

Finding a new home in Allentown

By Audrey Alexander Nolte and Miriam Alexander
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AUDREY: The prayer book states, "Life is a journey, not a destination." My mother, Miriam Katz Alexander recently moved to Allentown. Judaism has impacted her entire journey. The chapters have been defined by her inner strength, flexibility, and optimism. We have the gift of time together.

MIRIAM: *My father served in the German Navy during World War I. His talents gave him the opportunity to partner with a German family to rejuvenate their family business in the Bavarian village of Weisenberg. As Hitler gained power, our home became a sanctuary from the outside world. After my father's arrest and release in 1935, we migrated to Hamburg in the hopes of a renewed life. Leaving out the sordid details, we emigrated to my uncle's English home in 1936 and arrived in the United States in 1937. Today's immigration*

stories bring back the joys, sorrows and instability of my early life. We moved at least once a year during my first decade in the United States.

AUDREY: Although my parents did not know each other in Hamburg, my father, Edgar, left Germany on the last Kindertransport out of Hamburg and spent 10 months in a British orphanage before arriving alone in the United States in 1939. He became an American citizen during U.S. Army basic training and returned to Germany to fight against the Nazis who destroyed his homeland. Dedication to social justice, education and cultural involvement, as well as my father's military service, contributed to their American identity.

MIRIAM: *During my 44-year marriage to Ed, we lived in Newark, New Jersey, and moved to East Brunswick, New Jersey, six weeks before our twins were born. We loved the outdoors and were active campers, whitewater*

kayakers and hikers. I continued my nursing education and completed my Masters degree from NYU. After a 35-year career, I retired as an assistant director of a diploma nursing school in 1988.

On an Elderhostel trip to Israel in 1995, my husband died of a heart attack in a bird sanctuary. It was a peaceful death for him, but a difficult journey for me. The highlight of that year was taking a 12-day whitewater rafting trip through the Grand Canyon with a widowed friend. Our nicknames were Thelma and Louise. I remained in my home until 2012, when maintenance became too difficult, and moved into an apartment. Despite my immigration and worldwide travels, leaving my hometown of 64 years was an unexpected transformation.

AUDREY: My mother began taking courses at Ollie RU and retirement classes at Rutgers University. Her 20-year attendance exposed her to a variety of classes and kept her mind active. The friendships she made were deep and in-



spiring. Her curiosity and adventurous spirit carried her to Nepal in the 21st century where she rode an elephant.

MIRIAM: *In recent years, I spoke with my children about moving close to one of them as my needs changed. Considering this last chapter in my life, Allentown appealed to me because of the time I already spent here, interests Audrey and I share and my comfort attending religious services. On June 1, I moved to Country Meadows. Peo-*

ple are so nice and I love the varied activities, especially the monthly Shabbat services and luncheons sponsored by Jewish Family Service. We have weekly Torah talks attended by residents of all faiths. I'm happy that my children don't have to worry about me. When I told my New Jersey friends I was moving, many people said, "How can you move? You don't know anyone besides your daughter!" I just smiled and said what I've already found to be true. "I have friends there, I just haven't met them yet."