

## *Nana Lee...Memories from a Life of Giving*

### **Preface**

My mother, Leona Augusta Scofield, Lee to friends or Nana to her grandchildren, was a diverse and talented woman with complex emotions. She was giving, yet demanding. She was very critical at times, yet complimentary. She was very loving, yet still held grudges, even with those she loved most. She lived a wonderful and rewarding life, with her memories and experiences are chronicled to follow. Primarily, these series of stories that chronicle her life was written from her verbalizing her very clear memories at the age of 89 and most were exactly as I remember them as they were told to me before. Yes, she still had a sharp mind for her age, but memories do get blurred when you get older, and of course, we all have our own perspective. This was written from November 2002 through February 2003, during a time of varied illnesses, including being diagnosed with terminal cancer in January. She shared things I never knew about, and she answered virtually whatever I asked in writing these condensed memoirs.

### **Relatively Recent Family History for Mom**

Mom always considered herself a Schofield, a family with history dating to land grant from the King of England in 1636. Mom's mother was a German immigrant, from Hamburg, named Ella Newvine. She was a pianist and played Carnegie Hall several times. She designed all her own clothes with fine detailed embroidery. Mom was born on December 17, 1913 in a tuberculosis sanitarium, where her mother was interned for sometime, and was ill and dying at the time of her birth. Her father, Charles Bradley Scofield raped her mother in the sanitarium as Mom recalls, but she always disliked her father, so this statement had not always been expressed in the past. Her mother died within hours of giving birth to her. Uncle George came from Stamford on a cold night with a horse and sled to get her from Port Chester, New York at the sanitarium. She was raised by her Grandmother Eliza Bradley Hull, born December 16, 1848, her father's mother, and her old maid Aunt Clara Hull Scofield, born August 17, 1881 and Uncle George Mitchell Scofield, born March 20, 1885. Her older siblings, Harold and Eleanor were raised by her father, and her father never provided any support to his siblings that raised Leona.

Mom told me throughout my life of her German grandfather returning to Germany and giving much of his American made wealth to the Kaiser during WWI. I always assumed her Grandmother went with him, and that the one visit that was etched in her mind of her German Grandmother was a visit from Germany some years later. This was not true, as I learned the whole story, a somewhat shameful story, during the writing of this piece. It turns out the her German grandfather, a cabinet and coffin maker of much success, was also a Real Estate baron, buying up homes all over Bridgeport and renting these homes and apartment buildings. He was a shrewd man, average in build with a bad temper. He was nondescript in the pictures Nana remembers and at least six inches shorter than his very tall and attractive wife, who mother has always maintained was 6'3."

As the war approached, her Grandfather started secretly selling all his homes, and then last, but shamefully least, he sold their home, with his wife never having any sense of what was going on. He left for Germany, but her grandmother thought it was just a visit, but weeks passed and then into the next month, and he was still not home. Then, she received a visit from a man who had bought the house, unbeknownst to her, and this is how she found out that her husband was never returning and he had left her with nothing more than household positions.

This embarrassment, let alone the war, was the reasons she hardly saw her German grandmother, and no one ever told her she was half German either, let alone even knew or spoke of her mother for that matter. When Mom was only seven and in second grade, her teacher was a very unpleasant woman named Mrs. Stevens. One day, she told Mom to stay after school even though she had done nothing wrong and then said to her, "I want you to know some things. I knew your mother. She was German, you know, and I didn't like her whatsoever". Mom was stunned and angry, but didn't respond. When she came home, she burst out to her somewhat stuffy English relatives, particularly Aunt Clara, "I'm German! I'm German!" Aunt Clara fainted immediately. She then asked to see the pictures of her mother, and was shown the beautiful pictures, and told about much of the reality of her background.

This revelation about her background led to some other changes in her family, and that included a visit with her German Grandmother prompted by her beloved English grandmother Eliza. She was still seven and nervous about the visit, which resulted in her dropping a glass, which shattered all over the floor. Her grandmother blurted out "Dumas De Dassel" and "Dumas De Dumkoff", at least that's the phonetic spelling of what translated to "You are a Jackass", and "You are a Dumb Head". Needless to say, it was not a great visit.

Over the next couple of years, more effort was made by the English side of the family to show sympathy and kindness to her German Grandmother. She was homesick for her homeland in Hamburg and by coincidence, Yale Lock where Uncle George worked and one of the largest employers in the area had a plant in Hamburg. Mom's English Grandmother Eliza contacted the plant, and arrangements were made and she returned in Germany when Mom was nine to live her remaining years.

Eliza Bradley Schofield, her loving grandmother, had lived in the family homestead on Newroton Avenue in a grand large home, currently a historical museum. It was a large farm when she was raised there and for some time after her marriage to Charles Erastus Scofield on October 27, 1873. She had a sister Clara, who moved to Montreal after marrying a lawyer from a prominent family, named Farity, and raised a son who became a judge. Eliza's husband, Mom's grandfather was a drunk and he eventually lost most of their possessions, including farming land around the home and eventually the home itself. Uncle George, her dedicated and loyal son, abandoned plans for a career as a musician as a trumpet player who loved classical music and all types of music to take a job at Yale Lock as a very young man to support his mother. He never left that job, and he never had the opportunity to express his creative and intelligent side.

Grandmother Eliza was brilliant and a teacher who taught privately for wealthy families. She was always dressed to the hilt and was a wonderful story teller. She was always positive and upbeat, giving, kind and loving, and Mom credits her with instilling all these things in Mom. She was the primary female influence in raising Mom, with little influence from Aunt Clara, who Mom suggests "...was just there." When Mom was thirteen, Eliza got sick with severe hemorrhoids and worse, but very treatable in today's world. Mom would come home from school, and was told by Aunt Clara to dump the blood in the pail from under her grandmother's bed. Eventually, she was moved to a bed in the living room the last few weeks of her life. She was in constant pain, but never complained about her physical condition, another trait Mom inherited from her. Mom used to sit by her bedside for hours, stroking the large protruding veins in her hand, and telling her how soft they were. When she passed, Uncle George threw himself in Mom's lap crying and distraught. He had cared and been with his mother in the same home all their lives and he was never quite the same after she was gone.

After her grandmother died, time with Aunt Clara was much more difficult, as no one was there to offset the positives from her grandmother. Mom thought that Aunt Clara must have had something tragic or horrible happen in her life, as she was an old maid not interested in socializing, a prude as Mom often said, and a bitter and hateful person. Everyday coming home from school Mom would ask her, "How are you, Aunt Clara" and every day she would respond with, "I wish I were dead". One day, when Mom was in the eighth grade, shortly after losing her grandmother, she had enough of the somber Aunt Clara and she responded, "So do I!" She was told to go her room, and had to wait for Uncle George to get home to scold her. When they chatted, Uncle George let Mom tell the short story and then he surprised her with, "I agree."

