



BETH K. SMITH

February 11, 1921 - April 19, 2017

Beth K. Smith died peacefully at her home April 19, 2017, after 96 full and gracious years. She was preceded in death by her husband of 50 years, Edward A. Smith, and her sister, Ethelyn Simon. She is survived by her four children: Sarah Malino of Greensboro, NC; Judith Smith (Lawrence Blum) of Cambridge, MA; Deborah Smith (Mark Myron) of Kansas City; James Smith (Katherine Brady) of Berkeley, CA; her sister Ruth Belzer, of Evanston, IL; and her brother and sister in law, Mike and Carol Kulakofsky of Houston, TX. She leaves 10 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren.

Beth was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, where her parents, Sarah and J. Harry Kulakofsky were leaders in the civic and Jewish communities. After Sarah died when Beth was a very young child, Harry married Sadie Stark. Harry and Sadie were deeply committed to building strong local and national Jewish communities. Her parents were her role models for a life of service.

A 1943 graduate of Wellesley College with a degree in economics, Beth turned down an editorial assistant job at Time Magazine to work as an engineering technician in an airplane factory near New York City as part of the country's commitment to World War II. There Beth dated a young naval officer whom she had met earlier at a Harvard football game. She married Edward Smith in January of 1945.

Following a few years of legal practice in New York City, they moved to Kansas City in 1948. In 1952, Ed started his own law firm, which became Smith, Gill, Fisher and Butts, later merging with Bryan Cave.

Beth participated in the activities of her four children, joining with friends to start a cooperative preschool where parents volunteered alongside the teachers. She was a PTO volunteer, led numerous Girl Scout outings and started a freelance "club scout" group for her young son and his grade school friends.

As a couple, Beth and Ed had a wide circle of loving friends in Kansas City and around the

country who shared their love of great books, classical music, tennis, fishing and good conversation. They often vacationed in Aspen, Colorado, where they attended many seminars at the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies and countless concerts. Beth and Ed thrived on collaborating with their friends and other community activists to develop and lead organizations to improve the quality of life in Kansas City and across the country.

Beth was a pioneer among women in working for racial equality and civil rights. In the mid 1950's, Beth joined a group of interfaith and interracial speakers, called the Panel of American Women. These women began an early dialogue before church and civic groups, sharing both their differing and common views. Shortly after the race riots in Kansas City in 1968, Beth was asked to chair the Mayor's Commission on Human Relations and later she served on the City Plan commission of Kansas City, Missouri. Those experiences motivated her to improve her professional skills for her work with community and nonprofit groups. She returned to graduate school in public administration at the University of Missouri –Kansas City, receiving her MPA in 1976.

With her friend and colleague Marjorie Powell Allen, Beth founded the Women's Employment Network, the Wildwood Outdoor Education Center and the Central Exchange. She was also instrumental in the founding of the Women's Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the Midwest Center for NonProfit Leadership.

Beth was an adjunct professor of nonprofit leadership in the Bloch School of Management at UMKC for many years. In her board workshops, she mentored many nonprofit executives. Beth also established the Edward Smith internships to encourage Bloch School students to work in nonprofit agencies in Kansas City.

Beth was also an active member of her Jewish community. Because she was not taught to read Hebrew, she initiated the Tefilah 2000 program to include more contemporary English readings and music in the liturgy at her Congregation Beth Shalom. Beth served on the boards of the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Relations Board. She and Ed helped start the Jewish Community Foundation to encourage charitable giving. She helped initiate the Judaic Studies program at the University of Missouri –Kansas City and together the Smiths endowed a chair in Jewish Studies at Wellesley College.

Beth served on numerous national and local nonprofit boards including Common Cause, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, United Way of Greater Kansas City, the Truman Library Institute and Museum, the American Jazz Museum, the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, the Center for Practical Bioethics, the Neighborhood Alliance and advisory boards of two local banks.

Beth received many civic and national awards including the first American Jewish Committee Human Relations Award, the Yates Medallion for community service from William Jewell College, the Eddie Jacobson Distinguished Community Service Award and Kansas Citizen of the Year in 2008.

Beth and Ed were attentive and interested grandparents to each of their 10 grandchildren, taking the older ones on travel adventures and the younger ones to local ones. In more recent years, her entire family, now 32 strong, gathered in Kansas City to celebrate her birthday and her life well lived.

