

Yale Alexander



A Mother's Day Tribute

Last year I gave a Mother's Day card to my aunt, and I plan on doing it again this year. I don't mean I gave her one too, I mean I only gave a Mother's Day card to her. You see, I haven't had a relationship with my own mother for many years. I can hear the collective "aawwww" out there, but you can save it. My issues with my mother have existed for my whole life, but I chose many years ago to resolve them within myself. I don't hate her and I don't love her. She's just no longer a part of my life. I am very lucky, however, that that place in my life has been filled by my aunt. This is a tribute to my Aunt Betsy.

Of course, she isn't just my Aunt Betsy. In fact, most everyone she meets in her personal life ends up calling her either Aunt Betsy, or Mom, or Grandma. That is the kind of person she is. Everyone who meets her, loves her, and her heart is so open and big that she seems to be able to love everyone back.

By any measure, my aunt is an extraordinary woman. First off, we aren't related by blood, yet she is my closest relative. She, and I guess we, have a vast extended family, but we are the only ones with the same last name. I'll explain, eventually. You see, Aunt Betsy has always been an individual. She was born in Massachusetts, and raised a non-Jewish New Englander, but she converted to Judaism when she married her first husband. I assure you, despite her origin, she is more Jewish than any Jewish woman you'll meet. She worked, along with her husband, throughout their marriage, and had two children, a girl and a boy. When her marriage failed, she

divorced her husband, which at that time was a risky thing to do. However, she knew that she and her children were better off without him, so she kept on working, and raised the children on her own.

In the early 1960's, she got a job at a furniture factory, as an Executive Assistant to the boss. The boss was my Uncle Abe. At the time he was unhappily married to his first wife (whom I never met). Long story short, they fell in love, she married the boss, and became my Aunt Betsy. That is, when I was born a little later.

They were the loves of each others lives, but unfortunately, they only had nine brief years together, as my uncle died of a heart attack. Left again to raise her children alone, she took charge of the business, but couldn't make a go of it. The factory didn't survive the recession at that time, and she lost it and all of her money. However, Aunt Betsy doesn't stay down for long. With her experience in the furniture business, she became an international representative for the Spiegel catalogue, travelling and buying furniture.

By the early 1970's, her son was married, and she shared a house with her daughter, and her daughter's best friend ("my other daughter"). Aunt Betsy hired a live-in housekeeper to help with the house. The housekeeper had just come to America from Honduras, and was earning money to bring her family to the United States. Aunt Betsy promptly arranged for the family to come to this country, and moved them into her house. Over the years, she made sure they all went to school, and even put one girl through college.

That girl, and her young daughter, now

live with Aunt Betsy. The rest of the family are on their own, but still refer to Aunt Betsy as "Grandma". For her last birthday (her 78th), they delivered an entire birthday party to her house. They cooked a delicious latin feast, served it, and cleaned up so she wouldn't have to lift a finger. After she blew out the candles on her cake, they serenaded her with a guitar. She was in tears, and true to form, couldn't understand what all the fuss was about.

Aunt Betsy now has her own bookkeeping business, but since her years as a furniture rep we have remained extremely close. At that time, she would often travel to New York City, where I lived at the time. Whenever she blew into town we would always go out for a nice dinner and chat. In 1994, I moved back to Florida, and arranged to stay with her until I found a place. I ended up staying with her for four years. We were great roommates. Aunt Betsy has always accepted my being gay, and I have always accepted her as my own Auntie Mame. She has met all my friends, and boyfriends, and has liked them all, with a few understandable exceptions. They have all loved her with no exception.

Aunt Betsy still works more than full time, although she is starting to realize that even she must acknowledge the aging process, but only a little. In the past several years, she has had one of the lenses in her eyes replaced, and a breast reduction(!). I tease her that she'll just continue to have parts replaced as needed.

She is also a big computer geek, and is up on all the latest technology. She even says it is her fantasy to go on the space shuttle. I



Aunt Betsy

wouldn't put it past her. I often believe that she'll outlive me, and that wouldn't be such a bad thing. I don't look forward to outliving her. In fact, she has saved my life more than once. I'd certainly be happy to return the favor.

Don't get the idea that Aunt Betsy is all sweetness and light, though. She'd hate that. She has two scotch-and-waters after work, every day. She can swear, and does, in several languages. It's hard to get her angry, but if you do, watch out. She often refers to herself as an "old broad", but never leaves the house without make-up, "looking like a lady". Those looks don't deceive, my Aunt Betsy has always been a beautiful woman, but moreover, she is always a lady.

To be honest, I'm trying to get her to move in with me and my boyfriend. I tell her that I wouldn't like the idea of her ever being alone. The truth is, she enriches my life, and I selfishly want her around. Her son, a successful businessman lives three doors down from her. Her daughter married very well, and Aunt Betsy just got back from visiting her. She is a great mother, grandmother, and recently, a great-grandmother. She is a mother figure to many others. To me, she is simply the finest person I have ever known. I wrote this article about her because she knows what the essence of being a mother is: unconditional love. I am proud to have her as my Aunt Betsy. Happy Mother's Day, Sweetie. Love, Yale

Cumberland Business Guild 800 East Broward Boulevard Fort Lauderdale

\$65

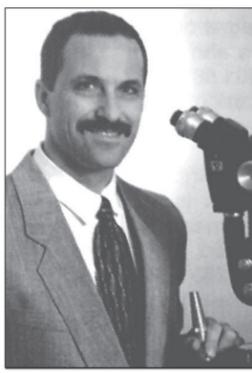
PACKAGE INCLUDES:
Eye Exam, Lens Fitting,
and 1 Pair Acuvue.

*Gas Perm, Toric and Bifocals are Extra



ACUVUE Now Available for Astigmatism

Jeffrey C. Hilton, O.D.



Board Certified Optometrist

Offering complete Eye Exams
including HIV Related Eye Care

- Se Habla Espanol

5875 Lake Worth Road
Greenacres, Florida
(561) 965-7600

800 E. Broward Blvd.,
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
(954) 524-9400 or (954) 764-6962

EYE EXAMS • EYE GLASSES • SUNGLASSES • CONTACT LENSES



C
L
E
A
R
L
Y...THE
F
I
N
E
S
T
E
Y
E
W
A
R
E
I
N
T
O
W
N

DOWNTOWN OPTICIANS

FINE EYEWARE & PERSONAL SERVICE

CUMBERLAND BUILDING
800 EAST BROWARD BOULEVARD
FORT LAUDERDALE
954.764.6962

• MENTION THE EXPRESS FOR A FREE GIFT •

EYE EXAMS • EYE GLASSES • SUNGLASSES • CONTACT LENSES

PETER L. BABINSKI, M.D., PH.D

DERMATOLOGY

DOWNTOWN

- MICRODERMABRASION
- COLLAGEN
- BOTOX
- SCLEROTHERAPY
- SKIN CARE THERAPY

◆ WE CARRY THE PAVONIA SPA LINE, NEOVA SKIN CARE LINE WITH COPPER PEPTIDES, AND NEOSTRATA GLYCOLIC LINE.

- SKIN CANCER - MOLES - WARTS - GROWTHS
- DISEASES & SURGERY OF THE HAIR, SKIN, & NAILS
- GENITAL WARTS
- HERPES



954/463-5406

(1 BLOCK EAST OF FEDERAL HIGHWAY)

800 E. BROWARD BLVD., STE 103
FT. LAUDERDALE, FL 33301