



Susan Kaufman Lapin

January 5, 1937 - February 3, 2025

Susan Kaufman Lapin, 88, beloved wife, extraordinary mother, loving “Mimi” to her grandchildren and great grandchildren, and devoted friend, passed away on Monday, February 3, 2025, enveloped in the love of her beloved family.

Though not immune to episodes of challenge and tragedy, Susan’s life was one overwhelmingly marked by happiness and gratitude. She was born on January 5, 1937, in Houston as the firstborn child of Jean and Albert A. Kaufman. When Susan was just 4 years of age, her father entered service in the U.S. Army and was away fighting in World War II for the next four years. Susan’s mother moved Susan and her infant brother, Stephen, into Susan’s grandmother’s home where the family lived for the duration of WWII. During the war, Al Kaufman rose to the rank of Colonel and Jean Kaufman took over and ran her husband’s casualty insurance business until Al’s return at the end of the war.

Following the war, the Kaufmans bought a home on Underwood Drive in Old Braeswood where Susan grew up and watched the example of both of her parents who committed themselves to ongoing service to Houston’s Jewish and greater community by taking on leadership positions in many of the community’s religious and social service institutions. During her formative years, whether at school, at Trip Lake Camp, or at Congregation Beth Israel,

Susan developed and nurtured a set of close friends whom she treasured and with whom she maintained devoted friendships the remainder of her life.

Near the end of high school, Susan was introduced to Jack Lapin, six years her senior and a law student at the University of Texas Law School, and the two of them immediately fell in love. By the time she graduated from high school, Susan had determined that she would marry Jack. In an early demonstration of her unshakable resolve, while she was travelling with her mother on the train out to Oakland, California to begin her freshman year of college at Mills College, her mother's alma mater, Susan informed her mother that she would stay at Mills for her freshman year and would eventually obtain a college degree, but that she was going to return to Houston after that freshman year and marry Jack. Indeed, Susan and Jack were married just weeks after Susan's 19th birthday in March of 1956 and shared an unbreakable bond of love, companionship, and adventure together for the next 63 years.

Susan fulfilled her promise of completing her college degree, attending the University of Pennsylvania, Rice University, and the University of Houston while Jack fulfilled his army service and then began his law practice in Houston. Following graduation from college, Susan devoted herself entirely to her family (with the arrival of sons David, Bobby, and Richard while she was in her 20s) and to supporting Jack in every way as he built a successful law practice and took on community volunteer leadership positions. At the same time, Susan took on her own series of leadership positions in the Houston Jewish community, including becoming the second Chair of what is now the Ann & Stephen Kaufman Book & Arts Festival at the Jewish Community Center.

Like her mother, Susan combined her warm, welcoming nature with a mastery for entertaining friends and family in a host of memorable and generous ways.

During the 1970s, Susan and Jack would host what became a family tradition of weekly “Sundays around the pool” during the springs and summers where dozens of family, old friends and newly-minted acquaintances would come to their home on Willowend Dr. each Sunday and spend the afternoons there enjoying bountiful supplies of food and games. In addition, Susan and Jack hosted Passover Seders for family and friends for several decades with the numbers in attendance frequently exceeding 50. Beyond that, regardless whether the celebratory event of the moment was Valentine’s Day celebration, Chanukah or even an Election Night party, Susan ensured that the dinner table was bountiful with food, decorations and fun. In truth, Susan was rarely happier than when she would plan and oversee a celebratory event for family and friends, reminding her children that the opportunity to celebrate life’s joyful events should not be missed.

As satisfying as her family and community roles were to Susan, nothing in her life provided her with as much joy and happiness as her 63-year partnership with her beloved Jack. Together, they traveled life’s pathways as parents and grandparents, and they traveled the world as lifelong learners. Susan was, always, a present and devoted mother to David, Bobby, and Richard and, later on, generously shared that same love and support when her sons brought their spouses, Carol, Eve, and Jim, into her life. Similarly, her years as a grandmother to Lindsey, Lara, Oliver (of blessed memory), Elliott, and Alec provided Susan with countless opportunities for fun, laughter, and love which she treasured immensely. And, in her final years, when she was blessed with the gift of four great-grandchildren (two of whom were named in memory of Jack), Susan’s cup of happiness overflowed.

