

SIX MINUTE MEMOIR

THEME: INHERITANCE

DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 4, 2018

My full name is Lyla Kathleen Joey Miklos.

Lyla is in honour of my Godmother Lyla Weinsheimer.

Kathleen is the name of my Father's Mother. Grandma Miklos.

Joey is short for Josephine. My Mother, Susan's, Mother. Granny Jo.

When my Mother turned eighteen Granny Jo threw her clothing into a garbage bag, kicked her out of her house, and stated she was no longer her responsibility.

Susan went to her High School, sought out her favourite teacher, Carl Weinsheimer, and broke down in tears. Carl and his wife Lyla, both teachers, took Susan in for the next four years.

They housed, clothed, and fed her and paid for her post-secondary education at Humber College where she studied journalism.

Shortly after graduating from Humber Susan was offered a job with CBC Radio in Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island, North West Territories. The arctic is expensive, so she needed another source of income.

My Grandpa Miklos interviewed Susan at the Sutton Place Hotel in Toronto to be a waitress at the establishment he owned, The Frobisher Inn. What she didn't know at the time was that my Grandpa wasn't really looking for waitresses. He was actually screening potential wives for his son and appropriate breeding stock for his eventual Grandchildren.

I was born in 1974 in Frobisher Bay. My parents were both raised Roman Catholic. Even though they were living in sin they insisted on having their love child be baptized by a Hungarian Catholic Priest.

During the Ceremony the Priest rudely stated “Lyla is NOT a Hungarian name” to which my Godmother saucily replied “No, but it is MY name.”

Lyla was a very strong, fierce and independent woman. She was disappointed when Susan told her she was leaving her job with the CBC to marry the Boss’s son.

A rift formed between Lyla and Susan, when my Mother met a Jehovah’s Witness doing missionary work in the arctic and converted. Lyla felt Susan had joined a cult.

Sadly the rift between my Mother and Godmother became so vast that my visits to Lyla and Carl’s came to an abrupt end.

In my twenties my Mother and I would also go through a period of estrangement. We reconnected when my Mother’s sister Teri reached out to me. Susan was in the final stages of breast cancer.

It was a shock to see my Mother. Frail. Thin. Skin and bones. Jaundiced. Weak. Speaking in a whisper. Even more stunning was the first question that came out of my Jehovah's Witness Mother's mouth: "How was Hamilton Pride this year Lyla?" A few weeks later I would be in the hospital room next to her bed as she took her last dying breath.

I asked my Father to reach out to Lyla and Carl. I felt they would want to know Susan had died and pay their respects. Whether Granny Jo would attend the Funeral remained in limbo. Granny Jo and Susan were also estranged.

My Grandma Miklos, who always had an air of Hungarian royalty about her, passed away from cancer a decade earlier. Although I felt she actually died from a broken heart after my Grandpa Miklos passed away from cancer too.

In the end Granny Jo did not come to her daughter's funeral. A few weeks later she died due to complications from multiple aneurysms.

Just before my Mother's Funeral started I asked my Father if he was able to get a hold of Lyla and Carl. He said he got in touch with their daughter and she informed him that they had both died years ago. Shit!

Many years later while updating my content on LinkedIn, a social media website for job seekers, an updated list of "People You May Know" popped up. One of the names that appeared on that list: Lyla Weinsheimer!?!?!?

Not a common name. I click on it. Retired school teacher. Hmmmm ... I google her. Alive and well and teaching in Egypt. Definitely. Not. Dead.

During the Arab Spring Lyla's family insisted she come back to Canada. I traveled by public transit to her retirement community in New Market from Hamilton. Her husband Carl had died from an aneurism the first night they slept in Ecuador just before they were to start a new international teaching assignment. We spent the day catching up, sharing meals, taking pictures, and watching Al Jazeera News. My most cherished keepsake: a signed copy of her memoir entitled Those Who Can Teach.

She was just as feisty and opinionated as I remembered, but she was going stir crazy in New Market. She desperately wanted to go back to Egypt to be with her students. A few months later she did just that.

It was always fun to get postcards, e-mails and gifts from Egypt signed from Lyla to Lyla.

She returned to Canada again, but she never returned to Egypt. She was dying. Last summer she passed away at the age of 93 outliving my Mother Susan, my Granny Jo, and my Grandma Miklos

Lyla Kathleen Joey Miklos: My Mother Susan's Foster Mother, Mother In Law, and Birth Mother.

My family. My legacy. My inheritance.