Mom didn't have much to do with Aunt Clara thereafter. Mom had many experiences with clairvoyance and when Aunt Clara died, she did again. When the phone rang the night Aunt Clara died, unrepentantly, Mom turned to my father and said, "Aunt Clara just die." and of course she was right. Her grandmother and others in the family had painful deaths, suffering and sorrowful, but Aunt Clara seemed fine, just coughed once and then died of a massive heart attack. Mom questioned, "Why did God spare this hateful cold woman a horrible death and not my kind, loving grandmother or Uncle George?"

When Mom was maybe nine, she recalled a cold winter night like many a chilly night, when her Grandmother warned her, "Keep that window tightly closed." Mom always liked fresh air so of course she opened the window a bit more than a crack and huddled under the warm blankets. She heard a strong but gentle wind and peeked from under the covers in time to see a clear image of her Mother, the Mom she never met, come through that narrow opening and then expand to full form, and sit next to her in bed. She was just as beautiful as all the pictures. Mom was calm and so was this illusion, this ghost of her mother, who started the conversation with a simple, "How are you, my dear". "Fine, mother," she responded. The conversation continued for sometime, just basic and easy conversation about the weather, her dolls and everyday life for Mom. Shortly before she left through the same window, her mother asked, "Are you happy." Mom said,

“Absolutely,” and a wide smile came over her mother, seemingly satisfied as she rose and floated away. Mom was convinced she would soon see her again when she passed as she retold this story and was waiting to see her mother and Uncle George in his youth for another ride up a hill on his motor bike.

Supporting his mother, his sister and Mom, Uncle George had forgone a career in music, and worked his whole life as a factory worker. He didn't complain or bemoan his fate. He was an avid reader, and spent much of his free time reading or fishing. Uncle George was a hill climber as Mom refers to it, riding his motor cycle, a Harley Davidson, up and over large hills. He strapped Mom on the back when she was as young as four. From the time she was very little, she went fishing with Uncle George an average of twice a week, maybe more if the fish were running. They went to Sound Beach or to the special cove where Uncle George and eventually Mom's ashes were scattered, where they took the row boat out. She didn't like that she couldn't talk when fishing, as the fish wouldn't bite as Uncle George continually reminded her. That's true, but maybe it was just a way to get this always talkative person to be still for awhile. Sometimes small fish called smelt would run and grandmother would have the big iron skillet on the coal stove hot and ready for their return, using that now ill advised bacon grease for flavoring. If it wasn't fishing, it was clamming and every one at home had their own pail for clam shells for those large dinners after Mom and Uncle George when clamming.

When Mom was six and fishing, Uncle George rowed further out to an island and they went ashore. They saw a Lady Slipper, a beautiful, spotted plant, quite rare, and one Mom never saw again the rest of her life. That night, they caught so much fish they had to give many away. Some time after that, Uncle George taught Mom to swim in an old fashioned way. They were fishing on a warm day and he said, “Time to learn to swim.” “Now,” she questioned before he threw her overboard. He told her, “Swim or drown,” and swim she did. He was proud of her and she was so pleased. She always loved swimming after that and was one of the youngest Junior Lifeguards when she was 13.

If it wasn't raining, a Sunday drive after a big dinner was assured. From the time she was six, she was sitting on Uncle George's lap, steering, on these Sunday drives. When she turned eight, he took her to a farm and had big six inch wooden blocks tied to the gas and brake pedals of his Model T. She still had to reach for those pedals anyway, but they spent a fun afternoon learning to drive.

They always went to the farm and picked their own apples, corn and vegetables, having fabulous picnics when Eliza was alive. Grandmother was a wonderful cook, unlike Aunt Clara. A favorite of Mom's was Chicken Fricassee, served on a huge platter, family style.

Mom always waited for Uncle George to come home for work at the corner, three houses down, since she was five. They were poor and didn't have that much and Mom remembered Christmas's without many presents, but with joy and happiness. Christmas Eve was the most special, with Uncle George and her taking a long walk into the woods, finding just the right tree, cutting it down and lugging it home. What fun could there be in buying a tree, she thought then, and she always chastised us about a tree obtained any

other way. Decorating the tree was a traditional event, with the ornaments and garnishments, but mostly the small, clip on candles placed in delicate, thoughtful locations. After the tree was decorated, Uncle George would meticulously roll up news paper very thin and light these candles one by one, slowly, until they were all lit, while Mom and others watched breathlessly. Then all would gaze at the tree in amazement for an hour, as Grandmother said a thoughtful prayer, and then Mom was allowed to blow them out under the close supervision of the adults.

Uncle George was a caring but stern man. A couple of times when Nana was a rebellious young girl, he didn't speak to her for months at a time when she wasn't honest with him. One time when Mom was about ten, she walked to Church on the direct route on a street where she was forbidden to walk, since it was considered to be a bad neighborhood. She was supposed to always go a certain way, the long way around this street. She didn't and he questioned her, already knowing the truth from a friend that saw her go another way, and she lied to him. He didn't speak to her for nine torturous months after that.

For many years when she was younger, Uncle George would take her down to the train station to see the circus and the animals arrive, as well as everything getting unloaded. It was like a free show of a different type. She loved the circus, everything about it, from the elephants to the acts of the "freak show." Leona was always beyond presumptuous and she fit in fine in the circus, chatting with who ever and not nervous in doing so. When Mom was 14, she ran away from home to join the Ringling Brothers Circus, which came to Stamford every summer. The fat lady took her in, a woman so large she could hardly get out of her custom made chair. She ate with all the performers over a couple days and mingled, until the fat lady convinced her to go home and she did to a worried Uncle George and Aunt Clara.

Uncle George could be peculiar at times, like not speaking to Mom for periods of times. This occurred again after the circus excursion and that continued when Mom grew up. He spent so much time and gave her so much love as a child, but her teenage years, years without his mother, Mom's beloved Grandmother, were strained at times. He never ever touched her physically, but the times he shut her out of his life, as much as she cared for him, were very painful for Mom.

When I was very small and Uncle George was up in years, he stayed with us one summer, and helped Mom in the garden. There was a huge rock that needed to be removed and he was determined to move it for her. He drove to the New York Library and researched leverage and wrote down drawings. Using crowbars over a period of weeks, this 138 pound man moved that huge rock across the yard and into the woods. He was stubborn and determined; qualities Mom and likely me, inherited to some degree.

Uncle George was diagnosed with stomach cancer when I was about five and soon moved in with us in our home in Chester and later when we moved to Mendham. He continued to lose weight despite the care and nourishment Mom and my Father provided. My father had his issues, but when people were ill, family and friends in particular, like

when he spent weeks nursing Uncle Don back to health and with Uncle George, he was kind, sensitive and very caring. These times brought out the best in him.

