

The Chad Lady

*The True Story of Ballots, Courage
and the 2000 Election*

Carol Roberts

with

Peter Weisz



The Chad Lady: The True Story of Ballots, Courage, and the 2000 Election

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Carol Roberts

Dedication

*To my children,
David, Jonathan, Mark, Stephen, Scott, Pamela*

1. HANGING
DOOR CHAD

2. SWINGING
DOOR CHAD

3. TRI CHAD

4. DIMPLED
CHAD

5. PREGNANT
CHAD

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The Chad Lady

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The Chad Lady



INTRODUCTION

*“Patriotism is loving your country all the time and loving
your government when it deserves it.”*

—Mark Twain

I

cannot believe it,” I muttered to Joan, my dear friend and frequent fellow traveler. “I simply cannot believe it!” We were both dumbstruck by the news that reached us via the little black and white TV in our quaint French Colonial hotel room. Joan and I had arrived to Vientiane, the Laotian capital, on the previous day, Tuesday, December 12, 2000. We had flipped on the TV upon returning to our room after a brief stroll, taking in the sights and sounds of the city. Upon receiving the shocking news, I turned to Joan as I felt the tears welling up in my eyes.

“Now I know why they call it Breaking News,” I quipped. “It’s breaking my heart.” The stiff-lipped BBC talking head on the TV repeated the headline, and each word was like a spike into my heart:

“The United States Supreme Court today halted the vote count in Florida, thereby making George Bush the winner of the U.S. presidential election.”

“This is not the way it’s supposed to be,” I said through my tears as my gathering rage welled up inside me. “Presidents are supposed to be elected. Not selected. This is not the way democracy is supposed to work.” Joan was empathetic and shared my bewilderment and utter outrage at this unforeseen outcome.

Why was the fate of this particular election of such importance to me, an American tourist visiting Southeast Asia? Why did I find the news so devastating? It's because for the three weeks prior to my departure from the U.S., I had found myself smack at the epicenter of the most contested and controversial presidential election in U.S. history. As a member of the Palm Beach County Electoral Canvassing Board, I had become briefly internationally known as the Chad Lady. It fell to me to explain the arcane process of recounting ballots to the reporters who had descended upon Palm Beach after the election. Ballots with dimpled, punched, and hanging chads that had to be inspected manually to determine how or if they should be counted. That process, and my critical role in that process, will be described in depth in the pages of this book.

But two questions need to be addressed here at the outset.

Question number one. What on earth was I doing 9,500 miles from home when the eyes of the world were focused on Palm Beach County—as the outcome of a presidential election hinged on those hanging chads and an election recount in which I had played such a pivotal role?

Question number two. Why was I so desolate and demolished by the Supreme Court decision that brought the recount process to a halt, thereby sealing the election's outcome? I will answer both questions. Know that it is the answer to the second one that contains the crux of my reasons for writing this book.

But first, a few words about the “Road to Vientiane.” Joan Goldberg was the daughter of my dearest friends and had, for years, served as my trusted traveling companion as we set off to exotic destinations around the world. Although I enjoyed vacationing with my husband, Dr. Hyman Roberts, he did not share my itchy feet and my passion for globe-trotting. So it was, that in January of 2000, at the dawn of the new millennium, Joan and I began planning our Far East adventure.

Joan Goldberg was, at the time, serving as the Director of Public Art for the Palm Beach County Cultural Council, where she was the project manag-

er for large-scale public art projects. Like me, Joan loved traveling to exotic ports o' call.

We planned our departure for just before Thanksgiving. At that point, I did not know that I would be serving on the election canvassing board come November. I was a member of the Palm Beach BCC, the Board of County Commissioners, a seat I had held since the mid-1980s. This is the seven-member elected legislative and governing body responsible for setting policies, adopting the budget, and managing county services for the 1.1 million residents of Palm Beach County.

The job of the nonpartisan election canvassing board is to oversee elections to make sure they are carried out fairly and efficiently. According to Florida law, it is the responsibility of the BCC's chair—or someone appointed by the chair—to serve on the canvassing board. But, if the chair appeared on the ballot that year, then he or she was barred from serving on the canvassing board. Someone else would need to be named.

Over the fifteen years I had been on the BCC, I had served on the canvassing board when the BCC chair did not care to do so. I had probably done so more than any of my fellow county commissioners.

