

# As If it were Yesterday. Brooklyn, 1952

by Phyllis Chesler



As I was curating some photos, I came across my sixth-grade graduation album. And there we all were, as if it were only

yesterday, preserved in tiny little black and white snapshots. The girls are all dressed in white and wearing short white gloves. We each have flowers pinned to our dress. The boys, in suits, sport carnations in their lapels. And oh, the zippered album greetings from relatives, teachers, and classmates. My father wrote: "To my little girl," and signed it: "From your ever loving Daddy." I immediately called my son, who is now a father himself and whose oldest daughter is eleven, going on twelve (about my age at the time), and I read my father's note aloud, generations spanned, connections created. My mother addressed me "as her best daughter" and said: "May your every wish and hope come true" and signed it "From your loving mother." (Precious voices from the Other Side...)



My favorite teacher, Mrs. Dorothea Friedman, wrote: "Sarah Bernhardt only better!" And she signed it with love. I cannot imagine what she was talking about... The teachers I had in every grade signed our little albums. My Hebrew school teachers also did so—and in Hebrew. But oh, my classmates' greetings: "In the golden chain of friendship, consider me a link." Someone else wrote: "If you have a friend/, Keep him so/But let him not your secrets know/For if your friend becomes a foe/The whole world will your secrets know." (How did she know this at so young an age?) And this: "As long as

ten pennies make a dime, you'll always be a friend of mine." And this:" Take the Local/Then take the Express/Don't get off till/you reach success." (Did everyone write the same thing to all of us, did parents make suggestions, did we write impromptu individual greetings?) And from this budding math aficionado: "I hope your life is like arithmetic: joys added, sorrows subtracted, friends multiplied, and love undivided." Lots of: "Sugar is sweet, lemon is sour, how many boys can you kiss in an hour?"