

FAMILY HEROES

FAMILY HERO: BECKY CAPLAN

by Shawn from Montreal



My grandmother standing next to my great grandmother Becky

My hero is my great grandmother, Rebecca Caplan. She was my mother's grandmother. Rebecca came to Canada from Russia in 1908. She married Harris Caplan in 1913 and together they had seven children. They owned a hardware store on St. Lawrence Boulevard, where all the Jewish people used to live. My grandmother was her youngest child. When my grandmother was seven years old, her father died. Rebecca had to go to work in their hardware store and support the family, while also taking care of her home and all of her children. She also took care of her four nieces and nephews who came to Canada as orphans. She and her children were very poor. They lived in a small apartment over the store.

Rebecca was very proud and generous. When people came to Canada from Europe after World War II, they got a few dollars per week from the Jewish Immigrant Aid Service (JIAS). This money helped to provide for their basic needs like food. On the holidays, like Rosh Hashanah and Passover, these immigrants could not afford pots and pans to prepare the food, or dishes to serve them on. They could not afford things for their new homes. They seemed sad as they tried to prepare their homes for the holidays. It was soon known that our Bubby Becky would take care of them. Becky sold dishes, pots and pans and so many other things in her hardware store. She would go to people and tell them to take whatever they wanted or needed and pay her back when they could. Many people came each week and brought her \$1.00. She never made them feel bad or asked them for more money. Many people came years later to my grandmother to tell her how grateful they would always be to her mother for her love and kindness. Some people are still telling the story to my grandmother, even as recently as last week.

Although I never met my Bubby Becky, I love to hear my grandmother's stories about her mother. I feel so proud to have ancestors who were caring and generous and who made a difference in the lives of others. I love to see how proud and happy my grandmother is when she tells me these stories. I can only imagine how hard life was in those days and I am proud of all that my great grandmother did.

Written by **Shawn from Montreal**

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