



Deborah Segal

February 18, 1939 - March 7, 2017

Deborah Ostroff Segal (née Levin), born in Philadelphia on Feb. 18, 1939, died in her home on March 7, at age 78, of pancreatic cancer.

Debbie quietly earned renown as a treasured Jewish educator in Houston and leaves a legacy of having taught countless students for more than 45 years. She delighted in sharing her love of Judaism and inspiring youth to embrace the Jewish culture.

As the daughter of a rabbi and rebbetzin (the late Rabbi Alexander and Ethel Levin), Debbie was raised surrounded by Judaism. The downstairs of their home was the shul and Hebrew school classrooms, and the upstairs floors the living quarters. Once, as a young girl, she ate non-kosher meat at public school out of curiosity and coincidentally developed appendicitis later that day - a pivotal event that convinced her of the importance of tradition.

Her love of Judaism and observance of tradition can be seen throughout her continuing education and the many roles she held over the years. Debbie attended Gratz Hebrew College and received a B.S from Pennsylvania State University. In 1985, she was one of four professionals in the country accepted into the Fellowships sponsored by the Jewish Educational Service of North America with the Institute for Hebrew Culture and Education of New York University's Graduate School of Education and received a master's degree in Jewish Studies. She was the educational director of Beth Am from 1973 to

1974, of Brith Shalom Religious School for fifteen years, beginning in 1974, of UOS Talmad Torah from the late-1980's to mid-1990's, and of Beth Yeshurun Religious school from the mid-1990's until 2000. Her love of teaching was constant and she continued to teach Hebrew school at Congregation Beth El and Congregation Beth Israel. Hundreds of young lives were touched over four decades.

Her accomplishments and impact were acknowledged in 1986 with the City of Peace Award and again in 1988 when she received the Yavneh Award for Outstanding Contributions to Jewish Education, given by the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston.

Another of Debbie's many life roles was her staunch belief in giving of herself to the Jewish community. She served on Selection Committee for the Irving L. Samuels Outstanding Teacher Award for Judaic Studies Award and was an active member of the Jewish Educators Council, serving as vice president and president, where she was instrumental in developing a code of practices for the hiring of religious school teachers in Houston. Ten years ago, during a coffee meeting of board members of Hadassah, they discussed the idea of forming a network to bring food and care to others in their time of need. Debbie was adamant that it be called the Caring Committee of Mazal Hadassah, and that the word Mazal be incorporated because it's 'who we are and what we do.' Thus, the Caring Committee was born with Debbie as a co-founder and taking a strong leadership role. Her caring for others was so much a part of her being that she continued to bring flowers and food, even while undergoing chemotherapy.

She met her first husband, Bernard Ostroff, through her late father's synagogue. The couple had two children, daughter Cheri and son Rick who is married to Linda. In 1995, she married Martin I. Segal and lovingly embraced his three children, Adrienne Segal, Holly Plost (née Segal) married to Randy,

and David Segal. Debbie is also survived by her grandchildren, Marcy Ostroff, Brandon Plost and his wife Faye.

Known for her sharp wit, Debbie loved to laugh and could often find humor in most of life's situations. She also loved a good book, a good movie, the symphony, Judaica art, and lamb chops.

For the many lives she touched in her years, we can never lose all that we enjoyed and loved. In memory, she becomes a part of us. Her qualities cannot be locked in the time and life of her body. We remember the good life and best times while she was strong.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to MD Anderson or Hadassah.