

Aunt Rose: A Memoir

Daniel J. Elazar

At twelve noon, Central Standard Time, Gimel b'Adar, 5735 (February 14, 1975), humanity in the United States, Minneapolis, and the Jewish people suffered an irreparable loss with the passing of Rose Barzon Goldman. "Aunt Rose," as she was known to three generations, was one of the unsung figures of our age—a woman who left her imprint upon several generations; an imprint which is felt in more than one corner of the world even now, all this with few beyond those who knew her well being the wiser.

Rose Goldman was a friend to humanity. She began her life with great love for humanity as a whole that expressed itself in a very deep socialism. She ended her life not loving humanity less but deeply disappointed with both socialism and the potentiality of humanity in the mass, and only willing to love people as individuals.

From the time she was a teenager until World War II, Aunt Rose was proudly a socialist, a Labor Zionist to be exact—but a sensible one. As a Zionist she was never one who could succumb the least bit to the blandishments of the Communists, whom she not only understood to be enemies of her people, but enemies of all people. When she died, there were still a few ex-Communists in Minneapolis who had tried to approach her on the subject of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, the salad days of the American left's love affair with Moscow, and who recalled the lash of her response. Yet for the last twenty years of her life she firmly declared that she was no longer a socialist, that she did not believe the human race to be capable of socialism or that socialism would be good for it.

In her last few years, disappointment piled upon disappointment for a woman who took humanity seriously and for whom world affairs went to the heart. Despite myriad family satisfactions, she could not rest as she saw the dreams of her youth debauched in an increasingly degenerate society. So her love for humanity became more than ever a simple caring for people.

It was Aunt Rose who taught me what equality really means: how you can hire a woman to come in and help with the housework without demeaning her or yourself if, as my aunt did, you recognize the fundamental equality of people and the fundamental nobility of any work well done. How different was the relationship between my aunt and those who over the years came in to help her with the housework from the relationships between matron and maid that we see in so many households and in so many parts of the world. When we all sat at the same table for lunch, we did so neither ostentatiously nor begrudgingly, but simply because that was the way that Aunt Rose understood the world.

Really Jewish and American

Aunt Rose was born in Bessarabia and was brought to the United States in 1903 after the Kishinev pogrom. People born in Bessarabia do not say they were born in Russia or Rumania, the formal possessors of sovereignty over Bessarabia for most of this century, or in Moldova, the present successor state for most of Bessarabia, but in Bessarabia, a province that was under Ottoman suzerainty (the name is from the Turkish for a string of border fortifications) until the beginning of the nineteenth century and never quite linked itself with either of its later masters.

She always claimed that she could remember the pogrom, the people hiding, the pogromchiks running in the streets, even though she was only two years old when it occurred. Indeed, it could well have left an indelible memory on the mind of a precocious child. She frequently told us what it had been like to be in Kishinev during the pogrom and proudly produced a torn megillah, a scroll of Esther, which her father, my grandfather, had picked up from the street after the pogrom had subsided. When I was a teenager she gave my mother, her sister, that megillah, and my mother and father went to a sofer, a scribe, and had it completed so that we could again use it on Purim as a sign of the indomitable continuity of the Jewish people.

Whatever her fleeting memories of Kishinev, Aunt Rose's real memories were those of the United States and, most particularly, of turn-of-the-century Minneapolis. My aunt became a great American patriot, loving the United States as few people whom I have known.

When she married Sam Goldman, she entered into a world in which love of America was a dominant motif, but she brought that love with her to the marriage.

My uncle was a veteran of both world wars, volunteering as soon as he reached the minimum age in World War I (he never got farther than Fort Snelling in his own backyard) and then securing a special act of Congress to allow him to enter the army overage at the beginning of World War II through the good offices of then Senator Joseph Ball. I remember looking over my uncle's shoulder as a boy of eight early in April 1942 to read the dispatches (ultimately untruthful) from Bataan. Two months later, he was in the army on his way to the west coast, where he was assigned to coastal defense batteries of the U.S. Coast Artillery for the duration.

