

This story took a lifetime to write. Two Bronx boys. One in business and the other a very special government agent. They are cousins and their lives keeps intersecting. This is the personal story of the author's life and lessons learned in his journey to old age. A journey almost cut short more than once.

SUNSHINE

by Leonard A. Slutsky

Order the complete book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10566.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.



CLASSIFIED

Sunshine

AN AMERICAN STORY
TWO BOYS FROM THE BRONX

DECLASSIFIED



Leonard A. Slutsky

Copyright © 2014, 2019. Leonard A. Slutsky

ISBN: 978-1-64438-780-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2019

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Slutsky, Leonard A.
Sunshine by Leonard A. Slutsky
Fiction: Biographical | Biography: Personal Memoirs
Library of Congress Control Number: 2019906972

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE	7
I - CHEATING DEATH	15
II - WHAT'S HIS NAME ?.....	41
III - TOP GUN	69
IV - UP THE LADDER.....	107
V - DOWN THE LADDER	151
VI - LIVE AND LEARN	179
VII - BACK UP THE LADDER.....	213
VIII - FINALLY.....	251
EPILOGUE.....	301
THE JAIL HOUSE POETRY	303
KEYS	303
DOIN' TIME	305
EYE'S OF PRISON	306
SNORES.....	307
YEARNING	308
RELEASE	309
SOLITARE	310
COUNT TIME.....	312
COLOR THE SOUL	313
PRISON FOOD.....	314
ROOMIES.....	315
THE CAPTAIN.....	316
COMMISSARY	317
FEAR	318

PROLOGUE

One day while I was playing golf, at my club in Boca Raton, I received a phone call from my cousin Benny. Ben asked, "What are you doing?" I answered, "I was just about to putt, why, what's up cuz?" He then said, "I got a call from a friend who needs our help?" "Who?" I asked. He responded, "I'm flying in to see you. Pick me up at Homestead Air Reserve base at six-thirty tonight." This must be important I thought. Here I pretty much haven't had much contact with Benny since he retired from government service. Now, he wants me to stop everything and pick him up tonight. As usual, I reluctantly said "OK" knowing I would later regret it. Before I hung up, he gave me a code to get on the secure area of the base.

At six-thirty I was at the base air strip waiting for him. Captain Miller, the duty officer, came over to tell me the plane would be about a half hour late. So, I sat in the hanger and waited. A while later an air-guardsman came in to tell me Benny was making his approach. I looked out and saw a small two engine jet plane coming in for a landing. I said to myself, he couldn't fly into Palm Beach or even Miami. I had to come all the way down here.

The plane landed then taxied toward the hanger I was waiting in. When the plane stopped, the door opened, out came Benny followed by a beautiful young lady dressed in a military uniform. I was impressed. I wasn't sure if I should kiss her or shake her hand, so I asked Ben. It's amazing what you can get away with when you're old. He warned me the Lieutenant Commander had special training similar to a Navy Seal. Now I was more than impressed. I kind of wished I knew what was going on here. I pulled Benny to the side and asked, "Are you sleeping with her?" Benny smiled and said, "Not yet. Judy is our military coordinator." I said, "Our what?" "Don't worry, I'll explain later," he said. At about eight-thirty, we

were in the car heading north so I piped up with my usual, "Anyone for a bite?" I had two takers. I expected nothing less.

We went to dinner, but no one would talk about why they were there. They kept telling me "Later, not here." I was confused by all the intrigue. I started looking for the movie cameras. I thought I was on a set of NCIS with Benny in the part of Gibbs, Judy as Ziva. Who was I supposed to play? When we were back in the car Ben informed me that he and Judy were to meet two others for a mission that required my unique expertise with night vision helmets. I recalled working on those helmets back in the 1960's. We developed them for sniper use in Viet Nam. As I headed up Interstate 95, they asked to be dropped off at the Marriott Residence Inn in Boca Raton. I was promised that I would get more details the next day. They specifically asked me not to discuss this with anyone, not even Sharlene. I could see this wasn't going to be an easy night for me. After almost fifty years of marriage I suspect that Sharlene could read me like a book. I dropped them off and drove home.

As soon as I walked into the house Sharlene asked me, "Where's Benny?" She assumed he would be staying with us. I explained that he wasn't alone and they preferred a hotel so I dropped them off at the Residence Inn. Her response was, "He's seventy-three, when is he going to stop acting like a teenager?" I just shrugged my shoulders and sat down to watch television. When she asked what he was up to these days I responded with, "You know, same old Benny." I went to bed thinking: *What has he gotten me into this time?* I guess it was too much to ask for a few quite years. The past two had been great, nothing happened, and no one bothered me. All I had to do was play golf and talk to my kids. Quiet and no more excitement was what I wanted for my retirement years, but o-boy was that about to end.

The next day Ben and Judy called. After confirming that Sharlene was going out to have lunch and play cards at the clubhouse, they scheduled time to come over. They came over

at about twelve-thirty. They were dressed normal. Thank goodness! I didn't want my neighbors knowing I had James Bond and Ziva Da-Vid over to discuss spy stories.

Now it was my turn to ask. "What's going on? Why do you need me? I thought the government and I, by mutual agreement, are finished with each other." Then I said to Benny, "What are you doing? I went to your retirement dinner. Don't you ever stop?" He responded, "In my line of work you never really retire. When Sam needs you, you do." I said, "OK, I'm all ears." They then explained that there were five people involved in this mission. The two of them and the two airborne rangers they would pick up at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. "Who's the fifth?" I reluctantly asked. "You are," is what I was told. Damn it! this was what I was afraid of. I don't like to dance with death the way Benny does. Judy added, "We will all meet at Aberdeen Proving Grounds next week where you will be in charge of the special equipment we will need for our mission." "What mission?" I asked. Ben responded, "At this time, you don't have a need to know." I was confused again and responded, "I no longer have any security clearance, much less for what might be a top secret mission. Add to that I am a convicted felon. Which means no one should expect me to be able to obtain any security clearance. How did I ever become part of this team?" Benny said, "That was my choice and you are cleared for this mission." He also said that he did expect that I'd be out of harm's way. "Yeah, I bet you do," as I recalled what happened in London a few years back, not to mention all the other times. Being with Benny is a constant adventure.

The plan was that they were scheduled to fly to Fort Bragg the next day to meet the other two and brief them. Then next Tuesday, they would be back to pick me up at Homestead Air Base and fly to Aberdeen. I should expect to be gone for two weeks. He then gave me my official military orders so I would be officially called to duty. Talk about a full circle, I was a Sergeant again. I started thinking *This is just what the Army needs, a seventy-two year old Sergeant*. Benny said, "Hey with

all the weight you lost, your old uniform will probably fit." I told him, "I'm not wearing a uniform. I'll look stupid at my age. I'd quit first. I knew that not being an officer I could reject the orders. Only officers are on call for life."

