

Sharsheret's National Book Club with Judith L. Pearson, author,  
*Radical Sisters: Shirley Temple Black, Rose Kushner, Evelyn  
Lauder, and the Dawn of the Breast Cancer Movement*

National Webinar Transcript

May 12, 2026

Presented by:



**SHARSHERET**  
The Jewish Breast & Ovarian Cancer Community

This program was made possible with support by:

*Lilly*



Deborah Litwak: Okay. In respect with everyone's time, we will get started. Good evening. It's so nice to have you joining us tonight from all over. We played a little geography before we let you in, and it's nice to see so many people represented from all over the country.

My name is Deborah Litwak. I'm the Outreach Manager for the Southeast region of Sharsheret, and I'm so honored to be part of tonight's program in conversation with Judy Pearson, and with each of you joining us tonight.

For those of you who don't know about Sharsheret, we help women and families facing breast cancer or ovarian cancer, as well as those who are at elevated genetic risk through free, confidential and personalized support and resources.

We also provide health education throughout the United States, and we also offer support to English speakers living in Israel. Sharsheret hosts virtual programs and webinars like this throughout the year on a variety of topics with medical experts. You can access the recordings on our online library.

We're grateful to our sponsors for this evening's program, Lily, Merck, and Novartis Oncology. And as we'll address community support in our conversation, I wanted to highlight a program, a newish program of ours. We recently launched virtual monthly support groups for those who've been diagnosed with breast cancer or ovarian cancer.

We have one for those in survivorship for stage zero through three, and on for the Embrace Community, those living with metastatic breast cancer or advanced ovarian cancer. And if you're interested in either one of these groups, the signup link is in the chat.

A few housekeeping items before we begin. Today's webinar is being recorded, and will be posted on Sharsheret's website along with a transcript. People's faces and names will not be in the recording. If you would like to remain private, you have the option to turn off your video and rename yourself or you can call into the webinar.

We also have closed captioning available, just like on TV. To display live captions on the bottom bar, click on captions and then click on show captions. You may have noticed that you were muted when you entered the Zoom. Please stay on mute during the call.

We will allow for additional questions towards the end of the program, and if you have any questions for our author, please type them into the chat and we will get to them towards the end of the program when we open it up for Q&A. Please keep your questions as general as possible, as we can't comment on specific medical conditions or individual concerns.

I want to remind you that Sharsheret is a not for-profit cancer support and education organization, and does not provide any medical advice or perform any medical procedures, and our full medical disclaimer you can see in the chat.

We recommend you keep your screen on speaker view. This will enable you to see the conversation with our guest author, and you can find that option on the upper right-hand corner of your screen.

So before I introduce our speaker, I want to tell you that we are in for a treat. Today's webinar is a chance to hear about the beginnings of the breast cancer movement, and meet three dynamic women, according to in our author's words, "Who did for themselves what the mainstream healthcare system refused to do."

Shirley, Rose and Evelyn challenged the male-dominated medical and government structures, turning their breast cancer diagnoses into a movement that has saved millions.

As I introduce the author of *Radical Sisters: Shirley Temple Black, Rose Kushner, Evelyn Lauder, and the Dawn of the Breast Cancer Movement*, Judith Pearson. Judy is a bestselling author and accomplished presenter, and a graduate of Michigan State University, but her favorite title is "storyteller", with a little "research junkie" thrown in.

Those characteristics have resulted in six biographies, including award winners and a bestseller. Her last two books won a Nautilus Gold Award and the Florida Book Award. An accomplished presenter, Judy has turned her books, subjects into presentations viewed by thousands in the US and the UK.

She was named one of Chicago's most inspirational women, selected as a finalist for the Arizona Healthcare Leadership Awards, and named a Phoenix Healthcare Hero. Judy and her husband live on Florida's beautiful Gulf Coast where long beach walks ignite her creativity. Welcome, Judy.

Judith Pearson: Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to be here, and thanks to all of you for signing on. This is going to be fun.

Deborah Litwak: It is. You beautifully wrote, "Cancer draws a line in the sand, sand of life. There was a time before it and all that comes after." And I think many in our Sharsheret community may feel the same way, and we often invite callers to share their story because we know everyone has a story. What drove you to tell this story?

Judith Pearson: Well, this is actually the third in an accidental out of order trilogy. I had written some books about World War II heroes, one a man, one a woman who no one had ever heard about, nor had they ever heard their stories before or the stories of the particular part of the war that they participated in.

