

A LIFE OF FAMILY, ENTERTAINING, AND HUMOR

Eileen Zain Pensky



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Entertaining, and
Humor*



The Memoir Writer

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Introduction

This book was the brainchild of Eileen's four children: Norm and Wayne Pinsky, Ellen Pinsky McGraw, and Rhonda Pinsky Holsworth. The content came from interviews with Eileen in January 2024 and the recollections of her extended family, and serves as a tribute to Eileen and Harold's legacy. It is the Pinsky family's hope that this book provides future generations with a strong sense of their shared history and family values.

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I



In the Beginning: How We Met Our Mother

On July 22, 1928, during an unusually cool summer day in Chicago, Sarah Rosen Zain and Edward Zain welcomed their second child, a daughter whose birth certificate read Helen Eileen Zain. They called her Eileen. Along with daughter Doris, born nine years earlier, their family was complete.

The family was supported by Edward's work at Acme Laundry as a driver. Edward woke up every morning at 4:00 AM to start his routes; he drove around the city, collected people's laundry, and delivered it to a large plant where it would be washed and rinsed. He then returned the clean laundry to the location where he had picked it up for its owners to hang dry and iron. To supplement the family's income, Sarah worked on and off at Goldblatt's, a local department store.

Eileen recalls that when Edward wasn't working, he was always immaculately dressed. She guessed that because he saw so many kinds of clothing during his long workdays, he developed an appreciation for good clothing, especially beautiful, well-tailored suits.

In Eileen's multi-generational childhood home, a Chicago apartment, Yiddish was the primary language. She vividly remembers her father reading the Jewish newspaper aloud to her mother and her parents: "They'd sit there and listen to all the stories. It was wonderful." Eventually the family moved to a house on Jeffrey Blvd. Like many other Jewish immigrants, they maintained a kosher home and Sarah cooked a lot – gefilte fish, matzoh ball soup, kugel. Mandel bread was one of her specialties. "I grew up religious," Eileen reflects. "We kept kosher because my grandparents kept kosher. They must have done that back in the old country so when they came to America, that's what they did."

Because Doris, Eileen's sister, was so much older, Eileen was often without a convenient playmate. "I wanted a dog so bad. I kept saying 'I want a dog! I want a dog!' So my grandpa goes out and gets me a cute little white dog. Then my mother tells me that I've got to pick up the poop and clean up after him," Eileen recalls. "I told her to forget it. I'm *never* doing that." Her grandpa took the dog back that very same day and Eileen claims that she has not been fond of dogs ever since. Little did she know that years later dogs would become an important part of her children and grandchildren's lives. Yet Eileen's aversion to canines never lessened. Those grand-dogs mostly steer clear of her and she steers clear of them.

The Hood

Chicago's South Side was a dangerous place in the 1930s. According to Eileen, "I remember walking home one night, just my mother and I, when I was six or seven. She had gone out to buy kosher meat, so she was holding her package and purse in one hand, and I'm holding her other hand. Somebody ripped off my mother's purse and ran. I got so scared. She's yelling at him! That was awful. We were in a terrible neighborhood near the liquor store that my Uncle Willie and Uncle Nate owned, and my mom ran in and told them what happened. They had to give her some money to get on the L (train) to go to where we

lived. It was crazy times.” She continues, “There were a lot of questionable characters and the neighborhood kept getting worse and worse.” Sadly, Uncle Willie was murdered at the liquor store in the mid-1940s. Eileen’s sons Wayne and Norman were named after her uncles.

Doris worked as a bookkeeper. The sisters’ age difference did not lend itself to a close relationship, though Eileen fondly recalls attending Doris’ wedding at age 15. Doris met her husband, Irving Tomlinson, through her father who worked with him in the laundry business.

Doris attended Hirsch High School while Eileen later attended South Shore High School, which opened its doors the year Eileen was a freshman. Eileen was in the first class to graduate after attending all four years. Not much is known about Eileen’s high school years except what was heard from Carol, Doris’ son David’s wife. It turns out that Carol’s aunt, known as Bubbles, was a good friend of Eileen’s. Bubbles told Carol that Eileen was really fun in high school and that they went to a lot of parties together. Carol recalls the initial irony that her aunt knew her husband’s aunt long before they were born. However, she wasn’t entirely surprised as the game of Jewish Geography generally reveals that there are very few degrees of separation, if any, between Jews in any given location.

The Rosen Family

Not much is known about Eileen’s maternal grandparents. Eileen thinks they met in Russia and emigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. After Sarah was born, they went on to have five more children: Dora, William (Willie), Nathan (Nate), Ben, and Jake. Their last name was changed to Rosen when they arrived at Ellis Island. At that time, it was a tradition to take on the name of the person who sponsored your immigration to the United States. In Eileen’s grandparents’ case that was the Rosen family.

The Rosens were the proprietors of a store selling coal in the winter

and ice in the summer, which her grandfather delivered. Her grandparents lived above the store in a large, multi-room flat. All that space came in handy for the Friday night dinners that Eileen's grandmother lovingly prepared, attended by the extended family. Says Eileen, "They lived right next to the L. We used to wave to the people when they went by. We'd eat there all the time because she used to cook everything by hand."

Eileen inherited her strong preference for cleanliness and order from both of her parents: Edward, always perfectly dressed, and Sarah, who was such an immaculate housekeeper that she kept thick plastic covers on her furniture. Sarah kept a kosher household which meant following a set of specific dietary rules including that all the silverware and dishes for dairy products had to be kept separate from the silverware and dishes for meat products.

