



## Ellin Friedman Grossman

March 25, 1934 - May 8, 2023

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved Ellin Grossman on May 8, 2023. During her long and well-lived life, Ellin was first and foremost a loving wife, mother and grandmother. She outlived our Dad, Dr. Robert Grossman, the absolute center of her world by exactly 18 months and one day. Although she had been suffering from Alzheimer's dementia and vascular dementia before Dad died from Parkinson's disease, Mom began a steady descent after his death in October 2021. Truth be told, she never wanted to be without Dad. And although we are grieving her loss, we know that Ellin is now at peace being reunited with her loving Robert for eternity.

It's hard to sum up Ellin's span of 89 years in such a short space which can only give a glimpse into who this multi-faceted and terrific, smart woman was. Ellin was a Renaissance woman, who was so ahead of her time in so many areas. She was a passionate advocate for women's rights and served as a strong role model for her three daughters, sons in law and nine grandchildren. She was fiercely independent and believed in speaking her mind on all topics. She was an artist who sketched, painted, molded clay and did loom weaving. She was a teacher, a professor, a Ph.D, in art education and art history who had a long career in higher education. She was a world traveller with our Dad and collected stamps on her passport from Japan to Australia to Turkey to Spain. She was a decorator of her own homes and filled them with beautiful vistas at every turn, mixing traditional antiques with oriental art and modern

pieces. She was an incredible home cook who baked and sautéed as fine as any restaurant chef. She was an athlete, who picked up running at age 74 and ran 5Ks from Houston to New York City. She was a giver of hugs, a supporter of our family, a champion to those in need. She loved dogs (especially West Highland White Terriers) and horses and grandchildren. And she was radiantly beautiful. She is dearly missed.

Ellin, who was adoringly called “Mimi” by her grandchildren and “Bunny” by Robert, was truly one of a kind. Born on March 25, 1934 in New York City, Ellin was the daughter of the late Bassami and Dr. Benjamin Friedman. Ben was an ophthalmologist and Bassami ran his office. They lived in a pre-war apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan and had a summer house in upstate New York. In town, Ellin loved going to museums and in the country she loved to horseback ride.

Ellin was always proud that she attended and graduated from the High School of Music & Art. There, Ellin focused on studio art which gave her a launch pad for a lifelong career in the arts.

Ellin was a keeper of memories and one of her favorites was meeting Robert when she was 15 and he was 16. They fell in love at first sight and dated for years, while they attended college. Ellin was a firm believer in education and after high school took classes at Bennington College in Vermont, learned weaving at the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina and studied art history at the Ecole du Louvre in Paris. Upon her graduation from Antioch College with a bachelor’s degree in creative arts in 1955, Ellin and Robert got married in her parents’ apartment. By that time, Robert had already graduated from Swarthmore College and was in medical school at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University. While Robert was in medical school, Ellin worked as a research assistant in Pre-Columbian Peruvian Textiles for the esteemed archaeologist Junius Bird at The American Museum

of Natural History. Simultaneously, Ellin attended graduate school at New York University. She graduated with a Master of Arts degree in art history from the NYU Institute of Fine Arts in 1958.

Ellin was the most supportive wife and she loved sharing life with Robert, which also meant moving around the country as he completed medical school, residency, internship, Army service and then appointments as a brain surgeon. That meant that they lived in Rochester, New York, Washington, D.C., San Antonio, Dallas, New York City, Galveston and Houston as Robert's successful neurosurgery path grew. Along the way, their family, grew, too, with the births of their three daughters, Amy, Kate and Jennifer. Everywhere the family went, Ellin was quick to make friends and become a part of the community. She was a gracious hostess and would invite people over for conversation and always, good food. Count on Ellin to make everything from deviled eggs to roast beef to sour cream coffee cakes. She loved to entertain and her tables were always beautifully set and people were always made to feel at home. Also along the way, Ellin worked in the field of the arts, most notably as an art history teacher at St. Mark's School in Dallas and as an art teacher in Scarsdale, New York.

In 1973, when Robert received his first Chairman position at UTMB Galveston, they bought a house in Nassau Bay. It was there that Ellin decorated their house on the lake with cool grasscloth wallpaper and mid-century modern pieces. It was there, too, that she received an academic appointment as a lecturer in Humanities and Fine Arts at the nearby University of Houston - Clear Lake campus, marking the start of a 26-year career at the University. While at UH-Clear Lake, Ellin also moved into administration, becoming the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for the School of Human Sciences and Humanities. One of Ellin's proudest accomplishments was serving as the Director of The Art School for Children and Young Adults.

There, her research areas included children's artistic development, the identification of artistically gifted and talented children and curriculum development. Ellin's other most proud moment came in 1979 when she received her Ph.D as a Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction in Art Education from the University of Houston. In addition to her teaching and administrative roles at the University of Houston, Ellin was elected to multiple positions with the Texas Art Education Association and was extremely involved with professional and volunteer organizations. She also was published in 12 different art education publications, delivered more than 30 art presentations and 18 different art workshops for artists and teachers.

In 1980, Robert was appointed Chairman, Department of Neurosurgery, The Methodist Hospital and additionally was appointed the Chairman of Neurosurgery at Baylor College of Medicine from 1980 to 2005. They moved to Southampton so Dad could be near the hospitals and Mom continued to commute to University of Houston-Clear Lake, where she continued to work until she retired in 1999.

