

The Schmooze

Stories with a Yiddish Twist

FLIP PHONES ARE BACK: WHAT NEXT? S & H GREEN STAMPS?*

by
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Maggie Lange says that “the flip phone is currently up for consideration as the trend accessory of the moment.” While some might consider the flip phones as dinosaurs, cell phone manufacturers have some of the latest features offered by Smartphones.

The flip phone resale market is booming. Why? They’re lightweight and small. It can be operated completely one-handed. They’re rugged. Some flip phones may include Wi-Fi, web browsing, video and gaming capability, messaging services, 3G, GPS, app downloads, expandable memory--all packed into a smaller package, at a cheaper price. And, when the flip phone is not in use, the phone’s keyboard is protected by its cover. Say goodbye to “butt dialing.”

Should I start singing, “Boy, the way Glenn Miller played. Songs that made the hit parade. Guys like us, we had it made. Those were the days. Didn’t need no welfare state. Everybody pulled his weight. Gee, our old LaSalle ran great. Those were the days. And you know who you were then, girls were girls and men were men.”?

BTW, the LaSalle had no airbags, seat belts, GPS navigation, and got less

than ten miles a gallon. In 1927, the LaSalle was priced at \$2,685 in base four-door form.

In the delightful book, “Good Old Days, My Ass,” by David A. Fryxell, he writes, “When the economy is in the dumps, wars rage on without end, partisanship reigns in politics, and you can’t even catch a plane without having to take your shoes off to get through security, it’s tempting to long for the ‘good old days.’...” So sit back in your house with central heat and air-conditioning, flick on a lightbulb without fear of electrocution, perhaps sip a cool beverage untainted by toxic chemicals or human waste and let’s journey back into the real ‘good old days.’”

Remember Ebinger’s Blackout cake, the Victrola, stoops and stoopball, the Seltzer Man, “bankes” (cupping), crinolyns, the Zoot Suit, Nehru jackets, chain letters, and “rumble seats”?

For Brooklyn residents, Ebinger’s Blackout Cake was a decades-long institution. The bakery opened in 1898. The signature chocolate dessert had a rabid following until the bakery went bankrupt in 1972. It left behind 800 employees, many red and black trucks, and innumerable broken hearts.

Some customers complained that they suffered from “PTCS”--Post Traumatic Cake Syndrome. And on Ebinger’s last day, crowds gathered to buy the last of the bakery’s famous cakes, pies and bread. Many Ebingerists kept cakes in the freezer. (Source: Louise McCready, “Look Cakeward, Angel,” edible Brooklyn, 12/8/13).

And, the dessert, the Charlotte Russe. It was made from a thin disk of sponge cake topped with a lofty spiral of whipped cream and crowned with a maraschino cherry. It was sold from pushcarts, candy stores and bakeries (primarily, but not exclusively Jewish ones). It was the ultimate afternoon snack. In 1976, the New York Times proclaimed, “The Charlotte Russe, that venerable New York specialty that left generations of city kids with white mustaches on their faces, is NOT extinct, but, like ancient Chinese jade, it is hard to come by.”

*Remember S & H Green Stamps? The trading stamps were popular in the U. S. from the 1930s until the late 1980s. They were distributed as part of a rewards program operated by the Sperry & Hutchinson Co. During the

1960s, the rewards catalog, printed by the company, was the largest publication in the U. S. The company issued three times as many stamps as the U. S. Postal Service. Customers would receive stamps at the supermarket, department store, and gasoline stations, which could be redeemed for products in the catalog.

Remember sheer stockings? Women who couldn't get their hands on silk stockings, which became scarce with the outbreak of W. W. II, made do by drawing a line up the backs of their legs with eyeliner to simulate the look of wearing hosiery.

Today's "big man" can shop for clothing on Google, at www.bigmen.com, kingsizedirect.com, or Haband. But perhaps you remember Sig Klein's Fat Men's Shop, which opened in the late 1800s at 52 Third Avenue, NYC. It remained at the same location until it closed in the 1970s. It carried plus-size clothes for men and one of his famous customers was Babe Ruth. Its sign featured the slogan:

IF EVERYONE WAS FAT THERE WOULD BE NO WAR.