Susan was preceded in death by her parents, Jean and Col. Albert A. Kaufman, by her husband, Jack, and by her grandson, Oliver Lapin, each of blessed memory. She is survived by her three children and spouses, David

and Carol Lapin, Bobby and Eve Lapin, and Richard Lapin and Jim Nelson, by her beloved grandchildren and their spouses whom she adored, Lindsey and Andrew Phillips, Lara and Tim Chew, Elliott Lapin and Alec and Christine Lapin, and by her four great-grandchildren, Rowan, Cole, and Jack Phillips and Jack Lapin. She also leaves behind her brother and sisters-in-law, Stephen and Ann Kaufman and Maxine Lapin, and many treasured cousins, nieces, and nephews.

A memorial service will take place on Sunday, February 9, 2025, at 1:00 pm at Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 N. Braeswood Boulevard, Houston, Texas 77096. The service will also be livestreamed at the following link: www.beth-israel.org/about-us/news-events-upcoming-events/livestreaming/.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made either to the Oliver Lapin Children's Book Fair Fund at the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center, www.erjcchouston.org/donations-giving/, to Congregation Beth Israel, www.beth-israel.org/giving/, or to The Stop ALD Foundation, www.stopald.org/make-a-donation.

May Susan's memory forever endure as an abiding blessing to those whose lives she touched.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB 9. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Congregation Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Blvd.
Houston, TX 77096

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Tribute Wall

DW

“ When my sister, Carol Sheffield, married David Lapin, all of us were welcomed in with great warmth. Jack and Susan truly loved and included us in their lives. Mom looked forward to the trips to Aspen (where Bobby saved her on side of a mountain and became known as The Prince. Richard made a valiant effort to drive his SUV straight up the 1200 ft. slope; but his rescue was too late. Bobby was already holding her up in his mighty arms, and had risen to the ranks of royalty. David, you are the king of course.)

We have wonderful memories of Mother's day celebrations and so much more. But the one I will share is the "Best Party Ever" story. Admittedly, at 70 memories are fading a bit; but you can add a dimmer switch to Susan's 60th birthday celebration and it still shines bright in my memory.

This is what I recall... It was at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Upon entering the doors, music from the Big Bang Era begin transporting me to a romantic, fun era of Fox Trot and Swing, and what was that Jack liked to do, Carol?...Tango? Think Ella Fitzgerald and the Rat Pack.

As you proceeded up the front stairs, your eyes caught sight of musicians from the Houston Pops performing on a rotating platform. The area around them had been transformed into a dance floor and replica of Susan's favorite New York night spot. There were high-backed booths, and I think they were decorated in animal print?... And there were manned food stations with her favorite culinary delights piled high. Everyone was dressed to the hilt in gorgeous gowns and tuxedos. We dined and danced the night away. What fun memories!

After that evening, whenever I thought of Susan, I always remembered "The Best Party Ever!" And, It is my sincere hope and belief that that wonderful celebration of family and friends (a surprise from her loving husband, Jack) was a mere shadow of the what she is experiencing now, as she enters into an eternity of love

and blessings. Thank you Susan, wonderful mother to many, and friend. Debbie

Deborah Wainerdi - February 09, 2025 at 05:10 PM

“ Susan Kaufman Lapin was a wonderful woman. Even though she was married to my father’s first cousin, Jack Lapin, I only met her in Houston in 1984—the same year I migrated to Washington, D.C. from Brazil. Susan welcomed me with open arms and an open heart and made me feel part of her immediate family. Soon after arriving, I received an invitation to the family’s Passover celebration where I met Jack, David, Carol, Bobby and the extended family. Richard, I believe was in Thailand at the time. What a wonderful welcome they all gave me!

Jack, Herman, my father, uncle and their other first cousins were born in Poland but, facing persecution, migrated to separate countries and grew up in the U.S. and Brazil, respectively. They sought happiness and success in their new homes. Since they were physically far apart, it was not a top priority for either to visit their family members abroad. That changed in the 70s when the Lapins and the Werebes started to see each other regularly, in different parts of the world. I was only a teenager at the time, and it took me another decade to forge some life-changing relationships during our Passover in 1984.

