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## My Betty White Life

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My phone was blowing up on December 31. No one was calling to wish me a Happy New Year, they were offering condolences for my loss of Betty White, who had become a staple in my life.

I quote her all the time in speaking engagements, in my book and on social media. She kept it real by balancing wit, talent and love with compassion. She was proof positive that an irreverent sense of humor doesn't make you less inspirational, it makes you more relatable—a validation that changed my life. Her irreverence gave her one of the most essential and enduring human qualities: trust.

***“Why do people say ‘grow some balls’? Balls are weak and sensitive. If you wanna be tough, grow a vagina. Those things can take a pounding,”—Betty White.***

I mean, has there ever been a more factual statement? Betty was the sweetest, yet “bawdiest” lady. Who but her could make men's weak balls and women's tough vaginas into an acceptable, hilarious, and above all, valid, point?

To the world, she was “America's Sweetheart,” to me, she was the original Princess Warrior Goddess, a modern woman living life on her terms. People never judged her for drinking martinis, eating hot dogs, playing poker, choosing not to be a mother or being married three times (“It's a charm,” she said.)

Betty divorced her second husband because he didn't support her career. Amazing! People (and animals) judged Betty on what mattered: her kindness, her humor, and her relatability. Her authenticity triumphed over the pin-up girl perfection of her peers. She was the definition of perfectly imperfect. She knew that life was about how you make people feel, including herself. Betty was a character and she had character!

So many times, in my own life, I felt less than because of what society expected of me. Unlike Betty, I never married (though I had a few offers) and wanted kids. Like Betty, I focused on my career and now, I can't wait to be a hot grandma and stepmom, as she was. Betty helped me embrace aging and become a role model to my younger friends.

***“The older you get, the better you get. Unless you're a banana,”—Betty White.***

I didn't know Betty White personally, but I live in a Betty White world.

After moving to Pacific Palisades in 2012, I met Annie, 93, and Nehama, 86, and unbeknownst to them, I refer to them as my “Bettys.”

Both immigrants and survivors—Annie of the Holocaust, and Nehama of the Yum Kippur War—these two broads are my best friends and my grandmas rolled into one. Neither of them lives in the past. They live in, “What's next? Where's the party?”

These unfiltered ladies are more spontaneous than anyone I've ever met and they make me laugh until I pee my pants. They adore me, feed me and I am 100% hooked.

There isn't an event or a party where friends don't say, “Bring the Bettys!” or a boyfriend who wasn't obsessed with joining them for a competitive game of Rummikub.

When we walk into our neighborhood haunt, The Golden Bull, the Bettys are welcomed regularly and belly up to the bar, martinis in hand. They flirt shamelessly with the men, cut their food and joyfully feed it to them, bite by bite.

I mean, what? Come to think of it, I don't think we've ever paid for our bar tab.

***“I've enjoyed the opposite sex a lot, always have and always will. In my head, I am the ultimate cougar,”—Betty White.***

My Bettys love nothing



From left: Nehama, Tami and Annie

Photo courtesy of Tami Holzman

more than attention from the opposite sex. Annie says, “I need more mischief and one more schnookel,” and Nehama too is an ultimate cougar. When she signed up for Match.com, she claimed she was 62 because “men my own age can't handle me.” Meow! Let's just say, thank God she is a cougar because the men of her generation would have a heart attack! Betty White said, “We are all teenagers trapped in an older body.” Nehama would second that statement. And like Betty, Annie's hobbies are vodka and happy hours at her house. One time, she insisted on adding a shot of Grey Goose to pre-made tequila margarita! Who wouldn't want to be smothered with laughter and love by these two shitsters?

***“You don't fall off the planet once you pass a given age. You don't lose any of your sense of humor. You don't lose any of your zest for life, or your lust for life,”—Betty White.***

Our “Bettys” are our own America's sweethearts. How we treat the generations that came before us matters, and what we can learn from them matters even more.

We seem to forget that they survived wars, created opportunities, paid their bills, suf-

fered heartaches, cried silently and found that humor was the ultimate unifier. Betty White fought for civil and LGBT rights, she was an advocate for animals, she paved the way for women to prioritize their careers and embrace aging—and she did it all with grace.

America's sweetheart knew that kindness was her superpower, and she loved life to her very last laugh.

***“It's your outlook on life that counts. If you don't take yourself too seriously, pretty soon you can find humor in our everyday lives. And sometimes it can be a lifesaver,”—Betty White.***

Happy Birthday Betty White, and thank you!

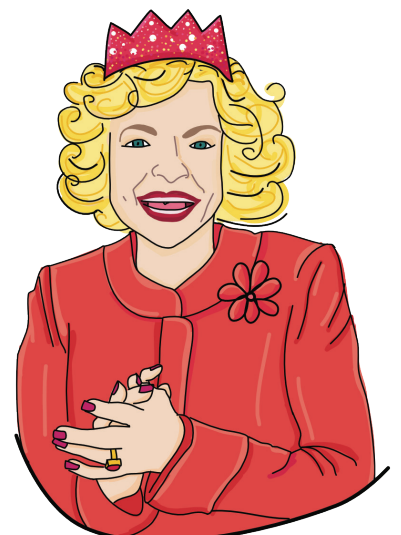


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