And Wikipedia writes about the crinoline. By 1850, the word meant a stiffened petticoat. To get the fullness under a 1950's swing dress, you needed a crinoline petticoat with layers of ruffles and tulle. In the '50s, women wore at least one petticoat to add some fullness, but the fancier the occasion, the more petticoats were needed. Mom could be seen starching the crinoline in a washtub. She would lay the skirt in the starch - Argo, as thick as toothpaste. She would let it dry, then sprinkle it and iron it until it stood like a board all by itself. The crinoline was the subject of much ridicule and satire, particularly in Punch magazine.

And how about the first sitcoms, which began in 1949, and women were depicted primarily as housewives (Lucy Ricardo), mothers (June Cleaver), or schoolteachers (Connie Brooks). Mary Tyler Moore was the first show to depict a single, independent career woman who would as the theme song said, "Make it on her own."

Today (2014), women make up 25% more of college graduates than men. Mary Barra is the first woman ever to head a Big 8 automaker. Yet, Matt Lauer asked her if she's a good mom...and plenty of viewers--both prominent business and media people and regular people--voiced their indignation. Shonda Rhimes ("Scandal" and "Grey's Anatomy"), tweeted,

“I’ve been up all night wondering if Matt Lauer can be a dad and have a job at the same time.” That’s as insulting as if we asked Hillary Clinton if she can be a grandmother (“bobe”) and potentially the next president of the United States.

Lucille Ball couldn’t sleep in the same bed with her husband, even though they were really married in real life. Danny Thomas and Marjorie Lord slept in different beds on the set of his show. Carl Reiner said, “We couldn’t say ‘pregnant.’” (They used the term “with child.”)

Remember when young women celebrated San-Apple Night on Halloween. They believed that girls could predict the name or appearance of their future husbands by Halloween magic with mirrors, yarns, apple pairing or bobbing for apples. Today’s single woman goes on the Internet to find her “bashert” (intended) or she advertises with the Forward’s Personals:

MASSACHUSETTS, WILLOWY, WOO-ABLE WIDOW WANTS
WISE, ROBUST ROMEO, 70s TO 80s. Forward Box.....
(Dec. 5, 2014)

Internet sites:

JDate The #1 site for Jewish singles. Credited with 52% of online Jewish marriages.

SawYouatSinai Over 2,000 members married

eHarmony 600,000 married couples in the U. S. met here.

match.com Over 1 million match.com babies born

OurTime.com This site is tailored for mature singles over 50

PlentyOfFish, Chai Expectations, Sugardaddie.com, Great Expectations, Love Me, Love My Pets

For pet friendly people

And, who can forget the classic TV show, “Howdy Doody.” Its theme song:

It’s Howdy Doody Time
Bob Smith and Howdy Doo
Say Howdy Do to you.

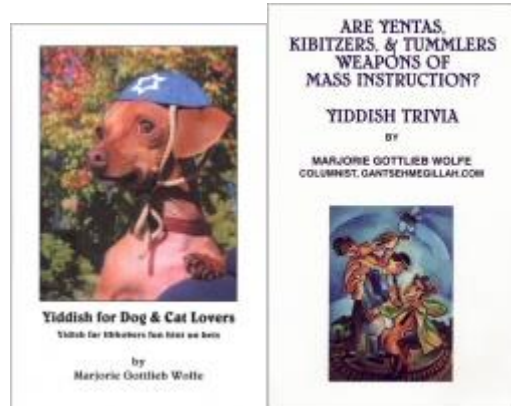
Let’s give a rousing cheer,
‘cause Howdy Doody’s here.

It's time to start the show,
So kids, let's go.

The show took place in Doodyville. The audience of kids was called the Peanut Gallery. Buffalo Bill Smith was one of the first to recognize the potential of television to market products to kids: Welch's Grape Jelly, Wonder Bread and Colgate.

MARJORIE GOTTLIEB WOLFE, who grew up in Rockaway Beach, NY, says, "Sometimes you don't realize how good the good old days were until they're gone."

Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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