The Pensky Family

Tillie Mildwurm was only 17 when she immigrated from Lamberg, Poland, to live with her aunt in the Logan Square community of Chicago. After recovering from her difficult trip in steamship steerage class from Europe, she got a job as a dressmaker. She was wearing one of her own designs when she met her future husband, Louis Pensky, at a dance at the Jewish People's Institute, a social club on Chicago's west side. Louis and Tillie married on January 20, 1920. She was 23 and he was 29. They lived at 6055 S Ashland, in Chicago.

Louis was born in the Bialystok region of Russia, leaving for America when he was nine. Upon arrival in New York, he did not find many work opportunities. He continued to Chicago by train and, with only minimal formal education, began working at one of the many different types of jobs he held over the years. His main source of income was as a house painter; Norman remembers that his garage was full of paint buckets and other materials. He was also a talented artist and painted many landscapes that hung in their home and later at Eileen and

Harold's home in Santa Barbara. It was in Chicago that he met Tillie. Louis and Tillie's marriage produced three children: Bernard (Bernie), Marion, and Harold.

The Courtship

Eileen's future husband, Harold, grew up in an apartment above his parents' hardware and paint store. Eileen and Marion became friends through the B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG) young Jewish group. One day, when Eileen was at Marion's house, she saw a framed picture of Marion's handsome younger brother in his Naval uniform. Right then and there Eileen said to Marion: "That's my husband." The Great War had just ended, and Harold had recently returned from service in Europe. Marion convinced him to attend the next BBG dance and there he met Eileen.

Their first date was to dinner and then to a sporting event. "In Chicago there was always some kind of sports thing going on ... football, baseball ...," Eileen says with a laugh. "Whatever date we had, we went to a game. [My daughter] Rhonda takes after him!"

Eileen was in her second and final year of junior college when they met. She'd been refining her secretarial skills, which she had been using in the office of a downtown men's clothing store since high school graduation. "A friend of my sister's told me there was a job opening so I went and got the job," she says. "I worked there for a couple of years."

Harold completed his first two years of college at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, served in the US Navy, then finished his electrical engineering studies at the Illinois Institute of Technology, called Illinois Tech. Eileen remembers attending his graduation.

On the day Eileen met Harold's mother and father, Harold also showed her the building basement where all the pieces of a disassembled car were on the floor, ready for him to put back together. "I

couldn't believe it," Eileen recalls. "He had every single part. I'd never seen anything like that in my whole life!" It's likely that Harold's interest in cars came from his father's two Model A's.

However, Harold was not Eileen's only suitor. Prior to Harold, Eileen went out several times with a man, who, as she put it in a deadpan voice, "I couldn't stand."

Eileen and Harold married on August 29, 1948, after dating for a year; she was 20 and he was 22. "It was a big wedding. I was the youngest of all the cousins and I had a lot of relatives," Eileen says. "I remember my mother checking on the prices, and they wanted \$5 a plate! She kept talking about that. That was a lot of money in those days."

2



Happily Ever After

Harold worked at Edison and, for the first 13 years of their marriage, the happy couple lived in one half of a south Chicago duplex. His sister Marion and her husband, Richard Diamond, lived in the other half of the duplex. The house became a literal breeding ground for cousins as Norman, Ellen, and Wayne Pensky, and Howard and Abbe Diamond were all born while their family lived there. Marion, four years older than Eileen, and Eileen remained friends the rest of their lives.

Across the street lived the Penskys' best friends Newt and Mae Silber and their son Mark, a year older than Norm. Living in a duplex and sharing the back patio and backyard was the highlight of the Penskys' social life.

All the relatives lived close to each other, and get-togethers with a lot of food was a big part of each weekend's activities. During the summers, everyone would meet at the park and the kids would run around while the parents played cards. During the winter, Eileen's parents' house became the gathering spot because of its large basement. Eileen's mother would shake her head and refer to the kids as Coxey's Army.

She never could explain why she said it but she enjoyed saying it over and over to the kids, Norm recalls with a chuckle.

The Penskys had a shallow inflatable pool in their backyard and used it as respite from the heat of the Chicago summers. There were many kids in their neighborhood – Marion believed that there were almost 20 in their cul-du-sac alone. There were always between eight to 12 kids at a time playing baseball, tag, and hide and seek, and it was Marion’s booming voice that called the kids in for dinner or bed. There were always birthday parties to attend. In fact, Norm and Ellen came home from a birthday party one day and discovered they had a new baby brother – Wayne!

Eileen’s life in Chicago was also colored by the blues, greens, and reds of the tile-based game Mahjongg, first played by the Chinese and now by Jewish women worldwide. Eileen continued to play it through her 80th year. “We played for money,” she remembers.

Chicago was also where, when playing with her brothers and cousins, who were all boys, Ellen was seriously injured. The boys didn’t want her to play with them and ran off without her. Rather than sitting idly by, she ran after them and fell on a broken Pepsi bottle. The gash in her leg nearly necessitated its removal; it required 18 stitches, and the scar remains today.

3



Denver – Living the High Life in the Mile High City

In 1959, Eileen, Harold, Norm, Ellen, and Wayne left Chicago for Denver; Harold had a new job with the aerospace manufacturing company Martin Marietta. Moving away from their tight-knit family was not an easy decision. By all accounts, the credit goes to Eileen and Harold for making the move to improve their financial status. They'd remain in Denver for five years before moving even further west. Eileen says of Denver, "I really liked Denver. I liked the weather. It was a nice place to live." The Penskys settled in Denver proper where one of Eileen's household responsibilities was burning their trash in their backyard. The use of home incinerators, popular in the 1940s and 1950s, stopped a few years after that.

