

Funerals are by definition sad events, but some are sadder than others. Today's is one of those sadder ones. Because our friend Jacob whom we have known for upward of thirty years and of whom we had become very fond, started out in life with some advantages, not very big ones, but extremely honourable ones.

His grandfather came to this country from Lithuania at the end of the 19th century. The family was brought up in Dublin in very poor circumstances. Five brothers were born, of whom the eldest, Hymie, was Jacob's father. His grandmother was an indomitable woman and by hard work and determination managed to send 3 of her sons to medical school where they duly qualified, one of them being the father of Dr. Brian Posner, Jacob's cousin from Newcastle, of whom we had occasionally heard direct from Jacob or from Thelma, Jacob's sister, and who visited Jacob regularly and whom we are so pleased at last to meet, unfortunately under sad circumstances, and to whom I am indebted for the family information. So Hymie, Jacob's father, became a businessman but never made an adequate living. Consequently Jacob and Thelma grew up in reduced circumstances, the family by now living in Leeds, a reversal of normal Jewish migration westward.

Jacob's misfortunes began with his 11 plus examination. He was destined to become a doctor, as many of his cousins were indeed to become doctors or dentists. Because of bad eyesight he turned over two pages of the exam paper, landing, after page 1, on page 4 without noticing it and therefore failed to answer all the questions on pages 2 and 3, therefore failed the examination and was streamed into a school which did not teach him adequately to attain tertiary education.

He WAS interested in photography and worked in the photographic department of Boots, the Chemist and looked forward to promotion to be the manager. He was overlooked when someone else was given the job and at roughly the same time his best friend ran off with Jacob's fiancée. This triple whammy, to use a modern expression, would have floored a person with a strong constitution which Jacob perhaps had NOT and it understandably induced a breakdown. He was taken to what was in those days still called a lunatic asylum where the last vestige of dignity was taken from him when they pulled out all his teeth. I deliberately do not use the more scientific expression 'extracted' as the regime and operator do not deserve the cudos of being described with the highest professional integrity, with which I am sure a cousin of Jacob's, a distinguished dental surgeon in Manchester, would agree. Probably deprived of treatment which would have been available to him today he languished in mental obscurity which pursued him for the rest of his life for an estimated 50 years. By our standards his quality of life was very low, but we shall never know if by HIS standards it was at least bearable. We can only hope that it was.

Jacob, or Sonny as his relatives called him, lived a placid and fairly contented life with few expectations and with a limited horizon but he unfortunately also had difficulty in communication, although we usually got the gist of what he wanted to say. Even so a few years ago the powers that be in the previous nursing home encouraged him to embroider rugs which he did most beautifully and artistically. Unfortunately they got lost in his transfer to the next and last nursing home in which they looked after him very well. This prompts me to pay tribute to the Malvern Nursing home; to Thelma who, with a round trip of 500 miles and for many years an invalid husband who needed 24 hours care, visited Sonny as often as circumstances