

Sophie and Avrahm Cassorla's Biographies

by Adele Baruch-Runyon

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compiled 8-21-03 by and edited

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These are stories about my father's parents and their friends. Right now, this collection includes stories compiled by Adele Runyan (nee Baruch), my cousin. They tell of life among Separdic Jews of Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia, both in the old countries and here in te New York City area. Some of these stories go back as far as 1910. *Thanks, Adele!* Your interest and foresight then (1970's) have given all Cassorla relations and others a great resource.

The first story, "Research Proposal," was written by Adele for a first-year oral literature course at William Smith College, in Geneva NY, in 1973. The second one shown here was wttiten as a high school student in 1972.

Special thanks also go to my brother, **Marshall Cassorla**, who scanned many of the old family photos that appear on this page.

Some day I hope to supplement this with screen captures and transcripts of my 1979 one-hour bio film covering similar ground, called *The Grandma Movie*. -- Albert



Adele Baruch, several years before writing these reports in high school and college



A Research Proposal

I had originally attempted to study the oral literature of a small community of Sephardic Jews that are now living in Rockaway Beach, N.Y. These people are my relatives or friends of relatives. Their community is dwindling quickly (though its history goes back hundreds of years) because this current generation of children, involved in movement, has almost completely broken away from its "ways.

The people now living in this community have been together for over eighty years. They had originally come from small towns in what is not part of Yugoslavia and Greece; and which was then part of the Ottoman Empire. Their small subculture in Turkey was built upon a community of Sephardim who had moved there during part of the Spanish Inquisition.

The men of these European towns (mostly from the town of Monastir and a nearby, now Greek, town of Cavala) were forced to leave. The Balkan

1 Wars broke out, and as Grandma Cassorla (Sophie Cassorla, nee Passo) stated, "The men, you know, they want to see what is going on in the world. They don't want to get killed."2

Footnotes:

1. (G.C.) GRANDMA SOPHIE CASSORLA will stand for my Grandma Cassorla, (G.B.) GRANDMA ALJOFA BARUCH will stand for Grandma Baruch (they are best friends now, and they have been for most of their lives). The other two people who were interviewed in my attempt were Becky and Isaac, a married couple, whose names will be written cut.

2. All the quotations in this report are, in truth, really paraphrases. I tried to write the words as close to the original expression as possible. Direct quotation is impossible to put down on paper because these people speak with a mixture of Spanish, English, and Turkish; and they also use a great deal of hand and facial expression to communicate a feeling or description.

The particular art of these people which I had hoped to study was the part of their oral literature which revolves around the stories about their lives. In order to explain the reason for the failure in my attempts to study the life stories, it is necessary to first describe some of the basic characteristics of the story telling.

The men usually tell their stories around a large dinner table after a meal. A big audience plays an important role for the men storytellers; and when a story is being told, they usually demand the full attention of at least everyone at their end of the table. The women usually tell their stories to a smaller group in a more intimate atmosphere. A woman will usually try to relate a story (off to the side) to one or two people when the rest of the people in the room are busy doing something else, such as eating or cleaning up after a meal.

(Handwritten note: It is interesting that after all these centuries, they still call themselves Spanish.)

The life stories can be divided into two major categories. One kind of story is told by the older Spanish people among themselves about a common past. The other category of stories comprise those that are meant especially for the younger generation to hear. In these latter stories, there is more emphasis on humor; and the situation described seems, in general, to be more exaggerated. Both kinds of stories are told in anecdotal form, in Spanish.

