

Goldie Hiller

Zahava bat Itzchak Tzvi

Passed away May 16, 2001 Iyar 23 5761

“What is in your heart about your fellow man is most likely in his heart about you.”

This quote from a Torah commentary called Sifre Deuteronomy seems very applicable to Goldie Hiller.

She was a person who valued friendships, and her loyalty to friends was returned in the devotion they held for her.

The conversation I had with Arthur and Florence last night about Goldie was a fascinating glimpse into the history of our community. With her passing we have lost another link in the tradition of our people that we can trace back to the formation of the tribes in ancient Egypt. It was there that people learned to rely on family and those around you, developing life long bonds.

Goldie's life is also a reflection of another journey taken by our people as the tribes dispersed to every corner of the diaspora, intermingling with others but maintaining the tradition of helping one another.

Born in New York in 1910, Goldie was too young to understand the decision of her parents, Harry and Rose to set out for one of the farthest outposts of Jewry. The description of Edmonton by his brother-in-law Abe Garfin, as a town where the streets were paved with gold, convinced Harry to bring his wife and daughters Dora and Goldie west in 1912. Here the Hillers became one of our community's pioneer Jewish families and left their mark by giving Edmonton a taste of big city culture. To make a living Harry opened a barber shop and then a men's wear and a second hand store. Rose worked with him in the businesses taking time off to give birth to Arthur. But Goldie's father and mother will be forever remembered for being instrumental in bringing Yiddish theatre to Edmonton. The Yiddish language and culture thrived with Edmonton home to a Yiddish school and the Arbeiter Ring, or Workmen's Circle, a fraternal labour society headquartered in New York. The Hiller children felt the influence of the many cultural programs that brought a taste of the old country to the new world. Harry's camera caught many of these events, some of which are preserved in the recently published history book, 'The First Century of Jewish Life in Edmonton and Northern Alberta.'

While a gift of a camera may have been the first influence that set Arthur on the path to film direction, it was the atmosphere of humor, friendship and family that Goldie absorbed. The faces that surround a young Goldie in a 1920 photograph of her Yiddish school class are faces of people who became life long friends. Together they helped build our community, a community that Goldie loved so much that she chose to spend her life here despite opportunities to move back to New York or south to California.

After she completed high school Goldie took classes at the Commercial Business School to become a secretary. She took on her new career with a zeal that saw her become a frequent Canadian champion typist, traveling across the country for competitions. She was a legal secretary, first for Abe Miller and then for his son Tevie, retiring only when Tevie was appointed to the judiciary. She was a liberated woman long before it became fashionable. She was very bright, absorbing much of the law that passed through her fingers. Goldie had a terrific memory and Arthur recalls he could always count on her to give him exact details of an event that may have occurred 60 or 70 years earlier. She was the family historian to the extended Garfin and Hiller families, never forgetting a name or a place as she helped new generations learn their heritage.

Goldie didn't marry but was cherished by family and friends. She loved getting together for family celebrations and the holidays where the quick wit and sense of humour she developed when she was younger brought added joy to the gathering.

She was devoted to her parents and after they were gone she turned her attention to her little brother Arthur as his career began to flourish. He really was the apple of her eye and they spoke at least once every week. She worried like a mother when he told her of some of the more exotic trips he was taking and expressed relief when he returned home safely. We share Arthur's grief as he mourns not only Goldie, but also his sister Dora who passed away just last week in New York state.

Goldie lived alone but she was not lonely. She loved to travel, visiting family in Israel with her sister Dora and enjoying frequent trips to Hawaii and Palm Springs.

The young faces that smiled brightly from the early pictures of school, theatre and family gatherings continued to be a part of her life. Cousins Dory Satten, Ansel Mark, Florence Soifer Ovics and Zelda Kalensky were important to Goldie as both family and friends. The joys of her decades of friendship with

the Mickelsons - Ruth, Tillie and Molly, Sara Wiseman, Lil Newhouse, Anne Shuler and Ida Ostry will be remembered by their families. Even in later years she attracted people who longed to spend time with her such as Ralph and Ava Witten who joined her for California holidays and more recently, as leaving her apartment become difficult for her, with shopping and banking. Arthur's friends Mitch Klimove and Abner Rubin performed the wonderful mitzvah of visiting and checking up on her to make sure she was OK and had everything she needed. Finally over the past few years when her health began to fail she was surrounded by a new group of loyal friends, her nurses. Ada, Evelyn, Kathleen, Virginia and Yvonne who watched over her 24 hours a day until she passed away peacefully in her home on Wednesday.

People wanted to be with Goldie, whether at an impromptu party when she celebrated a birthday or in the last few months when despite her failing health, flashes of her wit and humour still delighted those with her. But even a heart that was so filled with love, both to give and to receive, can not beat forever. Despite this time of sorrow we can rejoice in the knowledge that she contributed so much to our lives. She brightened our days, she inspired us and she helped us. She will be fondly remembered as someone who helped in the mitzvah of helping our Creator make this world a better place.

*Tehi Nishamata Tzroorah Beetzror hachaim*

May her soul be bound up in the bonds of life