Many of my earliest memories are with Uncle George when he lived with us, his great attitude and positive nature as we read together, watched Mickey Mouse and his beloved Dodger games. One day I don't remember, but Mom does vividly, he told her, "I will only get worse and I will never leave this bed here in my room. I want to see Timmy today, but I will never see him again." She led me to his room when I was about six years old, just the two of us, and he told me what must have been compassionate and caring words. I left that room, with neither of us sharing our private conversation with Mom, and indeed never saw him again. Eventually, Mom had no choice but to put him in a Nursing Home, harboring guilt in doing so that resulted in her never admitting that she did until several years ago in a shroud of tears as she told me. When he passed, this slight man was half his normal weight.

From the beginning of elementary school, Mom was friends with Annie Cohen, the daughter of Russian immigrants. Annie's father was a tailor, struggling to make ends meet when she first visited their family as a child. They lived and worked in one long room, a railroad flat as they called it. Boxes that had contained materials for drapes and such served as tables and seats. By High School, her hard working father had opened the largest upholstery store in the area and they bought a fine home, where Mom also visited frequently. Annie eventually went on to a fine academic career and became the principal of Stamford High School, where Mom and she graduated. Mom kept in touch with her for decades and attended her funeral over twenty years ago.

As a child, Mom's brother Harold and her sister Eleanor lived with her father, and she only visited a few times. Her brother was six years her senior and her sister three years older than Mom. They lived in a modest home in Old Greenwich, which included her stepmother Nelly, the former Nelly Gurley. When Mom was 13, she visited them during a snowy Christmas. Many years earlier, her father had promised to give young Leona her mother's engagement ring, but she had never received it. When opening presents on Christmas, her father said to her stepmother, "Nelly, I have something special for you." To Mom's shock, it was her mother's ring. She got up from the table, dumping all the food on the floor, as she burst outside into the cold, hysterical and crying. She was found in a snow bank sometime later and became sick as a result. Their relationship only got worse from there.

When I was three, Mom drove us in her Impala convertible to Florida for an extended vacation. This was the vacation Mom caught that large shark she showed me in pictures from a fishing expedition. On a night my brother's wife Carol and their (then) two kids visited, Mom went to visit her father and her stepmother Nelly for lunch. After lunch, she asked, "Do you know why I am here? Do you know how old I am now? I have waited a long time, and I want my ring!" Her father reluctantly agreed, but then advised it was in a safety deposit box. He agreed to get it the next morning and bring it to her. The next morning Nelly called, and advised he was sick that day. He then became ill during the three weeks she was on vacation and died before she returned home. Nelly promised her

the ring, but not long after her father died she passed away and left everything to her brother, whom Mom had always disliked. Within no time, he sold everything, including the ring. Mom said she wrote a story some years later that got published in Readers Digest called "The Ring."

When Mom was thirteen going on fourteen, for a few weeks during summer break from school she lived with her father. One day they argued and he locked her in an upstairs bedroom and left for the day. The Andersons lived across the street. Mom became friendly with the family from prior visits and more so from time spent in school with the Anderson girls, Ruth, Alva, Grace and Gloria. Mr. Anderson, a senior manager at Conte Nast Press, had always treated Mom like a daughter. After being in the room for most of the day without the benefit of a bathroom, she peed out the window, leaving a streak down the siding. After much of the day, Mom started waving a white flag of sorts made from a sheet. Mr. Anderson saw her and got a ladder and rescued her, then called the police who were waiting for her father when he got home. Nothing came of it, except more hard feelings. Visits with her father ended then and that was fine with Mom. When Mom became old enough to drive a couple years later, the first place she went was to see if that steak was still there on the siding. Sure enough it was still there and a strange sort of pride welled within her.

The Andersons became Mom's closest friends. She stayed over at their home regularly, and Mr. Anderson would bring an extra bed into one of the bedrooms shared by two of the sisters, and they would put all three beds in a row, and giggle and tell stories all night long. There was a large bathroom close by and the girls used all kinds of makeup, layering on "Clay Pots," a facial that hardened. They enjoyed spending time near the mirrors, making someone laugh until the facial wrinkled and cracked until they looked ridiculous or ten years older, or whatever giggling teenagers could imagine.

Grace Anderson, who was several years younger than Mom, became mentally ill when Mom was in her early twenties and then living in New York. She was put in an institution and worsened to the point where she didn't recognize her family. Somehow, she knew Mom and they could communicate well and Mom visited often. Within a couple years, she recovered completely, married and raised two wonderful children.

When Mom was 14 she visited the old homestead, which is now a historical landmark, and was in the process of being remodeled at that time. She found an old special doll, cleaned it up and kept it for several years. When Gloria Anderson had her fourteenth birthday, Mom, then 18, drove to their house and wanted to give Gloria this special doll, but no one was home. She left the doll in an old box on the steps, but someone came home and mistook the box for garbage and threw it out. Mom cried for days over this lost treasure.

When Alva was 36, she died from trichinosis poisoning from eating undercooked pork, and as a result I always ate over cooked pork when Mom cooked, the one thing she never cooked well except literally. Mom kept in touch with the Andersons throughout her life and she out lived them all, giving her many melancholy moments in recollection.

It was Grandmother Eliza's sister Clara that completed the family tree, which was eventually finished in the late thirties. She was a missionary in China for many years, and in her golden years returned to Connecticut. Research was difficult, time consuming and costly in those days, so Great Uncle George financed the expenses. The family referred to Great Uncle George as the grand old Army man. This family tree traces Scofields and Hulls from that 1636 land grant from the King of England for what was then all of Stamford to 1939.

Great Uncle George was very wealthy, a millionaire even then and a former general in the Spanish American War. He was quite up in years, always dressed in a suit with a long white beard. On Sundays, Mom and Aunt Clara would take the long eight mile round trip walk to his large home. Aunt Clara envisioned getting his inheritance, so she had a purpose in her visits. He was wise to her and spent the visits with his back to her, usually only responding to her with a "Yep" or "Nope." When he died, Mom was about sixteen, Aunt Clara, as well as most of relatives, got nothing. Mom's brother Harold got the house, and he sold most everything, or burned things like valuable first edition books, not aware of the value.

He left Mom a sizable amount of money, but only a small fraction of his wealth, which mostly went to charity. Aunt Clara took much of this money from Mom and hid it in the back of the icebox one winter when the icebox wasn't nearly as full. Mom found it, and "stole" back her inheritance. She used it for several adventures the summer she was 16, traveling to Europe, Canada and to Niagara Falls. She went to Hamburg, Germany to visit where her mother was born and visited London, not seeing many of the traditional tourist sites, but spending much time on the hard side of London, in the salt of earth Cockney pubs. She returned from Europe with fifty cents in her pocket and had to borrow some money from a stranger just to get a cab ride home. When she got home, it was another cold shoulder from Uncle George, who didn't speak to her for many months thereafter.

