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Inside Word

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A Son's Pride and Tears

*Thousands have paid respect to
the passing of Rebbitzen Tendler
a'h, which has left so many in
mourning. Her children wish
to share a few recollections of
her life with The Jewish Word.
Yehi zichra baruch - May her
memory be blessed.*

By the Children of Rebbitzen Tendler

There are those who leave this world a better place because of what

they have written, invented, taught, or built. Others leave this world a more beautiful place because of their art and music. Most of us leave behind a legacy of memories that enrich our families and friends in varying degrees. My Mother a'h was not a writer, inventor, builder, or artist. She was a daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and Rebbitzen whose legacy of profound dignity and nobility changed the lives of thousands simply because of who she was and how she



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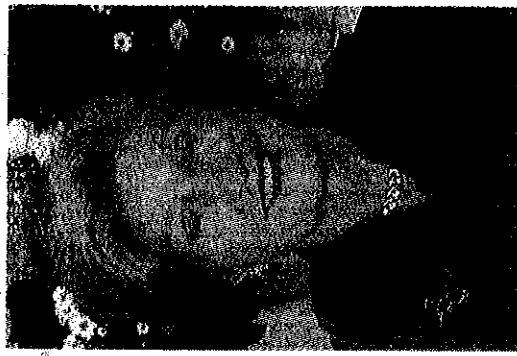
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lived her life. At present her passing is painful to many, but she left behind a better and more beautiful world for her having been here. Shiva did not provide me the time to mourn the passing of my mother. I have been told by others that it will come as I return to the routine of my life and realize that she is no longer a part of it. Only then will her passing become real and my true mourning will begin. However, as hundreds of people came daily to pay their respects and offer consolation I and my siblings realized that my mother shared her life with so many more and in a way that transcended her role as our mother.

I proudly proclaim that my Mother is Rebbitzin Shifra Tendler a'h. Born in Russia, raised in the USA, she graced our lives with true royalty and kindness. She wore her illustrious ancestry as the daughter of Rav Moshe and Rebbitzin Sima Feinstein Zt'l with pride and humility, and raised a family that she loved dearly and who in turn loved her and gave her great Nachas. The community in Monsey she helped lead, adored, respected, and mourns her passing no less than do we, her children and extended family. She framed my Father's life in a manner that allowed him

to accomplish true greatness, and her passing leaves a vast void we do not yet see how we can fill. My mother was the personification of the verse, "All the honor of the king's daughter is in seclusion." (Ps.45:15) At all times and in all circumstances, my mother was a true princess. She was regal but never aloof, royal but always available, a lady who never needed a title. Do not take my word for it; instead, ask anyone who ever met her. That is how they will describe her. If you ask any of her friends or community be prepared to settle down for a while. They will describe the profound effect my Mother's presence had in their lives and the lives of their families. They will talk of her as a friend, teacher, mentor, and role model. They will say with great pride that she was their Rebbitzin, and that she graced their homes with her unique ability of being able to share their joy and sadness. You will hear this repeated over and over again. Speak to her many nieces and nephews and they will say the same thing. Talk to the nurses, doctors, and technicians who cared for her during 13 months of battling Lymphoma and they will echo the same sentiments. Her royal bearing, warmth, and compas-

sion is fact not opinion; and it was self evident to all who knew her because it was what she was, not only the result of what she did. Her grandchildren, if they can stop crying long enough to express themselves, will describe her as a loving grandmother who cherished them enough to teach them how to live a life of Torah and responsibility. From how to fold laundry, make challah, and find the best bargains, to modeling for them how to create an integrated home of tranquility and purpose, my mother accepted the job of being a Savta with the same grace and dignity that she accomplished everything else in her life. My mother's life is a magnificently rich and colorful tapestry depicting the story of Jewish royalty, courage, determination, and survival. As the Torah world of old was systematically destroyed G-d gifted our people with unique leaders to help us transition into the present. Paramount among them was my Grandfather Zt'l, Rav Moshe Feinstein. His greatness in Torah anchored the Torah community to its unbroken past glory and through him the true word of G-d was made available to us all. However, his utter brilliance and fearlessness in blazing old trails in a new and foreign



Rebbitzin Tendler A'H

ing at pictures and reliving good and happy times, but she was not one to spend her time taking pictures. So many of us experience life through the pictures we took rather than experiencing it as it happens. My mother preferred to live in the present and experience life as it was happening.