"You like to stay up late at night counting votes, Carol," the chair would say to me, "Why don't you do it this year?"

In 2000, our chair was on the ballot and was, hence, barred from sitting on the canvassing board. So I got stuck with the job. Even if I had known, in January, that I would be serving on the canvassing board in November, that knowledge would not have caused us to alter our departure date. After all, three weeks is an adequate amount of post-election time to get everything zipped up and fully resolved ... or so we imagined. If I had only known what was about to befall us come November.

As you will read in the coming chapters, I became entirely swept up in the whirlwind nightmare that was the 2000 presidential election. It soon became clear that I would not be able to depart for our trip as scheduled on November 20. We decided that Joan would go ahead with our travel group

on that date and I would delay my departure until the courts decided that our job was completed and I would then catch up with her. I simply could not run off while the recount I had pushed for was still underway. I felt it should be completed within a week, so I changed my reservation to a November 27 departure and went on with the grueling 18-hour days of searching for dimpled chads.

On Monday, November 27th, my departure date, the phone awakened me at 6:30 a.m. after only two hours of sleep. It was my sister.

“Wake up, Carol,” she said excitedly. “I don’t know when you’re leaving, but I just heard on CNN that someone is going to subpoena the canvassing board. Don’t open the door for anyone. If they don’t serve you, you don’t have to appear.”

I made a dash for the driveway to pick up the morning paper after checking to make sure the coast was clear. At 8:30 a.m. there was a knock on the door. I put my eye to the peephole and spotted a man I did not know. I decided not to open the door. He rang the doorbell repeatedly. I still did not open up, and when it was clear he would not go away, I called the police. By the time the officer arrived, my unwelcome visitor had disappeared. Ten minutes after the officer left, the man returned and again tried to get me to open the door. The officer returned and the assumed process server vanished once again. I convinced the officer to stick around this time, and he obtained permission to guard my door until I left the house.

I had been assigned a security detail by the county and requested that my guardian, Deputy Sheriff Sergeant Gill Gomez, drive me to the Fort Lauderdale airport to catch my flight to Munich. From there I was booked on Singapore Air to take me to Yangon (formerly Rangoon) in Myanmar via Frankfurt, Singapore, and Bangkok. Upon arrival in Fort Lauderdale, I discovered that my flight had been canceled and I was placed on an alternate flight to LaGuardia with a ground transfer to JFK, where I was to catch a different Singapore Airlines flight to Munich.

When Deputy Gomez picked me up, he strongly suggested that I wear a disguise. The reason was that by this point, I had already received a good number of threatening phone calls placed to my public phone number. I had also received death threats via my published email account. The FBI had already confiscated more than 20,000 of the emails sent to my public account (not my private emails) and was investigating them.

“Mrs. Roberts, you’re a hot celebrity right now,” he cautioned. “Plus, I understand you’ve got some process servers on your tail. If you don’t want to get spotted, you’d better alter your appearance.” Now what?

I rummaged through my closet and found a big straw hat I had bought years before in a Nassau tourist shop. It covered my hair and obscured my face. Along with a pair of oversized sunglasses, I was ready to go incognito.

I boarded my flight without incident, but after being identified by some of the other passengers as “that Chad Lady,” I became anxious. I was still apprehensive by the time I arrived in Singapore for my connecting flight. I was traveling alone at this point and decided to walk around the airport a bit between flights. As I passed a cocktail bar, I was startled to hear my own voice emanating from within. I spotted a small crowd of people gathered around a TV set watching the news about the U.S. election. The footage included an interview with me. I immediately pulled the brim of my hat low to cover my face and slinked off into the crowd. I did not wish to be recognized.

I soon boarded my connecting flight, which delivered me first to the Myanmar capital city of Yangon and then on to Mandalay where, as the song says, “the flying fishes play.” I did not see any flying fishes, but I was delighted to finally connect with Joan and our hearty crew. Our contingent of seven intrepid travelers had been assembled by our travel agency, the GeoEx company out of San Francisco. They had been booked by Joan and were known to provide thoughtfully crafted geographic expeditions to underexplored places. Although I found Mandalay to be a lovely city, given my situation, I became anxious when I saw the many armed soldiers in the

streets. I hadn't seen so many people bearing guns since Hy and I had visited Moscow years before.

