



Debra Lou Winegarten

December 29, 1957 - September 10, 2018

Debra Lou Winegarten was born in Dallas on December 29, 1957 to Ruthe and Alvin Winegarten, and passed from this life on September 10, 2018, the first day of Rosh Hashanah 5779. Debra was an author, publisher, educator, flutist, and all-around rabble-rousing feminist who delighted in inspiring and challenging others.

Debra received her undergraduate education at Texas Woman's University, where she discovered her passion for sociology. Debra appreciated the skill and confidence that came from her experiences at TWU, and she served as president of the Austin TWU Alumni chapter for several years. Debra received her master's in sociology from The Ohio State University, and taught sociology at the college level, most recently at South University and The Art Institute, both in Austin. Debra also founded Sociosights Press, whose mission is to publish books that "transform society one story at a time," in accordance with the principles of tikkun olam.

Debra reveled in being a Jew in Texas; she found comfort and inspiration in the practice of Judaism, and was a member of Congregation Agudas Achim in Austin. A third-generation Dallasite, Debra's interest in Jewish history led her to become involved in the Texas Jewish Historical Society, where she took on leadership positions, including a term as president. Debra made a point of visiting Jewish historical sites wherever she traveled, from Cairo, Egypt to Dublin, Ireland and Waco, Texas.

Debra authored a number of books, specializing in biography and poetry, and her work garnered many awards. Her titles include "There's Jews in Texas?," "Where Jewish Grandmothers Come From," "Oveta Culp Hobby: Colonel, Cabinet Member, Philanthropist," "Katherine Stinson: The Flying Schoolgirl," and, with Zvi Yaniv, "My Life on the Mysterious Island of Nanotechnology." In June 2018, she was awarded Sarah Patton Stipend for non-fiction at The Writer's Hotel for her memoir-in-progress.

Debra was especially proud of the books she published via Sociosights Press. Among its titles are the award-winning children's book "Almost a Minyan," written by Lori S. Kline and

illustrated by Susan Simon, and “Faces of the Matriarchs: An Artistic Depiction of Women in Genesis” by Melanie Lewis, which was released while Debra was in hospice.

Debra’s journey through illness was marked by courage and grace. Even in the hospital, she was a teacher, demanding best practices and offering feedback so that others might have a better experience. She appreciated every caregiver, and made a practice of thanking those who tended to her body as it failed. She will long be remembered for the many gatherings she had while at St. David’s, including two standing-room-only minyans and a 20th anniversary celebration of her hand-fasting with her wife and heart partner, Cindy Huyser.

Debra leaves behind many who have been delighted and inspired by her. She was fond of saying it took three blackboards to draw out her family tree, and her extended family is large. She was predeceased by her mother, Ruthe Winegarten, father Alvin Winegarten, sister Martha Wilson, and stepmother Phyllis Putter, and is survived by her devoted wife, Cindy Huyser, her brother, Marc Sanders, uncle Larry Lewin, and her siblings Susan Picard, Josh Putter, Alan Putter, and David Putter as well as by her cats Orange Julious, Keyboard, and Sheina. At the time of her death, she was employed by the University of Texas, where she identified herself as the “first undersecretary of the American Astronomical Society.”

Donations in Debra’s honor may be made to the Ruthe Winegarten Memorial Foundation for Texas Women’s History (<https://www.womenintexashistory.org/support/>), or to a charity that provides service to pets or to the homeless.

Graveside services at noon, Thursday, September 13th in the Agudas Achim Section of Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, 2800 Hancock Dr., Austin, Texas. Online guestbook and obituary available at AustinNaturalFunerals.com. May Debra’s memory be for a blessing.

Cemetery

Austin Memorial Park

2800 Hancock Dr

Austin, TX, 78731

Comments



“ I am devastated... I was sharing my signed copy of Oveta Culp Hobby with my 7th grade students here in Houston, Texas. I told them everything I remembered that she told me about herself. IT was a TSHA event. I was avoiding a seminar I didn't want to attend. My appreciation for Ovata Culp Hobby grew and grew. I didn't want to walk away. She didn't have a voice then. I wish I could remember exactly when this took place. I thought it was February 2017 or 2018. We had a great conversation. She made me excited to be a teacher again. My heart goes out to her family of choice.

Reba - May 21, 2019 at 04:52 PM



“ I am only learning today that Debra is gone. What a giving soul. She as always trying to help me achieve my goals even when I didn't have them figured out. I loved our trip to Dallas and spending time with her dear dad. But my favorite member is when my book came out and Bookpeople wouldn't give me a reading. While she and I were on the phone about it, she brought the BP manager on the call and reamed him out. I never got the reading but observing her chutzpah made it worthwhile. Bye, Dear Deb.

