

## **Eulogy of Rebeca Frankel, given by her son, Dan Frankel**

Our mother Rebeca was born into an incredibly loving family that had overcome great adversity in Eastern Europe after the first World War, my grandparents, our Babe and Zeide, already with three children, my two aunts, Mina + Yetti, and my uncle Tuli, decided to start a new life in a new place.

The preference had been the US or Canada, but the options were limited, visas were hard to get.

So, my grandfather obtained a Peruvian visa and made his way to Lima on his own in order to begin to create a life for his young family.

Once he had settled in and established a schmata business he sent for my Babe and their 3 children.

My mother was the welcome home baby.

Being 6 years younger than her closest sibling, she was doted upon by her sisters and brother while our grandparents worked to create what would be a successful textile business and a life Peru's small but incredibly vibrant Jewish community.

This was the context of the beginning of a remarkable transformation of a relatively sheltered young girl who after finishing high school left this comforting cocoon to come to the U.S. to pursue her passion for theatre and become an actress at the age of 16.

By all accounts she was a budding star at Carnegie Tech in a class that included Barbara Feldon, Frank Gorshen and George Peppard.

But life had other plans for her because she met Bob Frankel.

My sister Janina spoke beautifully about their first encounter and whirlwind courtship.

They became engaged and married within 3 months of their meeting without her Peruvian family ever meeting our dad, Bob.

Soon after their wedding they visited Peru and my father was immediately embraced by everyone.

My father had not only fallen in love with my mother, but he fell in love with her entire family and all things Peruvian.

This would have a profound impact on my and my sister's life.

My father learned to speak Spanish, grew to love Peruvian food and my parents began collecting Peruvian Art and Inca pottery.

I should say that the Spanish my grandparents spoke was a blend of Spanish and Yiddish.

My mother spoke Yiddish as well and some Yiddish would creep into our conversations.

Over the years, my sister and I would take several weeks in during an extended winter break and travel with my parents to Lima where we were adored by our Babe and Zeide and developed wonderful relationships with our aunts and uncle and cousins.

Those extended visits remain among my favorite childhood memories and allowed us to continue those relationships as the Peruvian family dispersed to Miami, Houston, Toronto and Athens.

In the mid-1960s, our parents decided to build a new home in Point Breeze on Reynolds St.

It is impossible to speak about my parents without talking about the house they envisioned and built with their architect and friend Herb Sigel.

The house was embellished with materials that my Zeide obtained and shipped to Pittsburgh -- Carved wood panels, antique Spanish colonial chandeliers and tiles.

They filled the house with paintings, sculptures, antiquities from Latin Americas and beyond.

To my mother this was not just our home but a statement of who she was and what she loved.

Growing up in that home was a multicultural feast of Art, music, language and food.

Glorious Peruvian food, lomo saltado, ceviche, arroz con pollo.

In that home we learned to speak Spanish even to the point that I could roll my Rs.

Our seders, thanksgiving meals, Hanukah celebrations all came with a bit of a Latin twist.

My mother perfected a brisket, an eastern European chicken goulash and potato latkes in accordance with our Babes recipes.

Janina spoke about Rebeca's passion for art and her devotion to being a docent at the Carnegie Museum of Art.

She was so incredibly committed to being the best docent.

Her tours and explanations were mesmerizing and employed all her skills as an actress and her incredible knowledge and research.

When Debbie and I were organizing the Reynolds Street home I found filing cabinets, closets, shopping bags filled with notebooks of page after page of handwritten notes and commentary.

There were news clippings, art magazines all that would fill an entire room floor to ceiling.

The bookshelves had hundreds of art books.

This truly was so much more than an avocation; it was a calling for her.

Rebeca was an incredibly bright person. She loved to finish the New York Times crossword puzzle every day.

As some of you may know beginning with the Monday New York Times and throughout the week, the puzzle's difficulty is enhanced, culminating in the Sunday crossword.

It's impossible, right?!

I can get through Monday and occasionally Tuesday.

My mother, for whom English was a second language, could complete Sundays in minutes.

My father pretended to help.

Rebeca truly loved her new home of Pittsburgh, which she passed on to me.

Much to my consternation, this love of Pittsburgh did not include Pittsburgh sports teams.

Steeler football, Pirate baseball, Penguin hockey were beyond her comprehension and appreciation.

This might have been OK except that I was a fanatic fan.

Especially for the 1960's and 70s Pirates.

I went to dozens of games a year at Forbes Field, many with my good friend Larry Gumberg.

My father had box seats behind the visitors' dugout, which in those days was behind 3rd base.

Larry and I would go early and I would take my scorecard and get autographs -- Sandy Kofax, Leo Durocher, Juan Marichel and others.

I also had an extensive baseball card collection.

As many of you know I went to boarding school and then college.

One year, I came home, and my boxes of baseball cards and memorabilia were gone.

My dear mother had cleaned house.

My collection, which looked like trash to her, was in fact disposed of like trash.

Just one more "understandable" cultural disconnect of my mother from her new surroundings.

Nevertheless, I would often torture her about the fortune she threw away.

All is forgiven Mom!

Rebeca through her unlikely and wonderful life will live on through her grandchildren whom she adored and who gave her so much pleasure over the past 30 years and through these final years.

We will always miss you, love you, and remember you.