



Audry Kutin
ROBS History Project
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My name is Audry Kutin. I was born Audry Sneiderman. My parents were Rita and Nat Sneiderman. Years later my father changed his name to Nat Sneider for business purposes so when I was in college I was known as Audry Snieder. I met my husband George when I was a Junior in college. He was in dental school. We got married the following year. I started teaching in Queens. Together we used our wedding money to pay for his last year of Dental school. We got married in 1964. He graduated from dental school in 1965. It was during the height of the Vietnam War. He went in under something called the Berry plan where he went in as a Captain and we went down to Fort Sam in Texas for his basic training and then we were stationed at Fort Hood which was in Colleen, Texas. It was an armored division and there he worked in a dental clinic. He worked though, not on the military personnel but on their dependents and while he was working on the dependents he really and truly decided that he enjoyed working on children. So while he was there he applied to a number of dental schools to be trained as a pedodontist. After the Army we went up to Rochester, New York and he was at the Eastern Dental Center for two years. Then we came down here to Bay Shore and he set up his practice on Brentwood Road and he was a pedodontist in the professional building on Brentwood Road until this past September when he retired.

When we were in the service I had my first daughter Ellen Stacy, so she was born in Texas. Then in Rochester I had my second daughter Stephanie, and she was born right down here in Bay Shore in Southside Hospital.

My mother's maiden name was Rita Friedman. I was born in the Bronx in 1942. My dad went into the service and was stationed in Biloxi Mississippi. He was deferred because he had a child but while he was down in Biloxi they declared the armistice. However they still sent him over so he served in peacetime Germany and then when he came back my parents took an apartment in Stuyvescent Town. So we lived in Stuyvescent for eighteen months. My brother was born there. He was the first baby to be born in his building and then from there we moved from third grade we moved out to Oceanside. I went to school in Oceanside. It was a wonderful, wonderful place to grow up at that time. Every ten years we have a reunion. I've been to all of them. I went to OKS number three, and then there was the Junior High and then there was the Senior High. One of my high lights was when I was in the eleventh or twelfth grade I won the Unity in Brotherhood award. It was a contest and I had to go to the library and write under the teacher's supervision and my theme was *"United We Stand, Divided We Fall"*. Anyway, I won and I got a twenty-five dollar bond. To this day – it was then probably 1958, I have that twenty-five dollar bond. Another bond I have is when we went up to Rochester once again I entered a writing contest for the local newspaper and it was on *Being Pregnant and Belonging to the Y*. Once again I won and they came and took my picture and I was in the newspaper and I got another twenty-five dollar bond. I still have that one also. If I ever run out of money at least those two twenty-five dollar bonds can see me through.

My oldest daughter Ellen is a Kindergarten teacher in Queens. She's still single and she has a Townhouse in Oakdale. My second daughter Stephanie, got married in May so I had a very, very, busy hectic year of retirement because I was planning her wedding. She is a school psychologist who works for the City of New York. All she does is work on imparials. She runs the team for the Special Ed Department. This past year she was hired by Scarsdale so she now works in Scarsdale. Her husband is in Real Estate in Manhattan and they live in Manhattan. Oh, and she's a doctor: Dr. Stephanie. She went to Queens as I did and then went to Yeshiva to get her doctorate; her PhD. My youngest daughter Shelly, teaches

Social Studies in Freeport. All my girls followed in my footsteps. Her husband works for LIPA. They live in Bay Shore. They bought his parents house. She married a Bay Shore boy. They live in Bay Shore and have two of the most gorgeous, gorgeous little boys. My Ryan is three years old and Ethan is a year. They are the light of my life and I adore them. Ryan lives with his golf club in his hand. My husband and I and his father all play golf. Ryan's father got him cut down clubs and we all were out this past weekend to Mattituck. My mother was one of four sisters and one of my cousins built a beautiful house out in Mattituck. He had a family reunion so all my first cousins and second cousins and now my two little grandsons are the third generation and he has a putting green out there and my little Ryan did not leave that putting green. Every once in a while he'd jump in the pool then he'd come right again and stand there, I mean he's just unbelievable. He can really wallop a ball with these little clubs at three years old. Even though little Ethan is only a year old, he follows his big brother everywhere and he brings the club with him. Now of course he doesn't have the eye hand coordination his brother has but yes, those traits are definitely from the family.

