

# Mathilde Mendelsohn Schwab Dreyfous

## An Appreciation



by Tom Schwab

## INTRODUCTION

*Mathilde Mendelsohn Schwab Dreyfous, my mother, died on May 17, 1992, at the age of 94.*

From the time I was old enough to be aware of such things, I realized that my mother was a remarkable woman in many respects, but especially in the extraordinary and positive impact she had on so many people and in how they felt about her. I observed this directly, of course, but I also saw it in the things people would say to her in my presence or the things they would say to me, or the things they would write to her in letters and Christmas cards.

Even though I knew how deeply people felt about my mother, I was not prepared for the overwhelming expressions of it when she died, in words spoken at two memorial services, one on May 24 in Holyoke and another on June 1 in New Orleans, and in many letters and notes from family and friends.

Before my mother died, I had decided that I wanted to write a piece about her, as I had done in 1990 about my stepfather, George Dreyfous. I wanted to write it mainly because I want her descendants to know about her and to appreciate this part of their heritage.

Happily, she lived long enough that each of her five grandchildren knew her well. But she had five great grandchildren living at her death, Danielle, Zachary, Leah, Jeremy and Michael, and they were not old enough really to appreciate her. The two oldest, Danielle and Zachary, did delight in "Til" (as everyone called her) and loved to listen to her sing the songs, especially "Here's a Ball for Baby," she had sung for children for so many years. But advancing years had taken away so much of her understanding and ability to communicate that, although she could still enjoy them and sing to them, she never knew them as individuals and they could not really know her as the person she had been. And now there is a sixth great grandchild, Alexander Tilson (after her) Schwab, born two months after she died.

So this "Appreciation" is dedicated to the memory of a unique and remarkable woman whom I was blessed to be able to call "Mother", and to those great grandchildren who I hope will one day read about the special person that was their "Til."

We are fortunate that we have a large number of pictures, articles, letters, etc. about Mother. I will refer to them as "Mother's papers." They are presently located at our home at 80 N. Pleasant St. in Holyoke. It is my hope that they will be kept together over the years, and that as her descendants become old enough to read this Appreciation, they will be able to look through them as well and get a better feel of the kind of person she was.

*Tom Schwab Holyoke, MA September, 1992*

Note: The photo on the cover, Mother singing "Here's a Ball for Baby" to her oldest grandchild, Danielle Abra Schwab, was taken by Lois' sister, Estelle Abrams, in July of 1989.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	2
Her Life	4
Her Character and Personality	10
Conclusion	15
Appendix 1 - Concerning my Father	16
Appendix 2 - Memorial remarks by Edgard Schwab	18
Appendix 3 - Excerpts from letters, etc.	19
Appendix 4 - My letter on her 90th birthday	21
Appendix 5 - My letter on her 70th birthday	22
Appendix 6 - Memorial remarks by Leta Marks	23
Appendix 7 - Transcript of 90th birthday video	24
Appendix 8 - Student piece by Carol S. Hindin	27
Appendix 9 - Memorial remarks by David Schwab	27
Pictures	

## HER LIFE

Mathilde Mendelsohn was born on October 1, 1897, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the fourth child of Joe Mendelsohn and Bertha Bodenheira Mendelsohn, one having died in infancy. A yellow fever epidemic was in progress, and Mother liked to tell the story that after she moved to Louisiana in 1947, someone sent her a clipping from the Baton Rouge newspaper with a column "Fifty Years Ago Today" which said that on October 1, 1897, when others were fleeing the city, a brave little girl made her appearance in the midst of a yellow fever epidemic.

The story of Mother's ancestors is an interesting one, but I do not include it here because my cousin, Joe Mendelsohn III, has collected substantial materials about the Mendelsohn and the Bodenheim ancestors, and those who read this piece and want to know more about them should contact Joe. I will only point out that Mother's papers include a translation of a diary kept by her great grandfather, Auguste Picard, who was born near Colmar, in Alsace, France, which is not more than perhaps 40 miles from Diemeringen, the town where my father, Edgard Schwab, was born. Also in Mother's papers is a photocopy of a chapter about Auguste Picard from a book written about early American Jews by Rabbi Jacob Marcus, an old friend of Mother's from Cincinnati days.

When Mother was born, her father, Joe Mendelsohn, was working as a salesman for a liquor business owned by his brother-in-law, Henry Freiberg. The business was based in Cincinnati, Ohio, and when Mother was about two years old, Joe Mendelsohn and his family moved from Baton Rouge to Cincinnati. However, in the words of Mother's brother Joe (in a piece he wrote about his father in 1971), Joe Sr.'s personality and style were not suited to living in the North, and Joe took his family back to Baton Rouge less than a year after they moved to Cincinnati. But shortly thereafter, in 1901, Joe Mendelsohn died of typhoid fever -he was only 36 and Mother was 4. The family stayed in Baton Rouge until 1909, when the oldest brother, Simon, having completed his studies at Louisiana State University and taken a job with the same Freiberg liquor business in Cincinnati, brought his mother, Bertha, his brother, Joe, and his sister, my mother, to live again in Cincinnati.

Mother attended grade school and Hughes High School in Cincinnati. I know little of her school days except that I believe she enjoyed school and I do remember one story she liked to tell. It seems that she decided to take a German language course in high school and found in the first few days that most of the other students in the class came from German-speaking families (Cincinnati's population at that time included many immigrants from Germany) and could already speak and understand the language. So she became known as the least accomplished student in the class. But one day the teacher went around the room seeking the answer to a question of German grammar, and he and the other students were surprised to find that Mother was the only student who could answer it! She became the class expert in German grammar. She always attributed that understanding of German grammar to her having studied Latin and she used to say that Latin was the most important and helpful course she took in high school.

Mother attended the University of Cincinnati, graduating in 1921 with a bachelors degree in psychology, then a relatively new course of study. Upon graduation she obtained a job testing children in what was then called the Psychology Laboratory, a division of the Cincinnati public schools. I believe that such a department in a public school system was rather unusual in those days. Mother's job was mainly to test children in various schools throughout the system. It involved a good deal of traveling around within the City, and it helped acquaint her with many of the diverse communities and nationalities in the city. She worked with African-Americans, as well as what were then called "hillbillies", white people who had migrated to Cincinnati from the Appalachian areas of nearby Kentucky and West Virginia and whose families were generally poor and uneducated.

One fact about Mother as a young woman that always astounds anyone who only knew her later is that she was an extremely shy woman. She used to say she was a "wallflower," using the word that was used in those days to describe a young woman whom young men ignored - I think it conveyed the idea that when the pretty girls were asked to dance, the others stood around the side of the room, thus

decorating the walls. Aunt Marion has said that she thinks the work Mother did at the Board of Education, and particularly going around to the different schools to do testing, gave her confidence and helped bring her out from her shyness. Perhaps the experience mentioned below about martinis was also a factor.

Sometime in the early twenties, Mother met Edgard Schwab, my father, and they were married on August 24, 1924. My recollections of my father are dim - he died in 1942, when I was fourteen years old. But Appendix 1 to this Appreciation sets forth some recollections of him, and a little of his family history. That history is much in my mind as I write this, for I have just returned from a reunion of the Schwab family which I describe in Appendix 1.

My parents traveled to France on their honeymoon and visited my father's mother and other members of his family. On October 12, 1925, the first of their children was born and named Edgard Abraham Schwab, Jr., the middle name being that of Edgard Senior's father, who had died some years before. I, the second child, was born in September of 1927 and given the middle name Joe, after Mother's father. Mother always told me that her father's name, her brother's name and my name were all "Joe," not "Joseph." When I went into the Navy in 1945 and needed a copy of my birth certificate, I was surprised to see that it showed my middle name as "Joseph," not "Joe."

While on the subject of names, I should point out that in naming my brother after his living father, my parents were ignoring a rather widespread Jewish custom against naming a child after a living relative. Two of my father's brothers did the same thing, and I do not know what accounts for this. However, they all belonged at the time to Reform Jewish congregations, and at this stage in the development of Reform Judaism many old customs were ignored that have since come back into favor, even among Reform Jews.

Mother did not work when my brother and I were quite young, but she began to work again in the late thirties, as school psychologist for the University School, a small and respected private school. She also during this period took a few private students in remedial reading. Included in Mother's papers is a lovely picture that appeared in the newspaper, showing her tutoring twin brothers, who were children of a teacher at the University School.

In about 1940, she became interested in the "ink blot" or Rorschach test. She took a week's course in Chicago with a Dr. Beck, who was a prominent Rorschach expert. During the next few years she and some of the others who took that course and who lived in Kentucky and Ohio would meet at one another's homes for an occasional weekend of trading ideas and experiences with Rorschach testing.

In late March, 1942, my father suffered a rather mild heart attack, but while recovering from it in Jewish Hospital, he suffered a serious embolism that led to his death on May 31, 1942. During the entire period of his illness, Mother actually lived at the hospital so that she could be with him all the time. Although she knew his condition was serious, she looked forward to his coming home and had begun discussing with us how we might set up a bed in a downstairs room for when he came home. His death was unexpected and devastating to her.

While my father was in the hospital, my brother and I (then age 16 and 14) lived pretty much alone. We often visited the hospital. I have a vivid recollection of one visit because when we changed streetcars, as one had to do to get to the hospital, we saw the newspapers being sold (at the corner of Reading Road and Rockdale Avenue) announcing the air raid on Tokyo by General James Doolittle's B-25 bombers flying off aircraft carriers.

At about the time my father died, mother took a job as a psychologist at the Child Guidance Home, affiliated with the Jewish Hospital. It was a place where emotionally disturbed children lived during a period of evaluation and treatment. She did testing for the staff psychiatrists, who were led by a prominent local psychiatrist, Dr. Maurice Levine, for whom she also did testing of his private patients.

Both before and, I think, after my father died, Mother was active in a club called the Current Topic Club. Its members were all women, and at each of their meetings one member would present a paper or a book review. Judging from how Mother approached her Current Topic papers, I would say the

members took the task seriously. Mother's presentations often pertained to psychology. One was about a book by a psychiatrist named Karen Horney, and for some reason I can't recall, we always kidded her about its opening lines: "My thanks to you, Karen Horney, for having such a pretty name. Otherwise I should have had to try to find a clever title for this paper."

Another Current Topic paper, also included in Mother's papers, was devoted to a then recent book called "Our Age on Unreason," by another psychiatrist, Franz Alexander. Its opening lines are also worth recalling:

"I can thank Moss Hart for making my paper apropos. When I read Franz Alexander's recent book, I felt rather like a "Lady in the Dark" myself, but I realized that it was a tremendous work and really worth a Current Topic paper. The book isn't easy reading and I'm afraid my paper won't be easy to listen to. But bear with me, please. If I can extract a few of the main thoughts and make them clear I really think you'll have some new ideas worth mulling over."

(As I remember it, "Lady in the Dark" was one of Mother's favorite musical comedies, and it had a distinctly Freudian psychoanalytic theme.)

Edgard graduated from University School in 1943, and entered the U.S. Navy, taking training as an aircraft gunner. Mother and I moved from the house on Lowry Avenue where the family had lived for some years, to a small apartment on Mitchell Avenue. Although the apartment was in a separate city adjoining Cincinnati, called St. Bernard, it was only a few blocks away from where we had lived. I graduated from high school in 1945, having already entered the University of Cincinnati in January of 1945 pursuant to a wartime accelerated program under which you could start college while still finishing high school. I had already signed up to enlist in the U.S. Navy, and left for boot camp in mid-July. Knowing that both of us would be away for an extended period, mother decided to leave Cincinnati and take some graduate work in psychology at the University of Chicago. She sublet the apartment and went to Chicago in the fall of 1945.