Sharlene came home around five that evening. Did I have some explaining to do. I told her the story of what transpired that day. I explained what I knew, which really wasn't much. Sharlene started laughing. "The government is recruiting you for a top secret mission, but you don't know what the mission is. I think either someone is putting you on or this government is in real trouble." She continued, while hysterically laughing, "Benny must be pretty bored in retirement that he has to come here to play one on you." I thought maybe she was right and the whole thing was a gag, but why?

I checked out the orders I was handed, it was not a gag. On Tuesday I went to Homestead where I met Judy. We flew, no Judy flew; I just sat in the plane, to Fort Bragg where Ben was with the other members of the team. During the small talk I learned that Judy's father is an Admiral at the Pentagon. The military is in her blood so to speak. I always admired those who serve. I think the military is a great learning experience. It lets you see the real world and it's not always nice.

At Bragg I met Al and John, the other two members of the team. We then all boarded a military transport that flew to Bolling Air Base in Washington, D.C. Bolling is a small military air base mostly used by the Navy. At Bolling we boarded a helicopter and flew into Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. At Aberdeen we were shown to private quarters for our team. The really hot good-looking, Lieutenant Commander took the private room. The rest of us were in the general space. I sighed thinking, *oh well, what can you do, so much for equality*. She was entitled to the private room; after all, she was the senior officer.

The next day we met for a briefing on the mission that we were supposed to complete within the next sixty days. I then

learned why Ben and I were there. We each had a special skill that the team needed. Ben was intimately familiar with the area that we were going to, Germany and Austria. I was one of two people still alive that knew how to use the helmets that were designed for night vision fifty years ago. The other was the CIA engineer, code named Smitty. Many years ago. I worked with Smitty on the original design of the night vision helmet. We have kept in touch over the years. The team actually needed all of us or the task would be impossible to pull off. I thought it nearly impossible with or without the helmets. In fact, it seemed to me that it was likely, knowing Benny, that we would all be dead before this was over. I asked Benny "If we live through this do you think the government will give me the pardon I have been asking for?" His answer worried me even more. "I doubt it. When we complete this mission, no one will ever know what we did."

Benny quietly said "There are only four people other than the five of us that know anything about the mission. One, you met yesterday, the head of the agency. Two of the others are the heads of both the Senate and House intelligence committees." Immediately I said "there is such a thing as an intelligent government committee?" I was thinking, could only be that they outsource. Benny laughed, and finished his remarks, "and the fourth is the man at the top." "The President?" I asked. He nodded affirmatively. I asked, "Just what is the mission?" I was told very clearly, "You don't need to know yet." Benny and I go back a long way. I always trusted him to have my back, I mean for my whole life, so why not now?

That night, I started thinking about my life and the adventure it has been. Every life has a fascinating story. Each of us, in the course of our lives, get involved in many interesting, novel, sometimes dangerous, and sometimes regrettable situations. Think back over your life and all the wonderful things you have seen and done. Now imagine what your life would be like if you were related to America's most secret spy, the "President's Spy." I'll tell you what it's like, it's unreal, not

easy to describe and that's only the things you can talk about. The things you can't talk about no one would believe anyway. Who needs movies when you have to deal with the extraordinary life of my cousin, Bentley Solomon.

My life has been a little more interesting than most, but not always because I wanted it to be. When your closest cousin is an off the wall government agent (meant in a good way) you get pulled into situations that you do not ask for, or belong in. To understand what my life has been like you need to understand where my family and more specifically where I come from.

Mine is a life with great contradictions. The ups are high and the lows are low. This journey has taken me on multiple paths to places few people have ever known. Who was the last person you knew who was able to say, "I came back from the dead and remember what happened while I was dead?" Now I'm not sure if I was actually dead or merely at death's door. You will judge that for yourself. I've been both rich and poor, and yes, rich is without question the better option. Mine is a life that included qualifying for the Olympic team, serving as the Board Chairman of a National Bank, going to prison, working on a secret government project, interacting with spies, and training special forces in Viet Nam, to today's life of wanting a little quiet time on the golf course. Wow! I think I summed up my life in one paragraph. I'll go into the details in the pages ahead. I think you will find it easy to read. I write the way I talk – in BRONX (a New York dialect of English). That being said, don't expect Shakespearean English.

My fantastic family dates back to the American Revolution. A family that instilled the rules of fairness and hard work, rules I must admit I did not always follow even though I should have.

I wasn't present for parts of this story. I was either too young or not born yet. That being said, I had to rely on conversations with others to help me with the facts. I needed to

Sunshine

piece together the story using input from a variety of people, each one having a different viewpoint to the same story. In some instances, I needed to embellish the story to fill in the unknown so it would make sense. I tried to keep an accurate timeline and base each chapter on actual events and real people.

In many cases, I changed people's names; in others I did not. If a person was a public figure, I left their name intact. If they were dead, I assumed they would not complain. If they are alive and not a public figure, I usually changed their name. Two names I had to change to protect the real identity of some special people. It also keeps me from being arrested ... again.

I tried not to tell the stories that would be embarrassing to anyone other than me and, let me assure all my friends and relatives, I have quite a few. So be nice to me or they will be in the next book. All the stories that follow were written out of a love of family and times remembered. There are things here I want my grandchildren to be able to tell their children.

I was fortunate to be born into a most wonderful family. We have all grown and scattered across the country, and I cherish the fond memories of my childhood. I am sorry that the type of closeness that we had seems not to exist anymore. I am so lucky to have made great friendships during my lifetime. I am sorry to have lost a few along the way. Some were taken before their time, others lost by circumstance. My story starts just after my third birthday.

I

CHEATING DEATH

It was Wednesday, July 28, 1948, just three days after my third birthday. The day started like any day in the life of an active, intuitive, and inquisitive three-year-old. I awoke with a bounce and a smile. Like most three-year-old children, I was looking forward to another exciting day. I jumped out of bed and ran into my parents' bedroom.

“Daddy, Daddy, look the sun is up, it’s a nice day.”

My father rolled his eyes as he mumbled, “What time is it?”

“Daytime!” I yelled. He looked at me with those loving eyes of his, the ones I learned to love so much and would someday miss so much. He turned toward the big clock on his night table. You know the type, the one with a big round tin body and a white face, large black numbers, and a bell ringer on top. The clock rang so loudly that it would wake up everyone in the house.

