

Eulogy for Phyllis Weinstein - Feigel Bruchah bat Yosef uMichaela

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As King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 31:10: אִשְׁת־חַיִל מִי יִמָּצָא וְרַחֵק מִפְּגִינִים מְבָרָה:

A woman of valor, who can find? She is more precious than fine pearls.

Her husband trusts in her, and so she lacks nothing;

She does him good, never harm, all the days of her life.

She perceives that her labor is rewarding; her candle burns on into the night.

She reaches out to those in need, and extends her hands to the poor.

She is clothed in strength and dignity, and she faces the future cheerfully.

She speaks with wisdom; the law of kindness is on her lips.

Her children rise up and bless her; her husband sings her praises.

Many daughters have done valiantly, but you excel them all.

King Solomon could well have written these words specifically about Phyllis Weinstein, for in the way she lived and loved, she was truly a woman of valor.

Phyllis' family describes her as possessing a special energy. She was gregarious, insanely social, and no-nonsense. She was incredibly smart and had a great sense of humor, too – and she never hesitated to speak her mind.

At the same time, Phyllis was traditional and deeply committed to family. She was a loving, caring, and strong matriarch – who, by her actions and her overall approach to life, set an example for all of you, especially the women in the family.

She was born Phyllis Kauffman on December 6th, 1935, to Millie & Joseph Kauffman in Detroit, Michigan. Phyllis was the older sister to her late brother Eddie Kauffman. Joseph owned a grocery store and Millie was a bookkeeper. Joseph had a stroke at age 38. Phyllis & Eddie were sent to Florida and back several times over the years. They became quite close with their extended family and learned that you take care of family when they need you. When Millie had entered her senior years, she came to live with Phyllis & Bob, who cared for Bob's parents as well.

Speaking of Bob, when Phyllis was 19, they met on Valentine's Day at a B'nai Brith Sweetheart's Dance. It was a quick and easy courtship. They were so very in love. Bob proposed and they were married only eight months after their first meeting on October 30th, 1956. They would have been married 68 years next week.

The happy couple settled in Florida near their parents. They did everything together. Phyllis was Bob's right hand person. Life kept them busy and along came Suzie & Marla & Carol. As a mother, Phyllis was loving but tough because she was raised that way. Rules were rules. That often didn't stop the three girls though. If mom said no, they go to dad. Phyllis cooked dinner for the family every night and there was a loving expectation to eat what you were served.

The family had relocated to Southern California for work. Phyllis followed in her mother's footsteps by working in accounting. Bob worked with his brother in hat manufacturing. Time passed and they eventually made it here to Arizona in 1974. They continued working and Phyllis only retired in 2020 because of her cancer.

Jewish Life

After marriage and creating their home together, Phyllis & Bob got involved in the Jewish community. It's what you did. The women were involved in Women's League and the men were involved in Men's Club. Phyllis was "very involved in Torah Fund" and saw it as her responsibility to help with costs for training the next generation of Rabbis. Phyllis did so much for them, she was honored with the prestigious Woman of Valor award.

Separately, Bob & Phyllis cooked for events at synagogue. Phyllis with Women's League and Bob in Men's Club. Then, they started cooking together. They loved catering and cooked Shabbat meals for Har Zion/Or Tzion, Temple Chai nosh, Dor L'dor, Temple Emanuel Women's Seder, private parties at people's homes. Thanksgiving dinner, birthday dinners, events at Rabbi Mari's home. If you had a hankering for Phyllis' stuffed cabbage and asked nicely, you might get a surprise container on your doorstep within a few days. They loved to bring people joy and who doesn't love to eat?

Not only did they cook for Jewish events, they loved to cook for their family. Every Shabbat dinner & family holiday was at their house. They were a well oiled machine and it was never stressful... but they fought like hell.

Family

For Phyllis, family meant the world. The grandkids used to fight over who was the favorite because they were constantly showered with love from Bubbe. Phyllis & Bob showed up to every soccer game and sports match for the grandkids. No reminders needed. Phyllis had it all written down in her little Women's League Torah Fund calendar. Time passed and the grandkids grew and became parents themselves. Phyllis wanted to know everything about everyone and loved being with the kids.

Phyllis lived life to the fullest. She was in a weekly bowling league and had a regular mah jongg date dear friends. She always wore makeup and insisted on looking her best whether it was a day in or a day out. Phyllis & Bob lived frugally and did what they could to share it with their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. An extended family highlight was traveling to Oceanside, CA every year until Phyllis was not able to make the trip this year.

Illness and Passing

Phyllis rarely got sick in life and when she did, she never stopped fighting. It helped that she was an eternal optimist. Phyllis saw her role as caretaker for everyone and often put herself last. She cared for Bob and all of his ailments. Her only surgery before cancer was to have a pacemaker installed.

Almost until the very end, Phyllis' mind was still sharp. She never had the mindset that anything was wrong. She even asked Carol last week, "I'm getting better right?" What a resilient woman. 2023 was not without challenges, however. Phyllis was in and out of the hospital multiple times. She still stayed connected to synagogue, streaming Temple Chai services on Friday nights with her girls. Thankfully, she made it to Logan's bar mitzvah in July. Afterwards, she slowly began to decline and yet she stuck around. While many said "maybe she just isn't ready," the family joke was "Maybe Bob's not ready for her just yet. He's always got things to do."

Closing

To all of you, her family: Take counsel from King Solomon's words: Face the future cheerfully.

For as long as you continue to tell her story, as long as you continue to live by the lessons she taught you, as long as you remember her – "her candle will burn on into the night."

Zichronah livrachah. May the memory of Phyllis Weinstein, this woman of valor, always be for a blessing.