They maintained their Jewish roots by joining an Orthodox synagogue which had strict rules about Saturday driving and required women to worship in a separate room from the men. The Bar Mitzvah and Sunday school lessons, which the children attended, were long and intense compared to those of typical reform synagogues. Norm became a Bar Mitzvah, with the extended family coming from Chicago

to celebrate. Many of the relatives stayed in the basement which was temporarily converted into to a dormitory to sleep close to 20 people for the big weekend.

Eileen recalls another time her sister Doris and family came to visit, “I don’t exactly remember why or how this happened but one day we opened the front door and [our family] had come all the way from Chicago for a surprise visit. We didn’t know they were coming! So, we let them in and had a lot of people sleeping in the house. And eating!”

Back in Denver, the family gathered around the TV each evening to watch a show together. At that time there were only three television stations: ABC, NBC, and CBS. Unlike the flexibility of today’s entertainment streaming services, if you missed the start of a TV episode there was no way to go back and replay it. Eileen and Harold’s favorite was the Lawrence Welk Show followed closely by The Ed Sullivan Show. Color television was in its infancy and when Bonanza started broadcasting in color, Harold, ever the engineer, tried many ways to get color on the TV himself. He went as far as to buy a special plastic cover for the screen and then glasses. Since none of these ideas worked, he resorted to buying a new color TV, one of the first in the neighborhood. Baseball and football games were special events which required careful attention to when they would air lest you miss them. The University of Oklahoma was a national football powerhouse in those days and was often on TV as the featured “Game of the Week.” Games for the family’s favorite baseball team, the Chicago White Sox, were not broadcast often. Fortunately, the 1959 World Series vs the Dodgers was.

Just as important as TV was to the family, so was candy. Everyone had a sweet tooth. According to family legend, 11-year-old Norm decided he needed to have candy and told five-year-old Wayne to get it for him. Ever the dutiful younger brother, Wayne walked a mile to the local candy shop to fulfill his brother’s request. Unfortunately, he did not think to pay for the sweets and was intercepted by the store owner

on his way out the door. The shopkeeper called Eileen to pick him up, agreeing not to press shoplifting charges if Wayne promised to never do it again. Wayne swears he hasn't shoplifted since.

On the other side of their backyard fence lived Evelyn and Marvin Shamon and their family. Marvin and Harold worked together, and the two families became close friends. Their daughters Lynne, Joy, and Carol often played with the older Pensky trio. Lynne and Joy were Ellen's best friends, at least until Lynne's crush on Norm was revealed, explaining her frequent visits to the Pensky house. Lola and Len Chevlin were also close friends of Eileen and Harold's.

In Denver, Harold's career intersected significantly with of-the-time world events as he was an expert on missile defense systems. Then, as a part of his job in October 1962, he traveled to Florida during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Ellen remembers what a scary time that was for the family and for the world. The family moved to a home they built in upscale Cherry Creek soon after Rhonda was born. A large sign in front of the under-construction home read: This custom home is being built for Mr. and Mrs. Harold Pensky. Unfortunately, that beautiful home was not destined to be the Penskys' for long.

4



California Here We Come

Although Harold enjoyed his work and family life in Denver, he was also very interested in aerospace engineering. He returned from work one day and announced to his family that they would be moving to California. An opportunity had come up for him to take a year-long job at Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino, California. As it was a temporary assignment, the Penskys would live in an apartment complex starting in 1963. The apartment complex had a large pool area where the family spent a lot of time playing cards and drinking with their neighbors, the Burfords, whose son was Norm's age.

While they were in San Bernardino, Harold's friend, Len Chevlin, introduced him to Aerospace Corporation, a non-profit government contractor. Rather than return to Denver, Harold began working at Vandenberg Air Force Base, where he'd stay for the next two decades.

Vandenberg AFB was in Lompoc, a town of about 15,000 residents on California's central coast. Eileen did not want to raise their family in a community without a Jewish presence so the family bought a newly constructed home at 770 Dorado Drive in Santa Barbara and Harold commuted 55 miles each way, five days a week. One of Rhonda's earliest

memories is when the family lived in the Santa Barbara suburb of Isla Vista for three months while their house was being built. She remembers that the older kids would take her to the liquor store for candy. Learning from the past, the kids made sure to buy candy this time.

Of all the places Eileen and Harold lived during their 60-year marriage, Eileen says Santa Barbara was her favorite. Its proximity to Los Angeles, just 90 miles south, was icing on the cake. Both parents and children made friends easily. Eileen played in a weekly Mahjongg group. They joined the Montecito Country Club where she and Harold golfed. Harold also golfed and played poker with his friends. They made good friends, including the Kligmans, Rosens, Harters, and Kasdens. As it turns out, one of the Kasden grandchildren would go on to write the book *Dear Evan Hansen*, on which the Tony- and Grammy-award winning Broadway musical is based.

The family also became great friends with many of their neighbors. Rhonda and Ellen remember fond times with the Hasers, Deffenbaughs, Christensens, and Irvings. Five-year-old Rhonda and the Haser sisters painted rocks one day and sold them to the neighbors. Eileen was unable to find Rhonda during this escapade and Jane located her with her own daughters, much to Eileen's relief. However, neither mother approved of this activity and the girls got into trouble upon returning home. That was the end of the entrepreneurship on Dorado Drive!

Eileen remained passionate about cooking and entertaining, and the Penskys often hosted big parties; 20-30 people at a time was not uncommon. Large, elaborate Thanksgiving dinners and Passover seders were the norm. Years later, granddaughter Sabrina learned the hard way that her college Jewish organization's Passover seder had little in common with the seders lovingly prepared by Grandma Eileen. At Hillel, she had to sit through a long religious service and the food wasn't nearly as good!

