

simply incomprehensible to me.

There is a comforting postscript to at least part of this story for me, though not an ending any rabbi or orthodox Jew would call positive. My aunt—the one who married the Jew who changed his name from Isaac Cohen to Ian Campbell so that he could pass as a Scots Presbyterian—was widowed not too many years ago. Among the letters of sympathy she received was one from the other Isaac Cohen, “Izzy,” her old flame from Bell Island. He, too, had been widowed, and after a period of grieving and correspondence, they were married and are now living happily in the United States. I, too, have remarried recently, not a Jew but a very open-minded agnostic who attends synagogue with me and who is studying Hebrew for the fun of it. We were in kindergarten together, so although it isn’t as romantic as the story of the two Isaac Cohens, it is a very cherished compromise between my longing to rejoin Newfoundland society and my need to maintain Jewish observance.

Robin McGrath is a writer based in Beachy Cove, Newfoundland. Her most recent books are a collection of stories, Trouble and Desire (Killick Press, 1995) and A Heritage Guide to Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s (Oceanside Press, 1996). She is an adjunct professor of English at the University of Alberta and has been appointed the Halbert Chair for Canadian Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for 1996–97.

¹Strictly speaking means Jewishness, but usually refers to knowledge of Jewish culture as distinct from Jewish religion.

²Jewish religious court.

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LYN LIFSHIN

For Me the Holocaust Started in 33 in a Small Village

I was in a class
and the teacher said I
hear we have a Jew
pig in this class
I shook he said I’m
going to show this
Jew pig how much
pain a Jew can survive
he took a stick out
of the desk and
hit and hit I don’t
remember the pain
she said but only
the kids who’d been
my friends once
laughing and laughing

Lyn Lifshin’s most recent books include The Marilyn Munroe Poems (Quiet Lion Press, 1995) and Blue Tattoo (Event Horizon, 1996). A collected volume of her poetry, Cold Comfort (Blacksparrow Press), will be released in February 1997.



Jeannie Kamins, “Hug in a Snow Storm,” fabric appliqué, 32” x 45”, 1992. Photo: Henri Robideau