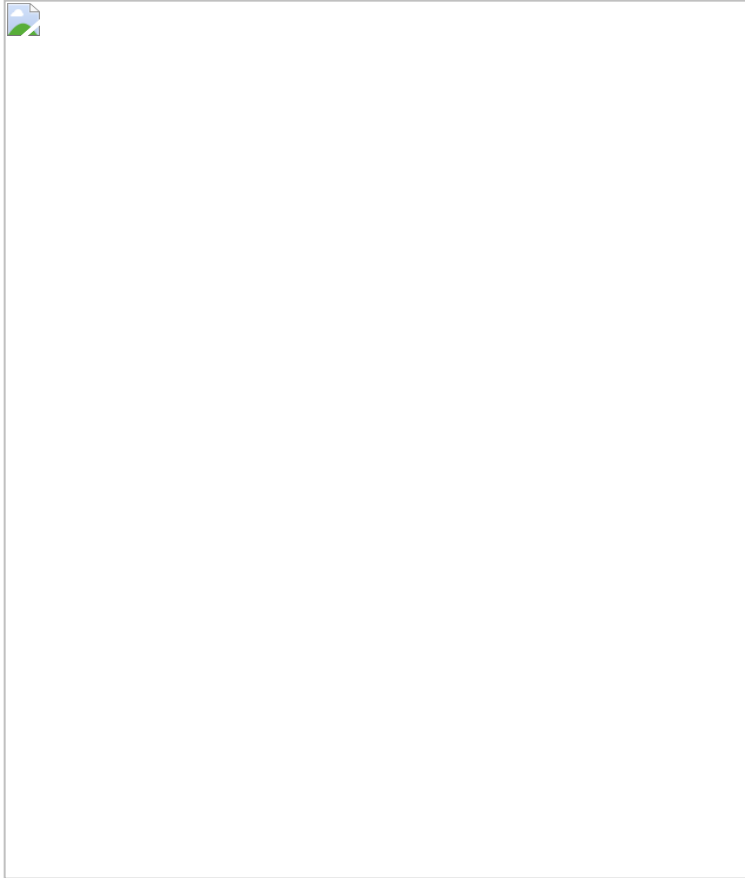
Recently, I am beginning to suspect that there is a third kind of story that is being created, which is meant to be told to the third generation of children (mostly in English). These stories are whittled down to their bare essentials; and they are extremely exaggerated.

The situation of an interviewer with a tape recorder (which I couldn't work discreetly at all) is not the natural family and/or friend situation in which the stories are normally told. The older people were afraid of the equipment; and they were especially afraid that the information, once recorded for use at a college, would be regarded as 'junk' by scholars.

The men, as I had mentioned, need a large audience for the telling of their stories, and all of the interviews were conducted privately. Also, the stories told among themselves or to their children (who speak Spanish) need to be recorded in Spanish.

(I can remember many times when the chances in stories, once translated, had been illustrated for me. I would be at a dinner table, and when everyone was laughing over a story, I would ask for the story to be repeated in English; and I could never understand what was so funny. Though much of the story was probably lost because I did not bring a shared meaning to it, I am sure that a lot was lost because it was not in Spanish.)

However, despite all my mistakes, I was able to catch some remnants of what I would consider to be the "real stories". These remnants were mostly captured from the women who are used to an intimate situation in story telling.



Isaac Baruch

Isaac, who is known throughout the community for his wit and skill in story telling, was completely unable to recount anything but his economic progress over the years to the tape recorder.

Perhaps, most importantly, these stories are told as a form of pleasure. Like a good wine that is served after a meal, the stories are told as a way to relax after dinner. The view of these stories as a way to relax led me to think of these stories in relation to the idea of tension as the source of art.

When these people originally came to this country from the small European towns, they pretty much stayed together in their own ghetto. Soon after the men fled their country, the young women from the towns were sent to America to begin families. (Often the match was made by letters from Monastir to America). However, even though these people had each other, they also had to cope with a culture which they knew nothing about (a new language, new kinds of people, new values and laws). Their home life centered around their small community in East New York, but day to day economic life caused them to constantly come up against this totally alien culture.

My belief is that the life stories are a reflection of the tension between the "old culture" of Monastir and Cavala, and the new culture in America to which these people had to adjust.

There are some conflicts between the two cultures that are most obvious (and I think most disturbing) which I was able to pick up during the interviews. One conflict has to do with sex roles. In the European towns, the men seem to have been completely dominant. The women were trained all during their childhood in the ways to make a good home for your husband (and later a family). The man commanded all the respect and made all the major decisions.

In America, the woman was forced to become more independent and to make some of her own decisions. She had to run a household with her husband far from home; and as a result, she gained more authority in the family.

Another major contrast between the two cultures is the importance of the family life in general. In Monastir, the family was the center of all social, economic and religious life. In America, beginning with the split between the social and economic life of the men, the family decreased in its importance as the years went by.