As I relaxed in the big black marble tub in our hotel room for a much-needed soak, I couldn't help but wonder how the recount back in Florida was going. But getting current news in a remote place like Myanmar was challenging, so we pretty much remained in the dark about events developing back home.

Our next stop was in the Maymyo town of Kengtung, known for trekking and its many diverse ethnic minority villages. Our accommodations were more primitive than in Mandalay, so Joan and I were pleased when we were assigned the most lavish room in the hostel where we were put up. This did not go down well with our American tour guide, however, since she was used to having that coveted room assigned to her.

I was unable to sleep that night and, at around 3:00 a.m., I found myself chatting with Joan as I often did at such times. I was telling her about the election inspectors who had descended upon Palm Beach to oversee the recounting of the undetermined ballots. One of these, I informed her, was Representative Benjamin Gilman, a Republican from New York, who was the chairman of the House International Relations Committee. I told Joan that I had mentioned to Congressman Gilman that I would soon be traveling to Myanmar and that he had, at that time, asked me to file a report about my impressions of the country and send it to him after my return. Just then the phone in our room rang.

"Hello? Hello?" I said, but there was no reply. Strange, I thought.

The following morning, as was her habit, Joan went outdoors to take a walk. When she returned, she seemed shaken. "What's wrong?" I asked.

"When I was out there taking a walk" she replied, "our local guide came up to me and he was shook up. He told me to tell you not to write that report. If you do, he could be sent to prison or maybe killed."

"But how did he know about the report?" I asked.

“My guess is that our room is bugged,” she speculated. “They knew you were connected to the government, and that’s why they put us in the largest room. The room must be wired for sound. And whoever was listening to us is the one who called on the phone to get you to shut up about the report.”

All this was enough to put my nerves back on edge. And, by the way, Congressman Gilman never got his report.

The last stop on our journey was the Laotian capital city of Vientiane. While today this former French colonial outpost is a bustling metropolis, back at the turn of the millennium, it was still a quiet and unhurried place. Streets were calmer, dotted with bicycles, motorbikes, and the occasional ramshackle truck. The ambience felt more like an old riverside town than a capital city.

We had arrived, we were told, during the best time of year in Laos, the cool season when the heavy monsoon humidity had disappeared and the air turned dry and mild. As Joan and I made our way to the marketplace that fateful morning, the weather was surprisingly crisp, especially along the Mekong River, which was covered with a pale morning mist. Across the river was Thailand, and as we stood at the bank we could discern the many smells of the morning market. The aroma of damp vegetables, crushed herbs, and river fish, all laid out on trays, mixed with the pervasive street food smoke from the many fires used to cook the ping gai chicken and the sticky rice.

Standing there with Joan, relishing the savory smells and the restful silence of the mighty river, my thoughts hearkened to events back home. We had more or less been cut off from the civilized world during our sojourn in Myanmar. But Laos was a different story. The nation was coming of age and beginning to modernize. Hence, we now, for the first time in a week, had access to such modern marvels as CNN, BBC, and other English-language news services. I yearned to learn what was going on back in the U.S.A. Had the recount concluded? Was the spotlight still on Palm Beach County and Florida? What had the Florida Supreme Court decided? Had Gore been

elected or was Bush to be our next president? Joan likewise said she felt like getting reconnected, and so we headed back to our room in the newly renovated Settha Palace Hotel. Once we got back and began flipping TV channels, it was not long before we learned what had just happened. The U.S. Supreme Court, with Justice Antonin Scalia writing the majority opinion, had decided the landmark case of *Bush v. Gore*. The ruling disallowed the jurisdiction of the Florida Supreme Court, taking the election out of the hands of the American voters and making George W. Bush the 43rd President of the United States. At the time the recount was halted, Bush led by 537 votes, and that enabled him to receive Florida's 25 electoral votes, which placed him over the 270 needed to win the election.

As stated, Joan and I sat on our beds with tears streaming down our faces at this miscarriage of the democratic process. I was not weeping because Bush had been declared the winner. It was because I did not believe that winners should be "declared" in America. They should be democratically elected. Although I was a registered Democrat and a Gore supporter, his defeat was not the source of my sorrow. It was a far deeper and more penetrating pain. I felt, sitting there thousands of miles from home, that something very precious had been lost back in the U.S.A. that day. The integrity of the American electoral process had suffered a mighty blow. I feel that the repercussions of that breach remain with us today in 2026 as many Americans still question the legitimacy of more recent presidential elections, such as Biden v. Trump in 2020.

