



**Joyce Mosseri (Smouha),
1914-2013**

October 8, 2013, New York City

Jean:

My mother, Joyce Smouha Mosseri, has been the light at the center of my life for almost 76 years. She was my role model, my loving critic, and my truest friend, and I have no words to say how deeply I already miss her presence in my life. Her 99+ years almost spanned a century.

Thank you all for being here with us and letting us know that you remember her and care about her, too. It means a lot to us.

My brother, Jeff, and my sister, Susan, have honored me by asking me to talk about our mother today. From when she was a small girl, Mummy was fiercely independent, effervescent, always ready to see the humor in every situation, greeting the world with laughter and optimism, grace and generosity. She handled the good and the less good with amazing equilibrium, leading the way for us all with her example, her humanity, and the profound love with which she surrounded the three of us and our families, all our lives.”

Joyce Esther Smouha was the sixth child of her parents, Joseph Smouha and Rosa Ades Smouha. She was born in St. Annes on Sea, near Manchester, England, into a turbulent time at the onset of World War 1, and into an intensely verbal, jousting household of brothers and sisters vying for the attention of their parents, and the fierce Nannies who held sway over their lives.



Mummy had red hair and the vitality that goes with it. She had deep passions, deep loyalties, and the ability to adapt with grace and charm to the many changes to which her life led her. Her creative nature made her a superb musician. She was a pianist, a violinist and

had an exquisite coloratura voice in her youth. Late in life, she discovered a considerable talent as a painter, an artist with an impressive drive, and she developed an equally impressive body of work, a clear expression of her vibrant personality, and her appreciation and love of the beauty of the natural world.



Mummy was an exquisite needlewoman too, and the smocked dresses she made for me when I was little were much admired. Later, following in Granny Smouha's footsteps, she made tapestries for antique chairs she and my father bought, and she embroidered beautiful tablecloths and napkins. She moved to Alexandria, Egypt, with her family when she was four, and in her teens, went to the Roedean School in Brighton England, with her sisters. She was a fiercely competitive tennis player, and even at ping-pong or board games, she was out to win, and she usually did.



Our parents loved each other and had fun together. We all remember the kidding and the laughs. Through them, we all learned to find beauty and humor in the world around us. What a gift they gave us! They were together for 34 years. Sadly, our father, Guido Mosseri died at the age of 63 and left her a widow at 57. She missed him very much for all of the 42 years that she continued without him, but true to her nature, she lifted her head and lived on with courage and determination, moving beyond her grief for the sake of those she loved, caring for her mother until she died, and then making the brave move to America in her late sixties, to be close to Jeff and myself and our

families, spending long summers in Rumont and Paris with Susan.

Thinking of what she has meant to me, I realize once again how exceptional she was. We were very different in nature and looks. I remember - still with an echo of pain – the many well-meaning ladies who patted me on the head when I was a small girl, and muttered what a pity it was that I had not inherited my mother's gorgeous red hair! She let me know when I was quite small that she had been concerned about how to understand me. (I was an only child until I was five, a dreamer where she was a doer). So she consulted our family doctor, Doctor Molco, who agreed that she and I indeed had very different natures, and that she would need to make me understand that this was fine with her and that she loved me for who I was. This she did.

However, in accepting me fully, as she did each of her children, she did not assume that we were perfect. She was a strict disciplinarian and expected much of each of us. Fiery as she was, she once broke her umbrella on one of us, who shall be nameless... But she taught us to accept ourselves for who we were, and this great gift of unconditional love has followed us all down the years of our lives, and has given each of us an understanding of what it means to love, and to be a parent.

In a society where most ladies sent governesses to pick up their children from school, I knew I would find her at the elementary school gate every single day, rain or shine. She wanted to hear my news fresh from the source and was not about to delegate the moment.

Motherhood and grandmother-hood were immensely important to her. She had the unique gift of being able

to remember what it felt like to be a child in a grown-up world and she related to children in a very special way because of it.