Santa Barbara's growing Jewish community benefitted from Eileen and Harold's participation; they were involved in building Congregation B'nai B'rith's new five-acre campus at 1000 San Antonio Creek Road which opened in 1968. The four Pensky children attended Sunday School at the temple's old site, the Leo Sanders historic house in downtown Santa Barbara, and Wayne became a Bar Mitzvah in Santa Barbara. Eileen was active in the women's group, at least once serving as its president, and managed its cookbook of member-submitted recipes. A natural extension of her interests was to run the temple gift shop. "I like to shop for anything and everything," Eileen says with a big smile. She continues, "I often went to LA, a two-hour drive, to shop for the store." A big collector of jewelry, rumor has it that her favorite temple member was the local jeweler. When Eileen went to LA, she always included a bagel run from the best bagel store in LA, and the family freezer was usually full of delicious bagels.

The Penskys arrived in Santa Barbara before there were any big box stores. Nordstrom, doing its market research, selected a group of women to bus to the closest Nordstrom, 30 miles away in Ventura, dazzling them with the quality and fashionable items that Nordstrom would become known for. Eileen was thrilled to be part of that group and became an unofficial ambassador for the Nordstrom experience and one of its very first shoppers in Santa Barbara in 1990 when it opened on State Street. Eileen was even happier when the Paseo Nuevo mall opened, giving discerning Santa Barbara shoppers many more options. "I *like* shoes and my daughters *love* shoes!" she says. Long-time family friends, the Harters, owned a shoe store. It became a tradition for Eileen's grandchildren to visit the store for new shoes and charge them to Eileen's account.

Sarah and Edward Zain moved to LA around this time and Eileen's trips now included visiting with her parents in Fairfax, a fairly Jewish section of the city located a couple of blocks from the iconic Farmers Market. Norm has fond memories of the delicious smells always

wafting from his grandparents Fairfax apartment as well as the TV volume turned up to its highest level. Also living in LA was Louis Pensky's cousin Adolph Shiman. A lifelong bachelor and jack-of-all-trades handyman, he knew everybody and earned the nickname The Mayor. Adolph participated in all of the family events, to Eileen's dismay. She was not always a fan of his brash behavior, though she did appreciate the help he provided the family from time to time.

Edward's health deteriorated after his retirement and move to California. He got a part-time job as a parking lot attendant at the nearby and famous Canter's Deli, adding years to his life and improving his health for a short time. He found joy in catching people parking in his lot that were not going into Canter's, frequently chasing them down to get them to pay or move their car. His favorite game was denying he was smoking, thinking he could go into the bathroom and flush the cigarette butt down the toilet without anyone knowing.

Not surprisingly, Santa Barbara was an idyllic place to raise a family. The beach and ocean were a big draw for the kids despite the devastating environmental mess left from the January 1969 Union Oil spill. "Every time we went, we'd get full of tar and have all kinds of crap on us," Eileen says. "That part was awful." Each year, the city honors its Spanish founders and its Spanish, Mexican, and North American pioneers with the Fiesta Days celebration. The Penskys frequented the events, which included a parade down State Street, an open-air market, the Stock Horse Show & Rodeo, and dance performances.

Norm and Wayne enjoyed riding bicycles and then motorcycles. The house had an outdoor basketball hoop and they played basketball on the driveway every day with the neighborhood kids. Eileen used to watch the kids play from the kitchen window. As a result, she earned the nickname Hawkeye. The neighborhood kids appreciated that the Penskys always had popsicles, Hostess Ding Dongs, cupcakes, and Snowballs at their house, and they took full advantage of easy access to their favorite

snacks. The candy cabinet always included Harold's favorites – licorice and Snickers. Ellen was involved in a number of social organizations including the YMCA, and Rhonda tried her hardest at ballet—but usually ended up peeing in her pants because she was laughing so hard. For a time, the Penskys enjoyed an above-ground pool in their backyard. Harold, however, wanted a low-maintenance yard and was known to go cement-happy. Eventually he disassembled the pool and covered it with concrete, the first of several yards he had turned into hardscape.

Having purchased the first Ford Mustang car that came out in 1965, Harold bought additional ones over the years then moved on to other car models including Datsun's 280Z, Mercury's Capri, and Toyota Camrys. His passion for sports continued and he attended live games in Los Angeles and also watched sports on TV. He was also well-known for the novel way he celebrated his birthday. He gave each child and grandchild an envelope with the amount of money that correlated to his own age. Grandson Kyle thought this was the best thing ever, and with the short memory common in young children, told people that "Grandpa should have a birthday every year!"

In spite of the distance between California and Illinois, Eileen and Harold maintained close relationships with their Chicago relatives. In 1978, Eileen's sister Doris passed away at age 59. As their nephew David tells it, he will always remember how Eileen and Harold immediately returned to Chicago, stepping in as surrogate parents to David and his wife Carol, and to their young child.

Up, Up, and Away

The majority of Harold's aerospace engineering career was spent on the Space Shuttle Program at Vandenberg Air Force Base, which served as a platform for scientific research within a range of disciplines and performed satellite launches and repairs, extending the life of the Hubble Space Telescope. Harold's responsibility was to prepare the Vandenberg site for the eventual hosting of the Space Shuttle Program.

All of the kids remember the times he would tell them to look out the window, though he couldn't say why. They all knew that a missile was being launched.

