



Rosette Davis

November 14, 1927 - November 26, 2018

Our mother, Rosette Zara Benguigui Davis, was a woman of love, bravery, strength and survival. She was born in Ain-sefra, Algeria in 1927. She was the oldest of seven children: Rosette, Mireille, Rene, Yvette, Jacqueline, Gilberte and Marcel, and is survived by all but her brother Rene.

Before Mama was 10, her family moved to Paris, France. In 1940 when she was 12, because they were Jews, the French government pulled her and her younger sister out of school and sent them to a farm in the country. There was never any notice given to the family that this was going to happen. While there, the farmer would mistreat her and use a cattle prod on her for no other reason than to be cruel and to be terrorize her. Her father found where they were and took her and her sister, along with the rest of his family, and put them on the last train out of France before the border was closed; but he had to stay behind in Paris. Her family ended up in a refugee camp in Spain and her mother used jewels, sewn in her clothes, to bribe a boat captain to take the family to North Africa, where they waited for her father to arrive. Her father finally joined them after escaping across the border. She recounts how he walked such a great distance that the soles of his shoes had worn to nothing, the skin of his feet had split, and his socks had to be cut from his feet.

Shortly thereafter, the Axis was in control of French North Africa. Living in Oran as a Jew of Algeria, who held French citizenship, she and her family

were stripped of their rights, required to wear an identifying mark, and subjected to admission quotas (limiting Jewish presence), even in primary schools. They had to shop on certain days, experienced rationing, and of course, lived with the constant fear of being rounded up and sent to a concentration camp, as was happening to other family members in Europe.

In 1942, the Americans launched a campaign to liberate French North Africa. Mama told us of her fear as she listened to the guns boom, heard the air raid sirens, and huddled behind the blackout curtains. Even though she remembers the cheering and the celebration in the streets as the Americans marched through the city, these experiences left our mother with a life-long fear of death and dying.

To make money, Mama would knit things and sell them to people in town. One day she went to a lady's house to sell her goods and was introduced to an American officer. He saw how little the lady paid her for the knitting, and he followed Mama outside to tell her that the American army needed switchboard operators, and she could make more money working for them. She didn't speak English but the officer assured her that she would be taught. It made her happy to tell this story, and to remember her switchboard, which she called Dexter.

Mama continued working with the Americans, in Oran, for 2 years. At 17, she was asked if she wanted to join the army as a civilian with officer's privileges. Her father refused to sign the authorization papers so she had her uncle sign; and along with the other young women who had been recruited as switchboard operators, boarded an American military plane and flew off to a new life. They landed in Marseille, France, and from there she followed behind the American army as they moved into Italy, and then north into Germany.

In 1946 Mama was sent to Badenheim, Germany, where she met the father of

her four children, L.B. Davis, an American soldier. They were married in 1948, and soon after, L.B. was discharged; they arrived in the United States in November 1948.

Mama very proudly became a US citizen and not only voted in every election, but taught her children what a gift it was. She worked many jobs to help support her family. She loved her children dearly, and there was never a moment's doubt in her children's minds, about how much she loved them. She would do anything to help her children and was an insistent voice for them to do better.

Our mother and father divorced in 1970 and Mama started a business with only a 7th grade education, her innate intelligence, common sense and perseverance; and she prospered. She was known to the Scouts and to campers throughout Texas and the Southwest, as The Tent Lady, and she successfully supported herself and her children until she retired in 1998.

Our mother was funny, loving, loyal, and precious to us. She endured many trials throughout her life and yet she always loved to laugh. Her family was her priority, and the memories of love with which she left us, will always be treasured.

Rosette leaves a legacy of love to her children and family. She is survived by her daughter Leota Henriette Pilgrim; her son Gerald Lee Davis and his wife Sharon, along with their children, Alicia, Ashley, Joshua and Jamie; her son Craig Allen Davis and his wife Jan, and Craig's children, Vennessa Garner, Sarah McGregor and Renée Dimond; her daughter Lucinda Yvette Segal and her husband Neil, and their daughter Hannah. She also has six great-grandchildren: Sammy, Brianna, Zoë, Makayla, Sam, Lenore and Ginger. Mama will be smiling when she is greeted by her eldest grandchild, Kevin

Pilgrim, who died in 1983.

We also want to let our cousins and their families know how much we love and appreciate them. They have shared a tremendous amount of love and precious time with Mama. Thank you to Valerie Katz and her husband Mark, and their children David and Sabrina; and Corinne Hazan and Meir, and her children Dean and Emily.

Rosette Zara Benguigui Davis was born in Ain-sefra, Algeria in 1927, and she died in Houston, Texas in 2018. Her life story was one of love, bravery, strength and survival. May her memory be a blessing!