

The street on which my elementary school was located, Francis Street, was home to the infamous Francis Streeters. The Francis Streeters, as I've already suggested, were a gang of what my parents called "hillbillies" (families that had moved to the "big city" from Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and points south) who lived around Francis Street, Clifton Avenue, and Fulton Avenue. These kids specialized in anti-Semitic slurs and physical harassment, up to and including beating, of any Jewish kids who happened their way.

Although my own contacts with the Francis Streeters were not all that frequent (I was advised energetically and often to avoid them if at all possible, advice to which I tried to adhere), my memories of them are vivid. One day, as I was walking to P.S. 60 by myself, I turned the corner to come face-to-face with a terrified boy running in my direction, pursued by three Francis Streeters. One of the gang held a manual can opener, the kind with a sharp metal point at the end of a wooden handle. The kid being chased was running so fast, and I was so taken by surprise, that I could not make out who he was. The pursuing Francis Streeters were so intent on running the boy down that they did not stop to check me out. I think I was too small a fish to be of much challenge or interest to them, anyway. That I did not hear afterward of anyone being grievously injured makes me think that the boy being pursued ran faster and longer than his pursuers.

At the end of second grade, a decision I didn't participate in was made about my schooling. My mother was concerned that P.S. 60 was located in such a tough neighborhood that I might come to harm, so she arranged for me to be transferred to Public School 18, located on Druid Park Drive in a distinctly better area about a mile in the other direction from my house than P.S. 60 was. I entered the third grade of P.S. 18 in Selma Meyerson's class, but a funny thing happened on the way to Miss Meyerson's. It turned out that, at that time, my oldest brother Leonard, who was then 22, was dating Miss Meyerson, an attractive woman with alluring red tresses whose nickname to her grown-up friends was Pepe. Leonard brought her home after a date one evening,