"I never told you this before," Joan confided, "but I was so proud of you on that day, sitting in the hot sun and standing up to Katherine Harris that way."

Joan was referring to the pivotal moment when things came to a head during the recount. When our three-member canvassing board announced to the world that we were going to conduct a full hand recount, a reporter pointed out that Florida Secretary of State Harris had said in a press release that doing so was illegal.

“What are they going to do if we proceed? Put us in jail?” I shot back. “Well, I’m ready to go to jail if necessary. The voters of Palm Beach County deserve to have their votes properly counted.”

Joan went on.

“I was doing the laundry and watching TV when I saw you say you were going to jail. ‘Oh, no you’re not,’ I shouted back at the TV and threw a sock at the screen. ‘You’re going to Myanmar with me!’”

The events leading up to that critical moment are recounted in the pages of this book. I did, in fact, eventually wind up going to Myanmar with Joan and not to the county lockup, but first I had to perform my duty and in the process become the Chad Lady.

I gladly became the Chad Lady for one reason. I love democracy. I’ve always cherished the liberties inherent in the American political system. From the time I was growing up as the granddaughter of European immigrants who fled to our shores seeking political freedom and economic opportunity, to my stint as mayor of West Palm Beach, I have tried to be an advocate for the advancement of democratic (small d) values.

It was these values—one man, one vote; secret ballot; rule of the majority with respect for the minority—that I strove to implant when I was dispatched to the Baltic states as a human rights observer after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As I provided governance guidelines to the newly emerging post-communist regimes in Estonia and Lithuania, I would point to the United States government as the template of how these values might successfully be implemented. But how could I do so now? It now appeared that America no longer selected its leaders by the will of the people, but rather by the whims of a tribunal of black-robed jurors.

It was the soul-crushing realization that these cherished democratic values had been subverted—a realization reached in faraway Southeast Asia—that was breaking my heart that day. My only consolation was the enduring hope that our nation would rebound and learn from the experience. It was my hope that the 2000 election would be regarded by history as a one-time anomaly and that our ship of state would soon be back on course. But has

this happened over the intervening quarter century? Have the lessons of the 2000 election been learned and are they being heeded? As of today, my honest answer must be no.

With each passing day, I see those lessons being increasingly ignored. Hence, it is for this reason that I “Cry, the Beloved Country.” It is for this reason that I have been moved to write this book. I hope for it to serve not only as an account of a fraught and fearful moment in our nation’s history, but also as a beacon in the fog of political perplexity. It is my fervent desire that by examining the singular and extraordinary election of year 2000, we may, as a nation, avoid the pitfalls and once again become the beacon of democratic values we all cherish as Americans.

—Carol Roberts
Palm Beach Gardens
September, 2026

CHAPTER ONE

First and Foremost

“You don’t have to see the whole staircase to take your first step.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

From where did my lifelong thirst for liberty and my passion for democracy arise? What is the source, the wellspring, the root of my lifelong devotion? I’ve thought about this question and concluded that to some degree it’s an inherited trait. I got it from my father, Milton Klein.

Technically, my father was an immigrant, although he was only nine months old when he and his family arrived here as the second wave of Jewish mass immigration came crashing onto our shores in the early 20th century. This was a movement fueled by violent antisemitic pogroms, forced conscription, and dire poverty across Eastern Europe. As Hungarian Jews, Milton’s parents—my grandparents Emma (née Tausig) and Joseph Klein—were driven even more strongly by their hunger for economic opportunity.

Emma and Joseph and their three children had said good-bye to Budapest, the bustling Austro-Hungarian capital that was my father’s birthplace, and had made their way to Cleveland’s growing Hungarian Jewish community. They arrived to Ellis Island in 1901 at the peak of a forty-year

period that saw roughly 100,000 “Magyar” Jews pass under Miss Liberty’s beacon of freedom.

My father grew up in a community that was populated by Jews who were more educated and cultured than most Cleveland Hungarians. Consequently, the Jews frequently provided the community with its professional and business leaders. For example, the first Hungarian doctor and lawyer in Cleveland were both Jews. But Milton, by contrast, was a rebel and an adventurer. By age 17 he had dropped out of high school, signed aboard a tramp steamer, and had set off to see the world.