My uncle had been active in veterans groups since the First World War, and my aunt became active with him, a devoutly Jewish lady who developed rare attachments to veterans and their wives of all backgrounds, from all groups throughout the State of Minnesota. My mother and father both loved America deeply, and there are many qualities of patriotism that I learned from them both, but in a fundamental sense I learned to love the United States from Aunt Rose and Uncle Sam, who not only loved the country in a general way but were involved in that large world outside the Jewish community, dealing with questions of civic life on a day-to-day basis.

For years, until I was in my twenties, I looked upon my aunt and uncle as quintessential Americans. Only later did I discover that my aunt, with all her love for the United States, felt deep in her bones that Jewish life in America had a certain tenuousness, not because of the failings of America, but because of its overpowering attractiveness. As a result, one part of her had to keep alive certain reservations about her own total commitment to the American ideal.

I recall now, as I write this memoir, how my aunt and uncle introduced me to my earliest memories of life in the United States as it was lived in Minnesota. They took us to their camp on Big Island in Lake Minnetonka, established by the State of Minnesota for its veterans after World War I and to which they faithfully repaired every summer and most weekends until the late 1950s, when her health prevented them from continuing to rough it at that relatively primitive campsite.

The last time I saw Aunt Rose outside of the hospital, in September 1974, I took her and Uncle Sam for a ride, and we went out to Lake Minnetonka. When we started out, I thought it would be just another jaunt to see the fall foliage – something we had done together so often – only to discover that her poor health and my uncle's failing ability at the wheel had kept them from enjoying the pleasures of even seeing their beloved lake for a longer time than they cared to remember. With great delight, my aunt summoned up her utmost strength to enjoy once again the bays and coves of that great natural treasure that is now on the very doorstep of Minneapolis. In driving around, we reminisced about how far away from the city the lake had seemed in earlier years and how close it now was.

When we drove up to the docks at Excelsior, Aunt Rose gazed sadly for the last time at the amusement park, then being torn down, to which she had come so often as a young girl, and then across the lake to Big Island. She delighted in the fact that on the dock we met one of her old friends, a Swedish-American veteran of the First World War, one of the last of the great Swedish migration to Minnesota, who had remained on Big Island as its caretaker and who had brought the camp boat over for supplies. With great pleasure she reintroduced me and introduced my own family to him, showing us off to a comrade with whom they had spent so many good times. As they stood there, thinking and reminiscing about old friends long gone, she gazed wistfully at the waters and with great effort managed to walk out on the dock to get a bit closer to the Big Island she could not physically manage to visit again.

This American side of my life with Aunt Rose and Uncle Sam comes back to me now in a series of flashing memories: A three-year-old boy holding a big fish while climbing out of his uncle's rowboat onto the island. A picnic one October in the 1950s with my aunt and uncle and George and Helen, two of their friends from that world on the bank of Mille Lacs, with the wind blowing and the promise of snow in the air, the little campfire and the cans of cold beer. My brother standing up in my uncle's rowboat in defiance of orders, and my uncle tumbling him into the water to teach him a lesson. Two of their Jewish veteran friends, Ben and Morris, sitting at our table on Friday night talking of Big Island and that company of veterans, and, finally, the parade of veterans from two



Sam and Rose Barzon Goldman

(courtesy of Daniel J. Elazar)

wars, marching through the grass up the hill to the dining hall on Big Island. In the summer of 1973, I was at one last affair with my aunt and uncle and their veterans, the annual picnic of his American Legion post, where in a time of Watergate, Vietnam, and student protest, men still played baseball with their boys, children still raced in potato sacks, and we could eat and drink together on the banks of a lake in the warm Minnesota sun.

