



# FOXY LADY

100 Years of Joy and Love  
With Sylvia Fox Namm

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With *Sylvia Fox Namm*

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*99 and Counting (2014)*

## INTRODUCTION

This book was written to celebrate the centennial birthday of a very special person, my mother Sylvia Fox Namm. Like many others who reach 100, she lived independently in a community of good friends until she was 95 years old. She always ate sensibly and took care of herself and has few chronic diseases. Prior to her hip surgeries, she walked faster than all of us, exercising her beautiful legs in the pool and on the dance floor. She has an upbeat personality and a hopeful view of life which has inspired many. It is possible that she carries the variant of the FOXO3A gene that geneticists have begun to associate with longevity.

She has outlived her husband, all of her siblings but one, and too many of her close friends. But she has always surrounded herself with younger people: nieces and nephews, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and younger friends in her community. This book contains remembrances and stories from many of those people. For no one of us knows all the stories about her and it is a delight to learn them. A big thank-you to everyone who has contributed.

This book does not purport to be a biography. Rather, it is a series of snapshots – photographs and vignettes – that attempt to capture the essence of my mother's personality.

My mother has many names: Mom, Simkie, Aunt Sylvia, Aunt Sim, Grandma, G.G., Grammie Namm. She is a godmother, a surrogate mother, a second mother, a parent away from home. So many of us have been blessed by her warmth, her acceptance, her generosity, and her joy. I have never minded sharing her because there has always been enough love to go around.



*3rd Grade (1923)*

## A GIRL CALLED SIMKIE

Sylvia Fox came into this world on November 20, 1915. Her father, Abraham Fox, had already buried two wives, both sisters of his current bride Pauline. Pauline was 19 years old when Sylvia was born — not a particularly young age for marriage and childbirth at that time — but with the marriage young Pauline would be charged with the raising of five of her nieces and nephews: Sadie, Lou, Minnie, Phil, and Davey. The oldest child was only five years younger than Pauline.

At the time of Sylvia's birth, the family was living on Chrystie Street on the lower east side of Manhattan, a large Jewish community. Because two of Pauline's sisters had died in childbirth, Sylvia's birth was an especially happy occasion. She was given the Hebrew name "Simcha," a term used for happy occasions in Judaism, and also meaning gladness or joy. Everyone in her family called her "Simkie."

In the ten years following her birth, five more siblings would join her and her older sisters and brothers: Toby, Irving, Anne, Murray, and Shirley. It is hard to imagine what daily life was like in her New York household. She told me many times that her mother was always "looking for the man who invented housework." There was likely a system whereby the older children looked after the younger ones, although at times it appeared that no one was doing the minding. On several occasions my mother has told me the

story about the time she and Toby threw their youngest brother Murray out a window. Happily he is still around to share his remembrances.

Simkie enjoyed a special relationship with her Uncle Philip, her mother's brother, and recalls his sending her a beautiful coat. She has talked about visits to her paternal grandparents on a farm in Hudson, N.Y. which her father bought for them after arranging to bring them to the U.S. from Austria.

My grandfather's principal occupation was the owner of an electrical business, but he also had skills in plumbing, carpentry, and engine repair. His business acumen led to the family moving to Hollis on Long Island. He drove a Rolls Royce or Mercedes and his wife Pauline reputedly had outfits to match the interior of the car. My mother attended junior high school at P.S. 109 , graduating in 1929. Her autograph book from that time portrays a girl who was a good friend to many and who was definitely crazy about boys.

The Great Depression changed everyone's life, and the family moved to Brooklyn. She made new friends, including a seemingly quiet young man named Murray Namm. Some friends of my grandmother felt sorry for my mother because they thought Murray could not hear or speak. He certainly seemed to say the right words to my outgoing mother.

Because they were so young when they met at age 13, they tried going out with others. But they came back to each other and by age 17 were engaged to be married. Simkie had found the perfect partner to continue a life of joy.

To my knowledge, her nickname was never used outside of the Fox family. But it was the name I heard her called at every festive family occasion in New York and during the summers at my grandparents' country home which we all called "Fox's Den." It was the name she was called when her sister Toby and brother Irving followed in her footsteps by moving to Florida. I heard it again when the clan gathered in 2002 for the Fox Family Reunion in the Catskill Mountains of New York.

She will always be "Simkie" to her younger brother and Aunt Simkie or Aunt Sim to several nieces and nephews. The appropriateness of the name has been evident her entire life. She radiates joy and happiness and has exhibited an incredible resilience in weathering the difficult times in her life.



*Engagement (1932)*

## A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

The teenage romance of Sylvia and Murray endured and culminated in their marriage on January 24, 1937. Running a household was not yet among my mother's many talents. She recounts the first time she invited her parents over to her new home for dinner. Her father Abraham did not comment on the meal, but was noticed quietly scraping the food on his plate out the window. It did not take her long to become a great cook.

Recently I found a copy of my parents' wedding invitation. On the back side my mother had written:

*Dear Sweetheart, Congratulations on our first anniversary. Love, Butch.*

Not to be outdone my father changed the word "marriage" to "golden wedding" and the date from 1937 to 1987 and wrote on the inside:

*Darling, May we all be together to celebrate this gala occasion. I hope so. Love, Murray.*

The three-day nonstop celebration of their 50th anniversary was a joy to attend. Being in the presence of their continuing love for one another was a special treat for everyone who knew them.

Growing up I always looked forward to Valentine's Day. My father would give my mother a large heart-shaped box

of chocolates and give a smaller box to me. Although I treasured my gift, I think I loved my mother's more because their love made me feel so secure. As children we knew that we were loved, but we also understood who came first.

What was the secret of their long and beautiful relationship? If you asked my mother, she would likely say "great sex." Their physical attraction for one another and their desire to keep romance in their lives was certainly part of it, but not its entirety. They had a profound respect for one another, built on a platform of trust, and they made important decisions together even though their processes for arriving at decisions were often different.

Around my mother, my father was generally a quiet, introspective person. My mother was a "space-filler" who felt obligated to talk when there was a lull in any conversation. She loved to tell jokes (at times quite off-color); my father was a master of irony. At times I thought my mother controlled the ship but that was only because she talked more. But that was just their outer shells. Inside was a commonality of values: family, responsibility, compassion, service, gratitude, acceptance, commitment, dependability, affection, kindness, respect, teamwork, passion, and optimism.

They were so much more alike than they were different from one another. My father was totally on board with my mother's desires to be with and help her family. They financially supported my maternal grandparents when they lived in the Catskills; they sent clothing and money to her youngest sister Shirley; they took my grandmother into

their home after my grandfather died and before her second marriage some years later. They provided a home and emotional support for my cousin Barry when his mother was ill with tuberculosis and in the immediate years following her tragic death.

They possessed a vision of their lives and a sense of adventure, moving away from New York several years after their wedding to seek out new job opportunities with the federal government in Washington, D.C. They took advantage of other opportunities resulting in a move to Philadelphia in the 1940s and then back again to the D.C. area. They made the most of their time together during the summers when we children stayed with our grandparents.