When he was 25 years old, Milton’s globe-trotting adventures had brought him back to the U.S. and to the Port of Miami. It was there that he underwent an experience that would change his life forever. He met my future mother.

Betty Pallot (rhymes with “ballot”) was born in Vilna Gabelna, an administrative area surrounding the Lithuanian capital of Vilna (modern-day Vilnius). Before the Holocaust, this region was noted for its many Jewish *shtetls* (villages) and bore the nickname “The Jerusalem of the North.” It was the home of the Vilna Gaon and cultural heart of Eastern European Jewry.

Their tiny *shtetl* was known in Yiddish as Panasishok and was located along the banks of the Verkne River. Jews had lived in Panasishok since 1849, when the area was settled by the Jewish Colonization Association, whose agronomists trained Jews to become farmers. At the time my mother was born there, the village of Panasishok was home to 17 Jewish families. Their Lithuanian neighbors referred to the village as “*Zsidkyemis*” or the Court of the Jews. Social life centered around the *beth midrash* or synagogue, which contained a small *cheder* or elementary school. There were also essential elements of Jewish life such as a *mikvah* (ritual bath) and a *schochet* (ritual slaughterer), but the community was too small to have its own rabbi and thus shared one with several neighboring *shtetls*.

Betty's father, Nathan Paillet—my maternal grandfather—died at about age 40. This loss, as well as the constant threat of antisemitic attacks at the hands of rampaging Cossacks, prompted my grandmother, Sarah (née Richmond), age 43, along with the couple's remaining four children, to set sail for new horizons in the "*Goldeneh Medina*" (the golden marketplace) of America.

Betty was either six or seven years old when she arrived in America in 1910. The spelling of the family's last name was changed to Pallot shortly after her older brothers landed at Ellis Island. Betty was never certain about how old she was at that point because my grandmother had lied to the authorities about the ages of her children and had made them older.

I recall my mother telling stories about her harrowing escape from Lithuania—fleeing from the marauding Cossacks, after having hidden all their valuables under the floor planks in the barn and covering the opening with hay. Once in the U.S., my grandmother and her children settled in Springfield, Massachusetts. There they joined other Pallot family members who had immigrated there earlier.

It is believed that my grandmother did not arrive in America penniless as did so many other Jewish immigrants in those days, including my father's people. It was said that Nathan Paillet was connected to French aristocracy back in Lithuania. He had owned a sizable estate with servants. Hence, my grandmother and her children did not cross the Atlantic stuffed into steerage, but rather in a pair of upper-deck private staterooms.

Some 16 years later, in 1926, my grandmother, Sarah, was recovering from a bout of pneumonia and was sent south to Miami to avoid the harsh Massachusetts winter. She arrived along with her 22-year-old unmarried daughter, my future mother, Betty. Driven by the real estate boom, Jewish life in Miami, in the mid-1920s, had morphed from a small scattered presence into a growing, vibrant community of roughly 3,500. A few Jewish pioneers had established the city's first Reform congregation, Temple Israel.

It was there, at a Saturday night singles evening organized by the synagogue, that Betty Pallot met a devilishly handsome merchant marine seafarer named Milton Klein. It was love at first sighting for Milton, the sailor man.

My future father was so smitten that he decided to jump ship, drop anchor, and stay in Miami. He spent the following few weeks trying to convince Betty to become his bride, but she held back and eventually rejected his advances. Milton found work aboard another merchant vessel and sailed off, but he could not forget about the girl he had met under the Miami moon. He had obtained Betty's address in Springfield and wrote to her daily. In one such missive, he included a photo of himself on deck as his ship passed through the Panama Canal. It was clear from the photo that Milton was engaging in the tradition of going through the canal for the first time in the nude. The photo included a strategically placed fig leaf. My future mother was so shocked and outraged, she tore up the picture and flushed the pieces down the toilet. Fortunately, there was a second print of the "figleaf photo" that I own and cherish to this day.

At the end of that summer of 1926, it appeared that God's wrath had descended on Miami's Jewish population as a hurricane ripped through the community just as Yom Kippur services were ending. Another tragedy followed on the heels of the hurricane. My grandmother, Sarah, despite having come to sunny Florida, died at age 60 from viral pneumonia in December.

