



Dorothy C. Abels

February 14, 1931 - November 21, 2025

Mina “Dorothy” Cohen Abels, 94, passed away on Friday, November 21, 2025, in Houston. Dorothy was born Feb. 14, 1931, in Wewoka, Oklahoma, to Ruth and Jay Cohen. She spent most of her early years in Tulsa, where she attended elementary school. It was there that she met her lifelong and dearest friend, Velva Golden, later Velva Levine.

While in Tulsa, Jay worked for Oklahoma Tire and Supply Company. Jay and Ruth later moved the family to Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where Jay opened an Oklahoma Tire and Supply store and eventually his own business, Jay Cohen Supply. Dorothy attended Pine Bluff High School and when it came time for college, she attended the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Her younger sister, Lillian, as well as Velva, also attended OU.

Dorothy earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology with a minor in psychology. She was active in Greek life as a member of Sigma Delta Tau and was popular within the sorority and among the Jewish fraternity boys. While in the sorority, she served as both secretary and chapter president.

Dorothy spent much of her leisure time with her friend Velva, who had met and was dating Fred Levine. Along with Melvyn Abels, Fred played in a popular dance band, the Debonaires. Dorothy and Melvyn soon became a couple and in January 1954, during their senior year, they were married in a

small ceremony in Oklahoma City. They then returned to campus, where their “honeymoon” was the completion of their senior year.

Melvyn, in addition to earning a degree in geology, was in Army ROTC. After graduation, he was posted to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. They lived there during Melvyn’s Army service, except for a short period at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. Shortly after returning to Fort Sill, Dorothee gave birth to their first son, Barry.

Upon Melvyn’s discharge from the Army, they moved to Kansas, Melvyn’s home state, spending a couple of months with his parents in El Dorado before settling in Wichita. Their family grew with the births of two more sons, David and Marc. Melvyn and his brother Jerry created Abels Oil Company and took over Western Pipe and Supply from their father and uncle. In the early 1960s, they added a fast-food franchise, Mr. Swiss, to their business endeavors.

The couple was very active in the life of Ahavath Achim Hebrew Congregation, with both participating in fundraising activities and the religious life of the synagogue. They enjoyed a large circle of friends and family in Wichita, including Melvyn’s mother, Esther; his brother and sister-in-law, Jerry and Delores Abels; and their longtime dear friends, Velva and Fred Levine. Summers were devoted to visiting relatives, including Dorothee’s parents in Pine Bluff and her sister Lillian and Lillian’s husband, Bernard, in Nowata, Oklahoma. Dorothee and Velva also spent many summers together with their children boating on Grand Lake in Oklahoma.

Family time was central to Dorothee and Melvyn, and holiday observances were always held at one of the Abels’ homes in Wichita. Dorothee spent much of her time as a homemaker in those years, though she could often be found helping in a Mr. Swiss store when needed. She also worked for a period helping manage the operations of the Wichita Racquet Club. During that same

time, business challenges led to the dissolution of both the oil company and Mr. Swiss.

Melvyn was offered business opportunities in Houston, and the family moved there in 1973, settling in Meyerland. Barry began college at UT Austin, while the younger boys enrolled in Houston schools. In addition to managing her home, Dorothee worked in the offices of Sage Department Store and later for Containerized, a commercial refuse company. During their years in Houston, they joined Congregation Beth Yeshurun and spent time with their close friends, the Levines, who had moved to Houston several years earlier.

After four years in Houston, Melvyn received an offer to return to Wichita to work for Beren/Berexco. He remained with the firm for nearly 25 years. Dorothee and Melvyn again became active in the life of Ahavath Achim Synagogue, and Dorothee worked in the offices of the Wichita State University Counseling Center.

Upon Melvyn's retirement, the couple moved back to the Houston area, where their son David lived, along with many friends who had also relocated from Wichita. They settled in Missouri City and joined Congregation Beth El. During this period, they watched their grandchildren grow to adulthood, traveled to Israel to visit Marc and his family, spent time with Barry and his family, celebrated many family simchas and cherished time with friends. Early in their Houston years, they also witnessed their son David create and grow his own business, though tragically he passed away in 2003. They found comfort in their family, friends and each other. Dorothee and Melvyn were married for 71 years.

Dorothee was an avid mah jongg player and a friend to many. She always had an ear for those who needed someone to talk to, and her advice was often

sought out.

In addition to her son, David Lee Abels, Dorothye was preceded in death by her sister, Lillian Roberts; daughter-in-law, Galit Abels; nephew, Michael Myer Roberts; brother-in-law, Bernard Roberts; brother-in-law, Gerald Abels; and sister-in-law, Delores Abels.

She is survived by her husband, Melvyn; her son, Barry, of Fort Worth; Barry's sons, Leland Abels and Jacob "Koby" Abels (Nicole); and Barry's grandsons, David and Joseph; her son Marc Abels (Galit z"l) of Ashkelon, Israel, and his sons Ishai, Yoad, and Yahav; nieces Joan Abels, Marcia Olmsted, Julie Abels, Larry Roberts, Leslie Miller and Jeff Roberts; and many great-nieces and great-nephews.

A funeral service will be held at 1:30 PM on Tuesday, November 25, 2025, in the Kagan-Rudy Chapel at Emanu El Memorial Park, 8341 Bissonnet St., Houston, Texas 77074.

Donations in Dorothye's honor may be made to Congregation Beth El (<https://www.betheltx.org/payment.php>) or The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston (<https://www.houstonjewish.org/get-involved/donate/>).

She will be sorely missed.

Cemetery Details

Emanu El Memorial Park

8341 Bissonnet St
Houston, TX 77074

Previous Events

Cemetery Chapel Service

NOV 25. 1:30 PM (CT)

Emanu El Memorial Park
8341 Bissonnet St
Houston, TX 77074

The Kagan-Rudy Chapel