Jan - April 06, 2019 at 01:27 AM



“ I recall in grade school (TCGooch) Debbie would always ace me out of the winner position in spelling bees and dictionary look ups! A very sweet, intelligent and considerate person, even as a child. Sleep well Debbie. I remember you :-)

Matt Falkenstein, DDS - February 03, 2019 at 10:40 PM



“ I am so sorry to hear of Debbie's passing. I had classes with her at TC Marsh and W T White and , while I did not know her well, I remember how incredibly smart she was and how talented she was on the flute. She obviously went on to do tremendous things after High School. RIP Debbie.

Jennifer Swift Benavides - October 03, 2018 at 05:52 PM



“ Debra was one of the first people that I was aware of that demanded change if she believed it to be a good thing. Such was the case in T.C. Marsh Junior High School when, as a member of the marching band, she refused to stand in silence as an invocation was read over the public address system. I was always in disagreement with her over this, but I never doubted her resolve. She was a talented person.

Doug Walsdorf - October 03, 2018 at 03:53 PM



“ I will always think of Debra in connection to Texas and Texas women's history. We often met at conferences, and her ebullience and confidence was a joy to behold. She tackled interesting projects and wrote a splendid biography of Ovetta Culp Hobby. I admired her good cheer and her profound interest in Texas women's history. Her mother Ruthe and I would often meet to discuss Texas women, especially the woman suffrage movement back in the 1980s when, it seems, Texas women's history was being "discovered.". Debra continued her mother's legacy with bravado. I miss them both and know the world has lost two wonderful authors.
Elizabeth Hayes Turner

Elizabeth Hayes Turner - September 25, 2018 at 10:33 AM



“ I met Deb in March of 2010; when she was appointed "undersecretary" for the AAS. It was a pleasure to work with her. We became fast friends through our desire to support the AAS and a wonderful man named Fritz. We had many fun times sitting at the "kids" table at Board meetings. I admit more fun was had over a glass of wine reflecting on the meetings, dinners and those all too few phone calls leading up to the meetings. She was a kind and incredible person and will be missed! Thoughts go to Cindy....Take care!

Kelly Clark - September 15, 2018 at 12:40 PM



“ Sitting in a room at the Library Hotel Deb spoke. She apologized for her voice which was raspy and quiet. But her voice--did she know?--was loud. Her words profound. It was luck or providence, I don't know what, that brought us both to that conference but what I know was that for me, it was fortune to meet her and to meet, through her, Cindy.
She will be so very missed.

Vicki Cohen - September 15, 2018 at 12:00 PM



“ I met Debra at Camp Young Judaea in the late 1960's. I remembered her when I met her again at Shearith Israel Sunday School where I attended with my cousin Dana Rubin.

I returned to Texas to live in Austin nearly 50 years later and t Friday night services at Agudas, I saw Debra, now Devora, and remembered her face. I reminded her how we knew each other, after she told me her name. I'm do pleased we were reunited. We spoke about writing and she referred me to a talk show host to publicize my book. She was a real activist and liver of life. I will miss her presence, wit and warm smile. Rest well, old friend.

karen L. Baker - September 15, 2018 at 01:30 AM



“ I met Deb through Story Circle Network and she inspired me and many other writers with her knowledge of and enthusiasm for book marketing. She was a great networker and was full of great ideas. She was a joy to be around. When she got sick, I wrote and told her that she was a bright light on this planet. Now she is a bright star still shining light on all of us. Love and peace to Cindy and all who are so sad to see her go. I didn't know Deb that well, but I will still miss her.

Sheila Allee

Sheila Allee - September 14, 2018 at 05:25 PM



“ My favorite memory of Deb was when we had a Christmas open house in about 2008. She and Cindy dropped by for a little while. We read poetry and other readings aloud, and Deb accompanied us on the flute. Sweet and happy time.

Jill Wiggins

Jill Wiggins - September 14, 2018 at 11:45 AM



“ Deb was one of the best examples of " love your neighbor as yourself" as anyone I have ever met. She had a love and open heart for everyone -- and I do mean that. In this world where there is so much division, prejudice and anger ,Deb reached out to people in love. All people. All little animals. Everyone. She had many talents she will be remembered for -- but the greatest of these was love.

Mac Morrison

Mac Morrison - September 14, 2018 at 07:42 AM



“ Debra was one of a kind and I am so happy to have known her. She did everything with gusto and left a delightful imprint on our world. Thank you Cindy for loving and taking care of her. My heart goes out to you as we all miss her now.

