



Vivian Schenker Ballard

January 21, 1960 - June 15, 2020

Vivian Ballard, age 60, ended her struggle with aplastic anemia in Austin, Texas on June 15, 2020. Vivian was smart, stubborn, feisty, strong, loving, and generous. She lives on in the hearts of those who fought by her side for justice, education, and equality, and in the hearts of many who benefited from her boundless hospitality and compassion.

Vivian was born on January 21, 1960, to Joan Desmond Schenker and Henry Schenker. She was raised in Fairfield, Connecticut; Erie, Pennsylvania; and finally Houston, Texas. As a student at the University of Texas at Austin, she lived at the College House Co-ops, where she met her loving and dedicated husband of 40 years, Jimi Ballard. As a young couple, they lived in Falls Church, Virginia, where her weekly participation in a vigil for the Equal Rights Amendment resulted in a freedom-of-speech lawsuit that is relevant today in light of new fences separating protestors from the White House. Vivian received her Doctor of Jurisprudence from George Washington University before returning to Austin in 1989. She was widely known for her work with the Student Health Advisory Committee of the Austin Independent School District, for her commitment to Congregation Beth Israel, and for her hospitality and attention to special diets as a baker and innkeeper at the gluten-free Austin Fairview Bed-and-Breakfast.

Survivors include her husband, James (Jimi) Ballard and daughter Miriam

(Mimi) Ballard of Austin, Texas; daughter Rachel Ballard of Seoul, South Korea; mother Joan Schenker and sister Rebecca Schenker of La Grange, Texas; sister Melissa Schenker of Austin, Texas; niece Desmond Magness and nephew Aaron Matlock. She was preceded in death by her father, Henry Schenker.

During this time of Covid-19, graveside services at the cemetery of Congregation Beth Israel will be limited to the immediate family. In light of Vivian's activism, the family recommends that memorial donations be directed to Project Corazon, which is run by the Lawyers for Good Government Foundation; Planned Parenthood; or the ACLU.

Tribute Wall



“ *Vivian Schenker Ballard*

October 14, 2022 at 12:02 PM



“ *We knew Vivian many years ago when she was about 18 years old and lived with our family in Belgium for a year as an AFS-student. I'll always remember how she introduced our family to a jewish tradition where we put an extra chair at the table for an unexpected guest. I found that was a gesture typical for her warm and generous personality.*

She will always be loved and remembered by us and by many others.

Many thanks for sharing the funeral service with us, it was beautiful to hear the words she wrote...

Our sincere condolences and much love from the Van Huyck family in Belgium



Satprem Van Huyck - June 19, 2020 at 03:08 PM

JB

I love this photo! We were so young and so happy. What a memorable visit with your family. Thanks for sharing that.

Jimi Ballard - June 21, 2020 at 01:03 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Vivian Schenker Ballard.



June 19, 2020 at 01:54 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Recording of Vivi's Funeral



Austin Natural Funerals - June 19, 2020 at 01:49 PM



“ I have such good memories of being graciously welcomed in Vivi and Jimi's homes. To know Vivi was to know the fierce intelligence, heart, and courage of the Schenker women. She will be lovingly remembered and so greatly missed.

Kim Watts

Kim Watts - June 18, 2020 at 05:19 PM

MH

“ A couple of my best memories of being with Vivian are from back when we were young, newly arrived in Austin, and learning how life as an adult worked. Around 1978 or so Becky had recently moved into the Ark with Jimmie and me, and Vivian was living in an all-girl private dorm, Madison House, around the corner. It seems now like either Vivian was in the Ark, or one or more of us from the Ark was visiting her in Madison House, several times a day, and this was during a long-gone time when those dorms had all kinds of procedures to protect their tenants from roving males. They must have been really happy when she decided to move out and go the Ark!

Another good memory was when she was running Sally Shipman's first city council campaign in 1983, out of an office just a few blocks below Seton Hospital. A lot of stress figuring out what to do and when to do it, but a great night when Sally ended up with an easy first win.

My thoughts are with Jimmie, Becky, and Melissa, and Vivian's extended family, in this time of sorrow.

Mike Hemer

Mike Hemer - June 18, 2020 at 05:07 PM

DT

“ My heart is broken for Mimi, Rachel and Jimi! The world has a gaping hole where Vivian once was! She was such a wonderful person!

