

## The Chandelier

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The elegant chandelier graced our formal living room in Prague throughout those tranquil pre-World War II days. Light from its six gold-plated arms cast a subtle glow about the room. I used to gaze at it frequently, preferring to look toward the ceiling and examine its intricate design rather than practice my tedious lessons on the piano. But for all its striking presence I never knew its history.

Much later, I learned that originally it hung in the dining room of my father's ancestral home at Kacov, in the Czech Republic. Illuminated by candles in those days, it must have created a distinctive atmosphere for the Sabbath services that were held in that room. I can no longer ask anyone what happened to it after grandfather died and grandmother moved to an apartment in Prague, but somewhere in its history it was electrified and became ours.

As I reflect now on its long-standing usefulness to enhance a spiritual mood during religious observances, I am struck by the irony that although both sets of my grandparents were keepers of the synagogues for their respective small towns, their offspring, my father and mother, were secular, observing none of the Jewish holidays or traditions, except Yom Kippur. Still, the chandelier remained a family treasure.

The chandelier survived the War along with a few other items of furniture, (including a beautiful bookcase) that my mother had stored in a friend's garage. She brought these things to New York and the chandelier was hung above the same, now reupholstered, love seat and arm chairs in our living room. It continued its useful life for 36 years until mother died in 1984.

When we closed mother's apartment, neither my brother nor I saw any way to incorporate the chandelier into our homes. But since I owned a house we decided that I should store it in my attic where it remained out of sight and out of mind for eleven years until we were preparing to sell the house. Again, what to do with the chandelier?

I very much wanted to sustain its useful life, so I decided to look for an organization that would respect the chandelier's history and value its Jewish origin from an earlier time. Luckily, my friend, Vivian Zoe, was at that time the Director of the Charter Oak Cultural Center, and I offered the chandelier to her. She agreed to accept it. Finally, our family's Czech chandelier had a

new home illuminating the stairwell in the renovated Center. The Center even engraved a plaque to inform all who read it of the chandelier's origin from the dining room/synagogue in Kacov.

Every time I visit the Center for an event I stop in the stairwell to fondly remember the chandelier's long journey.

*Dedicated to Leta, Marilyn and Rose who unknowingly inspired me to write this vignette.*