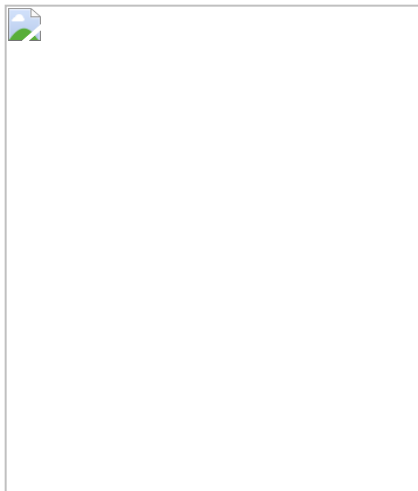


Aljofa Baruch

The importance of friends and neighbors was another aspect of life which changed order the influence of American culture. As GRANDMA ALJOFA BARUCH said, "They never did one without the other." Marriage among relatives was very common so the worlds of friends and family were inextricably woven. In America, (though many ties were strongly kept) with the many functional specific relations that had, to be developed, the attitude towards friends had to be of increasing independence.

I believe that the stories of the older generation, told among themselves, are told to help preserve old ways and build, security against an alien world; they provided relief from the conflicts of daily life.

I would like to describe some of the stories as they were told to me on the tape recorder to better illustrate my theory on the causes and relief of tension.



Sophie Cassorla, circa 1962

Several of the stories displayed the patterns of the expected sex roles in the "old culture". GRANDMA SOPHIE CASSORLA 's husband was decided for her while she was in Europe and he was in America. She was young; she longed to stay with her family, and yet there was nothing she could do to alter the decision. The story, as flit was related to me, snows GRANDMA SOPHIE CASSORLA as a completely passive character in the hands of relatives and fate. In fact, the words that she kept using again and again to describe her emotional state when she heard the news of the proposed marriage was "I am (was) paralyzed!"

GRANDMA SOPHIE CASSORLA is really a great storyteller, in that she relates not only her feelings about the situation, but she also relates the story from about four other points of view. She described Grandpa C's thoughts as he was going down to Ellis Island to meet his prospective wife and father-in-law (he did not want to marry at that time either); but he went to look at the bride to be sure that "at least she shouldn't be blind or crippled."

After several years of being married, GRANDMA SOPHIE CASSORLA was finally able to send money to her mother in America. This, however, caused one of the major conflicts in her life as far as developing independence is concerned. Previously, because she had to stay home with her children, Grandpa C. had done all the grocery shopping. When her mother came to this country, though, there was always someone home to look after the children when GRANDMA SOPHIE CASSORLA had to go out. And Grandpa C. (who had little affection for the marketplace) handed her a shopping bag and said, 'Here, now you ain't got no excuse not to go shopping anymore.' This forced GRANDMA SOPHIE CASSORLA to not only become more active, but also to learn to communicate to others in English.

GRANDMA ALJOFA BARUCH related a story about herself earning money which was quite interesting. Because of the poverty many of the Sephardic families faced in East New York, many of the women had to work as soon as they got married. However, Grandpa B. always forbade GRANDMA ALJOFA BARUCH to do any kind of work (aside from the chores of the home.

She said, "I felt ashamed, because all of my friends were working."

Finally, she devised a plan. She convinced her husband that she needed a sewing machine. With the machine, she did piece-work (garments sewn on a per-piece basis to manufacturers) on the sly for many years. When her husband left the house, she would have a garment manufacturer bring the materials to the house; and she sewed all during the day. She used to hide the finished garments under a high bed.

It wasn't until one day, while preparing the house for a ceremony of mourning, did Grandpa B. find his wife's work in the house. At this point, he finally conceded to let her earn money.

Isaac told a story about why he decided it was "good" to marry the wife that was chosen for him after he had met her for the first time. (I caught this story as he related it to the family during lunch between interviews). When Isaac was first invited to Beckey's house, following the customs related to courtship, the entire family sat around the main room and the woman of the house (Beckey's sister-in-law) passed around jelly and toast.

Beckey, being very frightened and shy, could neither eat nor speak. Isaac said, "Then I decided it would be good to marry her. She will be cheap; she will not eat too much." The audience reaction to this anecdote is always one of laughter because now Beckey is a very large (though still quite beautiful) woman.

