

Mel Braverman (1954 Unionport Rd & 1055 Esplanade Ave.)

You Can Go Home Again

In June I took my daughter, Hanna, on a trip to NYC. I had taken my son Conor to NYC a couple of years prior and I felt it was time for a father/daughter journey to show Hanna many of the places that are forever part of me. I also wanted to visit NYC with a fresh set of eyes and what better way to do that than with a 16 year old.

We landed in LaGuardia and were picked up by my lifelong friend Kenny Scher who grew up in 1954 Unionport Rd. on the same floor as me (our windows faced each other). Kenny, now called Ken-but never by me, lives in NJ with his wife, Nancy and two daughters Marjorie and Naomi. Marjorie and Hanna are a couple of months apart in age and had been instant messaging for a while so they were somewhat familiar with each other. This trip would give these two teenagers a chance to get to know each other better. Having my daughter be friends with my oldest friend's daughter is an incredible feeling-one that brings warmth to my heart.

After a day in NJ with Kenny and family Hanna and I moved to a hotel on 57th street and began to "do the city". First stop was the Carnegie Deli-where Hanna wanted to eat every day. Some NYC matzo ball soup and a corned beef sandwich and we were ready for anything the city would throw at us.

We spent time waking the city, east side, west side, 42nd St. and Central Park. Hanna went to two shows, one with Marjorie and one with me and then for Father's day we visited Pelham Parkway. Taking the train from 57th to White Plains Rd was not easy (there was track work going on and we had to take the train, bus and train to get to the Bronx) but getting off at White Plains Rd. was well worth the ride. We walked down White Plains Rd, trains roaring overhead, and Hanna took me to C & R's (now C & H's) for breakfast. There were two elderly Jewish women at the counter and the rest of the crowded restaurant was Hispanic, not the same crowd as 40 years ago but very friendly. The food was fine.

We waked up Lydig Ave and I pointed out all the stores and what they used to be, Snowflake Bakery, Angie's, Penrod's, Ben's, etc. Gloria's Pizza is now Adrianna's Pizza (I once got kicked out of Gloria's by Ralph for kissing my girlfriend). The only store I saw in its original location was Off Track Betting and I think the guys in front of it were also in their original location. Young Israel Synagogue is still there do Hispanic people get Bar Mitzvahed? Then a walk through Bronx Park, which was very clean and had a comfortable feel to it, to see the hand ball courts where my brother (Arthur, a.k.a. Red), sister (Rebecca) and I all spent a great deal of time in our youth, the tennis courts where Bec taught herself to ice skate one winter, explaining how Trojan Field got its name, past the playground (which has hard rubber beneath the play structures-I guess the kids of today are growing up soft) and down Unionport Rd. where I grew up.

No Yentas on the benches but the cobble stones are still there. New benches meant I wouldn't see any of our initials that we carved in them years ago. New buildings all around but there stood 1954 pretty much as I remember it. I pointed out 1980 where Ron Rubin, my brother-in-law, lived and then the stick ball field which is still in playing condition (except the lot is no longer in play as it now hosts an apartment building-what position would Kenny Goldscher play today?). We waked down to the Bronx Park East train station (Tony's stand is gone, but not the memory) and climbed the steps to the platform. You could see my old apartment windows from there, as well as Kenny's. I pointed to the fire escape and told Hanna we have an 8mm film of Bec doing the Hula out there. Lots of great memories and what a pleasure to share them with my daughter.

The train ride back downtown was uneventful as I sat back and felt my childhood once again. You can go home and you can relive the feelings of the past-just avoid the one of Joey Malio beating you up.

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