And then I heard those words, "You have breast cancer, triple negative breast cancer." And I had been actively looking for the next book to write. So like everyone else who's heard those words, I trudged through treatment. In my case, it was a mastectomy and 18 rounds of chemo, although I just in November had a prophylactic mastectomy on the other side. So now, I'm like a dude. I can just put on my shirt. It's the best thing ever.

And then I decided to start a little nonprofit because I was meeting women survivors of all cancers who were using their gifts of life and experience to give back to the greater good. It didn't matter whether it was something in the cancer world that they were participating in or the environment, animals, children, whatever.

And most importantly, and this theme comes up in this book, which I hadn't expected, there is healing in helping. So, through *A Second Act*, the name of the organization, I met a woman who became the inspiration for my first post-cancer book. And in this crazy out of order trilogy, it would've been the last book. It's the biography of the Cancer Survivorship Movement.

In that book, I was introduced to the inimitable Mary Lasker, she's right there behind my ear, and wrote *Crusade to Heal America*. And I had learned about Rose Kushner in doing research for both of those books. And so I decided I really wanted to write Rose's story.

And my agent and editor each ganged up on me and said, "Look, we love that you're telling these stories of unsung heroes, but it's great to have a known name on your cover." So my editor said, "Shirley Temple Black had breast cancer, was the first celebrity to talk about it. You should probably add her."

And then my agent said, "And Evelyn Lauder, who is Estee Lauder's daughter-in-law, also had breast cancer, you should include her as well." And so I pouted for about a day and then said, "Okay, fine." And it turned out to be absolutely brilliant. The arc of their stories was just perfect.

Deborah Litwak: Ah, great. So we look forward to getting deeper into each of those characters. Set the scene for us. What was America like with regard to women's health in the last decades of the 20th century, the '70s, '80s, '90s?

Judith Pearson: I lived during that time and I was shocked at what was actually happening in our country. It was the dark ages as far as women's health was concerned. And because I write biographies, because I love history, and I hope that people who read biographies love history as well, I always try to include current events and a bigger picture. Not that breast cancer isn't a big picture, but in this case it was the women's health movement, which it was shocking.

And probably the most emblematic mental image that everyone in this room can relate to is when you go for a gynecological exam and they put the sheet

over your leg so you can't see the doctor, you can't see what the doctor's doing, that's what healthcare was like. You don't ask the doctor questions, you don't ask for second opinions, you just say, "Yes, sir," because they were almost always, sir, and march down the hall and do what he tells you to do.

Deborah Litwak: Wow. Really, it was a time when breast cancer was not talked about or there wasn't a whole lot known about. Right?

Judith Pearson: That's true. That's true. And in fact, up until really until the '90s, cancer in general, and that included breast cancer, did not have great outcomes. Oncology didn't become a specialty until the late '70s. So there was no oncology nursing, there were really no oncologists. Breast surgeons didn't exist. Your surgeon might've done somebody's hernia in the morning, and they were going to do a tonsillectomy in the afternoon, and they wedged you in the middle to amputate your breasts.

And so it was just this weird phase. And breasts were very much talked about when it came to celebrity's breasts or Playboy Bunny's breasts, but no one thought about breast health. And certainly, if you got breast cancer, in many circles, again until the '90s, cancer was thought to be contagious. So, all of a sudden, you wouldn't get invited to parties, your kids couldn't play with other people's kids. It was really, really crazy.

Deborah Litwak: It was also when people sat around the dining room table and said, "She has cancer," and they would whisper it. I think that's documented in a movie somewhere.

Judith Pearson: Yes. The C word.

Deborah Litwak: The C word, exactly. The big C.

Judith Pearson: The big C. Yeah.

Deborah Litwak: Right. So, it's 1972 and Shirley Temple Black has been diagnosed with breast cancer. You said before, she was one of the first celebrities to come out and discuss her situation. What prompted her to do that?

Judith Pearson: She said that, and I have to just note really quickly, there were two practices in the cancer world that are very foreign and very alarming to us in this time. First was called the One Step Procedure.

So, a woman would find a lump, and mammography also was very slow to develop. So in the '70s in particular, there really wasn't very successful mammography. So a woman would find a lump. She'd go to her doctor all worried.

He would say, "It's nothing. I'm sure it's nothing." Check you in the next day for your biopsy, because it was an inpatient procedure and he would say, "You're going to be out of here tomorrow morning as good as new."

