



Blanche Borenstein

January 13, 1928 - September 24, 2024

Blanche Borenstein (nee Weinstock) enjoyed a multi-tiered and full life that ended peacefully, with loving and compassionate send-offs, on September 24, 2024. She was 96. Raised in the "poor part" of Jersey City, NJ, she was the third of four siblings born across a 20 year span to immigrant Eastern European Jews. As a child, she insisted on leaving the elementary school she was sent to, which was far from the family's apartment, to attend a closer one, which predominantly served children of color. She told many stories of the inadequacies of the teachers there, as well as at her junior high school, and was painfully aware of the rigid caste lines between Blacks and whites, as well as Jews and Catholics.

Blanche observed her family's struggles during the Great Depression and vowed that she would have more security in her life than they had. With the advent of WWII, schools began closing earlier as jobs were being made available for young teens, and Blanche began commuting to work in Manhattan's department stores-an experience that would later lead to her doing bookkeeping and finance work at Macy's flagship store. After high school, Blanche supported herself while living at home and attended evening courses at NYU. She had many friends who shared her enthusiasm for listening to musicians in "the City" and apparently sowed some wild (but unspecified) oats in her college years. Blanche was the only one of her siblings to get a college degree. Throughout her entire life she was an avid

reader and a follower of world politics.

Blanche was acquainted through mutual friends with Benjamin Borenstein, her future husband who was also from Jersey City, but paid him (and his then baby face) no attention until she had an extra ticket for a boat ride and invited him along. By the end of that ride, she realized Ben was potentially "the one" and promptly ended a relationship to be with him! They married in 1952 and shortly thereafter moved to Chicago IL and its environs for Ben's first professional job. There they had two daughters, Eve and Ruth. The family returned to NJ in 1959, residing near New Brunswick until 1964, when they moved to Teaneck NJ, five miles from Manhattan. They chose Teaneck due to its excellent school system and its having voluntarily implemented desegregation of its schools via a voter-approved busing plan.

Blanche was actively engaged in community politics. The summer before moving to Teaneck, she attended the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. When the Vietnam War exploded, she continued to make journeys to Washington, DC rallies. She was active in anti-racism and anti-poverty efforts of the local chapter of the American Jewish Congress as well as the Bergen County Democratic Committee. Working as a substitute teacher in towns adjacent to Teaneck that were more working class, she was acutely aware that their students were the ones fighting and dying in the war while many of Teaneck's more-privileged students were able to avoid the draft due to college deferments. While Blanche was not a very social person, she was strongly connected to those who were like-minded in such activism.

After Ben's retirement from a long and successful career as a food chemist, he and Blanche moved to Delray Beach FL in 1994. There, they expanded their NJ past-times (dedicated fans of professional football and horse racing), becoming avid birders. Ben was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease just prior

to their move but the couple enjoyed 10 good years there before back-to-back hurricane years exacerbated Ben's health issues. After he died in 2006, Blanche "slept for two years" (her words) and thereafter moved to an independent living residence in Florida where her brother-in-law resided. She made the decision to "be more social and say hi to everyone" and wore that new persona to huge benefit! After her brother-in-law's death, Blanche decided to move to Minneapolis to enjoy life closer to daughter Eve and her family. That move, in early 2013, opened a new and wonderful chapter of her life.

Blanche loved Minneapolis proper and St. Louis Park, the first-tier suburb where she resided ("the trees!!, the parks!!"). She loved having her grandchildren close by. Six years after her move, she walked her granddaughter down the aisle; three years after that, she saw her grandson married. Blanche also saw two great-grandchildren born, and lit up every time they visited her!

Over time, Blanche needed more household assistance, and was graced to have the help of dedicated professionals who kept her safe and active. "Team Blanche" began with the professional care manager and physical therapist she enjoyed from 2013 forward, and then expanded to include her amazing aides and their supervisors. With Team Blanche in place, Blanche survived the COVID years without the negative impacts that so many others experienced.

Those who knew Blanche way back when, as well as those she met more recently, and even those who only met her one time, recount her smile and sense of humor (and those who knew her for any length of time recall her sarcasm!) Blanche was less active from 2022 forward, keeping to her apartment but always noting the giant windows' view of trees and birds and

the changing sky and light. As she needed more assistance from her caregivers, her unwavering smile for, and kindness to, all who helped or visited her, never failed. Team Blanche was augmented in her last weeks by fabulous hospice workers. She considered each member of Team Blanche her family, and unfailingly thanked each member each time.

Blanche told everyone that she had a fabulous life and had no regrets. She is survived by her daughters, Eve and Ruth Borenstein, their respective "even more wonderful than her daughters" spouses, Candace Falk and Karen Strauss, grandson Jacob and wife Kristen Wilde, granddaughter Allie and husband Evan Sanford, and the Sanford kidlets, Emerson and Molly, along with three nephews, Jeffrey, Adam, and Daniel Dener, and their spouses and children.

The family will host a private Remembrance of Blanche's Life in mid-November. Anyone who wants to honor Blanche can do so by making a gift to a charity or a social welfare organization of their choice. Organizations Blanche supported are: the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU and the ACLU Foundation), The Nature Conservancy, and Brady United Against Gun Violence (Brady Center and Brady Campaign).