

Mildred Wolochin Wendell was born Jan 1st, 1926 on the lower east side of NY almost 99 years ago - at 31 Pike Street under the Manhattan Bridge. She recently said, "Which is now the fancy neighborhood". She told me that she was the 2nd or 3rd baby born in the hospital that first day of the year.

Her mother, my grandma Sarah was one of 5 children. Sarah came on a ship by herself at age 12 or 13 to meet her father and brother already here. I can't imagine the unpleasant steerage compartment she must have traveled in for weeks. This is probably where my mom got her strong spirit. Actually, when I asked mom about her own secret of longevity she often said it was because she ate dirt as a child. Somehow she liked to grittiness of it in her teeth. There must have been better, cleaner dirt back then.

Her parents met in NY but both came from Berdychiv a city near Kiev in what we used to think was Russia and now know is the Ukraine. Her father opened a little furniture shop in their building on the lower east side. My mom said there wasn't much there - someone would come in and ask for a chair or table and Joe would order it.

Mildred was the youngest of 4 children. Her eldest brother was 18 years older. She always said she thought she was a 'mistake' as her mom was already 40 years old when she was born. When her 18 year old brother came to the hospital at her birth, they thought he was the father. As the baby of the family my mom said she was very happy because everyone was always taking care of her.

When mom was still quite young they moved to the Bronx. It was the depression and they were very poor. Her father next opened a candy store that was not too successful. I think my brother Gary still has the original malted machine from there. Mom said she never felt poor because everyone else was too. The only rich people they saw were in the movies and that was just pure fantasy.

When mom was about 10 years old her father got tuberculosis and for the next 3 years she and her mother traveled 2-3 hours from the Bronx to Staten Island to visit him in a sanitarium . At that time the 'cure' was fresh air. The trips every other weekend (her older siblings visited on alternate weekends) were arduous and dangerous as there were no protective measures taken for visitors. Unfortunately, her father eventually passed away there.

After high school my mom worked for a stove company doing bookkeeping. The company sold new stoves but their big business was picking up old stoves, bringing them to the factory and putting them in a bath of lye to clean them and then delivering them back. Crazy and dangerous but obviously affordable for the clients and profitable for the business.

While working she went to night school at City College which is where she met my Dad. He was the editor of the school paper called the Ticker. There was a dance for the night students and he and his friend thought since they were staying late to put the paper to bed, they would check out the dance. So long story short, that's how I came to stand before you now. They were married for 63 years.

Mildred was a 50's stay at home mom who could have done many things. She read the NYTimes cover to cover everyday and was always hip to the latest things going on. She loved the theater and saw her first play "10 little Indians" in 1944. She told me it took 6 months of saving a nickel a week to get the \$2 it cost to buy a ticket, and a bit more to pay for the subway and sandwich at Chock Full of Nuts.

Then in the '60s, long before the internet, she would write for tickets as soon as any good play or musical opened - always getting perfect center row seats for Saturday night with another couple. And of course they had dinner at one of the great places on restaurant row - a new hot spot at that time in the theater district.

Although I would not say Mom was much of an adventurer, she enjoyed traveling with my Dad and usually another couple. Whether to Japan, Europe and China - soon after Nixon went and it was opened to Westerners in the '70s . They traveled to the Scandinavian countries, Columbia, Greece, Israel and Egypt. My parents were newly minted middle class and they traveled in style. My Dad loved taking movie pictures wherever they went. As a family we celebrated their 60th anniversary on a cruise to Alaska which was a great trip for us all.

I would be lying if I said Mom and I always had a wonderful relationship but since my dad died 12+ years ago and she moved to Manhattan, we became closer. When the pandemic hit, mom was still living part time in Florida. When things eased up a bit in NYC and got worse in Florida, I went down and brought her to NY where she has been living ever since. Mom never liked Florida much and never missed it- it was my dad's thing.

So in these past few years we forged a closer and closer bond of great understanding, love and mutual respect. We got to enjoy the ballet, the theater, museums, Central Park and many dinners out...along with hosting many dinners with friends. We had good times for which I am so grateful.

Mildred was a good woman...kinder, wiser and funnier as the years went on, and always generous. She was very satisfied and grateful for her life and not afraid of death. A friend recently said of mom, "She's a good woman from an admirable generation. They don't make them like that so much anymore."

Lao Tzu said, "Being deeply Loved by someone gives you Strength, While Loving Someone gives you Courage.

It has been a privilege to have spent these recent years with my dear Mother. I will miss her terribly, but our love is forever and she will always be my model for strength and courage to the end.