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Rachel Josefowitz Siegel

1924 - 2016



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Siegel, Rachel Josefowitz

Rachel Josefowitz Siegel, a psychologist and a foremother in the field of feminist therapy, died on February 21, 2016 at Kendal of Ithaca, after a

long illness. She was 91. She was born in Berlin, of Ashkenazi Lithuanian background. In 1930, as anti-Semitism rose in Germany, the family fled to Switzerland, where Rachel and her four siblings attended school. They emigrated to the United States in 1939. Never having attended high school, Rachel was admitted to Simmons College, where she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1944. While living in Boston, her brother David introduced her to Benjamin Siegel, who was completing a doctoral degree in physical chemistry at M.I.T. They married in 1944. When Ben received an academic appointment at Cornell University in 1949 they moved to Ithaca, where they both lived for the rest of their lives. They spent sabbatical leaves in Paris, Jerusalem, Cambridge, U.K. and La Jolla, California. In Ithaca, Rachel volunteered as a tutor in the Ithaca school system and served on the boards of several social service agencies. She was active in Hadassah and the Temple Beth-El community. After 25 years raising two sons and a daughter, she started her professional career, returning to graduate school and earning a Master's Degree in Social Work from Syracuse University. She was a staff social worker Tompkins County Mental Health Clinic, Ithaca, New York, 1973-1976. A founding member and consultant to the Ithaca, NY Task Force for Battered Women (now called Advocacy Center), she supported not only the clients of the agency but its staff as well. She volunteered at Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service as a support group leader and a Board member, and led a bereavement group at Hospicare. She entered private practice in 1976. Among many awards, Rachel received the National Association of Social Workers/New York State Chapter's Social Worker of the Year award in 1992. She received the Laura Holmberg Award for Community Service in Ithaca in 2005. She maintained memberships in Hadassah, The National Association of Social Workers, and The Feminist Therapy Institute, of which she was a founding member. She was a member of the Board of the Kendal Residents Association. Rachel was active in the Association for Women in Psychology. She attended and presented at many of their conferences. A 1995 issue of the journal *Women in Therapy* was dedicated

to Ms. Siegel on the occasion of her 70th birthday. She received the Association's award for distinguished scholarship in 1994 and 2000 and their Doris Howard Lifetime Achievement award in 2005. Rachel travelled widely and often. After Ben died, she especially enjoyed European travels with her grandchildren. In 1999 she attended an international women's conference in Trondheim, Norway, accompanied by three of her teenaged grandchildren. All three remain committed feminists, especially Tom. An active feminist, Rachel's commitment to equity for women never wavered, and is reflected in the many books and articles she published. She was the co-editor of *Women Changing Therapy: New Assessments, Values, and Strategies in Feminist Therapy* (1983), *Jewish Women in Therapy: Seen but Not Heard* (1991), and *Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories: Acts of Love and Courage* (2000), as well as writing a personal memoir *My Songs of Then and Now* (2012). Rachel conducted seminars and workshops on a variety of women's issues, especially aging, Jewish women, and sexuality. Rachel is predeceased by her parents, Frieda and Zachar Josefowitz, her husband, Benjamin Siegel, her siblings: Rose Choron, Samuel and David Josefowitz and Fenia Oren and her grandson, Johnathon Siegel. She is survived by her children, Charles (Cheryl), Hyam and Ruth, as well as her grandchildren: Brenda, Sarah, Thomas, and Anna Siegel, Matthew Padilla, and seven great grandchildren. Contributions in her memory may be made at the Rachel and Benjamin Siegel Campership fund at Temple Beth-El and The Women's Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County.

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Published in Ithaca Journal on Feb. 27, 2016.

Siegel Pages

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7 entries

December 13, 2016

Dear Hyam, please accept our deepest sympathy. We are thinking of you and your family and keeping everyone in our prayers. Love, Renata and Arnie

Renata Pienkawa/ Arnie Rosenbach

March 22, 2016

My sympathy goes out to the family during your time of grief. May God's loving-kindness comfort you and help you through this difficult time.
(Psalm 119:50,76)

A. M.

February 25, 2016

My deepest sympathies to Rachel's family and all who knew her. She was ever a bright spot in the days I spent with her. Her love for family, friends, communities, laughter, writing, gardening, and living life inspired me to see life through a deeper, more fulfilling lens. I always felt heard, cared about, and connected with her. She will be greatly missed. May her children and grandchildren, her entire family and friends find peace. Much love to all...

Giorgi Upton

February 25, 2016

Rachel was a dear friend. I remember her license plate initials: WOW. Wise Old Woman. She was so wise and loving and caring and supportive of me as I went through life's adventures. I will always cherish the days we worked together on the Temple Beth El Sisterhood.

I now live in the Chicago area but the last time I saw Rachel, she was so lovely. It was at a birthday celebration for a mutual friend.

I will always remember Rachel.

Susan Adleman

Susan Adleman

February 24, 2016

RIP Rachel! I'm so glad I got to spend so many years knowing you and having so many memory's of are years together! I will miss you dearly !
Love you !

Sharon Hubbell

February 24, 2016

We will miss our long time friend,a special woman who loved people, family and friends and worked for her community,enriched the lives of many.

Rachel (Aber),and Ben Schlesinger

Rachel, Ben Aber Schlesinger

February 23, 2016

Mrs. Siegel has been a pillar of the community for as long as I can remember, including so many years with her husband Ben. My sincerest condolences to Ruthie and her family on this tremendous loss.

dave rogachefsky

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