I walked into the little apartment on the third floor of the building opposite mine and I saw my Bubbie’s face light up, “Mamashayna! You look like you’ve grown!” She had a little bowl of apples cut up into tiny cubes for me. I sat down at the kitchen table next to her as she and my mom talked about the new article my Bubbie had read about the positive effects of eating bananas. I listened to them and thought to myself about how we should really buy some bananas because from what she was saying these things worked miracles. After my mom left to for work, we would go to the den and I would sit on the couch while she was in her brown velour La-Z-Boy chair and we put on the TV. Instead of watching she would talk to me about school, what books I was reading, she would tell me about an outing she and my “Aunt” Hilda had gone on, etc. I always found her so interesting, she knew so much and was more of a grandmother to me than a great-grandmother.

As I got older, she got younger. One day sitting in the den while I was over, doing some homework, my Bubbie asked me, “What time is your mother getting home?” I told her five o’clock, she had just asked me that a few minutes before. I noticed that she would repeatedly ask me questions within shorter and shorter periods of time. I would keep a mental count in my head: one, two, three…seven, eight, nine ...eleven. I was worried about my Bubbie and told my mom this when she picked me up about how much she had been asking me so many questions so frequently. Because of the neglect my grandmother had shown towards her own mother, my mom took over in my Bubbie’s affairs. In her own words, my mom became “her doctor, her lawyer, and her Indian chief.”

It turned out that my Bubbie had been suffering from mini-strokes that caused her dementia, something that comes with old age, to progress much quicker than it would normally. I started visiting my Bubbie more often, keeping her company and making sure everything was all right. I labeled her remote for her when she forgot how to use it, I made her a list of telephone numbers in large print to keep by the phone, and I cooked food for us to have together.

Eventually, we had to get an in-home aid for my Bubbie because she could no longer live on her own. It became harder and harder for me to see her, not just because of the increasing workload from school and my budding social life, but because it was painful to see my once vibrant and elegant great-grandmother become an old woman who hardly remembered who I was. I became ‘Miss America’, a nickname that made me feel good, but also reminded me she could not remember me as Rachel. Not too much later, she passed on. Even though I missed her, I knew that it was probably better that way. It was not only my mother and I who were sad to see her deteriorate, but my Bubbie knew she was forgetting and that was the hardest part for all of us. I can never take someone for granted because my Bubbie taught me how valuable everyone in my life is.