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Betty Levine Kaplan Scrapbook

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Bessie "Betty Ruth Levine Kaplan
April 30, 1903 - November 8, 1995

Bessie "Betty" Ruth Levine Kaplan....Born: April 30, 1903
Eulogy of Betty Ruth Levine Kaplan By Tema Joyce Kaplan
Cushner on November 10, 1995...Betty's Death: November 8, 1995

MOTHER

My mother was known by many names. She was Peshke Rochel, Bessie, and Betty to her family of origin. To Sara Lee and me, and then Morty and Len, she was, Mum--- except on those rare occasions, when we were annoyed, and she was M-O-T-H-E-R. To her four grandsons she was Nana----to Jenna, Kayla, Eli, and Max, she was Nana Betty----to Daddy, she was often Betty Boop. But, by whatever name, she was truly a loving and well loved woman.

She taught all of us the true meaning of love---unconditional love for, and loyalty to, family.

Her home was always open to whichever one of the sisters or brothers, nieces or nephews, who wanted to come to spend the day, the night, the week, or even the year, if need be.

I will always remember once, when I was a very young child, and I guess I was upset that she was spending so much time with a parent or sibling, I asked her if she loved them more than me. She took me on to her lap and explained that a person's heart was big enough to love every member of the family. I think that Sara Lee and I have learned that lesson well.

Of course my mother was not perfect----she could be very demanding-----she demanded that her house be spotlessly clean, that her clothes be perfectly coordinated, that her hair be just right----and if they weren't----you heard about it----endlessly. But, in the "small stuff"----like never interfering in her children's lives----like accepting what life had to offer with grace and a sense of humor----like her unswerving devotion to and love for her husband of sixty years----like setting a wonderful example to her children and grandchildren in so many areas----in those ways she was the greatest.

It may sound like a put down to the liberated women of today, but to my mother and the women of her generation, it is a great compliment---- she was truly ----a LOVELY LADY.

As all of you know, I have lived my entire life in the old plantation on Winchester Street. Len has been there for the past forty six, and I never left the house without knocking on her door to say----so long, see you later. She never demanded that kind of attention----I wanted to do it.

People are always telling Sara Lee and me what good daughters we were----no big deal----it wasn't difficult. She was truly, the GOOD MOTHER.

And so, for the last time I once again knock and say----SO LONG MUM, I'LL SEE YOU LATER.

Tema, November 10, 1995

ERIC BLOOM ON HIS NANA BETTY:

My Nana would use the expression "don't get exited"!

(Here is an example of this: Eric wrote to Sara:, "We will all work together to unleash the mystery of The Levine Family Tree. Remember! We are Levine Descendants, we are not supposed to get exited or are we!")

SARA LEE BLOOM AND TEMA CUSHNER ON THEIR MOTHER BETTY KAPLAN:

Our mom, Betty Levine Kaplan, left us a legacy that family represented the most important part of a person's life; she hoped that we would pass this trait on to our sons which we have always tried to convey to our boys. Our grandmother, Sarah Levine, set the example for our mom. Treat your spouse, children, parents, siblings, other family members, and all individuals with love, respect, and compassion and you will be treated the same way in return.

ERIC BLOOM ON HIS NANA BETTY:

Nana always told me that she never argued or had a disagreement with her siblings. At first, I did not believe this, but as I thought about it, I knew it was true. It was not in her nature to argue with anybody. I always admired her for this trait. Again, it has to do with respect. I have a feeling that Sarah was the same way.

Nana would say that her apartment was like Grand Central Station. Family members were always visiting. Evelyn, Frieda, Ann and Bibby would stay for weeks at a time. Glenyce lived with them after she graduated Colby. She worked in Betty Singer's clothing shop in Coolidge Corner. Nana's home was open to anyone. Don't you

think it was the same on Ticonic St? I think it was. Again, the sisters and brothers demonstrated the values that their parents instilled in them.

When Nana came to camp in the summer, she always made it a point to visit her extended family like Rose Saperstein, Ida Wolman and her best friend Lillian Brisk. Growing up, her cousins were a big part of her life. (Don't forget there were about 38 first cousins between Waterville, Brookline, & beyond and so many more 2nd cousins and beyond). And, when her aunts and uncles (Freda Libby, Leah, Mike, Kalman, etc) were alive, she did the same. Her mama & papa told her family was the essence of a person's life. Whenever she would say good-bye to a family member on the phone or in person (and she often used the expression "good-bye darling"), knowing that she might not see or hear from them in a while, be it her Eddie, daughters, siblings, nieces, nephews, etc., her voice would crack as if she were going to cry because she loved them so much. When I was in college, I called Nana & Papa every Friday night. Nana, always said, at the end of our conversation, "I love you darling."

