

## My Memoirs - Chapter 1 - Stretching Between Two Worlds

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*Here's a photo of my mom, Helen Levant Fefferman and dad Aaron Fefferman taken before I was born*

Some of my earliest memories involve stretching between two worlds. I was a Jewish boy who, at the age of three, appeared on the front page of the L.A. Times metro section opening presents with my little girlfriend Melinda, whose dad was the Times' photographer. My parents were 100 percent Jewish, except that my dad was an atheist and my mom an agnostic.

The Holocaust still loomed large in my childhood, as every one of our relatives who hadn't come to America prior to WWI was lost. Their faith was Jewish humanism. Mom was the optimist, admitting the possibility that there might be something beyond death. But Dad was a confirmed disbeliever. "I don't believe in God," he would say, "and if he exists I don't want to meet the sonofabitch." Not an unreasonable person for a man whose own father had died when he was three and whose mother soon entered a sanitarium for tuberculosis. Then, as a young adult, Hitler served to seal the deal for him.

Yet, by the time was four, I began to doubt my parents' lack of belief. My dad's heart attack at the age of 39 nearly killed him. Nightmares soon followed. By the Lake, a dream ranger-Indian approached to inform me that my parents had died. Shadowy buffaloes swam by my dark window in to frighten me.

My mom, who had not died after all, said it was just my imagination. But when I brought my fears to the Black housekeeper/nanny who moved in while my dad recuperated, she gave my nightmares more credit. From Elsie I learned about Jesus and could understand my dreams were not just figments. And so, still not quite five, I realized that I faced a crossroads. I could live in my parents world, where there was nothing after death, or I could live in Elsie's world, where life continued after death, but I had to face both God and the Devil.