After my father had a second heart attack in the late 1960s, they made the decision to leave their careers, furniture, family and friends behind, purchasing a small condo apartment in Hollywood, Florida. My father looked forward to a relaxed life which included golf, bowling, and visits to the horse racing track.

My mother had a tough adjustment. She never had the time to develop hobbies or interests outside of work and parenting. She was still willing to work but could not find anything in Florida which would pay enough for the many talents that she had. But rather than being miserable, she worked hard at making new friends, taking on responsibilities in her community, and finding joy in activities she had no time for previously. Their move to Florida and my mother's acceptance of a new lifestyle likely contributed to my father living for 20 more years.

When my father died of heart failure in 1991, my mother felt as if half of her had vanished. Despite the fact that they both had rich lives in their community independent from one another, the team of Murray and Sylvia which had been her life for more than 60 years was no more. To her credit she recognized all the other parts of her life which brought her joy and later went on to have another relationship with a lovely man named Max Budd who also predeceased her.

My mother taught me much about love and commitment, joy and happiness. Hers was the most successful marriage I have ever known. Together Murray and Sylvia were a force that had a life separate and apart from the two individuals and which affected all who knew them. It was indeed a match made in heaven.



*50th Anniversary (1987)*

## THE DANCING QUEEN

The Charleston, the Black Bottom, the Cakewalk, the Shag, the Lindy Hop. The Foxtrot, the One Step, the Two Step, the waltz and the polka. The samba, the rumba, the mambo, the cha-cha. The tango. They didn't make a dance that my mother didn't know how to do.

At family weddings and bar mitzvahs she would be the first up for the *hora*, leading the conga line, low on the floor with her brother Phil for the Russian *kazatzky*. Many an evening at my grandparents' home in the Catskills, the victrola was wound up and my mother had everyone dancing.

My mother danced better than anyone and longer than anyone. And when she and my dad danced together it was pure magic. If they looked like they had been dancing together all of their lives, it was because they had been dancing together almost all of their lives.

When they were teenagers during the Depression there was little money for entertainment. But everyone had a radio which played the great music of the 1920s and 1930s. They entered dance contests and often won. Dancing kept them joyful during the hard times.

After their wedding ceremony in 1937, she and my father went "truckin" down the aisle, a shuffle-like dance originating in Harlem. I think of their marriage as a dance

in which they sensed each other's needs and changed and adapted according to the changing music of their lives together: sensual Latin rhythms to express their physical attraction to one another, bouncy polkas when their grandchildren were born, a slow dance when my father was sick with heart disease and cancer. They had a knack for dancing in step with one another throughout their marriage.

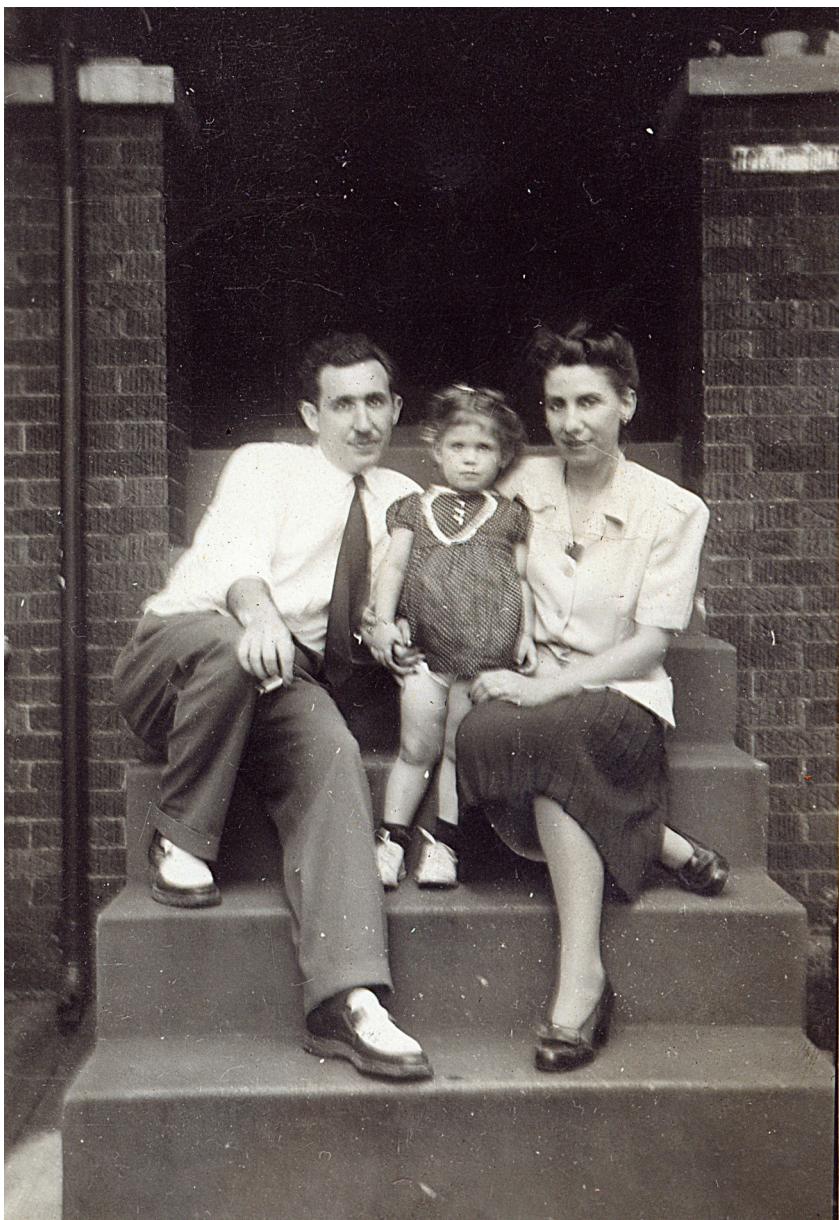
Watching them on the dance floor, I would be flooded with awe and gratitude for their love from the time I was a young girl through my adulthood. My tears flowed when they danced together at the celebration of their 50th anniversary in January 1987.

My mother shared her love of dancing with me. She encouraged me to take tap dance lessons when I was young and expertly sewed my recital costumes. She patiently taught me how to do the Charleston and chose me as her partner at many parties. At every family affair she whispered in my dad's ear that he should twirl me around the room with a slow dance.

Dancing was often my mother's therapy, her connection to and expression of life yet to be lived. She continued to go to the Saturday night socials at Sheridan Lakes after my father's death. Her feet would automatically start tapping at the sound of the music and she always found partners to dance the evening away. Nearing 80 years, she danced up a storm at my son Michael's wedding.

In the last four years, she has had to have both of her hips replaced. That has slowed her down considerably, but

it has not extinguished her love for music and dance. The hospice program which we have in place at the assisted living facility in Albuquerque has arranged to have a flamenco dancer visit and perform. We all hope that my mother's "dancing feet" will continue to bring us joy for many years to come.