My older brother, Bart, came running into Dad’s bedroom and with giant leaps we both took off and flew onto his bed and started our traditional bed-wrestling match. Dad was so much bigger than Bart and me, but he still ended up losing and begging us to let him go. We did, as always, and then we started all over again. This continued until Mom stopped us, complaining that we were making too much noise. Even worse than that, we were doing the unthinkable; we were messing up her bed. Alas, again we had to stop. As always, this lasted about two, maybe three minutes, as we would just find a reason to start up again. That day’s reason was Dad grabbing Bart and starting a tickle attack. When he finished with Bart, he turned to me, but I was too fast for him and

made my getaway, screaming and laughing while running down the hall between bedrooms.

In frustration, Mom got up, went downstairs, to make breakfast. When breakfast was ready she'd call out, "Everybody come on down for breakfast." Mom's breakfast was one of the things we stopped whatever we were doing for. We all knew that you don't say "later" when Mom called you to come to the table and eat. There is no later. If you dally, don't expect to eat until the next meal. As she said, "I cook once for the whole family. You want to eat, be there. When I clean up, we are done." It doesn't take long to learn to "be on time." After breakfast was on the table, she went upstairs to get Joey, my little brother. He was only six months old so he didn't have to be on time.

Bart was seven and I was three. We were a family of three boys, mom, dad, and Ann, the housekeeper. Actually, Ann's real job was to watch me. We would spend a lot of time together and I really liked her. She was about twenty years old and very pretty, with long golden hair and freckles. She lived with us but her real home was in Ireland. The last time I saw her was at the beginning of summer, three years later when I was almost six years old. My father drove her to the dock where she was boarding a ship to go back to Ireland. I went with them, just the three of us. She gave me a big kiss goodbye. I thought it strange that both she and my father were crying. They hugged each other before she walked onto the ship. I remember dad gave her some money. I asked, "When will Ann come back?" Dad said, "She will be back after she visits her family in Ireland."

I waited for her to return, but she never came back. It was years later that I learned she left because she had developed cancer. She didn't go home for "a visit," she went home to die. It seemed like only yesterday we would be sitting on the floor, the radio playing my favorite song, and she would sing to me, "*You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you*

Sunshine

make me happy when skies are grey...” She was the first love of my life.

Getting back to what happened on July 28, 1948. After breakfast, Bart went across the alley to see his friends Mike and Pat Bergen. They were twins and two of the five Bergen boys. The Bergens also had a daughter but she was a baby like Joey. The Bergen family used to own all the land that the houses in our neighborhood were built on. They were a farming family, and the land was all part of Bergen’s farm. Mr. Bergen worked on the farm as a child before his father sold it to Mr. O’Rourke, a builder. He was another neighbor and he lived next door to the Bergens.

We lived on a very odd block in the Bronx. The block was cut in half by an alleyway that ran between the two rows of houses. One row faced 179th Street, the other faced 180th Street. The houses were constructed so that each house would have its own garage behind the house with the alley being the common access. That way, the homes did not have to have a separate driveway for each house. Driveways would be impractical on the block, as 180th Street was at least forty feet higher than 179th Street, quite a steep elevation.

People from the Bronx can sympathize with the residents of San Francisco. I’ll give you an idea as to how hilly it can be. On one side of 180th Street was the uptown campus of New York University. I say “was,” not because the street isn’t there but because NYU is no longer there. It is now a community college campus.

At the high point of the campus is a flagpole, not far from the “Hall of Fame for Great Americans.” In winter when it snowed, we used to ride our flexible flyers from the Hall of Fame down a long hill to a point where today stands the exit ramp of the Major Deegan Expressway (which wasn’t built then) at the end of West Burnside Avenue. This is a distance that would take about a half hour to walk back uphill in snow. We did this in the winter, in the snow. Yes, the ride

was worth it. Kids, even adults, would congregate at the top of this big hill in the winter. Funny thing, now that I think of it, every once in a while, the campus police would chase us away. After all, it was private property and technically none of us were supposed to be there. When there was a good snow, there would be at least a hundred people of all ages with sleds. I think the campus police came by once a day to chase us away. They would leave and we would all turn around and come back a few minutes later. I guess they were not serious, as they left us alone the rest of the day. It appeared to me that they wanted to be able to say they tried to police it in case someone got hurt. The truth is, I think everyone was glad to see so many of us enjoying the place. It was a great place for kids to play. No cars and big open fields. It was safe, certainly safer than the streets.

I once found an old pair of skies and ski boots in my friend Roy's garage. He lived on the block next to my Aunt Amy. I put on the Frankenstein-looking shoes with their square toes, attached them to the skies, and sped down this big hill. I made it down but could not make it back up. I kept sliding backwards down the hill. The next time I tried to ski, I went down Osborne Avenue. This was a steep hill that ran next to the NYU hill. I thought it would be easier to get back up as there were parked cars to hold on to in the street. As I was going down, I saw a car coming up. I didn't know how to ski and I didn't know how to stop. Fortunately for me, the car was going very slowly as the hill was covered in heavy snow. Unfortunately for me, the driver of the car was my father and he was rather upset when I skied into the front of his car. I was grounded and my skiing career ended. I kept the square-toed Frankenstein shoes because I thought they looked great. I used to wear them to school when it snowed.

Now that I am thinking of the NYU campus police, I wonder if today they would look the other way and let all those people have a great time with their sleds on that hill, or would they be more concerned with the liability if someone were to be injured while on their property?

Sunshine

Either way, it was that or the street. Not that we didn't have street games; we had plenty, but that place was special. Times were really different in the 1950s; no wonder the people who lived then revel in it so much.

For me, the alley was the place to play. It was where we would meet our friends to play ball, tag, or just hang around. This alley was also the central meeting point for my extended family. We owned three of the houses on the block. My family lived in the center house on 179th Street. My mother's aunt and uncle lived next door. He was the family doctor, and I would ride with him sometimes when he was making house calls. House calls, now there's a thing of the past. Doctors actually went to their patients' homes to treat them when they were sick. I remember the sign in his office. It read "House Calls \$5.00" and under it "Office Visits \$3.00." Even though Uncle Nate was my mother's uncle, he was only about ten years older than Mom. He was the youngest of my grandmother's siblings, of which there were nine. My grandmother was not the oldest; she had an older brother whom I only met once before he died. When it came to my grandmother, she was the power behind the clan. No one would even think to mess with her. Her word was family law.

