



## Zelma Kahn

November 8, 1919 - September 22, 2023

Zelma Marcelle Eatenson Kahn (1919-2023) passed away from COVID-related breathing problems on the evening of September 22, 2023 in Palo Alto, CA, just a few weeks before reaching her 104th birthday (November 8).

Zelma, or "Zel" (as she liked to be called), was, as she had been for all of her very long life, aware and alert and cognitively "with it" until almost the very end.

Zel was born in 1919 and raised in Dallas, Texas. Her father, Sam Eatenson was from Berdichev (Ukraine); and her mother, Anna Lawrence Eatenson, was from Ploiesti, Romania. She had two brothers, Sol Lawrence Eatenson and Ervin Eatenson.

After briefly attending SMU, Zel married Frederick M. Kahn (1917-1975) in 1941. After World War II, they moved to Denver, Colorado, where they started a cosmetics business whose main product was a hand cream called La Viola, which was specially formulated to heal dry skin in the high-altitude Colorado environment.

In Denver, they raised three children (Robert, Ted and Patti Kahn); and together with close friends, they helped found and build a new Jewish Conservative synagogue, Congregation Beth Joseph, which became one of

east Denver's leading traditional synagogues in the 1950s-60's. Zel was active in Sisterhood and served for a time as its vice president.

The Kahns lived in Denver for 17 years, spent a year in San Diego, and then moved back to Dallas in 1965. Zel became a highly successful real estate agent in north Dallas, and she continued living there until 2011, when she moved to Palo Alto. Like many Dallasites—and many real estate agents—she was always stylishly and impeccably dressed.

Zel was the quintessential extrovert. She could walk into a room full of strangers and talk to each of them as if she'd known them all her life. An hour later she could tell you everyone's names, life histories, occupations, number of children, etc. Her memory was phenomenal; even at the age of 103, she could memorize and repeat people's telephone numbers.

A true Texan/Southern Belle, she never lost her habit of calling everyone around her "honey." During the Vietnam War, a Denver friend quipped that all the U.S. had to do to end the war was send Zel over to talk to Ho Chi Minh, the leader of North Vietnam. Her friend said Zel would just walk into the room and say, "Now Ho, Honey, we just need to talk about this...."

Zel was happiest when surrounded by family. She gave a strong moral and ethical compass to all of her children. She had an unshakeable connection to the Jewish communities of both Denver and Dallas; before her passing, she was the oldest member of Congregation Kol Emeth in Palo Alto. She was a strong supporter of Israel and StandWithUs, and she was honored several years ago for her lifetime membership in Hadassah.

She loved being around children and dogs, and she adored Broadway musicals. She never lost her Dallas/southern belle ambiance and always used to end every conversation with, "God willing, and the creek don't rise."

Her funeral (in Dallas) will be Thursday (9/28,) and we will hold a community memorial service in Palo Alto at the end of the traditional Jewish "Shloshim" —30 days of mourning—at the end of October.

She is survived by three children: Bob (Lynn Levy), Ted (Frona), and Patti Kahn (Bill Kornfeld); five grandchildren: Alyssa Ortiz-Kahn (Steven Ortiz), Ben Kahn, Yoni Kahn (Alison Rosenblum), Aaron Kahn, and Ilana Kornfeld; and three great-grandchildren: Niko and Theo Ortiz-Kahn, and Micah Taylor Kahn.

Donations in her memory may be made to Hadassah, the Jewish Women's Zionist Organization of America.

May her memory always be for a blessing.

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

SEP **28**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Shearith Israel Cemetery  
4634 Dolphin Road  
Dallas, TX