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# Ed Lazansky

Judson House was a temporary refuge for Ed Lazansky. \_\_\_\_\_

**I**n the summer of 1967 I desperately needed a place to stay in New York City on arriving from New Bedford, Massachusetts, where I had lived for two years as a teacher of art. My wife and I had separated there, and she had returned to New York earlier. When I returned to New York and found our relationship to be untenable, I called my old friend Larry Kornfeld, who suggested I try and stay at the Judson House, as a temporary room was available.

After a fitful night at the notorious Albert Hotel (now a condo, I believe), I fled to Judson the next day into the welcoming embrace of Beverly Waite, famous housemother, who situated me into a tiny room on the southeast corner of the building. My quarters, modestly appointed, had a certain existential gloom about them, an air of Parisian *chambre de bonne* or a window overlooking Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio, or a room inhabited by Jack Kerouac.

As I sat on my bed staring out of the window at the passing throng coming off Washington Square Park, I felt myself to be on another planet. The quiet of New Bedford and my depression yielded to the brash, noisy city outside. Motorcycles turned the corner, fire engines tore out of the firehouse with bells ringing, kids screamed. My end of the building seemed perfectly projected into the melee. It took me a while to relax, and at night only with the help of earplugs.

I spent time at Judson mostly at night, while I went apartment hunting during the day. I recall evenings at Beverly's place, chatting with her friends and a few housemates. I remember especially Chuck Gordone—a fine playwright who went on to win a Pulitzer Prize—and Jon Hendricks, who was involved with the Judson Gallery.

My daughter, Nadja, who was six at the time, would come and stay with me on weekends. I rigged up a modest cot for her from one of the vacant rooms. Not so long ago, she surprised me with a rather Proustian recollection of the place. We were together somewhere, and all of a sudden she announced, "Daddy, that smell! Does that

odor remind you of something?” “That smell, yes,” I said, “what is it?” Suddenly, the *déjà vu* revealed itself: the antiseptic used in the washroom at Judson! She recalled something I had not thought of for years, but the memory came flooding back. For my daughter, it brought back feelings and moments of her stay at Judson when she was a little girl and of her somewhat depressed absentee daddy.

My sojourn at Judson was short, no more than a month. I found an apartment on the East Side and returned to Judson only to visit Beverly and a few others. Ten years later, Judson figured in my life again when I designed a few sets for the Gertrude Stein productions by Al Carmines and Larry Kornfeld, the result of a long relationship in the theater with Larry that began at the Living Theater and ended with the Theater for a New City.

Judson was an important catalyst in my life. I shall always cherish my memories of the place, as will Nadja, who helped out behind the scenes.

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**ED LAZANSKY**

lives in Woodstock, New York.