

Lake Effect

Ricki Lake opens up about her influences and the causes most important to her.

Sara Eaker

Special to the Jewish News

For me, being memorable is more important than winning," says Ricki Lake.

The pop-culture icon has managed to do both for nearly two decades. Lake, 46, has reinvented herself at every stage of her career. From singing and dancing her way into millions of hearts in John Waters' 1988 cult-classic film, *Hairspray*, to her Emmy-award winning talk show (1993-2004); she acts, writes, produces and is an advocate for women's issues. Lake, who has two sons, made a highly successful 2008 documentary, *The Business of Being Born*, which will soon be re-released and includes footage of Lake's own life-changing home-birth while chronicling a day in the life of a midwife. Her most recent projects include two documentaries: *Sweetening the Pill* raises questions about the long-term effects of hormonal birth control; and *Breast Milk* examines society's double-standard on female breasts and breastfeeding. She's currently at work on *Weed the People*, about children with cancer and parents' choices to find alternative treatment for their children.

Lake continues her role as an advocate, this time in the Jewish community, when she will appear as the featured speaker at the Lois Linden Nelson Woman's World at Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield on May 6.

Talking to Lake is like talking to a

longtime girlfriend. "I have a theory about why I am not aging and why my skin is looking good," she says. "It's because I'm a little fat — that is the secret to not looking so wrinkly. My friend Courtney Cox says, 'You have to choose if you want the a** or the face.' I'm choosing the face."

On the agenda for her appearance in Detroit is discussing the impact her grandmother — who raised her until her death from breast cancer when Lake was 9 — had on her life.

"I would like to answer questions and share. I am an open book, and I love expressing myself and sharing what has gotten me through this crazy life of mine," Lake says. "My grandmother Sylvia was a true matriarch and got me through hardships and this amazing career."

"She was such a support for me. I was the first-born grandchild on her side of the family, and I was the light of her life. I loved performing, even at a young age. At 3 years old, I was doing Shirley Temple. I wanted to be an orphan in *Annie*. She said I was the best, the most talented, the most beautiful. I don't think I was the prettiest or the best, but she believed in me and that has gotten me so much through my life. Because she believed it, I believed it."

Lake continues, "You have to have one person that you love that believes in you, that role model or big brother, and my grandmother was that for me. I grew up in New York City, and I remember going to see the opera and *Pirates of Penzance*. I have her to thank for those experiences — that uncon-

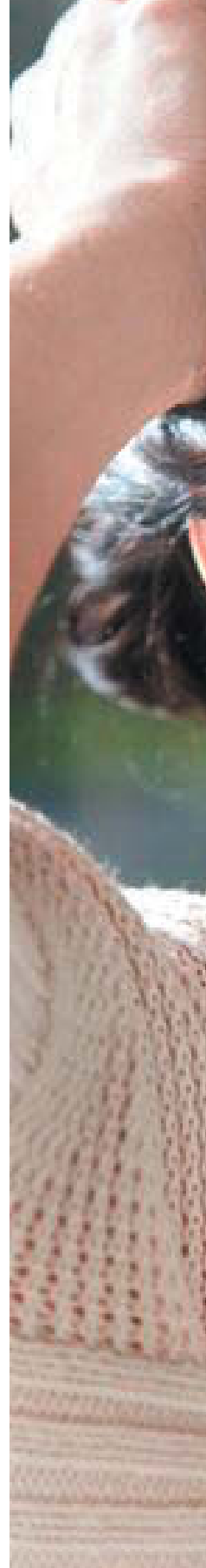
ditional love. She was so special, like a presence, and I think of her often."

Her grandmother also influenced how she connects to Judaism. "It was a vibe of family and tradition and safety," says Lake, who adds that many of her memories are cultural. "I remember hiding the matzah [at seders]," she says. "But, I was more concerned about how I could get chocolate gelt. There are a lot of food-related memories! My Uncle Murray Klein started Zabar's [in New York City]. Every weekend at the country house, we would have a platter of Zabar's with bagels and sturgeon. The paper label with the orange writing; that was my childhood."

Lake, who stresses that she's always been very independent, won the role of Tracy Turnblad in *Hairspray* and never looked back. "I had my own life outside of my home life and school life," she says. "I moved to California when I was 19. I was my own mother."

