



## *Your Grandma Fran*

was born in 1925. She grew up a San Francisco girl during the 1930s, attending local schools and exploring the city with her sisters. She went to Stanford University during the war years. In the 1950s, Frances Forrest was the mother of three little ones. She experienced tragedy, with the death of her oldest child, Carol. In the 1960s she met and married Jim Leonard, your Grandad. Uncle Jamie was born in 1963. The years at 75 Mirabel were happy ones.

This book includes a narrative of your Grandma Fran's life. I've also shared my own memories as her lucky son. In addition, your mom/Aunt Marilyn has enlivened the cover and several pages of this volume with her beautiful collage art. Enjoy reading your Grandma Fran's story.

## *Frances Julia Newman*

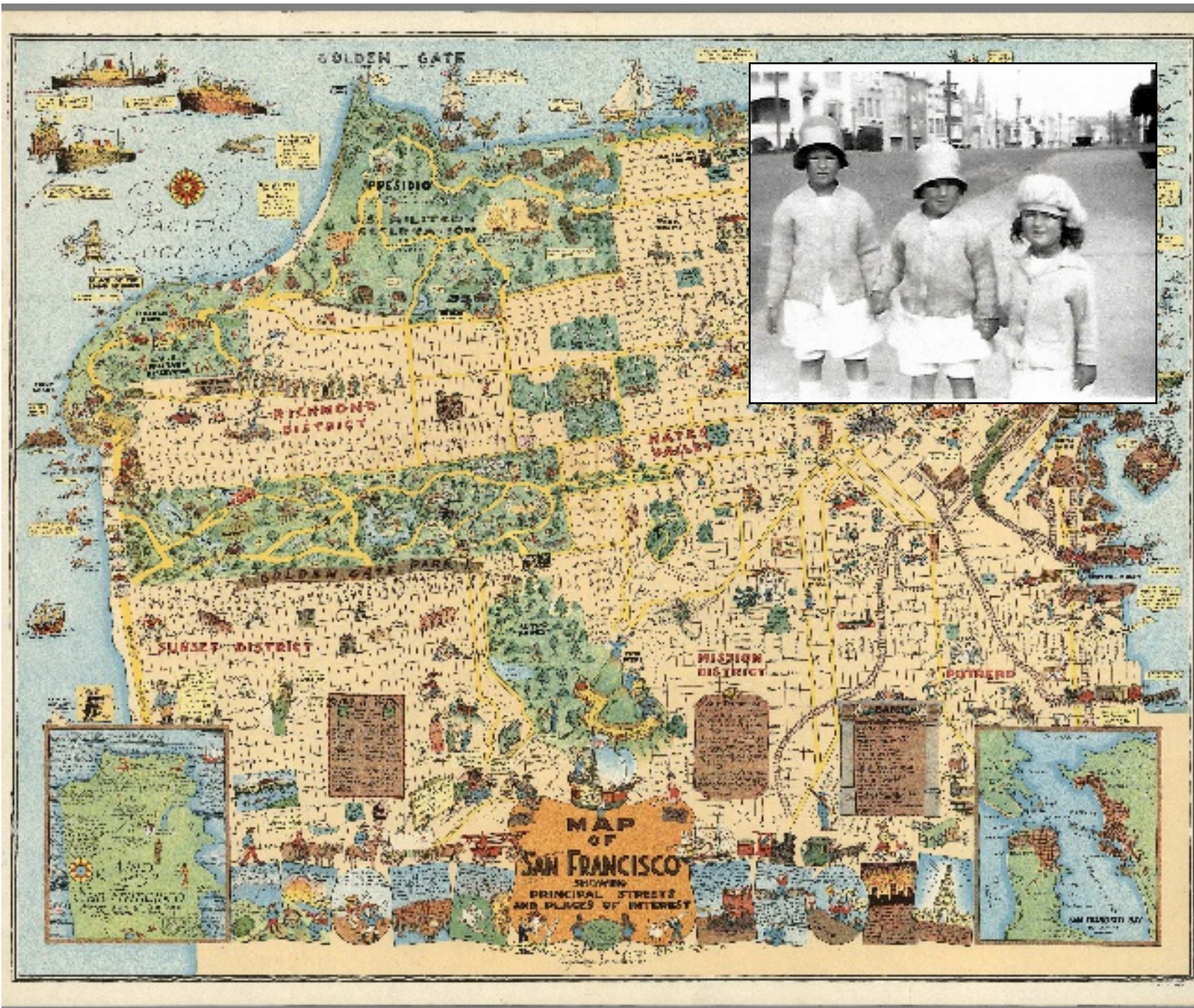
Your Grandma Fran was born Frances Julia Newman on March 9th, 1925 to Arline and Frank Newman. She was given the middle name Julia, in memory of her paternal grandmother Julia Caro who died in 1924.

