

A Place Called Home

Mom worked at the synagogue in the administration department and also helped run the gift shop. We had some nice items she brought home from the shop to help decorate our modest home. Like a 5-branch Shabbat candelabra and a 6-glass set of shot glasses on a platter with SHALOM engraved on each glass. Obviously things she got while running the shop and which are still in my possession to this day, now decades later. In fact, I don't have many things from my folks, but chose a few. My dad's mezuzah necklace which I still wear, their home mezuzah which still adorns our home in Sydney, the little figurines of the bubbe and zayde, obviously things which are valuable in the historic meaning, no matter the costs. Oh, I also have the Miracle Whip knife.

The knife is slightly serrated and useful in cutting salami into slices from the casing in which it is wrapped. By the way, the word salami comes from the Latin "sal" meaning salt, since that's how the Italians used to preserve the meat before they had refrigeration. The knife we have is a bit wider than ordinary and fit perfectly all the way down into the endings of the fake mayonnaise that is Miracle Whip. When the folks passed away in 2004/2005, Mike took the knife and when he passed in 2014, I put up my hand, or maybe just informed Judy, the knife was coming with me. A funny reminder of the past; history is like that. It was merely functional in its day, but now it triggers memories of a good past.

The neighborhood of Meadowlake was full of what would later be called baby boomers, children born after the 2nd World War. JC Nichols was the developer of much of the Kansas side of Kansas City. In fact, The City of Prairie Village, Kansas, was a highly successful, planned community he envisioned. The 1950s were a period of rapid growth following the initial phase of construction: By 1949, Prairie Village had been named the "best planned community in America" by the National Association of Home Builders. In the early 1950s, the Nichols Company's home construction department was completing an average of one house per day to meet the high demand for housing. The community continued to expand with the opening of the Corinth Square Shopping Center in 1955, adding to the previously opened Prairie Village Shopping Center (1947). The area was characterized by suburban homes, often in the Cape Cod style, with tree-lined streets and neighborhood shopping centers, serving as a model for other developments across the country.

Our home was small, less than 1,000 square feet, and the small kitchen was the center of our life. It wasn't long before the back porch became another family room and a half bath helped ease the 5 of us, 1 bathroom problems. In the back yard was the apple tree and a swing set which was useful when we were toddlers, but the kids at the end of the block had bigger yards, so we often went there. Of course, the street was an extension of our homes as we played many ball games and rode our bikes

in the neighborhood with ease.