Susan had a very inquisitive mind. She loved to understand the why, what, and how of the people she talked to. I remember the hours that Susan and I spent in her beautiful Memorial neighborhood home. Just the two of us sitting at her kitchen while Jack was at work. She grilled me on everything. I did not mind that at all. She knew how to ask (or rather, interrogate) and her curiosity drove our conversations to levels deeper than friends and families often reach. She asked me everything about my siblings, my parents, my Brazilian cousins, and myself. Then went on to questions about my personal and professional goals. I was only in my late 20s and she treated me like a mature adult. And all of that was during my first visit!

After that Passover, the Lapins invited me to events regularly. Susan also called me frequently. During those calls, she asked

more questions and assured me she would be there if I needed anything.

Susan also showed me how to enjoy life differently. I grew up in Brazil and the culture there is different. Another invitation came one week before Thanksgiving, back in 1984. She asked me if I wanted to join Richard, Jack and her for a long weekend in New York City. I learned at that time this was Susan's way to enjoy culture. During the three nights we were there, we went to three Broadway shows, always in excellent seats. That was after great pre-theater drinks or dinner and limo rides (no Ubers at that time). I had just graduated and had just started my career. So for me, this provided incentive and a standard of generosity to strive toward. I watched how a caring Lapin couple would extend their friendship to a much younger cousin.

Then I started dating my future wife. Another Passover came, another invitation followed, and I went to Houston along with Claudia. Susan was very considerate to have chocolate Easter eggs in the bedroom we were staying at their home. That was inclusiveness, respect and consideration for Claudia who is not Jewish. Susan loved her. She cared. Claudia loved that gesture. Small and at the same time very meaningful.

So many other occasions that we saw each other happened during the past 41 years. Always fun and full of love. Not too long-ago Stephen Lapin told me that his dad, Herman, loved me but he adored Claudia. I believe that was true for Susan, too. I think that is great since one of the best things in life is to have a warm feeling of belonging. Claudia and I, as a couple, were part of Susan's beautiful life. I can hear her voice now. I can see her penetrating eyes looking at me now waiting for an answer to one of her pointed questions. I will miss her dearly.

Roberto Werebe - February 07, 2025 at 02:01 PM

MK

“ will forever remember the lovely and

loving couple of Susan and Jack

Harvey and Mireille Katz

mireille katz - February 06, 2025 at 05:14 PM

SR

“ *I will always remember your mother, blessed memory, as a kind and thoughtful person.*

Wherever we encounters each other, Jcc, or Beth Israel, mother, always take the time to visit with me. Asking me how I was doing and being concerned about my well-being.

*Much love from,
Stanley Rosenblatt*

Stanley Rosenblatt - February 05, 2025 at 06:01 PM

JW

“ *I remember when Susan and Jack Lapin chaired the 2nd Jewish Book Fair in 1973 Susan was most enthusiastic about expanding the number of visiting authors and the bookstore to include many categories to attract more book buyers. Her excitement and extensive network of friends brought many volunteers to the event and began the long history of Jewish Houston's most inclusive community-wide program.*

Jerry I Wische - February 05, 2025 at 11:46 AM

MW

I too, remember when Susan & Jack chaired the 2nd Jewish Book Fair. It was such an exciting time for the Lapins, volunteers, authors, National book sellers & Houston community. I remember their gracious & bubbly hospitality in hosting Jerry & me, amongst many other deserving members of the JCC community, in their magnificent 2 story Library for an outstanding & memorable evening to kick off this Book Fair. It was so beautiful to see on display their love story, commitment & like-minded approach in support of all things Jewish whether well established or in their nascent stage. As a personal aside, I still remember vividly & with great delight, their collection of Balinese full standing puppets on poles-a testament to their many far and wide travels. Furthermore their prominent roles in AJC, & their writings in AJC Newsletter have helped me to grow in comprehending the AJC Mission & have perked my interest joining in support of & in understanding World Jewry, problems & successes therein.

Midge Wische - February 05, 2025 at 03:20 PM