

Growing Up Protestant in 50's Newark

The New York Times

April 5, 1985, Friday, Late City Final Edition

Copyright 1985 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Page 26, Column 4; Editorial Desk; LETTER

Length: 382 words

Body

To the Editor:

Peter A. Quinn's "In Search of Protestants" (Op-Ed, March 16), about a Bronx boy's puzzlement in the 1950's, made me recall my childhood.

I was born shortly after the Depression, the only child of Swedish immigrants boarding in the early 50's with an elderly man in need of a housekeeper and willing to accept a family of three in his one-family house in the Weequahic section of Newark. I was in the third grade and quickly realized I was different from most of the other kids in the neighborhood, having very blond hair and extremely red cheeks that virtually glowed when I was nervous or shy.

Letter by Gladys Ingmanson Golder on Peter A Quinn's March 16 Op-Ed article on religious mix of his Bronx neighborhood when he was boy; recalls her childhood, as Swedish immigrant, in Jewish section of Newark, NJ

My last name also was unusual, ending like so many Swedish names with "son," while most of my classmates' names ended in "berg" or "stein." While the "bergs" and the "steins" attended the public schools with me, the Flynns and Russos went to the parochial schools. I knew nothing of Jewish people before coming to New Jersey from New York's Long Island and was naturally curious. My curiosity was generously satisfied by answers filled with pride and a culture I began to admire.

There was a best friend whose family at first tolerated a young Protestant girl who wanted to share in their faith (this was a new experience for them, too). When I showed up on their doorstep with an Easter basket filled with colored eggs on Passover, they swallowed hard, smiled warmly and invited me in to partake of their traditional seder. When my friend came to my home for Christmas, my parents were excited witnesses to great wonderment in the eyes of a child who had never experienced the magic of a Christmas tree from floor to ceiling.

In this neighborhood that sheltered me and shared with me the Old Testament lessons, I grew, never realizing that I was not a minority person or that the majority can sometimes be brutal in its prejudices. Lox and bagels are still a favorite treat, and I know I've turned a few people on to Swedish meatballs.

Laughter and tears, shared with mutual respect, have put profound order in my world - for the youth that was then and the adult that is now - which is what makes it shocking to me that the whole world doesn't seem able to just "get the hang of it."

GLADYS INGMANSON GOLDER Roselle Park, N.J., March 20, 1985

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Growing Up Protestant in 50's Newark

Subject: CHRISTIANS & CHRISTIANITY (90%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (89%); **PROTESTANTS** & PROTESTANTISM (89%); JEWS & JUDAISM (88%); LETTERS & COMMENTS (79%); BIBLE & CHRISTIAN TEXTS (78%); RELIGION (78%); ADULTS (76%); FAITH BASED SCHOOLS (73%); EASTER SEASON (73%); PASSOVER (72%); PRIVATE SCHOOLS (72%); CHRISTMAS (66%); PUBLIC SCHOOLS (65%)

Industry: FAITH BASED SCHOOLS (73%); PRIVATE SCHOOLS (72%); PUBLIC SCHOOLS (65%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (92%); **NEWARK**, NJ, USA (72%); NEW JERSEY, USA (90%); NEW YORK, USA (79%)

End of Document