

Beverley Snyder Bettmann

Getting To Know You

Interviewed by Jan Zatzman Orlansky



Bev is a life-long learner who beats the competition when

it comes to the number of Adult Education classes she has taken, including book groups and Torah study. She loves to learn and her mind is sharp. What strikes you when sitting across from her, as I did for this interview, was her beautiful smile and her alert eyes. She is a woman who navigates with her walker and a photo of her favorite actor, Kevin Costner, taped to the seat, with a bubble above his head saying "Walk Upright Bev!" The other thing that strikes you, while talking with Bev, is her terrific sense of humor and her ability to look at the bright side of life. When asked what her favorite expression is, she said, "I'm so lucky!"

She is the youngest of four siblings: Ruth, Molly, Charlotte and Irving. Her parents were Herman Snyder and Minnie Glasser Snyder. The most difficult thing in Bev's life has been the deaths of her loved ones at very young ages. She keeps the dates of the 11 Yahrzeits in her wallet, so she does not forget to observe them when the time comes.

Her father, who taught her to be resilient and self-sufficient, was a strong influence in her life. He also taught her to type and as he wrote a column for his Knights of Pythias, it influenced her to start writing. Bev became a professional woman or a "career woman", as she says, at an early age and kept on working well into her 70s. She actually retired at the age of 78 years young! Her boss came in one day and said, "We were fired! This was because a multi-billion dollar international company bought us out."

Bev was born in Newark NJ, Saturday, October 26, 1929, the weekend of the big crash, and still speaks adoringly of her birthplace and Weequahic High School from which she graduated. Philip Roth was a year or two behind her. When Bev spelled the name out for me, it was if she were doing a cheer—WEE QUA HIC! Back in the day, it was considered a very prestigious school and was over 99% Jewish. Although Bev grew up in a Jewish home, she knew very little about Judaism, only foods and holidays. She's making up for lost time now by learning as much as she can about her faith. Fifteen years ago Bev studied with Mark Leopold for her Bat Mitzvah at almost 75 years old—a time she looks back on very fondly.



In fact, during that preparation time for her Bat Mitzvah she took the time to look up some old boyfriends, of whom she had many! One of the boyfriends painted her a still life picture for her Bat Mitzvah present and he hadn't seen her in many years. She claims she was a 'hippy' back in the 50s and 60s and played the flute in high school, while one of her boyfriends played the clarinet. In order to pay for her flute lessons, she used the money she earned from babysitting and working in the bakery, which she did after school and on the weekends. She's been a fan of opera since she was six years old. She also enjoyed listening to Theodore Bikel-

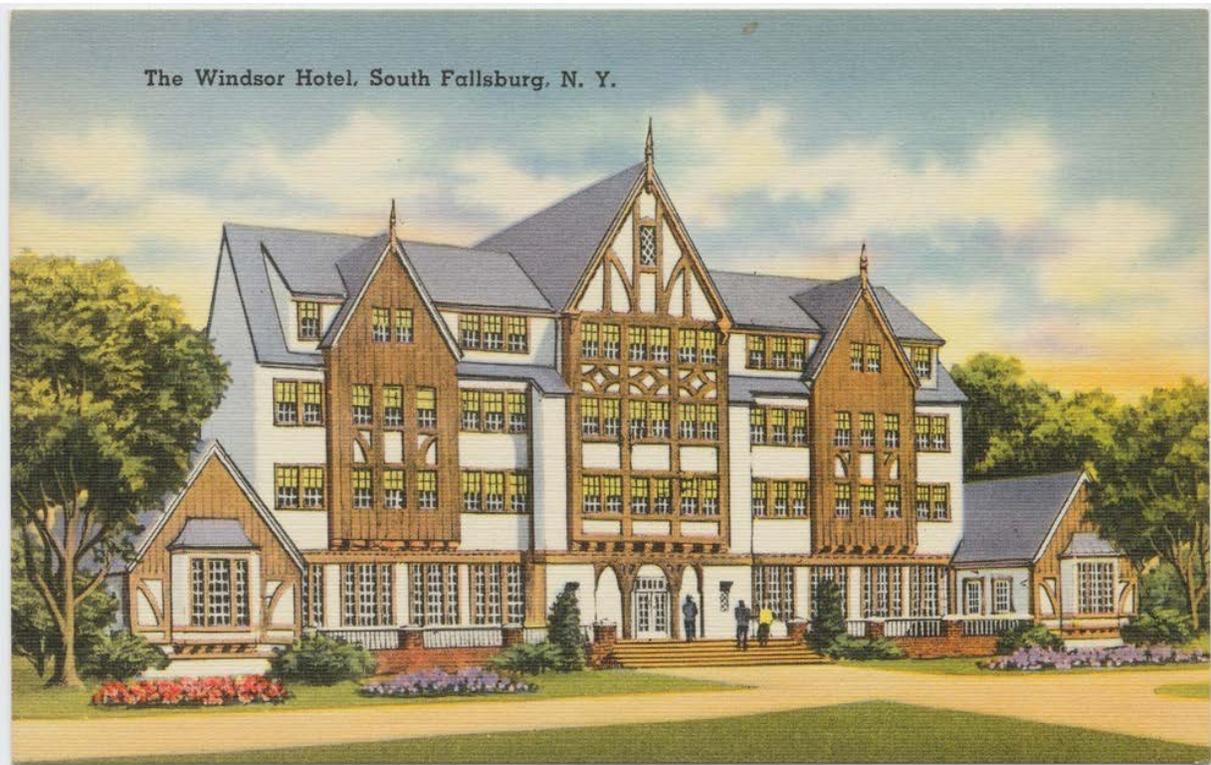
the famed Austrian-American actor and folk singer. She actually had a dream of opening a bistro with the name *Beverley Bagels and Bikel*. She even had a site in mind on MacDougal Street in Manhattan, and had some people who were willing to invest in that dream, but not enough people, so alas, it never came to fruition.