When I asked her many years later why she decided to do this, she said that it was not only because she wanted more training in her field of psychology, which I had assumed, but also because she wanted some relief from her overprotective friends and family who were so eager to keep her from being lonely.

In Chicago she rented a room in the apartment of an older woman. Her friends were mostly fellow students. She liked to tell that when one of her brothers was in Chicago on business and invited her to dinner, it was the night before an exam, and one of her classmates chided her for going and for not taking her academic work seriously enough!

She spent the academic year 1945-46 in Chicago and returned to Cincinnati in early summer of 1946, when my brother and I were discharged from the Navy. We both enrolled at the University of Cincinnati for that summer and mother continued to work as a psychologist, with a brief stint working with comparison shoppers at a downtown department store. She did a considerable amount of testing during this period for Maurice Levine and other psychiatrists, usually the Rorschach test, which requires expertise to interpret, and at which she had become something of a specialist.

Included in Mother's papers is a piece she wrote for *The American Israelite* newspaper at about this time, reviewing a book by Dr. Levine. It was for a general audience, and in her review she attempted to make this rather technical book understandable to such an audience. Perhaps in order to help do so, she included references to a character from the novels of Marcel Proust, which I believe she was then reading, and to one of her favorite books, *Alice in Wonderland*.

At about this time, she renewed her acquaintance with George Dreyfous, an attorney living in New Orleans, Louisiana. George had two aunts who lived in Cincinnati - as a young man he had spent vacations in Cincinnati while he was attending Harvard Law School, and he had known Mother then. He had never married. One of his aunts was a good friend of Mother's mother, Bertha Mendelsohn, and played a major role in bringing the two of them together. They met several times in Cincinnati, and began to correspond frequently.

I have a clear recollection that in early 1947 Mother asked my brother and me whether we would consider it inappropriate were she to accept George's invitation to spend a weekend with him in Chicago. When we gave the idea the okay, I can recall driving her to Union Station to take the train for Chicago, and coming back to the car (I even remember where on the station parking plaza it was parked!) and saying to myself "My mother is going to get married."

Shortly after then they announced their engagement, and were married on March 21, 1947 by Rabbi Victor Reichert (a close friend of many years and related to Mother by marriage) before only a few family members at our Mitchell Avenue apartment, George was then 53 years old, and mother was an extremely young-looking 49, as one can observe from some pictures in Mother's papers that were taken the night before the wedding, at a party given by mother's brother, Simon Mendelsohn, and his wife, Marion.

Let me digress for a moment to say a word about the beautiful relationship between Marion Mendelsohn and Mother. Mother always would say that Marion was her sister-in-law **and** her best friend. They were quite different and distinct personalities - they didn't always agree about things and each of them generally let the other know what she thought. But they loved and respected each other, they visited each other frequently, they traveled together and they remained "best friends" for some seventy years.

Mother's life in New Orleans was totally different from what she had known in Cincinnati. It was a different social world and an even more different economic world. Thanks to life insurance and the generosity of her brothers, she had had enough in Cincinnati to live on, comfortably if not luxuriously, as a widow. But George Dreyfous was rather well-to-do, and she began to live in a style that, while not in the least opulent, was considerably more comfortable than she had ever enjoyed before. They moved into an apartment that was owned by George and his family, and that was substantially renovated for them. It had many new conveniences, such as a garbage disposer, and it was air-conditioned, then an unusual and welcome comfort in near tropical New Orleans.

In 1955, they built a most unusual and lovely house on Conery Street, which was designed for them by George's brother, Julius Dreyfous, who was an architect. The lot on which they built was formerly part of the campus of Sophie Newcomb College, in the Garden District section of New Orleans, and it had two huge live oak trees on it. The house, which was in a contemporary style, was designed so that the oaks could be preserved - it was laid out between them, and its living room had a glass wall that looked directly out on one of the oaks and beyond to a house that George's sister, Ruth Dreyfous, built at about the same time. That tree had some Spanish moss growing on it, and George used to bring clumps of Spanish moss from country outings and place them on the trees. The house had a spectacular entrance hall, with a beautifully designed open wooden staircase going up to a small guest room that looked out at the front oak tree.

The Conery Street house was a big part of Mother's life in New Orleans, both before and after George died. There were frequent visitors from out of town who would stay in the upstairs room. She loved being in it and she used its large living room as a place to entertain and a place to have meetings of the many groups with which she was involved. She often talked about how she loved to lie on the floor in the living room and look out at the oak tree.

During the years she was married to George Dreyfous, Mother's activities were quite different from what they had been before. At first she did some volunteer work in psychology, at the Charity Hospital, but in 1948 she became involved with the New Orleans League of Women Voters, an association that had a major influence on her life. She was membership chairman from 1948 to 1950, research chairman and second vice president of the Louisiana League and President of the New Orleans League from 1952 to 1955. In 1956 she became the first Louisianian to serve on the National Board of the League. She, like most League people, took her duties very seriously - when she came to Washington for Board meetings, we hardly ever saw her until the meetings, which lasted several days, were completed. Over the years Mother's closest friendships were with League colleagues.

She also served on the Boards of and did volunteer work with many other groups, including the Travelers' Aid, the Charter Advisory Committee of the City of New Orleans, the Citizens Ad-

visory Committee on Housing Improvement and Slum Prevention, the Committee on Relations with Participating Organizations of the United Fund and the Urban League.

She participated with George Dreyfous in his work in forming the Louisiana Affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union in 1956 and in the activities of that affiliate between 1956 and 1961. Much of its work during this period involved resisting the frantic efforts of the Louisiana Legislature to counter the force of the U. S. Supreme Court's decision, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which outlawed segregation in public schools, and its efforts to ferret out and condemn people who, by reason of their liberal views, especially on the subject of race relations, they considered communists. George and Mother made many trips to Baton Rouge, where George frequently testified, and they were on occasion subjected to harassment because of the positions he was espousing.

George and Mother were both very active in supporting John F. Kennedy in the 1960 presidential election - it was necessary for Mother to resign from her positions with the League in order to do so. Their work for Kennedy put them at odds with many of their friends, especially those with whom George had grown up, as opposed to their League friends. Their enthusiasm for Kennedy was partly due to his youth and his liberalism, but was also partly due to their intense dislike of his opponent, Richard Nixon. Included in Mother's papers are some letters from John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, thanking them for their efforts, a picture of Mother and other campaign workers with Johnson, and also an invitation to attend the inauguration.

Mother and George were also active in encouraging an end to segregation and discrimination against African-Americans (then called "Negroes"). One way in which they did this was by encouraging African-Americans to become involved in civic affairs and to run for political office. Mother was particularly interested in encouraging African American women to join the League. Mother and George also included African-Americans in gatherings at their home, which, especially in the early 1950's, was considered most unusual and, by some, dangerous. Among the African-Americans whose careers they encouraged were the now Mayor, Sidney Barthelemy, the former mayor, Dutch Morial, the first African American federal judge in Louisiana, Robert Collins, and state judges Revius Ortique and Joan Armstrong.

In March of 1956, Mother was asked by the Tulane Law Review, to write a review of a book *The Supreme Court Speaks*, by Jerre Williams. Unlike some of her writing about psychology, where she, as something of an expert, wrote for the lay reader, here she was a lay person writing in a law review about a book consisting largely of excerpts from Supreme Court decisions. And it was a timely topic, for the Supreme Court, and the lower federal courts, were then beginning to come under fire because of their determination to enforce *Brown v. Board of Education* and desegregate public schools. Her review concentrated on the appeal of the book to the lay reader, but also pointed out some of the difficulties a lay reader would have with it. A copy of this review is included in Mother's papers.

George and Mother traveled a good deal, in the United States and Europe, and a trip "around the world." They spent a good deal of time on that trip in the Far East, particularly Taiwan, where George was interested in exploring the state of civil liberties (he found them sorely lacking!). They made many friends on their trips and corresponded frequently with them. While at home they also entertained many foreign visitors participating in programs run by the State Department.

George Dreyfous unexpectedly died of hepatitis in February of 1961, when he was 67 years old. The hepatitis was believed to have come from infected shellfish - such an early death had not been expected, as both his mother and father had lived long lives. George and Mother had been married just under fourteen years. Several people recall having said something to Mother about what a tragedy his death must have been to her, and reported her response: that when her first husband, my father, died she had never expected real happiness again, and that her marriage to George, even though it was cut short, had given her fourteen years of great happiness that she had never anticipated.

Mother lived an active life in New Orleans for many years after George's death, continuing the kinds of activities that they had engaged in during his life. She continued to support African-American, and also women, candidates for public office, especially judgeships. She served on additional committees, including the Family Service Society and the South Louisiana Democratic Women's Club, the Community Relations Council, the President's Council for St. Marys Dominican College, the Community Leadership

Committee of University of New Orleans, Women in Mainstream and Wake Up Louisiana.

Several years after George's death, Mother established a lectureship at Tulane Law School, called the George A. Dreyfous Lectures in Civil Liberties. The first lecture was given in 1965, by Professor Paul Freund, of Harvard Law School, and the series, now in its 27th year, has had a number of other excellent and prominent lecturers, including Erwin Griswold, then Solicitor General of the United States and formerly Dean of Harvard Law School, Federal Judges John Minor Wisdom, Charles Wyzanski, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, J. Skelly Wright, Louis Oberdorfer and Elbert Tuttle, professors Alexander Bickel, Charles Fried, Anthony Amsterdam, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Richard Gardner, Burke Marshall and Arthur Goodhart (a world renowned legal scholar at Oxford, who was American-born and a cousin of George's), and civil rights activists Jack Greenberg, Andrew Young, William Coleman and Norman Dorsen.

In 1966 (I believe it was), when the "boss" of Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, Leander Perez, tried to close the public schools of the Parish rather than let them be opened to African-American children, Mother and her sister-in-law, Ruth Dreyfous, volunteered as teachers for the children for a period of several weeks so the schools could remain open.

During these years Mother frequently visited her children and grandchildren in Washington and Long Island, and took many trips abroad with her sister-in-law, Marion Mendelsohn, and many of her New Orleans friends. Age forced her to stop trips abroad and driving when she was in her mid-eighties. It also caused deterioration of her memory, sight and hearing, but, until she was almost 90, not enough to interfere seriously with her intense enjoyment of life.

In December, 1985, Mother and her sister-in-law, Ruth Dreyfous, were awarded the Benjamin Smith Civil Liberties Award by the Louisiana Civil Liberties Union in recognition of their roles in helping found the affiliate and in working for civil liberties over many years. By that time, the LCLU, which had been considered such a radical organization when it was founded in 1956, had become respectable enough to attract several hundred people to the dinner at which the award was presented. The award plaque is located with Mother's papers.

In 1986 Mother showed some signs of increasing deterioration of her mental awareness, prompting us to visit New Orleans several times and to insist that she have help in the house at all times. But it was decided that part of the problem was congestive heart failure, and new medication worked such wonders that it wasn't long before she insisted that we dismiss her help. She recovered so well that in 1987, she went with us to Europe to attend the second reunion of the Schwab family, at a hotel in Alsace. Before the reunion, we visited Geneva and toured northeastern France. She was amazingly active during that trip. While in Geneva we took a bus tour of the city, and when we entered the bus, the driver said she couldn't come on the tour because in the middle of it we would be let out at one end of the old part of the city and would be picked up at the other end, and the driver was sure she couldn't manage it. I assured the driver she would make it just fine and would not delay the others, and of course I was right.

In the summer of 1988, she again showed signs of increasing forgetfulness, to the extent that we convinced her that she should either have full time help or come to live with us in Holyoke. She chose the latter course. After a trial period, she decided to live here permanently. Her house was at first rented to professors teaching at the Tulane Law School, but in March of 1990 it was sold.