She took a shopping trip to Manhattan before her European trip. As soon as she arrived in the big city, she hailed a cab driver to take her to get a fancy permanent to get those much desired curls. Being naïve, he took her to Brooklyn and then later she returned to Manhattan and did some shopping. Later that night, she got a room at the Greystone Hotel. In the middle of the night she got very sick and a couple down the hall helped her to her room as she struggled down the hall, taking her temperature, which was quite high. First, they took her to her room and told her that wrapping dirty socks around her throat would be good for her. When that somehow didn't work, they asked this out of place young girl where she was from, then got her a taxi, and went with her all the way home to Stamford, even refusing to be paid for the cab.

Mom graduated High School two years early, at sixteen, since they allowed you to skip classes much more often back then. She worked for a bit after her trips, and then six months later, just before her seventeenth birthday, Mom moved to Manhattan, living for the first few months with her sister, Eleanor, a successful model. Eleanor was more



beautiful than Mom accordingly to Mom, with auburn hair and a regal air about her, yet it was clear to others that they were sisters. She had never spent much time with her growing up and they had a ball together during that time. Eleanor got Mom work modeling, mostly elegant lounging pajamas; the kind that you wear out accordingly to Mom, with heels even. She recalls an Armenian man who was a cutter, a man that spoke no English, but would make lounging pajama that fit just right. Just by looking at you, he would make a pattern and perfect fit without the benefit of measuring.

One time when living with Eleanor, during a day off Mom had an idea that they should go for a ride. It was a warm, sunny day, and the subway didn't seem appropriate, so she told Eleanor to get dressed fancy, and the two of them went down to the Dusenbergs dealer, a touring car of great distinction. They targeted a good looking salesman, flirted a bit, and left for a test drive....to Stanford! They stopped for dinner there and returned many hours later. Mom dated the salesman once thereafter, but nothing at all serious. After all, she was just seventeen.

Mom used to eat at Childs Restaurant frequently, only a few blocks from Eleanor's apartment near Carnegie Hall. One evening there a couple of older women invited her to their table, became very friendly and they eventually exchanged phone numbers. When she returned to the apartment, Eleanor and her then boyfriend Ted inquired about this couple and called them, discovering they were a gay couple. This was new for Mom and she never had a clue what gay was accordingly to Mom, despite so many gay friends in years to follow. Since Mom was 17 and still a minor, they reported the couple to police. Mom liked Ted more than Bill Black, who Eleanor eventually married, as he protected her. Soon after this overblown incident Mom moved back to Connecticut

Not much thereafter, Eleanor entered Mom into a Miss Connecticut contest, to be held outside of Hartford. Through her modeling contacts, Eleanor got Mom beautiful clothes, high elegant spiked heels and jewelry. Mom won the contest and the prizes that went with it and her ego was further enhanced, some would say deservedly so.

Mom's brother Harold also worked for Conte Nast Press in Stanford and was a senior editor. He was a very handsome man, very much loved and respected by Mom. He had three children, Penrod, Peter, and Audrey. He had lost Peter in a horrific explosion of a furnace near his son's apartment in the city. Harold had a very bad run of luck physically after that. He had a tooth pulled when he was in his late 40's and developed an infection, and slowly and painfully lost all his teeth and his lower jaw bone over a two year timeframe. The pain and the deformity made him mentally distraught and imbalanced, requiring psychiatric care as well. Mom visited him a couple times then and he didn't even know who she was. His case was publicized in a medical journal, resulting in a doctor and plastic surgeon getting together and completing many painful surgeries over a five year period. Using photographs, they rebuilt his face until he became the good looking man Mom remembered. Ironically and tragically, a month after the last surgery, he died of a heart attack.

Sister Eleanor and Bill Black married and had two children, Billy Black, whom Mom adored and a daughter that she did not care for. She disliked the daughter so much that she can't recall her name and can't define why. She only recalled that she moved to Massachusetts and got married. Bill Black Sr. was a politician and was the tax collector of one of New Jersey's largest cities, which meant you had to live there at that time, something that didn't thrill Eleanor initially. Billy Black Jr. was the pride of the family, and was a senior at the College at St. Peters when he decided he wanted to join the Army, before deciding on his career path in life. He enlisted and left for training camp on a flight from the New York area heading south. The plane had mechanical problems and crashed with no survivors. The family was shattered and Eleanor never recovered. When I was four, Eleanor was diagnosed with stomach cancer, as was Uncle George soon thereafter. Mom drove to Jersey City three to four times a week the last couple months of her life to visit her at the hospital before she died. Eleanor's husband Bill lived an aimless life thereafter.

### **Mom, the Young Adult**

When Mom was eighteen, after she returned to Stamford, she met James Woodhouse. They were dating but nothing serious, and Mom never thought of him as the love of her life. One night, James had a party at his family home with many friends and likely some bootleg liquor too. His parents had gone to New York to see a show. His Cockney father and his Mom returned home to a party that they were not aware of, his father quite drunk. An argument ensued and his father blurted out, "You were never my son, only a bastard." He was devastated and distraught, and Mom and James quickly left the house. Over a period of hours, calming him, consoling him, reassuring him, they became lovers, and he asked her to marry him. Feeling sorry and to a degree trapped in his grief, she agreed.

Over the next couple of years, they had two sons, James Jr. and Ron. They lived in a cottage provide by his father, a successful contractor, and at times in the same house with Mom's in-laws. Mom described her father-in-law as crude and mean, and her mother-in-law as doting on her son and on the grandchildren, particularly Jimmie, the first born. She mentioned a couple of times that her mother in law tried to kill her, once putting wire on the stairs for her to trip, and that she endured stays at a nut house a few times. After much prodding, she described an unbearable life while trying to be a good mother to two boys in this environment.

After ongoing verbal and physical abuses from her husband, she decided she should leave, but she faced a terrible dilemma. She had threatened to leave before, and she had been threatened back that she would never be allowed to keep the children. She believed these threats and with good reason, as they were wealthy and she was not and this was a world before rights protecting Moms and children like today. Therefore, she was not in a great position to fight them, let alone they were mean spirited and abusive. What possible solution could there be? Realizing that they doted and cared for Jimmie more, she made the most difficult choice, one that would haunt her for her entire life. In the middle of night, staying in the main home, she packed up her clothes, Ronnie's clothes and some of his playthings and left, never to return. Sometimes there are no right answers in life, just

heart wrenching choices. She moved back with Uncle George and Aunt Clara and they became the primary influence in Ron's upbringing, something he shared with me not that long ago.

The two brothers had little contact thereafter and Ron has no memories of time with Jimmie. Mom's described one time she met James or a family member with Jimmie at a park to play with Ronnie when they were small. They weren't ever told they were brothers, never knew and played joyously together. As an adult, there was virtually no contact between Ron and his full brother, and that was the case for mom. She did mention one time when he was in his early to mid twenties that she got together with Jimmie with Tom and shared dinner with Jimmie's first wife or fiancée. They ever saw each other after that, and the last time someone heard he had moved from Connecticut to California with Sam, soon thereafter to be his second wife.

