



## **Managing Bubbie**

*Russel Lazega*

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## Managing Bubbie Russel Lazega

Her devoted family only wants the best for their Bubbie. Mostly they want to ensure that their matriarch's twilight years are spent in comfort, safety, and serenity. But how do you manage an aging, immutably stubborn Holocaust survivor who has risen above the squalor of Poland's ghettos; fled across the war-torn German wilderness; and survived the winter-ravaged Pyrenees alone on foot with three children? You probably don't.

*Managing Bubbie* is the heartrending, hilarious family memoir by Russel Lazega that recounts the frequently hectic, ever-exhausting trials of one Jewish family in Miami Beach as they try to oversee the care of the elderly, unmanageable Lea Lazega. As they scramble for an acceptable assisted living facility and struggle to get her medication in line, they discover the difficulties of controlling a woman who time and again eluded catastrophe by refusing to be told what to do.

A tapestry of an American family in the 1980s, *Managing Bubbie* also revisits the Holocaust period to mine the love, hope, and humor that emerged from the deepest despair. Anyone who savors a soft heart with a sharp funny bone will laugh, cry, and commiserate with the confounded family who must manage their beloved, impossible Bubbie.

## Managing Bubbie Details

Date : Published February 16th 2015 (first published February 5th 2015)

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Author : Russel Lazega

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## **From Reader Review Managing Bubbie for online ebook**

### **Joshua Meadow says**

Wonderfully written. The depth of affection Mr. Lazega obviously had for his “Bubbie” was palpable and is the driving force behind this terrific memoir, which is actually two books in one.

The first book is an exciting tale of surviving the most horrific regime of the 20th Century by an incredibly strong woman. Her courage in the face of true evil is inspiring. The second book is the humorous and heartwarming tale of how her family tried to do what the Nazis couldn't – control her. At the end of the day though it doesn't matter, both tales are immensely entertaining and I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

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### **Heather Osborne says**

Reviewed on behalf of Readers' Favorite

Managing Bubbie by Russel Lazega is a heartwarming and hysterical memoir of his “Bubbie,” Lea Lazega. Intermixed with a narrative about her harrowing journey across Europe to America during World War Two, are snippets of conversations between various family members, providing insight into the modern life of this courageous woman. As the Nazis invade countries in Europe, Lea manages to escape by the skin of her teeth with her three small children. Being Jewish at this time was difficult enough, but Lea continues to show courage in the face of adversity, finally managing to get her children out of Europe, back to America and safety.

I thoroughly enjoyed this memoir. Mr. Lazega had me from the beginning, as I am a huge Neil Simon fan. I was reminded of Brighton Beach Memoirs, a play I have directed, in the way he portrayed the scenes of his family life. Even more inspiring was Lea's journey through war-torn Europe. I can only imagine the fear she must have felt, knowing at any moment, they could be caught and sent to a concentration camp. I did not want the story to end, and I wanted to know what exactly happened to Eva and Lea's first husband. Mr. Lazega has done an impeccable job weaving together the memories and experiences of his Bubbie. I loved the addition of letters and photographs to bring even more life to the colorful members of his family. Managing Bubbie by Russel Lazega is certainly a different type of Holocaust memoir, one of hope, inspiration, and humor.

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### **Kim says**

a true story and is very interesting book

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### **Jessica says**

This book made laugh on minute then cry the next, over and over. This so much reminded me of what it was like to deal with my grandfather who was difficult in his old age. He too told some amazing stories.

This is really well edited and flowed smoothly. It was sort of weird to bounce back and forth between present day conversations and stories from the past, but I quickly got used to it.

I won this on Librarything, I did not promise a review.

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### **Mark W. says**

This book is absolutely astounding! I'm on my second time through now and learning more details I somehow missed the first time.

I can say whether you're the type who likes a good, engaging read or one who prefers to listen to his books (I also have the audio book for the car - the voices are amazing), I believe you'll find this journey through the life and struggles of one Jewish grandmother highly interesting & provocative.

I'd highly recommend this book and especially gifting it to others; most of my friends and relatives are now grateful to better understand the significance of this period in history.

