Heritage Funeral Home & Crematory

Lorraine B. Cooper

(May 15, 1917 - July 04, 2013)

Lorraine Berenbaum Cooper, 96, died on July 4, 2013 in Seattle, WA where she had lived for the past two years since becoming a widow. Graveside services will be conducted by Rabbi Michael Goldstein on Sunday, July 7, 2013 at 2 pm at Fairmount Memorial Park (5200 W. Wellesley Avenue, Spokane). My mother was born on May 15, 1917 to Nettie Finkelstein and Israel Berenbaum in Chicago, IL. A studious child, she graduated seventh in her class of more than 350 students at John Marshall High School on the city's West Side. Because her father was able to keep his department store sales job during the Depression, she lost out on a full-ride scholarship to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to a school chum whose father was unemployed. Still hungry for more education, though, Lorraine attended the Illinois Institute of Technology for two years until her savings ran out. She took up golf when she was eight years old, was an avid classical music piano player, a tennis ace and ice skater. She gave up the piano after her mother died (at 42) from kidney disease when Lorraine was 15. After arthritis hospitalized her for the first time in her early 30s, my mother was forced to abandon her sports completely. An avid baseball fan beginning in her youth, her aunts would take her to see the Chicago Cubbies on Friday afternoons when "ladies were free" (the use of lights and the introduction of night games were several years away). In fact, she enjoyed watching the Seattle Mariners play the Chicago Cubs during her last week of life from the comfort of her room at the Bailey Boushay House in Seattle's Madison Valley. (A finer hospice facility does not exist.) During the Second World War, my mother rolled bandages for the soldiers, sold War Bonds in Chicago's famed Drake Hotel and transcribed letters for the Department of Defense. After her older sister's family moved to Seattle in the 1950s, Lorraine and her father followed them. A fateful blind date brought my mother to Spokane in 1954 (with uncharacteristic moxie, my father told her they would be married on this first date and six months later, it became a reality). Their only child, Nancy (moi), was born the following year. Here in Spokane, Lorraine continued her professional life as a legal secretary and engaged in more volunteer work. She served as the local chapter Hadassah president and in subsequent years, accepted volunteer assignments from the League of Women Voters and the American Heart Association, among other worthwhile causes. She took Spanish lessons in her 80s and tried to learn to drive in her 70s.

Lorraine was much more successful with the former endeavor than the latter, as she went on to fail the State driver's examination three times. She was nothing if not plucky. A lifelong Democrat, she believed strongly in social justice and was looking forward to voting for Hillary Clinton in 2016. Among my lasting memories will be the three presidential debates we watched together as well as the night President Obama was re-elected. To the end, my mother remained engaged in life and political discourse and was a strong supporter of Israel. After more than 57 years of marriage, Lorraine was predeceased by my father, Gerald Cooper, in January 2011 at age 95. Her sister, Ruth Block, died nearly 25 years earlier. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Nancy Cooper and Rick Kustina of Seattle, and three nephews (Michael, Brian and Steven Cooper and their families in Washington DC, Virginia and Oregon). Lorraine Cooper was an ordinary woman who did extraordinary things from my child-high perch. She enabled my loathing of crusts by cutting them off my sandwiches when I was young. She "kvelled" and called me a "ballabusta" when I made sauce for the spaghetti or baked a cheesecake that remained intact when cut. She donated modest sums of money to almost every calamity, whether it was a tsunami half a world away, a bombing in Boston, or a devastating forest fire in the middle of Washington State. And while she had to wait longer than she wanted for a son-in-law, she made up for lost time by speaking of him glowingly to anyone who would listen. All of me that is good can be linked directly to her. I will love her forever as my mother and miss her forever as my best friend. In lieu of flowers, anyone so inclined to make a charitable contribution in her memory is directed to https://www.michaeljfox.org/ for further research into Parkinson's Disease, from which she suffered for the last five years.