And while you were on the operating table, they would take your lump and do a quick path exam, pathology exam, and if cancer was found, they would cut your breast off immediately.

There was no chance to psychologically prepare, get the right clothing, find somebody to take care of your kids. It's called the One Step Procedure. And it was absolutely without any medical relevance whatsoever, ever.

The second thing was a radical mastectomy. And we think of the term radical as really out there. And in fact, that's sort of a play on words in the title, but radical is the Latin word for root.

And so a doctor in 1891, Halsted, Dr. Halsted thought the more he cut, the more he could get to and hopefully get the root of the cancer. So they took all the lymph nodes, not only breast tissue, but both pectoral muscles, minor and major, sometimes rib cages, sometimes clavicles, women were completely debilitated. So Shirley said, "I don't want any of that."

But about day two, so she had the lump removed. The doctor told her that she had cancer, and so then the mastectomy happened, but she said, "I don't want all of that taken. You can take lymph nodes, but no muscles and no bones."

And about day two or three after her surgery, she started thinking about, she said, "What can I do for my sisters? This happens. I knew that it happened even before I had it, but there must be a better way to help women."

And the first thing she did was have a press conference, call a press conference in her hospital room. Now, in 1972, it was definitely thought that cancer was contagious. So this little scrum of reporters came in with their notepads and their microphones.

And she answered questions with all of her germs floating around, and she had a little gardenia in her hair and her sheet was pulled up to her neck, but she had a really pretty, frilly little nightgown on.

But she said, "I want women to know that they must not sit home and be afraid." Her doctor had told her to start doing self-exams like in the '50s. So that's really a rarity. And she said, "Waiting isn't going to make it go away."

And then she followed that up with a seven-page McCall's magazine article that was equally groundbreaking, and just really made women empowered to be able to talk about their own breast cancer and not hide in the shadows in their closets any longer.

Deborah Litwak: It's very similar to when Angelina Jolie went through the double mastectomy and talked about her own story being a BRCA carrier, and what she did proactively to take care of her health. She became sort of the poster child for a little bit.

Judith Pearson: Exactly, exactly. And Shirley followed it up with an appearance on the Mike Douglas Show, which is an old-time TV show, afternoon TV show where he'd have a variety of guests. And on with Shirley was a very young Muhammad Ali. It was really cute to watch that.

And then she did her part, first celebrity to talk about it, brought it out of the shadows. Actually, she was a delegate for the United Nations, so she wanted to get back to work.

Deborah Litwak: All from the "Good Ship Lollipop".

Judith Pearson: That's right.

Deborah Litwak: Okay. Switching gears to Rose Kushner, who really, if I remember correctly, she was really on the forefront with the medical things going on. So tell us a little bit about Rose Kushner. What did she do to make her voice heard in the medical community in the fight against breast cancer?

Judith Pearson: And I have to also say that the type of writing that I do in publishing circles is called narrative nonfiction. So, I want my readers to know what movies might've been popular as is pertinent, what movies might've been popular, what someone was wearing.

So Rose's story, she was the first woman or person to write a book for women about breast cancer and what you needed to do. And so in this first chapter, she talks about a Saturday night, the kids are all out doing things. She's in the bathtub. Her husband's making dinner. All in the Family is going to be on, and MASH. It was a big night, and she finds this lump.

And she is terrified because even though Alice Roosevelt had had breast cancer and had both of her breasts removed and survived, Rose said, "Ordinary women don't survive. Princesses, queens, president's daughters, this is bad. I'm not going to survive."

She lived in Boston, or excuse me, in Baltimore. And so the next morning, hightailed it to, or excuse me, two mornings later, on Monday morning, hightailed it to the National Institutes of Health, on whose campus resides the National Library of Medicine.

And she started looking for a book to tell her, even before she saw her doctor, looking for a book that would tell her what to expect, and nothing existed. So, she too refused the One Step Procedure. Her surgeon was not happy about it.

And then when he determined that she had cancer by telling her that she was now going to die because she had delayed these few days until she found a surgeon to take her breast off, she had to go all the way from Baltimore to Buffalo to find a doctor. Other doctors called her a cook.

One said, "Nobody's going to tell me how to do my job." But she found Dr. Thomas Dow in Buffalo, and he had the same feelings that she did. And because she was so far from home, he kept her there in the hospital for about three or four weeks, because even then, just like now, you have surgery, you stay however long in the hospital and then you go back for follow-up visits.

