

Elizabeth Kimpinsky (Julia Martin House)

By Marjourie Jimenez and Alex Menjivar

My name is Elizabeth Ann Kimpinsky. My mother's name was Edith, and my father was Carl Kimpinsky. My father named me Elizabeth after his sister who died at the age of 19. My mother wanted me to have the name Charlotte because her brother was Charlie but my father said he would prefer Elizabeth. My nickname is Betty. That's what my father called me. His sister Elizabeth was called Betty, too.

I was born on June 7, 1938. I lived at 8 Bynner Street in Jamaica Plain all my life. No, I didn't have brothers or sisters. My mother was a stay-at-home mom, and my father was a typewriter inspector. He worked every day. Later on, he would go to New York to the factory and learn how to use the new machines, then he would come back to Boston and teach other people how to use them and fix them.

My parents taught me to be honest and to be considerate to other people, to be friendly to others, and not to do anything to hurt anyone else. When I was young, both of my grandmothers were sick and then they went into nursing homes, so I spent a lot of my youth visiting them. They were lonely, and old people in nursing homes don't get a lot of visitors, so I would go to visit them.

I went to the Wyman school, then to the Lowell School which was where the Mozart playground is now. Then, they shut down the Lowell School because it wasn't safe. I went to the Mary Curley School for Jr. High; now it's called the Curley Middle School. When I was there, the kids made fun of my clothes and my hair, and that upset me, so it wasn't a happy time. I was glad to get out of there. Then, I went to the Jamaica Plain High School and graduated in 1956. Then I went to Boston Clerical School in Roxbury for one year to become a secretary. I learned how to type and do office work although I already knew how to type and do shorthand because I took a business course in high school. After I finished clerical school, my mother got sick, so I had to stay home and take care of her for many years, while my father supported us. After my mother and my aunt died, I went to work as a school secretary in a public school.

When I was growing up, Stop and Shop wasn't here. It was a big factory, but things haven't changed that much. There weren't a lot of Spanish people here then; it was mostly an Irish neighborhood, so I grew up in that Irish group. I remember that the Kennedy School used to be a playground! They took a lot of houses away to make a playground, and now it's a school

In the winter, sometimes we had a lot of snow, and when it was very deep, we had no school. But we didn't have anyone on the radio to announce "NO SCHOOL," so the whistle on the factory would blow "woo, woo" to tell us to stay home. The weather was different then. The winter was colder and spring was easier. Now spring is cold; there isn't a true spring. It seems like there's less difference today between spring and winter.

I played with the children at school and in my neighborhood. I liked checkers and board games, crossword puzzles, things that we could sit at a table and do. I always liked school. I like studying. My favorite teacher was my kindergarten teacher. I felt like she loved all of the children, and she was very kind to all of us.

When I was a teenager, I enjoyed reading. After school, I stayed home a lot and cooked for my mother. Often, I would go to the store to buy groceries, or I would help other students with their homework. Sometimes I'd watch TV or listen to music or talk on the phone. I was quiet, so I didn't do anything too exciting. I enjoyed art, and I liked writing. Sometimes I'd write stories, and I wrote articles for the school newspaper, *The Clarion*.

When I was younger, was in a tennis club after school, but I wasn't really athletic. I never learned how to ride a bike or swim. I didn't feel comfortable in my body playing sports — my body just didn't cooperate, because I'm not that coordinated! If you threw me a ball, you'd have to throw it right to me, or I couldn't catch it. That's why I spent more time reading, because I was just really bad at sports.

My best friend from first grade was Dorothy Donato. We still call each other on the phone sometimes. Her father was a policeman. Later, I played with Sandra Rogers and Connie Crystal. We stayed at each others' houses, and we played often, and walked each other home from school. These two friends were also my best friends in high school. I had another friend, Geraldine Brody, and we still talk. I was also good friends with a girl named Carol Braun, but she had a brain tumor and died when she was very young. Her family owned a German delicatessen where they sold sandwich meat, cheese, soda, and potatoes. It was up where Sorella's is now. Those were all of my friends. I didn't have too many friends because I didn't have a car. And, when my mother would say come home, I would more or less have to stay home.

My mother and father were very protective of me. They always thought something bad would happen to me, so I didn't go out that much. Sometimes, when I would go to the library to study with a friend, my father would come and say he was

worried because he didn't know when I was coming home. Or, I would go to the market, and my father would say, "*Where were you?*" or "*When are you coming home?*" so I didn't go out much. I stayed home and did homework. I was pretty easy to take care of and didn't get into trouble. I more or less did what my parents wanted me to do, because I figured they were supporting me.

