



Ben & Lenette

a memoir

By
Benjamin
Schranze

as told to
Vicky Funari
Hilary Brashear
Harlow Figa



This memoir was pro-
duced
as part of the
Pool Stories project.

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Independent Film Project

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Pool Stories is a multi-platform documentary project
about a group of people who find strength, grace, and
community in an aquacize class at a local swimming pool.

FOREWORD: THE POOL MOVIE PROJECT

Several years ago it was noted that many of those engaged in pool exercise classes at the Main Line YMCA in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, had often become involved in assisting fellow participants having difficulties. Vicky Funari, a member of one of these classes and also a filmmaker who teaches at nearby Haverford College, proposed to document the class. She realized that not only was there a social group taking exercise to improve one's health, but some members were also actively encouraging others to participate. She thought a film could illustrate how class members developed lasting friendships while additionally providing comfort to those having physical and other debilitating problems.

At that time, I was thinking about how much this class helped my wife, Lenette Weinrit Schranze, who was suffering from developing stages of Dementia, and how class members were helping her feel an accepted part of the group. Lenette had never learned to swim for fear of deep water, but there she was, exercising in the shallow part of the pool and actually enjoying it.

Recording the class and collecting the members' stories was intended to encourage older women and men to further enrich their lives while satisfying their need for physical maintenance and development, as well as to engage the support of professional agencies and workers who are in the business of making life more rewarding for the disadvantaged and the elderly.

These objectives were in keeping with the tradition of the YMCA. Many people today think of the YMCA as an exercise enterprise, equipped

with machines, basketball courts, swimming pools, and other physical-enhancing equipment. But this is not how it started. In about 1844 the first "Y" was established in London, England, for young men "seeking refuge from hazards of life on the streets." It provided a safe haven and a place to allow for bible study and reflection. This was extended to Boston, in the United States, in 1851. The concept of including exercise apparently began in 1909 in Detroit, Michigan and Newark, New Jersey. The original idea of providing a temporary safe haven was extended to twenty more cities in the U.S. by support from private philanthropic groups. Through the years, the Y has provided



Ben teaches Lenette to swim at the Main Line YMCA, 2012

inexpensive shelter and eating facilities for newly arrived visitors still needing a secure resting place before moving on with their lives. This was eventually extended to women and children. In Lenette's and my experience, the Philadelphia Y had fostered this tradition by allowing the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra to use its facility in Central

Philadelphia as a practice area for the development of young aspiring musicians.

The Pool Movie Project could add to this tradition to aid older women and men and to enrich their lives. To this end, I have been asked to provide biographies of my wife Lenette and myself. I recognize that while some of the material included herein may be considered private family matters, it could persuade others to participate and further the traditions of the Y. My accounts are purposely limited and may not be entirely accurate because of the ravages of time, my ignorance, and other lapses, but I want to at least convey a series of remarkable personal histories about various members of our families as they coped with handicaps and events of their day.

I have been asked about the very first thing I remember, though it is somewhat hazy.

I was lying in a pram, and ladies were looking down at me and talking about how long and pretty my eyelashes were. I think one of them was my Aunt Gertie, one of my father's sisters, who commented that my eyelashes should be on a girl instead. I couldn't have been much more than a year and a half old, maybe two. This left an indelible impression and caused me to resist attempts by Aunt Gertie and her sister Tillie, as well as other lady relatives, to cuddle me or make similar comments. Of course my mother was always an exception to this.

Another early memory is of visiting my mother's cousin Rose, and she had an upright piano. I started to tinker around on it, and my father had an idea that "maybe Benny should learn how to play the piano!" My mother thought that the violin would be more appropriate – after all, Jewish mothers have historically prayed that their sons would take up the violin and play emotionally-charged romantic music for them. I took piano lessons starting in 1940 when I was eleven. Later, my father found a private music teacher for me, named Harry Davis. I kept on taking piano lessons, and it was through music that I met my future wife Lenette. We met at Harry Davis's studio on West 74th Street, the summer after my junior year in college. When I realized that she was going to be the person I would like to marry, it happened in five minutes!

But I'm getting ahead of myself. To tell you the real story of Lenette and me, I must start much further back, with our families in Europe.

OUR SHARED HERITAGE – WHY OUR ANCESTORS MIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES

In order to understand the times involved with our forebears, it must be noted that during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, there was a great upheaval in the social fabric of Eastern Europe, particularly experienced by those of Jewish parentage. This spawned the determination to escape from the everyday fears, religious intolerance, and national conflicts which ultimately culminated in the Great War. Consider the view of our parents and grandparents when they heard about a "wonderful free country" in the far West known as the United States, where it seemed that religion could be practiced without fear, and how the American Revolution and the subsequent War Between the States finally had set all men in America free. Can you imagine in a child's mind how this feeling of freedom could have been augmented by early accounts of America's almost unlimited lands, which were ready to be occupied and developed? America's governing philosophy was thought to be unique in the history of world civilization, and as a part of it one could also be released from the class distinctions common in European and Asian empires. Moreover, legends about the American Cowboy heralded his independent and unfettered life, a life that could also be the lot of an ambitious youngster, eager to escape from poverty and the heavy hand and fears engendered by government control. In fact, my father loved to wear a Stetson hat and cowboy shirt, his way of living the Cowboy legend.

It was not a simple undertaking to collect one's belongings and go to America.

Money, always sparse, was needed to gain ship passage to the U.S. One would sometimes have to bribe guards or be

smuggled across the borders of Russia in order to bypass restrictions which limited the passage and relocation of minority people. This was the environment created by the “Russian Pale” that incorporated regions of present day Poland, Ukraine, and much of the Austrian Empire. Regional travel restrictions did not change much even after the Russian Revolution and the defeat of the Central Powers in 1918.

Moreover, while trying to reach the entry ports of the United States, which for our families involved Ellis Island in New York Harbor, other barriers had to be overcome. During the war years, 1914 to 1918, acceptance into the United States was severely restricted for those trying to come from East European communities. This was the lot of Lenette’s father, Saul Weinrit, and two of his older brothers, Joseph and Frank, who accompanied him. Instead, they were allowed to migrate to South America in 1914. They spent the next five years living and working as barbers in Argentina and Brazil, simply to stay alive. They became proficient in Spanish and Portuguese, as well as knowing Polish, Russian, and German. When the war ended, they applied for and finally were able to gain entrance into the United States.

Medical and physical examinations were performed on all arrivals to ensure that no serious disease would be carried into the country and that the person – man, woman, or child – was physically fit. Failure to conform to protocol health criteria would be cause for deportation back to the country of origin, but simple illnesses, such as fever due to colds or other readily curable ailments, would require only a temporary stay in isolation wards set up for that purpose. It must be noted that there was great concern and fear regarding the potential spread of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1919, that caused the death of millions throughout the world.

Defining an “Acceptable” Immigrant. It was also necessary to have

an established American resident or an American citizen “stand up” or vouch for the arriver and state that he was of good character. This can be related to our modern vetting process, but it did not have the benefit of an elaborate electronic database that can now rapidly define a person’s early and nearly complete adult background. Most often, family members already in America could vouch for the person, or potential employers could indicate that a job was available for him. In New York City, where most of the arrivals from Europe were processed, members of a particular political party, for example Tammany Hall, would vouch for arrivals in order to receive commissions for finding housing and employment for them, as well as ensuring allegiance to the Democratic Party once they became eligible to vote (sounds familiar?). A commitment to serve in one of the American armed services could also lead to entry and even early citizenship. This occurred for my Uncle Nathan Rubin, who volunteered for the U.S. Army in 1917, and for Lenette’s Uncle Max Hoffman, who entered the U.S. Marine Corps early in the 1920s.

LENETTE’S FAMILY

The Matriarch of the Hoffman family was Fanny, Lenette’s grandmother. She was strong-willed and dominated her family, rarely allowing any difference of opinion to last for very long. Her Jewish given name was Eya Fagel, meaning Pretty Bird. Our daughter, Linda Faye, is named after her. Fanny had four children while still in Europe, three girls and one boy: Mary, Edith, Sylvia, and Max, in that order. These are their Americanized given names, used to facilitate acceptance and assimilation into local schools or employment. It is ironic that Fanny did not appear to master the English language – or perhaps she kept this capability to herself. For intimate conversations it was necessary to speak Polish or Russian, but for my part I was able to get along with her in

Yiddish, which is a colloquial form of German. She liked me from the start because she was very fond of Lenette and she realized how much in love I was with her granddaughter.

Fanny was able to convince a federal judge that she was eligible to become a U.S. citizen in the early 1930s. It has been said that the judge was so impressed that he wanted to marry her, but she felt that she “had enough of husbands.” Not much information has been made available to me about Lenette’s maternal grandfather, but he was left in Europe and may have passed on during or just after the Great War.

Mary, Fanny’s oldest child, immigrated by herself to America in 1912 or 1913 and was apparently vouched for by a suitor who wanted to marry her. He eventually did and became her first husband. In turn, Mary was able to pay passage for her sister Edith (Lenette’s mother) who arrived in 1914, just as the war broke out. Later, in the early 1920’s, Mary was also able to arrange for the arrival of her mother Fanny, her sister Sylvia, and her brother Max, using her own money saved by working.

In many respects, Mary was the epitome of an angel on earth. She was kind to each member of her family and even provided understanding and comfort to acquaintances having difficulties. She gave funds when family need arose, and she cared for the family’s children. During the Depression years of the 1930s, Mary acted as a proxy mother to Lenette, since her own parents had to work to support her medical problems. Lenette had been diagnosed as having asthma and required special and expensive schooling.