Well, it was a long haul to Buffalo, so while she was up there, she started shadowing him and learning everything she could about the disease. That led to writing this book, led her to set up the very first hotline for women to call, and men, for that matter, husbands. It was her own home phone. And if they had questions or fears, or the husbands who didn't know what to do for their wives, they could call this hotline.

And I worked really closely with her daughter, Leslie, who was a teenager when Rose had cancer. She was diagnosed in '74, and she said she would answer the phone and run to the phone, as teenagers do. And then the woman would ask for a Rose and she'd say, "Mom, it's another lump." And then Rose would come to the phone. But it was a lifeline for women.

But then she got involved, you're right, in testifying in front of Congress and saying, "We have to have insurance coverage for mammography. We have to look for ways to improve treatment." She went to Europe to research for her book.

All over Europe, in particular in Russia, there was a breast cancer clinic run by a woman doctor, staffed by women doctors, and they were doing lumpectomies in the '70s, which ordinary women couldn't get until almost the '90s here.

Then she also went after the insurance companies about reconstruction, having them pay for reconstruction. And she put out the warning even before cancer about the high doses of estrogen in birth control pills being dangerous.

But then she also, very presciently, said, "We don't know why, but for some reason, Jewish women tend to get breast cancer at a higher percentage than the general population." And of course, now we do know why.

Deborah Litwak:

Thank you. Wow. There's so much to unpack there, but Evelyn Lauder, our third Radical Sister, as Estee Lauder's daughter-in-law, she had access to considerable wealth and privilege, but what inspired her to dedicate herself to this work and what drove her beyond the family legacy?

Judith Pearson: She realized, after her treatment was over, how really difficult it was even for her in a limousine to crisscross Manhattan to go to a doctor's appointment, to go to a clinic, or to go back to the hospital for treatment, maybe go someplace else for a wig, exercises. She was just bouncing all over. And she said, "If I am overwhelmed by it, I can't even imagine what an ordinary person who has to take a cab must feel like."

She'd become very close with her doctor. And so the two of them put their heads together and she said, "I envision the department store concept for breast cancer treatment. When you go to a department store," which of course she knew very well, "When you go to a department store, you can buy new shoes for yourself, clothes for your children, cosmetics, hopefully at the Estee Lauder counter, pots and pans."

And she said, "I want to see that for breast cancer treatment. A woman checks in, is put in a room, and everyone and everything comes to her." And that became the Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center at Memorial Sloan Kettering.

Deborah Litwak: Amazing. And what was her most significant contribution or what was her most significant project?

Judith Pearson: Her most significant, there was one other that she and the doctor did together, and I'm absolutely blanking on his last name. His first name was Larry, Norton, Larry Norton. Dr. Norton also co-founded the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, which is still to date the largest private breast cancer funding organization in the country. But she was looking for a way to enlarge awareness.

And her very dear friend, Alexandra Penny, was editor of Self Magazine and the two of them had gone to lunch, and they were talking about, "What could we do? We'd really like to come up with some kind of a symbol for breast cancer that would increase awareness."

It was at the height of the AIDS epidemic, so all the red ribbons and the AIDS discussions were going on. And they went back to Evelyn's office and her secretary came running in with a newspaper article about a woman in California called Charlotte Haley who was doing what they were talking about.

She was putting ribbons on little index cards and handing them out at grocery stores and in parking lots. She sent them to Anne Landers and First Ladies, and didn't want any money, just said, "Call the National Cancer Institute and let's get the research going." So they said, "Well, let's call her." So they did.

And Charlotte, when they explained that they wanted to help, Charlotte said, "No." And they were shocked. And they said, "Well, why not?" And she said, "'Cause you're just going to commercialize it." And Alexandra said, "Well, I have two million readers. We can get this word out to women to make them aware of

this disease." And Evelyn said, "Well, I've got 1,500 beauty counters around the world." And Charlotte hung up on them and they were heartbroken.

So, they called the attorney, the corporate attorney and said, "What can we do?" And he said, "Pick another color?" And so pink was Evelyn's favorite color, and so pink was what they chose, and that's why Deborah's pink, I'm pink, but Charlotte's ribbons were peach because that was her favorite color. And so that's why the book cover is peach. It's as a salute to Charlotte.

Deborah Litwak: Amazing. I love that. Did these three women ever meet?

Judith Pearson: They didn't. They never did. And Rose died first in 1990, but later that year the Rose Kushner Mammography Act was passed that again made sure that women everywhere could be covered for mammography. Evelyn died of ovarian cancer. The family calls it non-genetic cancer. In other words, guessing she was not BRCA positive.