Beth's life was enriched with the loving care of her extraordinary caregivers: Beverly Johnson, Hortense Borque, Myrna Bode, Donna Marie Fields, Connie Fahey and Jan Buckner.

A funeral service will be held at 2:00pm Sunday, April 23 at Congregation Beth Torah, located at 6100 West 127th Street in Overland Park, Kansas. Burial will be at Mount Carmel Cemetery in Raytown.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to The Women's Employment Network, Legal Aid of Western Missouri, Ad Hoc Citizens Against Crime, and the Jewish Family Services Food Pantry.

Events

APR **Funeral** 02:00PM

23

Congregation Beth Torah

6100 W. 127th Street, Overland Park, KS, US

APR **Shiva** 07:30PM

23

at Beth's home. Please call funeral home for additional information.

MO, US

Comments



“ Dear Debbie and family,
What a joy and privilege to get to know Beth Smith! I was inspired by her wit and leadership in many situations at UMKC while she was a member of the UMKC Trustees, excellent volunteer, and wonderful human being.
Beth's graciousness, and acceptance of one and all made her beloved. She leaves legions of admirers, and people whose life she directly changed for good.
May you know the joy of fine memories, even as you bear the burden of loss.
With great respect,
Kathy M. Dunn

Kathy Dunn - May 02, 2017 at 11:50 AM



“ Dear Family of Beth,

It was my privilege to work with Beth at the Bloch School in the early 1990s. She was a role model who taught me many life lessons at that time.

I recall her telling me about sitting with her friend, Marjorie Powell Allen, in Marjorie's last moments of life. Beth spoke with warmth and grace about the privilege of being with her friend at the end. I wanted to be just like Beth for others, a women of grace and courage.

Beth was thoughtful and brought me little remembrances when she came back from trips. I have a beautiful little ring box she gave me and remember her kindness when I look at it on my bookshelf.

Although I was a only program manager, she always made me feel that what I did meant something. She would often say,"It takes all of us."

Memories of Beth will always hold a special place in my heart.

My thoughts and prayers are now with you, asking for comfort and peace.

Love,
Susan Ray

Susan Ray - April 27, 2017 at 04:27 PM



“ Dear Debbie and family, Our interests intersected on many levels, but, in addition to all the other wonderful ways in which Beth contributed to the community, it was her love of music and her passionate devotion to Jewish literacy that made her special in our lives. She attended countless Symphony concerts when Tibor was

concertmaster, as well as Klausner and Friends and Volker string quartet concerts. And he was truly honored when she asked him to play at your father's funeral. And I was indebted to her because of her invaluable support of the Judaic Studies program at UMKC, and also very much admired her efforts that led to the Tefillah 2000 services at Beth Shalom. You mentioned her intellectual curiosity, and some of my most enjoyable memories of Beth were of the Shabbat afternoons spent with her and a few other women who met to discuss the weekly portion, or a book with Jewish content--even though we usually ended up discussing politics or local or international affairs that Beth was involved or interested in. Being with her was always "swell!" and her memory will always be a blessing. Heartfelt condolences from Tibor and me to you and all your family. Carla Klausner

Carla Klausner - April 23, 2017 at 08:54 PM



“ When I was still an assistant professor (probably some time in mid-1970's) Beth asked to do an independent study with me. That was the start of a long-term working relationship. We worked together on conferences and training programs, including the "Ploughshare" conferences, held at Wildwood. Beth was game to go over the wall and swing on ropes and do the trust fall. She, of course, was of immense help in starting the nonprofit management program as part of the MPA program at UMKC and in establishing the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership. The extent of her contributions to the Kansas City area is more well-known, even if those contributions are so extensive and important as to be almost super-human.

Bob Herman

Robert Herman - April 23, 2017 at 12:48 PM



“ I worked with Beth at the UMKC Center for Management Development. She was a delightful and inspiring friend. I will always remember her very fondly. I am so sorry for your loss. Jay Lentz

Jay Lentz - April 23, 2017 at 08:49 AM



“ I owe much to Beth Smith. I took a diversity class in the 80s and Beth was the main presenter. I will never forget.. even if the stereotype were true.. how do you know if you are dealing with the exception. Then at a serious training event. in walks Beth with a headband on that had jiggily hearts.. after all.. it was on Valentine's Day. how Beth!

