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Congregation Beth Shalom
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Anna Kattler
Hana bat Shaul v'Shoshana
January 2, 1910 - October 22, 2005

Anna's granddaughter, Debra, got it right when she said how appropriate that her "Nana Anna" would pass away right before Simchat Torah. Simchat Torah is the time when we dance with the Torahs, and Nana Anna LOVED to dance. In some ways it seems that with the approach of the Festival of Simchat Torah we are being cheated out of our opportunity to properly sit shiva for Anna Kattler, whose passing we mark this afternoon. On the other hand, there is something comforting knowing that Anna has marked 95 Simchat Torah celebrations in her life, and even though she has physically passed from our lives, in the bigger scheme of things, the Jewish people are still here, and we are still dancing with our Torah scrolls.

Anna Kattler was born on January 2, 1910, in Tochin, Russia, not far from Odessa. She was the second daughter born to Rose and Shoel Miller. Anna's older sister, Gitl, would fall in love and make her life in Argentina. There are rumors that Anna had a brother who must have died in infancy. When Anna was only three, her father moved to Philadelphia, changed his name to Charles, worked as a sheet metal worker, and struggled over the next 11 years to raise the funds necessary to provide passage for Rose and Anna to join him in America. So in her critical childhood years, Anna did not know her father. Rose made ends meet by selling clay pots and produce of local farmers, kind of like a mini Farmer's Market. Anna, her sister and her mom were very poor. Breakfast consisted of a piece of herring and a potato. Sometimes the girls were so hungry that Rose would supplement the breakfast with a cup of two raw eggs which they would quickly ingest while working at the clay pot store. Dinner also consisted of another piece of herring plus a baked potato.

At age 14, Anna and her mother stole out of Russia. At the Polish border, mother and daughter were separated and Anna had to walk across a mountain on her own, before she was eventually reunited with her mother. They managed to cross the Baltic Sea to England where a steamer took them to their new home in Philadelphia. Anna remembers falling into her father's arms upon their dramatic reunion. Together, the Miller's made their home in South Philly.

When Anna was 17, Hyman Kattler entered her life through the local barber shop. It was at that barber shop that the people who worked there told young Hyman about a beautiful woman he had to meet. And beautiful she was! Photos from that era reveal an angelic face, an adoring smile, and eyes which seemed to suggest that you were the only person in the room. One photo in particular reveals Anna with a perfect complexion and gorgeous, thick hair. Much later, if you asked Anna the secret of her beauty, she would answer that it was her family.

Hyman and Anna immediately took to each other and dated for a year. At the end of one year, Anna was given a beautiful cocktail ring which in turn led to a Philadelphia wedding in 1927. They immediately moved in with Anna's parents, and later struck out on their own in Wynnefield. Hyman and Anna were married for just shy of seventy years, and ended only when Hyman passed away in the late 1990's. There's was a happy marriage. Anna was a devoted wife.

Hyman and Anna were blessed with two children. Mildred, known as “Mitzi”, was born on Yom Kippur, 1929. Hyman was so observant that he put Anna in a cab to deliver Mitzi while he walked to the hospital in order not to ride in a car on the holiest day of the year. Mitzi would marry Ted Dubois, who said that his mother-in-law, Anna, always treated him like a biological son. They would bless Anna with two granddaughters, Robbie and Sherri. Mitzi has since gone to her Eternal Home, but we are especially missing Ted and his family who were prevented from traveling up from Florida because of Hurricane Wilma. We mention them now so they will know how important they were in telling Anna’s story.

Howard, known as “Heshy” was born in 1934. He would marry Diane, and together bless Anna with three grandchildren: Debra, Steve and Pati. These wonderful five grandchildren, would in turn, bless Anna with eight great grandchildren: Matt, Ben, Marlee, Dani, Talya, Sara, Yoni and Maya. All these children, grandchildren and great children were an unending source of joy and naches for Anna, and she would never miss a recital, graduation, or any opportunity to celebrate her progenies successes. Of course she was always partial to her boys, like when she said: “here comes my grandson Steve and his family.” But she loved all her kids.

Anna was a devoted daughter. When her mother, Rose, became ill, she dropped everything to care for her. As a result, without active maternal supervision, Heshy became a school-yard kid. But he lived amid wonder neighbors, and the boys in the ‘hood are still among his best friends so many years later. In fact, some of them are here today.

From his childhood, Heshy remembers some of the delicacies that came out of his mother, Anna’s, kitchen. They included knishes, kreplach and gefilte fish. When her synagogue’s sisterhood approached Anna for the recipes for some of her most memorable dishes, she couldn’t help them. She would say *shitarien*, you stick in a little of this, a little of that. To remedy the situation, members of the cookbook committee staked out Anna’s kitchen, and as she went about her cooking they would stop her as she added each ingredient, and measure it out, before allowing her to continue. Her grandchildren have done what they could to replicate their Nanna Anna’s cooking, but have often met with culinary disaster...like Debra’s gefilte fish, by her own admission, “hard like rocks.” Nanna Anna, the diagnostician listened to what her granddaughter had done, and delivered the verdict: “too much matzah meal Doll!” Her wonderful cooking formed the glue that kept her family together, be it Rosh Hashana dinner, after *tashlich*, or Passover *sedarim*. In later life with her husband, Hyman, in Florida, Rose could be *kibitzing* with her girlfriends by the pool, by come 12 noon she had to excuse herself to prepare lunch for her husband. With some pride she would say that “my Hyman only eats by ‘Anna’s Kitchen.’” And when people wanted to know where was that new trendy eateries called “Anna’s Kitchen”, she would have to explain it was wherever Anna Kattler was cooking the next meal. Anna also enjoyed cooking for her grandson, Steven, the doctor. His wife always knew when he had taken a meal by his Nanna, because he would smell of garlic, Nanna Anna’s favorite ingredient.

Anna loved to look good, a real *sheyna meyd*. She loved to wear jewelry and make-up, her hair was nicely styled, her clothes, especially those stunning suede suits with matching boots she wore at bar mitzvahs, fashionable, in short, Anna always liked to get *fahpitzed!* Nothing made her sadder than having to part with her white mink coat with the hot pink fluorescent paisley lining when she moved to the warmer climes of Florida....it killed her that the sleeves were too short for Debra.

Anna loved to dance, she was a *tantsa*. After her Hyman would go to bed at his predictable 8 p.m., Anna was ready to go clubbing when the couple made their home in Atlantic

City. Whatever the style of dance, Anna was up for it. Even up until two months ago, at the Kutz home, where Anna spent the last part of her life, whenever there was music, Anna could be counted on to be dancing. If Anna's two children, five grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren are the secret to Anna's beauty, then maybe it was her dancing which was the secret source of her longevity. So two nights from now, when they bring out the Torah scrolls for Simchat Torah, take a scroll into your arms in memory of Anna Kattler, and keep dancing!

*Zichrona l'vracha...*May her memory be for a blessing.