

Good afternoon everyone,

I always knew my great grandparents were different, special. I grew up surrounded by the black and white photos, the plaques and awards won and played with the hotel stationary and old papers from a time I was too young to understand or appreciate. To me they were always just Nana and Poppy. Nana the spite fire matriarch whose heart I stole from the minute she held me and the spirit I supposedly embody, sometimes to a fault. And Poppy the gentle giant with the infectious smile and most giving heart. It would not be until long after they were gone from my life that I would come to understand how special they were. Not just to me and my Family. But to people and their families from far and wide.

Today, I have the honor of sharing a story that's not just part of my family's history—it's a piece of American history, too. It's the story of two remarkable people-Esta and Dave Levinson—and the hotel they lovingly built and ran: the Tamarack Lodge.

Located on 250 acres of countryside in the heart of the Borscht Belt, right up the road from this marker, the Tamarack Lodge wasn't just a resort. It was a haven. A place where Jewish families—many escaping the chaos, pressures, and discrimination of New York City—could come together, relax, laugh, and feel at home.

Esta and Dave were the heart and soul of that place. They weren't just hoteliers—they were hosts, entertainers, problem-solvers, and, most of all, community-builders. Their warmth and generosity created an atmosphere that kept guests coming back summer after summer. You weren't just a customer at the Tamarack—you were family.

The Tamarack Lodge was part of a movement that transformed the Catskills into a cultural epicenter for Jewish life in America. With nightly entertainment, hearty meals, and days full of sunshine and activity, it was a place where memories were made. And behind the scenes, my great-grandparents made sure it all ran with care and love.

Their legacy lives on in the stories I've heard—and in the impact they had on so many lives. Their hard work, their kindness, and their dream of creating a space of joy and belonging are things I carry with me every day.

As we remember the place Greenfield Park and Ulster Heights, Esta and Dave Levinson and the Tamarack Lodge have in the history of the Borscht Belt, we also remember an era—a unique, vibrant chapter in our cultural history. And for that, I am deeply proud and deeply grateful.

That extends to both Marisa and Isaac. Marisa, who I am so honored to say I have known now for about a decade now. Who has been nothing, but an exceptional vehicle for the voices of the past. Since the moment she boldly walked up to our door to ask if she could take a tour and photograph what was left of the Tamarack. I, being just as bold, since it was no longer our property, grabbed my rotti, Lola and said "Hell Ya" because the importance of documenting my great grandparents legacy meant more than trespassing to me. And Isaac, who I only met this year but have had an absolute blast with tearing through boxes of photos and memorabilia. Watching him preserve them and seeing them for a whole new audience on Instagram, as well as Marisa is really tremendous. Thank you for letting me be even the tiniest bit a part of archiving this time in history.

Thank you,

Rachel Weiner-Deyo

Great Granddaughter of Great-granddaughter of Dave and Este Levinson, owners of the Tamarack and its sister hotel, the Algiers in Miami.

