

Liliane Kates

THE ESCALATOR STORY

Fifty three years ago (isn't it amazing that I can remember in detail, what happened 53 years ago, but I can't remember where I left my keys, which were in my hand a minute ago) I decided to take my 5 year old son, Marc, to Lord and Taylor, a department store on 5th Avenue and 38th street in New York City. I could describe the store for you to read about, but you can actually see for yourself today what it was like then. Lord & Taylor is stuck in time, a rarity in this city. When, on rare occasions, I venture in because they advertise something in which I might be interested (and they offer these delicious discounts....I met someone once who told me that by the time she bought the skirt she wanted, between the sale price, the discount and the coupon, the skirt was free ..How do they stay in business. The joke about that is that what they lose in revenue, they make up in volume.) The New York Public Library still sits a block south and the Mid Manhattan Library is still across the street. Otherwise, what was once an extension of elegant 5th Avenue houses mid-range and touristy retail establishments including downscale sandwich, salad and pizza places.

Oops! This is supposed to be an escalator story----So, I brought Marc into Manhattan as an adventure into a foreign land. We lived outside the city in a sort of a village called Riverdale---except this village did have high rise buildings (sort of) with elevators and one could get there by subway and bus.

So, with his hand in mine, we headed for and boarded the up escalator to an upper floor where Marc and I were going to sit at the counter for lunch. I remember we were served by a large gentleman in a white apron and a chef's hat, who made a big fuss over my son and wanted to make sure the soup wasn't too hot. After lunch Marc and I headed to the Down escalator and I instructed him to hold on to the moving bannister with one hand, while I held his other hand. I don't know what he was thinking on either the way up or the way down and I never asked him any questions. However, when we reached

the ground floor, my son turned and stood looking as the escalator descended and then asked, “
Mommy, what happens when the basement fills up with stairs?”