The importance of the family in this Sephardic culture was related Not so much in stories, but in the comments that were interjected between stories. G. C. said, "There was plenty of trouble... But I started to have a family, this and that, my husband, he was always a rood man... Thank God."



Aljofo Baruch, circa 1962, Albert's Bar Mitzvah

GRANDMA ALJOFA BARUCH repeated a one-sentence summary of all her years several times during the interviews: "Everything the best I had, wonderful children, wonderful grandchildren, I have grand children, even grand-grandchildren. Everything wonderful."

Several times, she was content to end with this, but she elaborated on aspects of her life when I prompted her with questions.

The stories conveyed a very deep and intimate relationship, with neighbors, especially in the early, difficult years in East New York. GRANDMA SOPHIE CASSORLA described the way in which the neighbors shared the work with each other's children. She saw her friends as invaluable in helping to adjust to a new culture: "This kind of life was the best, Thank God. No fights, no arguments -- that's why it didn't hurt not to know English.

Becky, when describing her wedding ceremony (a celebration involving anyone that wanted to come into the house) said that "All the strangers in the neighborhood came to eat the food. Your friends were too polite."

GRANDMA ALJOFA BARUCH summarized her life again. "Nobody had a life better than this-- You don't get jealous, with friends you pass your life. Otherwise it is miserable -- no money, no food, no mother, no father, no ninguno."

Ethnography Report:

A Biographical Study of the Culture of the Sephardim

Adele Baruch

I. Introduction

The subculture which I have studied is the one of the Sephardic Jews. One community which is a stronghold of this culture in America is in a group of apartment houses in Far Rockaway.

The people of this community have been together for approximately 80 years. They originally came from small towns a was then part of Turkey. One town, from which many of the people have come is Monastir. This town is now part of Yugoslavia. Others had moved out of Monastir, in search of work to the factory town of Cavala. These towns are across the mountains from each other. Cavala is, today, part of Greece.

The men of these towns were forced to leave, in order to escape the draft. When the Balkan wars broke out, they came to America. Because they always married within their group, the women soon followed. They came to the East Side of New Work; and they married and lived there for about 12 to 15 years. When their families became a little larger, they all moved to the "suburbs" of New Lots, in Brooklyn.. They remained there for about 40 years, until all of their children had married and moved away. The next place that they moved to, is the group of apartments in Far Rockaway.

Through my questionnaire, I have attempted to discover what this culture was like in Europe, and how it evolved to be what it is today. I have tried to get an accurate picture of what day to day life was like in Monastir, and what it was like to move to a new country.

There were various problems that I ran into with my interviews. The people that I questioned were all around 80 years old. None of them know their exact age - they range from sometime before or after "the 'fire ". I interviewed my two grandmothers, Grandma C. and Grandma B., both from Monastir, a woman from Cavala, Beckey, and her husband from Monastir, Isaac.

Aside from an age barrier (perhaps experience barrier would be a better description), there was a language barrier. Because they all lived so close to each other and dealt almost exclusively with people of their own group, there was never any real need to learn English. And though they know enough of the language to communicate with me, there were many expressions and phrases they had difficulty in getting across to me.

Understandably, many of their recollections of early childhood weren't very clear. However, they do remember some anecdotes in surprising detail.

Some of the questions that I asked them were questions that they couldn't understand. My grandmother could not understand it when I asked her if she liked her husband when she first met him. In fact, she was a little shocked.

It was a little hard to follow the question format. Grandma C. was very funny. She sat down (a little uncomfortably) and said "I don't know where to start." I asked her the first question, and she went on, without stopping, story by story, about her life, until the birth of her first child. Not only did she tell the stories from her point of view, but from several other's also.

One unfortunate thing though, was that they all stopped their stories at the birth of their first child. It was hard to get them to express any general changes in their lives over the past 50 years. Perhaps my questioning in this area was too general. I had to draw conclusions about change from the drastic differences of the children of my generation from that culture. Also, especially with the men, these people are used to story telling. They expect you to sit and listen, and they became insulted when I began writing. They kept on saying: "Don't write, listen." So I had to piece together information from little phrases or words that I was able to jot down between stories.