My Mother's funeral was on Thursday October 11. The following Shabbos I shared some thoughts with my Father Shlit'a, Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler, that I had not said at the funeral. In essence I reiterated what my other

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siblings had said in their eulogies about my mother doing her many mitzvos and acts of kindness with great joy and contentment. However, I started by saying to my Father that I did not know if my mother lived her whole life with joy and contentment. What I did know was that when she did mitzvos she did them with great joy and contentment. My father responded by saying, "No, your mother lived her whole life with joy and contentment. She never complained, she never spoke Lashon Hara, she never had mood swings, and she accepted everything in life with great trust and love in Hashem." My Mother's love for life and her appreciation for all the wonderful things that Hashem provided her and her family was evident in the person she was and the effect she had on people.

She was so proud of her husband. She adored him as her companion in life and she admired him for the Torah he taught and the Kiddush Hashem he made wherever he went. She sacrificed much so that my father could learn Torah and excel in his chosen profession as a Rebbi, biologist, and researcher. She never complained or expressed any regrets. Instead, at all times she proudly stood at my Father's side basking in his multitude of accomplishments and ever

growing international reputation. However, her greatest pride was reserved for the Torah he taught and the Torah that was integrated into everything he said and did. Every shiur or lecture he gave were gems in her personal crown that she proudly wore wherever she went.

My Mother loved quality and value. She loved a beautiful piece of silver and delighted in a fine china dish. However, she had no patience for contrived quality and false value. The same was true for people and social etiquette. She appreciated and admired true quality, accomplishments, and purpose but had little patience for political statements, political correctness, or inflated egos. I once asked her if I should begin wearing a 'homburg.' Others had voiced their opinions, some urging me to do so and others cautioning me from making "some kind of a statement." I finally asked my Mother who said, "A homburg is just a fancy hat. If you want to wear a fancy hat - go ahead and do so. Just don't make any more of it than it is. It's just a fancy hat."

On the other hand, my Mother appreciated protocol and believed that dress was an important component of proper social behavior. One time my mother expressed her dismay to me at a front page picture in the LA Times show-

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ing then President Reagan vaulting over a fence on his ranch in Diana Barbara dressed in jeans and a plaid work shirt. Her words were, "That is not the way I want to see my President! My President should be dressed in a tie and suit!"

Above all else was her exemplary chesed. She started chesed organizations, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, gave freely of her time, cared to the extent that she cried for those in pain and rejoiced openly when the opportunity called for it. She once hosted a shower for a young bride to be and when she saw that the girl did not have what she considered an appropriate dress for the occasion went to her own closet and gave her the new dress she had just bought for herself. Possessions and objects were only as valuable to my Mother as the chesed they could accomplish. She visited the sick and the elderly and cared for them as if they were her own parents. A mother of ten shared with my sisters that in addition to raising her own ten children she had adopted four Down-syndrome children to love and raise as her own. She explained that it was my Mother's exceptional commitment to doing chesed, something she had personally witnessed many times, that motivated her to emulate her and undertake such a her-

culean act of chesed. The simplest of kindnesses made lasting impressions on individuals. A Chasideshe Yid that we had never before met came to pay a shiva call. His reason for doing so was that more than more than thirty years earlier, while walking on a rainy day, my Mother gave him and unsuspecting ride so he could visit Rav Yakov Kaminetsky Zt'l. When Rav Yakov asked him how he had gotten there in the rain he credited my Mother's kindness in offering him an unsolicited ride. Rav Yakov commented on his great Zechus in being helped by Rebbitzin Tendler, "a true Tzadkaikis." My Mother's simple chesed and Rav Yakov Ztl's comment demanded that he pay a shiva call twenty years later and share it with my Father.

My Mother showed us the true meaning of honoring one's parents during the years of loving care she gave to my Father's parents and her own. Some might say that any child would do the same for any parent and certainly for such parents and in-laws as my Mother had; and I believe they would be correct. The difference is that my Mother did the same for non relatives and even strangers. My Father related in his eulogy that at the age of 50 my Mother went to nursing school. Upon her graduation she requested to work in Bronx Lebanon Hospi-

tal Center. There were many other prestigious placements available to her but she chose to work in a hospital that was considered an inner city facility. Her reason for doing so was that she had heard that the elderly Jewish patients still living in the area used the hospital and she was concerned about the quality of their health care. She worked in Bronx Lebanon for ten years serving her patients with great distinction and staying after her shift to check on the Jewish patients and ensure that they received the best possible care.

The stories about my Mother a'h are many and her accomplishments enduring. She blessed us with her presence and never asked for anything in return. She pursued truth in her heart and lived accordingly. She loved her family and infused her home with true Yiras Shamayim and love for Torah and Chesed. She celebrated her 80th birthday on Shimmi Atzeret, and seven days later quietly returned her soul to G-d surrounded by her husband and all her children. Upon returning from the cemetery, my Mother's home was filled with one hundred plus relatives and friends. My oldest daughter turned to me and said with tears rolling down her cheeks, "Daddy, the house is filled with people but it feels completely empty."