

We
Remember



When

A Collection of Memoirs
Written by Residents of

Fuller Village

in
Milton, Massachusetts

We Remember When

is a collection of personal memories - some dating as far back as World War I and the Great Depression - recalled by a cross section of the residents of Fuller Village in Milton, Massachusetts.

Included are poignant stories about their coming of age in the 1920s, '30s and '40s, including World War II as seen through the eyes of the servicemen and women who fought and served in it, those who experienced it from afar, and an unlucky few who survived it in Nazi concentration camps under the most inhumane conditions imaginable.

The genesis of this book is attributable to one resident, Betsy Buchbinder, who recognized that Fuller Village is comprised of a rich blend of individuals representing all walks of life in terms of race, religion and nationality, thereby ensuring a widely varied yet balanced wellspring of life experiences.

We're confident the reader will find that many of these memoirs speak to them both personally and in ways they had not previously experienced or thought possible.

With sincere appreciation,

The Fuller Village Memoir Committee

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Gemini

Saul Buchbinder

To this very day, every time NASA announces a space flight, I recall my own feelings of unease and apprehension about a much earlier space flight—NASA's Gemini Project.

The corporation I had founded, ELASCO (The Electronic Assembly Co.) manufactured DC power supplies for electronic devices. In the early 1960s, I was contacted by RCA (Radio Corporation of America) to develop a power supply for the Gemini Project, America's quest to reach outer space for a two-week flight. It soon became a personal challenge as I read and reread the specifications that had been sent to me: to design a five-volt power supply that would be at least 70 percent efficient. At that time, a five-volt DC power supply had never been made to achieve more than 50 percent efficiency. The five-volt supply was needed to power Gemini's vital communication system.

Another roadblock was the fact that there were specific parameters for temperature that could be tolerated in outer space. Space was a significant new frontier for our country and, at a personal level, for a company that wanted to be a part of this exciting challenge. What followed were countless sleepless nights and constant conferences with my staff concerning the specifications for the weight and size of the power supply we had been asked to design.

One of my consultants was a friend who lived out of state, and when he called one evening, I told him about the Gemini Project. At first, he too did not believe it was possible to meet the many parameters involved, especially the efficiency aspect. But a few days later, he called to suggest that I send him the "specs" so that he could have another engineer look them over. He knew of someone who he thought might be able to design such a power supply.

Two weeks later, I received a large envelope from my friend containing a schematic for a five-volt power supply that might actually be at least 70 percent efficient! Some of the other specifications had also been addressed. Actually, the power supply turned out to be 73 percent efficient! However, the size of the supply was questionable and remained for me to resolve. After many more sleepless nights, I found a workable solution! I was anxious to speak to the genius who had solved so many of the challenges. I asked my friend to put me in touch with the engineer who had been so creative in his thinking.

I was told that I would never be able to speak to him. It was a strange response. After many requests, I was finally told that the man was institutionalized and saw only a small circle of people. His technical and creative genius had remained intact, but, sadly, he was unable to cope with people.

Gemini went into outer space successfully, and with it, an ELASCO power supply. I have often wondered, whenever NASA announced further space trips, whether the spacecraft included any of the other fifty ELASCO power supplies NASA had purchased. How many times had I reached outer space, and did ELASCO eventually find its way to the moon? I'd like to believe it did.

Candled Eggs and Herring

Saul Buchbinder

My family lived in East Boston in the late 1930s where my father owned a neighborhood produce store. To buy his produce, he needed to go to the market district in Boston, and so he would get up at 4:00 AM. to get the early street Massachusetts Transit Authority (MTA) into town. It became my responsibility, at 5:00 AM, to take our horse and wagon and go by ferry to meet him. There was no Sumner Tunnel at that time.

I would get the horse from the stable located a mile from our house and then follow an unchanging routine: I walked the horse to the water tub so that he could take a drink, after which I put the harness on him and attached him to the wagon. We then went to meet the ferry that would take us over to Boston. When we arrived in Boston (State Street) I would drop the bit from his mouth and put the feed bucket strap over his head so that he could have his breakfast. In the winter, my father prepared a loaf of bread for the horse that was soaked in home-made wine and this warmed him up for our morning trip. I secured his blanket before we started out of the barn. I brought him to the market district where my father always picked him up with the fruit and vegetables that he had already purchased for the store.

After leaving the horse and wagon for my father, I took the MTA back home, had breakfast, and went off to school. On one occasion when my father got to the horse, he had no blanket over him, so my father took off his own warm jacket and put it over the horse's back. My father always took care of his animals first, and he thought I had forgotten to put the blanket over the horse.

The next day, a citation came from the court with a date for my father to come to court to explain why the horse had nothing over him on such a cold morning. It was considered

animal cruelty. We went to court with two sales slips proving that he had indeed purchased horse blankets, and the one over the horse had obviously been stolen that morning. My father preferred to be cold himself rather than have the animal suffer. The judge smiled, thanked my father, and dismissed the case!

We sold fruit and vegetables and other staples that did not require refrigeration; the store had no refrigeration. We did carry eggs, however, which made it convenient for the neighbors. But eggs, without being refrigerated, could and did go bad. I was fascinated by my father's ingenuity, as out of necessity, he found a way to differentiate the good eggs from those he would not be able to sell.

I watched as he developed his own system of "candling." The process included a board on which he mounted a candle. He would then cut a hole in the bottom of an empty coffee can to fit an egg. At that point he lit a candle and then placed the coffee can over the candle. Then he would place the egg over the hole. If the egg had a dark shadow, it was discarded. It was a creative method of checking inventory.

I remember the large barrel at the front of the store from which he would sell schmaltz herring every Saturday. He had a great many customers who came in weekly for this "delicacy." I would watch him roll up the sleeves of his shirt, put his arm into the barrel, swirl his arm round and round, and finally bring up a herring. The customer would examine the fish and, if it was satisfactory, the sale was made. If it was not satisfactory, my father would drop the herring back into the barrel and bring up another fish until the customer was satisfied.

One late Saturday evening as we were ready to leave the store and go home, a woman came running in for her schmaltz herring. I knew there was only one fish left and we were going to wrap it up ourselves to have for Sunday morning breakfast with candled eggs. But my father, the entrepreneur, preferred to make a sale. He performed as always, hand in the barrel, going round and round and finally coming up with the herring. But the customer did not like that particular herring, and so my father repeated his performance. He came up with the same herring and the customer said, "No." Once again he dropped the herring into the barrel, swished it around, and came up with the very same herring. The customer said, "Okay, that looks good. I'll take it!"

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