

Nuggets of Fun and Nostalgia for Treasure Valley Golden-Agers

Did God Ride the Brooklyn Subway?

Marcel Sternberger was a man of habits, with bushy white hair, guileless brown eyes, and boundless enthusiasm. He always took the 9:09 Long Island Railroad train from his suburban home to Woodside, N.Y. where he caught a subway into the city.



On the morning of January 10, 1948, Sternberger boarded the 9:09 as usual.

Enroute, he suddenly decided to visit Laszlo Victor, a friend from his native Hungary who lived in Brooklyn and was ill.

At Ozone Park, Sternberger changed to the subway for Brooklyn, went to his friend's house and stayed until midafternoon. He then boarded a Manhattan-bound subway for his Fifth Avenue office. Here is Marcel's incredible story:

The car was crowded, and there seemed to be no chance of a seat. But just as I entered, a man sitting by the door suddenly jumped up to leave, and I slipped into the empty place. Being a photographer, I have the peculiar habit of analyzing people's faces, and I was struck by the features of the passenger on my left. He was probably in his late 30s, and when he glanced up, his eyes seemed to have a hurt expression in them. He was reading a Hungarian-language newspaper, and something prompted me to say in Hungarian, "I hope you don't mind if I glance at your paper."

The man seemed surprised to be addressed in his native language. But he answered politely, "You may read it now. I'll have time later on."

During the half-hour ride to town, we had quite a conversation. He said his name was Bela Paskin. A law student when World War II started, he had been put into a German labor battalion and sent to the Ukraine. Later he was captured by the Russians and put to work burying the German dead. After the war, he covered hundreds of miles on foot until he reached his home in Debrecen, a large city in eastern Hungary.

I knew Debrecen quite well, and we talked about it for a while. Then he told me the rest of his story. When he went to the apartment once occupied by his father, mother,

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Major Events of 1923

- Egypt --- King Tut Burial Chamber Opened
- First Home Game Played at the Original Yankee Stadium home of the New York Yankees
- First Issue of Time Magazine
- The Great Kanto earthquake devastate the cities of Tokyo and Yokohama
- Adolf Hitler leads the Nazi Party in failed coup attempt in Germany
- Canada --- Insulin Used For Diabetes treatment



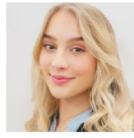
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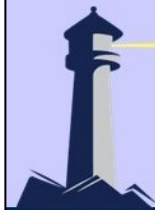
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WHEN EACH MOMENT COUNTS

In the Blink of an Eye



In the blink of an eye
another day is gone,
In the blink of an eye
another week is gone.
In the blink of an eye
another month is gone,
In the blink of an eye
another year is gone.

And in the blink of an eye
I'll be gone too,
And not just me but also you.
So maybe we should be
wishin' and hopin',
That we could just keep our eyes
open.

And see and appreciate
all that we can see,
And learn how we can be,
the best that we can be,
Before it's too late,
Time flies, so let's not wait.

Whether we have just one life
or many, one thing is true,
We should try to enjoy every
moment we can;
it's the wisest thing to do.

Did God Ride the Brooklyn Subway? *Continued from Page 1*

brothers and sisters, he found strangers living there. Then he went upstairs to the apartment that he and his wife once had. It also was occupied by strangers. None of them had ever heard of his family.

As he was leaving, full of sadness, a boy ran after him, calling "Paskin bacsi! Paskin bacsi!" That means "Uncle Paskin." The child was the son of some old neighbors of his. He went to the boy's home and talked to his parents. "Your whole family is dead," they told him. "The Nazis took them and your wife to Auschwitz."

Auschwitz was one of the worst Nazi concentration camps. Paskin gave up all hope. A few days later, too heartsick to remain any longer in Hungary, he set out again on foot, stealing across border after border until he reached Paris. He managed to immigrate to the United States in October 1947, just three months before I met him.

All the time he had been talking, I kept thinking that somehow his story seemed familiar. A young woman whom I had met recently at the home of friends had also been from Debrecen; she had been sent to Auschwitz; from there she had been transferred to work in a German munitions factory. Her relatives had been killed in the gas chambers. Later she was liberated by the Americans and was brought here in the first boatload of displaced persons in 1946.

Her story had moved me so much that I had written down her address and phone number, intending to invite her to meet my family and thus help relieve the terrible emptiness in her life.

It seemed impossible that there could be any connection between these two people, but as I neared my station, I fumbled anxiously in my address book. I asked in what I hoped was a casual voice, "Was your wife's name Marya?"

He turned pale. "Yes!" he answered. "How did you know?" He looked as if he were about to faint.

I said, "Let's get off the train." I took him by the arm at the next station and led him to a phone booth. He stood there like a man in a trance while I dialed her phone number.

It seemed hours before Marya Paskin answered.

When I heard her voice at last, I told her who I was and asked her to describe her husband. She seemed surprised at the question, but gave me a description. Then I asked her where she had lived in Debrecen, and she told me the address.

Asking her to hold the line, I turned to Paskin and said, "Did you and your wife live on such-and-such a street?"

