

## PROFILE - Seth & Myra Barovick



Asked to describe one another in one or two words, neither Seth nor Myra could hold to that limit. Seth: “Myra is beautiful, wonderful, talented, a great cook, everything a man could want in a wife;” Myra: “Seth is low key, modest, sweet, kind, a true renaissance man, and handsome.” Other adjectives cropped up during our talk. Myra is 83; Seth, blessed with good health and remarkably cogent, will be 97 on September 6<sup>th</sup>. They met 53 years ago

as neighbors and friends, each raising their own family. Having celebrated their 37<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in early August, “Sethie” and “Myrella” are a living testament to the lyrics of that old Sinatra classic, “Love is lovelier the second time around.”

Seth’s father, a physician, was born in Vilna (now Vilnius), Lithuania in 1903. Immigrating to New York when he was 9, the family were partners with George Gershwin’s father in a bakery on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Tragically, Seth’s mother died while giving birth to him in 1923; four years later his father remarried a schoolteacher. He had a half-brother and sister, both of whom are now deceased.

He attended DeWitt Clinton High School and the University of Pennsylvania before earning a DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) degree at the NYU College of Dentistry in 1946. Having interned at Bellevue Hospital and practiced in New York City until 1950, he moved to Marathon, NY for two years. After the start of the Korean War, Congress passed the Doctor Draft Law, making him eligible for the draft, since part of his dental education was in the ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program). Rather than waiting to be drafted, Seth applied for and was granted a commission as captain in the US Air Force Dental Corps. He was transferred from Presque Isle Air Force Base in Maine to Ethan Allen AFB in Colchester, where he finished his tour of duty in January 1953. “Once I got to Vermont I never left,” he says, “I practiced dentistry in the Burlington area until my retirement in 1998.”

Seth has two daughters. Robin, an attorney, now lives with her husband in Middlebury and serves as Supervising Clerk at the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. She is a graduate of Stanford University and the University of Buffalo Law School. Beth, who lives in Wayland, MA, attended Tufts University and has an MBA from Boston University. Having held several jobs, she was an at-home-mom while raising three children, who are now grown. Beth currently works part-time at a local exercise club. She and her husband recently built a vacation home in South Hero.

The Barovick family joined Ohavi Zedek in 1952. Seth served as Treasurer in the late ‘60s, and Robin and Beth are graduates of OZ’s Hebrew School.

Myra's maternal grandparents hailed from Bessarabia and paternal grandparents from Romania. They came to Canada in the early 1900s. Myra's mother was born in Montreal; her father, born in New York, moved to Montreal at an early age. Both of her parents had four siblings. Since all the aunts and uncles on her father's side married late, Myra was the only child for seven-and-a-half years in a big, loving family and she admits to having been 'spoiled rotten.' She has a younger brother, still in Montreal; her 'baby sister' who lived in Florida passed away in 2013. "I miss her very much" Myra says. Growing up, they lived close to their grandmother and two aunts. "Every day we'd gather at 4pm for tea and goodies, and on Fridays many others in the family would join us. We were a very close-knit group." Myra's parents were among the founders of Beth Zion, an Orthodox synagogue on Cote St. Luc in Montreal; as an adult with her own family, she belonged to Dorshei Emet, the Reconstructionist synagogue where Boris Dolin, the son of OZ members Leigh and Leslie Dolin, currently serves as rabbi.

Myra graduated from Strathcona Academy and secretarial school. She married young and was a stay-at-home mom to four children: Sheindl, a retired social worker and current professional organizer in Montreal, the mother of one daughter; Michael, a McGill graduate, civil engineer and building contractor who lives in Atlanta with his wife and two children; Karen, a retired bank manager and lecturer at Concordia University, the mother of four now living in Titchfield, England; and Aviva, a Swiss citizen along with her husband, who runs a family office in Zurich. Six children and ten grandchildren make up Seth and Myra's blended family. "Thank goodness for FaceTime," Myra says.

Even as a youngster, her creative and artistic talents were apparent – no surprise to those who are familiar with her unique sense of style. In Montreal she was a personal consultant and shopper, helping women with their wardrobes. Gregarious and effusive in nature, she lectured often about fashion. For herself, Myra favors floor-length outfits in soft, flowing, jewel-tone fabrics – mostly in amethyst (purple) and turquoise (blue-green). Purple is her signature color.

