

Miriam's Journey of Love and Remembrance

By Marion E. Gold

In the year 2002, I began a journey down a “beaded” path that was surprising, comforting and enlightening in ways I could never have imagined. I lost my dad in October 2000 to progressive supranuclear palsy after years of bravely fighting this rare and un-treatable illness; and two years later my mother passed away.

Mom was a talented artist. When I was a young girl, Mom would spend hours with me drawing fashion figures of elegant women. She had a great sense of color and design that she expressed in many works of art.

Mom’s delicate and nimble fingers crafted beautiful needlepoint, and she crocheted blankets and pillowcases that are family heirlooms. Her paper sculptures, the fine art of “Paper Tole,” depicting detailed scenes of people and animals were thoughtfully framed and sold in a local shop near my father's shoe store; others were given lovingly to family and friends. As Mom grew older, she stopped working with paper sculpture because her arthritic hands could no longer manage the delicate maneuvers of the tiny scissors and other materials, nor could she withstand the fumes of the glue that held the sculptures together.



Purple Lace Agate with Amethyst



Chrysocolla

I'm a writer by trade, and in the months following my mother's passing, I found it very hard to write. A book I was writing languished. Articles and editorials I tried to write didn't get beyond the first two paragraphs. I began to realize that it was my mother's strength that had helped me face the grief of losing Daddy. Now, they were both gone — and despite a satisfying career and personal home-life, I felt as though my soul had been torn from me and I would never again find peace.

I kept thinking of my mother's artwork, looking with fascination at the care with which she placed each tiny piece of paper onto her canvas to create a lifelike picture. I gently touched her needlework, hoping to feel the softness of her hands as she worked so carefully on every stitch.

Among the lifetime of personal treasures tucked away in our suburban New Jersey home, were boxes of vintage beads that Mom had been saving for one of her projects. I set aside the marketing book I was writing and began to work with the beads — and it seemed to soothe me, to help me deal with my grief.

Looking through craft magazines, I found new ways to work with the beads and began stringing them onto cast pewter bookmarks. I added to my mother's bead collection and used them to form the basis for a variety of colorful products including pens, letter openers and magnifying glasses. Soon I had dozens of these "products."

I gave several as gifts to loved ones and as memories of my mother. Then I thought, "My mom sold some of her artwork. Why couldn't I sell my beaded products in local stores or art galleries? Why wouldn't other people want to give these one-of-a-kind designs as loving gifts or even collect them for personal use or as keepsakes?"

**Gold and Silver Plated Letter Openers beaded with a mix of glass, wood and sparkling faceted acrylic ~
And carved pewter bookmarks accented with beads**



Semi-Precious Gemstone Silver-Plated Letter Openers and Magnifying Glasses (shown below) are also available in Gold. All products shown are made-to-order by Miriam.



I felt a sense of energy again, and I imagined my mom and dad encouraging me - as they had always done. I know my mother would have loved to use the bookmarks to mark her favorite recipes in her collection of cookbooks. And the pens, well, they would have been carefully placed in the dozens of shoeboxes my father used to store his collection of ballpoint pens - hundreds of them that I also found carefully packed away in our home.

My artisan name ~ **Miriam Bat-Rachel** ~ is derived from mother's Hebrew name, *Rachel*, joined to my own, *Miriam*, with the Hebrew word *bat*, meaning *daughter of*. I created and mailed a press kit, and started calling on several local shops. Imagine my delight at seeing my crafts displayed in a top-notch boutique and art gallery in a high-rise mall on Chicago's Magnificent Mile – colorful and creative items that Mom would have enjoyed using and collecting.

I launched a beaded product website and called it "Moonbeams, Lilacs & Roses." Soon my beading expanded to include semiprecious gemstone pendants and other beaded jewelry.

My father also had an artistic eye that he expressed in beautiful photography. His portraits of animals taken at the Bronx and Phoenix Zoos were among his favorites – after the hundreds and hundreds of photos he took of his children and grandchildren.

Especially for Pop, I take all the photos for the Moonbeams website and my advertising materials (including this article).

My parents, Ray and Larry Gold, set a beautiful example of great strength, courage and love throughout their lives. They understood that life is indeed a journey, and often a journey in the midst of pain. But life also takes us to unknown places in the heart and mind that are filled with wonder and creativity. My parents blessed me with the gifts of their love, strength and wisdom. They also gave me the encouragement to explore those unknown places – and so I am.

It is my hope that my personal journey down the "beaded" path of love and remembrance will inspire others. I miss my parents, and not a day goes by that I don't think of them with a mixture of joy, sadness, and cherished memories. The creative process is but one very important way I honor them.



Miriam Bat-Rachel

An exclusive selection of Miriam's Designer Jewelry is available at [The Gift Shop of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies](#), in Chicago. A selection of Miriam's beaded keepsakes may be purchased at the [CHIAROScURO](#) art gallery & gift shop, Water Tower Place in downtown Chicago, and at [The Art Center HP](#) in Highland Park, Illinois. A complete line of Miriam's beaded treasures may be purchased online at www.moonbeamsproducts.com and www.moonbeamsdesignerjewelry.com