The tragic aspect of Mary’s life is that she had a child of her own who died as a result of an accidental fire. No one in the family wanted to discuss it, but it may have been a factor in the separation from her first husband as well

as a probable cause of the guilt expressed by Lenette’s mother, who was babysitting the child at the time. Mary did not openly burden anyone with her sorrow, but it was striking that in her later years, even suffering from an acute form of Dementia, she admitted to Lenette and me that she thought about her child every day.

A bright side came to Mary’s life when she decided to improve her pronunciation and writing skills in the English language. In pre-Depression days it was almost considered sinful to have a foreign accent while living in America. I think it was in the mid-1920s that Mary attended language classes conducted by Maurice Marmer, “Uncle Moe”, who had emigrated earlier from England. His class sessions were held at No. 1 Union Square, New York City, in a building that still stands today. She married him and became Mary Marmer, and the family was delighted that Uncle Moe was found to be cheerful, amiable, and one of the funniest story



Aunt Mary, 1960s



Edith, mid 1940s

tellers around. While they did not bear children of their own, Uncle Moe quickly became a proxy father to Lenette while her own was working.

In 1914, before war broke out, Lenette's mother Edith was smuggled across the Russian border into Germany. She obtained passage on one of the last German liners to sail from Hamburg. A young man who was to accompany and protect her did not show up; thus at the age of 13 or 14 she traveled alone to America. When asked if she was afraid of being molested as a young girl, she replied that she had not yet achieved sufficient maturity to interest young men and appeared to be too skinny anyway. She always referred to this episode in her life as a "Great Adventure."

After coming to America, she stayed with Mary and found work as a seamstress in what is now called a "sweatshop." Edith had a great flare for beauty and design and was able to

develop attractive and artistic women's garments. She eventually found a position in Milgram Brothers, a leading clothes designer and manufacturing company. Edith was proud that she once designed and produced a garment for the American actress Lillian Gish, which was worn in one of her films. I have seen her select several yards of cloth of her choosing, grab scissors and thread, lay the cloth on a flat surface, stand back and consider the fabric for a few minutes, and then produce a beautiful woman's dress of the right size for the user, within the next few hours – all this without a pattern or sewing machine. She essentially became the breadwinner for her mother, her sister Sylvia, and her brother Max during the 1920s, and as a result she did not receive a formal education beyond the sixth grade.

Edith had an uncommon talent for art and literature and also appreciated both classic and modern music. She eventually wrote several books of poetry and tried her hand at producing both contemporary and classical-style paint-



Actress Lillian Gish wearing dress like the one made by Edith, could have even been the one!

ings. During the Depression she taught Native American Art which was given in the Museum of Natural History, adjacent to Central Park in New York City. This was sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), part of President Roosevelt's New Deal. Along with a former tribal chieftain named White Cloud, she gave classes in illustrating the design features of Native American art and taught children how to create artifacts and clothing. As a toddler, Lenette attended many of these classes.

I believe that these artistic traits lie in the genes of the family because Lenette, her mother Edith, her aunt Sylvia, and Sylvia's offspring, Dorothy, all exhibit the same characteristic. Sylvia successfully designed women's hats for a renowned milliner and later became a professional dancer in the 1930s. Dorothy produced unique pottery and paintings, and proved to be a master in interior home design, an astounding and beautiful example of which can be seen even today in her own home at the Beaumont Retirement Community in Haverford, Pennsylvania. She also served for years as the art teacher at the Friends School, Haverford, on Buck Lane in Lower Merion, Pennsylvania. Even Lenette's Uncle Max had this trait, but it finally surfaced publicly only after his retirement, when he created paintings, artistic forms of furniture, and many sculptures.

Edith was dedicated to her daughter and earnestly tried to provide encouragement and support for her development in piano performance and music pedagogy. One could say that this was so intense that it appeared that she was trying to live and develop her own life in the arts through Lenette. Of course, when I came along and courted and won Lenette, I was considered as an enemy, particularly since I came from a "rich man's family" and besides, I was stealing Lenette away from her. Her mother didn't realize until later on how my parents and my family also struggled through the Depression.

BEN'S FAMILY

Rebecca, my mother, was born in Kovel, a rail center in the Ukraine, then a province of Russia. Her father was Lev Rabin, whose last name was changed to Rubin when some of his children immigrated to the U.S. Her mother's name was Frieda. Frieda and Levin produced six children: a daughter, Sarah who died as a toddler during a typhoid epidemic in Russia, then Sam, Nathan, my mother Rebecca, Manya, and Sonia. Lev died prior to the start of World War I and Frieda was left to raise the family. (My brother David's middle name is from Lev, as are our first cousins Leonard Rubin and Lawrence Rubin.)



Ben's mother, Rebecca, 1920s



Sonia, Ben's mom, Rebecca, Frieda, and Manya, around WWI

Nathan came to the U.S. first, changed his last name to Rubin, settled in Philadelphia, and became an automatic U.S. citizen by serving in the U.S. Army in WWI. My mother was a nurse's aide in German-occupied Russia during WWI, helping her sisters who were nurses. Because of the medical care her sisters gave to a wounded German aviator, his fellow officers gave the family food to keep them from starving. My mother thought that one of these officers was Manfred von Richthofen, who achieved fame afterwards on the Western front.

Rebecca came to America just after WWI, went to her brother Nathan's family in Philadelphia, but later moved to New York City and lived with her aunt, Tanta Scheindel. "Tanta" is the

Jewish name for "Aunt"; I never learned her first name. Rebecca's other brother Sam, who first served in the Czar's army during WWI, followed them in the 1920s and also moved to New York City. The other sisters did not come, and they and their families perished in Russia during WWII.

My father courted my mother during the 1920s. He told me that Tanta Scheindel ran quite a bootleg operation during Prohibition, manufacturing sacramental wines in her bathtub and peddling it in oil cans to churches in Brooklyn as communal wine. It was said that no one dared to take a bath Saturday night because that's where and when they were "aging" the wine. (If it's true, it's great; if not, it could still be out of one of Damon Runyan's stories.)

On my father's side, the leader of the Schranze clan was my great-grandmother Betty.

Her husband was a prisoner of the French in the Franco-Prussian War, from 1870-1871, and he died while in captivity. She had six children, in the order listed below.

Tillie or "Toby": I knew her as Toby Blumenfeld. The family name is that of her second husband. He was a very kind man and was fond of my father and his family. He was a baker who made ice cream cakes every year for my sister Marilyn, on her birthday.

Mary: She was shot as a spy in her early years in Europe. Family legend indicates that she was also a nihilist. If it were known more completely, her story could make quite an exciting film.

David: Betty's third child, David, was my grandfather, who in turn begot my father, Harry. My grandfather David died in an avalanche during his middle years. My brother David is named after him.

Harry: My father is named after his uncle Harry. Uncle Harry came to the U.S., but apparently left six children in Europe. It was said that he was very mean to my grandmother, who stayed in Europe, and he did not help her when he could. My father was so angry with Uncle Harry over this that I can remember his going to his funeral “to make sure he was dead.”

Ollie: He came to the U.S. via England. He was the one who added the “e” to the Schranz name, and my father adopted it, presumably to differentiate himself from his Uncle Harry. Ollie married Jeanette, a wealthy woman, and possibly through her influence he was able to sit on the boards of several corporations. They had no children. Ollie made my father executor of his estate, but my father died before him, of cancer. Ollie’s affairs then passed to a niece, Dianne Miller, who proceeded to milk the estate. Ollie had originally made my father executor because he felt my father was the only relative he could trust. Ollie died at the age of 101, in 1974. A family story was circulated that he was really embalmed long before because he had scotch in his veins. He was an eccentric, but very kindly, and I do remember him well. My mother liked Ollie’s wife, Jeanette, particularly when she told her that my sister, Marilyn, was too aristocratic for this family. Marilyn has always seconded that!

Jack: He was born about three months after his father died. He also came to the U.S. I do not know his vocation, but his daughter was Dianne Miller, mentioned above. He died at the age of 99. Jack and his brother Ollie must have had a falling out for a while because they never appeared at family functions together except when their sister Tillie died. However, after that, they did seem to become reconciled.

My great-grandmother Betty came to the U.S. after her second husband died in Europe. She sold apples on the Brooklyn Bridge for a living after it opened in 1883. She died in 1931 and

is buried in Mount Hebron Cemetery, Queens, New York with many other family members.

My Father, Harry, was born in Lvov, originally named Lemberg, a city that was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, in what is now Poland. He was the third of seven children. The first two were boys. One died in childhood and one in WWI. The latter was Benjamin, for whom I am named. Then my father came along, then four girls: Beena, Luba, Tillie, and Gertie. Tillie and Gertie came to the U.S. and settled in New York City. My father Harry served in the Austro-Hungarian army during WWI. I can remember my mother telling me that he was still nursing a wound in his leg during the 1930s. When he came to this country, his aunt, Tillie Blumenfeld, and my father got along very well; she was probably very instru-



Ben’s father Harry, and possibly Ben’s uncle and namesake who died in WWI



Ben's father, Harry, 1920s

mental in helping my father during his early years in the U.S. and she was like a surrogate mother to him. He repaid this many times over the years, and there was a strong bond.