My aunt and uncle were the ones who taught me that veterans organizations were not simply men play-acting to relive old days in camp and field (although they were that too), and that the American Legion was not simply a symbol of reaction (as many of my "professional liberal" teachers and friends would have it), but, rather, that these were Americans expressing themselves in their own decent ways, loving their country, and prepared to understand and love a Jewish family that brought its kosher food to their picnics. For fifty years and more, Aunt Rose ate fish rather than steak or venison at the veterans' dinners—a woman who was clearly, if unostentatiously, Jewish through and through, even when serving in one important post after another in the Legion auxiliary or that of the Disabled American Veterans. My aunt taught me by example how to live in two cultures, how to be a part of both, in a ways that no theologian or philosopher could.

Mostly Minnesotan

My aunt's American links were, first and foremost, links to Minneapolis and Minnesota. She loved her city and her state, and communicated that love to a young boy whose family moved him away from his native land at a tender age, and who came to feel that he has been in exile ever since. Within Minnesota, Minneapolis had her commanding loyalty. Once, when I was a brash young college student, I said to my aunt, "You know, Aunt Rose, it's really an accident that I was not born in Saint Paul, where my parents were living at the time." My aunt looked me squarely in the eye and said, "That was no accident." Somehow St. Paul did not quite have it for her, it was not as pretty as Minneapolis, it did not have the lakes. Worse, St. Paul was fusty (this from a woman who found it difficult to accept anything modern in the way of technology or architecture—

even Kleenex), and, perhaps most telling, its Jewish community was somehow not quite as Jewish because it was not quite as Jewishly learned in her years. This last was—naturally—a reflection upon the city as a whole. Like most Minneapolitans, my Aunt tolerated St. Paul. She knew, of course, that since it was in Minnesota, it was better than any city outside of the state, but within the family, so to speak, it definitely occupied a distant second place.

My aunt and my mother grew up on the corner of Eighth and Marshall avenues in northeastern Minneapolis, where my grandfather had a grocery store and the family had rooms in the back of the store. My mother was actually born in those rooms. Later, she and my uncle lived on the old North Side, the famed Jewish neighborhood of Minneapolis, first on Elwood near Sixth Avenue, which later became Olson Highway. (I remember when they widened it in 1940 and how they moved the big stone Sumner Branch Library back so that it would survive the widening.) During World War II, when my uncle went into the army, she moved in with the Hinitz family, good friends who lived at Fifteenth and Penn. After my uncle returned they bought a little bungalow on Newton half a block north of Plymouth Avenue. When the North Side ceased to be viable, they moved to an apartment complex just inside of Minneapolis at the border with St. Louis Park near Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard. Neither would think of actually living outside of the Minneapolis city limits, so they found a way to stay in the city and still be part of the new Jewish community in St. Louis Park.

My aunt got immeasurable pleasure from the fact that I loved Minneapolis and Minnesota so much, and she never failed to comment on it. When I had polio in 1953, and expressed the hope that I would soon be able to see the “Golden Valley” where Basset’s Creek passes just to the west of North Minneapolis, she sent my uncle out to take a picture of the valley to send it to me. I have that picture somewhere, but more important I have the vision of that valley at the end of Plymouth Avenue as part of my aunt’s “domain.”

As good Minnesotans, active in civic life, my aunt and uncle knew all the state’s politicians and leaders from the time of my childhood and before. Mention Floyd Olson, the great New Deal governor of the state, and she would tell us stories of how he was a North Side boy, how he grew up in a Jewish neighborhood at the turn of the

century and served as the Shabbes goy for numerous Jewish families, learning Yiddish in the process. My aunt used to tell me with relish how he had embarrassed the B'nai B'rith by appearing before them to speak and addressing them in his good Yiddish to their great discomfiture, since at that time the organization was still composed mainly of old guard German Jews, their children and grandchildren, for whom Yiddish was the "jargon" of the Jews from Eastern Europe, an embarrassment.