I don't know if my parents took these events to be a sign, but, at that point, Betty relented and agreed to marry her wayward sailor boy. They got hitched in Cleveland in June of 1928.

It was not long after their wedding that my parents returned to Miami and opened a corner grocery store in the Dallas Park neighborhood near the Miami River. They got to work building a budding business—selling flour, sugar, and fresh produce to the rapidly expanding community. They also got busy building a family.

First to arrive was my older sister, Sonya, who was born in 1931 at the Victoria Hospital, a two-story 54-bed facility located on Ninth Avenue. By the time Sonya was five years old, the ravages of the Great Depression had forced my father to close the doors of the grocery and seek some other line of work. As the unemployment rate in South Florida soared above 25%, Milton felt he would have a better chance of finding employment if he took his little family back to Cleveland. The seriousness of the situation was compounded by the fact that Betty, at this point, was pregnant with their second child. Me.

I made my debut on June 22nd, 1936, some eight months after my parents and sister had returned to Cleveland. Strapped and struggling, my parents opted to have me delivered in the city's first public hospital. The bill for my birth came to only \$60—still a huge sum for my father given his financial situation. He later told me it was the best \$60 he'd ever spent. One month after I was born, my parents realized that there really was very little opportunity for them in Cleveland. So, they packed up and returned to Miami, this time carrying their little Cleveland souvenir.

While I often say that I'm a native Floridian, this is not precisely true since my passport and other documents show my birthplace as Cleveland, Ohio. But, if anyone could rightfully claim to be a true Floridian—without actually being native-born—it would have to be yours truly.

After retuning to Miami, my father, Milton, who had slapped paint on many a sailing ship over the years, quickly found work as a painting contractor. It was a profession he would stay with for the rest of his working life. My mother continued to give birth in roughly five-year intervals. The next to come along was my younger brother, Sandy, who was born at Victoria Hospital in Miami in 1941. Finally, my youngest sibling, Paul, was born in Coral Gables Hospital in August of 1947—making him an early baby boomer.

My childhood years were relatively unremarkable. I was a solid student and popular among my elementary school classmates. In middle school I

was recruited to play flute and piccolo in both the school's marching and concert bands. I loved playing the famous piccolo part in *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. But unlike my other classmates, I was a first-generation American. This is significant because I believe it is one of the reasons that I am so aware of the value of democracy.

While they did not preach to us, my parents impressed upon me—and upon my siblings—how fortunate we were to be born in a free country. Whenever an election rolled around, my father would make the point that everyone had to go to the polls and vote.

“This is a privilege that you find in very few countries around the world,” he would maintain. “You should never waste it.”

The importance of voting became one of the fundamental principles of democracy in our household. I can remember lively conversations around the dinner table that saw Mom and Dad discussing the candidates. They often disagreed on who they planned to vote for, but they always concurred on the importance of casting a vote in every election—city, county, state, or federal. As soon as I had reached legal age, I followed their model and registered to vote. I turned 90 years old this year and am proud to say that I have voted in every single election since then. If I was not in my home district on election day, I voted absentee. Because of this valued principle of democracy that was implanted in my heart by my parents, I have always proudly exercised my cherished right to vote.

Another episode that exemplified my early devotion to democratic principles took place when I was in the eighth grade. I had entered a citywide essay contest with a piece titled “What the American Flag Means to Me.” I was totally thrilled when I learned that I had won the competition. As you will read in a future chapter, on November 11, 2000, I felt as though I had again entered a contest entitled “What Democracy Means to Me.” When speaking to my peers and to the press during those turbulent days, I would hearken back to that eighth-grade essay when I spoke of how “Our vote is our voice and the ballot box is how we express that voice.”

After winning the contest, I had to decide where I would go to high school. In those days, a family was permitted to select into which of five area high schools they wished to enroll their children. At my urging, my parents sent me to newly opened Coral Gables High. It was in a more affluent area, and I thought that going there would enhance my status among my peers. It was to be the site of one of the most formative episodes of my teenage years.

As a sophomore in 1951, I was one of only ten Jewish students at Coral Gables High. It was early in the school year when I was notified by the principal, Mr. Webb, to stop at his office after class. When I arrived I was surprised to see that all nine of the other Jewish kids had also been summoned to the principal's office. Once we were assembled, Mr. Webb addressed us.