After the end of WWII, my mother and father attempted to determine if any family members had survived the war. Our family was anxious to bring them to the United States. My father even wanted to travel to Europe to try to locate them, but the State Department representatives would not allow him to clear U.S. Customs, or to pass through the Army's European Occupational Command for this purpose. They explained that the areas occupied by the Soviet Union were off-limits to Americans, and even Western Europe was in a state of turmoil. It was too dangerous to allow civilian travel. Frustrated, my mother and father contacted the various refugee and Red Cross agencies, as well as the

Office of the U.S. President, British and French authorities, and even the Russian Red Cross, to seek any information. About two years later, we received a letter from a cousin, also a Schranz, related on my father's side. He had managed to work his way to the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea just before the war broke out. He married an Italian girl, and they started a family. However, just like "jumping from the frying pan into the fire," he and his family suffered but survived through the several thousand German and Italian air raids that this strategic island endured during the war. He and my parents communicated with letters for several years thereafter, and his recounts of the air battles around the island were a source of amazement to us.

LENETTE'S EARLY LIFE

Lenette was born in Manhattan on the 1st of March, 1930. Her given name was Lena, but as a teen-ager she had it changed to Lenette, probably with the help of her mother.

Due to Lenette's asthma and susceptibility to allergies, her parents thought it was best to take her to an area that had a reduced tendency to cause respiratory problems. After spending a year with her mother in Miami, Florida, which did not help her ailments, Lenette's mother took her to live in Tucson, Arizona. The far West climate, then thought to be unblemished with allergic agents, would help – and it actually did, as she eventually overcame her asthma. Lenette and her mother lived there from 1940 to 1950.

I often thought that Edith was also using this separation as an excuse to be away from her husband and the rest of the family, so that she could live her life unfettered by external control and criticism. Edith felt very strongly about women's rights and she often said that men could be considered almost superfluous (according to the teachings of Margaret Sanger), aside from providing her with a beautiful child



Lenette and her father Saul with a red flag
at a union protest, 1930s

whom she wanted to bring up in her own way. However, I must note that Lenette's father, always deeply in love with his wife and entirely dedicated to Lenette's well-being, continued to work in his barber shop in New York and sent support funds on a steady basis. During times of adversity and sorrow, he always found ways to cheer up his wife and Lenette through his thoughtful letters. Saul's Hebrew name was Shalom, which means "peace," as well as a feeling of contentment, wholeness, well-being, and harmony. I feel that he truly was the epitome of a civilized human being and a great role model for Lenette and our own children.

There is quite a saga of Lenette's Aunt Sylvia and her daughter Dorothy. Lenette's mother Edith was very close with her sister Sylvia. Both had the same temperament about women's rights and the need to exercise their indepen-

dence from family constraints. Even though Sylvia had readily obtained her U.S. citizenship in the 1920s, she had a wandering streak which lured her to return to Russia, reinforced by her understanding of the apparent attributes of Communism. She decided to travel to Europe early in the 1930s and subsequently joined a dance company which also toured in Russia. She met and became close friends with an American journalist who had similar sympathy for Russia and its social experiment. However, she suffered a dancing accident and remained and recuperated in Russia, while her journalist companion returned to the U.S. Sylvia then made her way by teaching English to the intelligentsia and dancers associated with the famous Bolshoi Ballet Company. She married a Russian who was said to have been subsequently killed



Lenette and her mother Edith
on Congress Street in Tucson

in the Russo-Finnish War, but around the same time she gave birth to Dorothy.

When World War II started in Europe, the journalist who had earlier known Sylvia contacted Edith and urged her to convince Sylvia to return to the U.S. and to send her the necessary funds, before the expansion of the conflagration made civilian travel impossible. Dorothy was barely four years old at that time. Luckily, Sylvia had retained her U.S. citizenship and passport. Sylvia and Dorothy traveled East on the Trans-Siberian Railway nearly 10,000 kilometers from Moscow to Vladivostok. War had already started in Poland. They reached Japan to arrange for passage on a Canadian steamship to cross the Pacific to Vancouver, Canada. At that time, Japan and Russia were still honoring their mutual treaty obligations and Japan was not yet at war with the British Commonwealth nations. However, the Japanese authorities wondered about a woman carrying a U.S. passport traveling to Tokyo, accompanied by a young child who could only speak Russian. They kidnapped Dorothy and held her until their contact with the American embassy showed that they were not dealing with a spy, but simply an American mother trying to travel back to her home in the U.S. with her child (shades of Mary Astor and Humphrey Bogart in their movie *Across the Pacific*).

Sylvia and Dorothy continued their trip eastward from Vancouver, across the U.S. to New York, and then, finding her sister Edith to be

elsewhere, proceeded southwestward to Tucson, Arizona, to meet with Edith and Lenette. At that time, Edith was operating a boarding house in which American servicemen and their wives were staying. (A large Army Air Corps base was located just south of Tucson.) Edith helped Sylvia secure a position operating another boarding house, which provided permanent living quarters and a source of income. In her

day, Edith was very persuasive and could convince almost anyone to do what she wanted. She even convinced a local church to give Lenette their piano so that she could continue her music studies.

Dorothy had a Russian given name, but since she was to start attending school in Tucson, she was given the American name, Dorothy, using the fame and name of the heroine child of *The Wizard of Oz*, popular at that time. Dorothy and Lenette became very close, almost as sisters, and both have shared their innermost thoughts

throughout most of their lives.

Lenette's father wanted Dorothy to have the upbringing of a father, albeit a stepfather. When

Sylvia and Dorothy were living in Tucson, he set about finding one. He found an advertisement in a newspaper from a man who wished to find a suitable wife and proceeded to act like



Dorothy, Sylvia, Edith, and Lenette

a modern day Cupid to have this man, Irwin Barclay, investigated; and then he encouraged Sylvia and Irwin to correspond. Ultimately this proved a great match, and Sylvia and Dorothy subsequently traveled to Peoria, Illinois, after a marriage was consummated. Irwin adopted Dorothy and treated her as his own child, and he proved to be a magnificent father to Dorothy and a loving husband to Sylvia. In order to help her get over her fear of being in a strange area with new people, Irwin got her a dog, Woofy. Ever since, even today, Dorothy has had a dog to be her friend and companion; and her own children who came later on also shared in this relationship. Dorothy completed her public school education in Peoria, Illinois, where they lived. With the support of her new father, she attended and graduated from the University of Illinois, having received a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Irwin proved to be an essential part of our families and has had great love and admiration from his grandchildren, Dorothy's and her husband Marvin's offspring. He had always given his unfettered love to all, and he has used his unusual skills for their support. He was brought up as a farmer and he has what is referred to as a "green thumb," growing many and exotic – and delicious – plants in his own backyard. He hand-constructed a small apartment building adjacent to his home in Peoria, in order to provide additional financial aid for his family by renting out its apartments. As a young man, in the early 1930s, being enamored of flight, he built an airplane which he promptly crashed on its first flight, not realizing the complexities of control technology. He even rebuilt and regulated a damaged piano and quickly learned how to play it so that he could "provide pleasure to all those within earshot" and himself.

Lenette has always been devoted to music.

At age five she was introduced to the piano by her Aunt Mary. She has fond memories of the intricate carvings in the wood of the Bear Brothers upright piano in Aunt Mary's living room. Lenette attended and completed Tucson's Lower and Upper public schools, graduating with honors in music. During her time in Tucson, Lenette studied piano with Dr. Salvatiera, a music teacher educated in the University of Mexico in Mexico City, who also migrated to and lived in Tucson with his family. Both families became very close as well, and Lenette continued to communicate with them for many years after she left Tucson, even into the 1970s.



Lenette, 1940s.

Lenette enrolled in the University of Arizona, where she was awarded a music scholarship and studied piano and theory with Madam Altman, a former Professor of Music at the Juilliard School of Music, who also had come to Tucson for her health. Lenette attended the University for two years, until the summer of 1950, when, on one of her trips to New York City to spend time with her father and grandmother, she met me.

BEN'S EARLY LIFE

I was born in New York City on August 1, 1929. Some say that this may have caused the Stock Market to crash, also in 1929. I have an early memory of waking from a deep sleep, when I was very sick, to see my father and my older brother, David, who was three years my senior, completing the assembly of a Lionel electric train set. David and my father knew that I wanted such a train set and they set up its tracks to run from under my bed to the open floor in order to simulate a real train emerging from a tunnel. And when I woke up, there was my brother playing with it, and my father smiling because they knew I wanted a train set.

My brother David was a very strong influence on my life. David very rarely exhibited sibling rivalry, and while he usually preferred to play and remain with friends of his own age, he was always very protective and kind to me. This lasted through our entire lives and ended only when he passed away in his late eighties.

When I was old enough to go to kindergarten, my parents, my brother, and I lived in an apartment in Brooklyn. I can even remember the address: 1084 New York Avenue. My sister, Marilyn, was not yet born. I remember it was on the second floor and located just across the street from the public school which David and I attended. David used to take me to school in the morning and help me cross the street, but

my mother came for me at lunchtime, since he took his own lunch and had classes until mid-afternoon. I even remember the name of one teacher, Miss Ringland, but somehow I can only think of the name of the second one as Miss Donkey.

If I had a problem or if I got into trouble, my brother would look out for me. One still vivid example took place when I was in fifth grade. I was attending a lower school, PS 119, about five blocks away from my house. We lived on Kings Highway at that time, also in Brooklyn. I was being terrorized by a bully. Almost every time he met me he would call out that I killed Jesus and he would then proceed to punch me. The curious thing about this is that I had not yet learned who Jesus was and I did not know what the bully was talking about. Once when I came home in a disheveled state, my mother and my brother looked at me and asked what had happened. I



Ben, his father, Harry, and brother, David, 1930s



David, Harry, and Ben, inspecting the damage at Manhattan Beach after the 1938 hurricane

reluctantly said, “This bully keeps on hitting me in the stomach and I don’t know what to do.” My mother explained what may have been the reason for the actions of the bully, but both said, “You must fight back; you can’t let him continue to hurt you.” I was scared; what could I do? This guy seemed ten feet taller than me. But David gave me a few pointers in defending myself. The next time the bully came to me and started pushing me around, I just took a chance and I hit him in his mid-section as hard as I could. Well, I was surprised that he started crying and he said, “You fight dirty,” and he never bothered me again.