In 1997, Ron and Maggie came for their last visit to the East Coast before Ron's visit when she was terminal and we spoke a little about Jimmie. On a lark, I asked a friend and co-worker the day after Ron left, whose hobby was genealogy, what where the best sites to search for someone. He gave me three sites and on the first site, Switchboard.com, I found three matches for a not too common name. That night, I called the first name of the three in southern California and just like that, I was speaking to my brother's fourth wife and widow. I did not speak to my brother, as he had died only months earlier from lung cancer. Ron visited his widow and proudly wears his brother's watch today. I told Mom after his discovery and she was more upset than anything, dredging up difficult memories for her and the severe guilt in that hard choice she had made. After she settled down and many tears, she finally told me about her life with Ron's father and the circumstances surrounding her raising Ron, albeit with much help, and her ex-husband raising Jimmie. All I ever knew before was that, "They agreed to each raise one son."

Mom returned to NYC at the age of 22 after her split with her first husband James and she began modeling again, spending most time modeling furs, some for the Flemington Fur Factory. After a few years, modeling jobs lessened and she worked at Macy's, the world's largest department store, in sales. Macys was always "at war" with Gimbals, and after a year or so, she left Macys for a better job at their leading competitor. She became a "Competitive Shopper," responsible for visiting, in effect spying, and assessing Macy's sales and those of others, so Gimbals could market the same products with an advertising and pricing edge. During this time, Mom put herself through Trap Hagen Art School to learn interior design, taking classes that lead to her teaching painting later on in life.

Mom frequented a club owned by Babe Ruth, the legendary baseball star. During one visit there, the Babe himself introduced her to Dan Topping Jr., the son of the Yankees owner. She spent many days thereafter at the ballpark, in the owner's suite with Mr. Topping, who took a liking to her to say the least. She didn't feel anything romantically, so they just remained friends.

One day, Mom was in Grand Central Station in between trains and getting some things at Leggets Drug Store. She saw a white mouse scurry by and yelled at the top of her lungs.

It turned out to be a mechanical mouse belonging to a very handsome man named Jack Clarity, who had set it down just to get Mom's attention. It worked and they dated for a couple months, Jack taking Mom to the theater and to the best restaurants in town. He was gorgeous in every way and Mom wanted him to be romantic, but he never even kissed her. She was so disappointed and confronted him only to be further dismayed when he told her, "I love you like a sister." They remained friends for sometime, but she always thought that he must be gay.

Around 1940, Mom met Harry Martin, Hank as they called him. He was 6'5" with blond hair, blue eyes, and was truly a gorgeous man. He was kind, happy, very much fun and a real jokester who told only clean jokes but so many and was the life of any party. She never laughed so much as when she was with him. He fell madly in love with Mom and she had feelings of love for him. She was never sure if she was in love with him, or that she just cared for him and had so much fun together, but there wasn't a reason not to be together. Within a year, they got engaged, and soon thereafter, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Hank was quick to enlist and as a pilot of small planes, he was quickly assigned to a carrier and shipped out to the Pacific. It is believed that the Japanese sank the carrier after kamikaze crashes and many potential survivors were swept into the unforgiving sea. This was a horrific event, one that wouldn't be good for public absorption, and hence, Mom, never knew the details of Hank's death. She also never got a letter, as they had never arrived at port, at least in Mom's belief.

During the war and for some time after the war, Mom worked at Inter Chemical Company in the Empire State Building as the assistant for the Vice President, Mr. Chauncy. She and Mr. Chauncy, a small older man, had a father/daughter type of relationship and he said to her regularly, "If you were my daughter, I'd be so proud." She usually responded, "I wish you were my father," and they would talk of her being adopted. This went on for years and Mom and Dad later had discussions that maybe Mom would be an "adopted daughter" in his will, but that never came to pass.

The fire drills during the war in the Empire State building weren't very fun, but necessary during the high alert status during the war, what with all those flights of stairs. Before the war, Mom recalls members of the Nazi party holding demonstrations regularly in the city and being in the building, even in the elevator, many times crowding her in the very silent long ride up or down.

She enjoyed her work at Inter Chemical and some of the benefits, like a long 90 minute lunch break. She frequently went shopping and visited Central Park by the lake there. One day during her visit, she sat next to a woman dressed in a trench coat despite the warm weather, with a large hat and sun glasses covering part of a beautiful face. They exchanged pleasantries and Mom quickly realized from the distinctive accent that she was speaking with the famed actress and recluse, Greta Garbo. Ms. Garbo had an apartment very close to Central Park then. Mom didn't let on that she knew who she was, and they continued to chat. Mom returned to that bench many times over the next year, and they chatted regularly, about the weather, fashion, events of the day, the war, but

Mom never let on she knew who she was, protecting her privacy in a very unique and precious way.

She made many dear friends during her time in Manhattan, such as Donna Sword. Mom still kept in touch with Ms. Sword's daughter, a never married airline pilot, living in Wisconsin for over twenty years. Another friend lived on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue by the 40's when Mom was in the city and she taught Mom some of her upper crust habits at the time, dressing fine, and helped Mom shop for her first mink stole. She later moved to Mountainside, New Jersey, and raised several children. As a boy, I remember this regal woman visiting us in Mendham and buying tadpoles from me. Mom still heard from her from her Florida Assisted Living Facility before she passed, although the letters were sloppy and disjointed the last couple years, with clear signs of dementia, something Mom bemoaned to me about on a regular basis.

Not too long after Hank died in the War, Mom met Bill Keegan. Bill was a father figure to Mom, the father she never had. He was at about twenty years her senior, a World War I veteran, with an iron plate in his head from a mine field explosion. He was handsome, 6'4" and successful. Mom recalls that he was head of telephone and telegraph for the NYC fire Department, although Ron recalls he worked for Con Edison, the power company. They married and lived in Jackson Heights in a large apartment and fine building. He spoiled Mom, allowing her to decorate the apartment from scratch, all custom made furniture, the finest stereo and albums galore. Ron came to live with them when he was in was 11 or 12. Mom was the decorator for many of Bill's friends, acquaintances and neighbors, showcasing the apartment she designed for them and later a large home they shared. Mom went to many NYC fires during this time, as Bill was close with Mayor LaGuardia, the popular mayor then. The Mayor also liked to attend these fires and Mom spent many a night in his limo watching a blaze, chatting and laughing with this diminutive man with a huge personality.

