



Jeanne Barnett Saletan

June 1, 1928 - September 24, 2021

Jeanne Saletan died peacefully at home on Friday, Sept. 24, 2021, at age 93. She was born in Newark, New Jersey, and grew up in a community of Jewish immigrant families. While raising five children in New York and Texas, she embarked on a life of feminist activism and Jewish learning. She loved people and liked to try new things. Over the years, she trained as an electrician and machinist, learned drafting and filmmaking, sang in a community choir, performed in a play, served as a security guard at a women's conference, and went on a 400-mile motorcycle trip across Texas.

Jeanne earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a master's degree in social work from the University of California at Berkeley. In her early professional years, she taught kindergarten and helped women transition from public assistance to job training and employment. She worked with veterans, juvenile offenders, and the biological parents of children in foster care.

In her 40s, inspired by Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, Jeanne joined the feminist movement. She led discussion groups, campaigned for the Equal Rights Amendment, and launched a sex discrimination investigation that prompted her school district to begin hiring women in administrative roles. She served as president of the Houston area chapter of the Older Women's League, worked with the National Organization for Women and the National Council of Jewish Women, and helped form the Women's Lobby Alliance, a coalition of feminist organizations. She lobbied and testified before the Texas legislature, obtaining health insurance legislation for displaced homemakers and changing the way textbooks treated women and girls. She also worked as a vocational counselor for women.

In later years, Jeanne studied Hebrew and explored Jewish thought, particularly through the works of Rachel Adler, Mordecai Kaplan, Arthur Green, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Yehuda Amichai. She co-founded and served as the first president of the Houston Reconstructionist Havurah. In 1992, at age 63, she became a bat mitzvah. She participated in Palestinian-Jewish dialogues, hosted a weekly discussion group on

religious writings, and became a devoted member of Congregation Shma Koleinu. She continued to work in her community, tutoring adults in English and fighting successfully for housing for single mothers. She loved to sit in her back yard and watch the squirrels.

Toward the end of her life, Jeanne lost several beloved family members: her husband David Saletan, her son Ira Saletan, and her brothers Harry and Lewis Barnett. She is survived by her children Paul, Becky, Will, and Lou; by her daughters-in-law Suzanne Shiff, Tam Voynick, Martha Hirschfield, and Jynne Dilling; by her son-in-law Marshall Messer; and by her grandchildren Amelia Saletan, Ben Voynick, Anna and Simone Messer, and Eli and Miriam Saletan. The family would like to thank her doctor, Theresa Vicroy; her rabbi, Scott Hausman-Weiss; and her caregivers, Hattie Johnson, Martha Smith, Karen Finley, Stephanie Rogers, and Stephanie Booker.

A small, private graveside ceremony was held on Sept. 26 at the Eloise Woods Natural Burial Park in Cedar Creek, Texas, under the auspices of Austin Natural Funerals. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Donations may be made in Jeanne's memory to Congregation Shma Koleinu, Jewish Family Service, or a charity of your choice.

Tribute Wall



“ *Jeanne Barnett Saletan*

October 14, 2022 at 12:02 PM

SR

“ *Jeanne was a force to be reckoned with. As one of the mainstays of the Houston Reconstruction ist Havurah (later Kol HaLev) she was an important person in bringing me back to organized Jewish life. She listened- something most of us don't do very well. I didn't see her very much these past few years and I regret that. Her passing marks the end of an era. Suzanne Rickles*

Suzanne Rickles - November 14, 2021 at 08:38 AM

MW

“ *I love you, Jeanne. Your ever-present encouragement to help me stretch into new and uncomfortable places is a gift I carry with me, and share with others.*

Thank you for all that you gave to others

Your memory will always be a blessing. .

Marilyn Weiss - November 14, 2021 at 04:16 AM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Madeleine Boskovitz - November 02, 2021 at 10:25 PM

PW

“ *Most gracious Saletan kin & friends, Thanks for sharing the sad news. Jeanne was an example in many ways. My very 1st memory was that she took a very exacting, traditionally male job, tool & die related maybe. When i was urged by others to take a leadership position for which i felt inadequate, Jeanne said she would be my "right hand" and she was. I was honored to be included for Louie's Bar Mitzvah. Years later, while living in AZ, i had another eye surgery and needed to stay in the Houston area for numerous weeks. Jeanne was the 1st to offer me hospitality while i was totally blind, with hopes of vision returning. Jeanne facilitated my mostly horizontal 2 weeks in her home and provided 3 daily scrumptious meals. Since then we phoned and were sad when her hearing became a challenge. Phoenix Wheeler (aka Evie Whitsett) of Tucson, AZ*

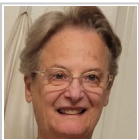
Phoenix Wheeler - October 21, 2021 at 01:04 PM

MB

“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Madeleine Boskovitz - October 18, 2021 at 03:09 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Madeleine Boskovitz - October 13, 2021 at 11:55 AM

LS

“ *3 files added to the album Houston Palestinian-Jewish Dialogue Group 2006-2008*