I must also mention that David taught me how to drive when I was 15, after I obtained a learner’s permit. He made sure that I could park the car properly and observe all safety precautions but also taught me that the car should be properly cared for. He even made me practice double parking so many times before my driver’s test that I felt my arms would fall off. He wanted to be sure that I “got it right.” That’s the type of person he was. In other words, he was my Big Brother.

I want to point out an attribute about my brother that was not well known outside the immediate family. He had a great artistic talent, which he subordinated while engaged in his business career. As a young student in the New York City school system at the age of eleven or twelve, he won first prize in a citywide art competition. He had created an original wall-sized picture of a Central American boy walking next to a donkey carrying vases filled with fruit, passing by palm trees, with mountains appearing

in the distance. This was drawn entirely with chalk of various colors and appeared to capture the Latin American aura. But even at an early age, he wanted to go into my father’s business: Textile Converting and Jobbing. When he was old enough, he attended the Straubenmeuller Textile High School located in the east side of Manhattan, just north of Greenwich Village. This was a city-run public school providing academic and vocational programs for students interested in entering the textile industry. Unfortunately, the school doesn’t exist anymore. David won many art prizes and even two city competitions for his tapestries and the special weaving designs he made. In addition, he loved music as well as art, but still he wanted to become a businessman and ultimately proved to be very successful.

My sister Marilyn came along six years after me.

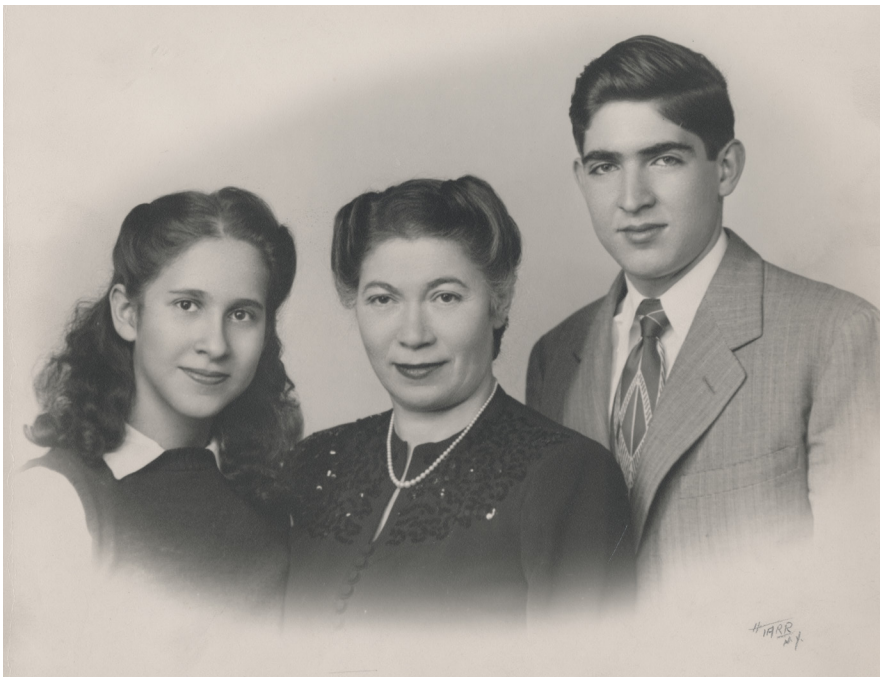
I remember that when she was a toddler, she was afraid of having a photograph taken of herself. She seemed frightened of cameras, and I suspected that this

may have been the result of the remnants of an Eastern-European superstition. I once noted that when a babysitter peered in a mirror while holding my sister, my father, who observed this, chided the sitter and indicated that a child looking at her reflection could bring bad luck into her life “by releasing evil spirits.”

I have always had the greatest respect and fondness for my sister. She grew up having a highly developed intellect and was often – and still is – described as “the brains of the family,” but she appeared to have an unfortunate trait. Despite the fact that our aunts and uncles told her that she had a beautiful and aristocratic bearing, she may have considered herself to be unattractive nevertheless. During her teen years, she suffered a separation of her hip bone from its socket. The doctors required her to remain in bed over a two-month period, missing school, during a time when her classmates were enjoying activities that a maturing adolescent would normally experience. I think she missed being together with girls of her own age. This bed confinement treatment did not succeed,

so the doctors had to subsequently operate on her and insert steel pins to allow the bone juncture to heal. Later on, as she continued to grow, these pins had to be surgically removed. Perhaps this affected her in several ways: One was that she believed that her appearance while limping during her recuperation was distressing to her peers. Another was that the entire treatment process, including her operations and recovery times, lasted more than two years, long enough to unfairly reinforce her bad feelings about herself. I now wish I had known enough about self-deprecating emotions at that time to talk her out of this.

Aunt Tillie’s Experience. When I was nine years old, the reported news events in Europe, particularly in Germany and Austria, drove home to me the severe anti-Semitic nature of our times. The orgy of destruction and murder over a 24-hour period in early November 1938, referred to as the Night of Broken Glass – Kristallnacht – was a marked example. This news gave impetus for my Aunt Tillie, one of my father’s sisters, to travel to Europe on the Queen Mary ocean liner to find her fiancée, Leon Suchman, who was still in Poland. Using her own American passport, she was able to cross Europe and find him, and then to take him with her to the United States. Afterwards, my father helped set him up as a jobber in the textile business. Aunt Tillie often remarked that even though the German authorities were suspicious of Leon’s religion as they traveled through Germany, Tillie’s appearance as a “typical Catholic Polish-born woman” apparently saved them from being detained.



Ben’s sister, Marilyn, his mother, Rebecca, and Ben, 1940s

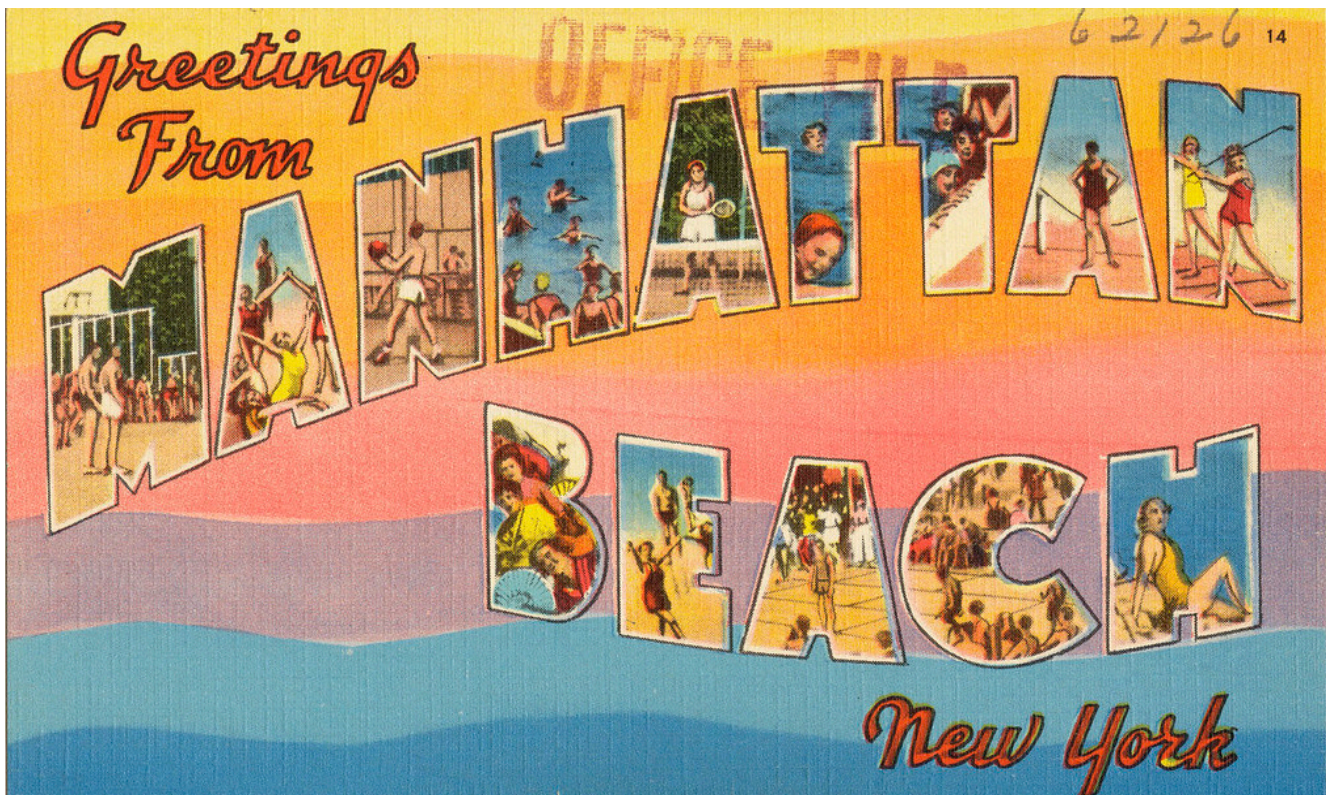
During the late 1930s, my father and mother decided to rent a bungalow in Manhattan Beach.