My brother Larry is seven years younger than I am and he was out at this reunion this past weekend. We were very, very close. He was talking about being seven years younger than me when we used to take these family trips down to Washington and at things like that my father would take the movie camera and you could always see my brother in and out and waving and teasing and to this day he adores my daughters. My brother doesn't have any children so my three daughters are – he's very close to them. He teases them the same way he used to tease me. He pinches their cheeks and he's a wonderful, wonderful uncle to them. My brother works for Roper Poles and he runs the phone centers throughout the country.

Well, I know that my grandmother on my mother's side came from Russia, someplace in Russia, Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia one of those three Baltic nations. I know she used to tell me stories about the wolves and whenever I played with my grandmother we used to take out the clay and make figurines as we played

with the clay. My mother was one of four sisters. My grandmother was widowed as a young woman and she raised the four girls by herself. They had a candy store and each of the sisters worked in the candy / stationary store. The last to marry was my aunt Bess who lived in Rockville Centre. I lived in Oceanside so my grandmother moved in with my aunt Bess in Rockville Centre so I was able to see my grandmother frequently because we lived so close together. I don't know how old my grandmother was when she arrived here. I do know she married her cousin, Harry. Her name was Etta and my daughter Ellen, is named after her. In the Jewish religion we are named for people who have passed on. Ellen is Ellen Stacy, so it is my grandmother and my husband's grandmother Cecelia, and then Stephanie Lynn was named for my husband George's Grandmother. Lynn was named for my aunt Bess's husband Lou. Shelly was named for (*I don't know*).

I was named for my two Grandfather's; Audry was for Abraham, my father's father, my middle name was 'H' for my mother's father Harry, (I used to say it was Honey) I use it for a few of my passwords.

My grandmother Etta arrived here at the beginning of the 20th Century and she and her husband Harry lived in Manhattan. Audry's mother attended Washington Irving High School. She was wonderful. Everybody loved Audry's mother. She loved to sing but had a terrible voice. When she was pregnant with Audry she was diagnosed by the dentist with throat cancer It was a sarcoma at the back of her throat and they even considered aborting her This was in 1941 (she was born in '42). They had just come out with radiation. So my grandmother told her (this was Audry's father's mother) to see a dentist in Manhattan. She worked in the leather industry and she used to make Audry leather and suede coats. She also was widowed young, and raised two sons by herself. The dentist said they'd try radiation. All during her pregnancy she would go regularly for treatments consisting of a series of 40 injections in her throat and neck. It always appeared dark and burned (but not like third degree burns), she developed a raspy sound to

her voice when she spoke as she got older (in her sixties) and her vocal cords became paralyzed (from radiation), she developed spinal problems, had disk operations, and eventually died of pneumonia having lost the ability to swallow by the time she was 78. They'd put her on ensure (a nutritional supplement), she drank it accidentally inhaled it, and developed pneumonia. That's why she died even though her heart was strong, Her father died when he was fifty-eight, though they'd been the same age. Her mother had a companion for many years named Maxie. He was a very nice man and went to all her daughters Bar Mitzvah's. He's in all the family albums, and then one day she kicked him out, for unknown reasons. Both Audry's mother and father worked during the depression. They worked for a knitting company called UpJohn. My father was the shipping clerk and my mother came in and she was very bright. People back then seldom went to college. Since he was the shipping clerk he would always have to pick up Etta's finished product. Audry's mother always told the story that he used to wink at her until she found out that he had a twitch. She thought he was flirting. He lived in Brooklyn, she lived in Manhattan. Then after seven years they got married and lived in the Bronx, 1236 Virginia Avenue, where I (Audry) was born. My dad was also a wonderful man he loved to sing *Night and Day* and *Temptation*, his two favorite songs. He had one brother Sid. They were eleven years apart. When his brother Sid got married to Audry's aunt Judy, Audry was their flower girl. When George and Audry got married their daughter was Audry's flower girl. Sid and Judy live in Florida now and Audry and George see them frequently. Years ago they went to Cancún and Club Med together because he married a woman that was ten years younger than he was so she and Audry (not that we were contemporaries), became friends and still are.