With the exception of Bill's heavy drinking and his jealous behavior, things were fine. She strongly maintains she never cheated on him, but she has always has been friendly, even a flirt by most people's definition, and he was insanely jealous. Ron used to play baseball regularly at a park by their home, and Bill would come down there and make a scene when Mom was just chatting with someone. She eventually had enough and left him one day, taking nothing more than clothes and moving back in with Uncle George and Aunt Clara with Ron. A couple weeks later, Bill came to Stamford and Uncle George answered the door, as Mom wouldn't answer. He pleaded with Uncle George, "Send her back." Mom, from the living room and out of sight, responded, "Go to hell!" and that was the absolute end of it.

My brother Ron was named after Ronald Coleman, the actor who played in the original Christmas Carol. Me, I was named after Tiny Tim from this classic tale...not the curly long haired that got married on the Carson show. Mom sat behind Mr. Coleman at a theater once and somehow resisted approaching him, since she always had a crush on him. Many years after Ron was born and named for him, Mom heard that Mr. Coleman had bought a residence in Greenwich, near Stamford. Her girlfriend, knowing she had

this crush, found the address and encouraged Mom to visit his house with her, although it was likely Mom needed very little encouragement. The butler answered, and Mom said, "I am here to meet Mr. Coleman." "Who are you" he exclaimed. Mom, in her cocky way said, "I am Lee Hull Scofield, that's who!" She liked using her grandmother's name too, particularly when in Connecticut, as if people would associate her with the distant relative, Admiral Hull, the commander of the U.S Constitution during our country's first naval victory. Mr. Coleman came to the door and Mom's infatuation instantly faded as she looked down on this man of short stature, compounded by her heels and height of 5' 9 1/2". She later found out he wore lifts in his shoes and stood on platforms in his movies, and it was on to other infatuations.

Ron lived most of life growing up with Uncle George and Aunt Clara, as Mom did had. She worked in NYC and stayed there mostly, returning to Connecticut on weekends, but not every weekend, and not that often during the week. During Ron's formative years, he clearly spent more time with Uncle George and Aunt Clara than Mom and that surely had a lasting effect, with many positives from Uncle George that established who Mom became, as well as he, and more fond memories of Aunt Clara than Mom as well.

Mom had a cottage in Saugerties, New York, or possibly West Saugerties, as Ron recalls, that she bought in the early 40's, with some money she saved from modeling and money Bill Keegan gave her. Ron was about 9 or 10 when she bought this cottage, as she calls it, although a picture Ron forwarded clearly shows a large two story dwelling, albeit a summer home. She had spent many vacations and weekends in this still very lovely area, mostly at a resort, enjoying the sun, great food and interesting people. One such person was the Hungarian lady that shared Queen Sophia's recipe for goulash, always a secret that she swore she would take to the grave and did just that. One summer night she went for a walk when staying at the resort, and approached this mailbox in the shape of the cottage and then saw the cottage. She immediately had a sense of destiny about this place that she was meant to be there. She walked up to the door and knocked and said to Mary Smith, who lived there alone, "I want to buy your home, and everything in it that you would sell too." By happenstance, the elder Ms. Smith was ill and was planning to sell her summer home and live in her Bronx apartment, so she quickly sold the house to Mom, fully furnished and decorated and died only a few months later.

The cottage had two outhouses, one homey with feminine touches and one wallpapered with off color jokes and such from Esquire magazine. For water, there was a well out back that you had to pump many times, standing on a clay platform to get your water into the bucket for whatever use. The pot belly stove was the only source of heat and was used for cooking too. Uncle George spent much time with her at the cottage and loved it there. They cultivated a vegetable and flower garden together with help from neighbors from Russia who spoke little English.

Cigarettes were hard to come by during the war and Mom smoked a couple packs a day, so when she ran out, the withdrawal was very strong. One evening in Saugerties, she drove to the general store in town and sure enough, there were four packs on the shelf. She figured she would have to buy a bunch of groceries to get those packs too, and

gathered lots of things, things she didn't even need really. The lady at the store refused to sell them to her, saving them for her regular customers, so Mom bought some rolling papers and a can of tobacco. Uncle George rolled his own cigarettes for as long as Mom could remember and he did it seamlessly, with one hand. Mom was no Uncle George when it came to tobacco, but repeatedly tried only to have them unravel or never light. Finally, frustrated to no end, she got into the car and headed to Connecticut to get her fix.

Mom tells of an unexpected visit to Saugerties by a young man she was dating a bit, a man named Warren Beatty like the actor. He wasn't nearly as good looking as the actor, and was maybe 24 when Mom was 32 or so. He was from a wealthy Stamford family. He cared for her a lot, but she only liked him a little and there was no chemistry and even described an "ooky" feeling with him at times. Uncle George was staying with her when he visited and she had just finished making a big pot of goulash, so of course, she invited Warren for dinner. After serving the meal, Uncle George startled and upset Mom by saying, "You gave more to him than me!" Mom replied, "What a dreadful thing to say in front of company. I wasn't brought up that way." He immediately went upstairs and didn't speak to her for a couple days thereafter. She sold the cottage with these many memories a few years before I was born.

### **Mom...with my Father**

She met my father in early 1949, just after turning 35, when he was 27, soon turning 28. She was still working at the Empire State building and he did then as well, at Hoffman and Heath. She was in the reception area of her company at the time and one day he came in to ask a question, or maybe he just knew of this beautiful receptionist and never admitted it. She looked up from her desk, and there he was and she fell in love immediately. He left and she immediately turned to a friend and co-worker and said, "The man that I love just left." Within an hour, a long, exquisite red rose and a card arrived for her, with the handwritten note, "You rose to the occasion, thus do I."

It turned out they had been on the same commuter train for years, with Mom stopping at Stamford and my Father going on to Bridgeport. He didn't smoke then and she did so they were in different railroad cars and hadn't met. They quickly evolved into a passionate relationship, with Mom continuing to Bridgeport often thereafter, where she met his best friend and roommate, Uncle Don. In good weather, they used to kiss and neck most of the way, sitting on the steps on the rear car.

Mom was over seven years older than my father, and for years after they met Mom's birthdays went backward so that my father could catch up. They were a glamorous couple, as the many pictures at swank, well known clubs and restaurants attests. Mom always had the latest hairdos and they always dressed impeccably. They loved to dance and frequently danced at the Astor Hotel or the "Top of the Roof," winning a waltz competition at the Astor once. They enjoyed weekends dancing in many of the hotel lounges at the Jersey Shore, particularly Spring Lake. They saw the finest singers of the day including many evenings spent with Ella Fitzgerald or their personal favorite Mabel Mercer (see My Father and Mabel Mercer). Mom had seen Sinatra many times years

earlier, before he had his flapping ears pinned, as she used to say. Nat King Cole played with a big band then and he hadn't hit it big yet when Mom and Dad saw him various times, dancing the night away to those smooth velvety tunes.