This was a summer residence and vacation enclave in southern Brooklyn, New York, located between Sheepshead Bay, a popular fishing port, and the Atlantic Ocean. The family spent the summer months there in order to escape the city heat and to enjoy its many recreational facilities. Often, we would be visited by our relatives as well as family friends from the City and Philadelphia. My father would travel to and from Manhattan each working day on the New York subway system or by cab, and ended up in one of the facility pools to cool off before supper. This enclave had four Olympic-sized pools, two ocean side beaches, many ball courts and playing fields, and was host to the famous Long Island University (LIU) athletes for their summer training. Their coach, Clair Bee, had an international reputation for producing winning teams. His athletes would also teach the

children living there, including my brother, sister, and me, about the fine points in various sports. These included ocean and pool swimming, basketball, softball, tennis, and wall board, an open-air city version of squash. I recall one time when a tall LIU athlete, referred to as "Hilltop," picked me up as I held a basketball and asked me to drop it down into the net. I had never seen anyone that tall before.

An outdoor amphitheater was situated near one of the pool areas and summer shows were periodically given there. In particular, the famous Billy Rose Aquatic Shows were developed and exhibited there, featuring many famous swimmers and divers of that time. However, when the war finally came to the U.S. in 1941, the U.S. Coast Guard took over the entire facility for use as a naval training center. I guess military personnel need their fun too.

In 1939, my brother David met a very inspiring fishing and rifle coach who had migrated from



Manhattan Beach postcard 1930s. Courtesy of Boston Public Library

Germany years before, to become a U.S. citizen. This coach operated a facility called the Brooklyn Rod and Gun Club, for which he developed an indoor target range in an abandoned trolley maintenance building in southern Brooklyn, near Floyd Bennett Airfield. David knew that since the U.S. could soon be involved in the Second World War, he was determined to become proficient in the handling of a rifle. The sport of target shooting was appealing to him as well. He decided to join this club and be coached by its founder. Of course, I wanted to join too, and with my parents' permission I also started to learn about the sport of target shooting. I don't know if critics today understand this business of the NRA – there is a lot of distorted information about it – but I wanted to join too and learn and become proficient as well. So at the age of 11, I started to learn how to safely handle and fire a rifle. We became members of the NRA, and with three others of our age we participated in several target range competitions as a “Tyro” (kids) team, managed by our rifle coach.

In hearing my reminiscing about this today, some folks are horrified to learn that as David and I always shared the same bedroom, a locked rifle cabinet was located along one wall, not more than three feet away from my own bed. It contained three heavy barrel target rifles, one ancient Civil War era rifle, and a lever action Winchester 72. This experience was useful later on. When David joined the Army in 1943, he became a Central Fire Control Gunner on a B29 in the 20th Air Force. After I entered and trained in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1951, during the Korean War, I was proficient in using every available infantry weapon.

In the late 1930s, my father and mother thought it would be desirable

to have one or more of their offspring learn to play a musical instrument (and perhaps become more civilized). They hadn't encouraged it earlier because of the Depression. As I have mentioned, while visiting a relative I had

started to tinker on an upright piano and seemed to enjoy it. Just afterward, a friend of my brother took me to my first classical music concert, which was performed in Carnegie Hall, New York. I was enthralled and can still recall the performance, which involved an all Tchaikovsky program with the violinist Joseph Szigetti and Arthur Rodzinsky conducting the visiting Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. I was hooked on classical music from then on.

My father felt that it was time for me to play the piano, though my mother thought that the violin would be more appropriate. My mother's wish for a violin-playing son seemed to be fulfilled a generation later, when my own son Lenny, her grandson, became a tenured Professor of Music at Memphis University and a nationally well-regarded string teacher.

My father rented a piano and secured the services of Irwin Casden, a local piano teacher. I started lessons and continued with him until I entered high school in 1943. He encouraged me to keep up my music studies and suggested to my parents that a more advanced teacher should be found. My father contacted the Juilliard School of Music and they recommended a concert pianist named Harry Davis, who taught privately at his home studio in an apartment located on West 74th Street in Manhattan, just west of Central Park. I started lessons with him, and since my progress was going so well my father decided to buy a piano. He bought a grand piano from the William Knabe Company after visiting their showroom located on East 57th Street in Manhattan, New York. This piano was one of the Knabe Baltimore Studio Series grand pianos that were famous for accurately retaining their tuning. This instrument has served the family and me for more than seventy-five years and is currently located in my apartment, ready to be played.

There's an amusing story about how he bought this piano. My father walked into the Knabe Company showroom on a day when it was raining very hard. The showroom had an exclusive

appearance and present were two elegant looking salesmen, one of whom said to the other in Russian that a tramp had come in to escape the rain. My father's coat was soaking wet, his hat was limp and slouched down, and he looked disreputable, but surprisingly my father asked for demonstrations to be made on several show-room pianos. Within the hour, he bought a piano with a check made out for the total sales price. Those two gentlemen were astonished, and when my father was leaving the store, he said in Russian, which they hadn't realized my father understood, "Next time don't judge a book by its cover!"

When I reached the age of 14, I secured a working permit for

employment with my father during summer vacations. My father owned and operated a business of selling textile fabrics, as well as being the proprietor of an 11-story office building on the corner of Broadway and Leonard Streets in downtown Manhattan near City Hall. His business occupied the main floor, basement, and sub-basement of the building and he rented out the upper floors to other private businesses. Prominently painted on the main window of the ground floor was his business motto: "If it's Made of Cotton Ask Harry Schranze."

I was a "Gopher" – I traveled around New York City to deliver fabric samples and invoices to my father's clients, as well as to occasionally collect sample garments and checks. In those days, subway and trolley travel were considered safe and no one seemed to worry about a teenage kid riding alone. Many garment manufacturers were located in midtown Manhattan and the Bronx at that time, all of whom served a thriving garment industry. This is no longer the case, because the lure of changing financial concepts has resulted in a massive shift of this industry overseas.

Such summer work was an eye-opening experience for an innocent teenager. I made a memorable visit to a garment manufacturer on a day when recently designed dress samples were being modeled for purchasing agents of large retail stores. Some of the women models were in various stages of undress, some even entirely naked. When the owner witnessed my apparent shock and surprise, he took me aside and mentioned: "Benny, please understand that this is for business; for fun should come at another time and place."

My parents always realized that becoming a businessman was not for me.

Aside from music, I became interested in the sciences, also early on. This interest was reinforced when I was in



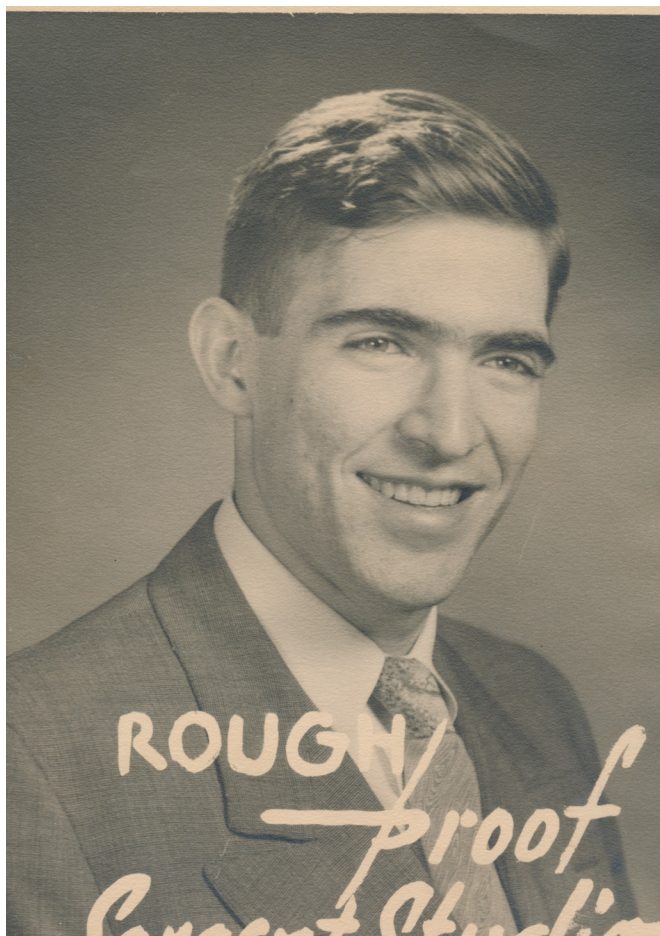
The building once owned by Harry Schranze, 349 Broadway, in 2004

the sixth grade and read an inspiring and popular biographical anthology called *The Microbe Hunters*, written by Paul de Kruif. It described the efforts of many scientists, including Leeuwenhoek (the earliest microbe hunter), Pasteur, Ehrlich, Walter Reed, and others, working to define and deal with the effects of “the unseen world.” In addition, in the last two years of high school I took chemistry and related laboratory work as elective courses and was awarded the city-sponsored Chemistry Medal. The concepts involved in scientific discovery and their application potential helped to define the principal course of my working future, more than the textile business, and even more than seeking music as a career.

In 1947, I applied to Columbia University as my first choice. My brother had previously completed one year’s study at NYU in their business management program, and immediately afterwards joined the Army. After the war, he renewed his studies at NYU, which was supported by the G.I. Bill, and received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management. While attending school he worked part-time in our father’s business and after his graduation continued as a full-time partner.

I turned down my acceptance to Columbia when I found out about their quota system. I was informed that no more than six percent of the total student acceptance rate for the incoming class could be of the Jewish faith. I chose MIT instead, and afterwards was accepted.

