

ROSALIND (ROZ) FORMAN

1921-1988

In Memoriam, November 28, 1988

For more than a thousand years, from the days of Aristotle until Maimonides, the via media or golden mean has been recommended as the ideal way to live. There have been practitioners of this art who came to it only after years of excess, followed by great effort to overcome the appetitional drives.

Roz lived the golden mean effortlessly, for it was inherent in her nature. She loved beautiful things and acquired what she could for her home, her family and herself, without denigrating the simple or exaggerating the importance of the expensive. She and Len entertained frequently, for their circle of friends was large and devoted. Family gatherings, especially for the Passover Seder, might have taxed the ability of minor caterers, but not that of Roz, for she had mastered the necessary logistics. If she reigned as Queen in her home, it was not through arrogant assertiveness but by "democratic election."

She had an extraordinary gift for binding people to herself in friendship, for she gave lavishly of herself to others and accepted with grace and gratitude any kindness shown to her. Immaculate in dress and appearance, her warmth, her smile and cheerful greeting were not studied but innate. She was not a professional do-gooder. Grateful for the gifts of life and her loving family -- her husband Leonard, daughter Fran and her husband Bob, son Robert and his wife Yvonne -- she regarded these gifts as a sacred trust to be used for the enrichment of all whose lives she touched.

Roz was active in the Jewish community and in the general community. She started modestly enough, as Fran has noted, with P.T.A. and a Brownie group, but as her interests expanded she found larger outlets for her energies and abilities. Sinai Hospital's mental health program ignited a special spark within her, and after serving as a volunteer she took the bold and courageous step of undergoing the necessary training to become a family counselor. This required resuming an interrupted

collegiate study program to earn a B.A. degree. She did this successfully, without neglecting her home responsibilities or her volunteer work.

The challenge of helping people who found themselves in emotionally trying situations added a dimension of depth to her personality. By nature a caring person, she found deep satisfaction in the insights she was able to engender in the patients whom she saw with some regularity. To make life less difficult and less painful — this was her self-imposed task. Even after leaving Sinai's program, she maintained a private practice and discontinued it only when long absences from the city made her unavailable to those who needed her.

Goodness was not a pose and kindness not an assumed stance with Roz. At a time in human history when philosophers and theologians see primarily fear and dread, when novelists and poets give us visions of despair and human depravity, when Hollywood, the TV and other

media have become purveyors primarily of violence and crime, relieved only by occasional commercials featuring cute little babies, Roz, in the dignity of her everyday life, demonstrated the fallacy of what we are given to read and see. People can be decent, honest, kind and considerate and need not be saints or hermits to live the good life.

And Roz lived the good life, especially with her family. Her marriage to Lenny for forty-six years was ideal, by modern standards, ideal and fulfilling. Fran and Robert provided the pleasure of early childhood, the problems of adolescence and the challenges of their emancipation into independence. That achieved, they brought new joys and happiness to Roz and Len through the four grandchildren, Sophie and Hannah, Rosha and Avram, and Fran's two stepchildren, Betsy and Jesse.

Then suddenly a few months ago Roz learned that her energetic and vibrant body had been invaded by a virulent unseen enemy, which threatened a rapid deterioration. The knowledge of the inevitable end aroused no

bitterness in her, nor anger, either against God or nature or life. She determined that she would not become an experimental statistic in the heroics of medical technology. Ease-ment of pain, yes, but nothing beyond that. As her strength ebbed and her body was ravaged, her mind and heart continued to be focused on the welfare of Lenny, her children and grandchildren.

Blessed as Roz was with many friends, four took time to sit at her bedside each day during those last harrowing weeks: Jane Schapiro, Lois Feinblatt, Shirley Handelsman and Livy Reichert. Netsy Lieberman joined them whenever possible. Their presence and their support helped Roz to maintain her courage until the end.

Len, Fran and Bob, Robert and Yvonne, sisters Elaine and Sylvia — the sense of loss which you and all of us feel is sharp and painful. Yet I dare to ask you and all of us to remember not only what we lost, but what we had. Roz's life is inscribed indelibly on our minds and hearts, and she will remain a living presence within us as long as we live.

We do not know what is beyond this,  
our earthly life,

But this we know:

We remember in loving gratefulness  
Those who have shared the warmth of  
their hearts and minds with us,  
Whose spirits have touched our lives,  
Who have lavished on us their most  
precious gift of friendship.

As long as breath remains in us, we  
shall keep their memory fresh,  
And pronounce their name with  
a benediction.

Blessed be Rosalind (Roz) Forman,  
And let us unite in saying "Amen!"

Louis L. Kaplan