She died of ovarian cancer in 2004 and Shirley outlived them all, dying of COPD because she was a closet smoker, and she died in 2014. But their work, as I said, it just was this beautiful arc.

Deborah Litwak: Yeah. Well, we certainly can be grateful for the support organizations that exist today, for sure.

Judith Pearson: That's right.

Deborah Litwak: Sharsheret being one of them. What do you think they would think of the current situation of the breast cancer movement where we are today, the research funding, the pink ribbons, the October?

Judith Pearson: When I was first diagnosed, I was diagnosed in 2011, in April. So when October came around and everybody talked about breast cancer awareness, I just thought it was weird 'cause I thought, "Who's not aware of breasts and who's not aware of cancer? So I don't understand why we have to be aware of this."

But in 1994 when the ribbon was first introduced, there was not a lot of awareness, and there was not an awareness not just, "Oh gee, I should do some self-exams, but awareness in the numbers."

So no one wanted to pit one disease against the other, but the fact of the matter was that this newer disease, AIDS, was affecting far fewer people with far fewer deaths than breast cancer, which was equally as large an epidemic.

And so, I think they would sit back and be shocked at how much money has gone. And quite honestly, the subtitle says this is the Dawn of the Breast Cancer Movement, which is true. The women that came later said, "Okay, I know. We know what it is. We're going to take a page from the AIDS workshop here." They

got angry and these women said, "No more polite little ladies. We need to get angry and we need to demand." And they did.

And in fact, Pat Schroeder, who was a Congresswoman from Colorado, said at one of the early events, "You can bet if you told one in eight men in Congress that they were going to lose one or both testicles this year, they would get on the move and find a cure for testicle cancer." So, there you are. So, I think they would be shocked to see really how wonderful how far we've come and how wonderful the organizations are.

Deborah Litwak: Shocked and proud and a little-

Judith Pearson: Absolutely. Yeah.

Deborah Litwak: So I was not around at the beginning of Sharsheret, but it sounds like their efforts in organizing a breast cancer movement created an environment to allow for other support organizations to really come to fruition. So Sharsheret was founded 25 years ago. We're celebrating 25 years this year, but really they created an environment that allowed us to serve, at the time when we started, Jewish women facing breast cancer.

And as has science has evolved, we've included ovarian cancer, and we've moved beyond young women and Jewish families. That's our expertise, but Sharsheret services are available to anyone, but it really sounds like their efforts allowed us to pave the way. And it sounds like Rochelle Shoretz, who was the founder of Sharsheret-

Judith Pearson: I knew Rochelle.

Deborah Litwak: I think you had said you had met her at a conference?

Judith Pearson: Yes, I was the co-chair of a conference and she came a couple of years in a row. Lovely woman. I would've loved to have hung out with her a lot more.

Deborah Litwak: That's what I understand. So she was also a powerhouse. Could have been included as one of these Radical Sisters, too.

Judith Pearson: Absolutely.

Deborah Litwak: So in your view, with the number of support organizations that are out there, what role do we play in the breast cancer movement today?

Judith Pearson: I think that it kind of goes back to what I was saying early on about the little organization that I founded in Arizona, I was living in Arizona at the time, about the healing is helping kind of a thing. But the other thing that we talked about a lot was finding the treasure in your wreckage. And cancer certainly creates wreckage in a life, and it's very difficult, harder for some than for others.

And so, to find some way to make sense, really of any life challenge. No life is without bumps, and sometimes things are devastating. And so, I've always felt that a way to heal is to say, "Okay, what did I learn and how can I share that with other people?" And then the sharing can be any shape, size, form, doesn't have to be a massive organization.

We did live storytelling events as our fundraisers 'cause we raised money and made micro grants to women who wanted to launch or grow their second acts. And some of the women just, as they said, did random acts of kindness every day. But I think giving of yourself, first of all, it has been proven to have health benefits.

So whether you call it volunteering, pro-social behavior, whatever, giving back to the greater good, you don't have time to then to worry about yourself. So that would be number one.

And number two I think is really important. I spoke about Breast Cancer Research Foundation, certainly the Komen Foundation are wonderful organizations, but they're huge. And sometimes we think, "Well, I can only afford to give \$10 or \$5 or \$50, maybe \$100, but that's a drop in the bucket to those big organizations."

