

My mother, Miriam bat Shimon ha'Levy, Marie Cohen was born on 19th June 1926. Her mother Etty, nee Brookstein and father Shimon had at least 10 children, 8 of whom survived into adulthood. Mum was number 5. When she came along there were already 2 brothers and 2 sisters and her mum went on to have 3 more boys.

This close, loving, family moved to 27 Thorpe Road, Tottenham in 1926, the year mum was born. Mum always had fond memories of this house and her childhood there. Her father was a tailor and a large section of the downstairs area was a tailoring workroom. Her father was commissioned to do work for a tailoring shop in Bayswater and much of his work was making coats for the Royal children. He would cut out the coats so carefully that he had enough material left over to make a coat for one of his children. Virtually all the pictures of the Queen and other royal children at that time would be of them in coats he made with delicate hand stitching at the base of the pleats that my grandmother did. My mum and her siblings would of course have matching coats!

My grandmother did all the jobs expected of a woman at the time as well as helping her husband with tailoring. She always cooked for the family and mum learnt from her, One of mum's earliest memories was of her mum hanging out the washing and singing as she did so. Mum used to go with her father to Ridley Road market on a Friday where they would choose a chicken for Friday night supper.

During the second world war mum and her siblings were evacuated to the Cambridge area. Mum hated the family she was staying with. When her dad came to visit her she begged to go back to London and he took her home. She remembers refusing to go into the bomb shelter because neighbours had done so and lost their lives that way. She and her dad used to shelter under the kitchen table during the raids. This house was bombed out and they moved to 273 High Road in Tottenham, the house we always remember as our grandmothers.

Mum learnt shorthand typing and went to work as a secretary to the boss of a company. She always talked fondly of her boss who would get her tickets to sporting events, and was very proud of the high wage she earned.

She met my dad at the Royal Dance Hall when she was 17. At the time she had a boyfriend who had been called up, so dad was just her platonic dance partner. This changed over time and when they were 19 they wanted to get married on dad's embarkation leave. Her parents wanted this too, but dad's parents would not give permission. They said she wouldn't wait for him. She said goodbye under the clock at Waterloo Station in 1945 and three and a half years later was standing in exactly the same place to welcome him home. Sadly, in the meantime her father died, aged only 55, leaving his wife with the smaller children still at home, and depriving my mother of the opportunity to have him walk her down the aisle, something she always regretted.

Mum and dad married in 1949. Her older brother Sidney has moved to Redbridge and told mum and dad they needed to live in that area too, so they bought the house she has lived in right until the present day. It was a new build, and because it was post war, the builders couldn't afford to build them all at once, so built them in pairs, sold them and then built the next pair, so mum and dad watched as their road developed, literally house by house.

She was so house proud right to the end, but apparently in her earlier married days she ironed everything, including dad's pants and if anyone moved anything even an inch out of place she hurried to replace it correctly.

When my grandmother decided she was too old to host the annual Pesach seder, my mum took over. She did it every year and the numbers grew and grew as she extended the invitation to dad's family

and my cousins got married. She would clear out the downstairs of the house, hire tables and squash us all in. The last time she did this there were approaching 50 people. After that it became just the immediate family – only around 20!! She would do all the cooking and clearing up after and just take it in her stride. She also catered for large numbers on Rosh Hashonah.

Dad got involved in Jewish youth work before I was born, running the Wanstead and Woodford youth club at the shool. Although dad was the face of the youth work, mum was very much the supporting act. She typed things up for him, made mountains of sandwiches and cakes for his meetings, and made sure he had everything he needed.

Until I was 17, and dad got a different job, they did not have much and mum had to scrimp and save to make sure we had what we needed. It wasn't until I was an older teen that I realised mum would tell us she'd eat later with dad, and tell dad she'd eaten earlier with us, because she didn't have enough to feed us all. Mum was strict and prided herself on it. One of my earliest memories was in our kitchen when mum had served supper and I didn't want what she'd made. She told me that if I didn't eat it, she would throw it in the boiler and I'd go hungry until the morning. I refused, and even though she must have wanted the food, she did throw it in the boiler to teach me the lesson – I never refused what she'd made again.

