

## TWO FATHERS

I suppose my stepfather was a good man. It's not that I didn't like him, he just wasn't my father, who was a hero. I don't really remember my father. In photographs there is a man pushing a baby carriage,

a man holding up a laughing child dressed up in a Carpathian costume. I heard stories from my mother of how he was hazed as a Jew at Lwów Polytechnic, I've seen him in Zionist youth group photos

with my mother. I read the notes he made in the camp on a book on relativity theory, and I've heard (again from my mother) how they went to Brody, his first job as a civil engineer being to build

a cobblestoned street there, and how they stayed in the house of the local priest. My mother sometimes told these stories with my stepfather there. The war came, we were in a ghetto, a labor camp, then toward

the end my mother and I were hidden by a Ukrainian school teacher. My father was killed in an attempt to organize a mass breakout from the camp. I was five when the news came to us in the Ukrainian's attic,

and I cried, because my mother cried. That's when my father became a hero, which he was. The war ended, 80 of 12,000 Jews in our town survived. In Kraków, where we went in 1945, my mother met

my stepfather, who had lost his wife in the war, and they married. I was eight, and though my stepfather tried and took me on carousels, I didn't want him. Later I built up a theory that my mother remarried

to provide me with a father, not because she liked him. But friends who knew them say they were in love. In the US my stepfather didn't try — he was busy working, first in a luncheonette on Delancey St.,

and when that failed, as a bookkeeper. When he was angry he raved in his room, then sulked long. We never made up in our family. Any punishment

(I was too good a child for that) was left to my mother.

My father was talked about all the time, and that is how my sister, born in Queens, found out she and I had different fathers. When my stepfather and I had a fight about my getting married

to a girl who wasn't Jewish (I think he was hurt by this more than my mother) I told him he wasn't my father. He died in 1981, and when I get angry I see that I sulk like him.