When Dwight Eisenhower retired from the Army before he entered politics, he was appointed President of Columbia University. One of his first actions was to eliminate its quota system, but by then I was already at MIT. Six years later, my sister considered applying to Swarthmore College which was one of the three Friends colleges located in the Philadelphia suburbs. Surprisingly, they also had a similar religious-based quota restriction, so my sister applied for and



Highschool senior portrait, 1947

was accepted at MIT, also as an alternative choice. (Shades of this story about religious bias at that time are described in the film *Gentlemen’s Agreement*). My sister Marilyn not only stayed and got a Bachelor’s Degree at MIT, she continued on to earn a Master’s Degree from its graduate school, became a staff engineer in the Institute’s Mechanical Engineering Department, and worked there for several years thereafter.

While at MIT, I majored in chemical engineering, and I was surprised to find out that several of my teaching professors had international reputations in their field. Two who were Nobel Prize Laureates also taught undergraduate courses part time. My freshman chemistry lecturer was Professor James Beattie, famous for his work on identifying real gas properties near the Critical State. Professor William McAdams,

who was Chairman of the Chemical Engineering Department and the author of what was referred to as the “Bible” in heat transfer principles, taught several of my chemical engineering classes during my sophomore year. Professor M. Stanley Livingston, co-inventor of the Cyclotron, which helped lay the foundation of experimental particle physics, taught physics in my junior year. Norbert Wiener, the founder of Cybernetics, relating to the development of methods to control and communicate with electronic systems, gave us lectures in advanced mathematics during my senior year.

My fellow students and I were curious to why such famous scientists and engineers were teaching at the undergraduate level. When asked, in almost a single response they replied that they love to teach, particularly kids who were just starting out in their careers. It made them feel young again. Furthermore, they said that teaching was important to them because it gave them a sharp focus on how to express what they are doing. Even more significantly, they also said: “You know, we learn a lot more from you kids than you realize. Maybe we should be paying you tuition instead of the other way around.”

Today, I strongly feel that this teaching philosophy and attitude are almost entirely overlooked, particularly for undergraduates in the major universities.

During my senior year, I was required to engage in original work and to produce a Bachelor of Science Thesis, an unusual requirement for an undergraduate. My work was performed as part of the MIT Solar Energy Project and my thesis advisor was

Professor Hoyt Hottel, who was a leading researcher in heat transfer, particularly with regard to radiation phenomena. He and his group designed and constructed two solar heated houses. One was a residence on campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that was occupied by a married veteran student and his family. The other was a large commercial structure in New Hampshire. Both used Dr. Hottel’s concept of storing solar-derived heat in a specific type of confined salt that would later change phase when caused to release its energy, for both home heating and hot water generation. This concept proved to be the most successful solar-derived energy application of its time and satisfied the annual heating needs of both houses, even during the severe winter weather experienced in New England during the early 1950s. However, while Hottel’s concept used in MIT’s solar homes was an innovative and significant engineering accomplishment, he was very cautious about its use in the future. He said that if one wanted to save 50 percent of his money, he could use heat from the sun; but if he did not wish to lose any money, solar energy should not be used at all. In reality, even though photovoltaics and other related technological advances were not developed at that time, he envisioned even then that future applications using solar energy might not pay



Professor Hoyt Hottel at the solar house in Cambridge
courtesy of MIT Museum

their own way and would have to rely on public funds. How prophetic!

His attention to detail, as well as his caution, was also reflected in work with his students. He required me to rewrite my thesis manuscript three times before he accepted it for formal submission to the Institute, with the explanation that it should be scientifically and impeccably correct to be suitable for future use by others.

Coincidentally, more than twenty-five years later, I was selected as a consultant on the same government advisory committee as Dr. Hottel. This was in one of the steering committees formed early in the President Carter administration to guide the newly-formed Department of Energy in selecting which of the proposed energy-related programs to pursue. Hottel's attitude of restraint culminated in his argument that the government should not subsidize "presently available ideas that are economically shaky" but that it should look for "better ideas." It became evident to both of us that political influence often seemed to be one of the prime motivations in the course of government funding of new projects and that unlike the attitude of private research institutions, scholastic superiority and financial viability would take secondary roles.

LENETTE AND BEN TOGETHER

Before she met me, Lenette and her family often discussed a premonition that a young man named Ben would become her future husband. This involved her mother's insistence on visiting a Russian Tea House on 14th Street in Manhattan, where a supposed Medium would read tea leaves from Lenette's cup. After several sessions they dwelled on the prediction that Lenette would meet a young college student called Ben in New York, who would fall in love with her. There was another Ben in Lenette's early life while she attended Tucson's high school, but her mother insisted that the one she would meet in

New York would win her heart. Apparently, Lenette's Grandmother Hoffman, who also attended one or more of these tea leaf readings with them, agreed. One can never argue or disagree with the superstitions of those who came from Eastern Europe.

Our first meeting occurred at the West 74th Street studios of Harry Davis, a well-known piano teacher with whom I had studied piano since my high school days. Lenette and I both love music, and with this common interest – lucky for me! – our feelings blossomed. We married the following year, after I graduated from college.

To the surprise of both sets of our parents, Lenette and I decided to suddenly elope and



Our wedding portrait, 1951

were married by a Court Judge Magistrate on October 10th, 1951, in the Manhattan Court-house, just before I was inducted into the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War. We had to use witnesses who were there for another ceremony for our own. Our families commented that “the babies got married,” but we fooled them by staying married for more than 64 years. When I came back on military leave, in order to have a religious ceremony at the behest of our families, we were remarried at Temple Emanuel on Fifth Avenue in New York City.

In the early 1950s, while I was serving in the U.S. Marines, Lenette studied music at the Juilliard Music School in New York, since her parents relocated to New York at that time. However, she did spend time with me while I was stationed in Great Lakes, Illinois, San Diego, California, and Opa Locka, a naval air base near

Miami, Florida. While in Illinois, she taught piano to the daughter of the family she stayed with, and while in Florida, she attended music classes at Barclay College in North Miami.

With the end of hostilities in Korea, I was released from the Service and Lenette and I settled in West Hartford, Connecticut. I took employment as an engineer at the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Corporation, and we also started to raise a family. Lenette continued her college studies and attended the Hartt College of Music, which later became part of the University of Hartford, where she studied piano with the Dean, Samuel Berkman, and with Irene Kahn. She earned a Bachelor of Music Arts Degree from the school in 1956 and proceeded to teach piano to adults and children living around the Hartford area.

During the late 1950s, while I was employed at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, a division of the United Aircraft Corporation (now renamed the United Technologies Corporation), I was able to earn a Master’s Degree in mechanical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). RPI had established a Hartford Graduate Center in order to provide cooperative courses and assist in research and development programs with students and companies around Hartford, Connecticut area. I was able to secure permission from RPI and my employer to use my design work as Project Engineer on high temperature gas turbine engine development as the subject matter for a Master’s thesis. I also took advanced courses in heat transfer and mathematics as part of the Master’s curriculum. My research and design work was verified on a Model JT-4 (military J-75 designation) gas turbine engine mounted on one of P&W’s test stands. This was the first demonstration of air-cooled turbine blades and related use of advanced metallurgy in order to improve operational efficiency and reduced maintenance requirements, which were incorporated in future gas turbine engine designs.



Building of Harry Davis’ studio, taken in 2004

We moved to the Philadelphia area in late 1960.

Lenette attended Immaculata College, located in Frazer, Pennsylvania, in order to obtain music teacher certification from the State of Pennsylvania, and she also became a certified piano teacher using the Suzuki Method. She has had more than 2,000 music students over her career. She has had many private students, adults and children alike, and has also taught at various branches of Philadelphia's Settlement School, Nelly Berman's Music School in Lower Merion, and at the Friends School in Haverford.

Lenette also spent 26 years as the music teacher at the West Hill School in Rosemont, Pennsylvania, working with children from the ages of two-and-a-half to six, where she introduced an innovative program of music appreciation, games, and musical activities. Her program was integrated into the topics being taught by the other teaching staff, in order to have the children gain a more comprehensive educational experience. In addition, she was able to track the physical and mental development of some

of the children by observing their responses to the musical games and related exercises that she devised. While she was teaching there, the Pre-service Academic Performance Assessment (PAPA) Group of Pennsylvania's Education Department noted that Lenette's music program for young children was the only one of its kind in the state.

Our firstborn child was Bernard (Bernie).

Lenette and I always thought that our children should have a good background in the arts, since it was an important part of our lives and because we considered it to be a developmental goal in modern civilization. So when Bernie was five years old, we tried to get him involved in music. He was very active and wanted to be independent, even as a very young child. We once took him to observe a Hartt College of Music-sponsored program which introduced music to small children. But when he saw a lot of dancing and singing, he interpreted this to be something for girls. He rebelled at having anything to do with this program as well as with music lessons, much to our disappoint-



Lenette at our Knabe grand piano

ment. He seemed to have no interest in playing an instrument until he got to high school. I often thought that his idea of showing that he was “manly” subordinated his open acceptance of music as a child. However, I recall that he would often ask us to replay our musical records many times. He loved the music of the show *My Fair Lady*, popular at that time, and also Saint-Saens’ *Carnival of the Animals*, as recorded with the recitation of original verses by Ogden Nash. He particularly liked to hear the symphonic version of *Pictures at an Exhibition*. He reveled in hearing his grandmother Edith talk about the legends of the witch Baba Yaga’s house, that walked on wooden legs, and of the baby chickens that started running before they came completely out of their shells. Finally, years later when attending high school, he took up the guitar, and when

he got married and had his own children he established a band and played the drums socially in the summer when his time from work permitted. After earning several degrees in psychology and in social work, Bernie earned his LLD from the New England School of Law and is now registered and practicing law for a major insurance company in two states.