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### **Brooke says**

Great story about how strong a mother/women can be. Reminded me of my Bubbe who survived the war.

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### **Gayle Slagle says**

Managing Bubbie by Russel Lazega was much more enjoyable and rewarding than I expected. I assumed it would be another sweet, loving memoir of one's family and it is certainly that, but it is also much more. Lazega tells the story of his grandmother, who he calls Bubbie, who managed to escape persecution and death for herself and her children during World War II by sheer will, determination, and strength. The book alternates between telling the story of Bubbie's difficult and dangerous escape and amusing vignettes of Bubbie after her escape. The mood and the tone shift from harrowing to hilarious and it is very effective. The result is a rewarding journey into the life a common, everyday woman who is in reality a hero. Bubbie's insight into life offers advice that we would all be wise to follow. This is one that I highly recommend.

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### **Leslie Chaviano says**

Absolutely love this book! Masterfully told with eloquence and dead on dialogue. A gripping story of a mother and her young children's miraculous escape from the Nazi's woven together with a story we don't often get to hear: how they ended up forty years later. Two great stories in one -- hopeful and humorous. -- suspenseful and touching. Best read of the year!

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## **thewanderingjew says**

Managing Bubbie, Russel Lazega

I loved this tender story. It was a nostalgic look back for me because I am familiar with the times and places mentioned in the book. The book will charm anyone who has had the good fortune to be born in the era of bubbies and to have had someone in their life that resembled one. Sadly, my bubbie was only with me for the first 7 years of my life. My mom was one of the youngest of almost a dozen children, so I met my bubbie as she neared the end of her life. Decades later, I still recall the warmth and the special feeling I had when I was with her. With her grey braided hair crowning her head, she was the embodiment of love as she would pull me onto her lap in the front parlor or ask that I sit next to her on the daybed and choose a candy from the ever present, always filled, tin of treats in the bottom of the bureau drawer.

Today, the idea of a bubbie, is almost extinct. Bubbies have had to make way for the more modern grandmother, one who doesn't always even admit to being one, let alone being a great grandmother! The term is fast being thrown into the dustbin of history, replaced by more chic names that do not indicate age or wrinkling or their special charm! Today we have nanas, mimis, gagas and many more unusual titles that do not indicate in any way their relationship to their grandchildren. Also, mothers are older so the likelihood of even having a bubbie is diminished even further.

Russel Lazega has cleverly and wittily, defied logic, by combining the horrors of his bubbie's Holocaust experience with her present day life in America, without making it too heavy a message to bear. His bubbie is a character who possesses both humor and sternness, who can be stubborn and yet pliable; but above all, is always thinking of others, always clever, always smart and also unashamedly manipulative in order to accomplish her goals, in order to survive. This is his story of Lea Winter Lazega, his bubbie.

His prose has a light touch which will sometimes make you smile at the antics of this old fashioned, determined woman who seems to be preoccupied by the effort to find him a spouse, and sometimes he will make you feel solemn as you read about the life she had in Europe, about how in the face of the worst possible consequences, she never gave in, never lost hope, and thus, survived and managed to carry others along with her, in that effort. She had courage and fortitude. Largely on her own, and without an education, she was able to lift herself up and make a better life for her family in America.

Going back and forth in time, he contrasts her life as she tried to escape from the clutches of Hitler and his followers, with her future, the life she made for herself in America. One thing that the book proves for certain to me, is that the absence of a bubbie in the lives of today's young children will leave its mark, or perhaps its absence will leave a hole, an emptiness that can be filled by no other. A bubbie is a person who selflessly loves whole-heartedly those that she feels responsible for, and she surely helps to shape the future of those with whom she interacts. Hail to the bubbies, may they defy reason and continue to shine in the lives of others!

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## **Pawan Mishra says**

The depths of the human heart are fathomless. A book like this makes us realize this yet again while helping us travel in the new dimensions.

The book is a powerful memoir of a young mother braving through Nazi-occupied Europe, doing everything possible to protect her three young children from the biggest man made catastrophe in the history of mankind. On the other side, the book also pictures a stubborn Holocaust survivor who just wouldn't follow

the normal while continuing her life in the assisted living facility.

