

Fanny Shurvel

Faige Sara bat Yitzchak v'Golda

Died April 2, 2002

Nisan 20 5762

In talking with Fanny's family it quickly became apparent that one of the main things that she will be remembered for was her generosity. Fanny was the favourite aunt who could always be counted on for a special treat whether it was something to eat or something that could be used to buy a special treat.

As she never married and had children of her own, her nephews and nieces and later her grand nephews and nieces always held a special place in Fanny's heart.

Remaining single was another example of her decision to be an independent person, choosing for herself the direction her life would take.

She developed this independent streak as a child in Winnipeg, the fifth of six children and the youngest girl. She strived to keep up with her older sisters in every way, even having the smarts to skip a grade in school to be closer to them. She attended cheder after the regular school day where she studied Jewish traditions and language, winning prizes for her work, but even at a young age, she questioned why she could not participate fully with the boys in all of the religious aspects of Judaism.

Fanny entered university, hoping to study law, an interest she developed sitting in courts watching trials, but because of a shortage of money in the midst of the depression, she had to leave after one year to go to work. She became an accomplished bookkeeper, and soon took a position with Imperial Oil. During the Second World War she found herself posted in tiny Norman Wells in the Northwest Territories often telling her family about how she would go outside in the cold just so she could appreciate the few minutes of light during the winter days.

Soon , she found herself at the opposite extreme, as she moved to the world's largest city at the time, New York, finding an important position with a shirt manufacturer with offices in the Empire State Building. She quickly adopted the city as her own, developing a life long love of baseball

and the New York Yankees. She acquired an appreciation for all of the good things that the city had and through hard work and determination was able to purchase her own beautiful apartment in a prestigious midtown neighbourhood. Here she proudly hosted relatives who came to visit her as she eagerly shared her exciting big city life with them. She also developed an interest in politics and registered as a Democrat as soon as she became a US citizen. She was able to travel extensively, take cruises and was the first of her family to visit Israel, a country she loved and returned to many times.

Fanny was admired by her nieces and nephews who cherished her visits to Canada from New York. One thing they remember is that she always treated them like adults no matter how young they were. She was very sophisticated and was looked up to by her younger family members who tried to emulate her in many ways. Fanny had strong opinions and wouldn't back down from an argument but her love for family always came through.

After 30 years in New York, Fanny moved to Edmonton to be closer to two of her sisters, Dora Kettner and Clara Bushewsky. As Ron and Carol's girls grew she developed a special relationship with them, becoming like another grandmother. She loved to go downtown with them on the bus taking them to expensive restaurants for lunch. When Allison and Heather turned 13 for a Bat Mitzvah present she took them to New York. Her health didn't allow her to take Sharon but she paid for her trip as well. She was a regular for Shabbat dinners where she would quiz the girls on what they were learning in school. The memories for Gordon's children will be different as most of their visits with Fanny were after she had moved in to Laurier House but they will always remember the special candies and cookies she had for them.

Its ironic that Fanny leaves us during Pesach when you would think that the commandment to refrain from chametz would mean that we would also be abstaining from treats for the eight days of the holiday. However today, even in Edmonton, we find our cupboards stocked with kosher l'Pesach candies, macaroons, marshmallows and cookies. Maimonides writes in Hilchot Yom Tov that a Jew who buys the most exquisite food, serves it on the most beautiful china, drinks the most expensive wine for the four cups but does not invite any guests for the seder has made a mockery of the commandment to rejoice on the festivals.

Maimonides also pointed out at the end of the Laws of Megillah " there is no greater and more beautiful happiness than to cause the needy, orphans,

widows and strangers to rejoice. In fact, whoever raises their hearts to happiness can be compared to God.”

It is difficult to find a more succinct and poignant way of expressing our responsibility to reach out to all Jews during the Holidays, and, in fact, all year round. Fanny was not only generous to her family but she quietly followed the practice she inherited from her mother, someone she admired for her involvement in community. Fanny remembered these responsibilities and supported causes both here and in Israel, both Jewish and for the larger community.

This spirit of generosity is something we can resolve to emulate each year when we observe Fanny’s yahrzeit during the Pesach holiday. Let us ensure that no Jew lacks a place to eat, or the food for Pesach they need in their own home for the seder. Let us carry this legacy of generosity with us through the year as we strive to improve the lives of those around us who need our help.

Tehi nishmata tzroora beetzror hachaim

May her soul be bound up in the bond of life