Mom's company manufactured inks, including printing ink for currency. This is how she met Duncan McCleron, an Australian who was contracted by his government. He was handsome and a real partier. He and Mom, with my father, spent much time together. Duncan was a heavy drinker, so many times Mom and Dad questioned how they ever made it home. Duncan provided Mom a source of much jealousy with my father, but their friendship remained for some time.

After Mom met my father, they shared an apartment on West 115<sup>th</sup> Street, between Broadway and Riverside Drive. My brother Ron was about 14 then, and he visited them in NYC too, here and there, one time getting beat up pretty badly near the park on the way to see them. He lived with them for awhile in Manhattan, working at a local dry cleaner. When Ron was fifteen, Mom and Dad moved to Fayson Lakes in Jersey and he moved in with them. By all accounts, he and my father got along well and Mom had an album with many happy pictures of the two of them. There were rare exceptions, and Ron only recalls one incident that would qualify as a bad memory, when my father held him down so Mom could punish him for something.

Mom met Uncle Jack commuting to Manhattan from Fayson Lakes long before I was born. That led to a great friendship with Uncle Jack and Aunt Helen, who baby sat for me frequently. We moved, and they moved to Atlantic Highlands, then Cape Cod, but visits to their house were always very special for me. We enjoyed wonderful visits with Aunt Pauline and Uncle Don throughout my childhood, both relaxing and fun. The laughter from downstairs while I tried to fall asleep still resonates. (See Aunts and Uncles)

My Mom has spoken often of the Log Cabin, her antique shop in Fayson Lakes, which she opened in early 1953. The shop had a large fireplace and was full of items Mom and Dad obtained from auctions and garage sales. That was a great time for them, when they were so in love, a love my Mom never let go of in spite of a divorce some 34 years ago from the date I write this piece. She recalled many items she found on those expeditions with my father. She told of unloading her car trunk with collectables and having the trunk fall on the bridge of her nose, and the resulting blood everywhere. She recalls a friend and my father getting ice at a neighbors and then to the hospital. She always pointed to the scar although it was barely visible, and the paint left on her nose from that hood as a reminder of the antique shop, paint I could never see but had to acknowledge just to get to the next story.

Mostly, Mom reminded me through the years of the shop closing due to her pregnancy with me. She never had regrets, with Lee Bradley's to follow and more so because of her love for me. In the past, she had always referred to me as her "little antique shop."

Mom and Dad continued to spend much time entertaining, traveling and dancing when I was small, after we moved to Chester from Fayson Lakes when I was about eighteen



months old. The neighbors, Bob and May Call were kind and friendly and Mom took me to their house often, where I would bounce on Uncle Bob's knee, as I was told to call him.

They vacationed often and mostly without me as an infant or small boy, usually leaving me with close friends, like Mom's very close friend, Frances Drew. When I was three, I spent three weeks with Mrs. Drew when Mom took their second Jamaican vacation. Mom and Dad stayed at a swanky place and they went out dancing, but Mom was not feeling her best, since she forgot to pack her precious mink stole. She called Ms. Drew and had it shipped to Jamaica. It arrived all wrinkled in a crumpled up box. Mom and Dad had a rented convertible and knew their way around, so they went for a drive, and figured that she could hold it up high in the wind as my father drove fast, to get the wrinkles out. They did this as they drove down a stretch of road know as the "Fern Forrest," where ferns covered the road above the cars and the thick underbrush lurked behind the edge of the road. Of course, it blew away and into the darkness of the overgrown plants. They looked, looked again and finally went back into town and brought back the police with searchlights until it was found. When I was about 14, shortly before my father left the house for good, she hocked the stole and never got it back to pay a bill or two.

While on this Jamaican vacation, they spent their days lounging on the beach. "Coconut Boys" would climb these branchless trees, wrapping their legs around the trunks and shimmying up the tree. They could split a coconut with a well placed chop, but Mom couldn't do it with a hammer or axe. Most were thirteen to eighteen and Mom took a very strong liking to a sixteen year old young man named Charles. Mom worshipped the sun and came back black as she says and took that a step further, attempted to adopt this young man and bring him home as my brother. She paid his way to Texas, but the paperwork was not in order and he was returned home to Jamaica. In Mom's papers after she passed away, I found several long letters from Charles, the brother (at least at home) I never had.

I was spoiled as a small child and Mom was spoiled at the time too. She didn't have to work then as my father had a successful janitorial supply business, with Johnson wax a key product. He had the contract for the Catholic Church, the diocese of Northern New Jersey for some time. In the early 60's he started working as a regional sales manager for Pepsi Cola too, a job he lost in 1963, but for years he had two very good income sources, and Mom had every luxury she could want. She enjoyed shopping at the finest stores and went out a couple times a week to shop while the baby sitter watched me.

I asked Mom about her recollection of Dad bringing Jim Brown, the football player and activist to dinner. I was about four so I do not recall. Jim Brown was the most dominant running back of any era, an eventual actor, known mostly for his role in the Dirty Dozen. Consistent with accounts of my father or Mom when I was young, she recently told me that Dad called during the day, after meeting Jim likely through a Pepsi advertising campaign that day and brought him to the house that night. She recalls having Goulash from the night before, going out to get a pie and rolls. She recalls his discussions with

Dad about a congressman, Washington politics and sports, the latter a topic my father knew very little.

When we were living in Chester and I was three or four, I visited my grandfather and his second wife, Sonja with Mom and Dad at their large Connecticut home a couple of times. The Old Man, as Mom called Tom senior had always been described by her in one word, "Bastard" (See My Father). Sonja was Mom's age, about her tall height for those days, an unusual woman, rather good looking with small delicate hands not befitting of her stature. She was born in Israel of Jewish heritage, married to this cantankerous, but brilliant Irishman, my grandfather. They lived in a fine Fifth Avenue apartment near the park for many years. Mom recalls I was too quiet during those couple of visits, which was enjoyable because of Sonja's hospitality and fine cooking. When the old man died a few years later, Sonja received all of the inheritance, some ten million by Mom's account, and then moved to Florida.

When I was three, Mom was told by a doctor she had colon cancer with an uncertain future. She is not clear and won't detail what she went through at that time, a time when she had this little boy named Timmy to be responsible for. She eventually got a second opinion that reversed the first opinion. I recall this story when I was young, but never an answer as to what happened to the first Doctor, about what repercussions if any for his wrong diagnosis. It was a different time then and painful memories are sometimes locked within, like a padlocked door without a key.

Mom says she hated the new house in Chester, which was my father's idea, where we lived from 1955 through 1960. She loved the log cabin in Fayson Lakes before Chester, but she got what she wanted with the move to Mendham, a wonderful place and property (See Mendham and the Lee Bradley Years). She enjoyed the large property and expanded entertainment opportunities and didn't work for the several years there either.

