

Zelma

I am honored to offer this modest eulogy to my mother, but am regretful that my words will be few and fall short.

Zelma Nancy Finkelstein was born Dec. 6, 1929 in Regina, the youngest of 5 caring siblings. However recently she did explain that her middle name may in fact of been Naline, and her birthday Dec. 5th. She is survived by her loving sister Sadie Ratner who is presently in Israel and could not attend. Mom was raised during the depression, and had a difficult upbringing having lost her own father at the age of 12. By her resourcefulness, tenacity, intelligence and good looks as she was prone to remind us, she did succeed in finishing her high school in Regina, and venturing forth in life.

Soon after, she married our father- the late great Malcolm, and raised 5 children she loved dearly. Sadly, she lost our brother Stanley at the age of 9, but was comforted by the knowledge she would be resting beside him today.

Mom was adventurous, clever, well read, articulate, and always curious. She was like most typical Jewish mothers, and relished climbing to collect rocks to tumble and polish in her own lapidary drums, casting and fly fishing, and even managed to backpack across Europe alone in her early sixties. She loved Israel, and volunteered with the IDF submarine command and on kibbutzim.

My mother continued to travel and volunteer. She taught ESL here in Edmonton for many years, studied Spanish for the fun of it, and even managed to get cited as a researcher in a medical study while volunteering for two winters in California just to help out. Having been first diagnosed with cancer in the mid nineties, she made many friends at the Cross Inst while volunteering and participating in groups to aid others.

Growing up at home, I remember Mom as being an early proponent of tough love, teaching us all that life wasn't easy. She taught the virtues of strength of character and determination trumping all adversity. Our mother was a very complex individual, and her life was not always easy, as a child herself, nor in the midst of rearing her own.

When she was diagnosed with her third cancer relapse last April, she did finally abandon all sharpness to her edge, and the last 10 months we had with her became an absolute gift for us all, and for the many loving nieces, nephews, and close friends she valued and who valued her. Mom was so very grateful for the kindness and compassion that so many offered up to her. She announced to me that this process of exit was to be her "greatest adventure". She showed us enormous courage in facing the inevitable, but still to be kind and outgoing. She had no regrets and took nothing for granted, gushing even more than usual at the sight of a flower, the shadow cast by a tree, or the profound beauty of a snowflake.

She endeavored and succeeded in touching those around her during her brief farewell, and I know that I speak for all of us in thanking her for saying goodbye so gracefully and graciously. We'll see you over and over Mom until we meet, in the fire of the sunrise, in the flash of a shooting star.