



**Bobbe Frankel**  
**ROBS History Project**  
**June 6, 2007**

Bobbe's full name is Bobbe Spring Frankel, and her maiden name is Seff. Her middle name, Spring, came from her mother's Grandmother, Bubbie Springer. She lives in Patchogue with her husband Chico, who also retired from the Brentwood School District. They have a daughter, Jennifer Torres, and a granddaughter whom Chico took care of when he first retired. Several Brentwood teachers also live on the same block as they do in Patchogue.

Bobbe was born in 1949 in Miami Beach where she lived with her parents and sister, Marcia. Both parents were deceased at the time of the interview. Her earliest memory is when she was in the crib. She remembers seeing Jack and Jill hand painted by her mother on the crib. One day she remembers her mother looking into the crib with a bandage on her face that scared her.

Her mother's maiden name was Finkle. There was a lot of mental illness in her mother's family. Bobbe's mother met Bobbe's father while she was working in a bank in Miami. He was an accountant. They were married within a month of meeting each other. Her mother loved to go to the beach, so as kids they went to the beach constantly. Her mother also loved to walk for miles and left a legacy, because both Bobbe and her sister are long distance walkers. Bobbe's mother also liked art. Bobbe remembers that they did a lot of art together.

Both Bobbe's parents and grandparent were born here in the U.S. Her mother was born in New Hampshire, and her father was born in either Atlanta Georgia or Alabama.

She and her sister, Marcia, are very close now and very similar, although as kids they fought constantly. Her sister, being older and also more serious than Bobbe, taught her a lot while they were growing up, like being a good student and writing. Marcia followed the rules and constantly corrected Bobbe telling her that if she listened, she wouldn't get punished so much. Her sister followed the rules and Bobbe was the opposite. Her sister said that she missed a lot of fun as a child while she was spending the time constantly correcting Bobbe, so now she learned from Bobbe how to have fun.

When asked if there was an evocative aroma while growing up, she said it was the smell of brownies. When her mother was well, she made the best brownies. Her favorite toy was riding on metal horses, which later led to horseback riding. Her favorite seasons are spring and summer. The family celebrated the Jewish Holidays at her Grandmother's house with lots of relatives.

When asked further about her childhood, Bobbe said that there were times that were really great fun like going to the beach, having a cabana on the ocean, living on a block with lots of kids and knowing everybody. She spent a lot of time living with her paternal grandmother who was very good to her. There were also times in her life that were painful, because her mother was so ill, and her father worked a lot of the time. Later after studying counseling, she realized that her mother was manic-depressive and schizophrenic. When Bobbe was growing up, she didn't know what this was and took care of her mother as much as she could. Bobbe thinks that this was a gift and had a lot to do with her decision to become a counselor.

What influenced her to become a counselor? Her grandmother was the biggest influence in her life. She used to tell her stories to teach her things. She was the kindest person she ever met. She always told her to listen to people and to care about them. She said, "If you get a dollar, ten cents goes to charity". Bobbe also had teachers who had a positive influence on her life, because they were very loving and caring towards her. She got the nurturing from them that she didn't get from her mother who was ill a lot. Bobbe was also school phobic in beginning, and now sees that it was due to the fact that she wanted to be home to care for her mother.

Bobbe went into teaching, because her father told her to. She was studying art to become an artist, but her father said he wouldn't continue paying for college if she didn't study education so she could earn a good living. She went into counseling, because Chico, who was studying for his masters in counseling in grad school at the time, convinced her to. She met her husband, Chico when he was a senior and she was a freshman in college at C.W.Post. Her first paying job was at Fortunoff's that she had for 2 days, because she didn't like it. When she started in Brentwood as a teacher, her beginning salary was about \$9600.

As to her education, she attended Nursery school, Elementary school in Central Beach where she was always in trouble, Fischer Junior High where she started playing Tennis and Miami Beach Senior High School. After school she was into athletics playing on a tennis team, swimming, and playing on several other sports teams. Her father was very strict and encouraged her to get involved in as many activities as she could. She attended C.W. Post College undergraduate and graduate. Her favorite subjects in school were art and writing. Her mother was a good artist and writer and her sister, also being a good writer, is a journalist. Bobby still pursues these interests. She uses art in her counseling and uses her writing skills by keeping a journal and having written a

book on Peer Mediation. She enjoys reading and just finished *Finding Noel*. She likes humanistic stories and autobiographies. Bobbe Studied Carl Rogers and Virginia Satir and was inspired by them in her counseling. She has a Masters Degree in counseling and several licenses. Among them are: American Association of Marital and Family Therapy, N.Y. State License in Marital and Family Therapy, Nationally Certified Counselor, and formal training in Peer Mediation. She opened her own practice doing family and individual counseling and women's groups. She ran the Program for Young Negotiators in Brentwood for which she trained in Stamford and in Israel.

When asked if she had one proud accomplishment while working in Brentwood, she said it was when she started a program called Families in Need in Brentwood, which is still going on to this day. In response to being questioned as to a worst day of her professional life, she said she had two. One was when she quit her job as a counselor at the 7th grade center due to a conflict with an administrator over her handling of a student. The second was when a girl came crying into school 6:30 in the morning before school and said she had just been raped. Bobbe handled it by reporting it to the police and getting VIBES (Victims Information Bureau) to take her to the hospital, but was later called down to Central Administration for not following protocol.

What made her come to Brentwood? Chico was working there at the time and that is also where she did her student teaching. She was also attracted to the diversity in the district. She started as an elementary school teacher and later became a Jr. High then Middle School Counselor. She sees one of the biggest changes in Brentwood in the approach to education. The humanistic approach changed to leaning more towards just academics due to all of the testing. There is more of a concern just for the academics and not the student as a whole human self. She said that teaching was now just for academic performance. Bobbe saw that her purpose as a counselor was to be there for kids, and that her purpose in life is to be there for people of all ages. She still sees many of her former students. When asked who were significant people whom she worked with and influenced her, she named Tony Felicio who was a very affirming family oriented person. John Sherin influenced her especially for his having started the Maslow Toffler School. She was inspired by his methods of teaching.

Why did she retire? Bobbe left after 35 years in public education, because she wanted to take care of her granddaughter and spend more time with her husband, Chico, who had become ill. She misses working with the kids and said that one of the best parts of her job was the morning Advisory when she could get to talk and meet with the kids on a personal level. Her favorite school year was the year when middle school started the Advisory. It was an opportunity to be human together. She really enjoyed that the most.

She was asked that if she had a magic wand, what 3 changes would she like to see made in the system. They were: #1 - Eliminate the academic testing, #2 - have more courses in humanistic education addressing the behavior and emotional needs of

students and #3 - Eliminate some of the structure and be a mentor not just a teacher.

Almost everything makes her laugh, and when asked if there was anything she would change if she could do things over again, she said she wouldn't change a thing. When asked how she wants to be remembered, she said, "I cared as much as I could care and loved as much as I could love, and never meant to do anything to hurt any body". The advise that she would give to the person who took her position was to "trust your inner heart", pay attention to what goes on inside and to get in touch with the kids, parents and teachers you meet at a soulful level.

In ending the interview she said, "I am always going to be hopeful that things will move in a positive direction, that people will always be cared for." She hopes that her daughter and son-in-law who are also in education will accomplish some of her dreams that they have similar to her. She wants a cure for her husband's illness and for her family to know that she loves them more than anything.