

Remembering Eleanor...



September 16, 1953 – June 22, 2025

Eleanor Heck was a respected, long-time member of Young Israel of Lawrenceville, and her presence will be missed by many. Here are a few thoughts from those who knew her well, and from those whose words are meant as a tribute to a woman who has left an indelible mark on our Community.

There were a lot of people who attended Eleanor Heck's funeral. Of course, family members were there, but also people with whom she worked and naturally her Young Israel family.

From Lynda Sacharov, Board Member:

Although knowing Eleanor for years, I really only knew the "shul" aspect of her life. Taking the following from her

obituary, "Eleanor was born in Newark, NJ and grew up there in Maplewood, NJ, where she graduated from Columbia High School in 1971. She attended George Washington University, in Washington, DC, where her lifelong love of the theater was seen in her work as an usher at Washington's Kennedy Center. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from George Washington University in 1975, majoring in dramatic arts.

Continuing in the theater world, Eleanor studied for a Master of Arts degree at the University of Minnesota's Department of Theater Arts from 1976-1978. She worked there as a teaching assistant. Her earliest post-graduate

jobs were as a manager at professional opera and theater companies.

Eleanor then pivoted to the legal profession. She attended Rutgers University School of Law, Camden, and received her Juris Doctor award, with high honors, in 1991. She was a member of the staff of the Rutgers Law Journal and served as its Articles Editor 1990-1991. She clerked for NJ Supreme Court Justice Robert L. Clifford 1991-1992.

Most of Eleanor's legal career was in service to the people of NJ, at the NJ Attorney General's office. She became a distinguished and widely respected attorney there, service as a Deputy Attorney General."

Her obituary then continued to mention that she had been a long-time member of Young Israel of Lawrenceville. That is where my story with Eleanor picks up...

Having first met Eleanor over 20 years ago at Young Israel, I remember that she would always have a quick comment or appreciative laugh at something Rabbi Goldenberg would say in his speech to the congregation. I remember how she would lovingly play with the Rabbi's children, who would respond to her as a trusted friend. When I became a Board member, Eleanor was Secretary, and kept notes of our meetings which she would review at the next meeting. She never missed a beat, and always kept things running smoothly.

I also remember working with Eleanor and Carol Aronoff on the shul's largest fund raiser...the Purim baskets. For years Eleanor and Carol would trudge to the Shop-Rite to determine what goodies would be in that year's "basket". As if schlepping to the Shop-Rite wasn't enough, the two of them would schlep bags and bags of their purchases to the shul. Each year a few hearty "Purim Packers" would pack the bags while Eleanor and/or Carol would create small bags containing fresh baked hamantash, as part of the Purim "baskets". As time passed, and health issues arose, I joined the ladies at Shop-Rite and learned first hand how difficult this task was.

From Bill and Carol Aronoff:

When she started coming to YI about 25 plus years ago. We become fast friends. Eleanor had many meals at our table and we at hers. Eleanor enjoyed cooking and the shelves of cook books in her kitchen attest to this. She liked experimenting with new recipes and very often we were her taste testers. Most of these trials were successful and some were culinary mistakes. She often opened her home to our guests when they needed to be closer to YI than our 3 miles and the shul was full, sometimes with more of our guests.

From Charles Miller, President of YIOL:

Eleanor Heck was a long time member of Young Israel of Lawrenceville. She generously donated her time to serve the community. She was the secretary of the Board of Directors for many years.

She was also the treasurer of the sisterhood. In this position she helped organize the Shaloch Manos and the Purim Seudah for many years. In addition she ran the Shop Rite gift card program for years. She would pick up the gift card from Shop Rite and deliver them to everyone who ordered them.

She was also a dedicated member of the Partners in Torah program. Even when we stopped the program, she stayed in touch with her teacher.

From David Klein, Board Member:

I got to know Eleanor after I joined the Board of Trustees of YIOL.