SARA LEE AND ERIC BLOOM ABOUT MOM/NANA BETTY:

Whenever Nana was planning a trip to Waterville, she would tell us: "I'm going home." Papa would reply: "Betty, I have taken care of you all these years. This is your home (meaning Winchester St.)." She had such a connection to Waterville roots.

ERIC BLOOM ON HIS NANA BETTY:

Nana was born with the name Bessie (named after her great aunt Bessie Levine Shiro, Tati's baby sister, Marcia Shiro Beckerman's grandmother). When Nana was little, Grandma Levine knew a lady called Mrs. Bigelow; she lived at the right hand corner of Maple St & College Ave. I'm not sure if she was a tenant or a friend. Mrs. Bigelow's husband worked for the railroad. Grandma Levine felt sorry for her because she had no children and was left alone a number of nights during the week. She let Nana sleep over quite

often and there was a mutual attachment. Mrs. Bigelow called her Betty instead of Bessie and then her siblings started to call her Betty. But she was, still, "Peshke Rochel" to Grandma & Grandpa. The only person in the family that called her by her real name was Uncle Howard; he referred to Nana as Aunt Bess.

ERIC BLOOM: A FAMILY STORY ABOUT BETTY(NANA) & EDDIE(PAPA):

From Vilna Poland/Lithuania, with stops in Boston & Dexter, Maine, Grandma & Grandpa Levine planted their future roots in family & business in Waterville, Maine. But, Brookline, Mass, also, has a lot of history in relation to our Levine Family. In 1925, Aunt Frieda, Jack, Howard, & Glenyce were all living at 160 Thorndike Street in Brookline; Nana was, also, living with them. Nana, attended Colby College (Class of 1924), but left in 1922 to pursue her musical talents, in both voice & piano, at The Boston Conservatory of Music. At her 1920 Waterville High School graduation, she sang: "OH YOU BEAUTIFUL DOLL" with her left hand on her left hip. I think it was on stage at The Waterville Opera House. Her Levine Family was in attendance and they were quite proud of their Peshke (Grandma & Grandpa called her by her Yiddish name). Nana, over the years, would give me an encore performance. BRAVO!.....BRAVO!..... Additionally, Nana was engaged to her 2nd cousin, Izzy Levine. Izzy's father was a 1st cousin to Grandpa & Tati. (Izzy's family lived in Fall River, Ma. and he was one of 10 children; yes, there was another branch of the Levine Family from Vilna). At the corner of Commonwealth Ave & Thorndike Street where Brookline borders Boston, there lived a young, handsome, funny, & talented doctor by the name of Edward Kaplan. Aunt Frieda & Nana would see Papa walk back and forth to his office on a daily basis because he parked his car in a garage located near Aunt Frieda's apartment building. Jack Miller, also, parked his car at this same garage. Aunt Frieda thought he would be perfect for Nana. He would come and go from his office, quite frequently, because he had emergencies and also, house calls. One day, Papa received a call from Aunt Frieda, that her sister, Betty, had sprained her ankle (the joke in the family was that Aunt Frieda had tripped her). He came to Aunt Frieda's home and wrapped Nana's ankle and left. The next day, he left the office early to attend a ball