Frances was the youngest of three Newman girls, with older sisters Elaine and Shirley. All three were born and raised in San Francisco, living first at 909 Anza Street and later in a beautiful three story home at 3621 Washington Street.

Although she grew up during the Great Depression, Frances was from a well-to-do family. Her father, Frank Newman, was partner in the Redlick-Newman Furniture company, located on 2141 Mission Street near 17th Street. His father, Sam Newman, built this successful furniture store after the tragedy of the Great Earthquake San Francisco of 1906. He later went into business for himself, founding the Frank Newman Furniture Company.



Arline Newman holding baby Frances. Older sisters Elaine and Shirley.





Frances was a San Francisco girl. She attended local schools during the 1930s, including Lowell High School. The Newmans were members of the Temple Emanuel Synagogue at 2 Lake Street. Frances and her sisters explored their city by roller skates and streetcar. Her mom would give each of the Newman girls twenty five cents for a day of San Francisco fun, an excursion to the Golden Gate Park, the beach, or a movie on Clement Street.

Frances was an excellent student. She was accepted to Stanford in 1942, graduating in 1946 with a degree in psychology. It was unusual for women to attend college during her generation. At that time, just ten percent of the

Stanford student body was women. When asked about this she quipped, " It was great, I could always get a date on Saturday night." In fact, her family had a tradition of educating their daughters. Frances' mom, Arline Stein, attended The University of Pittsburgh before she was married in 1920. In addition, Arline's grandmother, Ester Minnie Stein, was said to have been well educated in Bialystok, Poland before emigrating to Pittsburgh.

At 20, Frances began dating a handsome Army-Air Force Captain home from World War Two. Milt Forrest proposed to Frances on her 21st birthday. Frances Newman was soon to be Frances Forrest.



1946 Stanford Quad Yearbook Photo



The Newmans left to right: Frank, Arline, Frances, Shirley, and Elaine.  
Frances' grandparents Anna and George Stein.

## *Frances Forrest*

Frances and Milt Forrest honeymooned at Inverness in Marin, moving into a small home in Sausalito. Your Grandpa Milt commuted to San Francisco, working in life insurance. In the early 1950s the young couple moved to Mill Valley. They lived at 45 Elm Avenue, where they began their family. In 1951 Carol Ann was born. In 1954 the couple added a son, David.

Tragedy struck in 1956, when a house fire killed their oldest. Carol was only 5 years old when she died of smoke inhalation. Frances carried a badly burned David out of the flaming house to safety.

Lisa was born in 1957. By this time, Milt Forrest's mental illness had taken a heavy toll on the marriage. It ended amicably after 14 years in 1960. After the divorce, Frances raised David and Lisa on her own. During that time, she went back to University of San Francisco to earn a library degree.





MAY 1958

## *Fran Leonard*

In 1961 your Grandma Fran's life would take a happy turn. She met James H. Leonard at a party. Your Grandad recalled he almost didn't go into party because he was feeling discouraged about finding love again. He also had a former spouse who suffered from mental illness. Luckily, Jim joined gathering. He fell fast and hard for Frances. He moved out of his South San Francisco home into a nearby Mill Valley rental to be closer to your Grandma Fran.

Jim and Fran were married June 23, 1962, in a

civil ceremony in Sonora. They honeymooned in nearby Hetch-Hetchy. Grandad moved into 37 Ethel Avenue for a short time, until the family found a new home at 75 Mirabel Avenue. Thus began the happy Mirabel years.

James Robert Leonard, your Uncle Jamie, was born in August of 1963. Your Grandma Fran took care of her three little ones on the home front, while Grandad commuted to the city. He worked as a reporter and later as a public relations officer for the city of San Francisco.