My brother taught me that I was the most wonderful, beautiful person in the whole world. To this day every time he sees me he says," *Oh you're so slim, you're so young*". He really makes me feel good. That was what my father also

did. My father was a sales manager for Zenith, the Zenith in their Manhattan Showroom. He had some big accounts. Sy Simms was one of his big accounts and a place in New Jersey called Masters. The owner died when he was very young of heart failure at 58 years of age.

I only knew my two maternal grandmothers that's why I was named after the two paternal grandfathers. My mother's mother lived in Rockville Center. I learned from her how to always be there, how to be reliable. She always used to read the Jewish Newspaper "The Forvis." She used to tell me stories and babysit me. We lived in Oceanside and she lived in Rockville Center. My other grandmother went to work for the leather and suede industry and from her I learned the value of working absolutely, absolutely and she worked until she was eighty years old and lied to conceal her age. She looked younger than her age, and took the subway. I was very close with my mother's four sisters. Her oldest sister Helen and her husband Irving lived in Brooklyn and moved to Dallas, Texas. He worked for Van Cleef and Arpels and they opened a store in Dallas. When my husband George and I were stationed in Kaleen, Texas, they became our family and we spent all the holidays going up to Dallas to visit them. My mother's other sister Bess, lived in Rockville Center. She also ran her own business and had a company called Homell which her son and daughter-in-law have now taken over. All my aunts just made me feel that I was the first granddaughter and I had two older cousins but not by much. My aunts just made me feel that I was just so special and so wonderful. My mother's third sister lived in Florida. She just passed away within the last two years. It was her son who made the wonderful party out at Mattituck over the weekend. When we were in Florida every time I'd go down to visit my mother, we'd always spend time with my aunt and uncle.

I think I always knew I was going to be a teacher. As a little girl in elementary school we always played school. That was when my father's brother's wife Judy was an elementary school teacher and so I used to listen to her stories.

At some point I did want to become a librarian. My mother said why would you want to become a librarian when all they do is put books on shelves. In those days maybe that's all they did do. Of course to this day I still adore the library, I love reading, you might say my second home is the library. The minute we went down to Florida this past winter, I joined the Library. I have to be near a library, I never buy books

I used to go away to camp during the summers and work as a camp counselor. When I was about sixteen my parents lied about my age. My brother went as a camper so I guess that was their motivation. So, at age sixteen I was a counselor to girls who must have been about ten or twelve years of age. Those were pretty much my only jobs. Then later on, I was a hotel counselor but basically those were the only paying jobs I had.

Growing up and being Jewish Roshshashana was always celebrated with my mother and father, aunts, uncles, and cousins. We would first go to services and then go to my aunts and uncles house in Rockville Center for dinner. She had a big, big, round table and we could easily fit fifteen people at that table. We'd always have a wonderful dinner there.

Now that I'm married my husband has a brother and a sister and his sister lives in Nassau County and his brother lives in Commack. We used to spend every vacation together too when the kids were growing up we would go every Christmas to get together because we were all teachers, eventually including myself later on. We would go to places together with all our children. We'd go to Paradise Island, we went to St. Martin, to Florida when his parents moved to Florida, we would get four condo's or something, and the first cousins would share rooms, and we each would have a room, and we would spend every holiday together. If Roshashana was at my sister-in-law-Toby's House in Nassau, then Thanksgiving would either be at my house or at my sister-in-law in Commack. Whoever it was that had Thanksgiving the other would have Passover.

