

Bernie Is Getting Benched

A true story ~ by Becky Ruth Friedman

From my childhood, I learned to believe in the old adage: "*Where there's a will, there's a way.*" I was convinced that any goal could be achieved through pure determination and relentless hard work. It almost always came to pass for me, but rarely in the way I had originally envisioned. My earliest effort went something like this . . .

I wasn't quite a teenager, when I developed a burning desire to own a typewriter - because I loved writing stories. But my father wasn't *willing* to buy me one. He thought it extravagant. But I never gave up asking. I repeated this mantra time and time again, until he finally relented, but only when I promised to pay him back using my babysitting money.

At about that same time, I wanted to try-out for a certain part in the school play. I wanted to play the lead roll—of the blind girl. When I approached our drama teacher about it, she indicated that she had already *just about decided* on who she was going to choose for that role. But I requested a copy of the script anyway, I would practice the part hard, before the rehearsals. She *claimed* she didn't have an extra copy for me. I told her to just lend me her copy, overnight, and I would return it to her the next morning. She agreed.

Since I had never before used a typewriter - I started typing the script that same evening, using the very tedious "*hunt & peck*" system, and I didn't stop typing until almost daybreak the next morning. My back felt almost broken, and my eyes were burning. But I had completely retyped the script.

I then practiced my lines every free moment I could muster. I was *determined* to get that part. And I did. After the performance, my English teacher came backstage especially to tell me—*Ruth, you outdid yourself!*

My effort, and that teacher's comment, **set the stage** for the rest of my life. "*Where there's a will, there's a way*"—became deeply engrained in my psyche. It became my internal **life-line** each time I faced a *seemingly* hopeless situation. My life has since been inundated with similar stories.

But for brevity's sake, I will end this story with my most recent, and most emotionally disturbing—dilemma.

When my beloved husband passed away, it was suddenly decided that he would not be buried in his family cemetery located in New York, where dedicated spaces awaited both of us. It was deemed just too far away since most of us were no longer there; plus a big blizzard was headed toward Chicago. So, with truly heroic efforts by my daughter, Linda, with my son Jeffrey assisting her, Bernie was honored with a grand Military Salute, and was laid to rest in a somewhat newly built up and still rather dismal looking location—that was somewhat remote to Chicago. He was, indeed, buried during a blizzard.

As is my custom, I decided to make the best of the situation. But my heart could *never* accept the fact, that although Bernie was laid to rest most appropriately among his compatriots, there was no family nearby. A part of me wanted to die right then and there—just to remain near him.

Almost instantaneously, I developed a *determined* effort to find a much better solution than immediately dying. But I knew full-well I would never feel fully sated—without that solution.

So, I thought about it - and I researched Jewish religious constraints. Bernie's remains could not be moved. But I also learned that the religion did not intend that we visit cemeteries very often, and that although his physical body must remain in place, his **spirit** would be wherever it is that he was being remembered. The prayer is to G-d, not directly to the deceased.

For some unknown reason, at that very moment I was reminded of beautiful Martha's Vineyard, where we once owned a small cottage, and where Bernie's parents owned the locally popular *Corner Store* - where both Bernie and his belated brother, Norman, once worked along side their father and mother.

In a lovely space filled with flowering plants and greenery, adjacent to the family store—sat a small Memorial Bench containing plaques commemorating my husband's parents, and Bernie's brother. Suddenly inspired, I had my answer. I would purchase a Memorial Bench for Bernie—near his family.

Unfortunately, the town of Oak Bluffs had placed a “pause” on new benches. Even the adding of a new plaque to old benches—was strictly being enforced, according to *my source*, Al.

But I was not deterred. I contacted my nephew who still lives year-round on the Island, as do other members of the family. My amazingly kind-hearted nephew, Michael, provided me with local contact information, and some hopeful additional details . . .

Our efforts were determinative. I sent a detailed letter to the President of the *Committee on Island Beautification*. I wrote to her about the existing Bench, and my need for a Bench for my husband. I explained my research, and my dilemma. I had also emotionally appealed to Michael—even saying to him that G-d had already approved the location. And, of course, I praised all the Island's incredible beautification efforts, and rightfully so.

The Committee President, Susie, quickly responded to my plea in a most wonderful way ♡ explaining that the Committee had already decided that our family's small bench, that now was quite old, was in need of replacement—and the replacement had entailed a longer bench. The new I plaques had not yet been placed. And yes, the new bench could accommodate an extra engraved plaque that would be inscribed thusly . . .

In Memory of Bernard Friedman

My tears of joy and gratitude were immense. My appreciation over-flowing. I didn't *only* credit the powerhouse proverb, *Where there's a will, there's a way*, for this beautiful gesture. I also thanked Susie, from the Committee. And since many Jewish people believe that the number eighteen, that also represents “life” in Hebrew - is a very lucky number - I made sure my donation to the committee (after the fact) contained the number eighteen. Eighteen is *Chai* in Hebrew. I also thanked Michael and his wonderful family for welcoming Bernie aboard ♡ And, of course, I thanked G-d. I feel confident that the family will visit Bernie there quite often—along side his parents and his brother. All's well that ends well !

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With Special Thanks To:

