

## Mom's Eulogy – August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012

Over the past few years, I have become quite accustomed to writing speeches, whether it be for the Synagogues Annual Kol Nidre appeal, for a Gala event, or for the many Bar or Bat Mitzvah's I have had the honour of attending. For someone who is a terrible public speaker, this has been an enormous challenge for me. However, I have persevered and in fact, have started to even enjoy these opportunities. It is ironic however, that neither my beloved mother, or for that matter, my sisters since they live thousand miles away, have ever heard me speak in public. And now, here I am, at **the** most heart wrenching time, giving my mom's eulogy. I wish my sister's and for that matter my mother, could have heard me at a much more joyous occasion rather than today. Mom, I hope you can hear me, and just know how much we all love you.

One of the best things I have done in my life, other than of course marrying my wonderful wife, Gaylene, was to join the Chevra Kadisha. My father, who is I think the longest living member of the Chevra, tried for years to get me to join. But, I always declined the suggestion because I just wasn't ready. In fact, to be honest, when I was younger, the thought of being part of the Jewish burial society, kind of creeped me out. However, as years passed, and after some significant events occurred in my life, I decided to follow in my father's and my cousin Farrel's footsteps, and become a member of the Chevra Kadisah. As I mentioned, it was probably the most impactful and significant decision I made. These men and women who give selflessly of themselves to assist our beloved departed and their grieving family and friends are truly amazing and I consider myself fortunate to be part of this incredible group of individuals. I know I speak on behalf of my father when I tell you all how much we respect and love you all, **for all that you** do for the entire Jewish community. I can now attest to this first-hand!

My mother was born in Toronto on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1928, although for most of our lives, we always celebrated her birthday on December 31<sup>st</sup>. I think that was because she preferred celebrating her birthday the same time as New Years. Perhaps, because she was always thinking of others and did not crave a lot of attention, so she probably figured why celebrate two events when we could just celebrate both on the same day. Anyways, mom was the youngest of five children. Her sisters were Sadie, Rose, and Ruth and her brother was Harry, the father of my cousin Farrel. Sadie, Ruth, and Harry are sadly deceased. My sisters and I have very fond memories travelling to Toronto, where they all lived, and spending time with my aunts and uncles and all our cousins. In case you are not aware, Farrel and his sisters are doubly related to my sisters and me. That's because my father was first introduced to my mother in Toronto through his first cousin, my Aunt, Rosalie, and Farrel's mother, when she was married to Harry, my mother's brother. (*If you think this is confusing, ask me at another time how my wife Gaylene is now related to Farrel and his wife Lisa.*) (Anyways) My father told me that one day Rosalie and Harry showed him a picture of Hilda and he immediately insisted that they fix him up on a date asap. It was love at first sight according to my dad. My father often brags that he dated **many** women before meeting my mother, **probably some of you here today**, but when he saw her picture, he had to meet her. Anyways, they fell in love and shortly thereafter, they got married and moved to Edmonton. **That was just over 63 years ago! On August 14<sup>th</sup> my mom and dad celebrated their 63<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary.** I know it was very difficult for my mother to move away from Toronto back then. She was only 21 years old, her parents and siblings were all in Toronto, and she did not know anyone in Edmonton, whereas she had **many many** good friends in Toronto that made it even harder for her to leave. However, having just gotten married, she really had no choice, so move she did. And once in Edmonton, it did not take my mother long to

make friends here. Her personality attracted friendships. That is one thing about my mother; she always had many good friends and she always made sure she kept in contact with them all, whether they were here in Edmonton or back in Toronto or somewhere else.

