

Bubbies in Cyberspace

By Linda Parker Horowitz

"I'm not being a 'Pushy Jewish Mother,' " I anxiously typed in an email to the professional photographer for my son's Bar Mitzvah which took place over a month ago. "However, my own P-J-M. has been *hock-ing* me on a regular basis (like daily) during our multiple telephone conversations. She wants me to send her photos. Any sense of your timing for posting them online so I can quickly order and send her hard copies?"

Online might as well be outer space to my 82-year old mother.

In a creative fit of desperation and in hopes of temporarily appeasing my own P-J-M, I sent a Bar Mitzvah announcement into *The American Israelite*, the longest running English Jewish newspaper in the country. It is published in Cincinnati, where I grew up, a third generation member of that Jewish community and where my mother and all her life-long friends still reside. I now live happily in Southern California for a host of reasons aside from the good weather.

I contacted *The Israelite* via its **website**, and sent the announcement by **email** with a **Word doc** and a **jpg photo** attached to the Publisher.

I don't think Mom has a subscription to the *Israelite* any more. But really, who needs to pay money for a subscription when you live in YentaSpace, formally Cedar Village, the only Jewish seniors' residence in Cincinnati.

I am hopeful when she reads the "surprise" in *The Israelite* or gets calls from her yenta friends, she'll be thrilled and satisfied for the time being without hard copy photos to review 47 times a day. Having actual paper photos, there'll be additional times she will feel compelled to show them to her friends along with any resident she happens to pass in the corridors.

A photo album in the handy basket on her walker is FAR superior to being forced to learn how to navigate the Internet or even venturing near a computer to go online; to Mom, Online=Abyss.

I really hope she'll be momentarily satisfied with the *Israelite* announcement, to stave-off having to send her my mediocre snapshots, particularly since I paid a professional. I would much prefer that she show the *entire* community of Jewish seniors the gorgeous and expensive professional photos rather than my hastily grabbed shots of my sons acting like goof-balls at a rehearsal – and on the *bimah*! All of Cincinnati will think my sons are disrespectful in *shul* while my mother regales viewers with their virtues and brilliance.

Though I am fairly facile with various electronics, with two teenage sons and a digit-head-techno-nerd husband, I often feel like a technology dinosaur stuck in a Wang-Word-Processing-

Warp circa 1983. I'm usually hurtled into that emotional state by a condescending comment thrown down by my 13 year old standing behind me watching me type. "Mom! Don't use your mouse. The command is faster." Or a very snide direct hit slung from the lips of my 17 year old know-it-all, "You don't even know how your computer works! Your laptop, which I TOLD you NOT to buy, has dual Celeron core processor with [*here is where you fill in a bunch of techno-jargon. I do not remember any of it due to overload or menopause, hard to know which at this point. Or maybe because I just don't CARE.*] That concept, in and of itself, is unfathomable to my eldest. Not care? Waddayamean not care??? How can ANYONE NOT CARE? The most up-to-the-nano-second technology information along with all current and future automotive trends, torques, kits, makes, models, and stats are lingo and info critical to male one-ups-man-ship, an odd form of bonding.

The inner workings and dynamics of my computer are totally irrelevant to me, just as the Internet is to my mother, and as a result, foreign, including the language used to describe it. I can USE my laptop, thank you, which is more than I can say for my own mother, an acute techno-phobe. She cannot even use those Stone Age technologies – a cassette player and a VCR. Her attempts to master a cell phone were a complete disaster, though my nephew bought her two different models, gave her numerous tutorials, and is a far more patient human being than me (patience is a virtue I don't have much of, especially with family). Even my nephew gave up attempting to bring his beloved grandmother into the 21st century. How many times can even the most adoring grandson hear, "There's no dial tone." "What button do I press again?" "I pressed twice, now what do I do?" Hopeless. Totally hopeless.

I have to give my mother-in-law *props* for at least USING a computer, though just as I thought she'd mastered email and word processing, I heard my generally silent husband shouting in his study, "Mom. [then louder] MOM! PICK UP THE PHONE!!" Apparently he was attempting a tutorial, and she put down the phone to type. "PUT THE SPEAKER PHONE ON!" my husband shouted doubly annoyed because she'd forgotten what he considers to be a basic technology of phone usage. His head exploding and out of "old school" options, he out-technology'd her by using that frightening Sci-Fi-esque software that, like the TV show, "The Outer Limits," controls your screen and mouse. Success! When she couldn't manipulate anything on her screen, no matter how hard she tried, she picked-up the phone.

After the incident, he walked into my office, frustrated, exhausted, and sweating, despite the unusually cold Southern California temperatures and announced, "It's useless. She'll never learn." I smiled sweetly, shrugged my shoulders in acknowledgment and acceptance of his plight and silently thought, "At least it wasn't me."

Glossary for Gentiles:

Bubbe – grandmother

Bimah – alter

Hock mir a chinik – to nag (shortened and Anglicized, "hock me")

Schlepp – to carry something that is a big hassle

Yenta – busybody, as a pejorative, a gossip

Glossary for Adults:

Props – strokes, at-a-boys, compliments. Orig. 'hood. Now in general usage by white suburban high school boys.