In Holyoke Mother stayed pretty close to home. During the first year or two, she would attend concerts and other events with us, but as hearing, sight and mental awareness deteriorated, she spent more time at home. In 1991, we were fortunate to secure the services of a lovely woman, Ethel Goodwin, who came several days a week to read to her and to be with her, helping to dress and feed her - they became close friends. But by the spring of 1991, going up and down our stairs had become a problem, as was increasing incontinency, and she had become quite unaware of her surroundings and, for the most part, unaware of whom we were. Realizing that her mental condition was such that she would not know where she was, we decided to place her in nearby Buckley Nursing Home in May, 1991.

Initially she seemed to take to life in the nursing home. On her first day there, as we

had lunch with her in the lovely dining room, she asked "What is the name of this hotel?" For the first few months at Buckley she was on a floor with people who were able to feed and pretty much take care of themselves, but in October, 1991, we and the nursing home staff decided that she needed more assistance and she was moved to a private room on another floor. At about this time, blood tests showed that her kidney function was rapidly deteriorating. Ethel began spending four hours a day with her, four days a week. In early 1992, she began to lose her appetite and lose weight, and the blood tests showed ever worsening kidney functioning.

At about 4:00 PM on Sunday, May 17th, we were advised by the nursing home that she was having difficulty breathing and that they were giving her oxygen and had put in a call to her doctor's office. We went to the home and then called her doctor, John Egelhofer, who was not on duty at that time but lived nearby. He came right over and, after examining her, said that her lungs were filled with fluid, her heart being simply unable to do its job, and that the end was imminent. Jon, Cherie and Ethel all came to the nursing home at about 6:00 PM, while Lois took Zachary to our house and stayed with him there. At about 6:30, Mother's breathing, which had been somewhat labored, began to be quieter and slower. Finally, with Jon on one side of the bed, caressing her head while his hand touched her gently to feel her slowing heart beat and with me on the other side of the bed, holding her hand, she simply stopped breathing, at about 7 PM. It was very peaceful, and all four of us felt we had been through an inspiring and strangely beautiful experience.

Mother had told us many years ago that she wished to be cremated (as both her husbands had been) and that she had promised George that she would be buried alongside him in the Dreyfous family plot at Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans.

We held a Memorial Service for her at our home in Holyoke on May 24, 1992. It was attended by about 75 people, mostly family and a few of our friends. Rather than call upon the local rabbi, who did not know Mother, we asked my sister-in-law, Frances Abrams, to read some prayers and psalms in Hebrew during the service. Our cellist friend, Leopold Teraspulsky, and his wife, pianist Jacqueline Melnick, provided the music - a piece for cello and piano on a Hebrew theme, by Ernest Bloch, and a movement from a Bach suite for unaccompanied cello. The rest of the service consisted of recollections and remarks from about sixteen of us. The luncheon following the service included a noodle pudding prepared by women at the Rodphey Sholom Synagogue from a recipe developed by Lois' mother, Ida Abrams, for occasions at the same synagogue.

On June 1, 1992, there was a service at Temple Sinai in New Orleans, where Mother had been a member for many years. It was conducted by Rabbi Edward Cohen. He read some prayers and psalms, and said only a few words about Mother - he knew of her but had not known her personally. David, Mother's niece, Leta Weiss Marks, and I spoke - our remarks are contained in Appendices to this Appreciation - as did Mother's long-time League of Women Voters friend, Felicia Kahn. And Olivia Robinet Thomas, who is the daughter of another of Mother's League friends, Isabell Robinet, sang, unaccompanied, a lovely gospel-type song that she had also sung at some of Mother's special birthday parties, "You are so Beautiful."

Following the service, family members went to the cemetery where, following a brief graveside service, we placed the plain box containing the ashes, with a few cut flowers on top of it, in the earth. We then gathered with friends and family at the home of Ruth Dreyfous, Mother's sister-in-law, across the garden from Mother's former home on Conery Street.

## **Her Character and Personality**

The life of Mathilde M. Dreyfous was one of many accomplishments, and rather unusual ones for a woman of her generation. She worked when many women of her age and general economic standing did not work. She worked in a field that was relatively new for anyone, and especially for women. She learned the intricacies of the Rorschach test when few were familiar with it. Her leaving the city where she had lived for years and going alone to attend graduate school while her two sons were in service was a brave step. Her work with the League of Women Voters has been recognized by many of her colleagues as

providing sensitive and understanding leadership at a time when the New Orleans League especially needed it. She was considered a valuable asset to so many aspiring politicians in New Orleans, especially African-American ones, and she worked "behind the scenes" in so many political contests. Hers was one of the early white homes to have African-Americans as guests.

All of these accomplishments brought her recognition throughout her life. But remarkable as they were, they did not account for the almost universal love and respect that she enjoyed from her family, her colleagues and associates and even those that did not know her well but knew of her. Almost everyone who knew her agrees on what it was about her that accounts for that love and respect, though they express it in different terms. Fortunately, many members of her family and friends, over the years, and especially at the time of her death, have spoken and written about her character and personality, and Mother's papers include a number of these expressions.

So I have chosen, in my effort to have this Appreciation convey to her descendants the kind of person my mother was, to set forth some of my own recollections and impressions of her, and to include, as Appendices, some pieces or excerpts that were written about or to her during her lifetime or at the time of her death.

The principal themes that run throughout my recollections of Mother and those of others that are included in the Appendices are her positive outlook, her smile, her ability to relate to people of all walks of life and all ages, especially younger people, and most especially teenagers, whom she treated as real people not simply children, the positive impact she had on these people, both family and friends, the way in which she brought out the best in everyone, how she virtually ignored the not-so-nice aspects of the people she dealt with, how she never judged or condemned, how she was an activist without being abrasive, and how she listened to opposing viewpoints but managed to get her views across without offending those who felt to the contrary.

The way in which Mother affected so many of her friends and family, came out so clearly in the comments and recollections at the service we had for her in Holyoke on May 24, 1992. A tape of most of that service is included in Mother's papers. Several of our Holyoke friends, who didn't really know Mother but who attended the service, were moved, after hearing her children, grandchildren and nieces and nephews talk about her, to write extraordinary letters to us commenting upon what a person she must have been, based on the strength and beauty of the feelings expressed at the service - these letters are included in Mother's papers.

Her way of listening to people and encouraging them to talk about whatever they wanted to and to help talk out their problems with them, rather than judging them or pronouncing her opinion on what they should do, was something she did for as long as I can remember, but she became more conscious of it after studying with Carl Rogers at the University of Chicago in 1945. He was a proponent of what she always called "non-directive technique," which I understood to be a version of the Freudian analysis technique in which the patient, not the doctor, does the talking. In any event she loved to refer to it and, if she found herself being too "directive," as she would say, she would, lightheartedly to be sure, chastise herself for being that way. But in fact she was "non-directive" long before she studied with Carl Rogers.

I believe this non-directive, non-judgmental way she had of relating to people, especially young people, accounts for the fact that an amazing number of young people, including many of her nephews and nieces and grand nephews and grand nieces and children of her friends have spoken about how they were able to relate to her in a way that couldn't relate to parents or other older people. They have talked about how she "took them seriously" and in doing so helped them gain self esteem.

***Growing up as her son*** My brother's words at the memorial service, which are set forth in Appendix 2, address what it was like growing up with her as your mother. Some of my Cincinnati cousins recalled, also at the memorial service, that there were few strict rules at the Schwab house - and yet there was not chaos either.

I recall, as my brother does, how my youthful friends were jealous of me because they were always having problems with their parents and I hardly ever did. I especially recall when I and a

friend were both entering the armed forces on the same day, following graduation from high school. We were to report at a downtown location early that morning. He dreaded the day because he knew his mother would be absolutely distraught and it would be a difficult and awkward situation. He was adamant that she not go with him to the downtown location lest there be a scene. So he accompanied me and my mother, who drove us downtown. He could not get over the fact that she was so supportive about what was happening, and contrasted it to what his mother would have done. Of course, as I look back on it, my mother, having lost her husband several years earlier, with her older son in service and now sending her youngest as well, must have been heartbroken. But she must also have known that it would be important to me that our farewells not be overly emotional.

In those days there was a cartoon-like column in the paper that gave advice to parents: there would be two cartoons describing a potential conflict between parent and child, one labeled "Do this", in which the parent was always being reasonable and constructive, even though firm, and the other labeled "Not this", in which the parent was generally ordering or punishing the child. I always read this column and the "Do this" cartoon invariably portrayed what I knew my mother would have done in that situation.

**Drinking** Another example of how she treated her children in their late teens concerns the subject of drinking of alcohol. Mother always enjoyed a drink, even in those days. She sometimes brought home one of her Child Guidance Home colleagues for a cocktail. After she studied the Rorschach test in Chicago, she and some of the psychologists she met there and who lived in Kentucky and Ohio would gather for a weekend of discussing the test and sharing experiences with it, and those weekends also featured relaxation, in which we children (and my father before he died) shared, and the participants were all moderate drinkers. After my father died, when my brother and I were older, we wanted to start having a drink. After consulting with her friends in the Rorschach group, Mother told us she would rather have us drink at home, especially with a group like that, than be out drinking under other circumstances. I believe that as a result of being allowed to drink, we probably did less drinking than many of our friends.

In his piece about Mother (Appendix 9), David refers to her and drinking, especially in her later years. She enjoyed it, especially martinis and "old fashioned's." More than one person has remarked on visiting her in New Orleans, frequently someone who was a friend of ours or a friend of a friend, and who didn't know her, and being treated to her special martinis. Someone had once told her that a martini was better if mixed and then kept in the freezer, and that is what she did. Of course, a martini made cold by a freezer is pure gin and vermouth, while a "normal" martini is made cold by adding ice and stirring, which dilutes it. This factor accounted for more than one visitor realizing that he or she had been drunk under the table by this elderly lady. I don't think I ever saw or heard Mother "drunk" as that term is normally understood. But she loved the feeling of relaxation of drinking and the feeling of comradeship she felt when drinking with others (which is the only time she drank, except for her bourbon just before going to sleep).

**Entertaining** One recollection leads to another. In the days when Mother had her cook, Sylvia Amos, after having a drink with a visitor, whether a member of the family or a friend of a friend, they would enjoy one of Sylvia's fantastic meals. But after Sylvia retired, the cocktails would instead be followed by going out for dinner, more often than not at Commanders Palace, one of New Orleans' finest restaurants, located within easy walking distance from her house.

(Having mentioned Sylvia Amos, I cannot help but pause to say a word about her. I don't know exactly how long she worked for Mother, but it must have been 25 years or so. She was a remarkable woman, uneducated but wise, kindly and caring in every way, a woman of immense dignity, who performed her duties as cook and housekeeper with dedication and pride. She and Mother loved and respected each other. Included in Mother's papers is a piece I wrote about Sylvia following her death in 1989, and a few pictures of her.)

Because Mother went there frequently, the staff at Commanders knew her well, and our visitor felt he/she was getting usually good treatment. Mother would insist that the best dishes be tried, especially the desserts, which she loved. Going to Commanders with Mother was an experience that many

have recalled with special fondness. And when many of the family went to New Orleans for Mother's funeral and burial on June 1, 1992, we gathered the night before in a private room at Commanders for a farewell dinner in the spirit of the many good times she had had there, for nothing gave her more pleasure than to give pleasure to others.