game. As he walked by Aunt Frieda's home, he saw Nana sitting at the window and she invited him in. He checked the ankle and told her to come by his office the next day for another check up. She came the next day, he checked her ankle, and asked her if she would like to go for a car ride. He had no appointments and off they went for the day. At some point, he asked her the following question: "Will you marry me?" Nana, as known in the family, was not an impulsive person, but always thought things out. She said, "I can't until I speak to MAMA & PAPA." (Papa Eddie was dating May Kaplan, one of Lenny Kaplan's sisters. May's parents, Jenny & Morris, were Papa's patients.) That day or the next day Nana, Papa, & Aunt Frieda drove to Waterville. In those days it could be an 8 hour drive. When they arrived at the "THE BIG HOUSE", Grandma & Grandpa Levine were expecting them. Papa stayed in the Parlor, as the living room was called in those days. The rest of them went into the kitchen with the door closed. Papa Eddie said the following happened: "The father said in Yiddish mixed with English. "Vos iz he.? Vos iz he? (which means who is he?, what is he?). The mother said: "I like him. I like him." Betty said. "I love him." They were married sometime that day, on 33 Ticonic St, by a Justice of the Peace, and went right back to Brookline. Nana would not live with Papa until they were married by a Rabbi. Nana lived in Brookline with Aunt Frieda and her family and Papa lived with Esther (his mother) and Pa Kaplan (his father) in Malden, Ma. All this happened on April 13, 1925 and they had a family wedding, on May 12, 1925, in Brookline and a Rabbi officiated. Forty people attended, Evelyn was the maid of honor and Bibby was the flower girl. Mazel TOV!!!! Once they were married, they lived with Esther & Pa for a year while 70 Winchester Street was being built. They were married for 59 and 1/2 years. Nana lived at 70 Winchester St. for 69 years and in the years to come Levine descendants from all generations have lived or visited there at some point. Auntie Tema holds the record at 81 years!. (Thank you, Aunt Frieda for bringing together my GRANDPARENTS!!). Nana & Papa were both nurturing & loving to all!

WENDY MILLER ON GREAT AUNT BETTY:

My dad Howard always talked about how much fun his aunt Bessie was - that when she came to Waterville, it was aunt Betty who took them all out to camp. Nana Frieda, Uncles Ludy and Pacy were busy working, but aunt Betty loved being on the lake and loved to have all the kids there.

ERIC BLOOM ON NANA BETTY:

When Nana was young, she did drive, but that all changed when she got into an accident; her sisters Frieda & Evelyn were with her at the time. When I learned to drive, I would drive Nana & Papa to camp every August. When we went into Waterville, Nana always pointed out the important landmarks in her life or some other important fact. "Now, this is where I took voice lessons, this is where the tractor was invented, this is where the boat & canoe factory was located, that's where I went to school (BROOKS ST SCHOOL), this is where Aunt Freyda Libby & Uncle Mike lived. There's the Penny Bridge, etc. She would tell me some of the same stuff, time after time, but that was because she didn't want me to forget the memories in her life. (Now, whenever I'm with my mom or dad and going by The Brook Street School, etc., one of us will say, "That's where NANA went to school." We laugh and remember her. We, sometimes, would pick up Aunt Frieda, go out to lunch and then Nana & Aunt Frieda would talk about Evelyn, Teddy, and Mama & Papa, etc. and have discussions about growing up in Waterville. As they say, "I soaked it all up." And til this day, I love to talk about my family; that was instilled in me by my Nana and her siblings; also, by my mom & Auntie Tema.

ERIC IN RESPONSE TO WENDY'S QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNITY SERVICE/PHILANTHROPY: Betty was a 25 year worker at the Beth Israel Thrift Shop in Boston. Also, she was a life member (over 50 years) of The Women's Auxiliary of The Beth Israel Hospital of Boston.

Sara Lee was past President, Vice-President, and held many titles for The Women's Committee of the National Kidney Foundation of Massachusetts; involved for over 35 years; this organization's goal was to raise money to fight kidney disease. Also, she was a past board member of The Brookline Library Society of Artists and was an active member in Organization for the Rehabilitation Through Training (ORT), Brookline Chapter.

Sara Lee was, also, involved in PTA One interesting note when The Edward Devotion School had their 100th Anniversary Tema and Sara Lee were on the planning committee and help chair the event. Tema, Sara Lee, Andy, Stuart, Larry, and Eric attended this school as did Howard before he moved to Maine..

Tema was past President of The Edward Devotion School PTA, past President of Women's American Ort, Brookline Chapter (Organization for the Rehabilitation Through Training), board member of the League School of Boston(a day school for seriously disturbed children servicing greater Boston), and volunteered at The Women's Lunch Place of Boston, which is an organization that brings homeless women off the streets by feeding them and helping them find living arrangements and employment. Tema, also, read to the Blind at The Perkins School for the Blind.

NOTE: As Wendy researched the names and dates for the memorial list, particularly the Barron connection to the family, Eric persisted because he said, "Nana always said include everybody."





Neely
1910







Now is that nice 44 - Our old Betty













Sara Lee Summer 1950















