

1933: The Birth of Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1933. Her parents, Nathan and Cecelia Bader, named her Joan Ruth Bader. Ruth had one sister named Marilyn.

Ruth's family called Ruth "Kiki." This is the nickname Marilyn gave Ruth because Ruth was a "kicky baby." Sadly, Marilyn died of meningitis when Ruth was 14 months old.

Although Ruth's family called her "Kiki," when Ruth went to school people began calling her Ruth. That is because there were so many other girls named Joan in Ruth's class. Ruth's mother told Ruth's teacher to call her Ruth so there wouldn't be confusion.

Ruth grew up in a poor working-class neighborhood. Her family was Jewish, and she and her parents were often discriminated against because they were Jewish. Discrimination against Jewish people is called anti-Semitism, and it still is happening today.

Ruth's mother Cecelia was a big influence in Ruth's life. Although Cecelia had been a good student and had graduated from high school when she was 15, she wasn't allowed to go to college. Instead, her brother was sent to college. Even though Ruth's father didn't believe that girls should go to college, it was Cecelia's dream to see Ruth attend Harvard University.

Unfortunately, Cecelia never saw her dream come true. The day before Ruth graduated from high school, Cecelia died of cancer. But Ruth did fulfill her mother's dream. Ruth earned a full scholarship and attended Harvard University.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg's mother believed in the importance of independence. Ruth Bader Ginsburg once said "My mother told me to be a lady. And for her, that meant be your own person, be independent."