



Ilene C. Herman

September 5, 1932 - March 15, 2020

Born September 5, 1932, in Cleveland, OH to Edward and Florence (“Hinkle”) Weinberger. Died March 15, 2020 in Fairfield, CA, surrounded by her family and with her husband of 65 years, Irwin A. Herman of Fairfield, by her side. She is survived by her husband, her three children – Rod Herman (Jamie) of Benicia, CA, Dennis Herman (Denise) of San Anselmo, CA, and Jennifer Blumenberg (Michael) of Ventura, CA – and her eight grandchildren (Lindsey Daems (Jeff) of Benicia; Rachel Daddario (Chris) of Yorba Linda, CA ; Rebecca Rogers (Brian) of Walnut Creek, CA; Abby Herman of San Francisco; Elyssa Herman of San Francisco; Benjamin Blumenberg of Seattle; Valerie Herman of San Anselmo; & Aaron Blumenberg of Ventura) and five great grandchildren, all of whom miss her dearly.

Ilene was the middle of three girls, growing up in Cleveland with her sisters Lois (Levin, who died in 2013) and Marcia (Miller, of Mt. Vernon, NY). When she was 12 years old, Ilene went to the Hashomer training farm near Chagrin Falls, OH, where she first met her future husband, Irv – then 13 – when they were assigned to KP duty together. Ilene and Irv began dating in high school and were married in 1954, honeymooning at Scaroon Manor on Schroon Lake, NY. They lived in Cleveland and on a Virginia military base until 1962, when they relocated to the Bay Area, settling in San Leandro where they lived for 30 years and raised their family. During their daughter’s high school years, the family hosted an exchange student from Argentina, Silvia Mandil of Buenos Aires, who became like a fourth child, forming a bond that lasted throughout Ilene’s life. A few years after Irv’s retirement from his medical practice in 1992, they moved to Sun City Roseville, where they lived for 20 years. In 2017, they moved back to the Bay Area to be closer to their kids and grandkids, settling in Paradise Valley Estates (PVE), in Fairfield, where they resided at the time of Ilene’s death.

Ilene graduated summa cum laude in 1954 from Western Reserve University in Cleveland, earning a B.S. degree in Speech and Hearing Pathology. She worked for a time as a speech therapist, including a stint with the Head Start program in Hayward, CA. But writing was her true passion. She worked for the American Greeting Card Company while

in college, earning enough to help put Irv through medical school. She became a master at coming up with clever lyrics and rhymes at the drop of a hat, a skill that became her hallmark, especially at gift-giving times and holidays. She continued to write throughout her life, penning numerous short stories, some of which were published in various books and journals, including *Chicken Soup for the Tea Lover's Soul* and the *THEMA* literary journal. She had a creative and inventive mind, and regaled her kids, and later her grandchildren and great grandchildren, with the adventures of "Witch Mehitable," a character she created to occupy her children on long drives from the Bay Area to Lake Tahoe, where the family had a small condo for a number of years.

Ilene had a quick wit and infectious smile and made friends wherever she went. Never at a loss for words, Ilene could talk to anyone about anything for as long as they were willing to listen (and sometimes longer!) Always eager to make new friends, she joined several bridge groups, regularly played tennis, and was an active participant in writing clubs at both PVE and Sun City, where she wrote a column for the local monthly *Sun Senior News*. She wrote lyrics for several plays that were performed annually at Sun City, and often brought the house down. The outpouring of sympathy, admiration and support that the family received from the numerous friends she made at PVE during her short time living there is a moving testament to her ready smile, engaging personality and joyful creativity.

Ilene traveled the world with her "life-long buddy," Irv, visiting all seven continents and almost 100 countries during her life. She particularly liked adventure travel. She sailed to Antarctica in a converted Russian icebreaker, took a flying safari over Southern Africa, journeyed to New Guinea for the colorful Sing Sing festival, and explored Taquile Island in Lake Titicaca on the way to Machu Pichu. But she didn't shy away from places like London, Paris and Rome, and enjoyed many trips to Europe over the years, including one memorable storm-filled voyage on the QE2.

Ilene had a curious intellect and enjoyed vigorous discussions about politics and current events. A life-long advocate for women's rights, she was an active member and participant in the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women, where she helped set up and run a scholarship program for local high school girls. She had a thirst for learning, especially when it came to California history. She took many college courses, often just for her own edification, including at Cal State Hayward, Mills College, and the University of Virginia. Her crowning achievement was the Master's degree in Applied History she earned from Holy Names College in Oakland in 1987.

Ilene was one of the original docents for the history gallery at the Oakland Museum, giving tours to thousands of students on field trips over the years. She was instrumental in

developing a history program at the Camron-Stanford House on Lake Merritt, doing original research and training some of its early volunteers. She wrote a monthly column on the history of San Leandro for the San Leandro Observer during the 1990s, authored a historical bike tour for the San Leandro Cherry Festival, and was an active member of the Alameda County Parks, Recreation and Historical Commission. In Roseville, she became interested in the Maidu Indian tribe, the largest in California, which led her to become a docent at the Maidu Museum & Historic Site for many years.

Ilene loved animals, adopting strays and supporting numerous charities that protected wildlife and their habitat. She was also an avid and vocal fan of the Oakland A's (something her Giants-loving sons could never understand). But more than anything, family was the most important thing in Ilene's life. Known affectionately as "Bama" and "Bombom" to her grandchildren and great grandchildren, she loved nothing more than to create a wonderful meal for those she loved. When she wasn't rushing back and forth making sure everyone was happy and well-fed, she would sit back, silently "kvelling" (Yiddish for 'bursting with pride') as she watched the family she and Irv built talking, laughing and of course eating.

Ilene was interred at Ner Tamid Jewish Cemetery in St. Helena, CA, on March 18, 2020, following a private family service. The family wishes to thank the nurses, physicians and staff of the Intensive Care Unit at North Bay Hospital in Fairfield for their heroic efforts in caring for Ilene in her final days. Their compassion, effort and professionalism will not be forgotten. A memorial service to celebrate Ilene's life will be held when circumstances permit.