



Charlotte Goldberg

July 21, 1925 - March 31, 2020

Charlotte Goldberg - the leading light of her family, dedicated physical therapist, pioneer in women's athletics, successful artist, and active supporter of the Houston Jewish community - died peacefully on Tuesday, March 31, 2020, at the age of 94.

Charlotte was born in Brooklyn, New York to Celia and Jacob ("Jack") Mehlman. Celia immigrated to the U.S. in her early 20s from Galicia in what is now Poland, while Jack took pride in having been born in the U.S. on the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America and having served in the Army during World War I. Jack owned a shoe store underneath an "el" train, and the family - including Charlotte's siblings: Mildred, Sam, and Irving - lived just above the store. Because the store carried a staple of daily life, the family was able to weather the Depression reasonably well, albeit simply. Her parents put an emphasis on Judaism and education, and all four children went on to earn college or advanced degrees.

Starting her college career at Brooklyn College, Charlotte excelled in academics and a variety of sports, becoming President of the Women's Athletic Association in her junior year. In that position, she had the honor of helping FDR Jr. unveil a plaque to mark the renaming of the college's gymnasium in memory of the late President. For her senior year, Charlotte transferred to Columbia University, where she earned a degree in physical

therapy. She was invited to apply for admission to the University's medical school, but in an age when women doctors were almost unheard of, she decided on a different path.

After graduating, Charlotte accepted a temporary position in Houston treating polio patients at Jefferson Davis Hospital. Never expecting to stay in Texas, she returned to New York to work and hopefully find a husband. She soon met Bernard ("Bernie"), a fat peddler pursuing a Master's degree in chemical engineering at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, who somehow wooed her with, among other things, a picnic on the grounds of a sewage treatment plant.

The two married and, in short order, had three children (Michael ("Mike"), Ruth, and David). After Bernie received his PhD in mathematical economics and statistics from the New School University, he accepted a position with Shell Development Company, and Charlotte found herself returning to Houston with her young family. Wanting to have a "true Texan" in the family, she and Bernie had their fourth child, Aaron, in their new home state. The family was one of the earliest to join Congregation Brith Shalom, just a year after it was founded, and remained active in the synagogue for decades.

With the youngest still in diapers, Charlotte slowly started getting back to the workplace, first at the Texas Institute for Rehabilitation and Research, and then at the Jewish Home for the Aged (the forerunner to Seven Acres Jewish Senior Care Services), where she started and led the Physical Therapy Department. She eventually became the Director of Physical Therapy in the private orthopedics practice of Dr. Alexander Brodsky and his associates, where she worked for over 20 years. She was dedicated to her patients, fiercely loyal to her staff, and, as adjunct faculty at Houston Community College, helped train a new generation of physical therapy assistants.

Throughout this time, Charlotte maintained her interest and involvement with

athletics. Well into her 70s, she was playing basketball in a league at the Jewish Community Center with women only a fraction of her age. She had boundless energy and a lethal two-handed set shot, which also earned her gold medals in several Senior Olympics. She was inducted into the Houston Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in June 2000, at the age of 75.

For reasons that even she could not explain, Charlotte started experimenting making Plexiglas sculptures in the late 1960s. Using industrial equipment like a band saw, drill press, and wet belt sander - and conscripting the whole family in the effort - she crafted artwork, as well as modern-design commercial items including grandfather clocks and chess sets. Her work was featured in numerous galleries, art shows, home furnishing stores, and museum stores as far away as Los Angeles and Washington, DC. She also had success designing jewelry in sterling silver.

In her later years, Charlotte became active as a videographer for a wide range of community and private events, including programs hosted by the Houston Holocaust Museum, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Texas Medical Center Orchestra. Her tireless efforts were appreciated and enjoyed by countless people throughout the city.

Charlotte and Bernie maintained a fun and unconventional household. Meals featured kosher meat the family butchered themselves, a complete lack of table manners, and lively if sometimes inappropriate conversations. They took annual road trips from coast to coast, frequently paying unannounced visits to factories, which fostered in their children a fascination about how things work and are made. The family welcomed a steady stream of people from diverse backgrounds, many of whom became virtual members of the family. The parents encouraged a love of learning, and they put all four kids through Yale University. Each of the children went on to earn at least one graduate degree

in the sciences, international relations, and/or law.

The oldest child, Mike, lives with his wife Susan in Ithaca, New York, and their daughter, Alicia, lives in Houston with her husband Miles White. Daughter Ruth lives in Houston with her husband Allan Van Fleet and her daughter Kate Walker. David lives with his wife Marty in Boulder, Colorado, where their children (Miriam and Benny), son-in-law (Clark Farmer), and grandchildren (Essie Farmer, Talia Farmer, and Julia Goldberg-Negron) also live. The youngest, Aaron, lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland, but is contemplating a return to Houston - as are Mike and Susan. Charlotte also leaves behind a host of other family members, friends, and co-workers who will remember her fondly. She was particularly close to her nephew in Houston, Harold Vinegar, and his family (including wife Robin and children Abby, Scott, and Eva).

Charlotte was a playful and generous free spirit to the very end. She spent her last day enjoying chocolate ice cream and listening to Ella Fitzgerald singing Cole Porter tunes. She was laid to rest at Beth Yeshurun Cemetery (Post Oak) in a graveside ceremony presided by Rabbi Ranon Teller, at 2 PM on April 1, 2020. Although much of the family had to participate remotely because of travel and other restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19, the service was beautiful, with a full minyan and melodies in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English led by family friend Janice Rubin.

The family respectfully requests that any memorial donations in Charlotte's honor be made to Congregation Brith Shalom, the Houston Holocaust Museum, or the Anti-Defamation League.

Tribute Wall



“ *My daughter Anja is a friend of Kate's and was a frequent visitor at Charlotte's house while growing up. Charlotte was fun to be around and welcomed everybody in her home. I will miss her! Ute*

Ute Franklin - April 09, 2020 at 08:50 PM