



Miracles of Rehab 2009



A Loving Woman Repaid In Kind

By Ariette Klein

Lily Haim was born on Dec. 9, 1920 to a well-to-do Jewish family in Mansoura, Egypt, the Taninans. She had several siblings, only two of whom survived childhood. Her younger sister Rachel died as a teen-ager. Her older brother, Joseph, lived to his late forties and died in Israel.

Lily's father died when she was three years old. Her mother was 26 at the time, had another three children and no means to support them or her self. The family moved in with Lily's maternal grandfather and grandmother where they lived together with uncles, aunts and cousins, an extended family. Her memories of this time are mostly happy and rich with detail.

Her grandfather died during the Depression, his business went into bankruptcy and the family suffered financial hard times. None the less, the children received a good education in French and some Italian. The family seemed to have been established in the Middle East for many generations and they spoke Arabic. Their fortunes eventually improved.

In July of 1943, Lily married Chalom Haim and they had five children, four girls and a boy. His family came from Turkey where ancestors had settled after the Spanish Inquisition. He and his family (parents and two sisters) spoke Ladino in addition to which he and his sisters spoke French and Arabic. Chalom's career in the cotton business flourished and they lived well, spending all summers at the seashore and sending their children to private French schools.

The Jewish community which had been thriving when Lily and her husband were growing up (the town supported three Synagogues) was seriously shrinking. There was some emigration to Israel after 1948 and as the political climate became more and more hostile in the early fifties, Jewish people and members of the cosmopolitan European community left Egypt or were given notice to depart.

Coming to America

By 1962, Lily and her husband left Egypt with their five children. They were only allowed to take along clothes and personal effects and a small amount of cash (about \$35 per person). They spent several months in transit in Paris, France, until they were able to move to the U.S. as refugees. As soon as they were entitled to, they became U.S. citizens. Lily who had never worked before wanted to work to help her husband. He had found a bookkeeper job for a clothes manufacturer and she became an examiner and seamstress for the same company. They shared the commute.

Unfortunately, Chalom Haim died at 54 of cancer in 1970, just seven years after his arrival in the US. Lily was not yet 50. Her two oldest daughters were married by then. Her son and the two youngest daughters were still living with her. She sold the house that she had bought with her husband, continued working and moved to a rental. The children all got a college education, either with night courses or on scholarship. By 1975, when Lily was 55 years old, all her children were married and she has lived alone ever since. The family is very close with many get-togethers and joint vacations whenever possible.

Lily worked until her employer went out of business due to outsourcing. By then she was 70 years old and had added Spanish to the languages she spoke as many of her colleagues were Cuban. She often joked that management asked her to translate Spanish to English and vice versa. Both languages were new to her.

Lily is an intelligent, generous, strong, resourceful, loving person with a good sense of humor, and interested in all matters. She keeps well informed and active. She is a wonderful cook and baker, a skilled seamstress, very knowledgeable about health, a devoted family member and friend and very much interested in being of service.



May 2005 - Woman of the Year
Jersey City, N.J.

Volunteering Services

When she retired, she volunteered the majority of her time to the Jewish Senior Nursing Home in Jersey City. She continued for 13 years. She even moved to take an apartment in the building adjoining the Nursing Home so she would not have to miss any days due to bad weather. She stayed on after the Home was sold, first to the Franciscan Sisters and then to another organization.

She was a companion to a blind patient who needed company and help in using the phone for fund raising activities. She fed Alzheimer and other difficult patients who required too much time for the available nursing staff to be able to do it. She repaired their clothes when needed and made crochet blankets for all of them and hats for some of them. She was also often asked to accompany patients to medical tests on ambulances and on trips to the mall in their wheel-chairs.

She appreciated the companionship of other volunteers and her efforts were recognized when she was named "Woman of the Year" by Mayor Healy of Jersey City in May of 2005.

Lily dearly loves and takes special pleasure in the company of her grandchildren (She has nine grandchildren and one honorary grandchild). They reciprocate her love and affection in a tender and joyful way. Lily also has four great-grandchildren. She keeps up with "stories" about all they say and do. She is the matriarch of the family and the last survivor of her generation in the family. She considers her family, her fortune, and proudly displays a vast collection of family pictures in her home.

Lily belongs to the Brak Jacob Congregation of Jersey City where she made many friends. She traveled to Israel with them on a trip organized by one of their young Rabbi's years ago. She also belonged to their Sisterhood and attended all meetings, Friday night and Saturday services and of course holidays services.

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