She grew up in homes of great privilege and affluence, but although she was quite stunningly beautiful in the Paris fashions she wore as a young married woman, it was the **people** in her life who mattered to her. All the rest was incidental. She would have given the clothes off her back if she thought in any way that it might save her children from pain. She loved her parents with an equally fierce love that allowed for no questioning and no criticism. She had developed a gorgeous operatic voice, and her singing teacher wanted her to commit to a singing career, offering her a prestigious opportunity to sing in a concert. Her father, a powerful blend of Middle Eastern and Victorian values, would have none of it, and I have no doubt that the disappointment when she was not allowed to pursue the performance must have been immense, but when later, she developed a nodule on her vocal cords in her twenties and could no longer sing as exquisitely as before, she would point out to us that her father had been right all along. What would she have done if she had pursued her singing teacher's ambitions instead of becoming the wife and mother that she was?

The year of Suez, when we were all more or less confined to the house until we left Egypt, she set about preparing for the different life she knew awaited her. She had never cooked, since for twenty years she lived with my father in a large house run by her mother-in-law and sister-in-law, but she compelled the cook to teach her, impatient with his concerns that she not dirty her hands in the kitchen. She coerced her piano teacher to prepare her for music teaching exams, so that she might have a marketable skill to help out with, if the need arose. After my father died,

she joined Weight Watchers, working as a lecturer in Geneva Switzerland and continued to work for Weight Watchers in New York, well into her eighties.

Religion and what it meant to be Jewish mattered a great deal to her, but she also had a very pragmatic approach to the challenges of everyday life. One day, she was standing outside Shearith Israel talking to a woman she didn't know well. "Are you orthodox?" the woman asked. Mummy pondered. "Orthodox?" she said, "I always thought I was, until I came to America. Now I don't know if I'm even Jewish."

She never wanted us to feel that she was a burden on our lives in any way. Her older grandchildren remember her as a woman who always took a challenge, who played football with them, raced them across a field, and often won. Her older great-grandchildren remember dancing with Gran-Gran on Wednesday afternoons to the music of Peter Paul and Mary.

Nonetheless, she was also a woman of many fears. Daddy used to say that she was the bravest woman he knew, because she was the most fearful and yet met life's challenges with such positive energy. As age crept over her, she was taking a medication that gave her nightmares, and she would call up my brother, Jeff, who has been the best son any woman could hope to have, and he would come rushing over from 84th street at 3:00 am to calm her fears. That was when we decided that the time had come for her to have a full-time live-in helper.

Anyone who worked for her or took care of her has come to love her deeply and sincerely, and has appreciated the gracious way that she has managed the relationship. She always appreciated anything anyone did for her, and cared about *their* concerns

and troubles when she became aware of them. For her, and for the three of us, from the bottom of my heart, I thank the kind women, Davi and Sandy, Shirleen and Claudette, and the extraordinary hospice people, Rabbi Rudansky, Susan Stowens, Lana, Ashley, Mona and John, who cared for her and about her, and gave of themselves so lovingly and generously to make her last years more comfortable. Ever since the news spread like wildfire through the family grapevine that she was gone, we have all three been besieged with phone calls from her many nieces and nephews scattered about the world. Most of our cousins could not be here today, but each wanted us to know what an extraordinary person she had been in their lives, and why. Each felt they had enjoyed a very special relationship with her, and each commented with wonder, "she never forgot my birthday."

She was a wonderful woman. When I was asked in a professional capacity who I would list as my most significant role model, I had not a moment's hesitation. I listed my mother, and my interviewer asked with interest what her career path had been. Her career was us, I said. No other career. She showed me how to live, and she showed me how to love. Looking at her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, I can see that she has left each of us some of her sparkle and joy of life, down to her youngest great-grandchildren, Maya, Cole and Sophie. Their smiles and their laughter hold her spirit and gladden our hearts.

As I mentioned earlier, Mummy, the sixth child in a family of nine, was always fiercely competitive. All of her siblings lived only into their eighties, and her close friend and sister-in-law was 96 when she died. Both her parents died near 90. So, Mummy, if you can hear me now, I know you'll laugh. You made it. You won!

I love you so much, Mummy. I will always miss your presence, but I will always hold you in my heart and I know I will always hear your voice when I need it most.