Harold's career plans changed in 1986 when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded 73 seconds after takeoff from Cape Canaveral, Florida, killing all seven people on board, including teacher Christa McAuliffe. Eileen had traveled to Las Vegas with Harold for a work meeting. She watched the catastrophe on live TV and then rushed down to the conference room where his meeting was taking place. Harold and his colleagues had already heard the devastating news. The Air Force and NASA consolidated shuttle operations at the Kennedy Space Center following the incident and Vandenberg AFB's work on the program ended. Harold retired. So began the years of the elder Penskys' travel in earnest.



Eileen and Harold Pensky, August 29, 1948



Eileen's favorite photo of Harold, the one that started it all!



Eileen's maternal grandparents, Harry and Rivka Rosen



Norman, Wayne, Rhonda, and Ellen Pensky, Denver, 1961



The under-construction custom house Eileen and Harold built in Denver's Cherry Hills neighborhood, 1962



Eileen and Harold dressed up for Santa Barbara's Fiesta Days



Eileen's parents Sarah and Edward Zain, Santa Barbara



Eileen and Harold with one of his beloved Ford Mustang cars, Santa Barbara



One of the best family reunions - Whistler, Canada, circa 2003



What happens in Vegas doesn't always stay in Vegas! In this case, it is a 2010 Pinsky family reunion in Las Vegas with family meals, boating, and a show on the Strip.



Pensky family reunion, San Diego 2016



Eileen with her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren at Sabrina and Grant's wedding, July 2023

5



Citizens of the World

Annual summer vacations were a Pensky family tradition. They visited family, especially important with the many states now between them, saw new parts of the country, or both in the same summer. One of the Chicago trips included a visit to Mackinac Island in northern Michigan. Eileen remembers that during that trip, Harold put young Wayne on the handlebars of the bike he was riding. A few minutes later, Harold and Wayne fell off the bike, one of many times Wayne got hurt during his childhood.

The train and car drive between Denver and Chicago was a little less than 24 hours and airplane flights were off the table because of the cost. Long-distance phone calls, which were anything outside of the city in which you lived, were also an extravagance. This made the annual trips more special. On one of the visits, Norm and Ellen (aged 14 and 10, respectively) extended their stay and returned to Denver by overnight train with their cousins David and Alvin Tomlinson. David, aged 17, was responsible for them. Fortunately, he understood the assignment and all four of them arrived intact.

One of the things Harold enjoyed was long car rides. The summer

that Eileen was pregnant with Rhonda, the family drove from Denver to Yuma, Arizona, to visit Harold's brother Bernie, his wife Louise, and their kids David, Perry, and Janet. The trip was especially memorable as the Pensky's car lacked air conditioning and the drive included a desert crossing. Norm very clearly remembers Eileen's unrelenting nausea for most of the drive!

After the Penskys moved to Santa Barbara, the family rotated get-togethers in San Diego, Santa Barbara, or Yuma. Adolph had a friend in Desert Hot Springs, near Palm Springs, and sometimes the families met there, halfway between their two homes.

In 1995, Eileen and Harold's children, along with their cousins of the same generation, decided that family reunions would further strengthen familial ties, and they made sure they happened every few years. They cruised to the Caribbean one year and went to Whistler, Canada, another. Other destinations included San Diego and Las Vegas. In time, cousin gatherings at family weddings took the place of these reunions.

On their own or with their friends, Eileen and Harold traveled often, especially once Harold retired. "If you can name it, I've been there," Eileen says. To celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in 1998, Eileen and Harold took their children and grandchildren to Hawaii. Another family trip took them to Sun River, Oregon. They enjoyed Elder Hostel and other organized tours and cruises. Some of the places they visited included Russia, Finland, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Alaska. Harold had always wanted to see the Panama Canal. Eager to see this engineering feat, "He sat transfixed and watched as the ship went through all of those locks," Eileen recalls.

6



Danville – The Heart of the San Ramon Valley

By the mid-1980s, all four Pensky children were married and living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Wayne married Kim, Rhonda married Brad, Ellen married Jim, and Norm married Barb. In 1997, after 31 years of residence in Santa Barbara, Eileen and Harold made the decision to follow them north and buy a home in Danville's Crow Canyon Country Club. As was their way, they became involved in the local Jewish community and Harold played golf every day, sometimes with Eileen. He also improved his bridge game, eventually achieving the Masterpoint rank of Bronze Life Master. Eileen continued entertaining and they enjoyed time with their children and grandchildren.

Harold became ill and passed away two years later, on November 29, 2008. He is buried in Oakmont Memorial Park in Lafayette, California. Eileen and Harold had celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary four months earlier.

Eileen remained active in their Crow Canyon home until 2019, when she moved to an apartment in Ivy Park, an assisted living community in

San Ramon. At age 95 she still lives there, healthy and spry, providing history and anecdotes for this book. She continues enjoying the Broadway musicals and movies she has enjoyed her entire life, including *Now, Voyager* (1942), *Casablanca* (1942), and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), and her all-time favorite source of movies, the Hallmark channel.

Ellen and Wayne remember Eileen taking them to see the *Sound of Music* when it first came out in 1965. While Ellen remembers the movie itself, Wayne remembers it because just the day before, his two front two teeth were knocked out while playing baseball. Harold claimed that his best \$1 investment was for the Little League insurance!