So I always encourage people to find something local that they want to be able to give to. So we did an event here last October at a waterside restaurant and the money that we raised went to a local organization that provides mammography for Sarasota and Charlotte counties.

And so those kinds of things, if you've got a million dollars to give to big research, God bless you, go do it. But donating small and donating local, that's good, too. I think those two things.

And then I guess the third thing would be a lot of times, and I'm sure everyone who's had cancer and is now a little ways down the road, has had other people reach out to them, whether the patient themselves or a family member asking for help for their loved one.

And when people would come to visit me, even really, really good friends, I'd say, "Okay, look, I had cancer. They cut off my breast. I don't have it anymore, I don't think. And now we've got that out of the way. Now what do you want to talk about?"

And most often people mostly just want to be treated normally, and it's hard to be treated normally when you have cancer. So if you could be a listening ear or a gal pal to somebody who's going through it, regardless of what their needs are, maybe they just want to cry, I think that's worth millions in itself as well.

Deborah Litwak: Amazing. That's sort of how Sharsheret got started, was providing that support to one another. Rochelle Shoretz, she met someone her age who, a similar life situation with little kids, and they supported each other well and that started our peer support network.

And so many people I meet when I'm out at an event or standing at a resource table, all they say is, "I've had the experience. I want to give back. I want to be there for someone else. How can I be helpful?"

Judith Pearson: That's beautiful.

Deborah Litwak: It's really valuable. Okay. What were you hoping to accomplish with this book?

Judith Pearson: Well, I think that we study pioneers. We love studying pioneers. We celebrate the space pioneers, the NASA pioneers. We celebrate the pioneers that marched across the country, but we don't often think about celebrating medical pioneers, specifically cancer pioneers, specifically breast cancer pioneers.

And I think I got to be honest with you, when my agent was trying to find a publisher for the first book in this trilogy, which is the white cover over there from *Shadows to Life*, publishers kept saying, "Oh, we just can't do another cancer book." And I kept saying, "It's a history. It's a history."

People don't want to think about cancer. So certainly a book that is written about cancer is going to be a downer. So, the first thing that I wanted to accomplish was to tell this history because I think it's important to know, wow, so 50 years ago they had just a scintilla of knowledge that we have today.

Imagine with clinical trials and now AI, AI and medicine is going to be huge 'cause doctors and computers can put all everything together and it'll spit out all kinds of good things. So, think about where we are now, and instead of 50 years in the future, something miraculous could be happening in 5 years in the future.

So I think it's good to know that we didn't live back then, but then there's a favorite quote that I always talk about with all my books. Margaret Mead was a cultural anthropologist who actually died of breast cancer, but the famous words that I think about all the time is, "Never doubt that a small, thoughtful group of concerned individuals can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." And so, my hope is that readers will be inspired to do whatever speaks to them to help change the world.

Deborah Litwak: Amazing. I know you said you started with Rose Kushner and that was sort of for another book, but your agent said, "Okay, include these people," but then how do you find the information? How do you make it into a story?

Judith Pearson: Well, that's where the research junkie comes in. So it's always great to have friends or family members involved. And it was very easy to find Rose's family. I

first found her oldest son and then he introduced me to the siblings, and it ended up the daughter is the youngest, and she was the one... They were actually, the boys were already out of the house when Rose had cancer, so she was the one who remembered all those days. So she was super helpful.

I really stalked Shirley Temple's family. I thought they were going to set up a restraining order. And finally, one day I found her oldest son's, or she only had one son, her son's phone number. And I called it and I had also found her daughter, and I kept emailing the daughter and no response. So I called the son, and apparently my name popped up.

And so when he answered the phone, he said, "Hello, Judy Pearson." They were about to publish, hoping to publish the second half of her autobiography. The first one was published in '69, so before she had cancer. And they were afraid if they gave away too much information, the book wouldn't sell. And I said, "Well, that's not true, but okay." But there was so much written about Shirley. I was able to put together not only her early life, but through a newspaper database, gazillions of articles about her life.

And then Evelyn has two sons. The eldest is the CEO of the Estee Lauder companies, but I found the email and phone number of the youngest son who was positively delightful and so much fun. I found so much more information about her escape from Hungary running from the Nazis as they were coming, not Hungary Austria, as they were coming across Europe. And he's like, "I didn't even know this." So that was terrific.

The newspaper database I love because not only can I research my subjects, but I can learn maybe what the weather was when Rose finally graduated college in 1970 at the age of whatever she was, 38 or something. And I try to make the story as approachable as possible.