Another early memory I have is of primary school. Mum would walk us there every morning, and collect us every evening, about a mile each way. One day I was ill and didn't go to school. The evening Ray said it wasn't fair because I'd had the day off, he was going to have the next day off, but of course mum said it didn't work that way. The next morning Ray said he was ill, but mum was having none of it. He kept going on and on that he was ill, so in the end she said she'd take him to the doctor but g-d help him if the doctor said there was nothing wrong. She made him walk all the way to school with me, then another 10 minutes to the doctor. When she picked me up from school, he wasn't with her. He was in hospital – an emergency appendicitis!

Summer holidays would be in self-catering places in Littlehampton or similar, and not really a break for mum because she still had to cook and clean, but she never complained.

Mum would knit things for us when we were kids, but came into her own in the 60s when crochet was in fashion. She made me all the latest fashion dresses, sitting up late into the night to ensure I had them for whatever party or event I was due to attend.

She was so proud when Ray married Lois and when I, eventually, met and married David – she said she'd almost given up on me, I'd made her wait so long! In 1983 she got her first grandchild which made her so happy, and by 1990 she had 7. A funny memory is of 1988 when she had 4 grandchildren and I'd told her I was pregnant with my third. We were sitting around the dining table at her house, mum, dad, Ray, Lois, David and I and the children and mum said that she would have 5 grandchildren in the summer. Lois said actually she'd have 6. Astounded she turned to me and asked if I was carrying twins. When I told her I wasn't she couldn't understand, and it took her a long time, with us all laughing, before she realised that Lois was also expecting.

Her grandchildren were the love of her life. She was a wonderful grandparent. When my children were young and I was working full time, she would come over every Friday, cook Friday night supper in my house, collect the children from school and have everything ready when I got home. If I had childcare issues during the week, an early morning phone call would see her rushing on two tubes and a bus to get to me so I could get to work.

Mum kept busy always. Over the years she had many part time jobs, including working for a kosher butcher, in a canteen and as a shop assistant, and socially she ran the bridge club luncheons and tournaments and JACS and helped out wherever she was needed. She loved playing cards, clubbyas, kalooki, bridge and rummikub. She loved her garden, and even 2 days before she went into hospital she pulled a few weeds out.

Dad was 23 days younger than her, and every June, when she'd have a birthday he would tease her mercilessly that she was older than him. He was the love of her life and it showed in the way she looked at him. In 2006 they both turned 80 and we held a big family celebration. Sadly he died a few months later leaving her to live alone. She refused to leave the house they had lived in, because she said he was still there with her, and she talked to him every day, asking his advice.

She was blessed to stand under the chuppah for 4 of her grandchildren's weddings, and further blessed with 5 great-grandchildren whom she adored. She never saw the youngest, as he was born during lockdown, but she proudly displayed his photo, and showed it to anyone who visited her in the garden.

Lockdown was extremely hard on her. She missed her family and friends. Right until lockdown she volunteered every Friday morning at the Redbridge Jewish Community Centre, serving tea and toast to the "old people" all of whom were younger than her. She went weekly on 2 buses to the hairdresser and often took 2 buses to Ilford to browse the shops. She walked to the garage every day for a newspaper and across to Tesco for the odd bits and pieces. It was only in the last couple of years that she gave in and used Dial-a-ride for the bigger shops. She was incredibly fit for her age, and only used a walking stick when she was out to get a seat on the bus. Often it would be round her wrist, not actually touching the floor!

She has been having memory problems for a while and had started writing everything down. On the 19th June she was 94. Despite lockdown, we wanted to make her birthday special, so we arranged a rolling programme of visitors to her garden. Joanne took her 4 children there, and she wrote on her calendar "highlight of my day - the great grandchildren were here!"

Since yesterday Ray and I have been inundated with calls and messages, all saying how wonderful she was. Two of them sum up how special she was. One of my friends said, she was like a friend to us, and her hairdresser burst into tears and said "I can't believe I won't see her again"

Mum has been with us for Friday night dinner almost every Friday night for as long as I can remember. It has been hard not having her during lockdown, but now we won't have her again and she will leave a big hole in our lives. We love you mum and you will be missed by Ray and I, our spouses, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, the extended family and your friends, but now you are free of pain, at peace and reunited with dad. Baruch Dayan haEmet.