Debbie Tropiano - June 18, 2020 at 05:02 PM



“ I will miss you, Vivian. You were always one cool lady.
Sue Fowler

Sue Fowler - June 18, 2020 at 04:36 PM



“ Vivian always opened her beautiful victorian home for Travis Heights Elementary families, book signings for friends, and political watch parties. I am inspired by her memory especially at this important time in our neighborhood and our country. I'll think of you watching sunsets from mom's balcony at the Gables; you and Jimi have shared those sunsets this past year. Love to Vivian and her many communities. Ashley

Ashley McLain - June 18, 2020 at 02:51 PM



“ The Austin community has lost a beautiful soul. I met Vivian about 30 years ago, along with Becky, Melissa, and Jimi. Although we were not close friends, I had thought over the past few years how I would love to connect more with her, deepen the long-standing but casual friendship. I'm glad to have a sweet memory of eating pieces of several delicious pies with her in the kitchen at the Fairview awhile back. You will be missed, Vivian.

Ginger Webb - June 18, 2020 at 01:20 PM



“ All my thoughts and prayers are with Jimi and the girls. Vivian will be so missed by so many.

Cissy Swearingen - June 18, 2020 at 01:18 PM

TS

“ Vivian was my co-chair on the Austin ISD SHAC for four years and I saw her tenacity, her passion, her ferocity, her love, her perseverance, and her absolute drive for the health, safety, and well-being for all children. In addition to being such a strong leader, she was incredibly thoughtful. She knew how hard our jobs are in public education and before the monthly SHAC meeting she would bring me a "almond milk latte" from Picnik, remembering how much I loved coffee and that restaurant. My favorite memory of her is sitting at the Fairview with the SHAC executive leadership and Vivian having delicious muffins, fresh fruit, and a warm hug for all of us as we parted ways after every meeting. I'm heartbroken by her passing. I feel incredibly fortunate to have called her my friend and to have the opportunity to learn from her. I will miss her dearly. In peace, Tracy Spinner

Tracy Spinner - June 18, 2020 at 09:25 AM

CG

“ What sad news. Our daughter Ariel and Mimi were good friends when they were both little and going to the Beth Israel CDC. We'll never forget Vivian introducing the kids to edible flowers on Mimi's birthday cake.



Our deepest condolences and fond memories to the Ballard and Schenker families.

Cathryn Gleasman, Robert Lovato, and Ariel Gleasman-Lovato

Cathryn Gleasman - June 18, 2020 at 03:36 AM

JB

“ 2 files added to the album Family Album



Jimi Ballard - June 18, 2020 at 12:23 AM

PR

“ Wow. We are so unbelievably saddened that Vivi is no longer with us. In addition to all her other qualities she was an amazing host, acting as almost a glue for family and friends. When you touch so many, your passing leaves a giant hole when you are gone. We hope that the knowledge of how much she was loved, and a little time, will help to fill this hole a tiny bit. A hosting video from Mimi's Bat Mitzvh is attached.

Peter and Carol Reisfeld



Peter and Carol Reisfeld - June 17, 2020 at 11:24 PM

BS

This is so exactly perfectly Vivian. Thank you for posting it.

Becky Schenker - June 18, 2020 at 12:28 AM

PS

“ I remember Vivian's help when my husband John got sick. Vivian delivered glass jars full of her kitchen magic bone broth for weeks. Healer. When my mother was sick Vivian and I were dropping our girls off at school. As soon as we made eye contact she asked how's your mother? Before I could get out the words "not good" she had me in the crook of her neck hugging me with her big beautiful hug. We miss her deeply and we are so grateful for many kind ,vivid memories of Vivian. Love to Jimi, Mimi,Rachel and the whole family.

Pat Sartor - June 17, 2020 at 11:11 PM

BS

I guess we should start counting the number of families to whom she delivered bone broth. It really must have been magic.

Becky Schenker - June 18, 2020 at 12:44 AM

BS

“ 2 files added to the album Family Album



Becky Schenker - June 17, 2020 at 10:11 PM

BR

“ I'm totally heartbroken. I keep looking at that picture of Vivi and thinking how full of life she looks. My family lived far away from Vivi, so the opportunities for visits were few and far between, but whenever we did spend time together, her warmth and thoughtfulness always left a powerful impression on me. She strikes me as someone who did what few of us do - she lived life with tremendous care, intention, and love. I think that her loved ones felt so embraced by her. That was such a gift that she gave to them. I know that there are no words that can bring comfort right now - to Jimi, to Rachel, to Mimi, to Becky, and to Missy. I can't imagine how much it hurts. I just want you all to know that we love you and we are here. with. you. Sending love from Nashville.

Beth Lesch (nee Reisfeld) - June 17, 2020 at 09:34 PM

DS

“ So hard to imagine that my younger cousin is no longer with us, but then again she will always be in our hearts. We have shared so many family occasions and visits over the 60 years of her life. And I wish we were going to share many more. She has such a close and loving family, just don't know how we will all manage this tragic loss.

Debbie Schenker - June 17, 2020 at 09:21 PM