Every Sunday there would be a family meeting in the alley if it was nice weather or in one of the three homes if the weather was not so nice. The third home was on 180th Street, about three houses down and across the alley from my house. This belonged to my mother's sister, Amy, and Uncle Max. They were the other aunt and uncle living on the block. With my relatives in such close proximity, it was like living in three houses. With built-in friends called cousins, we had a very close family. My mother had three sisters and between the four sisters they had ten children. The four sisters had dozens of cousins from the nine families of my grandmother's siblings. They would all meet, thankfully not all at once, in the alley behind my house. You knew a mob was coming when all the folding chairs would be lined up, in the direction of the sun, of course. Uncle Nate insisted everyone get some

sun. Back then they didn't know it would wrinkle their skin and cause skin cancer.

Believe it or not, this was not the entire family. My grandmother was one arm of a larger family with interesting roots. On her father's side is one of the oldest and most important Jewish families in America, the Salomon family. On her mother's side, we go back two more generations before grandma to her grandfather, whom we called "the old man." I am in the fifth generation from him.

Why do we call my grandmother's grandfather "the old man?" I can remember seeing a newspaper article about him, it was published in 1939, in one of the New York newspapers. His name was Benjamin Kotlowitz and he had just had his second Bar-Mitzvah at the age of 113. The article had a picture of the five generations of descendants that included my oldest first cousin, Melvin. My great-great-grandfather died a year later at the age of 114, five years before I was born.

My brother Bart and my mother's cousin Bentley are named after him. Maybe that's why we always called Bentley "Benny" for short. Bentley has his own set of interesting stories but we will get to my cousin Benny later.

At the time of the newspaper article and until his death, Ben Kotlowitz was believed to be the oldest living person in the world. He was born in 1825 when John Quincy Adams was President and Thomas Jefferson was still alive. I am told he was quite a character. He would buy a bottle of whiskey, cut it with water into five bottles, and then sell it to his fellow residents at the old age home. He lived so long that he would take the bus to visit his children when they were living in old age homes.

The family's good fortune is that these good genes keep showing up. Most of my family, including my grandmother and mother, died in their mid-nineties. My Aunt Amy is over a hundred years old. She's the aunt that lived on the 180th Street side of our alley. She lived there with Uncle Max, also

Sunshine

my cousins Stan, Flo, and Libby and a cocker spaniel named Bobo. Libby was a year younger than me, so we grew up very close, almost like sister and brother. Stan and Bart were a year apart and they also grew up like brothers. The two families did so much together you would think it was one anyway.

At least once or twice a week, Ann, who was our housekeeper, and Sophie, Aunt Amy's housekeeper, would take Flo, Libby, and me to the park. The park was by the firehouse at the bottom of West Burnside Avenue. There we could play on the swings, monkey bars, and seesaws.

Libby and I were extremely close until we became teenagers. I was a very shy adolescent and I think I was intimidated by her girlfriends. Of course, it's the old story of "had I known then what I know now" kind of thing. Wow! I could have had a never-ending supply of introductions. Likewise, Libby could have had similar access to boys. Libby went to an all-girls school and I went to an all-boys school. It would have been perfect for both of us. Instead, we grew apart as we got older and went our separate ways. Alas, if only there was a way for do-overs in life. Libby and I would be very close today and always talking about the guys and gals we got for each other.

Uncle Max had his own special story. He was tops in my book, but he was all business. Uncle Max and his partner manufactured belts. You know, the kind that hold your pants up. Most of their belts were made for ladies and they were pretty successful at what they did. He made a fortune by a fortunate business error while ordering brass eyelets.

In 1938 they made a big mistake while ordering brass eyelets. These eyelets, or rivets, were used for the holes in the belts. Now as the story goes, instead of ordering ten cases, each with a gross of boxes each one with ten gross, of brass eyelets, my uncle ordered a thousand cases of these eyelets. Each case had 207,360 eyelets. A thousand cases equaled over two hundred million eyelets. Too make matters even worse, it seemed that each partner thought they were sup-

posed to place the order, and it was accidentally doubled. That's over four hundred million brass eyelets.

Normally that would be a disaster; most likely it could put a company out of business. Problem one, where do you store hundreds of millions of anything? Problem two, when the shipments arrived, they not only could not be returned, they had to be paid for in ninety days. Luckily, they had three empty floors in their factory building on 35th Street in Manhattan, but not for long. Soon every nook and cranny had eyelets, not only at the factory but in their homes as well. My mother claimed she spent her wedding night on cases of eyelets. Excuse me for not going into greater detail on this. The truth is, I wasn't there; fact is I wasn't even a thought at the time.

Of course, there is more to this story. To pay for this monstrous order, my uncle Max and his partner borrowed from wherever they could. Everyone helped and they were able to raise the money. That was about the same time my father became their general manager in the business. Although they raised enough funds to pay for the order, they still didn't know how to get rid of them. After all, they owned enough brass eyelets for ten lifetimes. They hoped to resell some of them over the next few years, even at a loss, in order to pay back the loans.

This was late in 1938, and things were really heating up over in Europe. As luck would have it, fate intervened and the United States entered the war. Have you ever seen a United States Army soldier's belt? It was a heavy fabric belt containing rows of brass eyelets encircling the entire belt. The soldiers could hook whatever they needed to carry into battle onto these eyelets. It appeared that my uncle and his partner had cornered the brass eyelet market at a very opportune time.

Of course, there were nickel plated eyelets to be had, but not brass. The reason was that the government needed brass

Sunshine

for shell casings so manufacturing items made from brass, including eyelets was not permitted. The army belts had to have brass eyelets as they did not rust like nickel-plated iron did. As a result, their little ladies belt company became the largest belt manufacturer in the country. My uncle and his partner became, as they say, “comfortable.”

There is more history to this family. The old man, Grandpa Benjamin, had a daughter named Sara who married a man named Joseph Solomon. My grandmother, Tillie, was their eldest daughter. The Solomon (also spelled Salomon) family goes back into the very early days of this country. The American Revolution was financed through the efforts of Haym Salomon. Haym was arrested twice by the British, put in prison, and had his property confiscated. He was sentenced to hang, but thanks to his fellow patriots known as “The Sons of Liberty,” he escaped. They came to his aid and saved him.

Haym was a man who backed up what he said with real action. He traveled to Europe to obtain additional funding for Washington and the war effort. Haym arranged the sale of notes to the French as well as much of Europe through the network of Jewish bankers attached to each European city. In total, he raised 660,000 pounds, the equivalent of billions in today’s dollars. This was in addition to contributing his own, personal finances. When George Washington ran out of needed provisions at Yorktown, he is quoted as saying, “Get me Haym Salomon.” The needed money was found and the rest is history. Without those provisions, we would all be speaking with an English accent and driving on the wrong side of the road.