Pam Knight - September 13, 2018 at 12:01 PM



“ Although I didn't know Deborah well, I am aware of the generous contributions and impact she made on the literary community. On the occasions that I visited her home to work on the Texas Poetry Calendar, I found her to be both gracious and graceful. She exuded a compassion for all living beings. My heart is with Cindy in this time of grief and reflection. Cuddle the kitties. It helps. Especially Keyboard, who will likely miss Deborah almost as much as anyone. Know that you have friends you can turn to.

-Tony

Tony Burnett - September 13, 2018 at 11:20 AM



“ Devorah put so much time and personal energy into the local alumni association and all of her projects. She was indeed a source of light. She will be deeply and profoundly missed by us all.

Robin Orlowski

Texas Woman's University BS 2001
MA 2005

Robin Orlowski - September 13, 2018 at 07:33 AM



“ Debra was a source of joy to me and all she knew and I received benefit from just being around her. I'll always remember her smile and warmth, especially directed to we who needed it most. I have many of her books and I've shared them with many friends and family. Memories of her readings, parties and laughter are stuck in my brain and will nourish my writing always.

Barbara Gregg

Barbara Gregg - September 12, 2018 at 11:26 PM



“ I join all here who have been loved by Deb and who will miss her generous loving spirit. She and I tied for third place in a Story Circle Network Essay writing contest. After reading my essay about having two children born with a genetic disease, she took me under her wing and began referring to me as her third-place winning sister.

We were both members of the Works-in-Progress group through SCN. She was a shining star in our group. She taught me so much ... like how to make Outrageous Requests ... not easy for an introvert. And that your book is only a vehicle for making connections with other people and discovering the gift you have to offer them. My life is ever so much richer for having had Deb in my life. And she will live on as I continue to be faithful to what she taught me and to pass it on to others.

I, too, was a recipient of her generosity. I was stunned when she offered to fly from Austin to San Francisco to help me sell my memoir at the conference dealing with my children's disease. She said a \$300 flight was a deal and even offered to help pay for the hotel room. She wanted me to be free to attend sessions and meet other participants. I was stunned by her offer. I had never met anyone so generous. I wouldn't let her help pay for the hotel room, but having her there with me was such a gift.

One year ago on September 10 I was flying back to Ohio after that conference and she was flying back to Austin. Little did we know that she would be gone in a year. I can hardly believe it. We had plans to rendezvous at the SCN conference this year, where she once again extended her generosity to me. Sadly, that was not to be for either of us.

On September 10 this year, I found my first chrysalis in my butterfly garden. This morning a female Monarch butterfly emerged. I named her Debster. I like to think Deb would love that and is exuding enthusiasm like only she can from the other side of the veil. I'm sure heaven is rocking with her vibrant energy.

I have not had the pleasure of meeting you, Cindy, but Deb did tell me about how much she loved you. And I could see that when I attended your Handfasting Anniversary celebration via Facebook Live. What a huge loss for you. I, too, hope your memories of a wonderful life with Deb give you comfort. And I hope you will take whatever time you need to grieve. Grief is a sign of having loved greatly and would that more people appreciated that. I will continue to surround you with healing light.





“ What beautiful writing about Debra and her life, her loves, and her lifework, Cindy. You are the model upon which all who have to walk such a painful path need to emulate. Your love was fully realized and I hope the love from Debra and all of the rest of us are the support you need to carry you onward.

Susan P Picard - September 12, 2018 at 10:19 PM



“ What a lovely review of Debra's life. She was such a shining light. I'm so glad she was able to go to New York last June and be honored for her work.

Her example guided me to write and produce my own YA book. I'd hoped to take a copy to Debbie when she felt better. Life having denied that, I'll always honor her in memory, a true case of the old saying, "May her memory be a blessing."

Deepest condolences to Cindy and cats in their pain. May the love you shared with Debra comfort you all.



Madeleine Dimond - September 12, 2018 at 09:43 PM



“ Love to Cindy. I remember Debbie's grace and humor at this year's Austin International Poetry Festival, how she got up and hoarse-whispered, a twinkle in her eyes, the poignant, hilarious, sassy tale of what happened to her voice. She was an amazing person.

Diana Conces - September 12, 2018 at 09:06 PM



“ I’ll miss you Debster! You were always so supportive in our little poetry community since I first moved here. I love the inspiring legacy you’ve left behind in your work. I’ll never forget my 4th grader’s Oveta book project and how proud I was to buy your book directly from the esteemed author herself! Shine bright with the stars now, and rest peacefully. Hope the universe beyond is everything you could have ever dreamed it to be.

