

Uncle Jack and Fate
By Betty Z.

In 1937, when I was 21, I took a job in my uncle's office. Jack Levine was a G.P. in the Bronx. We had office hours from 1 to 3 and 6 to 8, six days a week and on Sundays from 1 to 3. House calls were made on weekdays between 4 and 6.

I was taking a night course to become a medical technician at the Mandl School in Manhattan and worked during the day. Uncle Jack's office occupied the first floor of my grandmother's house. The Pelham Bay elevated subway was on the corner.

The office had an x-ray machine, fluoroscopes and diathermy machines. A patient was examined by the doctor. If an x-ray was needed, an x-ray was done. I performed the blood and urine tests. The first examination of a patient was \$5. Subsequent visits were \$2. A house call was \$3.

On the first day of my job, a neighbor rang the office doorbell and told me that his wife's water broke. I promptly asked, "Do you want me to call a plumber?" I still remember the look on his face when I said that.

Uncle Jack was paid by cash and was loved by all his patients. When a patient needed money, he gave it to them. Many times I picked up dollar bills from the exam room floor.

One day, a very heavy woman came in with a stomachache. Uncle Jack put her on the examining table and, low and behold, though she didn't even know it, she was pregnant and ready to give birth. He sent her directly to the hospital, then left himself and delivered a baby girl.

When Christmas came, the office was filled with homemade pies and cakes. This was the way it was to be a family doctor back then.

In 1937, Uncle Jack spent the month of August in Europe. We picked him up at the pier when he returned. Driving north along the Hudson River he said, "I've seen many beautiful places on my trip, but this is as beautiful as any of them."

A young doctor had filled in for him that August. Uncle Jack asked me if the doctor had liked his practice. “He liked it very much,” I said. “And he also liked your assistant.”

I married that young doctor a year and a half later.

Author Bio: Betty Z. lives six miles from the Pelham Bay station. She has had a life full of many adventures. At 95, this is her first publication. It's never too late to pen one's recollections.