"Next week is a Jewish holiday," he started, referring to Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year for Jews. "If you plan to miss school, you must return with a note signed by your rabbi stating that you were in temple. If you miss school and do not provide a note, you will be suspended. Do I make myself clear?"

I was livid. I was furious. I decided we had to act. Although I was the youngest among this makeshift *minyan* of Jewish students, I spoke up once we were all gathered out in the hallway. "Nobody bring a note," I instructed emphatically. The others all agreed to disregard Mr. Webb's warning.

The morning after Yom Kippur, I headed—unbeknownst to the other Jewish kids—straight to the principal's office where I found him seated behind his massive desk. Placing my hands on my hips, I confronted Mr. Webb with the following words:

"Mr. Webb, all of us went to temple yesterday and none of us brought notes from our rabbis. You didn't make the Catholic kids bring a note from their priests when they missed school to go to church on Good Friday. You have no right to demand differently from the Jewish kids. If you suspend

any of us, I will call the *Miami Herald* and the *Miami Daily News* and tell them that you're an antisemitic bastard!"

While my language shocked the man, my message got through. This was only a few years after a film called *Gentleman's Agreement* had won the Academy Award for Best Picture and had raised public awareness about antisemitism in America. No notes were provided to Mr. Webb and no students were suspended. Although I did not tell my parents about this incident until years later, it appeared that I had inherited some traits from my father and was, like him, becoming something of a rebel.

Because of episodes such as this, by the time I was ready to enter my junior year of high school, I had had enough of Coral Gables High. I asked to be transferred to Miami High, where my older sister Sonya had attended. This move was certain to please Miami High's band director, since it would mean my father would once again become part of the parent body. When my sister had attended there, my father had set up and run a very successful band parents booster club. Under my father's direction, the club had raised much-needed funds for uniforms, instruments, and travel expenses. But, my matriculation at Miami High was to be interrupted and I did not graduate along with my class. Destiny intervened. Destiny by the name of Hyman Roberts.

It was during my junior year, when I was 15 years old, that my sister, Sonya, who was an accomplished ballet dancer, got married to a man she had met in college, Harris Glantz. They had moved to Key West, where Harris operated an ice house owned by his father. We soon received word that Sonya was pregnant and not feeling very well. She was asking for some help during what she feared would be a challenging pregnancy. This placed my mother in a difficult position. Mom was busy raising my two younger brothers, ten-year-old Sandy and five-year-old Paul.

"Sonya needs some help," my mother explained to me. "I can't go. I've got two kids to take care of. So why don't *you* go help her out? You can afford to miss a week of school."

I agreed to go even though I was only 15 years old at the time. I arrived in Key West and stayed with Sonya and Harris. A few days later, Sonya explained that she had become friends with a doctor who was providing her with care during her pregnancy. The doctor admired Sonya's dancing ability and told her that he wished his own daughter could take dancing lessons and become a ballerina like Sonya. But, alas, there were no dancing instructors on Key West.

Sonya suggested to the doctor that he hire her former dance instructor—an alleged member of the exiled Russian royal family who went by the name of Princess Nina—to come to Key West and open a dance studio. She agreed to do so.

The studio was successful and attracted the daughters of several members of the Key West medical community. Shortly before my arrival, the doctor had arranged for Princess Nina to house-sit his residence while he was out of the country. It was a three-story house with the doctor's medical office located on the first floor and the family living quarters on the upper floors. The doctor had arranged for a naval medical officer to manage his practice on the first floor while Princess Nina kept an eye on things upstairs.

Sonya and I were curious to see the house and decided to visit Princess Nina during her house-sitting stint. I knew that she liked classical music and I had brought along some of Sonya's prized 78 rpm records. After we had chatted for a while, I placed a copy of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* on the turntable, cranking up the volume whenever the cannons boomed. Evidently, the symphonic sounds echoed downstairs and reached the ears of the Navy doc who was operating the medical office below. With his curiosity aroused, Dr. Hyman Roberts rushed upstairs to investigate. And that, my friends, is how Hyman met Carol.

Hy explained that he was the chief medical officer on a huge US Navy submarine tender, the USS *Bushnell*, moored at one of the finger docks located at the Fort Zachary Taylor Annex on the western end of Key West. Hy and I soon became friendly, and I suggested we go to Sloppy Joe's, which

was a congenial bar owned by one of my relatives. I did not choose to reveal my tender age to Hy at that time.

