

MILCHIDIKA WITH MARTY

A LETTER TO MY GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER LILA ROSE

A few months after my great-granddaughter was born, we had a family picnic at my house in Stockbridge. My grandson Brian asked me if I would write a letter to his daughter; telling her about my life. He planned to give it to her when she was 15 or 16- years- old and would understand it. I probably would not be around at that time. He wanted her to know something about her great-grandpa. The story follows:

To Lila Rose:

Today you were at our house for our annual family barbecue. You are now the cutest little baby, just five months old, always smiling, and rarely crying. Your mom and dad are also the cutest new parents, each one of them cuddling you, diapering you, giving you your bottle and taking hundreds of baby pictures. Your dad asked both Isabelle and me, if we would write a little note to you today, which he plans to keep and give to you when he thinks that you are old enough to enjoy it and understand it.

And so we begin. I'm your great-grandfather Marty, and I just had a birthday a few days ago and have reached the wonderful age of 88. So here is an 88-year-old talking to a five-month-old. Your mom, my granddaughter has always known me as "Poppy" since she was a little girl. And to your grandmother Judy, my daughter, I'm known as "Dad."

I was born in Astoria, Queens, New York in 1930 and my parents were Emil and Margaret Stransky, In those early days, they owned a small retail ladies dress store in Astoria, which soon went bankrupt in the depression of the 1930s. My mom later worked as a secretary for the Omega watch company and my dad was a shipping clerk for a leather shoe company known as I Miller shoes.

I grew up in Astoria and the local synagogue "The Astoria Center of Israel" was the place where all my boyhood friends and I hung out. They had a youth center where we would go to play ping pong, and pretty much just to meet to plan what we might do for the rest of the day. My parents didn't have a telephone in those days, as it was considered a luxury, and they couldn't afford it. So instead of calling one of my friends to make a date, I would just meander down to the synagogue to see who was there.

There was a youth group that met, and one day there was an announcement that there would be dance lessons for teenagers. I was just 15 at that time. I decided to go for the dance lessons, as I was now at the age where I noticed a whole new person called "girls."

I remember the dance instructress lined up all the boys on one side of the room and all the girls on the other side of the room. She then told the boys to "pick a dance partner." I had been eyeing a girl on the other side of the room, whose name I didn't yet know, and decided she was for me.

I rushed over to her as fast as I could to make sure that no other boy got to her before I did and asked if she would be my dance partner. She said "yes" and I was thrilled. I asked her name and she said it was "Marion." And so, we began the dance lessons. A Foxtrot. I had never held a girl's hand before, nor had I ever had my hand on a girl's waist. I was so excited. Of course, after the dance lesson, I asked if I could walk her home. And she said, "Yes."

And so, began my first romance with the girl that I ultimately married seven years later, at the age of 22. We were married for 11 years and she gave birth to your grandma Judy and your grandaunt Laurie. Unfortunately, tragedy struck, and she died at the age of 33 from what was then an inoperable brain tumor.

I was of course destroyed, my life completely changed and desperate for someone to take care of my two daughters; Judy who was then five years old, and Laurie who was two years old. I wanted Marion back, and wanted my old life again.

Soon thereafter, someone introduced me to her neighbor, a recently divorced kindergarten teacher and suggested that I call her for a date. Her name was Sheila. I remember that first telephone call asking for a date. I hadn't really spoken to another woman one to one in the 18 years that I knew Marion. I was so nervous and excited. She agreed to go out with me, a widower with two children. I was 33 at the time and she was just 25.

We had a whirlwind courtship and within a few months were married. Sheila was soon pregnant with Larry, and at the age of 26 was the mother of three little children, the oldest being six years old. a tough job for a stay at home mom, while I went off to work. I was working long hours, as a beginning accountant, coming home exhausted and when the children would come to me and say, "Mommy did this to me" or, "Mommy did that to me," I pretty much ignored it, as children just complaining about a strict mother.

Forty years later the truth came out. That she was not only strict with the children, but that she was cruel to them and had been abusing them. On hearing all the details of what I had been ignoring in the early years, I felt that I could not be true to my children and to myself, and could not continue to live with her; and we were soon divorced.

At that time, we were living in Florida and I left and moved up north to a small town in New York State called Milan. I built a home in the woods where I expected to spend the rest of my life with my dog Casey. I planned to be a bachelor and didn't want another woman in my life.

That lasted a few months, when I decided it really "stinks" and that I want another woman in my life. Someone suggested that I go on a dating site, "[Match.com](https://www.match.com)," and that is where I met Isabelle.

I was smitten by what she had written about herself on the web site "that when she sees a stone wall in a field, with the trees and blue sky, her inner being quivers like an aria from Puccini."

She also wrote " She sees the two of us sitting in a room quietly reading, a clock ticking, an occasional chime, and somehow being connected."

How could you resist that? She seemed so smart and intelligent, and very pretty. We corresponded via email for a short time and then went out on our first real date. I was so nervous. I hadn't been out with another woman in 40 years. We went to a small restaurant in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, which was close to where she had a summer home. She seemed so nice, and so easy to be with, that I decided "she's for me." And so, at lunch on our first date I said to her, "I'm going to marry you."

We dated a few more times and 10 months later we were married at the age of 74 and 75 at the Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge, Massachusetts with my grandchildren and her grandchildren walking us down the aisle. And here we are now, Isabelle and I, soon to be married 14 years.

And here you have a little bit of family history. As to some advice as you go out into the world:

I have always felt that my reputation was very important. That people could count on me. That people knew me to be honest and truthful I would say that your reputation is the most important thing that you possess. I feel that you must start at an early age to build it.

To always be, like the Yiddish word, "A Mensch". A good person.

As my mother would always tell me,
" Do the right thing."

I would also tell you to follow your passions, wherever they may lead.

Love and kisses from your great-grandpa Marty

Remember the future is yours.