

I don't know whether it is a small world, or whether the Jewish part of it is small, or whether G-d simply arranges stuff so that I have connections with the people I meet randomly.

In 1992 my wife and I decided to take the family (3 kids, 6, 10, 13) to Israel. Traveling from Denver to Israel is a long journey. The first leg of the 7 am flight was from Denver to Newark. My cousin picked us up at Newark and took us to LaGuardia where we boarded an El Al flight. The kids were wired. Every time I got thirsty, I had a cup of coffee. By the time we took off at 7 pm, the rest of the family was exhausted and I was jumpy enough that there was no way I could rest, let alone sleep. They passed out and I wanted to do jumping jacks.

So, in my shy retiring manner, I leaned across the aisle of the wide-body plane and stuck out my right hand and said: "Hi, my name is Jim, I'm from Denver, who are you?"

The elderly gentleman said, I'm Bill, I'm from Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania.

I responded: "My mother was from Wilkes Barre. She would have been about your age.

"What was her name?"

"Hilda Wruble"

He said: "No she didn't come from Wilkes Barre. She came from one of the towns surrounding Wilkes Barre." He then leaned to the man behind me and asked: "Do you remember Hilda Wruble?"

I twisted around so I could see him as he said liltily: "♫ Little Hilda Wruble ♪".

His wife crossed her arms, settled further down into her seat and scowled. Smoke was beginning to rise from her ears. Everyone around us carefully found something else to pay attention to.

My mother left Wilkes Barre in 1937. It has now been 55 years since whatever he remembered. And I did not want to know what he was remembering, but clearly his wife knew.

Then he said: "You could have been my son." The smoke from his wife's ears turned to flames and I decided that I needed to become engrossed in something else.