

Ruth Pulwer, 1925-2020
as remembered by her daughter
Ellen "Cookie" Brenner

My mother was an independent, busy, and involved woman who had so much life in her, much of which she discovered later in her life. She was raised in a traditional home with two parents and a brother. Her parents were old for their time (in their mid thirties) when she was born. She was the second child – always – but definitely the caregiver. Her mother was the oldest of 5 children and the only one who had children. One brother married in his late 40's but the other 3 remained single. My mother was the youngest of the grandchildren on her father's side of the family. She had warm, loving relationships with her cousins and even though they were much older than she, my mother maintained contact with her father's family until she was the only one left.

When my father semi-retired, he lived part year in Florida, in a one bedroom condo (pet unfriendly) he hoped she would move to. Oh how he misjudged her. At 55 she opened her own business and fulfilled a lifelong dream to travel the world. So he lived in Florida, which she hated because he loved it, and she traveled all over the world, sometimes with a group, but often by herself. She saw so much, and loved even the hard travels. Her bag was always packed. She loved art museums, parks, castles, animals, indigenous worlds. Her world grew so large. She was fearless, even going on a safari in her 80's. As a young woman, she was a skilled seamstress and designer. She went to work when I was three years old, and she would spend her lunch hours on South St. drawing children's clothes on an envelope. She would create a pattern from newspaper and with remnants she would create clothes for me. She designed and sold high end doll clothes, many of them beaded outfits. She knitted an entire wardrobe for Sarah when she was pregnant with her and had to be off her feet for several months. Every new baby got a baby sweater. She probably still has baby yarn in her closet I am sure. Each creation was her gift.

Her family was her joy. She was the one who took care of the older family members who became frail and sickly. She managed their care, went to get an elderly uncle when he wandered the tri-state area in his dementia, and never lost touch with family. As the proud mother of 3 children, 11 grandchildren, and 18 great grandchildren, and their assorted spouses, friends, and extended family, she reveled in their visits, their smiles, their calls. It tickled her that she could see them on her beloved Whatsapp, or talk to them across the miles. When CoVID curtailed visits, it was devastating to her. But every-

one kept in touch with her. She so enjoyed vicariously being a part of their lives. Her nieces and nephews checked in with her, and visited her which always brought her such happiness. Thank you all. The three of us called, or stopped in, daily so she could catch up on our lives. Each of us had a special purpose in her life. Sarah was her joy, the child who did not expect to have at 32 and who was so close to her. Sarah has done the daily work to help Mom especially through the past several months. Mitchell is the SON, the steady voice of reason. I am the oldest, with the most time as her child. She was still interested in our lives, still offering advice and even sometimes, orders. Although she accumulated many things over her lifetime, her family and friends were her pieces of gold. She was friends for almost 90 years with Ruth, Rae and Gert. She made and kept her friends for years and years, and she rarely met a stranger. I remember being stopped in center city once by someone who said "I went to school with someone and you look just like her" Sure enough, she went to school with my mother.

For as long as I can remember, my mother's community involvement was an important part of her persona. She was involved in the Jewish community, becoming a founding member of Ner Tamid with my father. When we moved to "the big house", my parents joined Temple Israel, where she served for several years as sisterhood president. The phone was always busy, as she monitored and coordinated. She was a Hadassah member for decades, and was recognized several years ago for her contributions to Hadassah. She worked with the Mental Health Association of Delaware County, food banks, Federation, UNICEF, and so many other worthwhile causes. She believed in her responsibility to be a leader to the best of her ability. Her involvement included donations to many charities, and she still gets what we fondly call "begging mail" by the pound to animal shelters, childrens, charities, and who knows what else. Giving back was even more important than receiving. She loved being able to be part of the world.

When Mom went on hospice, and came home to a caregiver and different lifestyle in her home, she was devastated. For many many years, she did her aerobic swim class, walked her dog, went wherever and whenever she wanted. She was proud and hated having someone take care of her. She kept things in their place, and she could tell you where to look for something. She fought the good fight to keep her place as the boss of her own home. She resented that she could not cook her way. She hated that she continued to weaken, her hearing was fading, and she was slower and slower. At least 3 times, if not more, she has been at death's door. One time, my Hannah looked at her and it looked as if she died. When she called her, Mom Mom Mom said "I am still the

boss". We called her the energizer bunny. She told us that she talked to God, and God said they were not yet ready for her.

Her will was strong to see what she wanted to see, a new great grandchild, an election, a birthday, and she maintained friendships until she could no longer. To her friends, you were such a wonderful part of her life. She loved sharing with you, laughing, kvelling, and keeping in touch.

So when does it end? Well, it does not end. Mom, Mom Mom, Mom Mom Mom, aunt, cousin, and family matriarch, your legacy is here forever. You have left an enduring memory in your family. From a modest beginning, you created and enjoyed being part of a family of many. You loved deeply, and gave freely of your history to your grandchildren. You had a challenging life with our father, but you created your world and made it special. You will be remembered in funny stories, memories of events you attended with us, the gifts you gave us. Most of all, we will remember the gift of strength. My mother could be pushy and bossy, snarky and angry, stubborn, and manipulative, but under it all was her vision of who she was. She fulfilled her dreams. She was the first to tell anyone that she had a very good life. It was challenging at times, but certainly she learned from each experience and tried to teach us through her strength. We were lucky to have her so long in our lives. As the child who had her the longest, I often thought her obituary would read "predeceased by her children" because she had this zest for life, and until a year ago, she was doing life her own way. Remember that about her, she lived her life giving and that was how she got back such nachas from her life. Her strength, her push, her drive to do as much as she could and to touch as many lives as she could, this was her legacy. A strong woman who spoke her mind, most of the time, who loved in her own way, and in many ways, who recognized that all her family were different from each other, and she treated us as such. She loved visits and visiting. Forever visit her in your hearts whenever you can. She will always love to see you.