

My beautiful mom, Idalia Radomska was born in 1923, in Mlawa, Poland, a small town located outside the capital city of Warsaw. Soon after she was born, her family moved to an apartment in Warsaw where her mother opened a small grocery store and her father worked as an accountant.

As an only child, Lila had a happy childhood spending long summers at her grandparents who ran a grist mill in the picturesque Polish countryside. Most times, Lila could be seen sitting for hours in the garden, behind a book-- not just any book--at a very young age mom was busily devouring the works of Mickiewicz, Sienkiewicz and other Polish literary giants. It was here she developed her hallmark passions that would propel her through life: Her

love for Poland, her love of learning and her love for her family.

Then, in 1939, at age 16, Lila's happy life suddenly turned upside down. It was the start of WWII and the German invasion of Poland followed by five years of occupation. Like others, Lila lived in constant fear of street round-ups, imprisonment, public execution and deportation to concentration camps or forced labour camps. Lila and her friends could no longer attend school. Curfews were imposed and blackouts were common. But terror did not break the Poles' patriotic resolve to resist again and again in a fight to regain their freedom. "Even with threats to her safety, her love of learning could not be diminished." Lila and her

friends started attending school at teachers' homes in secret. At age 20, she joined the Polish Home Army as it prepared for an uprising against the occupying troops. She started as a courier delivering news bulletins, then worked as an assistant field nurse, moving from location to location when things became unsafe. One night, fleeing over roof tops with strafing fire over their heads, Lila and her fellow resistance fighters were struggling to make it to safety. When I asked my mom how she had the courage to get through that, she laughed and said: "Kochana, we didn't have time to be afraid, we just kept going." But courage and patriotic fervour were not enough. Two months later, outnumbered and outgunned, the Uprising was defeated. The city was evacuated on foot. My mother and grandmother, broken hearted, were forced to leave

their city and country they loved-their homeland) They were put on a train to German POW camps and forced to participate in the German war effort by building the notorious V2 bomb.

Then, at the end of the war, out of the blue, one day something miraculous happened: Their liberators had arrived! But instead of the expected British or American troops, they were Polish soldiers. The men weren't expecting a camp full of women, and Polish ones at that! How life can change in an instant! One of the liberators was a handsome young officer: Zbigniew Rappe! After 2 weeks of celebrations, Zbyszek and Lila married in Germany, and together with my Grandmother they

emigrated to Canada, landed in Windsor and had two children.

Chris and I grew up with two wonderful parents and my grandma at home with us. We thought that having two loving mothers was a real bonus! My mom and grandmother were very close and shared a love of movies, opera and theatre. The arts were a major interest in my mother's life and she passed that along to me. I have many happy memories of seeing movies, theatre and opera performances with her in Toronto, New York and even in Poland.

Learning was a hallmark passion for my mom. She just loved academia. After a couple of office jobs, she was

lucky enough to land a position at the University of Windsor-in the library! What a match made in heaven! Since the university covered tuition, she turned her mind to earning a degree. Why not English literature? It was tough working full time, raising a family and attending night school. Eager to learn more and advance her career, she went on to do her Masters Degree in Library Science at Michigan State University. We were so in awe of her accomplishment. She did it with straight A's! We owed a debt of gratitude to my grandmother who did the weekly cooking and took care of all of us and our house.

Mom's education also meant more time to spend with dad. He took us on adventures through Essex County: skating, tobogganing and even a summer camping trip.

But Sunday mornings were always reserved for church and Sunday school. Mom was a devoted Christian and as a child of God, did her best to live according to her faith. She attended Trinity faithfully and was actively involved in her beloved Seniors Group. On Shrove Tuesday before the pandemic, Mom supervised the making of potato pancakes, according to the Polish recipe of course, scooting around with her walker and making sure the potatoe pancakes turned out just right.

Our collective love of the outdoors and my parents' desire to explore North America took us on wonderful family vacations, camping and sightseeing in the most wondrous places. Mom did all the planning, navigating and cooking. And my father-well he actually built our trailer with some help from my brother.

Eventually Chris met Kim, the love of his life and they went on to have three wonderful daughters. My beautiful nieces, Krystina, Tricia and Emmy. These girls were the light of my parents' lives. They meant everything to Babcia and Dziadzio. (reference the photos) And mom was truly delighted to welcome the girls' wonderful partners, Ben, Mike and Corbin into our family.



As they got older, my parents, then later my mother, generously helped the girls realize some of their dreams of travel. Experiences I know they cherish and will remember forever.

One of the most incredible gifts in my mother's life has been the recent birth of the youngest member of our family, Tina and Mike's son Mason. When Mason would come to see Babcia, her face would light up the room. Mason has an uncanny resemblance to my mother's father Eugene. She tried to convince Tina to name him Eugene. In fact she would always reference him by name. "Hello Tina. How is Eugene doing!

There is so much to share about our amazing mother, grandmother, great grandmother and friend Lila. There is one other passion that was a major feature of our family life that I haven't touched on, and that is the role of Polish culture and tradition. Both mom and grandma were founding members of the Polish Social Club of Windsor. It was the pillar of their social life and where they developed lifelong friendships, and poured much of their hearts and souls into building and sustaining. I remember the formal balls that they hosted at the Norton Palmer Hotel. The planning, the menus, the decorating and after, the post-mortems on Sunday mornings! The club held public lectures on a wide variety of topics, presented by subject experts and learned speakers often affiliated with the University of Windsor. We enjoyed going to the club's

annual summer picnic which was often hosted by club members with cottages in Grand Bend. And my parents loved hosting these picnics at our cottage too. Even at an advanced age, mom was able to keep this tradition going. With a little help from me her co-host.

Her undying love for Poland, her love of learning and her love for her family. These were the passions that shaped my mother's life. She experienced many challenges and hardships but she persevered and overcame them. Even at her advanced age, she kept going, determined and resilient. At Life she was a hero. My hero.