



Leah Schiff

March 6, 1924 - January 3, 2016

Leah Schiff lived 91-years. To say that is to say hers was a life of many phases. Born Leah Bronstein on March 6, 1924, she was the 9th of ten children raised by Isaac and Cecilia Bronstein - struggling Ukrainian immigrants. Leah was BOI - Born on the Island - a place that was then jokingly known as the Free State of Galveston, a place viewed by many as beyond the reach and laws of the rest of the United States. The city was an entertainment capital that remained relatively prosperous even through the Great Depression. But, this was a large and extremely poor family. Her father worked as a shoemaker to keep their children clothed and housed.

After the depression, during World War II, Leah met and married Charles Spungin and the couple moved - first to his family home in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and then back south to Texas. Charles and Leah had three children - Sandra, Charlotte and Stephen.

If you were a student at Milby, Jones, or Austin High School between 1953 and 1963, it is likely you handed some of your cash over to Leah. During that period, the Spungin's owned and operated the Ranger Drive-In near Gulfgate Mall. Leah could be found, most days, behind the cash register.

Sadly, progress doomed the popular drive-in when the state decided to build the 610 Loop. The restaurant's location on Telephone Road was taken by eminent domain and the place was bulldozed. The Spungin's relocated to San Antonio, where they spent four years - until Charles' death in 1969 - operating the Mustang Drive-in.

Shortly thereafter, the widow Spungin returned to Houston where she met the man she later described as the true love of her life - Ed Schiff. The couple married in 1971 and remained happily together until he passed away in 1997. Through these years, she performed secretarial work while Ed earned his part of the family income as an accountant.

Leah never married again after being widowed this second time. But, she was rarely without a busy social life. Much of it was spent at New York Bagels on Hillcroft, where her distinctive laugh could be heard many hours of the day. She also volunteered and socialized at Seven Acres Jewish Senior Care on North Braeswood.

In the final years of her life, Leah received loving and professional care from Shelly Gramajo, who hired on as her assistant but became her constant friend. She passed away as she slept in the home that she and Ed Schiff purchased at the time of their marriage.

Leah is remembered today by her two surviving children, Sandra Lowe and Charlotte Cohn (son Stephen died in 2002). Her son-in-law Arnold Cohn, four grandchildren and their spouses and 10 great-grandchildren also survive her. Graveside service will be held at 11:00 am, Sunday, January 3, 2015, Emanu El Cemetery, 8341 Bissonnet, Houston.