They were basically very honest and cooperative. They told, of course many of the tried and trusted stories of their childhood which they have told many times over the years. But in such previously undiscussed areas such as fear of a new country and childhood games they were very honest and helpful in remembering.

The Questionnaire

1. Can you briefly describe the places where you lived?
2. Did you live with your family as a child?
3. Can you describe you home in Europe?
4. What are some of your early recollections of your first friends?
5. How many brothers and sisters did you have? Which ones were you closest with ?
6. Which people were most important in teaching and giving you advice as a child?
7. Was your upbringing strict or relatively free?
8. What kind of games did you play as a child?
9. In what ways was discipline enforced for you?
10. How did you receive training for your occupation?
11. Did you attend a public school? A Hebrew school?
12. What role did religion play in you life as a child?
13. When did you begin your first job?
14. Can you describe your first job and some of the people that you worked with.
15. How old were you when you came to the U.S.?
16. Did you come with any relatives?
17. Why did you come?
18. What was your first reaction to the U.S.
20. Who did you first stay with here?
21. During your first years here, did you stay in a community of Sephardic Jews?
22. How was your husband (or wife) chosen?
23. Can you describe your wedding?
24. Can you describe the community that you lived in during your first years of marriage?
25. Can you describe some changes in the Sephardic community that have taken place over the years? Have many traditions remained? Can you give some examples of change?

II. The Sephardic Culture.

The Turks of the Ottoman Empire, as I have mentioned, were relatively tolerant. As a result some of the Jews there became very prosperous. Part of Monastir was inhabited by these very rich Jews, However, this particular group that I have studied came from the poorer section of town. The people of the poorer section were generally the servants for the wealthier people. Some had small businesses such as a vegetable stand.

The three people who lived in Monastir said they lived comfortably. The houses were usually shared by two relatives (two sisters, for instance)'; and they had two doorways, one for each family. Outside of the doorways were two large stones on which the people used to sit and talk. (This custom of sitting and talking outside was carried all the way to New Lots. Each house there had a bench in front of it.)

Each family, generally, had two large rooms. One room had a large stove (coal-burning), which they used to cook with, heat the house with, and heat the water with. There was no furniture, except some of the - wealthier homes had mats and pillows on which to sit. The children slept in the large room with the stove at night. Isaac slept in a room with 11 other children; and they used to sleep in line according to age. The parents slept in the other room, usually with the youngest child. These people all had wells inside of their houses so they were at least comparatively comfortable. Most of the people in their neighborhood had to go to the center of town to get water

Most of the girls had no formal education. They were trained daily by their mothers in doing housework, cleaning sewing, and in how to keep a Kosher home. Grandma B. was going to be sent to a Greek school that was in the area. However, her mother learned that this was a strongly Catholic school, and gave up the idea of an education for her daughter. Isaac went to school at the Aliance Israelitz Universal. I got the impression that this was a French Hebrew school which was started to spread the French language. The French seemed to have built many similar schools throughout Europe. He was taught Hebrew, Spanish) Greek, and mostly French.

From what I gather, this school was looked down upon by the very orthodox people of the neighborhood. They sent their children away to a school which only spoke Hebrew.

Most of the young girls were sent out of the house to live and work in the homes of the wealthier people. One grandmother was five when she left her family's home; the other was 13. They took care of the children and did some general housekeeping- attaining more responsibilities as they got older. The places where they worked were never more than a few blocks from home. A brother or relative was always dropping by to say hello or to pick the girl up for dinner at home.

Isaac left school at the age of 15 to go to work. He worked in several neighborhood retail stores. From what I gathered, most of the men went out to work at about that age.

Some of the games that the girls played were hide and seek and cards. They also used to sing and dance in a circle, either to the accompaniment of a tambourine or some instruments made from tin cans. The boys used to play team games. One game would involve one team sitting around in a circle with one person guarding them. The other team would try to hit one person on the sitting team with a small ball that was on the end of a string.

