

Tovah Feldshuh Remembers Her Westchester Roots

By Lorraine Thomas Sherman

One woman? Is it possible? Comic, writer, dancer, singer (she even was a rock singer at one time), teacher, playwright, actress on stage, screen and television—with awards in every area—Tovah Feldshuh is, as described in 1999 by Richard Dyer of the Boston Globe, “so talented, it’s scary.”

Presently on stage five evenings and three matinees a week in the highly-praised “Irena’s Vow,” at the Walter Kerr Theatre on West 48th Street in NYC, her flaming red hair hidden under a blonde wig for the part of Irena, the dynamic star grew up in Westchester, where she enjoyed a freedom no longer prevalent.

“You could ride your bike until sundown. No one thought about kidnapping or child molestation in Scarsdale in the 50’s and 60’s.”

Theirs was the only Conservative Jewish family in town and belonged to Temple Israel Center in White Plains, where



Tovah Feldshuh

Terri Sue Feldshuh (her birth name) had a bat mitzvah. At that time, Rabbi Max Gelb officiated, with Cantor William Wolff.

“I think I was the only Bat Mitzvah,” she said. Everything was done so differently years ago; she mentioned she even remembered “an open casket at my grandmother’s funeral.”

Born in 1952, she lived in Scarsdale from the age of about 2-1/2, attending

Scarsdale High School, where her skill with language emerged. She loved learning languages and speaks French, Spanish, Italian, and “a little, very poor Hebrew,” although she visited Israel many times and is fluent in Tefila prayer book Hebrew.

After completing her degree in philosophy at Sarah Lawrence College, she started graduate work, but almost immediately left for Minneapolis, after winning, with all expenses paid, the McKnight Fellowship in Acting to the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre. That was the start of her career.

Now, a Manhattan resident, she is a

member of B’Nai Jeshurun on the West Side, where her son and daughter attended Hebrew School as children. Her mother, now 98, raised funds for Hadassah, and is a firm Democrat who “loves Nita Lowey.” She still lives in the house in Scarsdale where Tovah grew up

Another great interest of Feldshuh is history. “It is the story of mankind, told by the victor, usually... human stories that happened... and it is not such a far fall from

there to theatre.” She was also a pianist, and recalled that playing “Rhapsody in Blue,” at her 8th grade graduation, “was a big deal in my life.” She continued playing at summer camp, and then moved on to acting in plays with music, “which I really enjoy.”

In “Irena’s Vow,” her current vehicle, she made the interesting point that Irena is a devout Catholic and yet she is able to



A scene from Irena’s Vow

play the part. She feels a certain kinship with the character.

“Irena’s last name, ‘Gut’ means ‘good’ in English. And my name, ‘Tovah,’ means ‘good’ also, so we have a small relationship.”

The most important influence in

her life was her father, a litigator “and an unbridled optimist who lived life fully.” They owned horses, and he trained her to ride. He was one of the first Jews accepted into Boulder Brook Riding Club, later became President, and was able to open up the Club’s membership.

Married to New York attorney Andrew Harris Levy, with two children, she states,

“We are not assimilated.

We celebrate who we are. We sing a lot, and it is fun. Singing must be something that is close to G-d.”

For charitable work over the years she has received the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanitarian Award, Hadassah’s Myrtle Wreath and the Israel Peace Medal, as well as the National Foundation for Jewish Culture’s Jewish Image Award in 2002.



**Westchester.
Care.
At Home.**

Our name says it all. Quite simply, WCAH provides the highest quality home health care in Westchester. Supervised by Registered Nurses, our Certified Home Health Aides assist with personal care, meal preparation, housekeeping, laundry, shopping and errands. They provide companionship and escort your loved ones to appointments. Rates are affordable – available on an hourly or live-in basis – and some third party payers provide reimbursement for WCAH’s services.

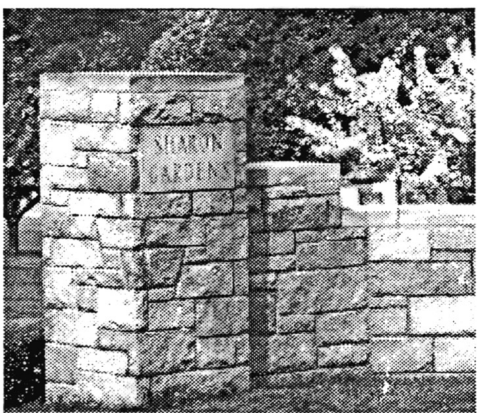
westchester
care
at home

914.997.7912
24 hours / 7 days

WCAH is an affiliate of
Visiting Nurse Services in Westchester
360 Mamaroneck Avenue • White Plains
www.vns.org

A New York State-Licensed Home Health Care Agency • CHAP Accredited

A resting place of beauty, dignity and caring.



Serving Jewish families and synagogues in Westchester county and the tri-state area since 1953. The Sharon Gardens staff is always on hand to help. For more information about family lots, estate and memorial properties call: toll free 1-888-536-7426.

www.sharongardens.com

A Division of Kensico Cemetery,
P.O. Box 7, 273 Lakeview Ave., Valhalla, NY 10595

SHARON GARDENS