We Salomons or Solomons’ are very proud of our heritage. I say this even though the government never repaid us the money that Haym lent to the government and its newly elected representatives. When the family asked for reimbursement in the late 1800s, the government said no. Instead, they is-

sued a medal and erected a statue. Personally, I probably would have preferred the cash.

In 1781 Haym worked with William Morris, the superintendent of finance for the new government. He brokered bills of exchange so the federal government could meet its obligations. In addition, he advanced personal funds to members of the Continental Congress at well below market rates. He was influential in repealing the barriers that were designed to keep Jews and other non-Christians from holding public office. Many consider him to have financed the birth of the then new nation, both before and after the revolution. The great seal of the United States contains thirteen stars. Each is a six-pointed star, what is commonly referred to as the "Star of David." This, I have been told, was to recognize Hyam's contribution to our nation's birth.

What a family I have. Once a year, the whole extended family would get together at an orphanage in Pleasantville, New York. It was an annual event run by our "Cousins Club." The Cousins Club consisted of the siblings from my grandmother's generation, their children and grandchildren. I don't know how many people attended the event, but it had to be more than a hundred, maybe more than a hundred and fifty. I am not certain, but I think my father was the reason why we used the grounds of the orphanage for this event, a reason you will get to understand in the next chapter.

As each family arrived, they would unload the folding chairs and food from their car. The barbeque grills were set up, charcoal lit, and the cooking started. It was well planned everyone had something to do. Uncle Jake, my mother's oldest sister's husband, was in charge of the cooking. He would be standing in the center of a ring of barbeque grills, some with burgers and some with hot dogs. I don't know why he was in charge of the cooking because he was in the antique business. I guess everyone just liked his cooking. This always seemed odd to me, because the family had great cooks. As for my grandmother and her four daughters, I personally can at-

Sunshine

test to their culinary greatness. Coming from such a close family, I can honestly say that all my aunts, uncles, and cousins are wonderful people. Being born into this family was one of the luckiest things that ever happened to me, second only to meeting and marrying the love of my life, Sharlene, who has managed to tolerate me for over fifty years.

Uncle Jake was special to me. He had an unusual antique business, where he not only sold antiques but he repaired them. He was an old-world craftsman. Whether it was assembling a giant crystal chandelier or building those scale model dollhouses to be sold at F.A.O. Schwartz, the famous toy store on Fifth Avenue in New York City, he could do it. Some of the dollhouses he built had more than just furniture in the rooms. They had tiny electric lights with working switches and would sell for thousands of dollars.

Yet his abilities were undervalued or unseen by most. His skills as a business person may have left a little to be desired, but that's not that unusual for a talented craftsman. It is the art that becomes important, not the profit. If he had had a partner who was good with the business end, leaving him free to concentrate on his craftsmanship, then he would have had a great business. Certainly, more than what he had. As they say, hindsight is always 20/20.

In the 1950's I enjoyed going to his antique repair shop in Manhattan. It was where I learned to use tools and gained an interest in radio and electronics using the many items he had from his prior business. In the 1930s he owned a business named "Y Y Wireless." At first, I didn't understand the Y's. They were neither his initials nor those of anyone else we knew. I soon learned that the reason it was named Y Y was because my uncle had a stutter. When he would say wireless, it would come out "Y... Y ...Wireless." He named the shop that to cover up the stuttering. In any case, Y Y Wireless was an electronic and radio repair shop back in the very early days of radio.

When I went to his shop on weekends I would experiment with the many old parts, tubes, and radios he had. He taught me many of the principles of radio and electricity. I was about ten or eleven years old and it became my hobby. I was so into radio that I took the test to become a HAM radio operator. I built radios from parts. As a young adult, I built a color television that I received in a kit form from Heathkit. My cousin Melvin (Uncle Jake's son) did the same. We both completed a course in TV repair under the GI Bill. At the time, it was a 'state of the art' TV. The two of us would compare the work we were doing and we built two great television sets.

Even though Melvin and I were ten years apart, we seemed to identify well with each other. He was an only child, but I think he treated me as a little brother. My Aunt Fay, his mother, once told me I was special to her. She lived in an apartment a block away from the hospital where I was born. My parents had not yet bought their house and available apartments were hard to find so my family lived with Aunt Fay and Uncle Jake for about three months after I was born. My aunt said I was like the second child she never had. I guess to Melvin I am the closest thing he had to a brother. Maybe that's why I have a special fondness toward Melvin.

Uncle Jake was a lot of fun; he also treated me special. He would pick me up on weekends and I would go to work with him. Whenever we went to his shop, he would stop so we could have a couple of hot dogs on the way. That's probably why we were both on the heavy side. We sure enjoyed those "dogs."

There is an interesting antidote about my uncle. He was a very creative person. He used to hang everything in his store window upside down. When I asked him, why he did that? He said, "Watch the people who walk by." Sure enough, I watched and just about everyone who walked by stopped and looked in the window. They would be turning their heads, trying to see what they were looking at. I don't know if it got him more business, but he sure got their attention.

Sunshine

Back to the annual outing in Pleasantville. While Uncle Jake was cooking, his son Melvin and my mother's cousin Benny would start up a softball game. We all played softball, regardless of age, everyone had an opportunity to play. Afterwards, it would be volleyball. The girls liked to play volleyball and I liked to watch the girls play volleyball. This is about as exciting as it can get for a ten-year-old boy. I wonder if the girls realized that none of the boys watching cared who won. Our eyes were not focused on the ball.

The older men would play pinochle or rummy while the ladies played with the babies. There were always plenty of babies to play with. At the end of the day everyone, thoroughly exhausted, would load everything back into their cars and go home.

The driveway behind our house, or alley as we called it, was a private road belonging to the residents of the block. It was used to provide access for public services needed by the residents; the postman delivered the mail and the garbage was picked up in the alley. Everyone's garage opened into the alley and everyone's back yard opened into the ally.

In the 1940s, clotheslines stretched across the backyards. I remember the sheets flapping in the wind as they hung to dry. On a windy day you would think the neighborhood was ready to fly away. Yet within a decade, all the clothes lines came down as home dryers became available.

The backs of all the houses on 179th Street were at the same level as the alley. The front of each house had three sets of six steps. These steps were very important to us, they gave us a place to play stoop ball. Stoop ball was played with a rubber ball, preferably a Spalding as opposed to the Pinky. The Pinky just didn't have enough bounce. A Spalding, now that's the Rolls Royce of rubber balls. The Pinky cost a dime while the Spalding cost a quarter. You couldn't be a person of substance with a Pinky; real class was a Spalding. Of course, if you were fishing the balls out of the sewer, I guess it didn't

really matter Spalding or Pinky. A ball is a ball is a ball. If you had to fish one from the sewer to play, even an old sappy tennis ball would do.