Yes, one recollection leads to another. There is another New Orleans restaurant she loved, Antoinnes, or, as she pronounced it, "An-twines." It had its own ritual. For many years, New Orleanians would make reservations and enter the restaurant through a side alley (there was a telephone that enabled one to call the restaurant, which would then open the side door) while out-of-towners waited outside the front door for admission to what many considered the best restaurant in New Orleans. Another part of the ritual was that New Orleanians who went there always asked for "their" waiter - Mother's was George. He took the orders (never a pad in hand), brought the inevitable drinks and the unique fried potatoes (pomraes souffles) and, for dessert, the baked alaska that Mother had ordered ahead of time, with the welcome words written on the top. Mother usually ordered the same thing - Pompano Pontchartrain, which, she would explain to the unknowing visitor, was baked pompano fish with a buster crab on top, and she would of course explain what a buster crab was. She would insist that the visitor try the crawfish cardinale as an appetizer, and one **had** to have the creamed spinach.

The pleasure Mother got from taking people to Commanders and Antoinnes was really, I think, just one more example of how she loved doing things for others. Of course she enjoyed the food and drink as well. But the highlight of these evenings for her was watching how her guests enjoyed themselves.

**Children** While Mother related beautifully to everyone, there is no doubt that she was particularly in her element with children. The number of nephews, nieces, grand nephews and nieces and children and grandchildren of friends who felt that she was something special to them is immense. And many of them from out of town visited her, first with their parents when they were little, and then came back when they were in their late teens or in college. When little grandchildren would visit in New Orleans, she always found several local children of similar age to include in the activities she had planned, and there always were many activities. From street car rides on St. Charles Avenue to going to the zoo to making candy together in the kitchen, and, with older ones, talking French together, discussing politics or books and plays of interest. . . she had an inexhaustible supply of things to do, things to play with, books to read, always appropriate to the child's age. And for the youngest there were the songs she would sing to, and later, with, them. We all recall "Here's a Ball for Baby", "Good Morning Merry Sunshine", "The Sugar Plum Tree," "Jim O'Shea" and "Under the Bamboo Tree."

**Reciting** Mother went to school at a time when students were required to memorize to a far greater degree than is now the case. She knew the words to countless songs that were popular in her day, as well as poems and essays that were read and memorized by the students of her day, including *Grey's Elegy*, *You are old Father William* and some of Aesops Fables. I recall once, not so long ago, when someone mentioned Charles the First, and she came out with: "Caeser had his Brutus - Charles the First his Cromwell - and George the Third may profit by their example." She insisted that they were the lines that preceded Patrick Henry's words "If this be treason, make the most of it." We checked the encyclopedia, and of course she was right.

**Music** Mother loved classical music. She learned to play the piano as a child, and she remembered enough to be able to play and sing songs to us when we were children. She had a great deal to do with my beginning at age seven to study violin with our family friend, Philip Dreifus, and she encouraged me to stick with the violin even when, during high school, I had doubts about whether I wanted to continue. In fact, unlike many parents, she urged me to keep taking lessons, even if I didn't practice very much, because she felt it was so important that I not quit and because she suspected that if I stuck with it I would regain interest. She was right, of course. She frequently accompanied me on the piano and I recall that when I was in high school, and became enamored of violin concertos that I couldn't really play but could play "at," she learned the piano versions of the orchestral scores and we would plough through concertos (Bach and Beethoven) together, admittedly at about half the indicated tempo.

Mother loved hearing me sing, and I must admit that I was not very cooperative when she

would ask me to. Her favorite was an aria from Handel's *Messiah*, which is actually written for alto, not baritone, voice, but which I would sing for her, though only when she really insisted.

Two highlights of her musical enjoyment come to mind, both involving Leonard Bernstein. In 1971, the Kennedy Center in Washington was dedicated by performances of a work, *Mass*, written by Bernstein for the occasion. I sang in the chorus, and Mother was in town for one of the preview performances. She was absolutely enthralled with the piece, the music, the performers and the entire occasion, as indeed was I, and she spoke of that performance many times.

In the early 1980's, Bernstein organized a concert in support of one of the causes he was interested in (I believe it was Physicians Against Nuclear War). The performance was at the Washington Cathedral, and the music was Mahler's 2d, the *Resurrection Symphony*. I was invited to be a member of the chorus, which sings in the last movement of that work. The principal vocal soloist was Jessye Norman. Mother was in town and I invited her to attend the rehearsal. The totality of Bernstein, Jessye Norman, the Washington Cathedral, my participation and, especially, the music and the words of the choral movement, all combined to make this another very special occasion for her. She was greatly moved by Bernstein himself - one could not watch him conduct Mahler and not be moved. And I believe the words of the choral movement, which sing of eternal life, struck a chord with her own mystical belief in some kind of existence after death. This was another musical event that she recalled many times.

Although Mother was not particularly fond of jazz music, she was extremely enthusiastic about the New Orleans Jazz Festival. She loved going to it and taking visitors to experience it. She always contended that it was a far more exciting, and indigenously New Orleans, event than the Mardi Gras festival, mainly, I believe, because she saw it as involving ordinary people of all classes, rather than mainly socially prominent people and tourists.

**Religion** Mother attended religious school as a child, and while she always belonged to a synagogue, she never attended on any regular basis, and when my brother and I were growing up, she and my father decided not to have us attend religious school. While Mother was not what we would call a religious person, she was a spiritual person. She believed in a kind of immortality of the soul, but even a little more than that. She felt the spiritual presence of her loved ones who had died, especially my father and, later, George Dreyfous, and I think it is fair to say that she expected to be with them in some undefinable fashion after death.

\*\*\*\*\*

Appendix 1 to this Appreciation is about my father. Appendices 2 through 9 are things that I and others have written or said about Mother, as follows:

Appendix 2 is the remarks of my brother at the May 24th memorial service.

Appendix 3 contains, in no particular order, a number of things that family, friends and others have said about her, either during her lifetime or at the time of her death.

On Mother's 85th and 90th birthdays, instead of writing her a silly little poem, as I frequently used to do on family birthdays, I wrote more serious birthday cards telling her what I so admired in her. They are set forth as Appendices 4 and 5.

At both of the services we had for Mother, in Holyoke on May 24, 1992 and in New Orleans on June 1, 1992, George's niece, Leta Weiss Marks, read a beautiful and touching piece about what Mother had meant to her, especially during Leta's teens, shortly after Mother moved to New Orleans. It is set forth as Appendix 6.

At Mother's 90th birthday party in New Orleans, David videotaped interviews of some of the guests, in which he asked them to talk about Mother. The videotape is very hard to understand, because of the din of conversation in the background, but I transcribed portions of the interviews and they are set forth in Appendix 7.

Mother's granddaughter, Carol Schwab Hindin, wrote a character sketch about her grandmother for a school assignment. It is set forth in Appendix 8.

David, who is a journalist, wrote a piece after Mother's death that he read at the Holyoke and New Orleans services, and it is set forth as Appendix 9. Even making allowance for the bias of a proud father, I believe it is not only an extraordinary piece of writing, but that it contains vivid insights about Mother and also portrays the very special relationship between the two of them.

## CONCLUSION

Life being what it is, it is harder and harder, as the years go on, to remember one who has gone, especially as those who actually knew her begin to pass on. And this will probably be true even with respect to someone as extraordinary as Mathilde Mendelsohn Schwab Dreyfous. But I hope that this *Appreciation*, and what I have called "Mother's papers" will help to keep that memory alive just a little longer and a little more vividly than would otherwise be the case. I think we all have something to learn from her life, and if some of us are able, by remembering her, to carry forward into our lives, and pass on to our children and, through them, to generations to come, some of her vitality, her love and consideration for others, her selflessness, her joyousness, her smile, her positive outlook on life and her generosity, we will all be the better for it, and I will feel that this little act of preserving memories of her will have been well worth the effort.

## APPENDIX 1: Concerning My Father

My father, Edgard Abraham Schwab, was born in 1891 in a little town called Diemeringen in the Alsace region of northeastern France. It was then politically a part of Germany but its people, at least his family, considered themselves French and only French. At some point the family moved to Ingwiller, some 10 miles or so from Diemeringen. Both are very small rural towns. I'm not sure the exact year when my father came to this country, but I imagine it was about 1910.

My father was one of nine children, four boys and five girls. Before he came to this country, his brothers, David, Armand and Auguste, and his sister, Lucie, had already come. I don't know specifically why they came, but most Jews who came to this country around that time came either to escape military service or to escape anti-Semitism or because they saw economic opportunity here that they did not see there. I imagine all of these were factors in the decision of the four boys, especially the avoidance of military service, because it would have been in the German army, Alsace being at the time under German control. David, Armand and Auguste settled in New York City, while Lucie went to Cincinnati. Edgard, who came last, went to Cincinnati because Lucie was already there. Lucie had come to Cincinnati because their mother's brother, Lazard Kahn, had come to the area some years before and had become very successful in a business known as the Estate Stove Company.

Because he died so long ago and when I was quite young, I have only limited recollections of my father. I remember him as a gentle and kindly person, and it is interesting that the two people I recently talked to who knew him well, his sister-in-law, Marion Mendelsohn and his nephew, Robert Lehman, both used those same words to describe him. He was also very attached to his Jewish heritage, and although my brother and I had no formal religious education, my father always led us in celebrating holidays such as the Passover Seder and Channukah.

My father spoke with a noticeable accent, which I recall as more German than French. Indeed, in accent as well as in appearance (but not in political thinking), I believe my father resembled Henry Kissinger. He was a strong political liberal, as was my mother. I recall convincing myself in 1940 (at the age of 13) that I favored Wendell Wilkie for President - I probably just wanted to be different from my parents - but I was assigned to debate in school on behalf of President Roosevelt. I asked my father for arguments I could make in favor of Roosevelt, and he suggested many. As a result of preparing for that debate, I convinced myself that I was really a Roosevelt supporter and a Democrat, an affiliation that has not changed in more than 50 years.

I'm not sure as to the exact extent of my father's education. I know he didn't attend college, and he may not have attended high school. Mother used to say that some who met him guessed, based on his conversation, that he was an academic person, and few guessed that he had so little formal education. He served in the U.S. Army during World War I, a sergeant in the quartermaster corps in France. After the war he worked as a traveling salesman for a clothing company. After he married mother, the company he worked for went out of business, and Mother's brothers, Simon and Joe, invited him to join their business, the American Suspender Company, which manufactured and sold belts and suspenders.

My father was a cigarette smoker, like most men in those days. He used a cigarette holder, and I can still see him placing his Lucky Strike cigarette in the holder. I remember another smoking ritual. The American Suspender Company's office included a factory portion and was located in first one, then another, old building in the downtown area of Cincinnati. Presumably for fire prevention reasons, my father would not smoke while in the office. But I can remember coming home with him and my uncles (when I had gone downtown to go to the library or for some other reason), and the routine of his putting his cigarette in its holder and having the holder with the cigarette unlit in his mouth while descending in the rickety elevator, and, only after going outside the building, his lighting up.

I have another recollection of my father that involves smoking and that illustrates the sense of humor that I'm told he had, even though I don't recall other examples of it. I clearly remember him saying that the only time when he could do three things at once was when, as he usually did each morning after breakfast, he sat on the toilet, read the newspaper and smoked a cigarette!

Two other recollections I have of my father both involve sadness. One was on a Sunday (in the late thirties, I think) when, as we always did, we were having noontime dinner with my mother's mother (Nana Mendelsohn) at her apartment on Dana Avenue. My father took a phone call (I suppose from one of his brothers in New York) advising that their mother had died. It was the first time I saw him weep. The second sad occasion, when I believe he also wept, was at the time of the fall of France to the German Nazi Army in June of 1940.

My father had a close feeling for the members of his family, and also for the members of Mother's family. His sales route for the American Suspender Company included the deep South, which meant that he visited Baton Rouge and New Orleans and many of my mother's family. I have been told that they all loved him and his visits.

