

## Edelberg Stories

These are a collection of stories about members of the Edelberg family.

*Sarah (Sally) Edelberg Trupin Mizis 1904-1995*

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If I don't write about my Aunt Sally, who will? She was never able to have children, which was too bad because she had a patient, soothing, nurse-like nature. At least that was the façade.

It is difficult to write about some of the Edelberg women—my mother, Ceil, Bea and Sally, because what you saw and heard was not what you got. They all presented a public face, which did not always conform to their private ones: and, in some cases, it was hard to tell the truth from fiction. I have come to believe (in my old age) that many of that generation of women got what they wanted by concealing their “true” characteristics and acting like caring, selfless, and undemanding creatures. In actuality, all were vain, dominating, manipulative, and self-centered. (I share many of their traits but am not manipulative, with me what you see is what you get.)

Sally was born in Russia and came to this country as a small girl. She had Grandma's features (like Ceil and Helen), but large blue/gray eyes, fair skin and dark blond hair like Bea. She was somewhat heavier than my mother or Bea but about the same height (5' 3”).

I don't know the date but I do know that she was married at an early age to Phil Trupin. I first met them in 1928, when we moved to New York. Phil was a student at New York University and Sally owned a small hat shop in downtown Brooklyn. I liked Phil—always following my Dad's lead—but he left Sally after she had worked for many years supporting him through graduate school. His name became a dirty word in our family.

Sally and Grandma moved in with us after Grandpa died and Helen and Bea married in 1931-1932. That was when we lived on 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Sally and Grandma shared a double bed and I slept in a twin bed—all in the same room. I did not care much for this arrangement, as I was always cold at night in the winter, because Grandma slept with the window next to her wide open. And, Sally was always waking me up coming in late at night.

A great bone of contention between us was the dressing table mirror. When I was about thirteen, I placed friends' pictures around the frame; Sally removed them. I put them back, etc. etc. However there were good times too.

Sally and her friends, my dad's cousin, Shirley Askanase, and Adele ? liked to hear me sing and I knew and sang all the popular songs for them. Sally particularly liked *Melancholy Baby* (Ceil would love *The Shadow Waltz*).

Sally had a long time boyfriend named Murray, whom we all liked a lot. However, he did not want to get married. Sally always had the misfortune to like men who were smarter than she was and who had no intention of marrying her. In desperation, she finally decided to join Ceil in San Francisco so she and Grandma went west. Murray did not follow.

I now thought that I'd have a room of my own, but this was not to be; my mother took in a roomer and I went to sleep on a cot in my parents' room. I only had a room to myself for a short time—on Ocean Parkway—before we too left for California. Back on a cot!

My most vivid memory of Sally's life with us was when she and my mother cleaned house; they always did it in their nightgowns. Another nightgown activity was repainting the kitchen table and chairs. No one rushed out to buy new things in those days—not when the old stuff could be repainted or repaired.

Then in the spring of 1937, we drove to San Francisco leaving behind Bea, Helen and their families. Helen, Victor and their son Harvey, would follow in a few years, but Bea and Sammy lived their lives on the East Coast where their families remain.

My own problems were so engrossing at this time that I can't recall where Sally lived or what she did except for several situations. Once, my aunt and her two friends took me with them to a dance at the Jewish Community Center. (I wore a brownish tweed suit that my Uncle "G" (Sam Gumbert) made for me and a dark brown fedora hat.) Some young men wanted to drive us home from the dance so we went with them. They were very insistent that we join them at a bar for drinks until Sally told that that I was fifteen years old and that I had to be home by midnight.

The other incident was much more serious and caused some heartache, I believe. Sally went to work as a nurse/receptionist for a Dr. Katsoff. They met in an odd way: Ceil and G. belonged to an organization called "P.X.O." (I'm not sure what the initials stood for but the members exchanged services without the use of money. My Uncle made suits and coats in exchange for summer vacations at Clear Lake and other places.) Dr. Katsoff was a member and was immediately taken up by Ceil (who also had been into spiritualism and blackstrap molasses in her day). Everyone thought that Dr. Katsoff was wonderful but my dad, who said that he was a quack. He rented (he said, "owned") an office with lovely rooms above it and a full-sized ballroom taking up the entire third floor of the house.

The doctor's office was filled with all kinds of Rube Goldberg type machines, which could do miraculous things—cure cancer, prevent heart attacks and promote virility. The doctor himself was short, rotund with a tiny black mustache—I thought that he looked oily. I couldn't stand him in spite of the catered dances he invited our family to attend. I could not believe that everyone could be so taken in. (In later years Ceil would tell everyone I was engaged to an Admiral because of the many gold hashmarks Chris had on his sleeve, he was a C.P. O.)

Dr. Katsoff and Sally were an item for some time and once again everyone hoped they would marry but, one day Sally went to work and no one was there: No doctor, no machines and no job. Talk about bad luck!

The other incident, which stands out in my memory, was how Sally met her husband, Sigmund Mizis in 1937. (I remember it so well because I met someone at the same dance.) We were at some Jewish picnic at San Mateo Park. There was a large dancing area and Sally and Sig danced a lot. (We all liked to dance and I learned by dancing with my uncles and father who were all excellent dancers.)

Sig Mizis lived with his elderly mother. Having said that, I've said it all. He had been married before and had a daughter who lived with her mother. He had an odd-when you think about it, a necessary occupation. Sig strung beads, but not just ordinary

beads—pearls. The wealthy people of San Francisco and the stores that they patronized—Gumps, The City of Paris, Magnin's and Liebes all took their pearls to Sig for stringing or restringing. As far as I've ever known, he had a monopoly on this boring profession but it was one to which he was admirably suited.

Sig had been gassed in World War I. When he emerged from the hospital, it was evident that he needed to be taught something simple by which he could earn a living. Some bright person came up with the bead stringing idea, which worked. (The man with the damaged brain managed to acquire a lovely home, a life long companion and a secure place in his community). Here was the ideal mate for Sally: he could be led, looked after, babied and displayed for the rest of his life. He would never think he was smarter than she was nor would he ever cease to need her help. She would learn to string beads too and help him in his small shop downtown. This was indeed a match made in heaven and everyone was happy that Sally was finally settled. (When my parents made an obligatory visit, my dad read whatever was available—I stayed home).

When Sig died, he left Sally very well provided for and she was able to sell their large home in the Sunset district and go on to what I believe were some of the most happy days of her life.

From about 1979, Sally had an apartment at The Sequoias on Geary Boulevard in San Francisco. The Sequoias is a large, expensive, hotel-retirement home, which only the affluent can afford. She made friends and even did a little bead stringing now and then—mostly pearls. We visited her whenever we could and she and I wrote many letters back and forth which never said anything but kept us in touch. Like my mother and the rest of her sisters, she never told me anything which would worry me so I never knew that she had cancer until after her death in 1995 from a bowel obstruction.

Of all my aunts, I liked Sally the least but then I never had to live with any of the others. When I was single it was like having four mothers and I knew my mother and her sisters discussed my affairs constantly. I resented this and the “nice Jewish boys” Sally and Ceil were always finding me.

But as they died, I missed them. They were the only ones who remembered those family picnics in San Mateo park, the dances at Clear Lake, and me; as a blond Monroe-of-a-girl having a wonderful time.