

She Leaves a Legacy of Pride and Poetry

by Mike Fink

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I share shiva with the Providence community: Pearl, "Pen" Braude, who gave me, and us all, so much, has gone into another realm.

Among my images of this lovely lady in the album of my memory I see her gathering boughs for her succah, elm stumps for sculpture, recycling plastic cartons for wall bas reliefs, making beauty wherever she went. Her names suited her, not only in Hebrew but in English. She was a pearl of wisdom and charm, translating all materials into sacred objects of spiritual meaning. She wrote with a pen of light, of tact, the proverbial magic of the Jewish people. A word is better than a jewel, she wrote in gold and silver over the dining room buffet, where I shared many a Sabbath dinner with the Braudes and other guests.

A common view of Reform history shows a temple that turned away from Zionism and from ritual. But Pearl Braude first urged me to visit Israel, in 1961, and brought me back to the majesty and elegance of Jewish religious art and artifacts. I blessed the aromas and the four garden corners of the earth in a havdalah ceremony at her table. I also discovered the perfumes of the cafes of Dizengoff in Tel Aviv with Pearl Braude, a friend, a guide, an encouraging angel bearing messages.

Pearl brought me comfort in times of mourning and grief, and festival treats from her kitchen in times of joy and renewal. She brought me a chuppah for my wedding in my

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own living room, and prepared the hummus and technia for a champagne toast after the ceremony.

She made Temple Beth-El a place of welcome and handsome hospitality, time and again, season after season, always graceful, spirited, and, to use a word told me over the phone when I was told of her passing, "etereal." She lived above us in an element of the imagination, the nechama, a creature of soul and spunk.

I was an ally and frequenter of her household, stopping by at odd hours, and I observed the love she gave and got, the romantic trio of red roses always there in a silver vase on the table, sent by her husband without fail each Friday.

I had my chance to say goodbye to a dear companion in this town, in a dim hospital room. I took Pen's hand and said I loved her. "I love you too," she murmured, "but I have to sleep." Before I left the shadowed chamber, she called back, "Give my love to your family." Dignity, class, vigor and refinement, she had plenty to spare, but she didn't spare herself. A fancy figure among us, she leaves us a legacy of pride and poetry.

For me, Pearl Braude took our religion and wrapped it in purple robes. Her devotion and respect for her family, and for our wider community family, keep her gentle smile among the living, even as she bears kind words into the next dimension. Words will pour forth to praise her days. I add these to the week's scroll.

BRAUDE,
Pearl