In 1982, my cousin, Laurie Schwab Zabin, got the idea that the descendants of Abraham and Brunette Schwab, on both sides of the Atlantic, should have a reunion. Thanks to her efforts, the reunion took place in August of 1982, in Baltimore, MD. It was so successful (there were more than 100 there, including about 25 from France) that we all decided to meet every five years.

The second reunion, organized by the European family, was held in August 1987, at a hotel in Klingenthal, a small town in Alsace. It featured visits to Diemeringen and Ingwiller, the two towns in which the family lived. While in Diemeringen, we attended a short religious service at the synagogue, which had been restored after the war by contributions from the Schwab brothers in New York. We also visited the Jewish cemetery, where a number of the family members are buried. We were greeted in Diemeringen by a sign across the main road, welcoming La Famille Schwab, and by a reception, featuring a welcome speech by the Mayor. In Ingwiller we visited the house where the family had lived. We also took a trip to nearby Strasbourg, where we toured the canals by boat, visited the Cathedral and had lunch in a typical Alsatian restaurant. The final event of the second reunion was a banquet, featuring a skit prepared and acted by members of the "younger generation."

The third reunion took place August 21-23, 1992, at a Stouffer's hotel in White Plains, NY just outside New York City. It was attended by 125 persons, including 21 from France and 7 from Switzerland. Included were a number of descendants of Joseph Schwab, a brother of Abraham, whose seven children all grew up in the Chicago area. The two branches of the family had been out of touch for many years and only recently made contact. In fact, when I was a student at the University of Chicago in 1948, and doing some door-to-door canvassing for a congressional candidate, I knocked on the door of a person named Schwab. When I told him that was my name also, and gave him my father's name, he said they were cousins. I found this hard to believe because I thought our family was so close, but when I reported this incident to my Uncle Dave, he acknowledged that there were some Chicago cousins, but let it go at that, as did I. I now know that this man, whose name was Myrtill Schwab, and who is deceased, was a son of Joseph Schwab and therefore my father's first cousin.

The White Plains reunion featured a Friday evening barbecue, a group picture Saturday morning, and a banquet Saturday evening. Preceding the banquet, David, Liv, Jon and I, on violin, flute, bassoon and viola, played some simple arrangements of baroque pieces during cocktails, as we had done at the first reunion ten years earlier. The banquet program included the singing of the Star Spangled Banner and Le Marseillaise, group singing of some songs written for the occasion to tunes of well-known French folk songs, listening to short remarks from a representative of each family, and dancing to music provided by a disc jockey. On Sunday morning we all gathered for a pool-side brunch at the home of my cousin, David Schwab II, in nearby Briarcliff Manor.

These reunions have been remarkably successful in bringing together the many members of my father's large family. Although we in the United States do not see a great deal of each other between reunions, there is a close bond between us that is renewed at each gathering. And the reunions have helped us become much closer to some of our French relatives, many of whom we hardly knew before the first reunion in 1982.

## APPENDIX 2: Memorial Remarks by Edgard Schwab

(The following remarks were given by my brother, Edgard A. Schwab, at the Memorial Service for Mother in Holyoke on May 24, 1992)

Peggy Wood said it -- "I Remember Momma." But she was never Momma. She was Mom, Aunt Til, Grandma Til or just Til to all those who knew and loved her.

I remember an incident in Cincinnati after Anita (Bowman, sister of Ed's wife, Betty) died. We were at Cohens and I was talking to a man about my kids' age. He asked if I was related to Anita and when I explained he asked if I had ever lived in Cincinnati. When I gave him my name and a little of who I was related to he exclaimed: "Oh, Aunt Til's your mother." That floored me. It turned out he was a good friend of John's (John Mendelsohn, our first cousin, son of Mother's brother, Joe) and had heard about her all the time he was growing up.

Everyone has stories about Mom and how she helped them. Tom told several this week from Laurie (Zabin, our first cousin), Cherry Fabe (an old Cincinnati friend, now Cherry Michelman) and others.

I guess I really never appreciated her until some time in high school when I began to realize how everyone felt about her.

What was it like growing up with Mom for your mother? It was living with someone who understood you and your problems. Many of my friends feared their mother. I don't think I ever did. I knew I could go home and admit to almost anything. We got punished, sure, but never physical or verbal abuse. Mom would explain where we had transgressed and why we shouldn't have and then mete out whatever was required, usually loss of something like comics or movies or whatever for a period.

When we became adolescents, so did she. We organized a club, the Brotherly Association of Adolescents. We had a password, BAA, pronounced BAAAAAAAAAAA. When we did something especially foolish or stupid, Mom would tell us that it wasn't being a proper BAA.

After she moved to New Orleans, she was still there for us. She visited when she could and called often. I still felt that I had someone to turn to with anything. She knew what I was thinking, sometimes before I did. She always told the story that she had realized that Betty and I would get married long before we knew it and brought her engagement ring to Cincinnati three times before I finally asked her if I could have it to give the diamond to Betty.

She was there for help and encouragement. Practical help: she came up from New Orleans when Betty was pregnant and confined to bed. When she realized that I would be doing the food preparation for months, she shopped and cooked until the freezer was full. When we moved to the house on Long Island she sent a house present, Sylvia, to spend a week or so helping us clean up and move in.

Moral support: this was the most important. I always could talk out my problems. At one point in the mid-fifties, when we considered moving back to Cincinnati, I spent many hours on the telephone with Mom and she helped me make the decision to stay in New York.

I could go on with examples but they all show the same thing. Tom and I were fortunate in having the mother that others only dreamed about.

I can't finish without digressing a little. I have to thank Tom and Lois, for Mom, for Betty and for me, for the complete alterations of their lives and life style for the last four years. Their sacrifice, and I use the word advisedly, made her world, and maybe even more, Betty's and my world, a better place to live in. We will always miss her and we will always thank them.

### APPENDIX 3: Excerpts From Letters, etc.

(The following are excerpts from things written about Mother during her lifetime or following her death)

Peg Murison, close friend and League colleague: “Everybody who knew her loved her and felt loved in return. She was magnificent.”

Raffi Berberian, a friend of George's nephew, Lee Eiseman and whose path crossed hers on relatively few occasions: “I will never forget Mathilde. She was one of the dearest friends I have ever known.”

Our friend, Margit Cartwright: “a grand lady with the kindest smile”

Lois' Aunt, Anne Heilman: “I always loved her serene, radiant smile. She dispelled disharmony in a troubled world. Her wit and charm, and real, sincere understandings, were a magic wand that affected everyone that was touched by it. “

Dick Salzer, a childhood friend of mine who hadn't seen her for perhaps 30 years: “She was a good friend to so many, including many of your contemporaries and friends. Her friendship knew no boundaries or distinctions - age included. We all miss her.”

Louise Reichert, sister of Sally, who was the wife of Mother's brother, Joe, and widow of Rabbi Victor Reichert who married Mother and George: “she left a shining trail behind her”

David Bogan, a doctor who treated her for a brief period when she first came to Holyoke: “I consider it an honor to have known your mother.”

Felicia Kahn, friend and League colleague: “I always felt happy (at Mathilde's home). I was in the company of a person I admired, who respected and taught me even before I felt that I had anything to give to League in return. Mathilde was interested in everything about her friends. We talked about the world, but also about my personal League career and my family.”

Eamon Kelly, President of Tulane University: “Mathilde Dreyfous was an admirable woman, and one who cared deeply about the welfare of others. Her untiring efforts to improve the educational system and the political life of New Orleans will be long remembered and valued. She will be sadly missed by everyone who knew her.”

Margaret Kelly, friend (and wife of Eamon Kelly): “ An elegant, gentle woman with graceful hands and the merriest of eyes who was a real listener.”

Louise Alcus Simon, daughter of Mother's close friend, Fanny Alcus: “She was one of the most thoughtful and delightful people I've ever known, appealing to all generations. I adored her from the moment she married George and came into my life. And I can say with all honesty that my children were equally enamored.”

Helen Pascoe, formerly married to George's nephew, John Dreyfous: “She was a delight and a true role model. A feminist without any harsh edges.”

Armand Schwab, my father's nephew: “She was so full of life - and the mind, but not just contemplation and good talk: action, too, for so many years. She erased the generation boundary.”

Isabell Robinet, friend, League colleague and an early African-American League member: “She had a wonderful personality and an even-tempered disposition. Color was something she

saw with her eyes, but love was something she saw with her heart. “

Lois's brother Bob's son, Sam Abrams: “Like many, I thought of Mathilde as a great aunt.”

Anne-Lise Picard, my father's French niece who spent the wartime years in the US: “I have so many childhood memories of her, delightful ones with such warmth, intelligence and sense of humor.”

Jean Levy, my father's French nephew: “We loved your mother very deeply, almost like a second mother.”

Jackie Schwab Isler, my father's niece, speaking about Mother and Jackie's mother, Carol Schwab: “They so enjoyed each other, starting very early in their sister-in-law-ship. Mathilde was good for Mom - she brought her down to earth, understood her, and together they reveled in each other's mind.”

Alan Edelstein, son of a friend of Lois and me, who lived for a time in New Orleans: “I remember well the time I spent with her in New Orleans, her generosity and noble spirit.”

Therese Landsburgh, daughter of Rosetta Weil, who was Mother's friend and was later married to Mother's brother-in-law, Julius Dreyfous: “She had the unusual combination of an inquisitive, inquiring mind, a warm and outgoing personality, and an intense commitment and involvement in civic life. My children loved going to her house.”

Bernie Marcus, friend: “Your mother was a remarkable person, a listener, reader, thinker, giver and, in the years I like to remember best, a great beauty. A large part of the worthwhile world used to pass through her living room. Through it all she was unfailingly gracious and charming. She was modest, but not falsely so. You knew where she stood and why, but only after she had listened to what you had to say. We loved her. Our kids loved her. She really deserved that love. “

Leon Weiss, Jr., George's nephew, and his wife, Pat: “She brought a smile to the face of anyone who ever met her.”

Dr. John Mendelsohn, son of Mother's brother, Joe, and his wife, Sally: “I will always remember my Aunt as a very special person who showed dignity and genuine concern in almost every conceivable situation. Perhaps more than anyone during my childhood, she related to me as a young adult rather than as a youngster.”

Dr. Nancy Mendelsohn, granddaughter of Mother's brother, Simon, and his wife, Marion: “She had the unique quality of making all of us feel special.

Lillian Martin, friend: “She had the courage of her convictions and was a leader of good works -at the same time remaining gentle and kind.”

Michael Wolfson, Lois' cousin: “Her intelligence, wisdom and humanity were always in evidence.”

Miriam Blank Sachs, daughter of friends and student at University School: “I remember your mother as a warm, friendly, competent person with whom a child felt comfortable.”

Jonah Zimilies, college classmate of David's who stayed at Mother's house on a trip to New Orleans: “I'm sure that you have already received many tributes attesting to her compassion, courage and intellect. What I will remember most about her is what a warm, hospitable and just plain fun person she was..when my friends trade New Orleans tales of their youth, I love to tell about the night I spent as a law student drinking up a storm with my friend's 80+ year old grandmother.”

John Dreyfous, George's nephew: "She was one of a kind and a fabulous woman."

Aline Fried Anderson, daughter of Mother's cousin, Josie Mendelsohn Fried: "I am influenced every day by the model Mathilde set for me."

Leo Parnes, husband of George's niece, Betty Weiss Parnes: "I never failed to enjoy her presence, her smile, her dignity and her conversation. I admired her humanity and wide ranging interests. She had a magic way of bringing people (even the most shy) out of a protective shell of inhibition into a comfortable, safe, loving relationship. She was never threatening or judgmental. She managed to find some spark of life and goodness, pleasure and shared interest in everyone she met. I especially enjoyed those wonderful gatherings at her home with an eclectic mixture of people, stimulating conversation and delicious food."

