



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 went to a Bar Mitzva last fall and there was every possibility it would revolutionize the whole idea of the thing.

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

AND THE MISTAKES

THE BAR MITZVA made his speech, he made his mistakes, he made everyone proud of him. The ad libs in the muchly 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 the weak smile 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 those we love wrench with agony at our failures, yet the knowing that there is still faith and unaltered confidence of the outcome.

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

EVERYTHING'S OPEN

After the services, 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 were welcome to share of the simple fare prepared by the family who celebrated this simcha. No one was left out.

THAT NIGHT there was a party and I walked down the stairs to the basement auditorium of the Shul. Everyone was there. Obviously the invitations read 'and family.'

The young people were being introduced to relatives who last remembered them as little dirty nosed tree climbers at Garfield Park picnics. The boy cousins were looking at the girl cousins and vice versa. The "under 10" group wandered freely toward the space to be occupied by the 3 piece orchestra fingering music stands and miscellany props.

DELICIOUS TOO

The dinner was a masterpiece. Great platters of sliced meat and mounds of potatoes and unfancied-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—) "Luz mere ahl and nanum" and by the time the sherbert was served all the boys and girls under 13 who were seated at the children's table were grouped off in inseparable friendships.

During dinner several safari's from said table were made when an 11 year old gentleman escorted 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 sherele. As the evening progressed children and elders joined in the ring or meriment as the orchestra was requested to repeat and repeat the traditional dances. Nieces and nephews saw uncles dance 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 shoes were abandoned, little boys had their older brothers ties 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 printed word. Children sat and watched their parents waltz together. I heard one say—"Did you two dance like this in the olden days?" The little one was about 9 years old.

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