's house had electricity, running water, a bathroom on the second floor, and was centrally heated. The bathroom was used sparingly as they could not use too much water, so the well would not run dry.

At Lottie's I was known as "the little Jew girl." I attended Sunday school and church service every week. I passed the collection plate, worked the clam bakes, bingo parties, and church suppers. (Sounds like something out of an old Mickey Rooney film.)

I eventually returned to The Bronx to live with my Jewish family. I remember sitting in an overstuffed chair with a most uncomfortable feeling in my stomach. I did not know who I was or where I belonged. This was the saddest moment of my childhood.

## **Back to Phillipsport**

Momma, Sylvia, and I moved back to Williamsport the next summer. She gave up our spacious apartment in the Bronx for a room in the country. I was not happy with this arrangement and ran away to Lottie often. I had my own room there and Momma always knew where I was.

Momma taught me to knit and sew when I was very young. One year when I did not go to Lottie's, Momma created a project for me to keep me busy over the summer. I knitted a royal blue skirt, a jacket, and a sweater. I suppose she thought it would help keep me living with her. It worked!

What I loved about the country is everything we ate was fresh. We regularly had home grown fruits and vegetables and drank unpasteurized milk. There is nothing like eating fresh sausage, but I did have to watch while Ernest killed the pig. That is another event I will never forget.