My uncle had campaigned for and with Olson and had been a precinct committeeman for him. Mention Hubert Humphrey and my uncle would tell how he had worked alongside him from the time of his mayoralty campaign, back in 1944, following him in his career as it moved upward. When I first met Humphrey in person at a meeting of the Cook County Young Democrats in 1955 when I was at the University of Chicago, I had but to mention my Uncle Sam's name and his face lit up.

My aunt and uncle were supporters of the Farmer-Labor Party. I would be surprised if they had not been. My aunt, I know, voted for Norman Thomas at least four times. She distrusted Franklin D. Roosevelt, both as a socialist and as a Jew. How right she was in her distrust of FDR later became apparent to me, even if I could not agree with the way she manifested it.

After the events of the early 1950s, my aunt became increasingly disillusioned with all politicians. Her high moralistic standards put even the ones she had loved in compromising positions in her eyes. A moralistic Minnesotan to the end, even the slightest movement away from the straight-and-narrow path of public service was enough to bring a great hurt. In the last few years, even Hubert Humphrey was tarnished in her eyes by his pursuit of the presidency with such avidity.

The Most Authentic Jew

But with all this, first and foremost, my aunt was a Jew, an authentic Jew, perhaps the most authentic Jew I knew for the first two decades of my life. Not that she was any more Jewish than my parents, but she had the capacity of going to the heart of the matter and putting

her fingers on what was authentic and what was phoney in Jewish life, no matter what the occasion.

My aunt attributed this Jewishness of hers to the efforts of her parents, frequently contrasting their ability to communicate their Jewishness to her and to my mother with the inability of her husband's parents, who were equally if not more devout, to communicate the same feelings and commitments to their eight children. My aunt would put it this way, "Tell me, Daniel, what was the difference? How did my parents know what to do with two young girls to make them so Jewish, when Bubbie and Zadie Goldman, who were really far more observant, failed so completely in the task? How did they do it? After all, my father died when I was a little girl and your mother was even younger, and my mother died when I was nineteen and your mother thirteen. Tell me, how did they do it?"

The question was one of genuine puzzlement, though she would proceed to narrate the answer, "You know my parents, your grandparents, had to keep their grocery store open on Shabbes and Yontif. The exigencies of making a living required them to do so, but they never let us little girls work in the store on those days. Other parents would have made their children work on the grounds that the children were not yet required to observe the mitzvot [commandments] and therefore it would spare the adults a transgression. My parents felt that children had to learn not to work on Shabbes, that if they had to, it should be on their heads and not on their children. So Friday nights, we would retreat into the back room, light the candles as if Shabbes had come for all of us, and then my father would go back to tend the store. On Tisha B'Av they would fast all day, working in the store the whole time without eating, although they saw to it that we did have something to eat. In those days, my father, your grandfather, used to take his horse and wagon to make deliveries out on the prairie, where Fridley is today, but he never delivered on Shabbes, saying that he might have to work but that his horse did not."

While we always had first-night Seder at the Goldmans, Aunt Rose reserved second-night Seder for herself, a Barzon family Seder, as it were, with relevant Goldmans and Elazars attached, and such guests as she and Uncle Sam wanted, usually one or two of my uncle's Jewish veteran associates, one or two individuals or couples associ-

ated with the Minneapolis Talmud Torah who did not have family in the area. My aunt continued her Seders until Harriet and I moved to Minneapolis in 1963. Then we assumed the function for the two years we were in town, and when we moved to Philadelphia took it with us. After that, Aunt Rose and Uncle Sam used to come to our Seder, the burden having grown too much for her.

She told me so many stories. I always promised myself that I would sit her down and record them, but except for one attempt which did not go well (she was too spontaneous to respond to a formal taping), I never did, and now it is too late, and I can remember but a few of them. But she evoked for me an image of two grandparents whom I never knew but who had an instinct for making their children Jews.

The last conversation we had on the subject, on the Sunday before she died, revolved around a letter she had received from my daughter Naomi, written in Hebrew, which gave her a great, great thrill. She said to me then, "When I read your daughter's letter, I think of my parents and I thank God for what they did, for making us what we were, so that your daughter would have that feeling."