While attending Columbia University in New York City to get a Master’s Degree in psychology, Bernie met and fell in love with a fellow student, Susan Lantagne. While there was some controversy in the Schranze and Weinrit families about this, since Bernie was of Jewish heritage and Susan was brought up as a Catholic, Lenette and I were delighted with such a good match. In order to disarm such controversy, Lenette would often remark that “Susan was probably too good for him, anyway.” Susan is currently working as an Administrator for the Department of Correction of the State of Massachusetts Prison Hospital System. When visiting her, I sometimes ask her where “the Warden” keeps her lockup keys while at home.

Susan and Bernie bore three daughters and one son: Kelsey, Kirsten, Kiley, and Gregory, in that order. Susan made sure that each of their three daughters would attend dancing schools, starting at kindergarten age. One of them, Kirsten, ended up becoming a professional dancer after she attended and earned her Bachelor of Music Degree from the same school that Lenette had attended years before, Hartt College of Music. She now teaches and performs as a dancer in New York City. Kelsey became a registered nurse, after earning her Master’s Degree in Nursing from Jefferson University in Philadelphia and is currently working as a member of the medical staff in a hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. Kiley studied marketing and received her Bachelor of Science Degree in business from Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia. She became a sales manager for a major food company, also in Philadelphia. Gregory has demonstrated his aptitude in business and was



Four generations of the Hoffman family:
Bernie held by great-grandmother Fanny,
Edith, and Lenette, 1954

pleased to have made a profitable stock market investment while in high school. He is interested in developing his skills as a photographer, potentially as a career, and is now enrolled in Stonehill College, Massachusetts.

Our secondborn is Leonard (Lenny).

When Lenny came along, he showed musical interest right away. He loved musical games, and even in kindergarten his singing voice seemed to be always on key. When he attended the Friends' Central Lower School in Philadelphia, he was a member of the school's children's chorus that sang during actual opera performances

given in Philadelphia's Academy of Music.

Lenette was so proud that she attended one of the performances while she was in an advanced stage of pregnancy, carrying Linda. While Lenny was in the fourth grade at Friends' Central, the teaching staff wanted to establish a school orchestra. Lenny had relatively large hands even as a child, so the music teacher decided to have him play viola rather than the violin. Lenette and I were encouraged to see his strong interest in many forms of music, as

well as his continuing growth in mastering the viola. During summer vacations he attended various music camps from the age of ten, until he reached his senior year of high school. He was exposed to the music and teaching of well-known contemporary artists and became acquainted with other instruments as well. He even continued his hand at opera at the age of 16 by singing the lead role in one of Gilbert and Sullivan's works at the Lighthouse Music Camp in Pennsylvania. Lenny subsequently became a nationally-known tenured professor of music as well as

the leading member of the resident Memphis University Ceruti String Quartet. Lenny has made commercial recordings of viola and string quartet performances, several of which were transcribed by him from violin to viola and one of which received a Grammy Award. He has traveled to Europe several times to participate in summer festivals and has conducted master classes in numerous universities.

While attending a summer music camp in Troy, New York, which was being operated by Heidi and Joseph Castleman, both of whom were string professors at the Eastman School of Music, Lenny met another young violist, Jane Gerard. They became infatuated with each other and both went on together to earn their Bachelor of Art Degrees from Eastman College, in Rochester, New York, and subsequently their Master of Art Degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. They married and eventually settled in Memphis, Tennessee. Jane also became a music professor in her own right, at nearby Rhoads College, as well as a well-respected private string teacher in the Memphis area. They both teach at the famous



Lenette and Lenny in Cape Cod, early 1960s.
The epitome of love between mother and son.

Interlochen Music Center near Traverse City, Michigan, during the summer.

Jane and Lenny have four children: Hillary, Adam, Robert (Robbie), and Ian, in that order. It apparently was mandatory to have all of their children take up and become proficient with a string instrument, even though it was thought to initially use private music teachers other than their parents. As you might expect, while all learned to play violins, some rebelled. Robbie and Ian thought to “get away as far as possible from strings” and each took up the tuba. They eventually learned that this might not have been a good choice, since each was of small stature when young and had to lug these heavy instruments around to music classes. Robbie is currently attending a medical school in Virginia and hopes to eventually practice as a registered Psychiatrist. (I have often suggested he could practice on me as part of his residency.) Ian graduated from Furman University, South Carolina, earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in business, and he has embarked on developing his own business. Hillary developed a fine singing voice, and she eventually received her Master of Arts Degree in voice from the Manhattan School of Music in New York and embarked on a professional singing career. She also teaches strings and conducts the school orchestra at a private preparatory school in lower Connecticut. While Adam took up the cello, nevertheless he decided to embark on a career related to emergency medical treatment, and is registered as an EMT and first responder fireman, while considering completion of his training at a medical school in Tennessee.

Our youngest is Linda Faye.

Linda appeared to be what is known as “a late bloomer.” Even though she loved musical games and singing as a child, she seemed to have some difficulty in her early learning process, which gave her cause to consider her brothers “a hard act to follow.” It was initially thought that part of the problem was physical, and we found that

she had dyslexia, causing her to be cautious in her movements and in adapting to new situations. Despite this handicap, she wanted to take up dancing and much to the family’s surprise she also decided to learn to play the harp. She once admitted that she was inspired by Harpo Marx and his antics with the harp in his movies. Since concert-type pedal harps were rare and very expensive, she took up the troubadour harp instead, which is almost as large but has no pedals. Harp pedals allow the player to mechanically produce sounds with differing pitch on each string, but both harp types can be played with almost all of the same music.

Lenette and I realized that Linda’s difficulty caused her some emotional distress, and we secured professional counseling to bolster her self-confidence. Over time, Linda found her own way to enhance her learning skills. Because of



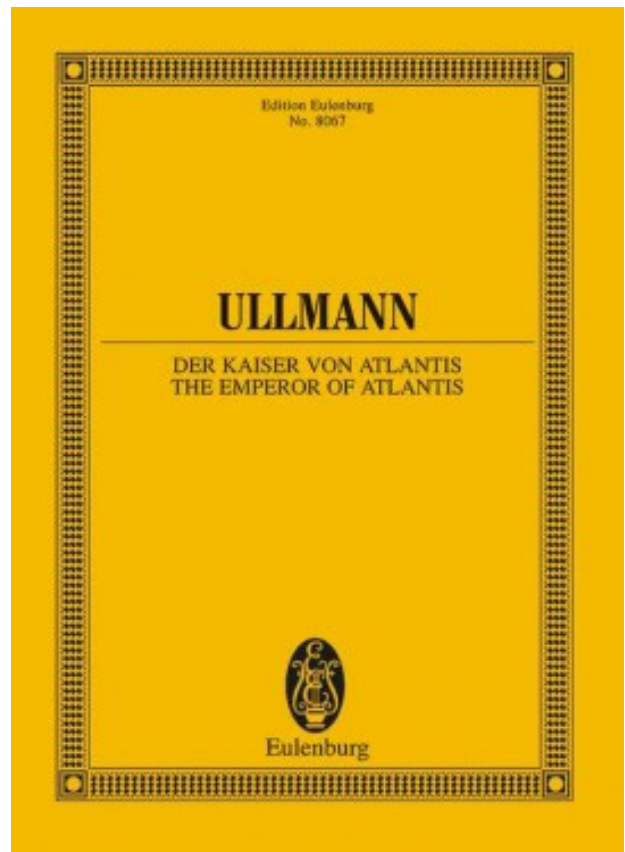
Lenette and Linda, early 1980s

her ability to interact well with others and because of her wish to develop her writing ability, she decided to enter public relations as a career. Linda has experience in operating a “mom and pop” type retail store while she lived in Boston, after attending Boston University for a year. She eventually earned a degree from Harcum Junior College in Bryn Mawr and subsequently a Bachelor of Art Degree from Xavier University in Cincinnati. She has spent the last 12 years working at various branches of the Benchmark Federal Credit Union in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Working as a sales consultant in various retail organizations in order to supplement her earnings, she has honed her ability to interact with both clients and fellow workers to create a favorable and friendly shopping atmosphere. In addition, because of her desire to maintain her physical prowess, she has engaged in an almost daily exercise regimen and has participated in numerous running marathons in and around the Philadelphia area.

A Holocaust-Composed Opera in the Bicentennial.

In 1976, during the preparations for the Bicentennial, attention to music performances in the Philadelphia area was mostly paid to American works, both older and newly produced. This was understandable, since the area was considered as the birthplace of the United States and the place where the Declaration of Independence was signed. Similar sentiments about the need to perform American music reverberated through the entire country. Attempts to introduce foreign music, particularly music which could relate to significant historical events overseas, seemed to have problems in engaging the interest of music producers and artists. Such was the case in trying to introduce an opera written by a Jewish-born composer in a Nazi concentration camp during the Holocaust, and to have its American debut during the Bicentennial.

