

Kind-Hearted Matriarch

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Contributing Writer

Jean Frankel had two big priorities in life: (1) Family and (2) Family. Period.

Her family-oriented philosophy was a carryover from her teenage years when her mother and grandmother died within a short period of each other, leaving Jean (then Grosberg) to help care for her siblings and cousins.

She carried out these motherly deeds for the rest of her life, nurturing her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Jean Frankel, 97, of Bloomfield Hills, died May 10, 2012, of natural causes at her home.

"It seems appropriate that we say goodbye to Jean on Mother's Day," said Rabbi Aaron Bergman of Adat Shalom Synagogue at the May 13 funeral. "She was thrust into the role of being like a mother and supporting a family even before she had her own children. But she did so with a full heart because she considered it a privilege to take on these family responsibilities. She was a surrogate mother to everyone."

Rabbi Bergman, the only person to speak at the funeral, described Mrs. Frankel as an "understated, modest and humble person who shunned the limelight and sought no notoriety. She preferred that her husband, Sam, be the 'front person' for the family."

Samuel Frankel, a noted Detroit area businessman and philanthropist, died at age 94 in 2008. During 69 years of marriage, they were a "great team, partners in everything they did for the family," Rabbi Bergman pointed out.

With her home as her domain, Mrs. Frankel took care of everything on the home front, always making sure to be there when the children came home for lunch or from school later in the afternoon.

"She had a high moral standard and strict, but fair rules," said Rabbi Bergman.

"Everyone had to be ready to eat dinner together — with their hands washed — at 6 p.m. And when you used something, you had to always remember to put it back where you found it."

Meanwhile, Samuel Frankel parlayed an early career in the wholesale and retail grocery business, operating the well-known Big Bear supermarket chain into a vast real estate empire that included founding of the Somerset Mall in Troy, now the Somerset Collection. In the early days, he often rose at 4 a.m. to help load produce trucks for the markets.



Jean Frankel

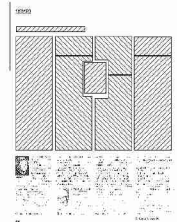
'Very Bright'

Mrs. Frankel was born in Detroit and attended Northern High School and the University of Michigan, getting a B.A. degree in English. "She was very bright; she had both book smarts and common sense, which is a rare combination," Rabbi Bergman noted. "She insisted on everyone using proper grammar because she considered that to be one of the tools to success."

The Frankels met in 1938 after being introduced by a mutual friend, and they got married a year later. They lived with Jean's family for two years before moving to northwest Detroit on their own to start raising a family.

"Jean had idolized her father, and the close-knit family spent many summers together in a cottage on Pine Lake," said Rabbi Bergman. "And they enjoyed it better when their father, Charles Grosberg, relented and had indoor plumbing installed."

Mrs. Frankel loved to needlepoint and do crossword and jigsaw puzzles, "but one of her greatest



pleasures was quietly helping people in financial need," said Rabbi Bergman. "Many people in our community benefited from her kindness, and they will never know she was the one who helped them."

Education, Religion, Charity

The Frankels championed educational, religious and charitable causes throughout Southeastern Michigan. Beneficiaries of their charitable efforts include the Jean and Samuel Frankel Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit in West Bloomfield; the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, where Mrs. Frankel served in the women's division; Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills, where the Frankels were members for more than 50 years; Congregation Shir Tikvah in Troy; the Detroit-based Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute; the Detroit Symphony Orchestra; the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan; Walsh College, and more.

"The Frankels left a lasting impact on JARC," said Rena Friedberg, the organization's chief development officer. She cited a major gift to its capital campaign to establish the Jean Frankel Garden and to help purchase its administrative building, establishing the Samuel and Jean Frankel Residential Services Division,

the Sadie and Charles Grosberg Home and, in 1973, a gift allowing JARC to purchase its first home.

Jean Frankel is survived by her sons and daughters-in-law, Stuart and Maxine Frankel, Stanley and Judith Frankel, and Bruce and Dale Frankel, all of Bloomfield Hills; daughter and son-in-law, Jo Elyn and George Nyman of Birmingham; grandchildren, Darren Frankel, Kami and Jamey Nielson, Caren and Robert Vondell, Aaron Frankel and fiancée, Carolyn Kantzler, Matthew and Jennifer Frankel, Richard and Jennifer Frankel, Jacob Nyman, Adam and Sara Nyman, and Sara Nyman; great-grandchildren, Zev Frankel, Lindsay and Jillian Vondell, Jackson Frankel, Tyler Frankel, Allie Marie Nielson, Colin Nielson, Samuel Nyman, Charlotte Frankel, Samuel Frankel, Jonas Couzin Frankel and Shasa Couzin Frankel; brother, Merwin Grosberg.

Mrs. Frankel was the wife of the late Samuel Frankel; sister of the late Norma Grant; and sister-in-law of the late Doris Grosberg, the late Joseph Grant and the late Tillie and the late Ben Mossman.

Interment was at Clover Hill Park Cemetery. Donations may be made to the American Israel Education Fund, 2301 W. Big Beaver Road, Suite 900, Troy, MI 48084; JARC, 30301 Northwestern Highway, Suite 100, Farmington Hills, MI 48334, or a charity of one's choice. Arrangements by Ira Kaufman Chapel.