Mendham is where the marriage of my mother and father began to fail. In Mendham, Mom recalls getting a call from a Miss America, who was on a cross country tour with my father in a Pepsi advertising campaign. This call was not a typical call and Mom had a very precise recollection of the call and being told "I have news for you. I am in love with your husband." Her response in a brief conversation was "Good for you. Good luck!" In telling me this story recently, she said she never spoke of the call when my father returned from this trip. I am not so sure about this, as I somewhat recall an incident of infidelity on my father's part and a related call when I was about eight or so. I recall the yelling and the escapes from the house, the ranch in the rear of the three house property and of my walks into the woods or visits to friends inspired by my parent's interaction over this topic.

Mendham was mostly a happy place and one part of the happiness was the Fresh Air Fund kids that stayed with us for portions of each summer. There were usually two to three kids each summer from poorer, urban families in the City, of various ethnic backgrounds. Jimmie Chong was invited back each summer after his first visit despite a rocky start. We were in the big house then and Mom had just finished wall papering the

guest bedroom before Jimmie arrived, not too much after Uncle George passed away. Jimmie had spent little time out of Chinatown before and never had spaghetti and meatballs until that first night with us. He had three helpings and then settled into bed briefly before getting violently ill and throwing up everywhere. Mom was furious, but never let on to him and the bedroom had to be redecorated again. She took Jimmie with us to visit Aunt Helen and recalls a visit to an old abandoned flour mill, when she crawled across a beam and back to get a large brown bottle she still has. Mom said Aunt Helen nearly fainted with worry and Jimmie was frantic too, but I don't recall and that may be due the fact that nothing Mom would do surprised me.

Jimmie Chong made a trip or two to Manasquan Beach with us and we always spent a couple weeks to a month close to the beach in this resort town. We stayed in a large home converted into a boarding home with maybe 8-9 studio apartments, owned by a Greek family. We became part of the family to the maximum extent possible considering traditional Greek families expect their daughters to be married to a Greek man. This wouldn't have come up except this proud and loving family had three daughters, Magna, the oldest, who mom introduced to cute non-Greek boys, Vasa, and Fifi, the youngest. Fifi was a tomboy and closest to me age. We were real buddies even though she could out play be in whatever sport. Mom would speak of Fifi and me as an eventual couple just to bother her Mom and several fights resulted. Still, we never seemed to wear out our welcome, just eventually stopped going there due to financial reasons just before puberty introduced itself to Tim.

Rarely did my father join us at the shore. We spent our time on the beach during the day, Fifi and I fishing and crabbing late afternoon, and we would bring the catch home for big family style dinners prepared with all the Greek and American dishes. Mom usually went out in the evenings to clubs to hear the shore's best jazz and piano players, like Sammy Pugh. He was a blind piano player in the Ray Charles mold who Mom swears would stop playing when she walked in and say, "Lee's here. This one is for you." Mom swears she never had a clue how he knew she was there, but I suspect it was the Channel no. 5 perfume. She partied with most of the rat pack through Breakfast one night, the oldest woman in the group. She spent many nights at the Bimini Yacht Club, including a night Rita Moreno danced on the bar for a couple hours. She spent much time in other types of clubs, places with great music in black neighborhoods, or colored as always said then, seeing Sammy and others play.

When we moved from Mendham to Long Valley, things changed. My father was devastated after his business failures and after years of supporting Mom, she was the primary bread winner after the rented Antique Shop/Art gallery/Restaurant got off the ground. He floated between bar tending jobs and working in the dairy and eventually got back in sales. She was the foundation for me, even though there were rocky times off and on after the move to Long Valley. She enjoyed those years, her independence and personal success.

The move before my freshman year of high school was to an abandoned old home, half built in the early 1800's and the rest in the late 1800's. It was a wreck, but Mom saw

something in it and she was right. I worked with my father for a year, taking out the old plaster room by room and putting up new sheetrock. Mom helped, constantly cleaning one mess after another, painted, and decorated. The house became a great home, with comfortable living areas, cozy fireplaces, with four upstairs bedrooms and one downstairs bedroom my father used for much of time he lived there. My father and mother separated when I was in my sophomore year after years of battles, and I started working fulltime at the Deli/Convenience Store up the street. Mom had hurt her knee, but was far more wounded by the divorce and the loss of her beloved Tom, a loss that really occurred years earlier. She hadn't noticed, blinded by love as they say. She contributed to the household by renting a couple of bedrooms, room and board, and buying and selling antiques here and there.

### **After Tom**

In 1973, when Mom was 60, the house was sold. She moved above Tim's Deli for about eighteen months, making home made salads everyone loved for the deli. She made new friends, which included her last passionate relationship with a much younger man named Cordy. I moved to shore and got in my first meaningful relationship, then became successful in real estate when I asked her to move to the shore with us. She did but wanted to be independent so started working again at a five and dime store, making so many new and wonderful friends, like the librarian, the son of the owner of the store, the employees, and so many customers that received her extra care.

She later moved to Toms River, and lived with me again in an apartment I built for her, and then another apartment shortly thereafter, where she augmented her social security with work as a nurse's aide. She continued with this work until her early seventies, and she was a caring caretaker. For several years she cared for a lady in her spacious two bedroom home in Lakewood, until the woman was admitted to a nursing home. Mom couldn't stop caring and kept visiting this woman and advocating for her at the nursing home for nearly two years until she passed. This was a great relief for the woman's two siblings. Before their mother passed, when Mom needed to move, knowing their Mom was never to recover, they offered Mom the use their mother's home and they continued to pay the utilities and taxes, only asking Mom to pay what she could afford. After their Mom died, they repaid Mom's kindness and continued to let her rent the home at a third of the market rent and they paid the utilities for nine more years. This again proves what you give, you receive. Again, Mom made new friends, like her dear friend Manny next door, or friends around the corner who helped her get her subsidized apartment, where lived her last eight years.

At 81, although Mom complained vigorously for a year or two, she moved to a seven story building and it was a blessing. As a large building, her network of friends expanded again and her penchant for giving was given many new opportunities. She became the chicken soup lady, the senior that injected youth into others with her childlike energy and attitudes. Her closets, under her bed, every nook and cranny, were all bursting with gifts she couldn't wait to give. She showed and continued to show others what giving was all about, and people responded in kind.

## **Postscript**

She sometimes lived as if she owned the world and everyone around her was just playing in it and there to entertain her. She was fearless and didn't see risks and still felt the same way until the end, as "When God wants me, he'll take me" was a common statement for her entire life. Still, at the same time, she gave of herself, she was open, she didn't hold back with people of all races and walks of life, people of varied so called stature, all who accepted and embraced her.

Mom was sick for awhile and not driving for months when I finished this story about Mom for and about her in early 2003. She had been recently diagnosed with terminal cancer, but said repeatedly said how she was happy and so blessed. She was blessed, but she was also getting back all the love and giving that she gave to others, at the time she needed it most. When you give, you receive, and she had a lifetime of giving.

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