Full of struggle, love, hope, sacrifice, humor, and a miracle, the book is one of the best I have read on the Holocaust.

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### **AudioBookReviewer says**

**My original Managing Bubbie audiobook review and many others can be found at Audiobook Reviewer.**

Managing Bubbie is a poignant memoir of the strength of family and individuals from a time long past. A time of struggle, tragedy, love, and hope. Surviving the Holocaust, poverty, war and crossing the Pyrenees during the winter with three children and finding her way to the US – this woman is formidable! Throughout the years of hearing about Bubbies life, her family now faces the decision of how to care for her in her elderly years and provide her with the comfort and peace she deserves while maintaining their own lives.

Russel Lazega weaves the tale of his Bubbie, Lea Lazega. Bubbie has never been a woman to take instruction well, rather she is a force to be reckoned with and she is not accommodating!

Lazega's tale of Bubbie wrenches emotions from the listener leaving them laughing, crying and sitting in awe of this amazing woman's journey through life. Entertaining as it is, it is also a testament to how far away we, as a society, have moved from our elderly and our lack of strength as an individual and as a family.

I enjoyed this book very much as it reminded me of my great-grandparents, grandparents and my parents – their stories and my lack of any. The multi-cast performance was enjoyable and well done. It is not an audiobook one can listen to and then jump into something else, this is one of those rare books that make you FEEL!

Production quality was good and there were no issues.

Audiobook was provided for review by the author.

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### **Sharron says**

This book took me along time to read for such a short book. I think because the flashback every other chapter was distracting. I think the Grandmother's story of moving from country to country to escape the Nazis was the best part of the book, would have liked to read more of that but perhaps that was all the Grandson knew of the story.

The latter part of her life was actually more personal reminiscence of the wonderful, eccentric family of survivors and their children and grandchildren.

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### **Angie says**

Originally posted @ <https://readaholiczone.blogspot.com/2...> (It looks a lot better there)

I have read many books about WWII, but none of them have been like this one. While reading, the same word kept popping up in my head courageous and that is the fundamental of this story how one woman's courageousness never succumbed no matter how atrocious her life became. Russel Lazega the author is her grandson, he calls her Bubbie which is Jewish for grandmother yet her given name is Lea. This is a woman who was born with a great inner strength she fought off the Nazi's and at 80 is still going strong doing anything she pleases by taking buses and trains all over town.

"They say, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Maybe when you've lived such a horrific and wonderful life it's worth a lot more-like the marvel of knowing that one glimpse can make you cry when you need to remember or make you smile while you need to forget."

The book jumps back and forth between the summer of 1987 during holiday brunch with the whole family attending the other half of the story begins in 1911 with the birth of a baby girl named Lea. Her strife started early in life she but Lea always pushed onward always confident and assertive. The prose is nicely written. Therefore, you never get confused jumping around through different eras. During the holiday brunch, I laughed so hard at times my sides started to hurt. It is a blast to listen in to someone else's family gathering, especially with the elderly Jewish ladies arguing over game shows. Managing Bubbie is a captivating book. You will laugh, you will cry, most of all you will cheer on Lea as she and her children fight for safety. In addition to this, I realized that if Lea could do all that she did in those horrid conditions why am I not out doing more for this world? Yes, I do have multiple health conditions that make everyday life very hard to get through, but if Lea can beat the Nazis I can be able to do something admirable with my life.

"Then, it suddenly hits me-this is the world she left behind-a place where killing was an art, and people prayed to be rescued by Bolsheviks. But though she recalls those days with sadness, strangely there's really not a hint of bitterness. It's more like a glowing sense of accomplishment-like deep down she's quelled by the knowledge that survival is sweet satisfaction."

What I took away from this book is that being courageous can inspire others like this book inspired me. You can do anything if you put your mind to it. Thank you, Lea, for giving me a new outlook on life. Who needs a therapist when you have a book like this.

"Thank you, Netgalley, for allowing me to give this honest review"

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### **Mark Young says**

Managing Bubbie reminded me of my own bubbie. She fled the old country to get away from the Nazis. She settled in NY, married and raised 4 children.

When I'd see her i'd get the same "i vant you should..." just like Russell.