Agnes Savich - September 12, 2018 at 08:19 PM



“ Devorah shared her joy with me and inspired me to write, create and follow my own passion as a writer.



John Baltisberger - September 12, 2018 at 07:14 PM



“ I count my self one of the lucky many who had the chance to share in Devorah's infinite joy and zest for life. She gave of herself freely, and had no litmus test for sharing her love and wit and considerable talent. I am honored and humbled to have partaken of her circle of love and friendship. Condolences to Cindy and family.

John Hoag - September 12, 2018 at 06:52 PM



“ Fay Sufrin lit a candle in memory of Debra Lou Winegarten



Fay sufrin - September 12, 2018 at 06:15 PM



“ I have wonderful memories of Debra, but I will especially remember her joy of life, her smile, and her beautiful blue eyes.

Nancy Baker Jones

Nancy Baker Jones - September 12, 2018 at 06:05 PM



“ Debra's passing has us really hard. We loved the few moments we were privileged enough to share with her life...Elliot and I are better, wiser and more blessed because of her. We truly miss you, Debra.

Arti and Elliot

Arti Barnes - September 12, 2018 at 03:37 PM



“ Debra was always a point of light in this world-a bright and sparkling luminary who animated each moment with positive energy and powerful presence. She made a dance of her leaving-involving all who came near/elevating and levitating each moment into a FACEBOOK epic.Her uniqueness will be treasured by her beloved Cindy ,as well as every person lucky enough to share a dose of Debra in their lives!

Thom Woodruff - September 12, 2018 at 01:50 PM



“ Devorah Winegarten will be present forever in the nature miracles she so treasured. Sharing this time of profound sadness and love with you, Cindy, and with all who love and miss Debbie.



Annette D'Armata - September 12, 2018 at 01:30 PM



“ When my husband died at 4am, I called my immediate family members, then I called Deb. She was the first one to the hospital. I will never forget watching her walk down that long hospital hall. She hugged me, looked me over, then pulled a banana out of her bag, asking, “When did you eat last?”

That, in a nutshell, is the person Deb was. The world won't be as good without her.

Mary L - September 12, 2018 at 12:41 PM



“ Mary-I don't know you, but she did the exact same thing for me the morning of my mother's memorial. She hugged me, looked me over, asked when I had eaten last, and pulled out a banana!

Jeff Wagers - September 12, 2018 at 02:13 PM



“ You will be missed greatly. Blessings and love and peace...Rev. Bill McDonald

Rev. Bill McDonald - September 12, 2018 at 12:01 PM



“ Cindy, I don't know what words can comfort you now except these snippets that offer glimpses of the many facets of the love of your life. I've known of Debbie for years because of the Herdomain email discussion group, formerly Webgrrls. After I met her that one time -- recently at a Herdomain monthly gathering -- I discovered some things about her that made me start to appreciate who she really was and feel an important bond with her. First, the cat's name, Orange Julious. We had an orange Peke-faced Persian cat whom my little daughter named Orange Julius Caesar. So I recognized that willingness to be goofily appropriate. And then I read her poem, "Crossing an Ocean of Silence", about how she felt about that early issue with her throat: "Do not act as if there is something wrong. There is nothing wrong, I'm just quieter than you're used to." That's when I knew how real Debbie was. And then her farewell poem for Sherilyn B., a beautiful visit from Sherilyn's ghost: "...Because being in her soft loving presence was enough to show anyone that surely our purpose on this earth is to love each other." That's why, even though I'm just in the periphery of the thousands whose lives have been touched by this woman, I feel the impact of her transition and I hope that is of some comfort to you.

Sue Reading - September 12, 2018 at 09:48 AM



“ Debbie "mitzvah" brought light and sassiness to every conversation, service, class, or wherever she was. She taught us to use chutzpah for good in the world, and she was an example of how to live and how to die. Much love to Cindy and her family. Deb will continue to live on through the enduring lessons she taught so many.

Dana Winer - September 12, 2018 at 09:33 AM



“ Devorah will always be the "Debster" to me. Her light will shine even brighter now...if that is possible.

Dance on amongst the stars and make the angels laugh dear sister.

Linda - September 12, 2018 at 10:38 AM



“ A dynamo who never lacked time to show empathy and compassion. The world is poorer for her absence.

