

Bagels and Bialys

by Jane Rosenthal

The trolley chugged up the hill on Franklin Avenue in Brooklyn when I was growing up. Whenever passengers pulled the cords next to the rows of wooden seats, the driver stopped the trolley with brakes screeching. On Fridays, I rode the trolley to pick up bagels and bialys from the bakery for Sunday morning breakfast. I can still smell the aroma of freshly baked bagels when I close my eyes and remember the bins of sesame, onion, garlic, and cinnamon bagels stacked in trays hot from the ovens. I used to dash up the street carrying a dozen bagels and bialys in brown paper bags to visit the appetizer store and buy cream cheese and lox to go with it. I barely made it home because I was so tempted to stop and have a bagel on the way. My mother liked the bialys, flat round rolls with golden brown onion flakes nestled in the center. My favorite ones were the cinnamon raisin bagels that I spread with a heaping tablespoon of cream cheese dotted with slivers of Nova Scotia lox.

It was a ritual on Sundays that we would all have breakfast together around our small kitchen table on Washington Avenue right across from the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. If there was a baseball game on Sunday or Saturday my sister and I would go up to the rooftop of our apartment house where we had a clear view of second and third place and root for the Dodgers. When I went to college many years later my mother and father would ship me a dozen bagels but my roommates from upstate New York had never seen a bagel and didn't know how to eat them. "Do you bake them?" I was asked.

"No, I said. They would taste like hard rocks. You can eat them cold or warm them up in a toaster."

To this day I enjoy toasting bagels with all the condiments on the side, especially lox and cream cheese. Bagel shops are everywhere in Northern Virginia and have become part of the mainstream culture. The Franklin Avenue trolley I used to ride is now on exhibit at the Trolley Museum in Baltimore, MD as buses and trains took over the routes. Yet in San Francisco, people can still ride the trolley to get to Fisherman's Wharf from Union Street.

BIO

Combining family and career has always been a challenge for this active mother and grandmother. After pursuing careers as an English teacher, journalist, freelance writer, and personnel consultant, Jane now has time to pursue her first love — creative writing. As a participant in the Memoir Writing Group at the JCCNV, she has drawn on her experiences growing up as the great-granddaughter of Regina Margareten, one of the founders of the Horowitz-Margareten matzoh company, and as a former editor of the Family Journal. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, she has lived in Tampa, FL, Miami Beach, FL, Orange, CT, and Warner Robbins, GA. She traveled extensively with her husband Norman (z"l) in the U.S. and abroad and has been living in the Burke, VA area since 1986. She is a member of Congregation Olam Tikvah and the JCCNV. A grandmother with three grandchildren, Jane frequently visits with their sons, Dan and Jesse, and daughters-in-law in Arlington, VA and West Yarmouth, MA.