I am definitely a morning person. I never had any favorite toys and I was, and am, most definitely a book person. To this I can add that spring has always been, is and ever will be, my favorite season of the year, since I was born in May.

Lilacs mean family to me. When we lived in Rochester, there was a Hyland Park and they must have had thousands of lilac bushes there and my daughter Stephanie was born in March and that first spring in May I remember taking Ellen who was now two years old and Stephanie in her carriage to Hyland Park. Every time I smell lilacs I can remember when my babies were babies. English and History were my favorite subjects then while math and science were my least favorites. During my last two years at Brentwood High School I ended up teaching and while I taught Special Education I also ended up teaching English and American History. Those were my best, best teaching years. I can't remember what year I came to Brentwood but I put nineteen years in the district so I can only assume that it had to be 1983. Prior to coming I had only taught for two years. I taught for one year in NYC and another year in Texas and then I left teaching to raise my children. It wasn't until the seventies when I had decided to go back to teaching. During that time school districts weren't hiring so the only people who were being recruited were Special Ed Teachers. Consequently, I went to CW Post to earn my degree in Special Education and Reading and I took a position in the seeder program on the Selden Campus (SCC) in Brentwood. I did that for two years when I was hired as an adjunct until the funding for that was cut. Since I had dual Certification (I was teaching Reading btw), I found work in Great Neck as a three month leave replacement. The next year they offered me five mornings in the Junior High again, since it was a Title One Program but it was just too much for me to get to Great Neck in the morning. I still had young children to get off to school and it was still only a three hour job, so it wasn't worth it and besides, I was "Floundering." That was about when I went to a party with my sister-in-law in Commack, and Carol Quickin, who worked in the Junior High who said she had just seen posted a Reading Position in Brentwood. I called

the district and spoke to Dave Holt, who told me that the position was at St. Ann's.

Now, here's this "nice" Jewish girl, (nevertheless, he said that was okay), so I went over and met Sister Steven and she and Dave interviewed me and hired me on the spot. I worked as a Title 1 Teacher at St Ann's for a year and a half after which the Supreme Court came in and said "*No, No, You can't have public school teachers working in private schools*" so they moved me over to the K of C Hall across the street from the BSD adjacent to the Parking lot. From that day forward, every day (we had aides) lots of aides and the aides were bringing students back and forth, back and forth from the high school. In the meantime, I had already started taking courses (SEPTA Courses) and Howard Brodsky was one of my instructors and we struck up a friendship and I approached him and said "*I'm not happy in my Reading Position, are there any openings in Special Education?*" He said they have an overflow for the resource room starting in February and if I wanted I could come and work for him as an overflow teacher in the Resource Room for two buildings." That's when I went to Southwest and Hemlock, I think that's what I did, and I worked a half day in each position and then came the spring and Howard says to me, Audry, we don't have any more overflow, I can't use you as a Resource Room teacher, I will give you a "Self Contained" so he gave me a self contained class in Loretta Park with Andy Lovito as my Principal. When I walked in they had just set up this class. When you first started teaching Special Education in Brentwood you didn't have any materials. Now-a-days they really do, now a-days-we get materials. But then there was nothing! *Nothing!* I had twelve students and the way they had set up the class I probably had the least desirable students. They were tough. They were tough, and I had never really taught self contained. I had done a little student teaching way back at CW Post but all my other positions, Great Neck and Suffolk Community and even the Resource Room I would come home and this is as a new teacher. This was a new teacher, every night I would cry, I was in my forties. I'd

cry and I'd get up in the morning and say, *"I can't go, I can't face it, I can't face it"*. One day my husband said to me, *"Then quit"*. And then he said to me, you know what, Ellen's starting college in two years and we need the money, and he kicks me out of bed.

Well anyway, by Thanksgiving, I think I had things under control. I had gone and spoken to Bob Bronzo, and he gave me like a Pep Talk, and of course Andy Lovito was really terrific. He understood perfectly what I was going through. Anyway, by thanksgiving I pretty much had things under control and nineteen years later I'm still teaching self contained.

