

# The Doll Lady

*A lively 89-year-old continues to live life to the fullest.*

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Special to the Jewish News

**A**lice Egrin, my husband's grandmother, celebrated her 89th birthday on May 18. One of my favorite relatives, she's become Grandma to me and Bubbie to my daughter and to a slew of other great-grandchildren.

Married for over 50 years to Albert Egrin, she raised five children, including her sister. Today, she's hardly slowed down. Her doll business, Grandma's Girls, is going strong.

Her workshop is in her Trowbridge apartment in Southfield, where she sews large, soft-sculptured dolls from start to finish. The dolls sit on the living room couch and "don't talk back," she says. They're sold via word of mouth and at craft shows. She also sews quilts for her grandchildren, giving them as show-er gifts.

Every Thursday morning, Alice meets other women at the historic Longacre House in Farmington, where the group sews clothing from scratch for the Goodfellows. She's the only Jewish member.

When she was in stronger health in her late 70s, she volunteered at Doherty Elementary School in West

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Alice Egrin holds one of her Grandma's Girls dolls. Above: Two finished beauties.

Bloomfield, helping the children read.

Alice plays piano (Beethoven sonatas are her favorite) and loves to travel. In her 60s, she studied Italian and Spanish. She took Spanish 101 four times; she passed the first class, but liked the teacher so much she stayed on!

Traveling from Burma to Morocco, Alice is an amazing bridge between people, readily meeting strangers and transforming them into friends.

In 1993, she and Sherry Kanter, her granddaughter, went on the first Miracle Mission of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. Sherry said, "Seeing it through her was incredible; she kept quoting her favorite book — the Bible."

Earlier, in 1987, Alice and two great-nephews, Michael and Robert Egrin, went to Israel on a tour billed as an active way to see the country. "No one on that trip will ever forget my near 80-year-old Aunt Alice hiking, camping, camel riding and sharing her flask," Michael said.

They climbed steep grades with her. "Michael would have Alice on one side," Robert recalled, "and I'd have her on the other. She'd say, 'Don't worry, I'm holding you. You won't fall.'"

No wonder I go to Grandma first to repeat a joke — even if it's twisted! She says what's on her mind.

For years, Alice would cook huge, wonderful meals for all the grandchildren, serving each person's

favorite food. The second generation wasn't allowed.

She's also a good gardener, giving us freshly grown vegetables from a plot of land at her son's "farm" (we still joke about when she planted the popcorn). She's of the generation that made do when there wasn't a lot — and is into Kmart big time.

Her thriftiness knows no bounds. How else to explain the reply when I complimented her on her son's kitchen wallpaper that they had put up, then questioned her on why there were two different patterns: "It's contact paper," she answered. "They only had this many rolls of that pattern."

I should have known. □