Fishing balls from the sewer was a special skill. It required one to bend a hanger into a loop to slip under the ball. The loop had to be a little smaller in diameter than the ball. The hanger would extend upward perpendicular to the side of the loop. Now when you dangled the hanger on a string you would need to set the loop under the ball, then you could pull the string up and the ball would be sitting in the loop. The real trick was to get someone else to pick up the ball and wash it off. Retrieving the ball sounded easier than it was. It was a challenge to get the loop under the ball in exactly the right place and to lift it without it falling back into the sewer. To make it more difficult, the water level was ten to fifteen feet down. It was not a place you would like to fall into, so care was needed.

You also had to make sure no one's mother was watching. For some reason, mothers tended to get hysterical when they saw a bunch of kids hovering over an open sewer. Sometimes just suggesting it could get one a new Spalding. It would also save the life of one hanger.

The topography of the block was such that the houses on 180th Street were sitting on top of the slope of a large hill that extended into the NYU campus. As I stated before, at the peak of the hill was the flag pole at the center of a war memorial. The memorial consisted of five cannons of different types in a circle about fifty feet in diameter. These were large cannons that were originally meant to be mobile long-range weapons. They contained the weapon, seats, wheels and a goodly number of operating knobs that would aim the weapon, back in the days when they were operational.

As a kid, it was great fun to play "war" on those cannons. You could imagine one's self as a soldier fighting the enemy charging up the hill. To change the pace of the day, some-

Sunshine

times my friends and I would go there to play “war” on the cannons. We would play there until the campus police chased us away. They did not want us anywhere near the cannons. To us kids, it was just a fun place. To others, it was a war memorial for those killed in a war that ended just a few years prior. We were too young to understand.

The fronts of the houses fronting on 180th Street, are at street level, so there are only two or three steps to enter the house. In the back is a flight of about fifteen steps to the alley from the back yard and back door to the house. The garage was at the bottom of the steps. Each house was built high. These are large houses, all with four stories, two staircases, big rooms, porches, sun rooms, etc. The big houses on 180th Street contained roughly about five to six thousand square feet of space. From Aunt Amy’s house you could look out the kitchen window and watch everything that was happening in the alley. She used to keep an eye on all of us kids; as it turned out, for this I became eternally grateful.

All the houses on the block were built of stone, brick, and cement, with wet plaster over brick walls. They will probably never fall down. They don’t build houses like that anymore. I don’t even think there are craftsmen that do that type of construction. I can’t even begin to imagine the cost of trying to do the mahogany woodwork on the staircases and moldings that gave the houses on 180th Street their stately appeal. The houses on the 179th Street side were not as large. They were two stories with a basement, built of brick and stone, smaller and lacking the fine upscale mahogany trim.

As far as neighborhoods in the Bronx go, it was one of the better. Those two tree-lined blocks across from the NYU uptown campus, along 179th and 180th Streets from Andrews Avenue to Osborne Place were all single-family private homes. They almost seemed out of place with the other Bronx neighborhoods. It was more like it belonged in Westchester or Long Island.

Unlike most of the neighborhoods in the Bronx, ours contained a very mixed community. Amongst the residents were five doctors, both Irish and Jewish; two reverends, one black (he was the pastor of the church that held the funeral for Malcolm X); the manager of prize fighter Sugar Ray Robinson; college professors, lawyers, business owners, and “The Cat Lady.” She moved into the Bergen house across the alley from us. Mr. Bergen was the son of the original landowner who sold Bergen’s farm to a builder named O’Rourke. Mr. O’Rourke lived in the house between my aunt Amy and the Bergens. Aside from the Reverend Childs’ large compound (the Reverend’s house was gated with security) these three homes were the largest in the neighborhood.

The Bronx had many varied neighborhoods. Each of them with their own sub-neighborhoods with many different characteristics. There could be a block of homes next to a block with five-story walk-ups. In another direction there would be a complex of elevated apartment houses with a central courtyard, built like a castle. If you were on a main shopping street you would find apartments over stores. Unlike mine, many of the neighborhoods in the Bronx were defined by ethnocentricity. People tended to live in pockets of people very much like themselves. There were blocks that were primarily Irish, Italian, Jewish, or Puerto Rican. These groups sometimes had their rivalries.

Rivalries amongst the neighborhood kids were usually confined to stickball (played in the streets) or basketball (played in the schoolyard). On rare occasions, it could get a little rough. The game would then change to “Johnny on the Pony.” This was a game where one person stands against the school building facing out (very strong stomach muscles were required for this position). The rest of his team had their faces bent over, heads down, and rear ends out. This was the pony. The other team runs and leaps on the pony, one at a time. After one team goes they switched positions and the jumpers became the pony.

Sunshine

I don't know if there were rules but this game was played until one team had to carry the unconscious or injured remains of a team member home, telling his mother he tripped and fell in the school yard. The other team was the obvious winner.

The kid who was carried home usually did not show up at school for a few days; one of those rare times that I think that person would have rather been in school. Now, I had a lot of padding, so I was never the kid they had to carry home. Instead, I was a desired final jumper. My weight added on top of everyone else was considered lethal. I was always the big kid until high school, then it seemed as if everyone else grew up around me. I was tall at age eleven, five-foot-six-inches, but average at age sixteen, five foot eight inches. While everyone was growing up I grew out. My mother called me "husky."

Being overweight caused me to be a little bit shy. I overcompensated my shyness by being an overachiever. Somehow, I must have concluded that a fat success was better than a skinny failure. This is not to say all skinny people are failures. After all, some of my best friends are thin. I never understood that; why would I want skinny friends? Logically, if I wanted to look thinner, I should have wanted to surround myself with fat friends.

I mentioned "The Cat Lady." I don't know her real name; we all called her the cat lady. She was an older woman who lived alone in a big house with dozens of cats. Her garage was opposite our garage in the alley. I must have been about eight years old when she got angry and yelled at me for playing too close to her garage. My father told me to ignore her because the alley belonged to all of us. There was a sun patio on top of her garage. One day, she came to the edge of the sun patio and dumped water on my friend Ricky as we were playing catch in the alley. To my father, this was a declaration of WAR!!

Every weekend when the family would come over, they would now set up the chairs directly in front of her garage. This would infuriate her. She would come to the edge and look to be sure that no one was scratching her garage doors. My father took great pleasure in aggravating her and he looked forward to every opportunity. I can't tell you how many cats we turned over to the pound. Every time we caught one, and we caught many, it would disappear. Dad would be sure to let her know that he caught a stray and had it sent to the pound.