My aunt's Jewishness was authentic, both in the standards she demanded of herself and of others. She knew what was phoney in Jewish life, and she knew what could be changed for new times in the spirit of Jewish tradition. Apparently, there is a strong streak of this in our family. Her grandfather has been raised in a Hasidic family, but had broken with the Hasidim because he could not accept the authority of the rebbe and was repelled by the rebbe's *tish*, the custom of ordinary Hasidim scrambling for leftovers from his Sabbath meal. My grandfather, her father, maintained that combination of Jewish commitment and hard-headed Jewish independence, allowing himself to make hard choices regarding the kind of Jewish life he would lead and his children would be taught to lead in the New World. He did not make the mistake of trying to preserve everything he had known in the old country. So, too, he certainly did not accept the view that in the New World, things were so different that whatever he or his children felt was inconvenient and wanted to drop was OK. Rather, he laid the foundation for two young girls to be able to build an authentic American Jewish life for themselves.

My aunt spent more than fifty years exposing the phoniness of the

Jewish life she saw around her. She devoted her life to efforts at its betterment as a builder and as a critic. She learned to speak Hebrew as a girl in the Minneapolis Talmud Torah. No summer camps, no Israel trip, just a long trip from their combination home and store at Eighth and Marshall, across the Mississippi River to Freemont Avenue on the North Side where the Talmud Torah was located. Summer and winter, five days a week for years, plus services on Shabbat, where she acquired a solid working knowledge of the language, as did my mother.

In later years, my aunt became a major symbol of the Talmud Torah and widely known as its staunchest champion. She was a member of the institution's first or second class, although, for reasons that had to do with the death of her father, she did not graduate. On the fiftieth anniversary of the graduation of her class, they formally graduated her, this after she had spent the intervening years as a linchpin of the Talmud Torah alumni and ladies auxiliary, and over twenty-five years as Talmud Torah librarian. She was a living, walking encyclopedia of the history of the Talmud Torah. There was material in her head that only she knew, which, since I did not record it, is now lost to posterity. Many times she told me of how Mar (Mr.) Even (Elijah Even, the first principal) established a pattern of disciplined dignity in the school, and about how Dr. (George J.) Gordon built it into the greatest afternoon Hebrew school in the United States.

Her own life exemplified the great influence of the Talmud Torah on Minneapolis Jewry. She was a founder of the Talmud Torah alumni. Daas, the study group which her alumni group founded, met regularly every month for over half a century. As part of the TT alumni, she participated in the founding of Beth El, Minneapolis' leading Conservative congregation, in 1924, which grew out of the alumni services.

Over the years, she and Rabbi David Aronson (who was brought from Duluth to be the congregation's first rabbi) developed a truly loving relationship. Our two families became very close to one another, but that did not preclude her from being willing to challenge "Rabbi's" actions when she deemed it necessary to do so. Quite to the contrary, she felt it incumbent upon her as a Jew and a friend to do just that. When Rabbi Aronson retired forty years later and left the

community, there was a reception tendered in his honor. When my aunt came up to him, he said to her very quietly, "Thank you, Rose, for being my conscience all these years."

Aunt Rose was the conscience for many Jews of all ages. Ask Rabbi Mordecai Lifeman, who once told me that, when he came to Minneapolis during the years he was a seminary student, he went first to "Rosie" for her to knock the seminary-acquired rabbinical pomposity out of him. Ask Gerald Bubis, the founding head of the HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Studies in Los Angeles. Ask Arthur Oleisky, the Conservative rabbi of Tucson. Ask a hundred other Jews who held or still hold key positions in Jewish communal life who grew up under her influence. And ask the several dozens, if not hundreds, of young girls whom she taught in Sunday School for many years.