She's also very proud of her role in the film. "[It's the film] that never dies. It is amazing. I love that girls who are not a size zero can see themselves in my character. It is an iconic role."

She adds that working with director John Waters was an opportunity she's grateful for. "We are still in touch," she says. "He is like a big brother to me, and he instilled great values in me. [My life] was about to get crazy from becoming famous overnight. He told me to never lose sight of who I am — and to not believe the good press, because then you have to believe the bad press." □



Ricki Lake will be the featured speaker at the Lois Linden Nelson Woman's World Wednesday, May 6, Congregation Shaarey Zedek, Southfield. The event is held 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Lake will speak at 11:45 a.m. Boutique Show is open to the public and free of charge. Luncheon/speaker tickets start at \$72. (248) 357-5544; lnwomansworld.org.

Celebrity Jews

Nate Bloom

Special to the Jewish News

WORKING THE DIAMOND: JEWISH BASEBALL PLAYERS

As of opening day (April 6), the following Jewish players were on a MLB roster. All these players have at least one Jewish parent and were raised either Jewish or secular. Players: **Ryan Braun**, 31, outfielder, Milwaukee. Braun was named Rookie of the Year in 2007, the only Jewish player ever to win this award. He had a so/so

season in 2014 and had hand surgery in the off-season. This season will tell us whether he can return to top form; **Craig Breslow**, 34, reliever, Boston. As for Braun, 2015 will be a pivotal test season for Breslow. He missed part of 2014 to injuries and his pitching quality was way below his career-average. He's an honors Yale grad from a religious home; **Ike Davis**, 28, first base, Oakland. Davis broke in to the majors with the Mets in 2010 and remained with them until early 2014. He was traded to the A's in the off-season. He has a lot of power, but suffers from anemic bat-

ting streaks; **Scott Feldman**, 32, starting pitcher, Houston. A 10-year veteran, Feldman had a good season in 2014, with a career best ERA; **Sam Fuld**, 33, outfielder, Oakland. He's very good when his batting eye is sharp; **Ian Kinsler**, 32, second base, Detroit Tigers. Named several times to the



Kinsler

All-Star team (including 2014), Kinsler has speed and power and is off to a very good start; **Ryan Lavaraway**,

27, catcher, Baltimore. He's been shuttling between the majors and minors since being called up in 2011 by Boston. He's a Yale grad, like Breslow; **Jason Marquis**, 36, starting pitcher, Cincinnati. The much-traveled Marquis broke into the majors in 2000. He's had some very good seasons, but 2014 wasn't one of them; **Joc Pederson**, 22, outfielder, L.A. Dodgers. Great things are expected from Pederson, who was called up last September after a stellar minor league season. He played for Israel in the 2012 World Baseball Classic qualifiers; **Kevin Pillar**,

26, outfielder, Toronto. This former bar mitzvah boy has been shuttling between the big club and the minors since mid-2013; **Danny Valencia**, 30, third base, Toronto. Like Pillar, Valencia had a bar mitzvah. He had a good season with two clubs in 2014.

AT THE MOVIES

Opening this week: *The Age of Adaline* is a romantic fantasy-drama. The title character (Blake Lively) was born in 1908; 20 years later she's in an accident that somehow stops her from aging. To avoid attention, she conceals her



Ford

changing identities from all but her daughter (Ellen Burstyn). Fast forward to the present, when she meets a charming, handsome guy she might want to spend part of eternity with. **Harrison Ford**, 72, has a big supporting role as a friend who knew her when he was young and is dumbfounded when he meets her again in the present. (Ford is still recovering from injuries suffered when he skillfully landed a disabled 1942 plane on a golf course last month, and had to pass up press appearances for *Adaline*.) Fun note:

The co-screenwriter, **Salvador Paskowitz**, 43, is the son of the late **Dorian "Doc" Paskowitz**, a physician-turned-professional-surfer and the patriarch of a family of nine kids known as "the first family of surfing."

In *Little Boy*, a 7-year-old is very attached to his loving father (**Michael Rapaport**, 45). When WWII comes and his father enters the service, the boy wants more than anything to bring his father home safely. Although he relies on his Christian faith to perform a series of bigger and bigger miracles, this isn't an overtly Christian movie. **Emma Watson** and **Tom Wilkinson** co-star. □



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