Throughout the years in Montreal, Vermont and Arizona she has taken courses in flower arranging, ceramics, beading, acrylics, textile collage, multi-media felting, quilting, Fimo (clay) and mosaics. Her handiwork ('my-riginals') has been exhibited in various venues in Montreal and in Boston, Arizona and Atlanta, as well as at Frog Hollow Craft Center and the Vermont Handcrafters juried show in Stowe. A self-taught jewelry maker, Myra created jewelry for Nan Patrick and Stephen & Burns in Burlington and has contributed 'my-riginals' to many local, national and international organizations. "My-riginals are worn by women in South Africa, Russia and Israel," she notes.

In Montreal Myra volunteered as a member of the Jewish Junior Welfare League, teaching arts and crafts at the Montreal School for the Blind. Proficient in French, she mentored and 'adopted' a Moroccan family to help them adjust to life in Canada. Later, in Vermont, she volunteered at Respite House for 15 years preparing meals, and before COVID she made sandwiches for the homeless in memory and in honor of Sally Hand, who, she says, "loved doing that so very much."

Seth and Myra met in the 1960s in Fairfield, Vermont, where both families had vacation homes. Myra recalls horseback riding, fishing, picking berries for jellies and jams, dabbling in arts and crafts, and enjoying glorious days outdoors in the country. Seth's weekend activities included cross-country skiing and snowmobiling in the winter, mowing and a little gardening (which was a disaster, he confessed) during the summer months.

The couple married in 1983 and moved into their first home in South Burlington, a condominium at Twin Oaks. Myra joined Seth at Ohavi Zedek. She partnered with Mimi Wall to stock and manage the gift shop, frequently attended Shabbat services, and made lifelong friends with many congregants. Currently the Barovicks are minyan makers on Tuesday evenings.

And they both celebrated b'nai mitzvah at OZ....29 years apart. Though as a boy Seth had attended Hebrew School at the Jewish Center on West 86<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, his father canceled his bar mitzvah due to illness in the family. Instead, 13-year old Seth recited the Haftorah at home on his designated Shabbat in the company of his cousin. Nearly fifty years later at OZ, having studied with the late Jack Rosenthal, Seth stood before the Torah as a bar mitzvah, with his stepmother (who was his mother throughout her lifetime) among congregants, relatives and friends celebrating with him. She was happy to be there in 1983, Seth recalls, and she expressed regret about his father's decision to cancel his celebration decades ago. Seth chanted another Haftorah in 1984. Myra, never having become bat mitzvah in her youth, remedied the situation nine years ago. From the bimah she looked out onto a sea of purple, donned by her friends in the pews. Rabbi Joshua wore purple socks.

Seth and Myra have always loved traveling, individually and together, both before and after their marriage. It would be difficult to find a country in Europe that they haven't visited; they've also been to Mexico, Nairobi, the Soviet Union, Cape Town, Curacao and the Caribbean. Myra went to Israel in 1964. She and Seth have journeyed to Switzerland several times to visit Aviva. For over 30 years they escaped the harsh Vermont winters in Scottsdale, Arizona, where they basked in the sun, visited with Seth's cousins who had moved there, and developed many close friendships. "We loved it, but for everything there is a season," Myra says philosophically. Nowadays they live year-round in their South Burlington condo off Swift Street. Friends describe their home as elegant, yet warm and welcoming. "Our place has a revolving door – I call it the Barovick B&B," Seth says. "We love entertaining," Myra agrees, though COVID guidelines have put a temporary hold on socializing.

Today, most of life is mundane – for her, washing, sanitizing, *shpritzing* everything with disinfectant, lots of cooking, baking bread and homemade pizza (crust included), trying new recipes, knitting, and sorting out in an attempt to downsize. She tries to walk every day. As for Seth, though earlier in life he was a 'real jock,' he can no longer jog, play tennis, ski or snowmobile. He walks slower and not as far as he once could, and his hearing is not what it used to be. Since he does most of the dishes, he quips that his DDS now stands for 'Doctor of Dishwasher Science.' He is an accomplished photographer, plays the piano, and – having taken to the computer when the technology was in its infancy – keeps up with every technological advance, still responding to calls from all over to help with computer problems. "I consider

myself sophisticated when it comes to IT,” says his friend, David Brown, “but I get tips all the time from him. He’s so sharp it’s incredible!”

Together Seth and Myra Zoom in to Tuesday evening minyan and other virtual presentations, spend time on computers and Facebook, watch TV, meditate twice a day, and rest when they’re tired. They love to hop into the car, with Myra at the wheel and Seth (‘a human GPS’) serving as navigator, to travel the back roads of Vermont that lead to creemee stands. If you ask, they’ll share their comprehensive list.

Summing up the COVID situation, Myra observes, “We are very isolated because we have to be, but are most grateful for what we have.....each other!”

Sounds like a love song to me.

*~Judy Hershberg*