We all need dreams, and Bev, by nature, is an optimist, so she moved away from Newark in the early 50s to the Catskills for a few years and spent her days as a clerk at the front desk of a hotel named The Windsor, and by night, she was a cocktail waitress...you read that correctly, A COCKTAIL WAITRESS! She had another stint as a cocktail waitress at a few other resorts, one in particular was the **Lido Beach Hotel** on Long Island. It was there that she again met Sammy Davis Jr. She first met him in Miami Beach FL with Morty Stevens, a high school orchestra friend, who composed the Hawaii Five O theme. This happened before Sammy Davis Jr. had appeared on the Ed Sullivan show.



While working on the second floor of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) on 59th Street, she could see the crowds gathering to greet the mop-headed British foursome, known as the Beatles. She had a birdseye view of them, before they also became famous on the Ed Sullivan TV show.

There are numerous stories about Bev's encounters with famous people both at The Windsor and also when she was working in NYC. Jonas Salk had just discovered the polio vaccine and his parents were guests at **The Windsor**. Jonas came to visit them at the hotel for a surprise and stayed for Shabbat dinner. Everyone in the huge dining room stood up and cheered when he walked in!



When I asked Bev why she finally *needed* to be interviewed, she said that very few people in the Temple Sinai congregation really knew her, and when she would talk to the Rabbi about her funeral arrangements he would know more about her. Bev is a planner! She loves going to Temple Sinai and says she is grateful for the 192 rides, so far, that people have given her. Five years ago at age 85, 100 people were on her list of volunteer drivers. Spoken like the accountant she was!

Professionally Bev has had numerous positions, but in her most recent one, which lasted 20 years, she was the Chief Financial Officer for PCI, a small family business, specializing in automatic lighting controls, in Burlington. She actually started working when she was 12 years old in a bakery and part-time as an office clerk, while in high

school. At The Windsor she met Edna, who was the financial manager. When the season ended, she invited Bev to come to NYC and showed her how to become eligible to go to Baruch College at night for free. First, Bev had taken 2 classes in 1959 at Rutgers College in Newark NJ, and always took loans out to pay for her accounting books, and for 17 semesters at Baruch College. She graduated with a BBA in Public Accounting and Economics in Feb. 1965. Before getting her first accounting job, she was the office manager for Becker and London, whose clients were in the entertainment business. One of her biggest clients was Allan Sherman of "Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah" fame. She worked at Loeb and Troper, CPAs in NYC, which still exists today. She was working as an auditor for Green and Strocker in 1967 when the Six Day War broke out. They were the financial advisors to the State of Israel. This is when Bev started to get involved in her Jewish life.

There are countless and wonderful stories that Bev has about her family and her life. She met her husband Jimmy when she was 40 years old, and it was a whirlwind romance. They moved to Burlington Vermont 50 years ago. Jimmy Bettmann slipped into Bev's life and gave her the two best gifts she could ever have wished for...Joen and Jessica. Unfortunately, Joen is very ill and this is hard for Bev to bear. They are in constant phone contact with Bev, and Jessica visited Bev just a few weeks ago.



Bev maintains close friendships and speaks with those far and near on her ever-present flip phone, which is never more than a few feet from her. Next time you see her, ask her about meeting Moshe Dayan and her encounter with Jackie Mason, who was performing at The Windsor, while she was there. Bev would be more than happy to regale you with her memories and there are too many to mention in a brief interview. Bev loves to write and has about 1,000 written memories she calls "Beebe's Maises". "Maises" in Yiddish means stories.

Bev has encountered many of life's transitions and her newest chapter is going to be in assisted living at St. Joseph's Senior Care across from Ohavi Zedek.

Thank you Bev, for taking the time to let us know you a little bit better.