The staff was great. I was next door to a girl whose name was Sally Karp with whom I became very good friends. We even used to golf together. The teachers themselves were all very, very, supportive, *buutt*, the kids were rough, tough, they were very poor, and I was not going to get much cooperation from the parents, and my department was very good to me, the fact that, they let me work at St Ann's and then they let me have the freedom I needed to "learn the ropes".

I worked for five years there at Loretta Park, always in self-contained and then they started the Middle School concept, so Howard called me into his office and said to me *"We are moving you up to the Middle School, and you'll be having a sixth grade self contained class up in the Middle School"* and I remember saying to him, *"Howard, where am I going to get all my hugs and kisses at the Middle School"* because one thing about all the students that I had they were always extremely affectionate and you know it's very nurturing, to have that kind of *"I don't know, maybe with Special Ed kids they're all a little more whatever, whatever"* I remember saying to him, where am I going to get my stroking, that's what it was not so much the hugs and kisses, the stroking, and he said, *"believe me you'll get your stroking"*. So they sent me up to South Middle and here once again I had a completely new situation, never taught in a Middle School before, and it was very interesting because it was a whole new concept, and the kids

would, you know, be the same. It was set up into a seven or eight period day, so the first period of the day, let's say I had Math and the bell would ring and the kids would go out into the hall and come back in and I would have English; the bell would ring and the kids would come back in and I'd have Social Studies and then the bell would ring and they'd come back in and I'd do Science so I did the entire curriculum but what was very interesting was that each time they came back in they sat in different seats, so it was as if they were in different rooms.

So it was very challenging and I became friendly with Mirium Couch, she and I and Ellen Bresloff, a new teacher to the building, and we also became friendly, and anyway I was there for five years and again, loved it for every situation I went in I found challenging in the beginning and then I learned the ropes and learned to love it.

It gave me a very full life. First of all I define myself as a teacher. Every time I would meet new people and again, the children that I taught they had so many issues that I could regale people with conversations about my students for hours but I mean that wasn't my purpose. But these children, I don't know, they just needed so much, they needed so very much and I loved having a purpose of going to work – I just loved it – I loved it.

I was always a dues paying member of the Brentwood Teachers Association, but I was never an active participant in the (BTA) as long as I had belonged to the Union. Since I've retired I've sustained membership in the Retirees of Brentwood Schools (ROBS), attending and enjoying participating in meetings. When we questioned if she had ever benefited from support received from the organization when she was an active member, this was the story she told: *"After five years in the Middle School (I had heard that Howard Brodsky loved moving people around). For whatever reason they decided to send me back to the Elementary school and so I was assigned to Oak Park. At Oak Park we were*

placed in the portables. When I questioned why I had been transferred, Bob Bronzo told me it was because they needed some experienced hands "down there" Immediately three brand new teachers were assigned to the portables. These were not twenty-five year old newbies they were older women who had previously worked as aides, women who had been around for some time but were still new teachers. Prior to this time I had always gotten along well with the Principal but for reasons that I did not yet understand I had come to hold the opinion that she did not like me. Also I had discovered that she had a volatile temper and she would scream at me – scream at me for what I considered to be minor infractions Here we were out in the portables and every time the kids had to go to the bathroom we had to take them into the building. We had to put on their hats, their coats, their raingear, boots just to go to the bathroom, to go to lunch, go to gym, go to music. I got pneumonia twice my first year because I would run outside without anything. Anyway, Marianne did not like me and the Union Rep in my building overheard one of her tirades against me. She came to me and said, "Audry never ever go into her office again without me." Anyway, after two years and it was Howard's retiring year, I went to him and said "I'm really having a rough time over there. Would you send me to the High School and he said yes. He sent me up to the High School and I spent the next five years there. That was one incident with the union. Another incident with the union was when I was getting ready to retire. I was over fifty-five and had heard about having my nineteen years invested in Brentwood and 1 year in NYC credited for twenty years because I was going to have twenty years. I went to Personnel and they said they would look into it. They came back and said "Oh no, it's got to be twenty years in Brentwood," but the contract did not read "twenty years in Brentwood." So I went to the President of the union who stepped in and was able to get the incentive. That was another very positive outcome made possible by the intervention of our union on my behalf". I retired July 1 of 2003.