Louis Saletan - October 08, 2021 at 12:14 PM

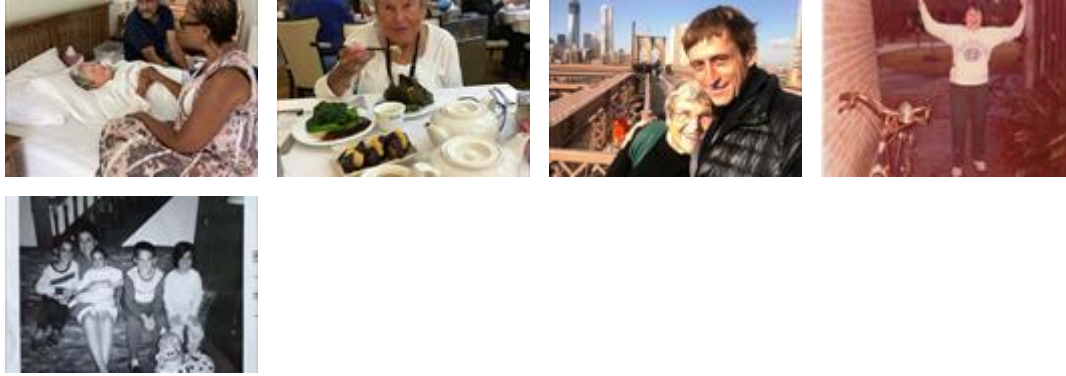
JB

“ We were always welcomed into her home with the most beautiful smile and bright eyes as was everyone who entered. It was easy to be in Jeanne’s company and we will miss getting to know her. What an amazing life!

Jacqueline and Craig Beskid - October 02, 2021 at 02:21 PM

BS

“ 12 files added to the tribute wall



Becky Saletan - October 01, 2021 at 07:07 PM

LC

“ My mother, Helen Finkel Green, loved Jeanne so very very much. She is one of her special. beloved people.
And I understand why. Among many other attributes, she had the most beautiful soothing voice. She was special to me as well. Though she was quite ill, she took the time to call me when my daughter Lisa died.
She understood my grief and I will always be grateful for her timely and beautiful call. I think about her voice on the phone that day with gratitude and an understanding what we both shared. She was special to me as well. Love Lynne Cloutier

Lynne Cloutier - October 01, 2021 at 06:25 PM

JU

“ *It's really hard to know where to start this. I've known Aunt Jeanne for just about 70 years, and she always epitomized loving kindness to me. My memories are bountiful - from my first encounter with her at age 3 1/2 - 4, to seeing her and David off on their cruise to France, to her taking me to my first demonstration (ban the bomb in front of the UN building in NY), to taking me with her and the family to Shelter Island and introducing me to spam, worrying while David taught my brother, Dan, and me to sail (sending us off with the largest Hershey bar I've ever seen) - and many, many more.*

Jeanne offered me a view of feminism that countered my own upbringing and, over the years, that view served to sustain me through difficult times. She introduced me to Judith Plaskow's writing and supported my affinity for Judaism.

Jeanne was always patient and kind - no matter how others acted. Her gentleness has served as a beacon for me, and her light remains in my heart. Much love to my wonderful cousins, Paul, Becky, Will and Lou - and their spouses and children.

Julia - October 01, 2021 at 03:29 PM



“ *6 files added to the album Memories Album*



Madeleine Boskovitz - September 30, 2021 at 09:41 PM

MA

“ *4 files added to the album Memories Album*



Marian - September 30, 2021 at 08:08 PM

ER

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Erika - September 30, 2021 at 04:40 PM

RF

“ Although I was not lucky enough to know Jeanne directly, she had a profound impact on my Dad through their study groups, sheltering during hurricanes and his use of her pool to exercise. His respect for her runs deep. May we all be lucky enough to find friendships as meaningful as theirs. Our thoughts are with the loved ones. Rebecca Feder (daughter of Craig Oettinger)

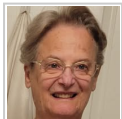
Rebecca Feder - September 29, 2021 at 07:57 PM

LS

“ 39 files added to the album Photos from the Saletan family



Louis Saletan - September 29, 2021 at 06:39 PM



Wonderful photos, Louie! Thanks for sharing them here.

Madeleine Boskovitz - September 30, 2021 at 12:27 PM



“ *Jeanne and her husband, David, were such an important part of my life. They invited me into Judaism and the Houston Reconstructionist Havurah, a community they helped build. I made many friends and understood what community meant. After David passed on, Jeanne and I became very close and I have a zillion memories ranging from lighting Shabbat candles together to taking her to the Emergency Room for heart failure.*

One thing that was unique in our relationship: Jeanne taught me how to eat mangoes -- you have to sit on the edge of the bathtub and let yourself really enjoy it!

I loved Jeanne's ready laugh and her great sense of humor, most of all.

I am attaching a last photo taken this last June when I knew I probably wouldn't see her again. We sat in her beloved garden and she let me take her with me (in a picture).



Madeleine Boskovitz - September 29, 2021 at 03:38 PM



“ *I don't have a specific memory to share, just a lifetime of knowing Jeanne and the lovely person she was! Jeanne was always there with a kind smile and she cared so much about everyone! She will be very missed, but I am thankful she and David will be together again ❤️ Love, Corinne*

Corinne Wier - September 29, 2021 at 03:01 PM



I first met Jeanne when I went to HRH- Houston Reconstructionist Havurah. She greeted me and my husband, and made us feel so welcome. I also loved singing with her. Whenever I saw her, we would look into each other's eyes and say, "I love you" to each other. I will miss her greatly.

Gail Toland

Gai Toland - September 29, 2021 at 03:08 PM



Jeanne and I met through classes at the Houston JCC. She was the smartest in the room and very modest. She never boasted about all the activities that were listed in her obituary. She was sweet and made everyone feel good. I shall miss you, Jeanne.

marge - September 29, 2021 at 04:32 PM

AW

Robert and I were fortunate enough to meet Jeanne and David a few times. But not enough!

Anne Weiss - September 30, 2021 at 08:19 PM