



Eugene Ira Gruber

January 31, 1927 - February 6, 2019

Eugene Ira 'Gene' Gruber, 92, a second-generation New York delicatessen restaurateur for more than 50 years, peacefully passed away at his home in Houston, TX, on Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2019.

A true deli man, Gene was an acclaimed member of a diminishing number of restaurateurs from the golden age of Jewish American delicatessens. Born in Brooklyn on Jan. 31, 1927, he started working as a child for his father, Max, who with other family members opened the first Jewish deli on New York's Broadway in 1927. It was called the Rialto, named after the movie theater next door. Walter Winchel often worked on his column in a booth there and the deli was frequented by stars like the Marx brothers and Milton Berle.

Gene went on to open his own delis, including Genard's Deli on Madison Ave. and later the Crest-Hill Kosher Deli in Spring Valley, NY. In 1992, the family moved to Los Angeles where Gene and son Ziggy opened Ziggy G's Delicatessen on Sunset Blvd. It, too, became a hangout for movie stars, directors, questionable 'family' men from both coasts and other celebrities. Lawyers of O.J. Simpson often met in a back room during his murder trial. After closing Ziggy G's, Gene retired in 1998, moving back to New York. He and his wife moved to Houston in 2013 where Ziggy had opened Kenny & Ziggy's New York Delicatessen Restaurant.

Never one to sit still, Gene was also involved in various entrepreneurial businesses, including one that had him on one of the last boats to leave Cuba before it fell to Fidel Castro in 1958.

He met his English-born wife, Pam, in 1965, and married her in 1966. Pam worked as an executive at Mary Kay Inc. while Gene ran the deli.

Gene was predeceased by his parents, Max and Sally Gruber.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Pam Gruber; his sons Ziggy Gruber, Houston, and Jonathan Gruber, Los Angeles; daughter Randi Hieronymus, Coral Springs, Fla.; brother Seymour Gruber and wife, Laura, New York; and his grandchildren, Poppy Q, Mackye, Isabelle, Maxine, Jennifer, Laura, and Sara; and 9 great grandchildren. He also leaves beloved cousins Norman and Lynn Rappaport, New York, and a host of cherished friends.

Besides the loss of another American deli man, the world loses Gene's no B.S. straight-talking ways, mischievous smile, and cutting sense of humor. Like the deli world he helped build, he was unique, and there will never be another.

Tribute Wall

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“ To Eugene's family. I'm deeply sorry to hear about your loss. In this trying time, please find comfort in our heavenly God. "He will wipe away all tears and death will be no more. (Yeshayahu 25:8)"

Gia - February 14, 2019 at 04:38 PM