I was teaching two American History Classes. The students now had to take Regents for the very first time and it was very, very, very difficult. In order to teach these students I had to read to them most of the material. Most who were good readers had a comprehension level of fifth or sixth grade readers. I also had a few dyslexia students who had never learned how to read. The day of the Regents out of thirty students fifteen showed up to take the Regents Exam, five passed the Regents and one passed the RCT. Now to me this was a tremendous accomplishment because the History Regents required that they write essays. I mean I read them every short answer, all the questions, all the essays and we stayed for hours and hours, because they were allowed unlimited time and one third of my students passed the Regents. To me that was my greatest teaching accomplishment ever. It was incredibly satisfying.

Why did I decide that it was time for me to retire when I did? Truthfully, I didn't. My husband decided. Understand, my husband has been a children's dentist in Bay Shore for thirty years, and he'd had it. It's very difficult to be a children's dentist. The insurance companies are driving you crazy. Since he was not one to sit at home and he wanted to go to Florida and of course, he wanted me with him. I had been in Tier 1, rejoined in Tier 4 and Legislated back to Tier 1. I already had the twenty years in and I was sixty-one years old, and he was 63.

Since we retired we visited almost a dozen National Parks. The first summer we flew to Montana and went to Glacier National Park. Then we went up to Canada and went to Lake Louise and Banff and Jasper and then in the fall we came home and went to the Shenandoah National Park. We were evacuated for two days due to the hurricane. While there we went to Monticello Jefferson's Home and I had been there when I was ten years old and it was quite a different visit now that I was in my Sixties. We spent the winter in Florida in the apartment that I inherited from my mom. This past summer we went out to Colorado to see

the Cliff Dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park and we loved, loved the cliff dwellings and went up to Rocky Mountain National Park and did hiking and biking. We just bought a place in Boca down in Florida and I came home in April from Florida, my daughter got married in May, and as soon as the wedding was over we put the house on the market, and sold the house in three weeks.

Currently, I'm in the process of packing and packing, and we'll probably be moving in October but I do hope to be able to come back home in the spring and be able to rent a place so that I can be with my family and grandchildren and friends, books, *'Stones in the River'* was wonderful. It was about a dwarf in Germany.

What if anything, did I leave unfinished? Well, these unfortunate young students who never learned how to read. When I was down at the elementary school that was all I worked on. I'd have three and four reading groups, two and three math groups, but once I got up to the High School even though I always taught a reading section, mostly it was all about comprehension. It was no longer for phonics. I still feel so bad that there are still so many students that cannot read.

What did Audry see ahead? Her own daughters are still in education. So, she certainly sees a need for more vocational work. *"My students in the high school went out to BOCES – I think it's a shame that the high school is offering to teach less and less technical skills. They used to have such wonderful technical and home economics courses. They don't have it now because of all the strict requirements for all the Regents. They can't fit all the other courses in and looking at my students- Do they know up, in Albany, that my students can't read and it doesn't matter to them about general knowledge. They must, 'they must' have a practical education. This generation coming in is so, so different with their digital and computer literacy, do they read as much as I read, no. I can't generalize but they all still read because they were brought up in a home that valued reading.*

Even though I may not have been active in the Union, I really think that all beginning teachers should become active in the union because of the way things are going now, you may very well be going to lose tenure, you could lose a lot of the wonderful, wonderful benefits, health benefits, unless you fight to keep them you're going to lose them.

Well, lastly, if my family should get a copy of this I want to tell them how proud I am of each and every one of them, and how I'm looking forward to seeing my grandsons and future grandchildren grow up. I also want to tell my husband how much I love him and to thank him for the wonderful live he's given me.