



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1ST, 2008

Suzanne Marilyn Lieblich Rubenstein, 87

Suzanne Marilyn Lieblich Rubenstein of Westport died early Wednesday, the second day of Rosh Hashanah, at the age of 87. Her loving influence on her family, friends and the many communities she lived in across the country will be felt for generations to come.

Sue was born in Manhattan in 1921 and grew up in Manhattan and Maplewood, N.J. She graduated from Columbia High School in Maplewood where she excelled in academics, theater, and swimming.

After establishing a major in theatre at Smith College, she graduated as the college's first drama major in 1942, and in 1943 married Rabbi Byron T. Rubenstein who was to be her beloved husband for 47 years before his death in 1990.

Sue did graduate work at Washington University in St. Louis, and subsequently she and "B.T." lived in Michigan City, Ind.; Duluth, Minn.; and Highland Park, Ill.

In 1959, they moved to Westport, where B.T. was called to serve at Temple Israel and where Suzanne became involved in many civic activities.

With her four children growing up, she returned to school and earned her Master of Social Work in 1973 from the University of Bridgeport.

She became a pioneer in the emerging field of early childcare and was the founding director of the Child Care Council of Westport-Weston, serving until her retirement in 1982.

Sue is survived by four children: Dr. Robert J. Rubenstein of Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. (with his wife, Elsa); James A. Rubenstein of Minneapolis, (with his wife, Andrea); Rabbi Jonathan L. Rubenstein of Saratoga Springs, N.Y. (with his wife, Rabbi Linda Motzkin); and Judith L. Rubenstein of Dover, N.H. She also leaves nine devoted grandchildren and her dedicated companion and caretaker of the last few years, Connie Opare.

Known as "Savta" (Hebrew for "Grandma") to her grandchildren, for several years Sue operated Camp Savta, hiring counselors and inviting her grandchildren for a week of "real" summer camp, complete with KP duty, awaking to Reveille, swimming lessons, hikes, arts and crafts, and more.

A highlight of each week-long season was the camp show that was written, produced, designed, and directed by Savta Sue's campers, featuring a characterization of Sue at her most active and social.

Always physically active, Sue loved nothing more than waking up in a simple lakeside cottage and taking an early morning dip in the frigid water. Her grandchildren credit her with teaching them how to swim. She was also a great cook and baker and her apple pie is legendary.

In her later years, the power of Sue's friendship became evident as she kept in touch and visited with her many friends in the Westport community and across the country.

Sue traveled widely and seemed to have a friend in every location she visited.

For many years she and her dear friend Joan Kahn expanded their horizons with annual trips to far-flung places such as Bali, Turkey, Greece, Norway, and Spain. After one of these trips, during which Sue, age 80, took a spill in a river, her children issued the edict: No more white water rafting!

Over the years, Sue and B.T. together left an indelible mark wherever they lived or even wherever they visited. They traveled widely, including an unforgettable world cruise in the 1980s.

Sue was one of the great modern Rebbetzins. She was a leader in her own right in her work and community activities, but she also was a full partner with B.T. in their synagogue life. She and B.T. were masters at making congregants, visitors, new members, and even new in-laws, feel welcome, cherished, and comfortable.

Sue was well known for her leadership activities in the Jewish community, her involvement in charitable organizations, and her boundless generosity in caring for others.

She gave much and asked for little. Sue remained active in her community, for many years, taking a leadership role in the Y's Women organization and serving on the board of the Westport-Weston Child Care Council.

She was also an active member of the Sisterhood and the Social Action Committee at Temple Israel, and the Interfaith Council of Westport-Weston.

Sue's enthusiasm for life, her intense devotion to her family, and her gift for friendship created a lasting and inspiring legacy.

Funeral services will take place on Friday Oct. 3 at 11 a.m. at Temple Israel in Westport with interment following at Temple Israel Cemetery in Norwalk.

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