Jeff:

Saying Good bye to Mum:

Since the last speaker has given you a pretty good idea of my Mum, and who she really was, I tried to find one single word which could most accurately describe her, and encapsulate all the wonderful qualities you already heard about. I couldn't find one. The closest words I found, "good", "pure", "genuine", "strong", "lady", "elegant", "gentle", "resilient", "humble", "courageous", "funny",.....all true, but not complete.

Mum had many gifts: wonderful wife, wonderful mother, wonderful mother in law, (tough one to handle!) wonderful grandmother, wonderful great grandmother, great musician, great artist etc. and she was terrific at all of them, but she also had the unique gift of being able to relate to each person with whom she came into contact, which made THEM feel that they were the only people who had this special bond with her. And in a way they were right.

In that regard, I would like to share with you a story which Karen Daar has just told me. She sat behind my Mum all those years in the Synagogue and they had many wonderful talks. It seems that at one point, Mum said to her "I am so happy that you sit behind me.. I hope that in OlamHaba (Hebrew for the world to come) you will also be sitting behind me....."

When Mum was with children, she also had the unique gift of remembering how SHE felt at their age, allowing her to relate in a very special way to each and every one.

I would like to tell you what a good friend of mine said yesterday, and then read you one of the many e-mails we received in the past two days, from all over the world.

One friend when told of her passing said...”WOW! 99 and a half!! Do you realize that she lived through two world wars, lived in many countries on three different continents, saw the development of the automobile, and the introduction of the telephone, television, and the internet!!

Well that’s true! By the way, to show you how modern my mum was, she actually got herself an internet address “grannyart.com” so that she could communicate with her grandchildren in college by email!!! And she did, in her 80s!!!

Now for the email from a very close friend of ours in Europe:

“Dearest Jean, Susan, Jeff and families,

A page has turned: the last “grande dame d’Egypte” has left us and I feel that I have lost my second mother, so I feel very close to you today, and was choking as I drafted this note.

My memories go back so far: Cairo, the Gstaad Palace, your parent’s open house in Geneva, and finally New York. Always smiling, a kind word for everyone, but often laced with her dry sense of humor, or her discreet but unequivocal way of transmitting her disapproval. She was the devoted wife and mother through thick and thin, widowed far too early, which she faced with her usual courage and resolution to rebuild, one can only regret that the social mores of the so called “haute société égyptienne” did not allow her talents to express

themselves more openly, like her painting, that flourished late.

In addition to the pain, you must all feel a terrible void. You were devoted children and we all admired your unceasing efforts from near and far, to transmit your affection and allow her to live her life in dignity in spite of the inevitable decline. She was blessed with adoring grandchildren and great-grandchildren upon whom she can now look down at rest.”

This seems to say it all....., so in closing, all I can say is that Mum lived life to the full, elegantly, with passion, and with love.

Oh! I think I've found the one word I was looking for: she was, in every sense of the word, a true "EshetChayil" (a woman of valor) , which, our Hebrew literature teaches us, means that she is worth more than precious jewels.....Her passing will leave a very deep void in our hearts, but I can only hope that she is now happily surrounded by her loving husband, mother, father, sisters and brothers..... Goodbye Mum....We all love you we will always remember all the wonderful moments we had together, and we will miss you terribly.

Susan:

I shall read a poem that I translated from French and that would explain the very end of Mummy's life:

One Day I Shall be Old !

If sickness should attack my mind and I should lose my powers of reasoning and my memory

And that I can no longer make myself understood nor understand you :

How will you, my child or my carer, look after me?

I ask you in advance :

Try to get to know my past, the work I did, what I liked and where I lived.

Give me reassurance when I shall be lost and enveloped in fear.

Tell me that I can count on you for all that I shall no longer be able to do alone.

Communicate with me, even if I have a lot of difficulty understanding and making myself understood

Do not talk about me as of an object.

The gentleness of your voice, the tenderness of your touch, a smile, I am sure, will let me know that I still exist.

Please : Enter into my world when I have left yours.

Mummy has given us a memory of such beauty, her music, her art, her courage and her sensitive and deep values and such overwhelming love that she will never leave the lives of many of us who have always loved and admired her so much.



Amanda:

To myself and her 6 other grandchildren, Joyce Mosseri was Granny. I lived my entire childhood 6 floors up from Granny, so as you can imagine we spent a lot of time together. I've been lucky enough to have her in my life for almost 34 years and I'm here to share some of my favorite stories, life lessons and characteristics I'll remember her fondly by.