This book should be a best seller, after all it will make you laugh, make you cry and hopefully be an inspiration for you.

I am sure Russel's Bubbie is kveling!

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## **Diane says**

The author's grandmother was a "true Miami Beach Jewish bubbe" who admonished the new college student author to write about her life story: something that he ignored at the time, but which would come back to haunt him ten years later.

Managing Bubbie may be the result of a direct order, but there's nothing compelling readers to pick it up - nothing but the promise of a hilarious, fun read about a cantankerous, determined, warm achiever who brought her children to a new world and raised them well.

Her name was once Lea, not 'bubbie'. Once, she came to a country her Polish parents had visited and left. Once, she changed worlds. And in Lazega's world, family interactions swirl around her outrageous statements and their equally ribald results.

Family memoirs permeate the biography and autobiography markets. There are Jewish brunches galore; there are much-celebrated, fun family characters who enjoy the limelight on the written page as much as they did at the head of the family table. They will live forever in the former position - as does Bubbie, here, in Managing Bubbie.

Conversations between Bubbie and family members are juxtaposed with biographical reviews of her life events and create an especially satisfying story line that moves neatly between the two approaches and rounds out events with personal perspective: something many stories fail to achieve in their drive to choose one approach (third-person story-telling) over another (first-person experience).

From imprisonment to freedom, the rise of fascism in Europe and a great escape, Bubbie's life is always the center of action and activity, offering trials, challenges, hope, and keen, penetrating observations.

Any who want to be moved by their biographical reading; to feel part of a family circle and part of past and present Jewish worlds abroad and in America, will find Managing Bubbie a powerful read.

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## **Evie Singer says**

Wonderful true story about strength during the hardest times. It shows that you have to follow your gut. This strong woman was able to get her family out of Belgium when the Nazis invaded. It's a story of resilience with humor, as well. And I can vouch that this is all true because this woman was my grandmother.

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## **Terri says**

Managing Bubbie is everything I expected it to be and so more! It is such a meaningful read on so many levels.

Bubbie is an inspiration. She's fearless, brave and one of the most remarkable women I have ever read about.

You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll be inspired. I hope this book becomes a best-seller. It should!

Russel should be so proud of his masterpiece. His story telling talents are extraordinary!  
I am sure his Bubbie is kveling!

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### **Donna says**

I really enjoyed this book. Mr. Russel Lazega gives an accurate account of the hard days in the 1980's when his family came together to attempt freedom. There is compassion, courage and even at times some funny times that emerged during the days of the Holocaust.

Bubbie, along with her family, got out of the Polish ghetto by refusing to follow orders. She is the matriarch of the family willing to make sacrifices for all of her children and family. She is a survivor.

This book is also a winner that I received from Good Reads First Reads Giveaway. You will love this book as I did.

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### **Ileana Chaviano says**

A quick and easy read. I agree with the comments I read that this would make a great movie. A very dramatic escape story mixed with touching and humorous screenplay-style flash forwards. I would look forward to seeing it in theaters. It had just right mix of humor, drama and history. I highly recommend this book.

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### **Russel Lazega says**

Hey, what do you expect? I wrote it.

But seriously, for those interested in the holocaust memoir genre this book brings something new: a perspective that mines the hope, love, compassion and even humor that a strong human heart can find -- despite confronting the most horrific circumstances.

The memoir uses alternating chapters to meld two special stories: 1) an action-packed biographical tale of a young mother racing through Nazi-occupied Europe, surviving on her wits as she struggles to find any escape for her three children and 2) a heartwarming and even humorous Golden Girls-style story of that same that same headstrong survivor some 40-odd years later as her confounded family grapples with the question: how you manage a cantankerous old bird who time and again has escaped the unthinkable by refusing to stay in line? The answer of the book is: you probably don't.

Bubbie's thoughts on the fifth assisted living facility she was about to be thrown out of:

"It's a concentration camp," she'd shout, pounding her lunch tray on the table. "They're concentrating people. Can you believe it? All day these people wait around to die—like a death camp. In Europe I ran to get out from the concentration camps, and after all that, you gonna put me there now? I'll escape. I escaped from Hitler, I can escape from here!"