In 1943 and 1944, many of the artistic intelligentsia of Central Europe, including composers, writers, and musicians, particularly those known to be of the Catholic and Jewish faiths, as well as their families, were sent to the Theresienstadt (Terezin) camp. The Nazis intended to isolate them from the rest of the population in a sort of artistic ghetto, to prevent the “contamination” of their ideas from reaching the rest of the world. An opera called *The Kaiser from Atlantis* was written at Terezin and was to be performed in the camp. It was composed by Viktor Ullman, a well-known Czech composer, and the libretto was written by a writer, Peter Klein. The plot is about a mad, murderous ruler who says farewell to the world in a Faustian-like vision of a natural paradise no longer spoiled by men. His dream would come true if all men would die. The Emperor of Atlantis, ruler over much of the world, proclaims universal war and declares that his old ally Death will lead the campaign. Death,



An opera written in a concentration camp

offended by the Emperor's presumption, breaks his sword and announces that henceforth men will not die. Confusion results: a Male-Soldier and a Girl-Soldier from opposite sides sing a love duet instead of fighting; the sick and suffering find no release; the alleviation of fear from Death by the soldiers cause them to disobey. After the Emperor pleads to have things return as before, Death accepts only on one condition – the Emperor will be the first to die. He accepts and sings his farewell.

The SS Commandant of the camp realized that this was a thinly-veiled allegory and direct criticism of Adolph Hitler and prevented its completion. He sent the composer, the writer, and their families to extermination camps to the east. It took more than 30 years for the manuscript of the opera to surface, having survived the war. It was acquired through the auspices of an American opera singer married to Kerry Woodward, a British conductor and composer,



Lenette and Ben in 1983

who completed the opera and gave its world premiere in Europe at the Dutch State Opera in 1977. Coincidentally, the father of the American opera singer, James Halitsky, a renowned meteorologist, was working with me on a project dealing with the measurement of potential air emissions of radioactive contaminants from a newly-commissioned nuclear power plant. Halitsky and his wife, realizing that my wife Lenette and our son Lenny were involved with several music notables, asked me to help this opera get an American premiere. They gave me several copies of the manuscript transcribed for voice and accompanied by piano.

I showed the manuscript to many of the musicians we knew in the area, including Joseph Primavera, the conductor of the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra; Joseph de Pasquale, the principal cellist of the Philadelphia Orchestra; Sylvia Glickman, a leading pianist and Professor of Music at Haverford College; Ruth Leibson, a local piano teacher and performer in Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts years before; two members of the Curtiss String Quartet, introduced to me by one of Lenny's viola teachers, Evelyn Jacobs; and Adolph Primavera, the leading violin maker in the Philadelphia area. I even went to the home of the Director of the Summer Music Programs for Temple University, where he sat at his piano and asked me to sing the roles. After only a few seconds of producing horrible sounds, he told me to accompany him at the piano instead, having realized I had no talent in voice (I told him that before we started). All this was apparently in vain.

However, when contact was made with Lenette's former teachers at the Hartt College of Music in Connecticut, they asked for copies of the manuscript. A performance was planned and made by the College students themselves. Thus, while the formal American premiere was made later on in San Francisco, conducted by Kerry Woodward, an informal premiere was actually the first one in America and was performed in Hartford in the Hartt College audito-



Lenette

rium. From that point on, my friends called me “The Two-Bit Impresario.”

Lenette was always conscious

of her health, and she went to the YMCA to work out and attend their exercise classes at least three times a week.

Lenette and I have always taken long walks almost every day. We even have done this during blizzards as well as in the heat of summer. Our favorite place for this is at the campus of Haverford College, where Lenette and I appreciated the beauty of the trees and the natural appearance of the site. We also traveled along the many walking trails in suburban Philadelphia over the past forty years.

Lenette exercised at the Y for 20 years before she started taking the water class. While she had a fear of deep water and never learned to swim, I convinced her to attend the YMCA swim

exercise group, where she worked out in the shallow part of the pool.

A frightening event had happened when she was a kid. She lived in Brighton Beach when she was very young, and something may have happened there, although she never found out what it was. She said that her mother didn’t believe in talking about unpleasant things in front of children. Lenette joked that despite her parents not wanting to talk about that unpleasantness, they had plenty to say about me! (She always had an uncanny knack of keeping me in my place.) So I made a deal with her about her fear of water: In the Museum of Natural History in New York there is an exhibit of a whale hanging from the ceiling, and they simulate noises and colors of underwater, and everytime Lenette used to go into the museum she was afraid of that whale. I said, OK, I’ll take you to the Metropolitan Opera to see a performance, but first I am going to take you to the museum, and I want you to open your eyes for a change. That’s exactly what we did. We sat there in that room with the whale, and we watched a video of fish and mammals underwater, and this finally got her to go in the pool to learn how to swim. She still had this fear of water, but little by little she tried to overcome it. Starting swimming at the age of 81 or 82, that’s really an accomplishment. You see, Lenette was a very strong person. When people met her, she was always a very gentle, compassionate lady. However there were certain things that really got her ire up: a Republican for example, like me!

Lenette made many friends with her other exercise and pool partners and they ultimately began to help her, as her memory problems and other health problems set in. Several of them became good friends, among them Jeannine Mermet, Jeannine’s daughter Sherry Witman, who is the class’s teacher, and Martha Noumoff. Martha helped Lenette in the locker room, helped her dress, combed her hair, and never let her go out of the locker room unless she was correctly dressed.

In 2008, Lenette's health troubles became serious.

I would like to provide a relatively concise review of Lenette's health and medical history here, according to my own unsophisticated and lay understanding. Main Line Health and Saunders House, as well as her former primary care physicians, Dr. Jennifer Claves of Main Line Health, and Dr. Jeffrey Ellis of Saunders House, have a complete record of Lenette's history. It illustrates her great perseverance in coping with a myriad of serious physical and neurological ailments.

In 2008, Lenette showed early signs of Alzheimer's disease, which was described as Early Dementia. It seemed initiated with a memory problem which caused her difficulty in locating her music and notes used for teaching at the West Hill School, and she periodically got lost while driving her car in the area. One time she "disappeared" while driving continuously for eight hours and ended up in southern New Jersey, where I had to go and pick her up. She only had a vague recollection of the roads she

traveled, but I realized that some were on major highways, which she usually made a point of avoiding. She then resigned, reluctantly, from her teaching activities; and she voluntarily gave up her driver's license. This was shattering for her, since it gave her a sense of the loss of her freedom and her beloved teaching.

I secured local social services to have trained people help her when I was away on business. With the recommendation of her primary care physician, Lenette made weekly visits to a licensed analyst in order to help her overcome her distress and anxieties. However, her malady progressed to the point where she even needed help in dressing and assistance in bathing. I always tried to reassure her that I would always be sure that I or other help would be there for her. I had great concern over leaving her alone in our home, even for a few hours, because of her potential forgetfulness in turning off our gas stove, or in inadvertently leaving open bathroom water spigots, or even going out alone for a neighborhood walk.



Lenette and Ben walking at Haverford College, 2012

In 2011, Lenette was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent two lumpectomy operations, and follow-up was made using intense radiation treatment. This was frightening for her, but she did it nevertheless. There is cancer history in both sides of her family, which made it doubly frightening. Thus, she agreed to have a study made of her genes and inherited cancer risk, in order to alert our children of potential future problems and to advise them to maintain appropriate medical examination scheduling.

Lenette seemed to have a premonition of the future effects of her illness. A few years ago, a statue was erected near our home in Wynnewood. It was of a woman sitting on a bus stop bench, looking confused and frightened, and it was rendered very realistically. When she first noticed it, Lenette became alarmed and commented that she was afraid that she might “turn out that way.” In fact, she asked me to find auto routes which refrained from going past that figure since it was so disturbing to her.

In late April of 2013, Lenette had a severe stroke. She suffered paralysis of her right side

and, apparently due to the complications of Dementia, she made only partial recovery. She was entered in Saunders House Rehabilitation and Nursing Center for continuous long-term care, since it is close to where I live, in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, to make it easy for me to visit and be with her. She could not feed herself, nor dress, bathe, or perform other personal activities. She had difficulty in talking and swallowing. Care had to be taken in even having her ingest sufficient fluids to keep her from dehydrating, which had been a common ailment for her over the past twenty years.

Initially, she could walk using a walker only when assistance was made. But then her Dementia illness caused further deterioration and it affected her to a point where she could not even remain stable in a wheelchair and required use of a mobile couch during the day when she was dressed and placed out of bed. She was quite cognizant of her situation even though she could not express it in words, but she did so with her body and facial movements instead.

Over the three-year period while Lenette was at Saunders House, our children and grandchildren, her cousin Dorothy, and some of our friends from the YMCA pool exercise group have spent as much time as they could in visiting Lenette. This encouraged her and made her realize that she had not been left alone. Additional help in accompanying, communicating, and just being with her was a daily and almost continuous occurrence by me. I became quite a popular storyteller to both Lenette and other Saunders House residents during this time. My children and grandchildren are very grateful that visits during her three-year stay cheered her up immeasurably.



Lenette at the Main Line YMCA pool in Ardmore, 2013

I really do not know the full extent of Lenette's anxieties and pain during her long-term illness, but I think she suffered tremendously. She was one of the most courageous people I have ever known. She never complained. No matter how frightening things may have appeared to her, she carried on. The nursing staff and hospice personnel at Saunders House noted that she would not give up because of the bad effect it could have had on our offspring and me. So she carried on until her illness caused such bodily deterioration as to cause her to lapse into a deep sleep. She passed away just after midnight on the 12th of March, 2016.

We all miss Lenette dearly, but I feel that she is here with us, looking at what we are doing, gently guiding us to set things right even without our knowing it.

A poem from an unknown author which I read every time I visit her internment site seems most appropriate to my family and me:

*"Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn's rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft star that shines at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there, I did not die."*



My favorite photo, under an oak tree at Haverford College, winter 2013



BEN AND LENETTE SCHRANZE