Gaylene reminded me the other day of watching our family home movies, which my father loved to take. He was always filming birthday parties and from all their travels. My mother loved to travel and travel they did. They went to China, Russia, Europe, the Middle East, and many other places, as well as spending many of their winters either in Hawaii or Palm Springs. Anyways, Gaylene, remembers us watching the home movies, and in one scene, my mother was getting out of the car as they arrived at home, with a baby in her arms, my sister Mimi, and being greeted by my mom's parents, my Bubbie Annie and Zaida Sam, who frequently came to Edmonton to visit. Then, in the next scene, a year and a half later, my mother was again coming out of the car with another baby in her arms, me of course, and Mimi in the arms of my Bubbie. **I think my Zaida Sam was in the background smoking a cigarette.** Then, in the next scene, a few years later, again my mother was getting out of the car with another baby in her arms, Shelley, with Mimi and me running around the front yard. Then, in the next scene, three years later, once again my mother was getting out of the car with another baby in her arms, Carrie, and again being greeted by my Bubbie and with the other three of us playing on the grass. And, then, finally, one more scene of my mother two years later once again getting out of the car with her last child, Risa of course, once again being greeted by her parents, and again the other four of us playing, or by this time fighting with one another in the front yard. By the way, back in those days there were no infant car seats. The other thing, I remember, is that in each of those five scenes, the car was always a different make and model. The only thing constant was my Bubbie always greeting my mother as she was getting out of the car with a child in her arms, **and my Zaida always smoking a cigarette.**

Now that I think about it, I'm not sure how my dad managed to drive the car up to the house while filming this all???

Growing up at our house in Valleyview, I fondly remember always having our friends around, whether they were my friends or my sisters. I think all our friends tended to congregate to the Rubin household, and I think in large part, it was due to the warmth and love my mom shared with each of our friends. I know our childhood friends, many of whom are here today, adored and cherished my mom. And, I have to thank my mom for that, because what hot-blooded young lad would not appreciate having all of his sister's good-looking friends hanging around his house.

As each of my sister's grew up, one by one they moved away. Mimi, Shelley and Carrie to Toronto, and Rissa to Los Angeles and eventually to Florida. I know this was very difficult for my parents, and especially to mom. She was extremely close to each of my sister's and missed them terribly. My mother had a very special and individual bond with each of my four sisters. However, although they were separated by thousands of miles, each one of them was always close to her heart and I know they chatted frequently by phone. Unfortunately back then there was no skype, let alone computers.

It was tremendously difficult for all of us over the past 10 years or so, to see Lewy Body Dementia weaken my mother and stop her from doing many of the things she loved to do, including exercising and socializing with friends and family. However, although this disease took its toll physically on my mother's body, and eventually prevented her from walking all together, and eventually eating, as well as sometimes making her delusional, her memory, even near the latter stages, remained intact. **She was amazing.** Often, my father, Gaylene and I would be talking with my mom, and while the three of us would be struggling to remember someone's name, right away my mother, would tell us

the person we were trying to remember. And then, a cute little smile would creep onto her face...., as if to say, “***see, I’m still with it!***”

Also, when my mother would be sitting in her wheelchair, or in bed, apparently asleep, or not fully conscious, one of my sister’s would call, and she would quickly awaken and be more alert in order to converse with them. She lived to hear their voices and would always ask how they were doing, and when asked how she was, would always answer “I’m okay”, despite her ill health. She would always perk up when Gaylene and I, and my mother-in-law, Florence, would drop by to visit, or my daughters Taylor and Kaylee. And she never failed to compliment how beautiful all four of them looked, or for that matter, even complimenting me.

Friends were extremely important to my mother. Next to family, they were her life. As I mentioned earlier, my mother had lots of good friends and many of you are here today. But some of her dearest and closest friends were Seema Leon, Lil Segal, Rose Pechet, Esther Samuels, Maimie Sorokin, Sybil Dlin and Marj Goldberg. I am sure I am missing some as there were so many. I know she loved them all dearly, and she cherished her friendship with them all as she did with all of her other many dear friends. Many of these closest friends unfortunately have pre-deceased her, and it was extremely sad for my mother to hear of their passing, and for some, not to be able to attend their funeral because of her own health. With each of their passing, it was if a piece of her was also lost.