Mother's mother, Bertha Mendelsohn, writing to George when he and Mother were engaged: "Mathilde will bring joy and sunshine into your life as she has in ours."

A newspaper story in 1973: "Now 75, she is a remarkably intelligent, professional, generous, warm person, with friends from all walks of life. A deeply liberal woman, her home was a workshop for young civil rights lawyers, and she first entered partisan politics to defeat Nixon in 1960, whom she and her husband saw as a dangerous threat to personal liberties."

Her grand nephew, Don Mendelsohn, and his wife, Margie, on the occasion of Mother's 90th birthday: "You are an extraordinary woman. You are an inspiration and role model for all of us, male and female. You are so full of joy and love and wisdom."

Our friend, Edie Berkowitz, in a letter to Mother: "I'll never be able to tell you how much of a lift hearing your voice last night gave me. You sound strong and wonderful, just exactly the same as when we first met so many years ago. You are my role model and always have been."

Joel Myers, a League of Women Voters colleague, written in 1983: "You are the type of woman who serves as a real role model for all of us, because of the constancy of your support, your continuing quiet leadership and your excellent ideas."

Coralie Schaeffer, a friend, on Mother's 90th birthday: "I think the Lord made you as a role model for us sinners - but we can't compete."

## **APPENDIX 4: My Letter on Her 90th Birthday**

(The following is a birthday card I presented to Mother on her 90th birthday, October 1, 1987. I also read it at the memorial services for her in Holyoke and New Orleans.)

A son is expected to love and respect his mother, and I don't have to tell you that I love and respect you -it's easy. But a son doesn't have to admire his mother unless she deserves admiration. And while I hope you know that I admire you, I don't think it hurts for me to tell you, at least once every 90 years, the qualities that I (and, I imagine, just about everyone who has ever known you) admire.

Let's begin with your selflessness. Your entire focus is outward, not inward, towards others and not towards yourself. The kind of positive impact you have had on so many others, family and friends, could be caused only by someone who has that kind of flow of love and concern towards others, one who is infinitely selfless and not self centered. In all my life I cannot think of a single instance where you placed your happiness, your convenience, your needs or your desires over what you perceived to be mine. That is a bold statement, but it is true.

Closely related to selflessness is the pleasure you get from other people, and your uncanny

ability to see not only the good but the unique in others, those qualities that set them a little apart from other people. This explains the incredible number of friends you have had over the years, and the depth of so many of these friendships. It helps explain the very special relationship you have with each of your grandchildren, which differs in the case of each of them because they are different people, each with that something unique and special that you have been able to perceive and help to develop.

Some people never scratch below the surface and really get to know anyone else, and their lives are undoubtedly the more narrow and unfulfilled because of it. Most other people scratch below and get to know a relatively small number of others, their close families, a few business and social contacts and a limited number of close friends. But you have scratched below and gotten to know so many people. Just think of those you have first met as a friend of a friend visiting town, or as a tradesperson or domestic servant, or as a relative of a relative; contacts that for most of us would be limited in time and substance. But for you these contacts often end up with friendships, visits, recognition of qualities of, for example, a working person other than the work he or she performs. It happens because you look for and find the unique and good qualities in others, and because you truly enjoy meaningful, not merely casual or unthinking social contact and discourse.

This ability to appreciate the qualities of others also helps to explain why you have always had such a heterogeneous circle of friends, people who were frequently different from you in age, education, social or economic level, religion or political outlook. You have always been able to find the common ground between them and you, and to enable it to be the basis of a friendship or an interesting or rewarding relationship.

Then there is your generosity. Lois and I could not be in the unusual and happy position we are now in without not only the gifts you have made to us over the years but the attitude that went with them. You never made us feel that we were indebted to you, or even that you were doing much of anything for us - you achieved a truly blessed way of giving, in which the recipient never felt uncomfortable. You did it by years ago making the astounding assumption, which you made as if it were the most common way of approaching such things, that whatever was yours was mine and Ed's, not at some distant point in the future but right then and there.

Finally, you've proceeded in recent years to show us all how to grow old, gracefully and graciously. Granted, you've been blessed with good health, but I believe (and I know you do too) that one's personality and attitudes are close related to how ones body functions, and I have no doubt that your good health is as much a result of your mental state as it is a cause of it. One might have expected someone as active as you, as interested in what was going on about you, in politics and government and people, to resist old age and to be bitter about the inability to make your body and mind function like they used to. But instead you have accepted the limitations of old age, and have been able, remarkably, to get from people, books and contemplation the same kind of pleasure you used to get from more vigorous activity and challenge. How beautiful that has been to watch, and of course it has been characteristically outward oriented and kind to others. It is especially so to your children and grandchildren who, instead of having to worry about you, can bask in the gentle light of watching you grow old with infinite grace and dignity.

So hats off to you, Mom, on your 90th birthday. But lest you get swell-headed at this late date, I decided to end this letter with a list of your not-so-laudable qualities. So far it is not very long, but I'm working on it. Here it is: (1) You are second to none in your ability to tell the same story to the same people for the 100th time; (2). . .

## **APPENDIX 5: My Letter on Her 70th Birthday**

(I gave the following birthday note to Mother on her 70th birthday, October 1, 1967. The form, using the initials of her name, was one her mother, my grandmother, Nana Mendelsohn, used to use for birthday greetings. Reading this along with my note on her 90th birthday (I didn't have a copy of the earlier one when I wrote the later one) suggests that my feelings about Mother didn't change much over the years.)

**M** is for minds - all the troubled ones she has soothed and improved, and all those she has tried to enlarge and persuade, as mother, friend, psychologist, teacher, party worker and League volunteer.

**A** is for adaptability and ability to accept and enjoy people, places and economic and social conditions which an active life has brought her.

**T** is for thanks from her son, not just for all the things for which a mother deserves thanks, and not just for her extraordinary generosity in things material, but for achieving, with the help of Dad and George, what may be the most important job of a parent - the instilling in a child of a set of values and goals which give inspiration and purpose throughout his life and which make his life meaningful and worthwhile.

**H** is for hospitality, not just the formal kind, but the kind that makes people, family and others, really feel like wanting to come and stay, the kind that includes friends of family and of friends even when she doesn't know them, the kind that includes unpopular civil rights workers and the kind that lasts.

**I** is for idealism, which led her to be a psychologist when not many married women were, which led her to graduate school at a time in life when not many would have gone, which led her to be active in politics when many are retiring, and which led her to support and be proud of George's idealism and activism and to carry it on after him.

**L** is for liberalism, in the best meaning of the word, not just in politics but in all aspects of thought and deed, in child raising, in social contacts and thought - in everything, and extending beyond the age when many liberals are no longer liberal.

**D** is for devotion, not the religious kind, though a sort of that too, but the devotion which an amazing number of people feel towards her, including many who have known her for years and many who have had but little contact with her.

**E** is for eagerness, always eager, even at age 70, to read new thoughts, to travel, to support new and old causes, to meet interesting people, to see her family and friends - in short, to live. May that eagerness never fail her.

## **APPENDIX 6: Memorial Remarks by Leta Marks**

(The following is a statement read at the Memorial Services for Mother by her niece, Leta Weiss Marks):

In journeying back through layers of my life, in each one I peel off, Mathilde looms as a special presence there. I see her in all of the many places I have been, each one illuminated by the light that shone from her, her wisdom and her grace; for her spirit entered mine at each stage of my life from the time she entered it. That was when she married my favorite uncle. We called him "Unk." As kids we sang to him "Unk, the bunk, the big fat hunk; throw him in the river and he goes kerplunk." Not a very appropriate song considering George's lanky shape.

Because my father had died before my wedding, I asked Unk to be the one to give me away, for he naturally fell into the role of surrogate father. Once he married Mathilde, she became a special friend to me, especially during my teen age years, when I was suffering all the confusions and turmoils of adolescence, trying to find out who I was. She helped me do that by being a role model I wanted to emulate and by giving me special attention; for she had a special way of listening and she had an especially sweet nature that drew me to her.

Many weekends, when my parents were away, Unk and Mathilde shared their lives with me. Like many other young people, I learned from Mathilde. I saw the way she lived her life for other people; I heard her respond to them, give to them, and never be too busy or self-absorbed to listen to them.

Yes, she listened. With her eyes and with her heart, she heard all my questions and my adolescent gropings for meanings and values. I don't remember her answering or giving advice; she just listened, and I felt she took me seriously. My own thoughts reflected back to me from her, and I learned about myself from hearing myself talk to her.

I see in my memory her face, the smile that lit up her whole countenance as she listened. What she gave to me was time and sincere interest in whatever fumbling thoughts I managed to express. I learned from her all about order, concern, temperament, appreciation, selflessness, cordiality, modesty and love. Winding up my last years of high school and my last childhood days in New Orleans, I found Mathilde and George's apartment on St. Charles Avenue a haven, a real retreat. Doing my homework while listening to old scratchy records of Handel's *Messiah*, seeing before me bookshelves laden with *Foreign Affairs* magazines, I felt comfort and a growing sense of what I wanted to become. Years later Mathilde told a story about me that seems to say it all: I confessed to her one weekend that the most important thing in my life was being a cheerleader, but that I knew that I would not think so forever. What impresses me is that when she told my story back to me years later, she expressed praise and admiration for what she called my maturity; she never laughed or mocked.

In later years, I remember, our children formed a special attachment for her, even though our visits were infrequent. They loved going down to Mathilde's because of the special way she had of talking and listening to them, or playing with them, whether on the piano or on the floor. And she always had those special treats: Sylvia's chocolate chip cookies that no one can replace - a mystery recipe -and sour cream coffee cake. And there was that silly exercise wheel that no one could manipulate except for almost ninety-year-old Mathilde...and the martinis in the freezer.

And then I remember the last time I saw her; she did not know me, but her face lit up just the same, with the expression she always greeted me with; I wanted to believe she knew me and was genuinely happy to see me. She almost had me fooled.

Finally I think back on her last birthday here in this house. Age was beginning to cloud her memory, but she amazed us all by reciting from memory, all of Gray's *Elegy*. Because she loved that poem, and because the meaning of it fits her so well, I want to read from it now, for Mathilde and for us, so we can hear the words she loved so well:

*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,*

*The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea.*

*The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,*

*And leaves the world to darkness and to me.*

## **APPENDIX 7: Transcript of 90th Birthday Video**

On October 1, 1987, Mother celebrated her 90th birthday by inviting friends to an open house at her New Orleans home at 1228 Conery Street. Her grandson, David, videotaped interviews with some of the guests, asking them to describe Mother and indicate how they felt about her and what they would like to say to her on her 90th birthday. The following are highlights of what some of those who were interviewed said.

### **Simone Fisher (Professor of French at Tulane and a close friend for many years)**

The evening I first met her, I remember it well. I had the feeling I had met someone quite exceptional, one with quiet strength and enormous kindness, and without any weakness. No, she doesn't seem 90 years old. She has a very sharp mind, and her true interest in other people hasn't diminished a bit. I will always remember how she reacts to crowds, where other people are less open, flexible or tolerant than she is. She can blend in so well. She loves the Jazz Festival, which is an enormous mixture of social classes and races.

Everyone is relaxed, tolerant and smiling. She is completely at ease - she blooms. I was with her there - she walked enormous distances, on uneven ground, wanting to get closer to the band. She wanted to be in the action. My son (who played in the Festival) and I agreed that this was the essence of Mathilde - enjoying herself among very different people. She has meant so much in my life. She gives of her enormous strength, for which I am grateful.

