

ANITA STEWART LOPATIN SMOLOVER



Three surnames that each evoke different phases of her life. She was 98 on March 9th, and died peacefully of natural causes on Saturday, April 13, 2024. Anita Stewart was the eldest of three daughters (Anita, Marilyn Laufé (deceased) and Sondra Reiff, Carbondale, CO) of Charles "Benny" and Esther Stewart. Anita was born in Beechview then moved to Squirrel Hill where she attended Taylor Alderdice

High School, and then graduated with a BFA in Music Education from Carnegie Tech. Aside from her role as camp counselor at Emma Farm, she began her career as band director and music teacher at Braddock Elementary School, then moved on to become a nursery school teacher and Nursery School Director at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement, (corner of Stanton and Negley in the East End), prior to which she married Milton Lopatin (deceased), her college sweetheart. (Up until her death there were many of you that had stopped her on Murray Avenue to say "Mrs. Lopatin, Mrs. Lopatin, you taught me in nursery school"). Anita's tenure as nursery school teacher evolved into Program Director for the facility and advanced further as the IKC was absorbed by the Pittsburgh JCC. She moved on to the Squirrel Hill JCC location and advanced her position to City Wide Director of Early Childhood Programming. She also oversaw the James and Rachel Levinson Day Camp and Swim Club in Monroeville. As her administrative skills grew, in 1972 she was tapped to become Assistant Executive Director of the Pittsburgh JCC and moved to the YM&WHA building in Oakland, a position that few women in this country had achieved. Anita was responsible for total day-to-day operations for five JCC facilities. She served the Pittsburgh Jewish community for 43 years then retired when there was nowhere else to go as she was passed over for Executive Director for being a woman, and for not having a degree in social work. Though she certainly did know her job. Retirement was really not in Anita's vocabulary. I caught her selling Hawaiian plants at the Pittsburgh Flower & Garden Show the following Spring. Not long afterwards she was approached by Marilyn May of the May Company (owner of Kaufmann's Department Store) to establish a Pittsburgh chapter of OASIS (Older Adult Services and Information Systems), in Kaufmann's downtown location. Anita opened the Pittsburgh program with three members and proceeded to grow it to an astounding 36,000+ membership, the largest in the country. From the OASIS offices on the tenth floor of Kaufmann's she ran programming and established a computer center for Pittsburgh's older adults to learn computer skills. It was during this time that Milton, suffering from mental illness, took his life. Though devastated, Anita picked herself up and continued to focus on her life at OASIS. In time, Anita realized that she didn't like living alone, and began to date, at age 70. She met and fell in love with Albert "Al" Smolover. They were married in 1997. Anita finally did retire when Al lost his eyesight due to macular degeneration. For 14 years they were an inseparable couple. She became the "eyes" for both of them as they walked hand-in-hand shoulder-to-shoulder to parties, symphonies, synagogue and Osher classes. Al passed suddenly in 2013. Anita remained in her apartment until 2018 when she moved to JAA Weinberg Terrace and had been a cheerful, bright light there since. She is survived by her son William "Billy" Lopatin (Rebecca Litman); six grandchildren (two Lopatins, four Bachs); twelve great-grandchildren and numerous members of the Smolover family. Her daughter, Jody Lynn Bach, died unexpectedly of COVID in 2021. During her lifetime Anita received numerous awards and accolades from Mayors, Governors, Congressmen, community organizations, religious institutions and universities. Anita dedicated her life to community service and to the caring of others. Her memory will remain not only a fixture in the Jewish Community of Pittsburgh, but also to the 36,000 plus older adults whose lives she touched in her service to OASIS throughout the community of Greater Pittsburgh. Graveside Services and Interment will be held on Monday, April 15, 2024 at Beth Shalom Cemetery, 1501 Anderson Road, Shaler Township, PA 15209 at 11 AM. Contributions may be made to the Jewish Association on Aging, 200 JHF Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15217. Arrangements entrusted to **RALPH SCHUGAR CHAPEL, INC.**

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