



Lenore Shankman

February 25, 1926 - November 21, 2020

Lenore Rose Davis Bruntill Shankman was born in 1926 in Manhattan, NY to Joseph Isador (Jeff) and Blanche (Zelinka) Davis. She lived 94 years until her death on November 21, 2020.

Len, as she preferred to be called, was one of only 2 children to be born among her mother's six siblings. As such she was the treasured child of them all and was enriched by her extensive family and their connections. Her upper west side home welcomed the likes of George Gershwin and Leonard Bernstein and when her uncle had the teen Lenore to lunch with Perry Como, Perry remarked, "Sid, you didn't tell me you had such a pretty niece!"

Growing up, the Isle of Manhattan and its boroughs were Lenore's backyard and playground. She met her lifelong best friend, Florette (Floss), at the age of 6 and a few years later Edie joined the mix. The triumvirate lived 80 + years of friendship. Len biked across the George Washington bridge, sailed along city streets on the handlebars of her teenage boyfriend's bike, modeled at her grandparent's NYC Paris Art Store, and as Miss Subway at one point, her picture graced the pulsing arteries of the transport system that allowed Len a fantastic freedom of exploration.

As "Bobby Soxers" in the early 40's Len and her friends were paid 50 cents to scream for Frank Sinatra at the Paramount Theatre. Len always said, "Frank

was so skinny you couldn't see him behind the mike!". She knew all the words to the songs of her decades and would often spontaneously break into song, especially over the last few years.

The shadow of her mother's heart disease and the physical pain that it caused her mom also hung-over Len's childhood. Her mother's death when Len was 15 affected her deeply. Her father, Jeff, always noble, kind and very present in Len's life, gave her an anchor point with his gift of unconditional love. Jeff also modeled love in his relationship with Len's mother and then with Len's stepmother, Leona, who Jeff married when Len was 17. With this union, Len gained her stepsister and friend Helen who was her same age as well as two older stepsiblings. These teen years also took place among the backdrop of WWII.

At 18 Len married Irwin Bruntil and her son Robert (Bellingham) was born when she was 21. Bruce (Arizona) followed when Len was 26. The family moved to Connecticut and Len settled into raising her boys. She was a good 1950's housewife for some years, acting as Den mother, playing bridge with Win and friends, and playing tennis and ping-pong with her boys. Her mom had enticed Len into drinking milk as a child by adding a little coffee. This became a legacy as Len upped it to coffee ice cream for her children and carried it forth as the ritual of sharing coffee ice cream, mochas, or coffee Fribbles from Friendly's with each of her 23 grandchildren and most of her 31 great grandchildren!

As her children got older, Len took a job as an Assistant Educator at a private school. When she was 46 Len moved on to working for Dr. Albert Shankman, an optometrist and pioneer in the field of vision training. Len's loving manner was the perfect fit for becoming Al's Vision Trainer, working closely with the many children and adults who were Al's patients. Over time Len and Al fell in love and they married when Len was 48. With this marriage Len became the

mother to six more as she embraced the Shankman siblings—Bert (Eva), Roy (Leslie), Anita (Pete), Robin, Gary (Susan), and Jill (Kevin)—and gave them all the gift of being a treasured child. The ability to be present, love, listen and make one feel seen was an enduring and shining quality in Len. Over the decades Len continually honed this loving quality through her interactions with her ever expanding family and her friends, gracing us all and modeling what it looks like to be with, accept, and love without judgement.

Al and Len enjoyed 30 years of work, travel and sharing life until Al died in 2005 when Len was 78. Len had never lived alone, but she was buoyant and reweave her days with good friends, family, and volunteer work. She served for a decade at the Jewish Home for the Aged, visiting and loving the residents, playing bridge and contributing to activities, and even leading tours for inquiring families. She was recognized as Volunteer of the Year for all her rich contributions. Len also expressed herself in writing throughout her life, filling many journals and reflecting on matters in many poems and short stories.

In 2013 Len moved from Connecticut to Bellingham to be closer to son Bob and the west coast branch of her family. Once again, a city was her oyster as she lived for 5 years at the Leopold and enjoyed walking out to the stores and services offered in downtown Bellingham. In 2018 she found a perfect and supportive loving home among the staff and residents at the Solstice. For the last 10 weeks of her life Len moved into the home of Roy and Leslie Shankman under hospice care and under the care of Roy, his wife, Leslie, her sons Bob and Bruce, Bob's wife Karen and daughter Jill, with visits and phone calls from other family members.

Len was known as Gram...or Gram cracker to many of her grandchildren. She in kind, had many endearments for all of us—Hello Sadie...Hello Sweetheart...Hello Potato Chip...

When you asked her if she needed anything, her reliable reply was, “George Clooney!”

We will remember Len for her unflagging gratitude, joy in the smallest thing, her ability to live in the now as she bathed in the play of moonlight on her bedspread, as she watched the theatre of sunsets from her Leopold window in awe, and for the loving way she interacted with all around her. Len lived as one of the most emotionally intelligent, intuitive, aware, and empathic people that many of her family and friends have been graced to know. We thank her for showing us how this is done, for this is indeed a true treasure that she bequeathed to us all.

One of Len’s poems captures her spirit well:

Friends

When the coffee is hot and the talk is good,

and the feelings are easy

the laughter light and the memories many

but the time is too short,

you know you are with a friend.

If you would like to make a donation in Len’s memory, the family suggests:

Whatcom Hospice Foundation (288 Douglas Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225)

or,

The Jewish Home for the Elderly of Fairfield County (see <https://www.jseniors.org/foundation/ways-to-give/> to make a credit card donation) or make checks payable to Jewish Senior Services and mail to Jewish Senior Services, Attn: Foundation, 4200 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT.

Tribute Wall

RA

“ I’m saddened to learn of her passing away today. She was a good friend to both I and her friend Muriel from Oronoque Village in Connecticut. I was an aide for her friend, and she gave her love and visit to us. She was full of laughter. and I owe her \$5. we had promised if one of us get married, she should send the others a \$5 dollar bill, which I never did.
Her sweet memory and laughter will always remain in me. a friend who always listened and gave an intelligent advice!

Rahab - July 03, 2022 at 12:00 AM

BR

“ Lenore was a joy and I am so happy to have crossed paths with her. She always brought a smile and laugh to my day with her jokes. she will be missed

Bri - December 19, 2020 at 12:00 AM

LG

“ I was privileged to visit with Lenore at health care appointments. I loved her joyful spirit, her wit, her stories, and her zest for life. She was definitely a treasure to those around her. Condolences to her family.

Leona Groesbeck - December 06, 2020 at 12:00 AM