Before long, I returned to Miami and continued my studies. I resumed my high school education during the day and enrolled at the University of Miami at night. My mother claimed I was the first dual-enrolled student in Florida history. She had managed to get me into both high school and college at the same time by pulling some strings.

Her brother, my Uncle Al, was E. Albert Pallot, who was well connected politically. He would go on, in a few years, to found Biscayne Federal Savings & Loan and eventually served as Florida's Assistant Attorney General. Uncle Al would also go on to become my mentor and my entrée into Florida politics. At this point, in 1952, Uncle Al helped me out by facilitating my enrollment at the University of Miami before I had graduated from high school. I eventually did receive my high school diploma from Deerborne, a private school in Coral Gables.

Hy became a frequent visitor during those days and would drive to Miami from Key West almost every weekend for our dates. I thought he looked very spiffy in his Navy whites uniform and I asked if he would like to attend an upcoming family event. The occasion was my parents' 25th wedding anniversary, which was coming up in June 1953. They had arranged to convene their friends and family for a celebratory dinner. Hy said he would be delighted to escort me.

After the lavish meal, my Uncle Moe got up to offer a toast to Betty and Milt, after which he said: "There's a handsome young naval officer with us tonight that Carol brought along. Would you care to stand up and introduce yourself, sailor?" Hy took the microphone and did just that.

"I'm Navy Lieutenant Dr. Hyman Roberts," he began before turning to look at me. "I am so pleased to share this wonderful occasion with your family, Carol, and I am so impressed with the happiness your parents have experienced over their 25 years of marriage. I would like for you and me to

enjoy a similar life of joy and happiness, and so tonight, I'm asking if you'll agree to be my wife."

Everyone in the room—except for my parents, with whom Hy had checked in advance—was stunned ... including me. I realized that all eyes were focused on me. So, I took a deep breath, looked straight at Hy, and slowly nodded my head. The crowd erupted in applause.

While I had never intentionally hidden my age from Hy, the fact was that he had never asked. Actually, I looked older than my true age, which Hy did not learn until we went to apply for our marriage license a week later on June 22nd. As the county clerk completed the application form, she naturally asked for my date of birth. I gave it to her.

"Wait a minute," exclaimed Hy. "That's today. June 22nd. Today is your birthday. Mazel tov, sweetie." He gave me a hug and planted a kiss. But then he noticed the year and did the math.

"Holy mackerel!" Hy shouted as the smile fell from his face. "You're only 17?! Today is your 17th birthday?! Can that be right?" I could see the clerk thinking to herself, "Boy, she must have fed you some line, sailor."

Despite any qualms Hy may have had about robbing the cradle, we tied the knot in Miami on August 9, 1953, my younger brother Paul's sixth birthday. In short order, the Navy transferred Hy to the Newport Naval Station in Rhode Island. We were not there long before his next assignment came through, which sent him to Chelsea Naval Hospital in Boston. This was ideal since Hy had grown up in Boston and we were quickly able to get settled in.

Once we were situated, I decided to continue my education at Tufts College (it was not yet a university). I thought I would be taking classes at its sister school, Jackson College for Women, located in Medford, but that was not to be. It should have been called Jackson College for "Unmarried" Women. Since I *was* married, they thought that my presence among all the single ladies might contaminate them somehow. Hence, I was thrown in with the menfolk at Tufts.

So, there we were. A young couple starting our married life in Boston, the bustling birthplace of American democracy. It was a heady time that witnessed the rising star of someone who would become a great influence on my future life in local politics. John F. Kennedy had been a frequent patient at Chelsea Naval Hospital some ten years prior to Hy's service there. JFK had been treated at Chelsea for the back injury he sustained aboard PT 109 during his service in the Pacific. Kennedy had been elected to the United States Senate the year before we arrived to Boston and had married Jacqueline Bouvier a month after our own wedding. We had just moved to Boston from Newport, Rhode Island, the site of their "Wedding of the Century," held at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church and boasting a guest list of more than 800.

I recall reading JFK's new book, *Profiles in Courage*, during the brief time we lived in Providence. Courage was something both Hy and I would need a good deal of in the coming weeks and months, for I had just received word that I was expecting. Although I did not know it at the time, the baby I was expecting would be the first of our six extraordinary children.