Celebrating Eileen

Eileen's 90th birthday was celebrated several times. The first celebration was a brunch held after granddaughter Cory's June 2018 wedding in Sacramento, California. The second celebration was a luncheon at Castlewood Country Club in Pleasanton, California, on July 22, 2018, with nearly 50 people. Norm, Ellen, Wayne, Rhonda, and their spouses were there, along with all of Eileen's grandchildren: Teri, Val, Cory, Travis, John, Scott, Brian, Kyle, Sean, Alyssa, and Sabrina, as well as some close family friends. Guests played a trivia game and were shown a movie-themed video of Eileen and her family created by Sabrina. Teri convinced her then-colleague, comedian and TV host James Corden, to record the video introduction. It can be seen here: <http://tinyurl.com/2a2rmrrx>

There was also a 95th birthday breakfast celebrating Eileen on July 22, 2023, the morning after Sabrina's wedding. The favors were fans imprinted with the words "Fans of Grandma Eileen." Eileen's children and grandchildren shared their favorite memories of her, some of which are included here:

Teri:

Grandma's house was always immaculate. No matter how many people were there, her house was perfectly in order, and she never looked stressed. Food was always presented like out of a magazine, and everything had its place. I don't understand how she did it. Maybe for one day, my house will look like that.

Val:

My memory is going to the shoe store in Santa Barbara every time we visited. There was a huge rainbow on the wall and I remember thinking it was the biggest shoe store ever. I also remember Grandma and Grandpa's Santa Barbara home and that Grandma always had bagels and jelly beans for us to eat. Grandma always has the best outfits and Coach purses too.

John:

My early memories in Santa Barbara at Grandma's house were based around golf. Going to the driving range with Grandpa, not knowing how to swing a club on the turf setup, and pretending I knew how to putt. Years later, when they moved up north, Grandma's house became a destination for cousin bonding and good food. There was the chaos of 10+ kids running around to find matzah on Passover, the laughter and excitement from envelope season, and the VHS movies we could watch until it seemed like our eyes would fall out.

My favorite memories with Grandma are of her incredible cooking and the crowd it would bring. Brisket, soup, latkes, chicken – wonderful smells filled the house. It was never bland, overcooked, or dry, unlike her legendary humor. That feeling of excitement and Grandma calling us to dinner only to tell us "Slow down!" I get excited for family events because of what Grandma taught us: food and family go hand-in-hand. Without Grandma's recipe of bringing family together, we wouldn't have half the memories we have together.

Alyssa:

My memory was always going shopping and out to lunch for my birthday and going over the budget she would give me.

Sean:

Grandma would have all the grandchildren over for Passover most years and she would pre-hide the matzah. She often hid the matzah in the same place (the washer and dryer) year after year, expecting us to forget. If she mixed it up and we couldn't find it, then she'd just secretly tell Cory where it was hidden so we'd stop going through all her things. Grandma's house was always immaculately clean.

Travis:

My best memory was when she met Amber for the first time at Grandma and Grandpa's anniversary brunch at Castlewood Country Club. In classic Grandma fashion, she shook Amber's hand, held it, and gave her a solid look-over followed by a little head nod of approval.

Brian:

I remember going to her house and eating frozen cheeseburgers and jelly candy from Trader Joe's. Also, Grandpa allowed me to jump over the backyard fence to play golf even though Grandma would get mad at him.

Kyle:

Grandma and I used to have lunch together. We went to cheesesteak together regularly. I was thinking that I was getting Grandma some food she wanted. After years of having cheesesteak together she finally told me she didn't really like it and just went because she knew I liked it. We haven't been back to cheesesteak since. Also, whenever I make Grandma matzah ball soup, she says it's not salty enough.

Rhonda:

I remember getting up in the morning to go to the bathroom and my bed was made before I returned! Also, I would pour Dad three fingers of scotch on the rocks when he would get home from work.

Sabrina:

I always tell Grandma that I am her favorite grandchild, and, although she has yet to correct me, she does laugh and give me her classic eye roll. Any time I went to Grandma's house, she would spend hours playing cards with me, teaching me all the classic games. In classic Grandma fashion, she would always break out the pennies and nickels for gambling and she would always sweep me. I was not bothered by this since I never had to contribute to the coins and I was happy to dig into her endless jar of jelly beans instead.

On the day I found out my mom had been diagnosed with colon cancer I was sent to Grandma's house. Alongside a healthy dose of jelly beans, VHS movies, and card games, Grandma convinced me that everything was going to be okay. She even let me win a game of cards. It turned out Grandma was right (as she always is) because my mom got the surgery she needed and has been cancer-free ever since.

Ellen:

Everyone knows that mom loved to shop but they probably don't know that her love for shopping began a long, long time ago. When I was about five and we lived in Denver, many times I would come home from school to find a new outfit laid out on my bed. That's how my shopping habit started and continues to this date.

Wayne:

I was in my late 40s and mom was in her mid 70s. I was at work in a meeting. Catherine, our assistant, comes in and announces that my mom is on the phone. This is the first time Mom has ever called me at work. I trudged back to the office, picked up the phone and said, "I am surprised you know where I work" (which I actually was). Mom says, presumably with an eye roll, "Very funny." She asks me to come over the next week to move a chair. Really? Of course I agreed. After the brief call, Catherine asks if everything is okay. That's when it dawned on me that I should have been concerned when my mom called me at work for the first time ever. Ever since then I am more prepared to handle an odd call, which I haven't needed to yet.

Scott:

My fondest memories of Grandma always involve her pecan tarts, brisket, and kugel. The Passover celebrations were memorable but Grandma's meticulous attention to meal preparation was unforgettable. A specific memory was the beaming pride from Grandma on my Bar Mitzvah Day. Even though the Pinsky family is now in somewhat of a Jewish religion hibernation, the memories from that day will always stay with me.