Beckey lived in the small port town of Cavala. All of the Sephardic Jews there worked in the tobacco factory there. This town was like Monastir. Beckey's friends and relatives all lived in the poorer part of a wealthy Jewish town. However, because Becky (now 75) was a few years younger than the others, she was affected by the terrible bombings of the Balkan Wars. Consequently, she spent many of the nights of her childhood hiding in a cemetery, away from the bombings. Living was much less comfortable because of the unavailability of supplies and food. Beckey, like most of her friends, worked cleaning up after the men in the factory.

The children didn't have time, really, for much play, in a poor area of a war torn country. But she does remember spending some afternoons by the docks with her friends. They used to play, jumping from boat to boat.

In both these towns, these people's lives were very influenced by religious tradition. Their small Sephardic Temple was open all day- with people constantly praying in it. They would wash their hands and pray before and after each meal. Whenever hard luck hit a household, a child or a parent would go to the temple and pour some oil and give some money to charity.

I really didn't get a clear picture of the way discipline was enforced. They all said that, as children, they never disobeyed their parents. Grandma C. does remember one time when her mother voiced disapproval of her appearance. As a girl of fifteen, she curled her hair high, and tied the ends in a ribbon-in the latest fashion of that time. Her mother did not reprimand her or order her to change her hair, but rather, just stated that the girl was being silly and that she looked prettier with her hair plain.

In 1808, with the takeover of the Turkish government by Sultan Hamid, the Turks changed their laws concerning Jews. They were no longer restricted from military service. With the coming of the Balkan Wars, the men of this group all fled the country to America. To marry outside of your community was unthinkable, and soon letters and money was being sent across the ocean for the women.

During the trip over, none of them recalled having a particularly difficult time. One exception might be the emotional state of Grandma

C. Before sailing, she had gone to the port town of Solonik-where the boats to America were docked. She was with her future sister-in-law and her father. At this town, she met a former employee, who considered her to be almost a daughter. He had heard that the man that she was going to America to marry was a compulsive gambler. He begged her not to go to America so she would not have to marry this man.

However the promise had been made, and she could not return home to her mother who was having some economic troubles as it was. So she came to America with such dread in her heart that she was sick all the way across the ocean. (The rumors that were reported about the man who was to be my grandfather had gotten distorted when they crossed the ocean; the warnings were sent about another man)



Becky Baruch

Becky, who came several years later, had gotten news that she had to learn a language before coming to Ellis Island, or they wouldn't let her in. So she invested 20 dollars and took cram courses in Hebrew before coming over.

When they came to America they all went to live on or around Henry Street on the East Side of New York. Both Becky and Isaac (coming without previous marriage arrangements) went to work within three days of their arrival. Isaac worked in a tin can factory and Becky worked in a piece goods place. Both Grandmothers began carrying out their marriage plans from the moment they got here.

Marriage was done either by a matchmaker, the relative that brought the child over, or through letters between relatives in Europe and the men in America. Marriages were often arranged between cousins or within families (For instance, a girl would marry a boy, and his sister would marry his wife's brother.) Grandma C. was explaining the disadvantages of this system. "If you were having a problem with a person, there was never anyone to tell it to. Everyone was everyone else's relative."



Avrahm Cassorla, circa 1962

My Grandpa C. thought that he would be an exception. He attempted to plan his own marriage. His father died in Europe unexpectedly. He wrote to his mother that, though he had been planning to return home to marry in front of his father's eyes, since that became impossible, he had changed his plans. He told his mother about a girl he had met in America who he planned to marry.

However, knowing this girl's relatives, his mother objected to this match. She was best friends with Grandma C's mother; and she thought Grandma C. to be an appropriate match for her son. She sent a letter to her son telling him to forget about the woman he was planning to marry- and that she was currently sending him a wife from Europe.

Grandma B. was sent over to America, also with instructions from her parents on the man she was to marry. However, unlike the situation with Grandpa C. (who consented to marry my grandmother the moment he saw her) Grandpa B. decided he did not want to marry my Grandmother when he met her at the boat. However, the uncle which brought my Grandmother over took him for a walk on the bridge and convinced him that he had to marry her.

The best picture that I got of the Sephardic customs in the engagement-courtship-wedding...honeymoon(?) procedure was through the stories of Beckey and Isaac.