The National Library of Medicine, as I mentioned, National Archives for congressional papers and rulings. And quite honestly, there's a lot of videos, Shirley's press conference, Rose on Phil Donahue, those things are available. You can find them. So, my favorite day is sitting down in front of my desk and researching.

Deborah Litwak: It's incredible. How long does that take to go from the ideas to through the research, and then forget starting to write the story, but through the research?

Judith Pearson: With a non-fiction book, it is sold to publishers by proposal. So, I have to have two or three chapters written, a chapter outline so that they can see I know how to get from beginning to end, and then a couple paragraphs for each chapter, the marketing, comparable title. So, by the time I've done enough research to do that so that my agent can take that out to publishers, I've got a lot of it done.

So then the writing part, then I've already got the framework, I've got the outline, the writing then just pretty much flows. Takes about 18 months, and then another 6 months to go through multiple rounds of editing, footnote... Or I do end notes, not footnotes, but the publisher does all of that, and they make sure that everything that I've annotated is accurate, cover design, and then finally to market.

Deborah Litwak: Amazing.

Judith Pearson: And then one other little secret that I learned early on is when you've written one book, either about a person or about a period of history, and you've done all that research, why not use it again and then maybe a third time?

Deborah Litwak: For the trilogy.

Judith Pearson: That's right.

Deborah Litwak: Exactly. Oh, I had a question for you. Okay. I really had a good question. Okay. What's next? What's on the horizon for you?

Judith Pearson: Well, here's the ugly truth about-

Deborah Litwak: Oh, I remember the time.

Judith Pearson: Oh, okay. You want me to answer this one?

Deborah Litwak: Well, yeah, tell us what's next and then we'll go back to this one.

Judith Pearson: Here's the ugly truth about publishing. Not every brilliant idea that Judy comes up with becomes a book. So, I have several books, book ideas in banker boxes in our storage unit, but the one I was working on that I was so excited about, really invested in, it was the history of the woman who is the reason you know what Tupperware is. And she actually was right here in Florida.

And so, she worked with Earl Tupper. Her name was Brownie Wise. She worked with Earl Tupper, who invented Tupperware, and convinced him it needed to be sold through home parties and created the whole Tupperware empire. And just as I told the story of the women's health movement with *Radical Sisters*, I told the whole overarching theme for that book was working women.

Women in the 1950s were expected to stay home. The men came marching home from the war, they had GI bills, they could buy houses. The little woman was meant to be in the kitchen. And women still wanted to work because they'd worked during the war, so Tupperware gave them the perfect opportunity to have a Tupperware party in the afternoon and then make dinner for Hubby that night. They started making a ton of money.

And the '50s is a forgotten decade in women's history. Okay. I know I don't have to tell you guys. 33 publishers said no. And when the 33rd said no, I said to myself, "Okay, this is the universe trying to tell me something." I had an idea that'd been rambling around in my head for 30 years, ever since my mother died. I had found a packet of letters that she had received from a pen pal, a British pen pal during World War II.

Now, we don't know what my mother wrote, but the pen pal, Evelyn was her name, answered those letters. So I am in the midst of writing a historical fiction about not just these two girls because that would be young adult fiction, and there's nothing wrong with that, but I don't write that. Not that I write a lot of sex, but I'm better speaking to adults.

I invented a couple in the United States and a couple in England, a young 20-ish couple, husband and wife couple, their husbands march off to their respective militaries, and there are lots of interesting home front stories that have not yet been told. And in fact, the American story takes place in Southwest Michigan where my mother lived and where I was born. And so, the friend couple is Jewish. There was a huge Jewish farmers organization in Southwest Michigan and the national organization made loans to the Jewish farmers. They went to the fruit market and everything else, but there was this 60 farmers in this little corner of Michigan.

There were also German POW camps all over the United States and in Michigan, and right in this southwest corner of Michigan. The men and women who used to pick the fruit, either the men had gone to the service or the families that came from the South couldn't because gas was rationed. So, England had run out of POW space so they started shipping them over to the US, and the military decided to put them to work in the farms. And the farmers got to choose if they wanted them. There were also Nazi spies in Michigan. So the whole story gets really dicey.

Deborah Litwak: All right. And where in the process of that are you?

Judith Pearson: I am working on chapter six. I had written two novels before my first book was published, my first biography was published. So, I'm not a stranger to writing fiction. You kind of have to have an outline, but World War II is basically the outline.