My aunt was a great teacher, although she did not deem herself worthy to teach in the Talmud Torah itself. She would say, "I know enough to teach Sunday School, but I would not dare follow in the footsteps of my great teachers." Instead, she became the Talmud Torah's librarian and held that position for over twenty-five years. In that capacity she taught generation after generation of children who came into the library not only how to find books but how to find wisdom. Generations of students found her the best part of the TT, with her penetrating ideas and her ability to get to the heart of the matter and tell the truth. For them, she became a legend in her time. One can go to any part of the world and mention Rose Goldman, and if there are former students of the Minneapolis Talmud Torah present, their eyes will light up.

My aunt was not what you might call a progressive librarian. She loved books and communicated that love. She was careful and methodical, she tried to keep up with the literature and did. She was a learned librarian and not a technician. But she saw her principal role not in revamping the system by adding fancy mechanisms but in teaching and counseling class after class of children who came into her domain.

My aunt's Jewishness was eminently practical. She had an instinct as to where and how to innovate, and when to leave well enough alone. She introduced Hanukkah decorations into the American Jewish community on the grounds that Jewish holidays should be made

pretty. She always said she had done this, and when I got older and was able to check around, it seems that she really did. Others saw it as an imitation of the goyim, but in doing so, misread the whole point.

My aunt could never tolerate foolish imitations of anybody, reserving her sharpest thrusts for rabbis who put on ministerial airs. There was a standing argument between her and Uncle Sam that lasted throughout their fifty years of marriage (less one month) as to whether the Jewish War Veterans should fire rifle volleys at the funerals of their departed comrades. My uncle, a veteran through and through, wanted that rite and supported it against all comers; my aunt, on the other hand, despite her support for veterans' organizations, saw this as "goyish militarism."

She supported Rabbi Aronson, but let even "Rabbi" overstep his bounds—let him criticize the Talmud Torah, or seek to subvert it (which she always felt that he wished to do), and she was on him like a flash. And he not only respected her for it but perhaps even feared her a little bit, because she spoke the truth.

Her Zionism and Israel

More than anything else, my aunt's Jewishness was manifested in her Zionism. She was a Zionist from childhood and, indeed, almost moved to Israel (then Palestine) after World War I after her parents had died. Her Uncle David, a *halutz* (pioneer) then briefly in the United States, was about to take his two young nieces back with him when it was discovered that my aunt had been inadvertently left off her father's citizenship papers and hence was not an American citizen. With the unsettled status of Palestine at the time, her uncle would not risk her future, so went on alone. While she soon remedied the matter, the opportunity for aliyah passed, never to return.

She and Uncle Sam went to Israel as often as they could—four times, all told, saving her librarian's salary for the trip. Once she was so sick that she had to travel first class on the plane in order to be able to make the trip at all, this despite their truly modest means. The last trip that she made, early in 1974, undoubtedly shortened her life. We still ask ourselves how her doctor could have permitted her to go, but I know that, had she been given the choice between a few more years with no more visits to Israel and a shorter time

with that last trip, she would have chosen the trip without hesitation. She manfully keep up with the group throughout the trip, but it wore her down, and just before leaving, she suffered the heart attack that would ultimately kill her, although neither she nor we knew it at the time.

The trip back to the States must have been sheer agony for her. When she arrived in Minneapolis she was hospitalized immediately, and for nearly a year she was in and out of hospitals, with her heart consistently deteriorating. Still, the very last words she said to me when I left her on the Tuesday before she died, when she thought that she would not see me before I returned to my family in Jerusalem (and may even have felt in her bones that she would never see me again) were, "Tell them in Israel that somehow we will be back, that they should wait for us and expect us, because we will be back again."

Prominently displayed on the wall of her home was an old piece of Bezalel art work, perhaps one of the first pieces of work to come out of that Zionist effort to revive Jewish art in the Jewish homeland, an inlay of what seemed to be mother of pearl on wood with the motto, *HaAsita HaYom Ba'ad Amcha v' Artzecha?* ("Have you done today for your people and your land?"). There is not a day that passes that I do not see that plaque before me and ask myself that question. Aunt Rose told me that on one of her trips she went to Bezalel and described the plaque to them. They told her that it was indeed a very rare piece and they had none like it. She immediately promised it to them in her will and brought it back to them on her next trip.