Michele Manne (Snyder) Neylon

Michele Neylon - April 22, 2017 at 09:08 PM



“ Our condolences on the loss of a wonderful woman, Beth Smith. Reading her life history, along with her great partner, Ed, is like reading a history of Kansas City. They were there together as leaders, as friends and as mentors. I share many great memories of her leadership and activism- always strong, always cheerful, and always smart, not only at the Chamber but also in virtually every important social cause in the Jewish and general community. May her memory be for a blessing for you and all of Kansas City. Pete Levi

Peter Levi - April 21, 2017 at 03:36 PM



“ I AM A COUSIN FROM cLEVELAND, oH WHO USED TO LIVE IN oMAHA I REMEMBER BETH FROM MY CHILDHOOD. MY MOTHER ESTHER SAKS GREENBERG WAS A FIRST COUSIN OF BETH. I REMEMBER THE WHOLE FAMILY AND WOULD LIKE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH SOME OF BETH'S CHILDREN, SHELLEY GREENBERG LIPSON SLIPSON772@GMAIL.COM
MY SYMPATHY ON YOUR MOTHER'S PASSING

SHELLEY LIPSON - May 01, 2017 at 10:38 PM



“ She was my first "adult mentor" and guided me away from many near-mistakes. The consummate liberal with her best buddy Marjorie Powell Allen, the uber conservative, the two plotted and made forward-thinking steps here with the Women's Foundation, Central Exchange, IWF and more. I was humbled by their visionary thinking, their generosity, their love for each other's "screwy political ideals" and their deep religious guidelines felt by all of us. I will miss her every day.

Betsey Solberg

Betsey Solberg - April 21, 2017 at 10:15 AM



“ Sending you strong thoughts and prayers as you and our community have lost a true icon. She lives on in the hearts and minds of those who knew her and in the lives of thousands whose life was made better because of her. What an amazing life! Very best wishes, Sandra Mellinger

Sandra Mellinger - April 21, 2017 at 10:09 AM



“ Beth's imprint is all over this community. I will always cherish the frank, insightful and meaningful guidance she so graciously gave me. She was a trailblazer, a highly respected leader and a trusted friend. My compass for leadership has been and always will be "What would Beth do"?

With great gratitude I am thinking of her and all of you.

Warmly,

Merilyn Berenbom

Merilyn Berenbom - April 21, 2017 at 07:44 AM



“ Beth was a wonderful mentor and friend to me. I will miss her and the wonderful inspiration she was to all of us. I am so sorry for your loss and the loss to the community. Know she was loved by many as she lived.

Terry Satterlee - April 20, 2017 at 08:02 PM



“ As for so many people in our community, Beth was a role model and the dearest of mentors to me. I know for sure that she influenced the direction of my life which led me to find my life's purpose and calling. She lives on forever inside many of us.

Rania Anderson - April 20, 2017 at 07:16 PM



“ Beth K Smith was an icon in our community for the last many years. Although we felt a special friendship when we saw each other, I greatly regret that I have not seen her since a community event at Beth Shalom a few years ago. Our friendship emanated from a connection between my father, Oscar E Rosenbloom, who was then President of Beth Shalom Congregation, and Ed Smith, the respected attorney who represented our retiring Rabbi, Gershon Hadas. They worked together to create a retirement agreement for our beloved Rabbi, which would take effect in years hence. Also, my late mother Susie Rosenbloom had a large family living in Omaha, and the Kulakofsky family were also from Omaha. So, Beth and Susie had this mutual Omaha interest.

I feel honored to have known Beth Smith, and will always remember her. Ha-makom Y'neichem etchem b'toch sh'ar ahveilei Tziyon V'rushalayim. May G-d bring comfort to all those who grieve the loss of loved ones, and may the memory of Beth Smith be a blessing to her family and to all the mourners all over the world!

M J Rosenbloom (aka Maynard Rosenbloom)



“ Dear Debbie, Mark, and family,
I am so sorry about your loss. Beth was a treasure to Kansas City! She and Ed were always so kind to me. The city and the Jewish community will miss her incredible guidance and sweet demeanor. What an example to us all. Lenny joins me in sending our heartfelt condolences.

Lisa and Lenny Cohen

lisa cohen - April 20, 2017 at 12:52 PM



“ My condolences to your entire family. Debbie and family, you had a great role model and you encompass so much of your mom's ideals. You are genuinely caring people and I know the hole she left will be filled with her memories and the love and support of your family. Margie Stark and family.

Margie Stark - April 20, 2017 at 12:04 PM