*Washington, D.C. (1942)*

## THE FASHIONISTA

Both of my parents had a heightened sense of "style" and loved dressing up. My mother, especially, had a great knack for putting outfits together. She was an excellent seamstress and saved money during World War II by making our clothing, including matching polka-dot sunsuits.

Therefore, it seemed natural that when she went back to work after Rick, Barry, and I were settled in school in Suitland, she chose employment in the retail clothing business. She worked in the southeast Washington store of a chain of clothing stores called Morton's. Initially she was a salesperson and later was being groomed to be a buyer. However, her personality and skills were noticed by the owner of Morton's and it was not long before she was asked to become his personal secretary.

Her vision of this new role was not just of someone taking dictation. She became Mr. L's eyes and ears and learned everything about the business — from the purchase of clothing in New York, to the mechanics of the Receiving Room in Virginia, to handling the cash receipts of all five stores, and preparing the payroll for its many employees. There were others in charge of all these functions, but my mother felt it important to learn how everything worked. The buyers often sought her opinion about clothing samples that they brought back from New York.

She integrated our family into many aspects of the store. Rick, Barry, and I were models in a fashion show that she ran on a local T.V. channel. We all worked (including my father) at the store at Christmas so that the non-Jewish employees could have time to be with their families. I began working for pay in the downtown office after I was old enough to get a work permit. It was a pleasure to see my mother in action, exhibiting incredible energy and caring, and earning the respect of everyone she worked with.

Morton's owned several stores in predominantly black communities. My mother came up with the idea of using children from the community to participate in fashion shows. She provided instruction in how to walk the runway, do pirouettes, etc. The children got to keep the clothing they modeled, but the greatest gift was the increase to their self-esteem.

After my parents retired to Florida, Sylvia continued to find opportunities to express her showmanship and love of fashion. The Women's Club, for which she was President three times over three decades, had fashion shows with outfits they made in sewing class. She was a lifetime member of Deborah Hospital Foundation — her sister Anne received care in their Browns Mills, NJ facility when she had tuberculosis —and put on several fashion shows for them.

She loved designing and had a great sense of humor. People at Sheridan Lakes will long remember her costume made with racing forms and the time she had my dad and

other members of the Men's Club put on a fashion show in drag.

On her last visit to my home, she and I took the boat to Victoria, B.C. We had a wonderful time sightseeing, but our favorite moment was at the photography shop where we dressed up as bank robbers, fashionable ones of course.

Style and humor, style and sophistication. My mother expressed both throughout her life. Her outfits told stories. Stories that said "I may be poor but I'm looking good." Stories that said "I love the man I'm with and he loves me." Stories that said "I'm so proud of my child or grandchild who is graduating/getting married/dancing on that stage." Stories that said "Don't take yourself so seriously."

My mother has been a joy to look at all these many years. At first you are captivated by her smile and the sparkle in her eyes. But then as you take all of her in, she is dressed for the occasion and you know that she is happy wherever she is.



*Rick's bar mitzvah (1957)*

## THE HOSTESS WITH THE MOSTEST

When I was growing up in Washington, D.C., a name that frequently appeared in the newspaper was that of Perle Mesta — a socialite, former ambassador, and one of the capitol's premier party hostesses. The guest list for her extravagant soirees included Supreme Court justices, movie stars, foreign ambassadors, military leaders, and White House personnel. She served as an inspiration for Irving Berlin's "Call Me Madam" and was dubbed "the hostess with the mostest."

That moniker suited my mother perfectly. She didn't throw lavish parties, although the liquor and jokes flowed at parties for the Morton's gang and my dad's buddies in the Housing office. But my mother definitely had the "hostess gene." Our house was always open for guests. Whatever we had was for sharing.

She was a den mother to Rick's Cub Scout troop. We had many visits from my cousins in New York. Both Rick and I felt free to bring our friends home at any time. They didn't necessarily have to be gone by dinner time.

I remember one occasion in particular when I was a teenager in the Jewish youth group Habonim. The Baltimore and Washington, D.C. chapters planned a joint Passover celebration called "The Third Seder" to be held in D.C. The Baltimore kids were to be housed among many of

us living in D.C., but the chartered bus dropped everyone (about 25 kids) at my house. Rather than making way to various homes, we lost ourselves singing Israeli and American folk songs.

My parents came home from work to find a house full of teenagers who were getting quite hungry. My mother, not missing a beat, opened cans of peaches and fruit cocktail and started making meatballs. My father was sent out for a few more supplies. It seemed no time at all that there was a buffet table full of food. One of my friends queried, "How did she know we were here?" She didn't, of course, but she certainly made everyone feel very welcome. I would often hear "You are so lucky to have her for a mother!"

When my brother turned 13 and had a *bar mitzvah*, quite a few of our New York relatives stayed with us at our Oglethorpe Street home. We had people sleeping in every room, many of them on the floor. I will never forget going into the bathroom the next morning and finding my mother asleep in the bathtub. A centerpiece of flowers from the party sat on the bathtub ledge right over her head.

I have tried to emulate my mother's hospitality, but I'm not nearly as good at it as she was. I worry too much about whether my house is clean enough, whether there is enough food, and a host of other things. My mother never seemed to worry at all. She absolutely loved people and the more the merrier. She adored engaging in conversation with people and had a great knack for making everyone feel at home. She was generous with her food and her sleeping

quarters, but she is perhaps best known for being so very generous with her time.



*With the "Grands" (2014)*

## **DON'T CALL ME BUBBIE**

If there is anything in the world that my mother really loves (excluding chocolate), it is her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She even counts among them some who are not blood relatives at all, e.g. Max Budd's grandchildren and great-grands.

She became a grandmother for the first time when David Namm was born in July 1966. She was 50 years old. And she was a young 50-year old in great physical shape. Her hair had not yet turned the beautiful white that we associate with her now; she was a regular customer at the beauty parlor and often came home with a different color than she had when she went in.

She was working full-time and enjoying her life. She was thrilled when David was born and looked forward to her new role, but when she thought about her own grandparents and even her mother as a grandmother, she could only picture white-haired "old" people. To call her "Bubbie" (the Jewish name for grandmother) was unthinkable. And most certainly her husband was not at all a "Zayde." I don't know whether she considered "Nana" or other choices, but she ended up with the standard "Grandma." Grandmas could still be young and sexy; Bubbles could not.

By the time she and my dad moved to Florida, she had four grandchildren: David, Michael, Stacie, and Jay. Her new home (a one-bedroom apartment) was often full of youngsters sleeping in the living room, on the porch, and anywhere one could lie down. The closets were full of toys and coloring books, and beach apparel. She loved taking the young ones to the beach, playing with them in the swimming pool in her development, and introducing them to Sea World, the Monkey Jungle, and other Florida sites. You could often find her on the floor with one or another of the children building castles or garages.