**President Eamon Kelly of Tulane University and his wife, Margaret**

She is an extraordinarily vital person. I admire her patience and good humor in difficult situations, such as when she had trouble hearing in the crowd at the dinners after the Dreyfous Lectures. She's a hero for many women in New Orleans, a person that so many admire, particularly because she was in on so many issues so early and because she is so committed. She has such empathy and social sensitivity.

**Nell Lipscomb (lawyer, League friend of many years)**

What distinguishes her are her values, her sense of humor, her sensitivity to human beings, her concerns. She is a wonderful person. She is my ego ideal, the kind of person I would like to be, someone I admire very much. She cares about people, she is not judgmental and she is truly the most loved person I've ever met.

**Janet Reilly (retired Professor of Law, Loyola University -League friend of many years)**

She is a wonderful person. She was successful in League and politics because she always made a point of seeing to it that the right people knew each other. She kept in constant contact with others. Over the years she realized that League needed different kinds of people, and she encouraged diversity of talents - that was a factor in my getting my law degree. She doesn't seem to know she's 90. Her enthusiasm and her youth keep her from seeming that age. Everybody else slows down, and she goes right on.

**Richard Boebel (husband of League colleague, Jean Boebel, and good friend over the years)**

She and we have had a most pleasing and fulfilling relationship. She is the most sympathetic and tolerant person I've met. She's reluctant to condemn anything, even things she is adversely affected by. She tries to find a reason not to condemn others. She'll say she doesn't agree, but she doesn't condemn. I hope that her style and personality are immortal.

**Lulu Brown and Alma Benton (Lulu worked for Mathilde, while Alma worked for her sister-in-law, Ruth Dreyfous)**

Lulu: What do I think of her? She is wonderful, young at heart, smart. She loves everybody. A beautiful person.

Alma: The most wonderful person that you'd want to meet. She's nice to be around and is always trying to make everybody feel comfortable. Just a beautiful person. She don't get old.

Lulu: She doesn't have any prejudice. She tries to do everything regardless of color.

Alma: She did a lot to help integrate the schools and to help the black race - not just the black race. I think she tries to help everybody.

**Max and Ethel Tropez (Max was a driver for Mother and others)**

Max: I've known her for 9 years. She is wonderful, beautiful to be with. I admire her and I love her. She has different attitudes than most. She's lovable and sweet, and you can't help but loving her and going along with her in anything she'd do.

Ethel: She is a wonderful person. She has a birthday for my grandchildren every year.

### **Sidney Barthelemy (Mayor of Hew Orleans)**

Mathilde and Ruth gave me my first political party and started me on my career, about 14 years ago. After that I was elected to the state senate and the city council and now I am Mayor. She's had a great influence on me and my career. She and Ruth always took positions to help the community. We always stayed in touch, they were always supportive. She's a rarity, because she believes in the good nature of human beings, and she believes in truth and justice and that everyone should have an equal opportunity and a chance. She's been at the forefront of the civil rights movements, helping the poor in our city, and taking up causes and issues that are not necessarily popular.

### **Essie Vantry (a woman who works for Ruth Dreyfous)**

She is a beautiful person to know. She's kind, understanding and wonderful to be around. She makes you feel so welcome, and makes you feel like people at all times. From the time I met her, she and all of her family are beautiful people. I am in love with them, and I know she loves me because she treats me that way.

### **Leonard Rosenson (retired lawyer - former partner of George Dreyfous)**

We need more people like her, people who make an outstanding contribution to everything worthwhile in the community. I feel privileged to have known her.

### **Caroline Weiss (Mother's sister-in-law)**

How would I describe her? An angel. Very good in every way. It's so wonderful that she's well and strong. She doesn't seem 90 now, but then she didn't seem 50 when she first came to New Orleans. Her energy and her interest made her seem young then and it still does.

### **Judge Revius Ortique (Chief Judge of Civil Courts, Orleans Parish)**

I have known her since the late 50's when I was President of the Urban League. She is a brilliant woman, a person who has lived for her brothers and sisters, whatever their color, whatever their position in life - always concerned. A tremendous lady. A good person. I am very proud that she helped me grow as a person. She was with me during various campaigns. I remember when she had a sign on her lawn for me, probably the only one in this area. A great human being. You could always sit and talk things through with her. She was always participating in human endeavors. Always if there was a problem, if persons were suffering injustice or indignity. I've been fortunate in achieving many honors. I learned that you don't get them by yourself. Others help. When I served as a black negotiator in civil rights issues, and when things would get rough, President Dent (Dillard University) would say lets back off a bit, and I'd say let's get someone like Mathilde to help us meet with someone who can help resolve the matter, and she would.

### **Felicia Kahn (long time League associate)**

Mathilde was President of the League when I first got active. The League had organization problems at that time, and here comes Mathilde, the star coordinator; the person everybody liked. Just what the League needed. I was with her in the great racial struggles. She was great. So logical. And with the integration of the League, Mathilde invited black women to join, and they found out they couldn't join and keep their jobs. Nobody but Mathilde could have gotten us through all that. For those of us active in the League, Mathilde was as much of a mentor as we had in those days, on ideas, manners and direction. I'm grateful that I've known her and can still enjoy her.

### **Peg Murison (long time League associate and close friend)**

One of the most loving and warm women I've ever met. She would have a way with people. In a school board election people would come meet a candidate they had no interest in, and they'd leave ready to vote for her because they loved and respected Mathilde so much.

## **APPENDIX 8: Student Piece by Carol S. Hindin**

(The following is a piece that Mother's granddaughter, Carol Schwab Hindin, wrote for a school English assignment to do a character sketch.)

She has just turned 75. She is a rather short lady with grey-white, curly hair. Her eyes are bright and alert with love and a zest for life. She is my grandmother.

My early memories of her are all good: playing games with her, listening to her recite poems to me, listening to her make up stories, making up stories for her or just talking. How many people do you know who can talk to a little child seriously - with a straight face? Grandma is one of those people. As I've grown older, Grandma has recognized the fact that I'm older and treats me as such. When I was five, she played with me and would come down to my level. Now that I'm eighteen, she still plays games with me, but she is also someone who I can talk to without being laughed at or treated as a little child. She isn't a super-perfect person; she's just human. She makes mistakes and can admit them. One example is when she decided to make taffy for a friend and me. When it came time to pull it, it was too stiff for us and she had to do it herself. After it was baked, it came out as a block of pure sugar. What a goof! She took it in her stride. She cut it up and let us eat it.

Another important aspect of her character is her enthusiasm for life in general. She is one of the bubbliest, enthusiastic people I know. It makes you feel good just to be near her. She is always excited about some project; a trip somewhere; or a visit from someone. She is one of those persons to whom you can tell your most exciting news and, whether it matters to her or not, she will be enthusiastic for your sake.

She is also very gregarious. She has friends all over the States and all over the world. She is the type of person who can walk into the area where you wait for a plane and, by the time the plane is ready to take off, she has several friends.

The most important thing about her is that she cares. This facet of her character could be used to explain everything I've said about her so far, but I'm putting it in a separate category because it is such a big part of her. She cares for people. She has been very active in the Civil Rights movement and in the League of Women Voters. Through the caring comes consideration, and through consideration comes understanding. She always knows just what to do when I'm upset to calm me down and to make me feel better. Her consideration is shown in the following example. Some relatives invited me over for dinner when she was there a month or so ago. When I got there, the man told me that Grandma had suggested going out to get the makings of a whiskey sour because she knew I liked them.

Grandma and I always have lots of fun together. We had a lot of fun in Canada together and she always has lots of great things for me to do when I visit her in New Orleans. When I look at her, I realize why I have such a great father.

I mentioned earlier in this paper that she isn't a super-perfect person. Well, I'd like to change that somewhat. She is human so she does make mistakes, but, as far as is humanly possible, she's perfect, and I'd just like to go on record as saying that I love her very much.

## **APPENDIX 9: Memorial Remarks by David Schwab**

(The following was read by my son, David E. Schwab, at the memorial services in Holyoke on May 24, 1992 and New Orleans on June 1, 1992) If it weren't for Grandma Til, I might never have eaten shrimp. Now that may not sound like much to you, but it is for me. Here's why.

For most of my life I refused to eat any seafood. My mother indulged me. My father largely giggled, Carla loves to tell the story about when she first visited 6600 River Road and was startled to

find that while everyone was ripping apart Maryland crabs. Mom had made me my very own filet mignon. In New Orleans I was the butt of continual jokes about how much I was missing in this seafood town. For a long time I had an ally in my Uncle Edgard, who also preferred a steak to any fish cooked in a paperbag or to gumbo peppered with tiny, red creatures. My refusal even to try seafood was, in many ways, probably typical of my general reluctance to try new things, of my stubbornness and, of a certain immaturity on my part. Lots of people gave me grief. Not Grandma. But one night while I was visiting New Orleans alone without the family, she suggested I might want to try a shrimp dish she had made, the one with the mayonnaise and the red onions. Of course I refused. She asked me why and I tried to explain that it looked yechhy. So she suggested that she could wash off all the stuff and fry the shrimp in a skillet just like a piece of chicken. And she did. It wasn't all that bad. Soon enough I was eating that yecchy sauce too. Now when Mom makes that dish it's one of my favorites. And I recognize now that I should eat more seafood, even if I still more or less refuse.

Grandma Til made a big difference in my life. The shrimps were just a tiny though symbolic part of it, the icing on the cake. I believe she helped me grow up and to see how lucky I was for the remarkable family I came to take for granted, which she was directly and indirectly responsible for creating -and nurturing. And I think she did this more or less simply by being herself and that, almost as if by magic, some of her insight rubbed off on me. I'm sure I'm not the only one. Long before she began to forget the verses to all the old songs, Grandma always said she had been blessed. So were we. I just hope I can pass along what I have absorbed to my children, can pass along the legacy she has left.

I don't quite know how I came to feel so special about Grandma Til. From the earliest days she always represented something almost exotic. There was a certain pride in telling people I had a grandmother who lived in the Big Easy. Visiting her in New Orleans was always like going away to a foreign land. There were so many unusual sights and sounds, and always so inviting. The streetcars; the magnificent live oaks and the way they caressed her home; Sylvia; Antwines; the way she drove around in a hot car for many years; the ships you could hear from the upstairs room; the docks; her friends who always came to call.

But there was something well beyond this that drew me to her. Even after I took off on my own, visiting her was my idea of a vacation, and I took several trips. I think it had to do with the fact that she was so accepting, which in itself may have been a measure of the love for grandchildren that doesn't ask questions. I think I can see that today even as my children come to know their own grandparents. It's perhaps hard for parents not to judge some of the flaws they see everyday; I feel it with my own two kids. But grandparents, they accept everything, and Grandma in particular never seemed to be judging.

Plus, there is the fact that Grandma Til was the only grandparent I was really able to have a relationship with. I never met my grandfathers; they died before I was old enough to know them. My Grandma Ida, who lived with us for some years, suffered a series of illnesses. Though a remarkable woman herself, there was a certain distance. For a couple of years I have dreaded this day. I have wondered how I would react when I got the news that Grandma had died. Not one prone to showing emotion, I figured this would be the one day when I might break down and cry. And yet when I first heard the news, I was more stunned than anything else. Only briefly did actual tears come to my eyes, comforting Michael in his upstairs bedroom moments after the call had come. Today I remain much more grateful for who she was and what I knew about her than I am sad about her inevitable death. Like probably all of you, I realized that the Grandma Til I knew had long ago departed. And since I lived relatively far away, I did not see her very often; indeed I found the infrequent visits a little upsetting. Only when I listened to some of the conversations I recorded with Grandma over the years did I truly remember how far she had slipped. Indeed, the Grandma I knew has been dead for sometime; I have been crying inside for a while.