My father, my sisters and I are all overwhelmed with the love and support that we have received from all of you who are here, and to all those who were unable to be with us this afternoon. Even though many friends and family members were not able to make it today, I know their thoughts and prayers are with us. As I read emails, received phone calls, I was often brought to tears with the

emotional outpouring of affection for my mother, as I know my father and sisters also were. On behalf of my father and sisters, I cannot thank you enough for all of your support and love that you have showered us with.

Thank you to the medical staff at the Misericordia Hospital that provided my mother with tender loving care in the last couple weeks of her life. On behalf of my father and sister, thank you to Dr. Leon Kagan for all of his wonderful care during my mother's battle with Lewy Body Dementia. And a very special thank you to Dr. Amy Borken, for all of her specialized assistance with my mother. I know my father would want me to tell you, Amy, what a special person and doctor you are, and that he will always be eternally grateful for your loving care of my mom. I know my dad considers you a dear friend as well as having been my mother's physician.

Over the past number of years, my father has truly been amazing. He has dedicated his entire life over the past 10 years or so to the care of his beloved wife. There is no doubt in my mind, that if my mother had been moved to a nursing home, she would not have lived as long as she did. My father ensured that my mother always had the best and personalized care that she could. He sacrificed many aspects of his own life so that he could always be with my mom and to spend as much time with her as he could. I know Dad that you loved her deeply and your actions always spoke louder than words, although you always took every opportunity to tell her verbally how much you loved and adored her. I know how much she valued that by the way it always made her smile.

A couple days ago, when chatting with Rabbi Kunin, I asked him if Jewish people believe in Angels. You would think being President of the Shul, I would know? Anyways, he told me that although we do not believe in guardian angels so to speak, Angels are mentioned in the Bible. Well, I have to tell you, **that I believe in**

**Angels.** They are walking amongst us here on Earth, and these Angels are the caregivers that not only provided my mother with such love and devotion but also to so many **of your** loved ones as well. The sad truth of getting older is that we also unfortunately begin attending more and more funerals of friends and family. Being a member of the Chevra Kadisah has also sadly provided me with ample opportunities to attend funerals, and the one constant message often conveyed is how much the family valued and appreciated the love, the care and devotion the caregivers provided to their loved ones. My mother's caregivers were no exception. They are all truly amazing women and my father, my sisters and I will always be eternally grateful to you all. There are many of you who have provided care to my mother during her failing years, but four of you particularly will always be in my family's heart. And they are of course, Jackie, Avi, Irene and Lyndsey. You four not only took such special care of my mother, but were devoted to her and loved her as she was your own mother. **You truly are Angels** and I know my mother also loved you four very much. Thank you for your love and devotion to my mother.

I want to thank the Rabbi for his support and officiating at my mother's funeral. And, again on behalf of my father and sisters, my daughters, Taylor and Kaylee, my step-sons, Jared and Adam, my nephews and nieces, Skylar, Logan, Jennifer, and Amy, who were unable to be here today, thank you to all of you for your attendance this afternoon. Seeing such a huge number of people here today is truly a comfort to us all and acknowledgement of the love and affection everyone had for my mother as well as for our entire family. Sometimes we can forget about how much we rely and value one another's love, friendship and support until such an occasion as this. Thank you also to Ron, my sister Shelley's husband, and to Martin, my sister Carrie's partner, for not only their love for my mother but also their ongoing support to my sisters. You both are terrific. And of course, I want to extend my thanks and love to my wife Gaylene for all of her support during

this difficult time. I know how much you loved my mom, and my mother truly adored you and agreed with me 100% that you are the best thing in my life.

I would like to end with two quotes. This first one is from a friend that was emailed to me which said: ***“Age is irrelevant, both our own and the parents’, when we lose a parent”***.

And lastly: ***“Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal”***.