Many of her Sheridan Lakes friends had grandchildren of similar ages, and I frequently scheduled my trips down to Florida at the time when I knew that other out-of-state parents would be around. My parents' home at 2200 Park Lane was usually Command Center, with my mother organizing all kinds of activities. She was like the Pied Piper, leading the small army down to the swimming pool, staying in the water till the last child was worn out.

Rick and Sheryl went on to bless her with two more children, Gayle and Stephanie, who were also regular visitors to Florida. She regarded Barry's children, Anne and Todd, as grandchildren because she always regarded Barry as another son. When Charlie and I became a couple, she added John, Marie, and Michael Poole to the list.

One of her most important possessions was her birthday book —thank you, Patricia Roisman— which contained everyone's birthdates. She was always the first one to send a birthday card, usually with a check for \$25. If it was your

16th birthday (sweet sixteen), \$100 would be enclosed. As my generation got older and our children started having children of their own, great-grandma Sylvia upped the ante by purchasing \$500 savings bonds in their name soon after their births.

Her mother had also been the family "rememberer" of birthdays. Bubbie never forgot our birthdays and always enclosed a few dollars from her Social Security. When my mother was very ill in 2003 and I stayed in Florida with her for five months, one of my important jobs was to write and send out all the cards and checks. It was unthinkable to her that a child would be forgotten just because she was ill. I think at that time she counted 22 grands and great-grands whose pictures were on the refrigerator, in frames on every small table, on her bedroom wall.

Her Albuquerque grandchildren and great-grandchildren give her much to still live for. Charlie and I helped celebrate her 99th and it was wonderful watching her blow out the birthday candles with her four great-grands. Young Shelby gets the biggest smiles, but all of them definitely brighten her days.

She has loved being called "G.G.", Grammie Namm, and Grandma Sylvia. It is possible she might now think of herself as old enough to be "Bubbie". But I doubt it, 100 years is still young.



*Wedding Joy (1994)*

## **IT AIN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER**

There are many words which can describe my mother: generous, compassionate, bawdy, lively, loving. But the characteristic that has been most important in her life these last 25 years is "resilient" — the capacity to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.

She stopped traveling after my father's death in 1991. Three years later, when Charlie and I decided to get married after fifteen years of being together, we talked about her being with us and I offered to fly down to Florida to travel with her to Seattle and then take her back. She surprised us by saying she would come by herself.

During her three weeks out here she fell in love with Beverly, our three-year-old granddaughter, who came to stay with us for a week. She read to her a lot, often sitting on the toilet seat to read while Beverly played in the bathtub. She bought her flower-girl dress for the wedding and the two of them walked down the aisle together holding hands, best friends forever. More trips followed.

But it is in combating serious health issues that my mother's resiliency shines bright. When she had surgery in 2003 for advanced pneumonia and then contracted *C. Difficile*, she was written off numerous times by her doctors. She not only recovered her health, but returned to live at

her Florida apartment, at first with assistance but fully on her own before the year was out.

She made the adjustment easily when we children suggested at her 95th birthday that she move in with one of us. When she fell in Albuquerque and broke her hip, many thought that this would be the end. But she survived the surgery and walked again with minimal assistance. Her fall this year after playing bingo resulted in a second broken hip, and we were amazed when the ER doctor said she was a good candidate for surgery. And she was. She has been getting stronger each time I see her.

What can explain her resiliency, her buoyancy, her ability to rebound? She possesses a life force or vital energy, the "qi" in Chinese medicine. Although she misses her loved ones who have predeceased her, her work here with the living is not done. And although most of us cannot imagine ourselves living to 100 years, we are happy that Sylvia has.

My mother has all of the qualities which my friend Linda Wolf calls "Full Woman": resilience, heart, wisdom, intelligence, compassion, experience, intuition, beauty, love. She embodies the qualities in one of my favorite poems by Bessie Anderson Stanley called "Success". She has lived well, laughed often, and loved much. She has gained the respect of intelligent people and the love of children. She has looked for the best in others and given the best she has had. Her life has been an inspiration to the many beneficiaries of her joy and love, and we wish her continued good health.

Happy 100th birthday, Mom. Many more to come. I love you to the moon and back and then some more.

Phyllis

## More Memories and Wishes

**from Family and Friends**



*Foxes (2002)*



*Fox's Den, Burlingham (1953)*

## Murray & Bea Fox

Dear Big Sister Simkie,

For all these years that we have been far from each other geographically, we have always remained close in each others' lives and thoughts. We miss that intimate contact, but you are always in our hearts and minds.

We often reminisce about the 'old days' and recently Murray had an early memory of when you both were very young He was about 11 yrs old, and you, his big Sis, called him over to the window to look across the street where the Dept of Sanitation had a substation. You proudly pointed out your 'Boyfriend', who was there on line waiting to receive a shovel to help clear away snow in the neighborhood. That Boyfriend was Murray Namm, the Love of your life! What a sweet memory.

Then there was the time when we were young adults and Murray and I were courting. He was working with your Dad in the family business getting an allowance as 'Pay'. He asked for more money in order to purchase an engagement ring for me, which led to a large argument and rejection. When Murray told you about the situation, you informed him that there were jobs available in Philly at the Budd Company Defense Plant and invited him to come stay with you. He took the offer, got a job as a machinist at the Plant, worked night shift for a period of time and accomplished his

goal. Then ironically, your Mom asked him to please return since Pop could not handle the work alone!

You were such a big help to us at a time when we were struggling to begin our new life together. We want you to know how very much we appreciated your loving kindness, even as you, too, struggled through those difficult times.

When I came into the family, I was young and nervous, but you really helped me acclimate into, what I then called, the Fox's Den. You and I immediately became fast friends, and you always referred to me as your 'sister'. That close relationship has endured throughout the years, even when things were difficult, even when things were good, even when the world was still in turmoil...and after these many years, even today!

There was much movement in the Fox family for all of us, and time slipped by but whenever we reconnected, it was as if NO time had passed at all. To me, that was always most comforting.

When I think of you, Simkie, and our many telephone conversations, in addition to catching up with family activities, you always had the latest 'off-color' joke for a laugh!...And you ALWAYS mentioned your age, saying "not bad for an old broad"!

\*\*\*KEEP IT UP, SIMKIE...WE ARE RIGHT BEHIND YOU...AND OUR LOVE IS WITH YOU ALWAYS\*\*\*\*

Love,

Bea and Murray



*New York (1937)*

## **Stuart Namm**

Ever since the death of my mother Lily, I have considered my truly wonderful Aunt Sylvia, to whom I could always relate my latest trouble, to be my "surrogate mother."