My aunt's Zionism lasted through thick and thin. In the 1920s and 1930s and through the 1940s she was a staunch Labor Zionist, an active member of Pioneer Women, and a friend of the "greats" of the Labor Zionist movement—those who later became the leaders of Israel. She used to tell how she took the late Levi Eshkol, Israel's third Prime Minister, to see the movie *Cinderella* when he was once in the Twin Cities in those pre-state years and had a free afternoon. She and Golda Meir were friends from the old days, and until Golda became Prime Minister and my aunt no longer wished to intrude upon her, they invariably saw each other whenever my aunt and uncle were in Israel. Eliezer Kaplan, David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Sharett, all of them had passed through my aunt's portals. More-

over, through her close ties to men like Dr. George J. Gordon and A. N. Bearman she met the other greats of the Zionist movement, and could tell personal stories of Chaim Weizmann and Vladimir Jabotinsky, Nahum Sokolow and Shamaryahu Levin—the whole galaxy of the founders of the Jewish state.

In the 1950s, when she ceased being a socialist, she also lost interest in Pioneer Women. She never really was active in Zionist circles after that. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Israel itself became something of a disappointment to her as she began to perceive its harsher realities. That hurt her more than even she could express and may have also helped shorten her life, but she never wavered in her basic faith or commitment. She would gladly have moved to Israel had Uncle Sam been in a position to adapt to a new life there.

A Last Word

My aunt and uncle had no children of their own. They were foster parents to Joe and Ruth Sugerman, a brother and sister whom they took into their home in the years immediately prior to World War II, raising them through their teens. But, when the war came, they both went away, one to serve in the armed forces, and the other to do war work on the West Coast, and neither returned. As it was, only a great act of charity had led Aunt Rose and Uncle Sam to take in those particular children in the first place. There was little in common between them and they drifted apart, one of the many disappointments in my aunt's life.

As a result, my brother and I became the children she never had. We were far closer than is normally the case between aunt and nephews. Our children, in turn, became her grandchildren for all intents and purposes. If she took some pride in our achievements, it was little enough that we could bring to her for all she brought to us.

We buried Aunt Rose on a gray Sunday in February. The temperature was 32 degrees, and everyone was pleased that at last a thaw had come to the Twin Cities after a hard month of winter. The funeral cortege drove from the new Beth El (which earned both her disapproval as a building and her pleasure for the facility it gave her in overcoming her deafness to enable her to participate in the services) down France Avenue, past the home of her niece Joan, where we

were to sit shiva, to her apartment at the very edge of Minneapolis (she and Uncle Sam were such Minneapolitans that even when they had to move from her beloved North Side, they found a place legally within the city limits, although, for all intents and purposes, it was part of suburban St. Louis Park), then east on 30th Street to Lake Calhoun, south along the lake routes which we had traversed so many times to enjoy the beauties of Minneapolis, to her great pleasure, and then down to the cemetery where her parents were buried. It was a gray day, and the cemetery, sitting on flat land in the heart of Richfield, looked like a scene on the open prairie, out of a nineteenth-century novel. My aunt was returning to that prairie, amidst the Jews who had built a great community—a mother city in Israel—on that prairie during the course of her lifetime.

People said that Rabbi Abelson's eulogy of her was the best eulogy he had ever delivered. That was because he, too, loved her. Yet had she been standing with us, she would have given the funeral no more than a mixed review. She would have been gratified to see the people who came, representing a cross-section of her life, friends spanning three or four generations, but the service would have provoked her usual response to innovations and gimmicks which she so deplored. My mother and I deplored them for her. In her memory, we could do no less. But then, as Rabbi Abelson said, "She was the last angry woman."

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