

## SO WHO WAS SOL FEINSTONE??????

Sol Feinstone was born in 1888 in the small town of Lida, Lithuania on the other side of the world. When Sol was your age, he did not go to school. He was very, very poor. He had no toys. He worked all day to help his father. Sol's mom died when he was very young. Sol's dad was a Torah scribe. The Torah is the Hebrew name for the Old Testament. Sometimes, people were mean to Sol and his family because they were Jewish. Sol, however, was a very lucky kid. When he was 14 years old, he managed to come to America on a large ship to join his older brother and sister. Sol can be called our special pilgrim. Sol was an immigrant who came to America, the "land of opportunity," to find a better life. Had Sol not left his small country of Lithuania when he did, he could have been killed there in a Nazi concentration camp. That would have been very sad.

It took nine long days for Sol to reach the New York Harbor by ship. In fact, do you know where Sol first arrived? Ellis Island! Have you been there yet? Can you imagine how excited Sol was? Can you imagine how scared Sol was? He did not know how to speak a word of English; he only spoke Yiddish and Russian. The only clothes he had with him were the clothes he was wearing. The only money Sol had with him was one Indian Head penny he found rolling on the floor of the ship. A very kind Irish woman gave small Sol two rolls with a delicious piece of chocolate – all for that one penny. Even after Sol grew up, he never forgot that very generous woman... the very first American he had ever met!

Once settled in America, Sol needed a job fast. He walked into a coat making shop that advertised, "Learners wanted!" The owner, Mr. Morrison, looked at Sol and said, "No, you're much too small!" You're not able to reach the pedals!" (In those days, factory sewing machines were mounted high on bicycle treadles; later they were lowered with push treadles; and still later they were powered by electric motors. Sol pleaded and pleaded to let him try. He sat on the edge of the very high chair and managed to reach the treadles. Sol was hired to work free for two whole weeks until he learned how to use the factory sewing machines. So you believe that? Sol was willing to work for no money for two whole weeks in order to learn how to make coats! After one week, the boss said, "You are a good boy. You don't have to work for free." Sol earned six dollars that week, making one hundred pairs of coat sleeves a day, working from seven in the morning until six o'clock at night, with one hour for lunch. Imagine six dollars! Sol was on his way!

Sol had a real love of nature. He decided to study chemistry and forestry...more than 50 years before the popular environmental movement began! Sol was too busy working to be able to go to elementary school, junior high school, or high school. Instead, he went to a special night program for a little over a year before starting college at the University of Missouri. Sol was very smart and transferred to New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University. He loved many of his teachers. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1915 and a Masters Degree in 1916. Sol was awarded honorary Doctorate degrees from other universities too. As Sol grew older, he became very interested in studying about different governments from all over the world. He especially admired a special form of government call socialism. His father had always taught him, "Do not believe newspapers or books or anything important. To make sure it is true, go straight to the source." So Sol studied and studied to learn all he possibly could. He did not want others to tell him what his opinion should be. He was a man who liked to think for himself.

Sol Feinstone felt very strongly about minorities. Minorities are groups of people in our neighborhood who are often discriminated against because of differences in their beliefs, skin color, or backgrounds. Sol would not forget his roots, even though he knew that some people disliked him because he was Jewish. That takes a lot of courage. He said, "More than once I have been refused employment for which I was qualified, because of my name. The fact is that some employers in our country would rather not consider applications from members of minority groups. Some do not like Jews, some discriminate against Italians, many fear Black people."

One day, Sol's friend Sam told him that he had recently walked into a restaurant in Cape May, NJ which refused to serve food to African Americans or Jews. Sol was angry! He drove straight to Cape May and purchased the restaurant and the entire block of stores. Sol renewed the lease and even lowered the rent for each and every store except for the restaurant. The restaurant owner was furious. Sol told him, "Before you didn't serve African Americans and Jews; now you don't serve anybody." If you look on the outside wall of our school, you'll find a plaque with Hebrew lettering which refers to the words in the Torah, "Let there be light." Sol Feinstone insisted on this. You'll also find one of the tallest elementary school flagpoles in the entire state of Pennsylvania. The flagpole was erected in honor of the son of Sol's Quaker neighbor killed in action during World War II. This Quaker neighbor, Norman Davis, was one of a few in the community who supported Sol in naming our school "Sol Feinstone."

Sol's great wish was for all of the children at Sol Feinstone Elementary school to be proud of whom they are! Sol believed that we must respect each other's differences, no matter how we look or what religion we practice. If Sol were here today, he would encourage each and every one of us to think for ourselves and learn as much as we can about our world first hand.

So now when we're asked, Sol who? We can proudly answer, Sol Feinstone!!! Thank you, Sol Feinstone; for all that you have generously contributed to our great elementary school and for working so hard to make our world a better place!