My father Paul and Murray Namm were brothers, children of Joseph (Joe) Namm and Rachel Davis Namm. One of my favorite stories concerns the wedding of Uncle Murray to Sylvia Fox. Three-year old me was the page boy or ring bearer , dressed in a mini tuxedo with formal "tails." Among the many wedding guests was my grandfather Joe's younger brother Ralph who was completely bald after an early bout of Scarlet Fever. After the wedding ceremony and during the dinner, some of the Namms and others, in a joking way, began throwing wedding candy at Uncle Ralph's bald head. Before long, what started out as a joke turned into an inter-family brawl. The police were summoned to this happy event but fortunately no one was arrested. Aunt Sylvia, who has a great sense of humor, loved to tell me the story, knowing that I would enjoy hearing it.

Since my father did not own a car when I was growing up, I saw my aunt and uncle and their children Phyllis and Ricky when they came to New York for visits. Aunt Sylvia's father owned a storefront business known as "Fox Electric," and I would often walk down Livonia Avenue just to visit and see all of the engines and electrical devices scattered throughout the shop. When they moved to the Catskill

Mountains, I was invited on several occasions to stay for a week or two with my aunt, uncle and cousins, and the many other Foxes, etc., who were there during the summer. I was made to feel like one of the Fox family. The best part of those trips was being with my Aunt Sylvia who was always full of life and full of stories.

When the Korean War broke out, I became a member of the ROTC at City College of New York which necessitated summer training at an Army base in Maryland, Fort A.P. Hill, not too many miles from where my aunt and uncle and family resided. I made my first trip to Maryland by Greyhound Bus with my very close friend, Alvin or "Vinny" as we called him. Almost immediately after our arrival, Aunt Sylvia made Vinny a surrogate member of the family, and he felt completely at home. It was then that Aunt Sylvia learned how much I loved baked ham and whenever I would visit thereafter, there was always a ham in the oven.

Much later in my life, while living in North Carolina with my current wife Nancy, we began to vacation on cruises out of Fort Lauderdale. On the first night, we would always stay at the La Quinta Inn in Hollywood, Florida where we would park our car during the length of the cruise, just a stone's throw from Aunt Sylvia's comfortable condo. We made a point on each occasion to spend a few hours with Aunt Sylvia. For me, it was the highlight of the trip from North Carolina to Florida. Of course, Aunt Sylvia would invite us to stay the night, but we knew that this would be too much of a burden for her, so we gently refused her generous offer.

Since Aunt Sylvia has been in New Mexico, I have missed seeing her regularly and speaking to her on the telephone. Nevertheless, knowing that my angel of a surrogate mother will soon be 100 years of age, God willing, gives me strength to accept what I can not change!



*Suitland (1950)*

## **Barry Roisman**

When I was born my parents made a decision to ask Sylvia to be my godmother. When she agreed, they probably didn't suspect that their decision made me the luckiest person in the world. Seven years later my mom died and, as I said at Sylvia's ninetieth birthday party, Sylvia went into full mom mode.

I am the person I am today because of the things I learned from Sylvia. She told me many times, you have an obligation to support your family in every way possible. Sylvia's generosity to her family is legendary. From the war years when I was a baby and she found room in her life for me and my father when my mom was in the sanitarium, to a time not that many years ago when a legal suit left me temporarily unable to get access to any of my money Sylvia was there.

Between these two there were hundreds of instances when she provided the support I needed. Once while I was living in Massachusetts and she was living in Maryland, preparing to move to Florida, she asked me if I wanted some of her furniture. Being a starving GI I told her that since I was going to be coming down to Maryland to drop off a car for Patricia (who was staying with Sylvia while she got treatment for cancer) I would love to have her furniture. It was my idea that I could rent a truck rather than go home by bus. Of course when I told Sylvia my plan she not only

paid for the truck rental but gave me money for the gas and tolls.



*Phyllis, Pauline & Sylvia (1957)*

## **Harmon Butler**

I have fond memories of dancing with my cousin Sylvia (Simkie) at a Fox family Bar Mitzvah in Brooklyn in 1951. She had an outgoing personality who loved to jitterbug and also to tell jokes. She was truly the life of any party.

Simkie continued the link with my paternal family that began with her Mother, my Aunt Pauline. Pauline was the sister of Philip Butler, my father who died when I was 22 months old.

Many years later, Aunt Pauline introduced me and my wife, Jill, to her son, Irving Fox, my first cousin. We enjoyed a warm relationship with Irving and Marcia until his passing in Delray Beach, FL.

We are grateful to Sylvia for introducing us by phone to her cousin Sylvan and Gloria Fox in 1999. Their condo on East 65th Street was just one block from ours. We remain in e-mail contact with Gloria and try to see her whenever we are in New York.



*Philadelphia (1943)*

## **Estelle Silverstein**

Among my pictures, I came across an old 8mm film of our cousin Sylvan's Bar Mitzvah, Aunt Sophie and Uncle Louie's son. I had it put to a DVD and though it is very old, short and fast, it is amazing to see. My mom Sarah and Aunt Simkie are dancing together and Aunt Simkie is doing a great shoulder shimmy. They were such cut ups at all the affairs.

She is just as I remember her growing up, not that she looks much different, she has aged beautifully. Aunt Simkie was such a part of my life growing up, it's hard to write one particular story, she is everywhere: in Philly, in Silver Spring, in Suitland, in Washington and of course up at the country at Burlingham. She used to make that joke saying the church bells were saying Mass is out, Mass is out except it was M'ass is out, M'ass is out. She was always my funny Aunt and I was crazy about her.



*The Namms' Kitchen (1957)*

**Bernie Fox**

One of my favorite memories is the story of the "Midnight Ride." Aunt Simkie was always telling me to drop in anytime I was in her neighborhood. I never took her up on it because I was never in that area.

However, in 1955 I was in the Air Force and had just returned from duty in North Africa. I was stationed at Shaw AFB in South Carolina. Because of my duty schedule I would sometimes wind up with five days off in a row. Two of my buddies and I decided to take advantage of the long down time to go home to New York. We hit the road right after work and headed north. About 1:00 AM we found ourselves in Maryland, tired and hungry. We decided to find a place to eat and rest awhile. But where? I said, "You know guys, we are near my aunt Simkie who tells me I have an open invitation." Of course they all told me I was crazy and you couldn't call up "old" people that time of night. We were about 19 at the time. I told them you don't know the Foxes.

We found a phone (pre cell phone days) and I made the call. Aunt Simkie insisted that we come right over. When we arrived she put out a spread of eggs and other foods which we devoured with gusto. Then she asked us to stay the night which we did.

When we hit the road again Aunt Simkie asked us to stop by on our way back. We didn't but you can believe my friends left with a new definition of "Family."



*Dancing & Talking (1960)*

**Jill Fox**

As a child and young adult, I always looked forward to any family get together if I knew Aunt Simkie was going to be there. Without fail, she gave me a warm greeting, was always interested in what I was up to at that time and never missed the chance to tell me that her home was open to me anytime I wanted or needed it. Although I was one of dozens of nieces and nephews, she made me feel like a most important part of that group.

Aside from her warmth, Aunt Simkie was also a fun loving person and I could count on her to be out on the dance floor having a ball and floating from person to person to have conversations with everyone she could.