- Granny taught me how to be a proper and respectable young woman even though the influences of being a teenager growing up in Manhattan pulled me in other directions. We had this tradition that before every school dance I would go by and ring the doorbell on the way out so she could see me dressed up. Without fail, she would say "Darling, isn't that a little short?" or "Shouldn't that have sleeves?" or "Makeup, what on earth do you need makeup for at your age?". I have a feeling when my daughter Maya is a teenager, I will always have Granny's voice in the back of my mind when she's leaving the house saying "Isn't that a little short? Shouldn't that have sleeves?"
- Granny looked out for me in other ways too, that for a long time made me roll my eyes, but as I got older brought a smile to my face. From a very young age, when my parents finally gave me permission to travel down the 6 flights to her apartment by myself in the elevator (probably around age 4), it made her "terribly anxious". When she found out I went skydiving after college, her response was "I'm so happy I didn't know about that ahead of time. What were you thinking?"
- Granny was always witty and fun to be around. Spending time with her felt like she was just part of the gang. She made fun of all of her New York grandchildren's accents. Every time I asked if she could please pass the water, she would say "What's water? I could pass the wotah if you would like." One

of my favorite Granny stories was from a summer at the Danon country house in Rumont outside of Paris, where she would join Laura, Daniel, Joe, and I during the summers for many years. Joe and I were about 10. We were all watching TV in the living room in the evening with the doors open when we suddenly noticed a bat on the ceiling. Joe and Daniel were amused, but the rest of us not so much. Granny then proclaimed that she remembered being told in her childhood that if a bat gets stuck in your hair, their feet are so sticky that you have to shave your head. Well as you can imagine, this threw us all into a tizzy, resulting in all of us, including Granny herself, running around in shower caps for the rest of the evening. The boys finally shooed the bat out, so no harm was done.

We will all miss Granny terribly, but she has clearly left a strong mark. It's kind of strange because part of me feels that in this sad and confusing moment, Granny would have been exactly the person to turn to for uplifting and witty advice that helped put everything in perspective. But since that's obviously not possible, I thought I would end on the next best thing, a classic Granny quote for a time like this:

"Life is like a cake. You can't have all sugar. There's got to be some flour and salt in it too, or it won't taste good."

Mummy as seen by many :

Suzanne (Adda) Erera:

"She was a lovely person to know, so warm-hearted, understanding, affectionate, refined. When, we met for the first time, I was only ten years old. My sisters and I all adopted our new Aunt and have loved her ever since."

Jackie (Adda) Coen:

I also want you to know how very very grateful I was to Auntie Joyce for her affection and devotion to my mother."

Colette (Adda) Hawes:

"I shall always remember Auntie Joyce as a beautiful young woman on a station in Alexandria meeting her fiancé , your father, off a train from Cairo. I must have been seven or eight and I thought she was the loveliest thing I had ever seen. Later, I remember our dining-room beautifully shining with silver, the table decorated with white flowers for an engagement dinner-party my parents gave Joyce and Guido, which I did not attend because I was too young."

Dicky and Sylvia Smouha:

"Auntie Joyce was very special to all of us"

Michael Espir:

"My darling Patricia and I were very fond of Auntie Joyce."

Guy Naggar:

"She was an example to us all with her wonderful kindness and sense of humour."

"She lived an extraordinary life in a remarkable way always keeping her vivacity and sense of humour"

Judy (Smouha) Aghion:

"She was like a mother to me"

Gilly (Setton) Zilkha:

"Can't forget standing with her and you (Susan) at Uncle Guido's prayers at your house in Geneva. She was so brave and dignified that day.

Auntie always remembered our birthdays and sent us cards every year till she was nearly ninety.

What an amazing woman she was"

Philippe Setton:

"Aunty Joyce, the last of the generation of our parents from a great family of aunties and uncles, leaves us with a lifetime of memories from Egypt to Europe and beyond. A grand lively and lovely lady and loving aunty and Mum of course

to you. Very fond lifelong memories for me, close as I was to you all then and close as I feel in my heart to you today."