I think she finally gave in when we started to use her garage as home base for "Ringolevio." There would be dozens of kids of all ages running on her property, tagging her garage doors, yelling "Ringolevio 1-2-3, Ringolevio 1-2-3." She would be yelling at everyone to get away from her garage, but no one would listen. It finally got to the point that the police stopped responding to her complaints.

Fireworks were legal back in the 50's. Nothing was more enjoyable than a good fireworks show in the alley. My father would invite the immediate world to join us. Of course, he set the fireworks off in front of his garage, which just happened to also be in front of the cat lady's garage. Dad would spend any amount of time or money to aggravate the cat lady. We had a great time with this. The more she fumed, the better time we all had. My father was the wrong person to start a neighbor war against. Alas, the cat lady died and the war ended. After she died the cats overran the neighborhood looking for food. They would overturn trash cans and leave a mess. It seemed they could multiply faster than animal services could get them off the street. The cat lady finally had her revenge.

Other than the cat lady, all the neighbors on the block got along wonderfully. About half were either relatives or close friends; the rest just wanted to join in against the cat lady. She gave the neighborhood a common purpose to rally against. All the neighbors got so close we were able to go into

Sunshine

almost any house on the block and be treated like it was our home. The cat lady brought the entire neighborhood together.

On Sunday mornings, my father would meet in the house next to the cat lady, the one on the side away from Uncle Max's house. He and some of the other men on the block would play "Hearts". I'm not quite sure that was the main purpose of the get-together. I think one of them was a bookie and Sunday was settle-up day. Dad had two flaws, smoking and gambling. He could afford the gambling. We were never in want or need of anything. He only gambled what he didn't need to live on. Smoking, on the other hand, was what eventually killed him.

He was one of the great dads of all time. Everyone who met him loved him, but he had his flaws, he was not perfect. He was always trying to get rich quick, but I never knew why. He was by all accounts a very comfortable person. I think this stemmed from his growing up in an orphanage and not having any money. I think he must have been very insecure, although I could not have realized it at the time. As I was growing up, Dad and I had our conflicts but we grew to become the very best of friends. He died in 1986, twenty-six years before Mom. Some things you never get over; I still miss him.

A significant part of our life in this alleyway was the outside people we interacted with on a daily basis. There were quite a few. Some I never saw but could hear, like the milkman. Early in the morning, about daybreak, I would hear the bottles tinkling against each other. The milkman would take the used bottles from the milk box and replace them with filled bottles.

To me, the best part of the milk bottle was the cardboard tab that was used to seal the cover over the top of the bottle. Bart and I would take these little cardboard disks and shoot them across the table with our fingers. The idea was to get it as close to the edge of the table without going over the edge.

This competition is permitted (don't ask me by whom) to be played with a penny as well.

Some people you would see every day. One such person was Sid, the mailman. Sid would say hello to me every day as he stuffed the mail into the box by our garage. I would walk next door with him to Uncle Nate's mailbox where he would say, "See ya tomorra" and I'd say, "Bye, Sid." Sometimes I'd follow Sid through the alley until we reached Aunt Amy's house where I could go to play with Flo and Libby.

One year, on July 28th, Sid woke up not knowing that day was going to change his life forever. Like any other morning, he got dressed in his mailman's uniform and had breakfast. The day was sunny and warm, a perfect day for a long walk. Back then there were no little mail cars, mail was delivered by shoe leather. Sid walked a lot. When he left for the post office that day, he kissed his wife Sandy goodbye, saying his customary "See ya later" as she smiled. She watched him go to work as she did every day for the past twenty years. Nothing seemed to have changed, but tomorrow things would never be the same. The love and admiration she had toward her husband for the past quarter century would have a greater significance then she had ever imagined.

Most government services did not require people to come into our alley unless we called them. Police patrolled the streets in front of the houses. The fire plugs were in front, so I imagine that is where the fire trucks would have gone in an emergency. The exception were the men who collected the garbage. The trash cans were in the alley behind the houses and garbage was collected three days a week.

I got to know the men on the garbage truck. They stopped every twenty or thirty yards to dump trash into their truck. What three-year-old wasn't fascinated by the truck and the noise--the men banging the cans, flipping back the lids? Back then cans were not plastic; they were steel. There was plenty

Sunshine

of noise as the cans got banged up quite a bit by the not so gentle guys on the truck.

Our garbage men were Tony, Alfie, and Phil. Phil was the driver, Tony and Alfie rode the back and they dumped the cans as the truck went along its route. The men would pick up our trash on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, three days a week. On Wednesday, Tony and Alfie showed up for work at their regular time but not Phil. His wife was having a baby. She had gone to the hospital the night before and Phil was exhausted after being up all night in the waiting room. He had called in that he could not be there because he was in no condition to drive and was going to use a sick day.

The City Sanitation Department assigned a temporary driver for the day, Frank Costanza. Frank met Tony and Alfie at the depot. Due to the circumstances, they got a late start. The truck usually rolled out of the depot at eight in the morning but that day it didn't leave until after nine. They figured they would make up the time during the route and still return to the depot where a different crew would take the truck, unload the trash, clean the truck, and prepare it for the next day.

The scheduled time to return was three in the afternoon. After they returned the truck to the depot, they had one hour to shower and clean up. They would punch out at four in the afternoon and head down the block to Renaldo's Clam Shack. There they each had an order of fried calamari and a beer. It seemed to be the perfect way to end the work day before heading home for dinner.

Frank was an experienced driver even if it wasn't his usual route. What he didn't know when he woke up that morning was that it was going to be his last day as a substitute driver. Change was about to take place as several lives converged on a single event that occurred at slightly after eleven-ten that morning.

Bart was at the Bergen's; Joey was sleeping. That's all he ever did—sleep and eat. Eventually, he learned to bite. He was vicious. I remember the little kid from across 179th Street came to the door bleeding, bearing teeth marks, and mumbling through tears, “Do Joey bite?” I think he finally grew out of biting everyone when he was about thirty. OK, I admit that is a slight exaggeration. It could have been twenty-eight ... tah-da. OK, he was more about seven, I think.

Joey, Bart, and I had a reputation for being a little on the wild side. I don't quite know why. Perhaps it was because of the things we did. Joey sawed the legs off of my parents' bed. We still don't know why. Bart and I made our own special doorway between our rooms with a spike. Joey locked Kenny the electrician in the attic. Someone heard his screams and let him out. I got lost on the NYU campus when I was five years old. It took two days to find me. We were cute, but our reputations followed us for years. When my future father-in-law found out I was going out with his daughter he was noted to say “not with that hoodlum.” He heard all the stories about us because the two families were friends.