Barb:

Eileen was so welcoming to Sean and me when we first met everyone at Wayne's house. The funny part was when, out of the blue, she asked me what my birthstone was. She said she had room for another stone on her necklace! At that point, I thought I was probably a "keeper!"

Brad:

I first met Eileen in late 1984; Rhonda and I had just started dating and she took me down to meet her mom and dad. Upon arriving in Santa Barbara, I was quickly struck by how immaculate the house was maintained and how the meals were delivered promptly in the morning / noon / night. I could tell Harold liked it that way. Eileen was a great cook and was always fashionably dressed no matter what she was doing. She reminded me a lot of TV mom June Cleaver. Eileen was easy to talk with and made me feel right at home. We talked about family and the things we had in common. She asked about my parents, and I told Eileen they were my role models, especially my mom who was a special education teacher. Eileen asked what my mom liked to do, and I told her family time, gardening, and swimming. With typical Eileen bluntness, she commented she didn't like gardening or swimming but really liked shopping. To this day, after knowing Eileen for almost 40 years, I have never seen her garden or swim, but she still loves to shop and remains fashionably dressed at 95 years young!

7



The Legacy

“I’m most proud of my children,” Eileen says. “Being alive at 95 makes me happy.” To date, Eileen and Harold’s four children have produced 11 grandchildren. Most of the grandchildren have married and have produced 16 great-grandchildren thus far. Norm’s daughter Teri (husband Jesse) has sons Jake and Rex, and Val’s (husband Oliver) kids are Layla and Ozzie. Son John (wife Cassie) has sons Holt and Griffin, and Scott (wife Anna) has daughter Amy. Barb’s son Sean (wife Kate) will have a daughter in July 2024. Wayne’s daughter Cory (husband Ross) has sons Cam and Maverick, and is expecting a third son in July 2024. Travis (wife Amber) has daughters Ellis and Rylee. Rhonda and Brad’s son Brian (wife Jovan) will have a son in March 2024 and Kyle (wife Julie) has son Drew.

Eileen claims she can’t remember all of the names of her grandchildren and great grandchildren. Yet, she always makes sure their birthdays and holidays are recognized with a card or gift. Another notable thing about Eileen is her attention to her hair and makeup. Not a day goes by that she isn’t perfectly coiffed. Rhonda makes sure Eileen’s nails are done monthly and accompanies her to the hairdresser every week. None of Eileen’s kids ever recall Eileen washing her own hair.

People always say that Eileen has the best sarcastic quips, a great sense of humor, and complete mastery of the eye roll. She tells this story about her own mother, who Eileen claims, wasn't funny but did this funny thing: "She was living with me the last six months of her life and she was sleeping in a bedroom that I had made up for her. She insists she sees all kinds of cockroaches on the walls and birds flying around in there. I told her that we don't have cockroaches or birds and she responded, 'You're full of shit!' That came out of her mouth! I couldn't help but to laugh. That was the funniest thing my mother ever said." Of course, Eileen's most common phrase is "Oh shit," so the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Eileen has strong opinions about many things – including President Trump, whom she cannot stand. Also, likely to come out of her mouth in response to a troublesome situation is "What are you gonna do?!"

When asked what Eileen thinks her friends would say about her, Eileen said, "I hope they like me."

Yes, Eileen, your friends *really* like you.
And your family absolutely loves you.

PENSKY FAMILY BIRTHDAYS & WEDDINGS

JANUARY

Amber Pensky born January 6, 1986
Scott & Ana Pensky married January 6, 2019
Brian Holsworth born January 17, 1989
Travis & Amber Pensky married January 21, 2012

FEBRUARY

Ross Spencer born February 16, 1985
Harold Pensky born February 19, 1926
Layla Garrett born February 20, 2015
Cooper Holsworth born February 29, 2024

MARCH

Amy Pensky born March 3, 2020
Holt Pensky born March 12, 2019
Griffin Pensky born March 15, 2021
Ellis Pensky born March 17, 2019
Teri Pensky Hlubik born March 19, 1975
Wayne & Kim Pensky married March 22, 1980
Jesse Hlubik born March 24, 1971

APRIL

Camden Spencer born April 4, 2019
Julie Holsworth born April 16, 1991
Norm & Barb Pensky married April 20, 1996
Kim Pensky born April 23, 1956

MAY

Brian & Jovan Holsworth married May 2, 2021
Kyle Holsworth born May 7, 1991

JUNE

Maverick Spencer born June 4, 2020
Cory Pensky Spencer born June 10, 1983
Ellen Pensky McGraw born June 13, 1953
Cory & Ross Spencer married June 16, 2018
Ozzie Garrett born June 23, 2016
Grant Antalek born June 27, 1995

JULY

Rex Hlubik born July 5, 2013
Barb Pensky born July 12, 1960
Valerie Pensky Garrett born July 12, 1979
Sabrina & Grant Antalek married July 21, 2023
Eileen Pensky born July 22, 1928
Scott Pensky born July 25, 1991

AUGUST

Wayne Pensky born August 14, 1955
Sabrina McGraw born August 14, 1995
Cassie Pensky born August 20, 1986
Mateus Oliveira born August 20, 2002
John Pensky born August 21, 1987
Kyle & Julie Pensky married August 24, 2019
Kate Curtis born August 26, 1993
Ana Pensky born August 28, 1982
Eileen & Harold Pensky married August 29, 1948 –
2008
Drew Holsworth born August 31, 2022

SEPTEMBER

Terri & Jesse Pensky married September 6, 2009
Brad Holsworth born September 7, 1960
Sean Curtis born September 8, 1992
Brad & Rhonda Holsworth married September 13,
1986
Travis Pensky born September 27, 1985

