



STELLA SHEMARYA PARRIS

August 21, 1929 - April 25, 2018

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Stella Shemarya Parris, devoted wife of 60 years, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and dear friend to everyone she met, died on April 25 following a brief illness -- and 88 years of love.

Stella was born in Seattle, Washington to parents Rachel and Jack Shemarya, both immigrants from the Mediterranean island of Rhodes, Greece. Stella and her siblings, Jerry, Sylvia and Al grew up in an environment rich with the unique tastes, smells, and especially songs and dances ingrained in their Sephardic heritage. Her spirited mother spoke seven languages fluently (and once played a trick on Stella by teaching her two children a certain unutterable word in all seven).

Stella's work ethic emerged in her mid-teens when she worked at an outdoor Greek market in Seattle. When she graduated high school at 18, she began a government career with the United States Navy's Military Sea Transportation Service, cutting officers' orders at Navy Pier 39.

Five years later, she would meet a young pharmacist stationed at Madigan Army Hospital at nearby Fort Lewis who valiantly tried to capture a date on her busy social calendar for three weekends in a row. When she saw a cancellation on the fourth weekend, she called him, and Arnold would become her soulmate, husband and the forever love of her life.

They married in 1956, and Stella moved with Arnold to his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, where they grew their family with a daughter and a son. They were side-by-side partners as they opened the corner drug store from which their life took shape, Mohawk Drugs. Stella and Arnold raised their two children in the back of that store, teaching them how to properly dust shelves, stock merchandise, serve ice cream sundaes at the soda

fountain, help deliver prescriptions to customers too sick to stop by, and eventually, ring the big brass cash register.

Each night when the family came home, Stella would take out her big ledger and manage the business from her recliner next to Arnold, while their kids did homework and played on the green shag carpet. When she wasn't doing work for their store, Stella was very actively working for and/or chairing a broad range of local philanthropies, including the Hadassah Medical Organization, Jewish Community Federation, B'nai Brith and many others. She was a working woman who always found time to give back, an iconic message which her children could not miss.

Stella's life was rich with family and philanthropy, cooking and friends – with opportunities to combine them all at every opportunity. But her purest joy came in the time she savored with her beloved husband, with whom she never, ever stopped holding hands. She and Arnold found great joy in time with their kids, grandkids, and extended family and friends – so many of whom were like family. Until their final days, they spent countless hours on bar stools together in their favorite pastime: watching Kentucky and Louisville basketball.

Stella is preceded on her journey by her soulmate and husband of 60 years, Arnold. She is survived by her daughter, Roshann Shemarya Parris and husband Jeff Dobbs, her son, Harry Jack Parris, two grandchildren, Justin Parris Cohen and Tessa Diana Cohen who lovingly called her “Vava,” three grandpups, and an awesome group of nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews to whom Aunt Stella was like a second mother and grandmother.

Following a private burial, the family welcomes friends to a memorial service at 6:00 PM at the Parris/Dobbs home on Sunday, April 29 and again on Monday, April 30 at 6:00 PM at Village Shalom. In lieu of flowers, the family would warmly welcome contributions to Village Shalom or the Jewish Family Services Food Pantry.

Comments



“ Roshann, I am so truly sorry to hear about the passing of your mother. She was always so dear and I enjoyed visiting with her at every major milestone you've had throughout your career. She will be remembered fondly. All my best to you, Jeff and the kids during this difficult time.

Katie Fitzgerald - May 04, 2018 at 10:54 AM



“ My dear Roshann, words cannot express how sorry I was to hear about the passing of Stella. While distance has kept her and me apart for many decades, the legacy of her warmth, smile, care and kindness has always prevailed in my mind from our childhood. I know how special and connected the two of you have been throughout life and while I'm sure it will take some time before your grief subsides I know in my heart that you will preserve the great memories you have had with her and the wonderful moments she no doubt shared with your family, grandkids and others that knew how special she was. My heart hurts for you. Please know that my warmest thoughts and my deepest sympathies are with you and your entire family. Sending love. Rick

Rick Weber - May 03, 2018 at 04:47 PM



“ Roshann,

I am so sorry for your loss. I will be thinking of you.

Robin O'Bryan

Robin O'Bryan - April 30, 2018 at 06:25 PM



“ I had the pleasure of working with Stella while she was a resident at Village Shalom. She and Arnold regularly used the exercise equipment at the Spa & Wellness Center. She was always so friendly and helpful to everyone. She will be missed.

Sincerely, Madeline Silver

Madeline Silver - April 30, 2018 at 05:59 PM



“ Stella was an amazing person. What a remarkable, full life she had. Feeling your sadness. Heartwarming knowing Stella and Arnold are together again.
Melynn and Danny

Melynn Sight - April 29, 2018 at 11:56 AM



“ Stella was a progressive woman before her time. She could do it all and do it well. There are so many wonderful memories of growing up in the Parris house and of them in ours. . Sharing high holidays meals together, memories of our parents getting together and telling jokes and our moms sepharic cooking.. our mothers are Mediterranean Jews so they had similar upbringing and culture. Both great cooks. Some of my other best memories are when Stella and Arnold came to my house for thanksgiving for many years .harry and ron would smoke ribs and lamb chops and we ate like kings. Our families always enjoyed one another. Stella was a smart, funny wonderful wife, mother and friend to so many. Arnold was her second half. I know they are now reunited in heaven. I know my family will miss them both and keep them close in our hearts forever.
Much love and may both your parents be a blessed memory forever. Amen
Raquel and Ron koff
Sara shpilberg

Raquel Koff - April 26, 2018 at 11:36 PM



“ I was blessed to have known Stella for the last 8 of her 88 years of love on earth. I always thought her to be an amazing woman. I will forever remember her smile when she would greet me, by name every time we passed in the halls of Village Shalom or at the Villa. Her love of life, Arnold, and your family was apparent in everything she said and did. I have a picture of Arnold and Stella on my " Happy Memories Wall."
Thank you for sharing her with me.

Michaela Kidd - April 26, 2018 at 06:21 PM



“ My sincerest condolences Roshann and family! I'm so sorry to hear of your loss. I will never forget knocking on her door in Louisville. Unannounced and seemingly strangers until I shared with her who we were. So full of life, welcoming, and hospitable. We shared our Sephardic heritage and lots of conversation. My heart is with you. Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam dayan ha-emet. Fondly, Ellen Barocas



ellen - April 26, 2018 at 05:40 PM



“ I did not know Ms. Parris. Her tribute was one of the most beautiful I have ever read. A friendship I know I would have cherished.

Rest in Peace
Michael Myer

michael myer - April 26, 2018 at 04:46 PM



“ My sympathy to you and your family on the loss of your Mom. I am fortunate to have known both parents growing up in Louisville.

Harryette Cooperman

Harryette Cooperman - April 26, 2018 at 04:38 PM



“ What a beautiful tribute to a life filled with love.

Marilyn Berenbom - April 26, 2018 at 04:13 PM