"Yes!" Bela exclaimed. He was white as a sheet and trembling.

"Try to be calm," I urged him. "Something miraculous is about to happen to

Continued on Page 3

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Did God Ride the Brooklyn Subway? *Continued from Page 2*

you. Here, take this telephone and talk to your wife!"

He nodded his head in mute bewilderment, his eyes bright with tears. He took the receiver, listened a moment to his wife's voice, then suddenly cried, "This is Bela! This is Bela!" and he began to mumble hysterically. Seeing that the poor fellow was so excited he couldn't talk coherently, I took the receiver from his shaking hands.

"Stay where you are," I told Marya, who also sounded hysterical. "I am sending your husband to you. He will be there in a few minutes."

Bela was crying like a baby and saying over and over again. "It is my wife. I go to my wife!"

At first I thought I had better accompany Paskin, lest the man should faint from excitement, but I decided that this was a moment in which no strangers should intrude. Putting Paskin into a taxicab, I directed the driver to take him to Marya's address, paid the fare, and said goodbye.

Bela Paskin's reunion with his wife was a moment so poignant, so electric with suddenly released emotion, that afterward neither he nor Marya could recall much about it.

"I remember only that when I left the phone, I walked to the mirror like in a dream to see if maybe my hair had turned gray," she said later. "The next thing I know, a taxi stops in front of the house, and it is my husband who comes toward me. Details I cannot remember; only this I know—that I was happy for the first time in many years.

"Even now it is difficult to believe that it happened. We have both suffered so much; I have almost lost the capability to not be afraid. Each time my husband goes from the house, I say to myself, 'Will anything happen to take him from me again?'"

Her husband is confident that no horrible misfortune will ever again befall them. "Providence has brought us together," he says simply. "It was meant to be."

Skeptical persons will no doubt attribute the events of that memorable afternoon to mere chance. But was it chance that made Marcel Sternberger suddenly decide to visit his sick friend and hence take a subway line that he had never ridden before? Was it chance that caused the man sitting by the door of the car to rush out just as Sternberger came in? Was it chance that caused Bela Paskin to be sitting beside Sternberger, reading a Hungarian newspaper?

Was it chance—or did God ride the Brooklyn subway that afternoon!

*Paul Deutschman, Great Stories Remembered,
 edited and compiled by Joe L. Wheeler*

Speed Trap



A man was driving down the highway late one night when his Dodge minivan broke down. He turned on his flashers and tried to get someone's attention to help him. Eventually a Ford Mustang pulls up.

"Any chance I could get a lift into town?" said the minivan driver.

"I can do better than that," the man driving the Mustang replied. "I've got a V8 under this hood. I can tow you to the nearest town, no problem. Just honk your horn and flash your lights if I start going too fast."

They headed off down the road and eventually came to a stop light and up pulled a Chevy Corvette. The 'Vette began to rev its engine to get the Mustang to race. The Mustang revved its engine and the light turned green. They flew out of there, and about a half a mile down the road they passed a speed trap.

The officer there watched them pass and radioed to the station, "Sarge, you won't believe what I just saw. A Mustang and a Corvette were driving down the road doing about 120 - with a Dodge minivan honking its horn and flashing its lights trying to pass them!"

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FUN FACT

The blending of idioms or cliches is called a malapophor

“You can take one man’s trash to another man’s treasure, but you can’t make him drink.”

“We’ll burn that bridge when we get to it.”

“It’s not rocket surgery”

“He’s not the sharpest egg in the attic.”

“That’ll happen when the cows freeze over.”

“You’ve opened a can or worms, now lie in it.”

“You hit the nail right on the nose.”

“She really stuck her neck out on a limb.”

“He’s burning the midnight oil from both ends.”

“It’s as easy as falling off a piece of cake.”

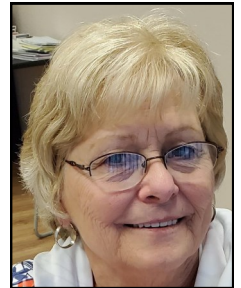
“This country is going to hell in a handbag.”

“I can read him like the back of my book.”

Milestones



Ronald Hellman
Dec 16, 1937—85 years
Weiser



Connie Lang
Dec 13, 1947—75 years
Weiser



George Bemrose
Jan 25, 1953—70 years
Weiser

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Albert & Elyssa Alvarez
Jan 31, 1959—64 years
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Pet Puns

Why can't you hear a dog whistle?
Because dogs can't whistle!

Cat puns freak meowt!
Seriously, I'm not kitten!

Dressed my dog as a cat for Halloween.

Now he won't come when I call him!

Where do you find a dog with no legs?
Right where you left it.

Dear Noah—We thought the ark left at 5 pm!
- signed, the Unicorns

What do you get when you cross a sheepdog with a rose?
A collie flower!

How many cats can you put in an empty box?

Only one—after that the box isn't empty!

What did the Dalmatian say when you scratched his back?
"Ah, that's the spot!"

What kind of guard dog works at the bakery?
A pure-bread!



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