And so, the writing goes much faster, but I write, just write. And then if I think of things or discover things that need to be added on in earlier chapters, I make notes. So I'm in chapter six now of the first go around. I'm almost done with chapter six.

Deborah Litwak: Amazing. Good luck to you on that one. Before I ask my last question, I don't see any questions in the chat, but I want to give anyone the opportunity to add anything into the chat that you would like to know. Oh, "Did you know Ruth

Handler, co-owner of Mattel Toys, an inventor of Barbie had breast cancer and created nearly me, a line of breast prosthesis in 1976?"

Judith Pearson: I did. And is it Mali?

Deborah Litwak: Yeah.

Judith Pearson: Yeah, Mali. And isn't it funny that, or ironic, I guess, that she created this very shapely doll and then the poor darling got breast cancer herself. She was very pretty. She was a very pretty woman, and I toyed around at one point about writing her biography as well.

Deborah Litwak: Interesting. She certainly featured in the movie, Barbie. Okay. So before we wrap up, I just wanted to ask, you were on the Jewish Book Council promotional round, and have been really representing this book all over the country. How did you get onto the Jewish Book Council round?

Judith Pearson: And I have to say, first of all, it is an exquisitely organized group of people. The book council staff themselves. They were so much fun, so sweet. It was absolutely wild. Event planners, so some of them had book festivals, some of them did JCC programs. There were a variety of types of events, but the event planners receive a book and a packet of information on each author, a book from each author and a packet of information. So they knew my bio, they could look at my website, they knew a lot about us.

And then over the course, just about this time actually last year, over the course of three nights, I think there were maybe 200 authors. And so this group of event planners, we couldn't see them. We could only see the other people in our night. So whatever night you were chosen for and whatever pitch time you were chosen for, you showed up, you had two minutes, like legitimately two minutes, they pushed the kill button if you went over, and you had to sell the event planners on why they should include you in their event.

Deborah Litwak: Wow. Well-

Judith Pearson: It was fun. It was really fun.

Deborah Litwak: Got it. That's exciting.

Judith Pearson: It was. It was, really. And so that was a great honor. And then the fact that the book was just recently selected for the gold medal for the Florida Book Awards was really over the moon. I was thrilled to have that.

Deborah Litwak: Congratulations, really. Judy, thank you. Thank you for sharing with us tonight along your insight, your wisdom, your research. Continued good health to you and to all those listening. We'd love for you to stay connected with Sharsheret

and with Judy via social media. You can follow us on Instagram or Facebook. Details are in the chat.

And thank you to Judy for donating two signed copies of our book tonight, which you'll hear about in a moment. Please take a moment to fill out the brief evaluation survey that is headed into the chat box now. You'll be entered into a drawing for one of these two signed copies of the book. Evaluations really do inform our future programming and in this case may come with a prize.

Judith Pearson: Deborah. Can I add one more thing?

Deborah Litwak: Yeah, for sure.

Judith Pearson: I'm so sorry. I.

Deborah Litwak: For sure.

Judith Pearson: Just wanted to say I would be happy to do Zoom book clubs with anybody.

Deborah Litwak: Oh, good.

Judith Pearson: So, anybody listening who has a book club-

Deborah Litwak: And you can DM Judy on Instagram. Many thanks again to our sponsors for tonight, Lily, Merck, and Novartis Oncology for making evenings like this possible. Please note we have an upcoming webinar that might be of interest to some on the call, *Navigating Fertility: What Genetic Mutation Carriers and Cancer Patients Need to Know*, coming up on June 4th.

We don't have them quite scheduled yet, but one in October during our Sharsheret Summit, Dr. Elisa Port. We will be discussing her new book that comes out actually next week. And in January of next year, we'll be having Dr. Liora, Eliora? Eliora Teplinsky, who will be discussing her new book. Two doctors in the breast cancer field discussing their new books.

Remember that Sharsheret is here for you and your loved ones during this time. Sharsheret provides personalized support, lifesaving education, and other programs designed to help navigate you through the cancer experiences. All of our services are completely free and confidential, and you can see our contact information in the chat box.

Our social workers and genetic counselors are available to each of you. You are a priority, so please never hesitate to reach out. We're going to put the evaluation link in the chat one more time. It's your chance to win a free book, a signed book. Thank you really for being here tonight for Sharsheret's Book Club with Judith Pearson, author of *Radical Sisters: Shirley Temple Black, Rose*

Kushner, Evelyn Lauder, and the Dawn of the Breast Cancer Movement. Have a good night.