Judith & Michael Adda:

"She was a hugely lovely lady - gentle, funny and kind. There was also wisdom - we shall miss her very much but fondly imagine the joyous reunion with Uncle Guido." She was a very special Lady and we will all miss her dearly."

Tony Smouha:

Most of my memories of Auntie Joyce date back to when she was in Geneva in the 1960's and 1970's. I was of course one of her eldest great nephews and before I went to the Abbey prep school, she used to teach me the piano. I was somewhat better than my father who at a very young age (he can't remember) apparently who thought the piano keys represented parked motor cars, but I was not brilliant. Nevertheless I would be taken along to route de Florissant and in the end, was able to do some scales and play a piece of Chopin. I was 8 years old.

Of course, the funniest story was when I was taught how to kiss properly on the cheek. The classic "Smouha" kiss was to turn one's head away from the cheek one was kissing not quite presenting one's ear to the cheek. So one evening I completed my lesson with particular attention to Uncle Guido and the next day I had mumps. At that time Auntie Joyce insisted on being called Auntie Darling to distinguish herself from

Auntie Joyce Ades, the Coptic wife of Uncle David Ades. A wonderful memory for me was after my first three months at the Abbey, at 9 years old, when you came with your parents to the prize giving. It was a total surprise as in those days travelling was not as easy as today and I did not expect anybody to come to see me collect my prize.

In the 1970's when Auntie Joyce was living at Gran Gran's I remember she was a pioneer member of Weight Watchers. Special meals were prepared but this did not prevent the reward after dinner of going to the not so secret chocolate drawer-quite right!

Caroline (Smouha) Levy :

"Aunty Joyce ... Aunty Darling, was so incredible, to do so well, the most resilient of her generation! She was so lovely and she did so well for so long, with always such a cheery outlook and disposition on life."

David Cicurel:

"She was the last of a great generation and she takes with her so many of our childhood memories."

Joe Smouha:

"We too are remembering Aunty Joyce though with much sadness at her passing but also full of happy memories. She was always wonderful to me and had a very special place amongst all the aunts and uncles.

... She was such a cultured, joyous elegant and very funny aunt - I always loved her especially. And she was such a wonderful companion to Gran Gran. And then of course in 1984 she was really in loco parentis for me while I was at NYU Law School. .. we spent many happy hours together that year- she didn't only feed me but lots of piano and music and fun. She was at my graduation (rather appropriately at Carnegie Hall!) - my parents could not come so that was again a special moment to have her there I have only the happiest memories of her-the last of the generation but she embodied all that was best about that generation, and there is no greater legacy to the family."

Geoffroy Wallier:

The last of her generation, she had a long and interesting life. I have very fond memories of her, in particular when, many years ago I spent a few days in her New York apartment and she made me read the wonderful short story she had written.

She never forgot my birthday and would always send me a card. She was really kind and very refined."

Gilles Wallier:

"She was like a grandmother to me."

Ghislain Wallier:

"I'm really sad but will keep a vivid memory of her laugh and the love she gave to all of us."

Isabelle (Setton) Bouhanna :

"J'ai appris avec tristesse que Tante Joyce avait quitté ce monde. La dernière des enfants de Gran Gran et Grandpa, cette si belle famille de frères et sœurs Smouha, qui nous comble de tant de cousins et cousines !

À chaque fois que j'ai vu tante Joyce, j'ai été marquée par sa gentillesse, son énergie et sa joie de vivre, des valeurs qu'elle a si bien transmises à chacun de ses enfants"

Eric Setton :

"I wanted (Aurelia) to know as much of my family and traditions as possible, to introduce her to this heritage that means so much to us all. Our visit was terrific. Auntie Joyce displayed this unique mix of British formality and middle-eastern familiarity that I keep in my memories from my grandmother. I'll always be grateful for that".

Gavin Adda:

"She was a very special Lady and we will all miss her dearly"

Ben Adda:

"Auntie Joyce was a heroine of mine....She was one of the great, amazing people of this planet.

So intelligent, vibrant and energetic - and living to 99 years - simply incredible. I will treasure all the memories (and paintings) she gave me forever."

Paul Cicurel:

"She was such a Lady!»

Wendy and Paul Weltz:

"a truly great lady."

