



Sylvia Spertus

May 21, 1936 - July 31, 2021

Sylvia (Liebman) Spertus passed away on July 31, in her home in Austin, surrounded by her loving family during her third bout with cancer. She was born May 21, 1936, in Rock Island, Illinois to Eva and Julius Liebman. Sylvia earned a bachelor's degree in Geography from the University of Iowa, foreshadowing a lifetime of travel with her husband Philip Spertus, whom she married on February 5, 1961. They raised their four children in the Chicago area, where they were active in the Jewish community, including sponsoring the Philip and Sylvia Spertus Judaica Prize and raising money for the Jewish United Fund and Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership.

In 1989, they made what they thought would be a temporary move to Austin but decided to stay permanently because of their wonderful new friends and the great community, which they contributed to by helping create the Shalom Austin Jewish Community Center and Congregation Tiferet Israel.

Sylvia was an excellent cook and hostess, whether entertaining large groups at the home she and her husband built, preparing meals for her husband or as a volunteer at a soup kitchen.

She was an opera enthusiast from back when all she could afford was "nosebleed" seats, going on to assist her husband when he chaired the Austin Opera and to win a walk-on role in Tosca in a fundraiser. Phil produced a

poster with a picture of her in costume, proclaiming that she was the "star of the show" and that she "dominated the stage".

A world traveler, Sylvia visited over 60 countries, some of which no longer exist. Her travels took her everywhere from Antarctica to the North Pole, including the interior of New Guinea and the Galapagos with her children and grandchildren. In her last trip before the pandemic, she set sail from Norway to see the Northern Lights.

In addition to her husband of 60 years, she is survived by her loving children, Michael (Maura), Debby, Ellen (Keith), and Andrea (Ted), and her four grandchildren, all of whom were with her during her last days.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to any of the following Jewish charities:

- Spertus Institute (www.spertus.edu)
- Tiferet (www.tiferetaustin.org)
- Congregation Agudas Achim (www.theaustinsynagogue.org)
- Shalom Austin (www.shalomaustin.org)

A live stream of the funeral service will appear on the Austin Natural Funerals Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/AustinNaturalFunerals>, shortly before 10 am on Monday, August 2nd. A Facebook account is not required in order to watch. If a pop-up window appears asking you to log in click "not now" and the live stream will be available for you to watch. If the "not now" button does not appear, scroll down on the page and it will come up for you to select.

Previous Events

Graveside Service

AUG 2. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Austin Memorial Park
2800 Hancock Dr.
Austin, TX 78731

Tribute Wall



“ *Austin Natural Funerals created a Webcast in memory of Sylvia Spertus*



Austin Natural Funerals - August 02, 2021 at 01:48 PM

MS

Alas, there was only one Sylvia! To Phil and the entire bereaved family, please accept my deepest condolences on your great loss.

Madeleine Solomon - August 05, 2021 at 10:00 AM



“ *Sylvia Spertus*

October 14, 2022 at 12:02 PM

RF

“ *Sylvia's life is a testament to the power of a strong Jewish woman. Her Judaism and her dedication to the Jewish people were evident in everything she did and for which she stood. Lori and I wish Phil and your entire family only a sense of peace and comfort as you reflect upon the goodness of Sylvia's life and the love which flowed from this remarkable woman.*

Rabbi Alan Freedman

Rabbi Alan Freedman - August 02, 2021 at 11:35 AM

LZ

“ *I was fortunate to have met her, just to know a little of her, a fierce, loving woman who demonstrated her care for justice, for emet (truth), and who embraced the wholeness of life.*

Lucien Zahendra

Lucien Zahendra - August 02, 2021 at 08:02 AM

LT

“Dearest Phil, Alas we had no idea of Sylvia’s deteriorating health. We are so sorry for we have spoken of you so often with so many precious memories.

We wish with all that is in us we could have had one more of Sylvia’s warm embraces - and we could have told her how much we loved and admired her.

Ian will be with you at the funeral but unfortunately Luci is out of town.

Luci is in DC on Monday and Tuesday speaking out for social justice, the voting rights crisis and the poor peoples march.

We share this with you only because we believe that this commitment to social justice is something that we have shared with you and Sylvia.

Your commitment to community has always left us in awe. And you are so right Sylvia’s smile and “can do” spirit always was the tonic that the weary of us needed.

We shall miss her mentorship and her generosity. We will always be grateful for your friendship which inspired a purpose driven life in us and every other life she touched.

You two made a difference with your lives and what more could any of us want?

Besides your marriage was an inspiration to countless others including both of us.

Shalom,
Your forever admirers
Luci Johnson & Ian Turpin

Luci Johnson & Ian Turpin - August 01, 2021 at 10:13 PM

GT

“ Sending my sympathy to Phil and family. May her name be for a blessing.

Gloria Taussig

gloria taudig - August 01, 2021 at 08:36 PM