PAUL JAMES



NAOMI  
AUG. 31, 1963



SEP 1963

## *My Hero*

My mom has always been my hero. She saved me, literally, pulling me out of our burning home when I was only two and a half. A PG&E worker came to fix our gas heater in the basement. He accidentally left the gas on, filling the bottom part of the house. When the pilot light touched the gas the house exploded into flames. I was sleeping in the living room near the front door, and my older sister Carol was sleeping in a back bedroom. I was burned badly. My mom scooped me up and took me outside to safety. She was burned on her

forehead, but returned to get my sister. Too late, by the time she reached the bedroom and brought her outside, Carol had died of smoke inhalation.

I didn't fully appreciate my mom's bravery until I had children of my own. How awful it must have been to lose her first-born, how incredibly difficult it must have been to live with that loss. My father, who had been working in San Francisco the day of the fire, blamed himself for not being home. He returned to a mental hospital soon after the fire,



leaving my mom to care for me. I spent six weeks in the hospital, bandaged from head to toe. My mom used to laugh describing me, "You only had a small slit in the bandages for your eyes. We knew you would recover when you were found running all over the hospital, bandages streaming behind you."

I returned home, my wounds healed. However, I wanted to talk constantly about the details of the fire. I asked where my sister had gone. The doctor reassured my worried mom that talking was the therapy I needed. I recovered fully, enjoying a carefree and happy childhood in Mill Valley. But the marriage did not survive the fire or my father's mental illness. My mom was alone, raising my younger sister and me.

My mom was a strong person, with a calm demeanor. She wasn't easily ruffled. I expect having lost a child, the small difficulties of daily life paled in comparison. One of the great gifts she

gave us was to put the trials of daily life in perspective, especially in the face of the big issues of life and death. I never saw my mom be petty.

My mom was not a single parent for long. Jim Leonard met my mom at a party in 1961, and they were married in June of 1962. Our family moved from Ethel Avenue to Mirabel Avenue.

My new dad did all the important activities a small boy needed. He taught me baseball and how to ride a bike. We made model airplanes together, and he took me on rainy Boy Scout camping trips. However, it was my mom who provided moral guidance. She taught me about being kind, especially to the less popular kids in the neighborhood. She made sure that I learned to respect various religious traditions by encouraging me to visit the local churches and synagogues of my friends. Although Mom did not raise her children in her Jewish tradition, she taught us to recognize the great idea of love in all traditions.

Through her daily acts of kindness she demonstrated that one did not need religious doctrine to practice love. She was known to all for her graciousness. Family and friends spent a lot of time at our kitchen table at Mirabel, mainly to talk with and be near my mom.

My mom also passed on her great love of books. She read to me when I was little. In grade school she found me books like *Jason and the Golden Fleece* and *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, sparking my little boy's imagination. In Junior High she suggested Steinbeck, *The Red Pony* and *Of Mice and Men*, and London's *Call of the Wild*. Thanks to my mom, by high school I was reading late into the night. She taught us to love books by her example. On most evenings, you could peek into my Dad's home office and see my mom stretched out in the

big easy chair reading her latest novel.

My mom was my rudder during difficult teenage years, too. At sixteen I was passionate and opinionated, a real know-it-all. My dad and I went round and round, arguing about the events of the day at the dinner table. He challenged me to provide facts to back up my opinions. My mom took a different tact. An excellent listener, she often brought up her ideas when the heat of the dispute died down. She preferred the carom shot, not directly challenging me but calmly introducing alternative ideas for me to chew on. She was effective getting through to her intransigent teen.

Mom always seemed wise to me. (Even my dad seemed smarter as I became older.) So, I returned to Mirabel Avenue to discuss all the important decisions of life. We would confer at our kitchen table. Mom would have a cup of coffee in one



hand, cigarette in the other. She would listen, and we would talk until I could see my way forward.

I was so grateful that my daughters had a chance to sit on my mom's lap, listening to their grandmother read stories. However, when she was diagnosed with cancer at 70, I wished desperately that each of my girls had more time with her. We were not ready to accept the finality of her diagnosis. But she was tranquil, accepting that her time had come. In the hospital she had pain. Nevertheless, my mom faced her final suffering with dignity, grace, even humor, just as she had lived her life.

My hero saved me. My mom taught me her gospel of love. This is what I hope to pass on to my daughters, their Grandma Fran's great legacy



## *Grandma Fran*

Grandma Fran was blessed with six talented and beautiful granddaughters: Caity, Nicole, Tamiko, Jamie, Miya, and Ginny. They inherited their Grandma Fran's kindness, intelligence, and grace.

No doubt she is smiling down.





In Loving  
Memory of Your

*Grandma*  
*Fran*

1925-1995