I remember once, we were dressed up for a special occasion, probably a wedding, when one of our cousins noticed a guest we did not know and pointed out that she was wearing a low cut and revealing dress. Aunt Simkie looked over at her and replied nonchalantly, "If you've got it, flaunt it!" This made me laugh, but also taught me a life lesson. Be open-minded and not to be judgmental about others, but just be happy for them when they have something to show off about.



*American University (1963)*

## **Don Weiner**

What I remember most about my favorite aunt was her total acceptance of everyone. She welcomed all with open arms and always found the time and space to make people feel as if they were home.

One particular story comes to mind. I was about 18 years old and had just graduated from high school. It was the summer of 1963 and myself and a few friends decided we would like to visit Washington, DC. There were 6 of us in total and I contacted Aunt Sylvia to ask if we could come down from New York and spend a few days with her and Murray while visiting the area. There was no hesitation on her part, immediately saying yes to this request. She said she and Murray would be delighted to have us come down and stay at their house in Silver Spring. Not really sure if Murray even knew of the invitation.

We drove down and probably stayed for 4 or 5 days (my memory is not that clear on specifics). Aunt Sylvia was just an incredible host offering room and board for 6 young, healthy and starving young men. She treated everyone as if they were her own children and made all feel as if they were in their own homes. Food was plentiful and each and every young man feel in love with Sylvia. They just couldn't get over the fact that this woman made them all feel as if she had known them for their entire life.

It turned out to be a fantastic adventure because of the love and generosity of this remarkable lady. She is one of a kind and always has a special place in my heart.



*Experienced Grandma, Silver Spring (1968)*

## **Lea Schneider**

Sylvia...a force of nature...dynamic, enthusiastic and just plain fun.

There are so many positive memories of Sylvia and her Murray. But the one that stands out is "parent away from home." It was 1966 and we were moving to Washington, DC. I was really excited because my brother Larry and Phyllis would be in the same city with us for the first time. Vic would be teaching at the U of Maryland and we would be living in Silver Spring , the Namm's hometown.

But that was the year Larry took a job at the U of Washington in Seattle to teach.

So in steps my "parent away from home," Sylvia (and Murray of course). Sylvia eased the transition and her home was always opened to us. My oldest son Ben was born in DC in 11/11/1968 and there was Sylvia the grandmother, stepping in. It would have been more challenging and not as much fun without Sylvia sharing our new adventures in parenting and adjusting to a whole new life.

The other major event that happened during our stay in DC was the assassination of Martin Luther King in April of 1968 and the riots in DC that followed. It was a scary time in our history but I know we frequently talked to Sylvia, visited and felt comforted knowing family was nearby who

knew the city and could give us excellent advice in coping, especially expecting our first child.

So thank you Sylvia for being the best and most fun "parent away from home."

Happy 100th..here's to good health, continued joy in family sharing and love!

Love, Lea



*Patricia's Family (2010)*

**Patricia Roisman**

In 1970 I had surgery for breast cancer. The Air Force flew me to Washington DC for an evaluation. The decision was made for me to have radiation therapy, and I would have to stay at the hospital to get it. Aunt Sim and Uncle Murray came to the hospital and said that I should stay with them and drive to the hospital daily for treatment.

Not only did Aunt Sim allow me to live with them but she had Barry bring my kids to live with me while I was going through the treatment. What a wonderful gesture that was for me. I was going through a rough time but I was surrounded by loving , caring people. Not everyone gives of themselves like that. I thank God every day for having Aunt Sim in my life and for the love she has given me and mine.



*Sheridan Lakes (1972)*

## **Michael Selinker**

The first game I invented was at my Grandma Sylvia's condo in Hollywood. At the center of the complex, there was shuffleboard and bingo and lizards to chase. But most importantly, they had these little red tags at Grandma's place. Other than family, they were the reason to go to Florida.

The tag was the way to get through the gate to the pool. You had to wear a tag or you couldn't swim. As a child of colder climes, there was no way I wasn't going to use the pool. So as soon as I got to Grandma's place, I would change into my swimsuit and grab a tag.

In the morning, I would plunge into the pool. Usually I was the only one awake. Now, there was probably a rule about kids not swimming alone. If so, I didn't know it existed. There were a lot of rules, enforced by an enforcer named Tessie. And so I'd get ready to do laps—never dives, that was definitely against Tessie's rules—but the first thing I would do is throw my tag away.

The game was called Tag Drop. Like a pitcher I would wind up and chuck the tag all the way down the pool into the deep end. And then I would run into the water and power-swim toward the deep end with one goal in mind: catch the tag before it hit the bottom of the pool.

This is really, really hard. First you have to get enough of an arc with the tag so that it doesn't even hit the water until you're already in it. Then you have to cross enough distance on the surface to make up for the fact that the tag is slowly being dragged under. Finally, about two-thirds of the way across the pool, you must suddenly drop vertically—this is a great way to get a headache—at full extension so that maybe you can grab the edge of the tag string before it nestles on the bottom. And if you're nearsighted like me, maybe you can't see it all that well. But you tried anyway.

Anyway, I'm not sure I ever succeeded at this task, but I tried at least 100 times. Until the one time Grandma came out right after I got to the pool and saw me getting ready to hurl my tag into the air. Now, I want to say that these tags are a Big Deal. Losing one was costly, and losing ownership of the tags altogether—probably to Tessie—was costlier still. This is where most people would begin a stern lecture about how swimming is a privilege, not a right, and if they ever saw me blah blah I'm eight years old and I don't listen so good.

Not my Grandma Sylvia. She saw me playing with physics and probability and physical challenges, and winked at me to carry on like she'd never seen it. And so I chucked the tag into the pool and commenced the chase.

And that's how I invented my first game, Tag Drop.

Thanks, Grandma!



**SHERIDAN LAKES INSTALLATION** — Patricia Murphy's Restaurant in Ft. Lauderdale was the scene for the Sheridan Lakes Woman's Club installation ceremonies of new officers Wednesday.

From left are Mrs. Maurice Bishko, mistress of ceremonies; Mrs. Abe Raider, installing officer; and Mrs. Murray Namm, president.

*In the News (1973)*

**Rita Twardy**

When Ray and I moved into Sheridan Lakes, Sylvia and Murray treated us like family. She was like our mom. When we'd pull into our parking space, she'd be out there to greet us and see how we were. We enjoyed her company and her jokes.

I never heard Sylvia say a cross word about anybody. She would go out of her way to help people and Sheridan Lakes. She worked for many years at the condo, donating her time without expecting anything in return. One thing I'll never forget was when Mom dressed up as a cigarette girl with her tray of goodies, one of the sexiest gals. What a shape and personality she had.

I really miss her not being here. To us, she was always up. She never complained about pain. Many times she included us in dinners with her family. I know her most important thing in her life was her beautiful family and friends.

Love and kisses, Mom, and happy birthday.