What do I remember from the 1940's? Well, one time, it was during the Second World War, my mother wanted to get a birthday cake from the bakery, and she had to bring her own sugar from home. Everything was rationed because they needed it for the soldiers, so we couldn't get bacon and a lot of other things like that. You would have a little coupon book, and if you needed something from the store, you could only get a certain amount. You had to give them the coupon to get it. Children could get shoes, but older people weren't able to get shoes. I also remember when you had something out of a can — like baked beans — after you took the beans out, you'd wash the can and flatten it with your foot because they needed all of the metal for the war effort. I didn't really know much about what was happening in the war, until when I got older. Then I learned more about how many men died. It was during World War II, that the Bromley Heath Projects were built for the soldiers coming home from the war. The projects housed the men and their wives and children.

In the late 1950's after I got out of school, my mother was sick, then my aunt got sick, and I took care of both of them until they died. So I don't remember too much else from 1960's. I do remember when President Kennedy died in November, 1963. That was very sad for the country.

I was more than thirty years old when I learned to drive a car! I didn't buy a car for a long time, but I knew how to drive. My biggest adventure??? Maybe I should invent one! Well, when I was 11 years old, my father had to go to New York for a while to work. He said to my mother, why didn't we join him in New York? So, we spent a couple of weeks in New York City. I remember him telling me that, someday "*I'll show you the skyscrapers,*" then, when we were there, he showed them to me. And I said, "*What's the big deal?*" We went to the top of Rockefeller Center where you pay a quarter to look into that viewer, but by the time you adjusted it, you needed another quarter. We also saw the Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall.

It was very hot when we were in NYC. Do you know that song "*Heat Wave*"? Well, that song was written about that heat wave. It was really hot the whole time we were there. I remember when we went to see the Rockettes, it was cold inside the theater, then, when we came back outside, whoosh! The heat really hit you. I

also went to the Bronx zoo — I loved that! They let me feed fish to the seals. I remember the guy giving me a little towel afterwards, and it was all oily. I hated that, because I hate getting my hands gooey, just like I hate making meat loaf!

When I was young, I dreamed of being an actress. I wanted to be on one of those TV. shows and ride a horse. When I got older, I didn't really think ahead of what I wanted to do, because my mother was so sick and I took care of her. I also wanted to be a teacher, but I never really had the opportunity to go to university, even though I was smart enough, and got good grades.

The best job I ever had was working with children. I was a para-professional, working thirty years in the public schools. I worked with special needs children or children who have trouble reading, little children and older children. When I retired, I was working at the Hyde Park High School. So I had the opportunity to be a teacher, in another way, as a para-professional, and I really enjoyed passing my information on to another generation.

The scariest thing that ever happened to me was when I heard someone at the door and they ran downstairs and they were trying to rob my house. I didn't know who they were but I heard them running away. The funniest thing that ever happened to me was when I was a little girl. My father said to me, "*You broke my glasses,*" because I stepped on them. He used to go to sleep in the afternoon, and he'd take his glasses off and put them down beside the sofa. So one day, he said, "*come here and say bye bye to Daddy,*" and I stepped on them. So, after that he put them underneath the sofa.

I most admire some of my school teachers and I liked my uncles, too. One of my uncles was a chef. My mother's brother Charlie, and my father's brother Louis, were soldiers. I thought that was nice. They worked hard. All the men on both sides of my family worked hard. My father's father died young. I never knew my grandfathers. I knew my grandmothers but all my grandfathers were gone by the time I was born. So my friends' grandfathers were my substitute grandfathers. I didn't know too many people in my family because a lot of them died young or they moved away. We never really saw them that much or spoke to them, so I mostly had my mother and father around.

Music? I like country music. And, I like Strauss, he's a classical composer. *Moments to Remember* is one of my favorites. I like old fashioned songs that they don't sing anymore. I also like novelty songs like *How Much is That Doggie in The Window*. I use to play the violin when I was a little girl. But my school work got to be too much and I stopped. Then I played the guitar for a little while, but with my arthritis, I can't do it anymore anyway.

My favorite color? My mother dressed me in blue all the time because I have blue eyes. So, that's all I ever saw! Lots of mothers dressed kids in dark blue because it didn't get dirty. They didn't have washing machines back then like the ones we have now, so it was hard to keep children's clothes clean.

The happiest moment of my life? That's a good question. I honestly don't know. One thing that always gave me satisfaction was helping homeless animals. I've adopted animals in the past, and I try to find homes for them. And, my greatest accomplishment has probably been taking care of other people. I have a tendency to take care of people and animals. Also, I bought the house that I grew up in, and I'm glad I did that. I said to my father, why should we sit here and let other people buy it? Let's buy it, and then we won't have to move.

The hardest thing I've ever had to do was probably when my mother died. Saying good-bye to her was very hard. And, it was the same with my father when he died. Saying good-bye to people or animals that I've loved has been the hardest thing.

My advice to you is not to give away too much personal information about yourself unless you really know people. Follow your own rule and don't break it. You know what's best for you deep down inside your heart. So don't let someone else tell you what's best for you, because what's best for them may not be what's best for you. Listen to that little voice inside of you, and you'll do well. If someone says let's go to this party, and you get that feeling that you're not sure it's a good idea. Listen to your own voice inside. You know what's best for you, and it doesn't matter what they think.