Now That’s What We Call a Bar Mitzva!

BY VERA MILLER

Now is the time for all good relatives to go to a Bar Mitzva... and I'll bet you're going to get an invitation to one. I heard that a Bar Mitzva hasn't been held in this area for many years, and so there was every possibility it would revolutionize the whole idea of the thing.

The service was at the Shul on Saturday morning and there was a row upon row of adults, big children, middle-aged boys and girls, and small ones. There were friends of the celebrant. Little girls sat side-by-side, and observing possibly something they had never seen or heard before. The boys sat there thinking of the years to come or reflecting on past performances.

AND THE MISTAKES

The Bar Mitzva made his speech, and he made his mistakes, and made everyone proud of him. The ad libs in the much forgotten speech came from the heart. There are no planned speeches directing the celebrant to stumble over a word, look in the front row at his mother, sisters, brothers and grandmother. From the heart came those weak smiles and the knowing that everyone sitting there is taking pride—and also pain—in this moment.

As a matter of fact, the Rabbi based portions of his sermon on this human act of seeing us where we love and where we are at our failures, yet knowing that there is still faith and unaltered confidence of the outcome.

After the service everyone was at the Kiddush. Of course, some of the young people jumped in quickly and substituted the wine for the prepared grape juice—but then an afternoon nap never hurt anyone.

EVERYTHING’S OPEN

After the service, everyone returned to the small apartment of the celebrant’s family. The door stood open and so did the hearts of all who entered. Adults, children, babies—all welcomed to share of the simple meal prepared by the family who celebrated this simcha. No one was left out.

THAT NIGHT there was a party and I went down the stairs to the basement auditorium of the Shul. Everyone was there, obviously the invitations read ‘family’.

DELICIOUS TOO

The dinner was a masterpiece. Great platters of sliced meat and mashed potatoes and saucered-up platters of home-made dill pickles, olives, and watermelon pickles. During the dinner there were noisy and loud rounds of off-key singing of (as the children sang) “Tza’re achi l’venu” and by the time the sherbet was served all the boys and girls under 13 who were seated at the children’s table were grouped up in inapplicable friendship.

During dinner several safaris from said table were made when an 11-year-old gentleman assented a 5-year-old young lady who, secretly, over the din of the festivities loudly announced her request to the toilet.

There were children who never before danced a shereke. As the evening progressed children and elders joined in the ring or at the minimum as the orchestra was requested to repeat and repeat the traditional dances. Nieces, nephews, and nieces were never seen of the traditional steps... this too, they had never seen before.

THE SWINGINGEST

By the end of the evening, the festivities were in top swing and shoulders were abandoned, little boys had their older brothers tied off and little girls were losing hair ribbons all over the place. But mothers danced with the youngest sons and little 4-year-olds danced with their dads and the small upturned faces spoke more than any word. Children sat and watched while parents walked together. I heard someone say, “Did you dance like this in the olden days?” One little one was about 9 years old.

And indeed everyone brought home souvenirs. They weren’t satisfied, but you couldn’t light a cigarette with them, but they were enlightening and enriching the spirit of the family. I am sure many small children will never forget this Bar Mitzva.