

# The Record

NORTH JERSEY'S TRUSTED SOURCE

\$1.50  
**SUNDAY**  
 July 22, 2012

**TODAY** 87°/70°  
 Partly sunny and warmer  
**TOMORROW** 89°/74°  
 Thunderstorm

## Fort Lee native pens an intimate memoir

### Writer and jewelry designer delves deeply

By **ERINN CONNOR**  
 STAFF WRITER

Beth Bernstein is nothing but honest and open when writing about very personal, intimate moments of her life: Picking up her mother's jewelry after her unexpected death. The ups and downs of a transcontinental relationship. The complicated feelings for her absent father.

The Fort Lee native chronicles these moments in her memoir "My Charmed Life: Rocky Romances, Precious Family Connections and Searching for a Band of Gold." A fashion writer for *Newsday* and the *Village Voice*, among other publications, and veteran of the jewelry industry, Bernstein catalogs milestone moments in her life through jewelry: her mother's baguette diamond stickpin, her first pair of steel stud earrings, a Claddagh ring given to her by a boyfriend.

"That's just my style," said Bernstein. "I spill out who I am onto the page. What you see is what you get. When I'm reading, I want to get to know somebody

**WHO:** Beth Bernstein

**WHAT:** Signing copies of her memoir, "My Charmed Life"

**WHEN:** 7 p.m. Tuesday

**WHERE:** Barnes & Noble at The Shops at Riverside in Hackensack, 390 Hackensack Ave., Hackensack; [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com)

**HOW MUCH:** Free with purchase of book (\$15)

and feel like they're telling me the whole story."

She considers herself a half-Jersey, half-New York girl after spending much of her formative years between the two places. She remembers going to clubs with friends on Route 46 in Bergen County, and spending summers down the Shore in pre-"Jersey Shore" Seaside Heights and Long Branch.

After her parents' divorce she moved to Fort Lee, a place that felt like home right away.

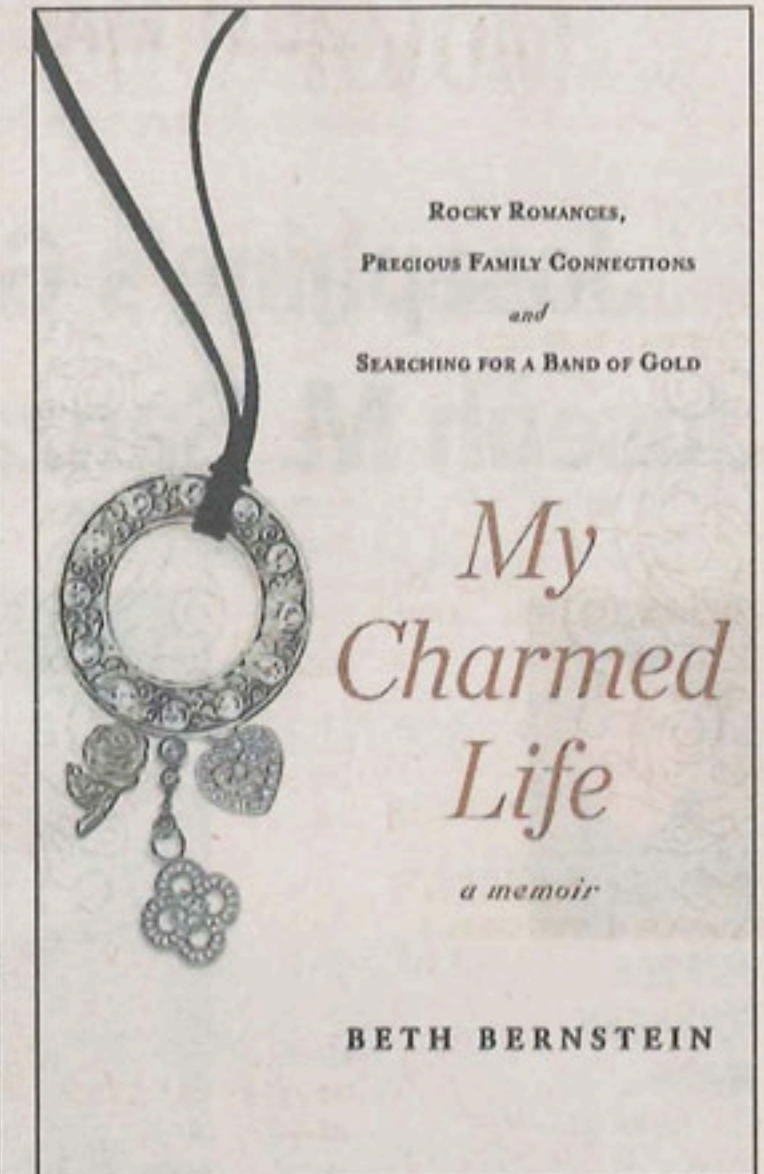
"It was kind of a turning point

in my life," Bernstein said. "I was nervous about fitting in, but I moved to this town where a lot of people came from divorced families, so it made me feel like I wasn't so different."

Even if you're not a jewelry buff like Bernstein, it's not hard to relate to some of the anecdotes she relays. In one of the early chapters, Bernstein describes the classic childhood caper of getting what you want by going around one disapproving parent: She talks her grandmother into taking her to get her ears pierced, despite her mother's disapproval.

"I had decided that the one person who could trump my mother's decision was ... her mother. It was an overthrow of the crown at its best, and the worst that could happen was that my grandmother would say no. She didn't, of course," Bernstein writes.

Of course karma came back and she got a small infection, but it was, as she describes: "My first act of independence, my first true gift of love, and it was the first time I experienced the push and pull of mother/daughter relationships."



Beth Bernstein, a fashion writer and jewelry industry veteran, writes movingly about her relationship with her mother. Her memoir opens with the writer dealing with her mother's death and ends with how she has grieved.

Bernstein's relationship with her mother is a constant running thread throughout the book. It opens with Bernstein coming to grips with her mother's death and closes with how she has grieved.

"The pain doesn't go away, just becomes duller," she said. "And I

wrote about it because it's something people experience on a universal level."

She put her own spin on these experiences by using jewelry as symbolism.

"This generation of women places a lot of sentiment on jew-

elry," Bernstein said. "Pieces are engraved, birthstones are used. Jewelry is passed down through generations and means a lot to the wearer. They want something to hold on to."

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