OCTOBER

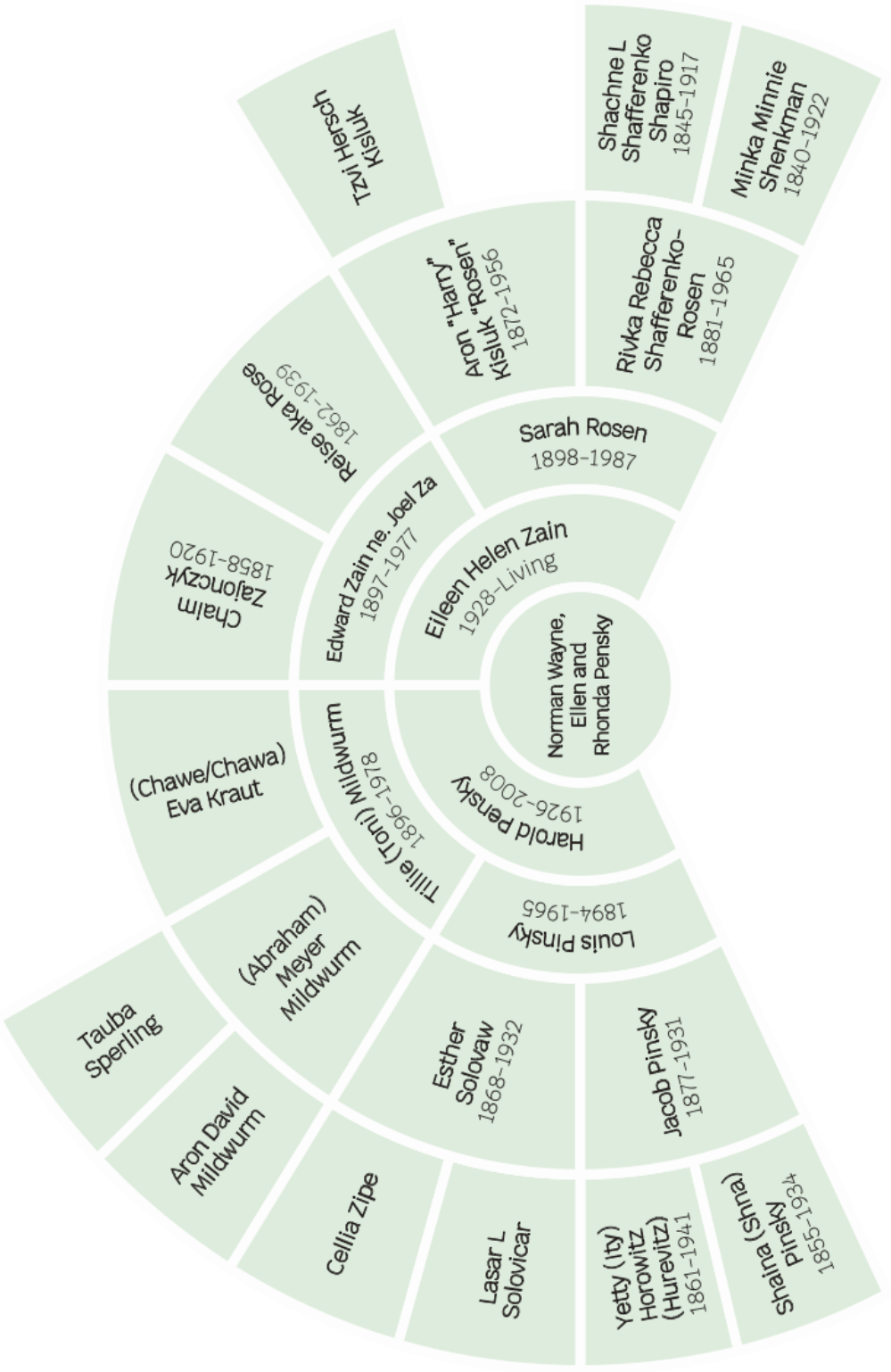
Rhonda Pensky Holsworth born October 6, 1961
Valerie & Oliver Garrett married October 6, 2013
Jim McGraw born October 20, 1951
Jovan Navarro Holsworth born October 20, 1986
Jake Hlubik born October 20, 2011
Rylee Pensky born October 24, 2020
Oliver Garrett born October 31, 1981

NOVEMBER

Sean & Kate Curtis married November 4, 2022
John & Cassie Pensky married November 10, 2018
Norman Pensky born November 26, 1949
Ellen & Jim McGraw married November 27, 1992

DECEMBER

Avianna Navarro Hillman born December 3, 2011
Alyssa Holsworth born December 21, 1994



Eileen & Harold Pensky

Ellen
(James McGraw)

Wayne
(Kim Viera)

Rhonda
(Brad Holsworth)

Barbara Kerrigan
(Barbara Kerrigan)

Sean Curtis
(Kate Taylor)

Sabrina
(Grant Antalek)

Cory
(Ross Spencer)

Travis
(Amber Accardo)

Alyssa

Kyle
(Julie Cendejas)

Brian
(Jovan Navarro)

Cooper

Av Hillman

Drew

Ellis

Rylee

Camden

Maverick

NORMAN
(Maggie Laughlin)

Scott
(Amartha Olivera)

Amy

Griffin

Holt

Layla

Ozzie

Rex

Jake

(Karin Schwartz)

Teri
(Jessie Hubik)

Valerie
(Oliver Garrett)

Jonathon
(Cassie Heunkekers)