Rita and Ray



*Marie & Sylvia (2010)*

## **Marie Poole**

Long before my dad and Phyllis were married, I became part of Sylvia's family. And with it came precious gifts: acceptance of who I was, unconditional love, and being part of a large family with a rich history.

I met Sylvia and Murray Namm in the late 1970's. Following the breakup of my parents' marriage, we spent a good deal of time at the big house on 20th Avenue East where my old babysitter Abbie was living with two other women: Joan, who lived upstairs, and Phyllis, who lived downstairs with her son Mike. I liked going there because Abbie helped me with fun projects, Mike was nice to me, and the stairs were fun to slide down.

On one particular afternoon, there was this older couple who was visiting. Phyllis explained that it was her mom and dad (Mike's grandma and grandpa). My memory of this first visit was that they gave me a present and treated me like I was their grandchild too. They were the nicest people I had ever met, and while I don't remember what the gift was, I remember that they gave me one.

And what followed over the years, after my dad and Phyllis were a couple, was that I started to get cards with \$10 checks enclosed. All the time. Like my birthday and Christmas, of course, but also Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, and Christian holidays I didn't even know existed.

I didn't know much about my benefactors, but I knew they were Jewish. And in the midst of all of the problems that I had growing up in a fractured nuclear family and feeling disconnected from both my mother's and father's extended families, here was this woman sending me cards for holidays I knew she didn't celebrate herself.

We Poole's became part of the Namm family and they a part of ours . Those \$10 checks from grandma were so much more valuable than the currency they represented. They were my connection to another life, another family, across the country. A family that chose me.

I once heard that true unconditional love is about inspiring and being inspired to be our best selves. In honor of Sylvia's 100th birthday, we should all try to live as she has taught us: to love unconditionally in our words and actions, building a legacy of our own best stories, and thereby inspiring more stories. A very smart lady was able to inspire much with her \$10 checks.



*Dining in Seattle (1981)*

**Joan Andersen**

100!! Boy, that's a big one.

It also does seem a lot of years since you sat in our living room on Capitol Hill in Seattle with the various housemates that came and went. I was always impressed by how you got along with everyone and made us all feel mellow. We always talked about how much you liked to dance and how you just kept on dancing on.

I was sorry that John wasn't able to spend any time with you—you could have danced at our wedding-- actually, his daughter who is a professional dancer did dance at the wedding and I bet you could have done a good dance with her. We'll think of you as an honorary grandmother and great-grandmother to John's daughters and grandchildren.

We'll set off a firecracker in your honor on your birthday.

Love,  
Joan



*Tethered but Raring to Go (2014)*

**Abbie Mitchell**

Dear Sylvia,

I'm not the least bit surprised you are two-steppin' into your 100th year. You've always been the one with the get up and go to make tracks for the nearest dance floor. I see from last November's email that you are now tethered to some oxygen but I know how portable those gizmos are these days and I can see you doing a quiet little jig around one, or at least thinkin' about it.

And even if you are, perchance, relegated to a supine position for hours on end, you can always entertain everyone with your sassafras and moxie, which I trust you haven't lost.

I hope you have a rootin' tootin' 100th birthday.

Love,  
Abbie



*Lopez Island (1986)*

## **Charlie Poole**

Before 1996, I didn't fly, and so did not accompany Phyllis on any of her visits to Florida. I got to know and love Sylvia and Murray during the '80s through their visits to Seattle.

There was one great occasion that I think of as the "Chinese" visit. Phyllis and I had recently taken a Chinese cooking class together. We bought enormous tiger prawns at Uwajimaya, the big Japanese market in Seattle's International District, along with a variety of oriental vegetables and fixings for fried rice. Murray said he had never seen prawns quite that big before. Sylvia enjoyed the food but I think what she liked most was watching the two of us cook it together.

But the most memorable visit of all was in 1986. By that time, Phyllis and I had been together for seven years and had become – of all things – sailors for the past two. We wanted to share our enjoyment of the San Juan Islands with her mom and dad but we knew that a lengthy trip in the cramped quarters of our tiny sailboat would make a pretty poor introduction.

That year, there was a Dixieland Jazz Festival taking place at Friday Harbor, on San Juan Island. We knew that Sylvia and Murray would enjoy the event but that the town would be packed. Instead of staying there, we chose Lopez,

a smaller, quieter neighboring island. Its secluded bay and virtually empty roads and paths had already made it a favorite of ours.

So we proceeded to get organized. The Lopez Island Resort had docks for the boat and rooms facing the bay. Phyllis would drive from Seattle with her parents and the younger Michael (Poole). They would take a car ferry from Anacortes to Lopez. I would bring the boat with the elder Michael (Selinker) serving as crew.

Somehow, we all got to the same place at about the same time! Sylvia and Murray had a room at the resort, as did Phyllis and I. The “Michaels” slept on the boat.

We spent several days going back and forth to Friday Harbor by the small ferry. The Jazz Festival was in the town center and we only had to walk up from the dock to be surrounded by music. That music was incredible and it filled the small town. Sylvia couldn't keep her feet still as the dixieland flowed around and over us. Our hands-down favorite was the Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band, a group that still plays all around the country.

Along with all the good music, great food and beautiful sunsets, we had a real opportunity to get to know one another better. I'm pretty sure that Sylvia and Murray considered me a part of the family well before this time, but I think this was when I really began to feel I was part of them.



*Ready for Company (1989)*

## **Reina Weiner**

It was 1989. My mother, Florence Segall, had died in Boynton Beach, Florida. I flew down to sort through her belongings and put her condominium home up for sale.

I sat alone alternately crying, laughing, remembering my parents, my sister and our family life together as I organized what I would donate, what I would keep as sweet remembrances and what beautiful clothes were worth passing on to someone I deeply cared about. Who would come to mind? Only one woman, Aunt Sylvia Namm. She and Uncle Murray Namm were the only two people I wanted to be with at such a difficult time.

I drove down to Hollywood, Florida to deliver the clothes, but for much more than that. Needing to feel the love and support of two people I held dear meant the world to me. Sylvia and I sat on the couch and Murray in his favorite chair opposite us - talking, listening and enjoying the simple act of being together. Of course, they were more than generous with their time, their love and plenty of food! I had to eat before I drove the long, arduous journey back to Boynton Beach - ha!

There are so many fond memories of Sylvia and her favorite sidekick, Murray, I could have chosen to write about, yet, I chose this one to honor and remember them

with great love and respect – the very same emotions they shared with me always.



*Rosalie & Family Visit (1993)*

## **Rosalie Oliveri**

My aunt Simkie's laugh and energy are remarkable. One time we visited her in Florida and she suggested we go out to eat at a deli. When we arrived we got out of the car to open her door and help her. She was already out and walking quickly ahead of us.

She told us many stories about her childhood. She showered love and affection on my Dad. I love her dearly.



