

26. TEACHING IN OHIO, COLUMBUS, 1979-82

Harvard had ruled that faculty arriving at age 66 could choose between two further years full-time or four years half-time. I chose the latter, and for at least three of the blank half years accepted an appointment at Ohio State University (OSU). The title I held was Robert F. Lazarus Professor--the funding having been provided by the owner of a major department store in downtown Columbus.

We bought a flat in Chatham Village. Why buy rather than rent for so short a period? Because of my prejudice against renting, a corollary of my prejudice against borrowing. Chatham Village was a pleasant spread-out condo of several hundred families, who shared a swimming pool and other facilities, an attractive place to live and own property in.

I had fine colleagues at OSU, but none that I admired more than Professor Saad Nagi, Chair of the Department of Sociology. An Egyptian who had established himself in the United States, made himself thoroughly American. He was my closest colleague in the Department and closest friend socially.

We were living in Cambridge at the time, and each fall for three years we loaded our belongings, including some substantial furniture, into a trailer, and set out on the several hundred miles to Columbus.

It was too long to cover in one day, and on at least two of the three trips, trailer and all, were invited to put up for a night with Paul and Lynn Demeny. They had a daughter, Lylla, about 10 years of age, and a divine creature if there ever was one. "Don't you fear she will lose that fairy-like quality over the course of time?" I asked. "Well yes, but she has been losing ever since she was two years old."

And each time I managed to maneuver the car, trailer attached, out of the Demeny back yard, say good-bye to our hosts and continue on the way towards Columbus.

My hernia operation, Columbus, OH, 1983

When we were preparing to leave Columbus in the spring of 1983 to take up a year's appointment at the University of Toronto I woke up one morning with a terrible pain in my groin. We looked up the yellow pages and found the name of a surgeon, and after phoning went to his office. He felt my groin, and then sat down in his chair and said sadly, "I hate to tell you this (the hell he did), but you have a hernia, what used to be called a rupture, not on one side but on both--a double hernia."

I recalled that my father, at a younger age than I then was, had a similar problem, and not wanting to be operated, wore a truss all the time I knew him. The doctor quickly talked me out of that solution, and he set a date for the operation. He said it would be best to do the side that hurt worse first, and then have another operation for the other side on another day.

I came for the operation, and just as I was about to go under the anesthetic, mentioned that I would be leaving for Toronto two days later, and would have to have the other part done there. He said nothing, but when I came out of the anesthetic he informed me that both sides were now repaired. He wasn't going to let a perfectly good hernia escape to Toronto.

The outcome of all this was excellent-- 20 years have gone by and I have traveled all over the world and there has not been a whisper of trouble from my abdominal wall as restored that day in Columbus. And given the constraints he faced the doctor optimized his intake. That was one hernia that gave pleasure to all concerned.