Back to what happened on the 28th of July. All mom had to do was find something for me to do then she would have some rest time. Ann was busy cleaning the house so the answer was to send me out to play in the back. She got the tricycle out from the garage. We never kept a car in the garage. It was for everything else, and I mean everything was stored there, except the car. We only had one car and Dad took it to work. Mom didn't drive yet. She and Aunt Amy would learn to drive in 1951, about three years later.

So, there I was playing on my tricycle. At about eleven o'clock I saw Sid the mailman. I rode over to him and said “Hi.” Sid said, “How ya doin, Lenny?” He placed the mail in our mailbox and went to Uncle Nate's mailbox. I followed him and asked if he had any mail for me. He said, “Not today” as he moved on to the next house. Meanwhile, my Aunt Amy was watching out her kitchen window keeping an eye on the

alley. I saw her looking out of the window and yelled “Hi” to her. She waved back to me.

Just then, making the turn to enter the alley way was Frank driving the garbage truck. He would stop the truck by the cans and Tony and Alfie would empty them into the truck. I was following Sid and when Aunt Amy waved to me I started to ride my tricycle across the alley to get to Aunt Amy’s house. Frank didn’t know there was a kid that played in the alley. He was sitting high in the truck and he could not see a little kid on a tricycle. If Phil were driving the truck, he would have paid special attention and watched for the kid in the alley but Frank had no clue there was even a kid in the neighborhood.

Aunt Amy saw the truck approaching and yelled for me to go back. I didn’t understand what she was saying because the truck was so loud. Frank could not hear her either. The truck struck the tricycle with me on it and I got twisted up in the frame of the tricycle and ended up underneath the truck. They were unknowingly dragging me down the street.

Sid heard my aunt’s screams. He turned and saw me under the truck. He ran in front of the truck waving his arms and the truck stopped. By this time my aunt was out of her house and running toward the truck. Sid was yelling, “Lenny, Lenny.” By now everyone realized something was wrong. Sid and Tony went under the truck to pull me out. They could not untangle me from the twisted tricycle. I was crying, dripping with blood, skin hanging in all directions. At least they knew I was not dead. Amy was yelling “Get him out of there.”

Finally, they untwisted me from the trike and pulled me out. To everyone’s surprise I started to run, heading for home. In tow behind me were Sid, Tony, Alfie, and Aunt Amy. Frank was in shock. I ran into the house crying for my mother. She was exiting the bathroom as I ran in. She had no idea what had happened. She saw me and got hysterical. “What happened? What happened?” I leapt into her arms, bleeding all

over her while Aunt Amy told her what happened. Sid wanted to know where the phone was so he could call for an ambulance. Both Tony and Alfie were beside themselves saying how sorry they were.

Amy called Uncle Nate's office; he was the family doctor. Uncle Nate called one of the other doctors on the block to come over right away. Dr. Fay from the corner house was there in minutes. He examined me. "No broken bones," he said. He started to treat the wounds and within a half hour Uncle Nate was there. He looked me over and took charge of the situation.

The truck had dragged me over thirty feet. I was bruised up pretty badly and in bandages for most of that summer. The tricycle was destroyed. The fact that I was not squashed by the truck's tires or ripped apart by the twisted tricycle is, in itself, certainly remarkable. Furthermore, there was not a broken bone, nor is there a permanent scar.

I think if my aunt wasn't looking out of her window, or if Sid had come a few minutes earlier, I wouldn't be here. I guess it just wasn't my day to die. On that day, the "Grim Reaper" was made to wait. I had things to do and I needed my lifetime to get them done.

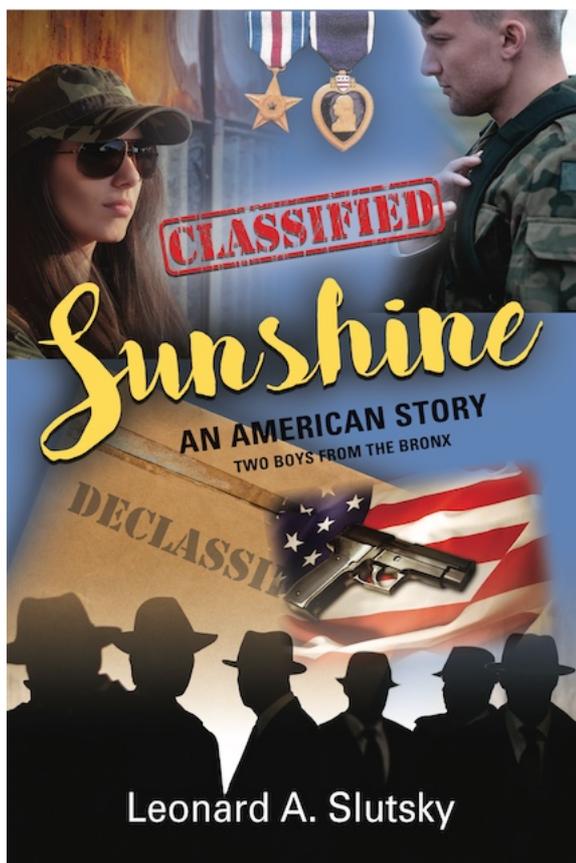
After the accident, Frank was no longer permitted to drive a sanitation truck. Those were the rules, even though it wasn't his fault. Often times as Phil, Tony, and Alfie drove by they stopped to see how I was doing. Phil apologized to my parents for not driving that day. He blamed himself. I don't know why. They were just good people who cared. But Sid was the real hero. The post office gave him an award for saving my life. Even though it was my aunt's screams that attracted his attention, it was his actions that saved my life.

Sid and Sandy became honorary members of our family. Dad invited them to the annual cousin's club picnic. They were surprised when Dad gave them the keys to a new car for them to drive there. Sid had never owned a car before. I knew

Sunshine

he was going to get the car when I overheard my father and Uncle Max talking about buying him a Buick. Uncle Max was partial to Buicks. For many years afterwards, Sid would keep reminding me to “Stay outa the street, Lenny.” Sid retired eight years later. He and Sandy drove their Buick to Florida. We would get cards from them every year.

In 1965, Dad called to tell me Sid had passed away. I flew from school in Tucson, Arizona to Tampa, Florida to attend the funeral. I owed him that, and more.



This story took a lifetime to write. Two Bronx boys. One in business and the other a very special government agent. They are cousins and their lives keeps intersecting. This is the personal story of the author's life and lessons learned in his journey to old age. A journey almost cut short more than once.

SUNSHINE

by Leonard A. Slutsky

Order the complete book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/10566.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.