Ann Howells - September 12, 2018 at 02:16 PM



“ My friends, if you only learn one thing today, let it be this: LOVE. Be fearless in loving. Be grand in your love. Be infinite in love. Just don't wait another minute to declare your love. Be loud and political in your love. Just be love. This is what I learned over and over from my fearless and boundlessly loving friend, Deb and her heart-partner wife Cindy!



Robin Bradford - September 12, 2018 at 08:59 AM



“ my condolences to you and yours Cindy. I can tell she was deeply loved and that is the most important thing

Esther - September 12, 2018 at 09:18 AM



“ Debra always had a smile on her face when she came to see me at the library at South University. I enjoyed working with her. Cindy, please accept my deepest condolences in her loss. She truly was one of a kind.

Ashlie Mildfelt - September 12, 2018 at 08:54 AM



“ I met Debbie at Texas Library Association conference. I literally turned a corner, and there she was. At first I walked past her, but then her book "There's Jews in Texas" caught my eye and I literally backed up. As soon as I saw her, I knew this was a person I had to get to know. Debbie and I became fast friends, having so much in common. We were both Jews, feminists in long term "heart partner" relationships, cat-lovers, poets, and daughters of aging fathers. Debbie was so incredibly kind and generous to me. She and Cindy hosted a shabbat dinner/poetry reading at their home in my honor and provided me with a home away from home while I was in Austin. Debbie also shared a bookselling table with me at a book fair and to watch her work the table was truly watching an artist at work. The sale was not the important thing; the important thing was making every single person who stopped by the table smile and experience a moment of joy in their day. Debbie gave me some practical advise that made a huge difference in my life, both personally and professionally. I had looked forward to many more years of friendship with her and many more years of reading her wonderful poetry. I offer heartfelt condolences to all her friends and family, most especially the love of her life, Cindy Huyser and her three precious cats. Maybe Debbie's memory be for many blessings. Lesléa Newman



Lesléa Newmsan - September 12, 2018 at 08:32 AM



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Dina - September 12, 2018 at 06:43 AM



“ Peace and love to all her friends and family.
After my son was abducted to Japan in 2010, Debbie wrote me a poem to offer comfort and understanding in my darkest hour. She was and is the Light of Compassion and loving-kindness. For that and so much more, I'll never forget her.

November 21, 2010:

The grief of a father
For the loss of his son
Is worse than the howling wind
Of an unstoppable hurricane.

There is a certain comfort in death
In knowing that one has returned to the creator.
It is the unknown and missing
That is worse than death.

The longing to be with;
The “if only we had one more day”
The unbearable uncertainty of aloneness
With only a two-dimensional pictorial reminder.

And the fluidity of memory
Plays tricks on the emotions
The ghost of the missing one
A glimpse on a passing subway.

And yet, the father never stops loving.
Never stops searching.
Never stops knowing he will find his son.
To do so would mean death for them both.

11-21-10

Brian Prager - September 12, 2018 at 04:33 AM



“ 4 files added to the album New Album Name



Yuriko Matsumura - September 11, 2018 at 11:49 PM



“ Debbie and I met by her book "The Flyng Schoolgrl!". I'd visited her two times from Japan, and she took me to New Mexico University to help my research about Katherine Stinson. Debbie said " we are Stinson sisters" because both of us respect her so much, it sounded so sweet and exciting for me.

Debbie was always attentive and charming. Her smile makes me so happy.

Good-bye, my Stinson sister, Debbie!

Yuriko - September 12, 2018 at 12:22 AM



“ I met her when I read her wonderful biography of Oveta Culp Hobby, founder of the WAC. What a delightful person, so full of life, a fantastic writer.

Thomas McKelvey Cleaver

Thomas Cleaver - September 12, 2018 at 01:18 AM



“ After reading all the memories of Debbie it is apparent she was an amazing woman and friend to many. I'm sending heartfelt condolences to her wife and my friend Cindy Huyser! May you find peace in all the wonderful memories you shared.

Debbie Gonzalez

Debbie Gonzalez - September 12, 2018 at 09:21 AM



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Jean Stuntz - September 11, 2018 at 11:24 PM



“ At the Texas State Historical Association meeting ion March 2018. Debbie was always a light in the darkness.

Jean - September 11, 2018 at 11:35 PM



“ Devorah called me several years ago after her father was left alone in his life. We spoke of his moving forward in life and she never stopped being concerned and showing her love for her father. She was a sincere loving and caring person who will be remembered well by many. Cindy I wish you peace and comfort in these days sadness and loss. Let her memories and love lift you up and give you strength.

marge wright - September 12, 2018 at 09:33 PM