Daniela Laufer (Gloria's sister):

"I have such happy memories of my shared lunches with Joyce, dinners in her home and her playing the piano. She so kindly gave me a little painting she had done, but about twice a week I always think of her when I use the plastic flower pad that she gave me to open up plastic bottles."

Leon and Nicci Nahon (Gloria's brother and sister-in-law):

"The passing of the greatly respected and very well remembered Mrs. Joyce Mosseri. We had the good fortune to know her whilst still enjoying her life in Geneva -lucky indeed to be invited to her lovely home, enjoy several meals together both in and out of home. Gracious, friendly,

warm and affectionate, making both of us feel like family immediately. Can't help thinking of Jean's book, and picture her literally doing just that. An eventful life shared for so many years with your father, devoted to her children and extended family. Joyce remained elegant and our visit on the occasion of Amanda's wedding, was even if a little forgetful, charming and welcoming."

Carole (Danon) Gabay:

"Joyce and I had in common a passion for music and ability for the high notes and scales, as described in Jean's beautiful book, which will remain for you all to remember and cherish her in your hearts."

Vivette Ancona:

"I am so sorry, so sorry and yet know that instead of grieving what we should be doing is celebrating her beautiful life: the epitome of the "virtuous woman"."

Anne Nacamuli:

"I still have wonderful memories of your mother when she was still her real self; such a warm and welcoming personality, such charm and of course a lady to her fingertips. I particularly admired the way in which she re-made her life in New York, with her work for Weight Watchers and especially her really excellent painting. Above all she was quite devoted

to all of you and in turn was loved and supported by all of you until the very end.

Alec Nacamuli:

"A page has turned: the last "grande dame d'Egypte" has left us and I feel that I have lost my second mother.

My memories go back far: Cairo, the Gstaad Palace, your parents' open house in Geneva and finally in New York. Always smiling, a kind word for everyone; but often laced with a dry sense of humour, or her discrete but unequivocal way of transmitting her disapproval. She was the devoted wife and mother through thick and thin, widowed far too early which she faced with her usual courage and resolution to rebuild, one can only regret that the social mores of the so-called "haute société Égyptienne" did not allow her talents to express themselves more openly, like her painting that flourished late."

Liza and Gérard Mareuil:

"We will always remember her as a wonderfully gay happy smiley person, a bundle of joy."

David Kleeman:

"She came from quite a wonderful background - of tradition, dignity, warmth and affection, culture, sensitivity, family-minded, kindness - features not easily replicated in today's

different world, but she was successful in passing on these qualities to the next generation.

I admired her from the time I first met her in Florissant more than 50 years ago. I admired the way she rebuilt her life after your father's early death, and I admired her on my fleeting visits to New York to which she adapted so well. She always gave me such a welcome."

Jonathan Berg:

"She was a lovely and kind woman that I remember fondly. Thinking about her reminds me of many holidays and happy occasions that we celebrated together.

Juliette Berg :

"I'm so sorry to hear about Joyce passing away. I remember her from when I was little as being a very kind, warm and interesting woman. I'm happy that she had such a long and fulfilling life."

Jean M. Auel:

"She was such a vibrant and active woman, whom I much enjoyed knowing, and an inspiration. There are not many who would develop their artistic skills at such a late age... "

Vicky Bijur,

"I am so grateful that we had that mother-daughter tea at the Cosmopolitan Club several years ago and that I got a

sense of your mother in person as well as in the pages of your book. What a tribute to her that was remembered with such grace by her three children and that even after the upheaval of leaving Egypt, she lived the long last chapter of her life surrounded by a bevy of grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

Rosalie Wolarsky:

"one cannot help but marvel at your mother's amazing lifespan. What astonishing history she witnessed - the departure from Egypt, the birth of Israel, and all the strife of the 20th century."

Ashley Lewin and the Hospice (many signatures):

"It was a pleasure to meet Joyce, hear your stories about her, and work with your family."

Monique Colonna (Susan's piano teacher)

"Je vais jouer une valse de Chopin en pensant à ta petite maman"



March 2004 - 90 years old -
I thought you should know that Mummy has
ditched her walker in favor of a more youthful
form of transportation !!!