Rhett Trom

English 102

Living History Interview

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**Mordecai “Marty” Dushey**

Mordecai Dushey, or “Marty,” as he is referred to, does not appear anything like an 80 year old man. He walks quickly, laughs often, and has a smile that hints at a boyish charm, quick wit, and a mischievous nature. Marty has led and continues to lead a full life, despite being a retired minister, as well as cosmetologist, actor, and radiologist. He welcomes his granddaughter and myself into his living room, which is full of a large screen television and entertainment system. He lives alone and is without a pet as a companion, yet claims to have too full of a social calendar to want one, or need one.

Marty was born in 1932 in Brooklyn, New York. The son of third generation Jewish immigrants hailing from the Middle East, he is somewhat vague about the details of his immediate family, but mentions an older brother, several years his senior. Marty's young life begins as a series of family relocations, edging themselves out west, beginning with Indiana. There, as a 9 year old little boy, Marty experienced anti-Semitic discrimination for the first time. He recalls being stood in front of his elementary class, quite shy and unsure of himself. The teacher prompted him to speak his name and announce where he was from. Young Marty, at that time, gave his full name in a thick Brooklyn accent, unaware of the religious and cultural differences that sleepy Midwestern Indiana had with Brooklyn.

Later, at recess, he was circled his new classmates, both male and female alike. A large boy from the class approached him out of the ring of students, and inquired if he would like to play a game. Mordecai agreed, and the boy informed him that they would each place a small chip of wood on their respective shoulders. The goal of the game, the large boy announced, would be to flick the wood chip from the other's shoulder, all while keeping their chip safe on their own. Mordecai was confused at point of this game, but began to play regardless. When he successfully flicked the wood from the large boy's shoulder, he was punched in the face, and once fallen, was kicked in the ribs. While on the ground, he heard the words “Jew boy,” and “Christ-killer” shouted at him, for the first time. However, as little boys are wont to do, Mordecai rose, and began to fight back. “I guess, after awhile, we [he and the large boy] became friends, as kids do. That was it.”

Marty's father owned a store in Indiana, which went bankrupt, forcing the family to move farther west. The family settled in Salt Lake City, Utah, which is known for a high population of practitioners of the Mormon faith. “While I like their [the Mormon] family night,” he recalls, “they still have...class structures. They are very...clannish. I am not putting them down, but that was what I experienced.” During his time there with his family, Marty experienced additional discrimination and harassment for his heritage.

The Dushey family moved once again, this time relocating even further west, in southern California. Once again, Marty's father opened another store, and Marty worked with his father as a child. “[Working in the store] was kind of fun! My dad always said, 'Look at a person's shoes, and you can tell how much money they got.' “ It was by working with his father that he developed the ability “to sell.”

Despite living in southern California, Marty and his family experienced additional anti-semitism. However, the discrimination was not something that Marty allowed to consume or dominate his life: “It comes, it goes, you know. I didn't dwell on my mind. I did a lot of happy things: played football, you know, and so on.”

In 1950, after high school, Marty enlisted in the US Navy, along with his uncle, Norm, as their age gap made them far more akin to siblings. “Here I go to bootcamp, mind you, naïve, 19, and very young. Scared. I was exposed to the older adults. But,. I got through bootcamp.” Marty then grows serious, and continues. “The greatest tragedy happened to me, and I still think about it today. You might laugh,” he says, “but here I was, going to come back to San Jose, California...and all my girlfriends were going to see me in my sailor suit. Guess what? They canceled the leave, it didn't happen, and that's a tragedy! Oh...what my girlfriends missed!”

Marty found himself fighting in the Korean War, at the Battle of Inchon, and other locations and battles commonly known. “I remember being really cold, and really scared. Anyone who tells you they aren't are full of bologna.” Despite being in the center of a war, Marty was attacked in his sleep by another older sailor, who drunkenly shouted anti-semitic slurs at Marty while he attacked him. Despite being in his sleep, Marty was able to fight the sailor off. Later, the sailor apologized to him for the horrible words.

After the war, Marty came home, became a cosmetologist for a short period. He did some work with his Uncle Sam, who started Monogram Pictures, which became Columbia Pictures, acting in films. “I had dark hair. I wasn't the greatest looking guy, but I could pass through a storm!” He ended up working his way into the health care industry in radiology, married,and had a family of his own, with several children, and, eventually, grandchildren.

As the years passed, Marty moved up north to Spokane, Washington, in order to stay close to his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. “The focus of my life is family...I love them very much. Sometimes I might go a little overboard.” He smiles, and then continues, “But that doesn't matter. What matters is that [family] is what is important to me.”

Marty is a true Renaissance man, saying that “The best thing [anyone] could do is using your mind.” He follows this principle in his own life, for example, converting older videos to DVD, as well as editing the content for upload to Youtube. I was amazed to meet with such a man, one who appears to have gathered the natural wisdom from the passing of time, yet not been lost to it. One who triumphed over discrimination and hatred, and yet refused to be defined as a victim. The time I have spent with him, hearing his story, can be valued at nothing short of priceless.