Eleanor excelled at paying attention to details. She was savvy and asked questions that might otherwise have gone unanswered.

Eleanor had deep wisdom and reminded the Board of things that had worked out in the past for the best - and reminded us of what could have gone better.

Eleanor was very tactful and taught me a valuable lesson in communications at Board meetings.

One time, she needed something to be done by another Board member - that individual said it was done.

Eleanor knew it was not done.

If I were in that situation, I would have stomped my feet and said it wasn't done.

This bluntness might create tension in a Board meeting.

How did Eleanor handle it - she talked around the issue calmly, as if she were strolling in the park..."AHHH" said the other Trustee "You're right. I didn't do it".

Eleanor did not respond - she simply looked down and kept on typing.

That was a lesson in mussar and interpersonal middot that I'll never forget.

From Rabbi Goldenberg:

Eleanor had strong, genuine bonds with her family, and a deep attachment to her community. She was a kind, smart, witty, accomplished, and devoted woman, who invested much effort in leaving the world in a better state than she found it.

Predeceased by her parents, Seymour & Alice Heck, and her brother, William.

She is survived by her sister Caroline, brother Robert, nephews Noah, Kalling & Mary and Daniel & Betsy, her niece Prudence & Justin, grand-niece Freyja, and grand-nephews William and Eli, as well as to all the family and many friends who share in this loss.

While Eleanor started off with a strong social Jewish identity, her upbringing was mostly secular. But by the time my family met her, 24 years ago, with the help of Rabbi Mordechai and Mrs. Rivka Terebelo, she was well on the way to taking her Jewish identity to the next level. She worked really hard to build her Judaism on her own terms, and it eventually became a prominent part of her identity.

Having her in Synagogue was great because whenever I said a joke, if it was funny, she would be the first to break out in heartfelt laughter. And if it wasn't, she would let me know.

Eleanor had an unquenchable thirst for all knowledge. We had this running joke as she would often approach me and say, "Rabbi, I have a question". But this was happening so often that one day I told her, "Eleanor, from now on, just say 'my next question is...'"

Through her exploration of her faith, she met the Young Israel community, and formed decades' long deep friendships, which she cherished until her final day.

Eleanor's home was one of the places where my wife, our then newborn, and I stayed at for several weekends when we were commuting from Brooklyn back in 2001. Eleanor also opened her doors and her heart when there were people in the community who needed a place to stay for Shabbos, like her friend Esther Weiner, whom she hosted regularly for an extended period of time.

Since even before I arrived to town, Eleanor was a board member at the Shul, and was part of sisterhood, where she, together with her dear friend, Carol Aronoff, arranged holiday and social events for the community. One of the projects that she headed was the Purim gift exchange program that she would proudly arrange. This year, Purim was the very final activity she was involved in prior to suffering an illness which sadly eventually took her life.

And it was in these final months of her life that I discovered the strong inseparable bond that she shared with her family. Although she was super proud of her niece and nephews, and she would often speak about them, and

we had met her siblings on rare occasions, I only really only knew them through the conversations I'd had with Eleanor. Her dear family, rallied around her every day of her illness, really shows the devotion that they all have for each other. And I know and believe that this meant the world to her. As she was so vulnerable and frightened, you showed her unconditional love, emotional support and care, and the reassurance that she so desperately needed. She knew she wasn't in this alone. This, to me, is the ultimate nachas and satisfaction that you can give to your parents and grandparents, Seymour and Alice, who are surely feeling so proud, as they are looking down from heaven.

Please keep Eleanor's memory alive by continuing your relationship with her on a soul level, and perpetuate the good deeds that she can no longer do herself.

May the soul of Eleanor Heck be bound up in the bond of eternal life, and may we merit to very soon reach the time of global perfection, with the arrival of Moshiach speedily, Amen.

***Thank you to all who contributed to
create this heartfelt tribute to
Eleanor....***

***An "Eleanor Heck Kiddush Fund"
has been established on the
YIOL.com website "Donation" page.***