*Dancing Grannies (1995)*

## **Larry Selinker**

To me, Sylvia Namm always showed an admirable vitality. I want to relate one experience that has stuck with me for almost 20 years. As background, my parents and Phyllis' parents became close, their long relationship developing independently of ours. This was especially true of Sylvia and Miriam who spent a great deal of time together over the years, if not in person then over the phone.

When Mike and Evon got married in 1995, Sylvia and Miriam of course spent time together at the wedding and the reception after in that incredible club. Then Sylvia got up to dance, and, DANCE SHE DID! My mom, who had long suffered from arthritis, was so amazed at Sylvia's vitality that she mentioned to me how much she admired her and how incredible it was that Sylvia could join in, more than keep up, and seemed so young.

Then suddenly, Sylvia comes over, pulls my slightly resistant mom over to dance, encourages her with that smile and dance they both did! One can see this in the attached photo, which could be called "The Dancing Grannies."

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*Sylvia & Max (1998)*

## **Carole Balkan**

Ed and I have many fond memories of Sylvia. I always called her my role model. Not many people could match her amazing determination and warmth.

Sylvia gave my father Max some wonderful years after my mother died. If I could have hand picked a second mother it would have been Sylvia. I think she and my father shared something special, including their great sense of humor. It gave me comfort that they had a number of years of happiness together. Whenever Ed and I visited from Los Angeles we were welcomed with open arms.

We remember their favorite restaurants and it was always fun to go with them. Sylvia complained that the pianist didn't begin playing when he was supposed to at Tropical Acres. She was disappointed that we didn't get to hear him. She cooked for us a number of times, remembered that Ed liked Belvedere Vodka and surprised him with a bottle. He was so touched that she thought of him. She would tell him to sit and "put your feet up," one of many endearing moments. Every trip to Florida was made more enjoyable for both of us because of Sylvia's hospitality, warmth and graciousness.

I remember her walking in the pool most days and her bingo nights. Those were sacred. At my niece Rachael's wedding in Miami, Sylvia and Max were the classiest couple

around. It is a joy to remember those times. I loved the stories she told us about her children and the “grands,” as well as other stories about her extended family. She spoke of her beloved husband, her work and her boss. I know she must have been a wonderful wife and mother and an asset to any employer.

I believe Sylvia will continue to inspire, as she inspired me with her optimism and strength. Her list of admirers is no doubt very long. That bustling, energetic woman with the shock of white hair remains in our thoughts always.



*On the grass with Stephanie & Gayle (1983)*

## **Stephanie Namm**

Grammie Namm (AKA Sylvia, GG and many more cool names). What a beautiful life she has had.

I hope to always live just like the inspiration in my life. She is one amazing lady and every time I have a bad day I just think of her. She has one of the best outlooks on life. I asked once "How do you live to be so old and healthy?" She said "Have lots of sex, and don't give a shit about what people think." That right there will definitely cheer you up on a bad day!

When she met my life partner, my wife Marge, about 10 years ago she instantly treated Marge as part of the family! That made me the happiest person ever and I will always think of my Grammie and remember how much love and open heart she had and still has.

One very fond memory I have of her and grandpa is when I was quite a bit younger, a fresh five years old. They were visiting our family in Albuquerque and I was playing waitress and I served them plastic pork chops and water! However, I was too small to reach the sink so funny me apparently got the water from the toilet! Well, only grammie knew but didn't keep it a secret from grandpa....so he got saved from drinking toilet water...hahaha...

Oh so many beautiful memories in just 33 years that I have had with Grammie Namm!



*Todd & Sylvia at Fox Family Reunion (2002)*

**Todd Roisman**

Aunt Sim has inspired me over my life. Growing up as an Air Force brat meant that I didn't get to know all of my aunts, uncles and cousins on a regular basis. We would see each other at weddings or special occasions but not long enough to get close and hear everyone's stories. Aunt Sim was my link to our family history. Almost everything I know about Bubbie and Zeyda came from stories that I heard sitting in Aunt Sim's living room. I heard stories about my Dad and Aunt Phyllis and Uncle Ricky as young kids and how important family is even when they aren't around you.

The most profound thing I learned from Aunt Sim was to follow your dream and to do what feels right to you. Not what people tell you is right for you. She told me about the time she showed up for a date with a friend wearing pants, in a time when women didn't usually wear pants. The boys refused to take them out as they were dressed, so they went out for the night on their own. She told me "Don't let anyone dictate what you wear or how you should act. As long as you are respectful people will learn to accept you as you are."

When I was in high school and deciding what career I wanted to pursue I worked in a factory one summer and also drove a frozen lemonade truck. The factory work was interesting to learn how things are made but I couldn't imagine doing it for more than one summer. The lemonade

truck was an instant failure and led me to believe that I should never work in food services. One of my true loves was theater and lighting design. To my parents this was a great hobby but not a great career path. When my dad took me to interview at North Carolina School of the Arts for college he was surprised that there was very little liberal arts education. It was all theater. He was concerned about what would happen if I didn't end up getting a real job in theater. What would I fall back on without a good liberal arts education? To my dad's credit he took the leap with me and supported me the whole way. I believe he too was influenced by Aunt Sim at that moment. To this day I tell young people to find a job that you love. It is more important than the money or the status. It is something you will have to do for a third of your waking hours as an adult.

I worked in theater and dance for 5 years after graduating. I loved it but when I moved to Los Angeles the company that I worked for hit hard times and wasn't able to pay us regularly. Los Angeles is a hard city to live in without a paycheck. I met an old friend of my dad's who worked in the film industry and was introduced to a new career. I thought a lot about Aunt Sim as I was making this transition. I felt like she would follow life where ever it went instead of trying to control the path. If you are doing something that you love then there are no bad decisions. Twenty years later and I am still in that career working for the same company. All of the important decisions I have made in my life were influenced by Aunt Sim's philosophy of follow your dream. It helps you when times are uncertain

or when things don't go your way. It encourages you to seek out the things that will make it right again.

My daughter Amelia is now 12. She is a straight A student in an advanced learning program at school but Kelli and I encourage her to do what she loves. She is an artist and she loves theater. I feel that same thing that I am sure my dad felt when I was choosing theater. We want our kids to live to their potential and choose good careers that will support them but I will have to give way to the advice that so profoundly affected my life. Follow your dream.

I know Aunt Sim was not the first to say it but I am glad she was there to instill it in me. I wouldn't be the person I am without it.

## *Ode to Sylvia*

*For my Aunt Sylvia whom I have adored through the years for her strong character, integrity, and intelligence. She has served as an outstanding role model for the women of our family and others. Her accomplishments as a wife, mother, daughter, sister, aunt, and friend are beyond words, and she will always hold a special place in my heart!*

*May your 100th Birthday be nothing less than celebratory and filled with love and beautiful light shining upon you.*

*Your loving niece,*

*Helene*



*Sweet, sassy, sincere, smart*

*Young at Heart*

*Loving and Lovely*

*Vivacious and versatile*

*Inspiring and independent*

*Adored by all who know you!*

*....a remarkable Woman*