Their marriage was arranged by a relative-matchmaker. Beckey did not want to get married., but her brother, with whom she was living at the time, felt that she was ready. Arrangements were made so that the two could meet. Isaac and his brother and Beckey and her family were invited over a mutual relatives house. It was not the custom with them to introduce people then, so after the brief visit which consisted of a short conversation and the passing around of some sweet jelly, Beckey still was not sure who her prospective husband was.

However, Isaac remembered her. He called for her unexpectedly the next Friday night. Because he was unexpected, and all the tenants knew this (because everyone always knew everyone else's expected guests) her neighbors felt they should warn Beckey's family. So they put to work their warning system that they had devised. They opened up their doors and the person on the first floor coughed and said the name Isaac-the person on the second floor did the same, until the message reached Beckey on the sixth floor.

However, Beckey was not too happy, to receive her guest. She had just washed her hair and put it in pigtailed; and she had gotten into a housedress. She immediately ran into the back room and locked the door and refused to come out. When Isaac came to the door, her sister-in-law pleaded with Beckey to come out. She refused. Her brother ordered her to come out after Isaac had come in, Beckey had no choice.

So she sat in a corner, and spoke only when spoken to. But to her surprise, when she walked Isaac to the door, he asked her to go to Coney Island with him the next day.

A 15 month courting period followed. Beckey recalls how, after they had been going out for a while, they faced the problem of trying to kiss each other good night in private. All of the neighbors had windows at the tops of the doors that they could look through. When they knew the two young people were coming home, everyone would watch over their doors. Beckey told me that she had recently met a woman who recognized them and said: "Oh, I remember you. I used to watch you come to the top of the stairs and kiss each other good night all the time.

The wedding was not fancy, but it certainly was large. Everyone in the whole neighborhood was invited. Beckey recalls that all the people who usually ate all the danishes were the strangers who had come in, because your friends were usually too polite to eat.

They had no honeymoon. On the day after the wedding, the bride would get up and scrub the floors and prepare for the people who were coming to celebrate again that day. In the morning, as was the custom, Beckey's sister went into the bride's room to check for a blood stain on the sheets to insure that the woman had been a virgin. If everything was alright, they would immediately call guests in and celebrate with some sweets.

Almost all of the women became pregnant right after marriage. The neighboring woman would help in the delivery, none of them went to the hospital. Often this caused a lot of difficulty, especially when the woman had a problem with childbirth. Beckey was in labor for three days. When she finally did give birth to a baby, she was already dead.

The occupations after marriage varied. Many women, like my two grandmothers and Beckey, stayed at home and took care of the children. They also took care of the housework and the children of the women who were forced to go out to work.

Grandma B. had a special job. She has the position of the Havra Kadusha. This is a great honor in the Sephardic community and the position was handed down to her from her grandmother. She arranges for all the religious and ceremonial tasks which have to be done after death. She makes sure that the family has visitors and meals; and she prepares the body for burial. Though she cannot read or write, she also manages to take care of the financial affairs involved.

Isaac went from the tin can business into the skirt manufacturing business in with a couple of friends. None of them knew anything about skirts, and they almost went bankrupt until one particular mill began giving them a lot of business. He stayed in that field until his retirement at 65.

III. Conclusion

As I previously mentioned, these stories all pretty much ended with the birth of the first child. However, it is easy to note some changes within their culture. It was too hard for the men in America, who were struggling for survival, to attend synagogue once a day, as most did in Europe. They did go at least once a week. The religious customs have altered slightly, but not as much as one would expect within the American culture.

Sometimes, when their children take part in a religious custom, such as a holiday meal-the custom is abbreviated. Again, my grandmothers see to it that traditions are not changed too much.

The modern devices, such as T.V. have come into their life, and have also changed them a bit. As my Grandma B. said: "You know, when I see everyone (meaning the children) do something, I want to do it too."

The children of these people have become modernized. They have moved out to more expensive homes and complicated lives. They were given a public education and they spoke both English and Spanish as children. They chose their own marriage partner, usually someone within the Sephardic community.

My generation, with the parents moving outside of the Sephardic community when they were young marrieds, is just barely familiar with the Sephardic customs. Most of what we know is merely from stories told to us by our grandparents. For us, the traditions which used to bind the Sephardic Culture together have all but disappeared.