

NANA, MOM AND ME. 1974. 47 minutes, color.

Produced and directed by Amalie R. Rothschild.

Edited by Bronwen Sennish and Amalie R. Rothschild.

Photography by Daniel Drasin and Amalie R. Rothschild.

Sound by John K. Chester.

Music and 8mm Photography by Randolph S. Rothschild.

Distributed by New Day Films, P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, New Jersey 07417.

The process of making NANA, MOM AND ME was very long, involved and personal. The film itself is a record of that process, and it was edited intentionally with the purpose of keeping intact that sense of the filmmaking experience as an odyssey of self-discovery. I originally began the project with the idea of making a biographical film about my grandmother, Nana. However, once I had begun she changed her mind about letting me film her, so I turned to my mother, initially to gain information about Nana that Nana wouldn't give me. As I began questioning Mom, I started to see her more fully as a person and to see her in her relationship to Nana as a daughter. And I slowly became aware that the film I really wanted to make was more centrally focused on my mother, the generation in between, both mother and daughter, and the bridge between the values of Nana's time and our own. I also realized that Mom has been the single most important and influential person in my life; and it was only through the filmmaking process that I began to tacitly acknowledge to myself my debt to my mother in my own struggle to become an independent professional woman.

It seems to me that as women today, one of the most important things we have to do is discover our heritage and identity as women. We have to find our history. And what other more logical sources do we have to turn to than our own mothers and grandmothers? I felt, at 28 years of age, that I was reaching a turning point in my life when I began examining my own feelings and attitudes about becoming a mother. And as I seriously considered my thoughts on the subject, I found myself having many questions about Nana and Mom that I realized had never crossed my mind before. I also found myself painfully aware suddenly, of Nana's mortality. So, partly as an attempt to keep Nana alive through film, and partly as an attempt to begin to sort out questions about female relationships in my family as a key to the roots of my own identity, I started probing for answers with the camera. The resultant film is, I think, much more interesting, complex and meaningful than the film I originally set out to make – and I certainly learned more about my family and myself than I anticipated.

Many young people seem to feel that the only way to establish their separateness and independence is by denying their background and rejecting their families. Ironically, experience often proves that the key to self-understanding and maturity lies in the opposite direction – direct exploration and intimate knowledge of one's background. What has been crucial for me is the realization that my mother and grandmother are first and foremost people, with their own personal problems and conflicts. Once I realized that they were individuals like myself, I understood that the only way I could learn more about the forces that shaped me, was to learn about the familial situations that shaped them. If there is an element of confrontation within the film, it is there because sometimes there is simply no other way to ask those critical questions.

While I am aware that my family situation is not "typical" (whose is?) I hope that other people will find the film a catalyst for seeking the roots of their own identities. And I also hope the film will generate a new and widespread interest in the reexamination of family relationships."

Amalie R. Rothschild