



Gratz Insider, September 2016 - Story Continuation

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Alumni Spotlight on Randi Cohen: A Family's Story Begins at Gratz

In the 1920's, Abraham Shelow and Anna Harris attended Gratz College's School of Observation and Practice. The two met there, later married and started a family. Anna and Abraham Shelow were Randi Cohen's maternal grandparents.

Anna and Abraham graduated from Gratz in 1925, as evidenced by the class photo below. After graduation, they remained deeply committed to the College. Abraham was president of the Gratz College alumni association; Anna taught at Gratz and also volunteered at graduation ceremonies, setting up refreshments and performing other necessary tasks. In the 1970's, the couple was named the Gratz College Man and Woman of the Year because of their alumni work.

"My grandparents set the tone that Jewish education was really important," said Cohen. Therefore, when Cohen's mother and two uncles were old enough, they too attended Gratz, without question: Irwin '47, Cyrus '52 and Judith '56.

And when it was their turn, so did Cohen and her three sisters: Randi (Cohen) '79, Michele (Susson) '81, Bonnie (Cooper) '83 and Ellen (Greenberg) '88. By the time Cohen started school at Gratz, she already felt as though she had grown up there because of her grandparents' longtime involvement. She says that for her, Gratz was "like a second home."

Cohen's two daughters continued their family's longstanding tradition by graduating from the Gratz Jewish Community High School (JCHS): Alyssa in 2008 and Tamara in 2013. To bring the story full circle, the girls' JCHS tuition was paid with the interest from a former Gratz scholarship fund that had been created in their great-grandfather's memory.

Cohen estimates that at least 20 of her relatives have graduated from Gratz, including uncles, cousins and other family members. Especially striking is the fact that her Gratz lineage encompasses four



Randi Cohen, Judy Greenberg (mom), Ellen Greenberg, Seymore Greenberg (dad), Bonnie Cooper and Michele Susson



Tamara and Alyssa

generations, in particular, four generations of women: her grandmother, her mother, Cohen herself and her two daughters.

Dina Maiben, assistant director of Gratz Advance, who brought Cohen's story to the attention of The Insider, explains the significance of Cohen's family history:

Gratz accepted women on an equal footing with men, and was the first institution of higher Jewish education to do so. As it turns out, Randi's family is a beautiful illustration of the power of Gratz's egalitarian policy. Randi's daughters represent the fourth generation of women to attend Gratz. I think this is just such a special thing for us to celebrate.

In addition to having grown up at Gratz and having sent her own children there, Cohen has also been an employee and a volunteer at the College. For 20 years, she worked in Gratz's Tuttleman Library, and to this day, continues her volunteer work in the Holocaust Oral History Archive.

We are grateful to all of our alumni, and we love hearing about their Gratz connections and memories. If you have a Gratz alumni story that you would like to share with us, please contact Dodi Klimoff, either by [email](#) or by phone at 215-635-7300 x 133.