Never one to let grass grow under her feet, Ellin began volunteering at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and served on numerous subcommittees. She also worked side by side with Robert volunteering passionately for organizations that were important to them: the Epilepsy Foundation of Southeast Texas and the Houston Areas Parkinson's Society (HAPS).

Mimi loved her grandchildren with all her heart. She was famous for hosting their New Year's Eve sleepovers and keeping large jars of Oreo cookies on her kitchen counter for them. She made everything fun and would always take them shopping for books or clothes. Mimi loved that all her grandkids lived blocks away from her house and everyone was always invited over to her house to swim and eat.

One of the most unique things about Ellin, though, happened in 2009: she started running. Yes, that's right. Running. She bought some cute, colorful running shoes and took off. At the time, she had no idea how the act of running down a stretch of track or city street would make her feel: strong, powerful and in her own words, "I instantly loved the sensation and challenge of running." Having never run before in her life, Ellin dove into eating, breathing and reading about running. She even wrote an unpublished book about her experiences as a runner. She also immersed herself in the racing world and entered more than 80 5K races. She would always win the races too, being the only one in her over 70 age group. Ellin racked up a room full of ribbons and trophies and was even interviewed in Runner's World magazine. Robert faithfully took her to all her races and waited at the finish line, cheering her on with love.

Faithfulness, love and beauty are a constant when thinking about Robert and Ellin. They were married for 66 years and fit together like two pieces of a custom puzzle. After Robert died in 2021, one of the last lucid things Ellin said was that without him, she "felt unmoored." Looking back at a chapter of her book titled "Time is Running Out," Ellin wrote some words that feel appropriate now: "My heart is afloat, light, anticipating the opportunities stretching out ahead; the road is endless and colorful, gorgeous, red and magenta, dark blue and green, sun yellow — the most beautiful road that I can imagine awaits my running shoes. I would not give this up, not now, and I can't do without the run ahead."

Ellin is on her journey now, running ahead to that most beautiful road, to meet up with Dad. No longer unmoored, but fit together again, where they belong.

A private funeral for family only will be held on Mother's Day for Ellin, as we bury her next to her beloved Robert. Ellin is survived by daughter Dr. Amy Coburn and husband Dr. Michael Coburn, along with their son Jeff Coburn

and daughter Laura Coburn and fiancé Bradley Clement; daughter Kate Rose along with her son Joel Gottsegen and her daughter Claire Gottsegen and fiancé Scott Weady; and daughter Jennifer Oakley and husband Bruce Oakley along with their children Jessica Sosa and her husband Jonathan Sosa, Sarah Oakley, Connor Albert, Paige Albert and William Oakley.

For those wishing to make a donation in Ellin's memory please consider donations to: The Houston Area Parkinson Society (<https://haps.org/> ) or the Epilepsy Foundation Central and South Texas (<https://efcst.org/>)

## Cemetery Details

### **Emanu El Memorial Park**

8341 Bissonnet St  
Houston, TX 77074

## Previous Events

### **Private Graveside Service**

**MAY 14** (CT)

Emanu El Memorial Park  
8341 Bissonnet St  
Houston, TX 77074

# Tribute Wall

GK

“ Amy, Kate and Jennifer--we just found out from a dear friend about the passing of your beloved mother and are so sad for your tremendous loss. Although we had only met her very briefly a few times, we could tell what an extraordinary woman she was, and now that we have read your sublime obituary, we see that we were right! What a Renaissance woman indeed! We know that they're happy again--lovers who were always meant to be together in this life and beyond. We are aware how close you were to both of your incredible parents and what wonderful daughters you were. Although we know how much you miss both of them, we also know that their beloved memories will live on in your hearts and minds always.

*Their memories ARE blessings! Gail and Milton*

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**Gail Klein** - June 10, 2023 at 06:29 PM

KO

“ In 2013, I met Ellin, who would later become a dear friend, and her husband Bob. The day before the Houston Marathon, they both ran a 5k race, and I congratulated them on their accomplishment. However, I became confused when Bob, who was wearing a finisher's medal, insisted that I hadn't run the race. It was the beginning of my friendship with Ellin, who was smiling at the situation.

The following day, I ran the Houston Marathon in cold and rainy weather, making it the worst one I had ever run. Despite this, I finished with a good time, securing a safe entry into the 2014 Boston Marathon.

Running races was never on my bucket list until I ran the Houston Half Marathon in 2006. Even now, I don't particularly enjoy running. This is what makes Ellin's racing success so remarkable, as she began competing in her 70s and continued to excel. Her dedication and competitiveness were evident when I watched her race at the All-Comers Meet at Rice track, where she was the only runner in her age group and consistently had a winning streak.

Ellin's secret to success was her determination to excel and her husband Bob's unwavering support. Her spirit is summed up in the quote, "Challenge yourself until your death," which she lived by until her passing. I am honored to have known her and will miss her dearly.



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Kazu Oka - May 14, 2023 at 09:46 AM

RR

“ *Ellin and i were born the same year. Her parents Ben and Bassami Friedman were my parents best friends. Ben was my first mentor in ophthalmology. A wonderful woman,a wonderful family. Renee Richards*

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**renee richards** - May 11, 2023 at 12:30 PM

HN

*My deepest condolence to the family and we also think she's in the better place with the love of her life: dr. Robert Grossman*

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**Helen Nguyen** - May 12, 2023 at 03:23 PM