

## My Address Book

After thirty years, I finally decided to get a new address book. I had clipped so many pages into it, it could not expand anymore. Besides, the pages were falling out. So I decided to buy myself a new address book at Staples. But, after an hour's search, I left empty-handed. No address books to be had! Yes, there were some fancy leather-covered ones with price tags of \$50.00 and up, but without the all-important feature of being able to expand them with refills. There were no refills. Refills went the way of lipstick colors: discontinued or "retired."

Back home, I began examining my tattered address book for content. Did I really need such a book, particularly since a great many of my current contacts were now on the computer? And certainly, most of the staffs of publications, publishing houses and magazines were no longer there? But buried among those pages are names of human beings who were, to me, at one moment in time, nothing less than angels. In the "L's," for example, squeezed between "Landlord" and "Lawyers" is the name of Dr. Harry Lusk, the obstetrician at the Kaiser Medical Plan in Los Angeles, who saved Elizabeth Julia's life. Actually, when I checked into the hospital that evening, everything was considered perfectly normal. I was expected to deliver in the course of the night. But unannounced Dr. Lusk stopped by to check on me past midnight and sounded the alarm. My baby was choking on the umbilical cord. Within minutes he gave orders for delivery and, she was saved! If Dr. Lusk had not stopped by just then, none of the attending staff would have noticed and Elizabeth Julia would not have been born alive and all the wonderful subsequent years with her would not have happened!

Dr. Lusk, now deceased, will always remain in my address book.

Once you let us know which of our services you wish to employ, we will send you a work contract setting forth agreed tasks and completion dates.

We look forward to helping you publish and promote your written work, and establish a strong author's presence on the worldwide web.

**E** Now in the "E's," between "Employment Agencies" and "Ginger Everson" (who was a special friend of my father's and very kind to me when I was growing up), is the name of Scott Ehrlich. She was the young woman the employment agent on Fifth Avenue said I might see for an interview, although he was reluctant because he said I did not have adequate skills. But in the end, he did send me to see Ms. Ehrlich, and there I was in a one-room office on West 46th Street, nervously sitting across from her, while she was scanning my resume.

"Oh, you are divorced," she noted, looking up at me. And then added, "So am I."

"And you have a five-year old daughter?"

"Yes, I do," I replied.

"So have I," Ms. Ehrlich noted again.

"And you graduated from USC!" she exclaimed with even greater surprise. That was her alma mater, too.

Then she picked up the intercom and said: "Mr. Navin, I have a candidate for you."

The man who appeared from behind a screen, was not quite as impressed as was his assistant. He said he wished to conduct further interviews with more candidates, since the Help Wanted ad had only just appeared in the *New York Times*. But after a week, the job was mine. My first one in the Big City as a single mother, thanks to Scott E. And even though we have lost touch and that one room office has changed many hands (the last time I passed, it was a Korean employment agency), I will always keep Scott Ehrlich in my address book.

**P** Among the "P's," between "Photo Labs" and "Post Office," is Susie Perl. She sat in front of me at a lecture. The lecture was metaphysical in nature and having just lost a dear friend, I had gone there to inquire re: possibilities of communication between the deceased and the living. Susie Perl turned around and said, "See me later." Then, waiting for the elevator in the vestibule, she asked me if I knew about Ellen Resch. I had not heard of her, but having been given her name, I went to see her and subsequently she became my teacher for the next twenty-four years!

**H** And in the "H's" between "Hairdressers" and "Hotels" is the name of Dr. Joseph Haim, a lawyer formerly from Vienna. One day I was suddenly asked to participate in a reading of Austrian poetry at the Austrian Institute. The regular person on the program could not make it and, although I did not think my German was as good as it should be, I jumped in. The next day, a man with a heavy accent by name of Dr. Josef Haim called me. He had been in the audience at the Austrian Institute and hoped I would know the address of one of the other readers. We started to talk and discovered we were living in the same neighborhood. I mentioned to him that my daughter and I had been looking for an apartment for almost a year without a tangible result. Our landlord, who lived downstairs from us, wished to make a duplex apartment since his wife was pregnant. He had the right to evict us but had given us time to look for something else. We had found nothing and time was running out. Dr. Haim said he would let me know if he heard of something. Months went by, then one day, his voice was on my answer tape: "Are you ready?" he inquired. An apartment in his building was about to be made available. It was the kind of place that would never be advertised. Word of mouth was the only way for a find like this. It was at least two-and-one-half times bigger than the apartment we had been squeezed into and it was rent-stabilized! Well, there were a few hoops to still jump through, but we got it!

I have decided to keep my tattered address book. And although I will key all subsequent addresses into the computer, I will never discard the names and former addresses of those human beings who, although they may no longer be living, were angels in my life.