Yet beyond all of this, I genuinely believe that Grandma's spirit remains with us all, in a very tangible way. Those who know me know I am not a very religious person. But Grandma is someone who has made me believe there is something like a soul, and that hers is among all of those whose lives she has deeply affected. I'm pretty sure I remember her talking about believing there was a soul, separate and apart from the body. I feel as if there is a part of Grandma with me; if the brain really is like a computer, then she is somewhere there in the read only memory. She just about got me to believe in miracles. How else to explain the fact that to the month, she is 30 years older than Tom, who is 30 years old than I, who is thirty years older than my first born, Danielle.

To me, Grandma's spirit began with her very presence. She was a petite woman, with tiny, delicate fingers. I picture her wearing the sort of fine clothes of royalty, the black Ferragamo shoes, the famous silky smooth black seal coat. It might have been easy to write her off as an eccentric. Who else would keep martinis in a plastic jug in the freezer? But she was as outgoing and down to earth as anyone. There was a sparkle to her eyes., a melody to her voice wherever she went, no matter how mundane the situation. She was as interested in what you had to say whether you were the president of the university or the waiter serving the meal.

Grandma normally looked and acted many, many years younger. People were always surprised at how old she actually was; I probably would have forgotten her age myself were it not that she was exactly 60 years older than I. Grandma was always energetic. She was famous for the walks she liked to take. She was the first older person I remember who insisted on doing her own exercises well before it became fashionable. She even got that funny donut that she rolled for her tummy. And what other woman approaching ninety could be found out on the dance floor at an uptown cafe, or marching with the family up to the observation deck at Mt. Tom.

She seemed to be interested, fascinated in fact, by just about everything, from the Spanish moss that grew on the live oak trees to French literature, Impressionistic paintings, to what the young people were thinking and doing or the latest news on Mario Cuomo. I believe she could still have administered a Rorschach test. And she was adventurous. I recall the time when Dad and I were visiting for one of the lectures. We were planning to go visit the bayou areas where George had purchased property and meet up with someone who was going to take us on some boat ride. Grandma came along, and seemingly before we knew it, we three were in this small, flat-bottomed boat zinging around the marshes and out in the choppy waters that led to the Gulf, dressed in bulky life preservers. Our guide assured us that it was unlikely we would get stuck in the shallow waters so long as he kept up his speed. Grandma never flinched.

More important, Grandma was always concerned for the less fortunate, perhaps in part because she knew first hand what it was like to have lived in tough times and through the Depression. Though she had some extravagant things, she was not an extravagant person. She seemed equally content at Antwines-with the special entrance, George her Cajun waiter, savoring tournedos in a back room beneath pictures of the rich and famous covering the red walls-as she was with eating leftovers from the tiny kitchen table.

Perhaps in part from her training in psychology, she had a remarkable ability to empathize with others and to see in them what others might have overlooked. I recall how she saw well before I did the sensitivity in my brother Jon that would make him the exceptional doctor he is. She was sentimental, but not so much about material possessions, but about those things that really mattered in life, I think the saddest I saw her was when she reflected on the loss of her dear friend Pokey.

I can't recall ever seeing her mad. She was accepting of most everyone and everything. I knew she probably hated the long hair I wore as a teen, but she never said a thing about it. The only two people I remember her consistently speaking harshly of were Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. And certainly that was, among our circles, politically correct. She believed in doing the right thing, but rather than tell you what to do, she believed you'd figure it out.

I always believed that it was a measure of how remarkable a woman she was that she could lead two perfectly contented lives with two very different husbands under very different settings. And though both would tragically die early, this never seemed to make her bemoan her misfortune. She could speak of both her husbands in the same breath and never seem to betray an ounce of regret or self pity. At the same time, she would marvel at how lucky she was that her two sons found spouses who were so perfect for each other. Another measure was the number of my friends who, having met her once or twice, perhaps looked her up in New Orleans, would always ask about her, as they might about a college chum.

I rattle this all off because I believe so many of these traits-though maybe not all-have been passed onto so many others, especially my father. That is her legacy. When I see him enjoying his music or tearing up just listening to Mahler or West Side Story, I think of Grandma, who saw in him the sensitivity at an early age to be a musician. Yet he's the one in our family who wasn't the least bit sentimental about leaving the house at 6600 River Road, though he would miss the people. When my wife asks me where he gets the energy to romp on the floor with my two-year-old, acting like someone many years

younger, I think of Grandma. When I see his generosity, his beat up old shoes, the list of his charitable work, the agonizing he does over difficult decisions, the many numbers of people who have come to depend upon him, I think of Grandma. When I joke that he occasionally repeats a story he's told me, I recall saying the same thing to Grandma, and his reaction is much the same as hers, a bemused indifference, though he appears a tad more annoyed. And I see Grandma when I look at his short fingers, his impish smile.

As for me, I think I'm a more mature person because of Grandma. I think she helped, along with others, to bring me out of a shell that I had drawn around myself. Along those lines, I particularly like the story she told about how she got in the habit of "taking" a drink, as she liked to say. I'm sure you've all heard that story many times, but I'll relate it to you the way I remember it. It seems that years earlier I forget exactly when this happened, Grandma fashioned herself as something of a wall flower. Well, she was at this party at someone's home and at some point she decided to have a drink. Some time later, she heard a pompous man carrying forth on a topic she knew something about. She wanted to tell him he was wrong. And before she knew it, she blurted out her opinion. She could only credit the drink. From then on she understood the value of a drink. I was a very shy person. For some time I felt like that wallflower, and I was not the first journalist who chose that line of work precisely to force myself to interact with others. Sometimes it's still a little hard. I think she helped to pull me out, mostly by demonstrating an unfaltering interest in what I had to say. Maybe, in fact, she's partly to blame for my intense curiosity about just about anything, which is in turn what makes me a decent journalist.

Grandma was the first person other than Carla, of course, I even broached the subject of marriage with. I did not think I could talk about it with my parents, I was too embarrassed, I worried about what they thought, I was so desperate for their approval. So during one of my visits to New Orleans I asked her how she knew when she had met the right man. She seemed slightly stumped, viewing it as a mixture of fate and luck, and anything else she did not remember. All that I can remember of that conversation is her belief that about all that mattered was that two share the same "values." It could not have been more true.

I came to share her view on the role of luck, for we talked about it once in a while. As it turns out, she was at my side at what was probably the single luckiest event in my life, a chance encounter that would set the course of my adult life. It was sometime in the fall of 1979. I had graduated from college and thought I'd like to try working at a newspaper. That summer I had worked at a weekly newspaper, but the position was nearing the end. So I had blindly sent out resumes to scores of tiny papers throughout the country. I had not heard much. Grandma was visiting and we were downtown, probably going to see one of the museums. As we prepared to get on the Metro, I ran into a college classmate of mine. As it turned out, his father was the editor of a daily newspaper at the Jersey Shore, one of a sort I had assumed was too large even to send my resume. He suggested I send him a resume and clips, and that when I go for an interview look as preppy as possible. That was how I took a job at the Jersey Shore, and ended up meeting my wife, raising my family and becoming a Jerseyan.

The moments I spent with Grandma that I will most cherish are just a bunch of simple affairs, not one of them in itself terribly significant. But they are the sort of memories that have etched themselves into my very being, the sort that may not come to mind day to day, but click in at the right time. I hope they will remain there forever.

It's approaching cocktail hour and the early spring day has been quite hot and humid for a northerner. We are sitting in the cool, brown living room, drinks in hand. The subdued lighting and the dark wooden walls are soothing. We're just talking. Or we are driving back from a long day out west in Cajun country. We've bypassed the highway and opted for the two-lane road that, winds alongside the levies that rise beside the Mississippi, taking us past weathered old shacks amidst groves of live oaks and huge oil refineries. The sun is setting behind us, leaving the sky a bright orange. There's no traffic; the river is still. Again, we're talking.

We're talking not so much about politics and current events these times, but about history, family history. I ask questions now and then, and she spins one story and then the next in a sort of stream of consciousness way of speaking, not necessarily in precise order or chronology, recollections slipping into focus, stories about Baton Rouge, Cincinnati and New Orleans, about her two husbands and her two sons, about her extensive family and friends. "Actually," she would say, signaling the start of something new she had remembered. Sometimes I felt as if I were looking backward through a window in time, for I could

begin to understand something of the human forces that produced Grandma and, in time, my father and me. Grandma being a Freudian, a number of these stories had to do with childhood. What was particularly satisfying was that Grandma relished these times as well. She said they had a therapeutic effect upon her, allowing her to examine things she had not thought about recently. For both of us, then, it was a form of talk therapy perhaps.

Then, sometime later, watching her play with my daughter, Danielle, I was anxious to take my first born to spend time with her, so we took the train down about six months after she was born. After all, she was her first great-grandchild, and when Grandma was living in New Orleans long periods would pass before I would see her. In that same living room, I can see Grandma singing all those old songs, holding Danielle on her lap. Danielle did come to know her Grandma Til. And when she heard the news last week, she began to cry in a way I had-not seen quite often. One of the saddest things to watch was that just as Danielle was growing and learning how to walk and talk Grandma was losing precisely that ability. For a momentary period their paths crossed. Just when Grandma was beginning to reach the point of being so hard of hearing that few had the patience to talk with her for long periods of time, Danielle was beginning to talk and respond. The two could entertain themselves in Holyoke, even if they could not quite carry on a real conversation., But months later, Danielle was ready for more and, sadly, Grandma was no longer capable of providing it.

I recall a dinner at Antoinettes with Grandma and Carla. I don't remember what we ate so much as what we drank. Carla and I had ordered the cheapest bottle of wine on the menu and so thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and the conversation that we dared order another one. How many young adults could have so much fun getting tipsy with someone almost 90 years old? The postscript is also amusing. A month later Dad called to question me about the bill.

Other images....I recall lying on the floor of the living room and gazing up at the live oak that spread its limbs out over the house. Grandma used to say that was one of her favorite past-times. Spending days rearranging the books in the library (she insisted her favorite book was *War and Peace*, which she did not read until she was in her eighties; she gave me a copy) I recall the playful teasing between Dad and Grandma, especially as she became slightly forgetful. One time Dad dared her to recite Gray's Elogy, and she promptly set off. I can still hear some of those old tunes: "I've got rings on my fingers and bells on my toes....Here's a ball for baby, big and soft and round...One live as two, two live as one, under the bamboo tree...Go tell Aunt Rhody, the great big goose is dead...."

Even as she approached death, Grandma remained a remarkable woman, never one to complain or make much of a fuss. When years of heart and kidney dysfunction finally became overwhelming, the end came so quickly that it could truly be said she died peacefully. It was the sort of death that normally might happen in your sleep, but she was not alone. Beside her for the final hours were Tom, Jon, Cherie and Ethel. The only regret I believe is that we all could not have been there.

I thought Jon's words the most eloquent in describing the scene. "It felt lucky just to be there, privileged. I marvel at it. She had led such a long life, and we were there when it ended," he said. "When you see somebody take their last breath, feel their last heartbeat, it makes you reflect on what that body has been through. She touched so many lives." I had the vision of the ending of a grand symphonic masterpiece, that contained gigantic crescendos and a series of beautiful, exhilarating and complex movements but that wound down to a hushed pianissimo, the sort where the conductor moves his arms closer and closer towards the ground until he finally freezes, and all on stage remain poised just for an instant so that there's a moment of silence that marks the end of the piece. Her eyes closed, Grandma lay in her pink nightgown on the bed. She stopped breathing. Jon found there was no pulse. Dad gave her a kiss on the forehead. The room was silent. "It was an amazing Spring day, Jon recalled. "The kind we have not had in a long time."