



## Jean Hilary Tobias

November 25, 1944 - August 14, 2022

### JEAN HILARY TOBIAS (1945-2022)

Jean Tobias, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and sister, died peacefully in hospice. Jean was born on November 25, 1945 in Cape Town, South Africa, and grew up twelve miles away, in a small town called Parow. Her father Maurice Reznek was a general physician, and her mother Zelda helped manage the office, and made the most amazing stuffed monkeys.

Together, Maurice and Zelda raised Jean, alongside her younger brothers Rodney, and the twins Frank and Steven. Jean was a feisty and protective sister. When the bullies came around, they warned each other not to touch the boys, because Jean was their older sister, who would “donner” them. On the playground, Jean honed her skills as a guardian of good, and her brothers repaid her in kind as loyal defenders and friends.

When she was a teenager, Jean used to spend every weekend at Lesley Loon’s home, from which they would go out for a Saturday night party. One night, she came home and confided to Lesley’s mother, “Mrs. Grayce, I met a really nice boy tonight. His name is Brian Tobias.” They became sweethearts, and the rest is history...

After graduating from high school, she went to the University of Cape Town

and received a Bachelor's of Arts and Honors Degree in Social Work. Shortly thereafter, she married Brian, who was studying medicine at the University.

Jean went on to become a teacher — a pursuit she excelled at as a pre-school teacher at Yavneh Day School in Cincinnati. Melanie Zadikoff, her friend and colleague, said she was the best. For decades, former students would introduce themselves as adults at all sorts of random locations, and recall happy memories under her tutelage. Her profound love for children fueled her life with purpose.

In 1970, she welcomed her first child, Jonathan, a gentle yet rebellious boy. She loved telling stories of him as a toddler — quietly profane while walking barefoot on hot sand or yelling an obscenity in Afrikaans. She had that kind of mischievous sense of humor and often exploded into laughter that electrified a room.

In 1971, her daughter Deborah was born, and her doctor said she would grow up to be a most beautiful woman. Debbie also grew up to be a tremendous and loyal companion to her mother. They were inseparable, and liked to go shopping, share meals, fashions, and gossip. Jean proved to be a fierce protectorate of both her children. Debbie and Jonathan came first... until, they had grandchildren.

Jean found her true calling as a grandmother, where she could indulge freely in unfettered, ice-cream and sugar-laden, unconditional love. She had a sweet tooth, and relished black licorice beyond all good sense. It was the vice of a good woman.

Her first grandson Sidney is a sensitive and bonny boy, who delighted in his Gigi's wicked sense of humor. Gigi took Jacqueline, her granddaughter, under her wing, and ferried her to art classes, where Jackie developed an

expressive outlet and a passion for art. She danced with her granddaughter Izzy, and together, they listened to The Beatles. And she made sure Zac, her grandson, got to Toys R Us, when no one else would.

In South Africa, Jean and Brian made lasting friendships that carried them through their youth and into their family years, when they immigrated to Cincinnati in 1977. There, they cultivated a rich life full of laughter, love, good food, and a rooted connectedness in a tight-knit group of Jewish South Africans, who peppered their conversations with a colorful patois of British, Yiddish, and Afrikaans... stropky, baleboster, pup, kugel, and other words that'll keep for another time.

What is the measure of a person's life? If you measure a life by how much she loved and was loved, Jean commands attention. Her laughter was infectious, and being around her was like a ray of sunshine. She was a big presence — a beam of vim, vigor and love. She will be dearly missed by legions.

If you asked Jean what made for a good life, she would paraphrase the scholar and teacher Forest Emerson Witcraft: "A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove. But the world may be different, because I was important in the life of a child." Jean made a difference to the child in all of us.

Jean is survived by her husband Brian, son Jonathan, daughter Deborah, younger brothers Rodney and Frank, and grandchildren Sidney, Jacqueline, Isabella, and Zachary. She lost her brother Stephen earlier this year.

Funeral services will be held on Tuesday, August 16 at Weil Kahn Funeral Home at 1:30 pm. Friends are welcome to livestream the service at [https://webcast.funeralvue.com/events/embed\\_viewer/77405](https://webcast.funeralvue.com/events/embed_viewer/77405). Shiva will be observed

Tuesday at 6PM at Fox Hollow Condominiums Club house at 9521 Fox Creek Lane, Mason, OH 45040. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to support research for Alzheimer's Disease and dementia: Cure Alzheimer's Fund ( <http://curealz.org/giving/donate>).

“There will never be another Jean in my life. If you look up loyal friend in the dictionary, it should read ‘Jean Reznek Tobias.’ Jean was steadfastly loyal during thick and thin — kind, generous, thoughtful, and the most incredible Mother, Gigi, and Sister. She will be missed by so many, particularly me. Sadly, I have felt her absence for some time now.”

~ Lesley Loon

“Jean was a very special friend — from the age of 13 when she came to Good Hope High School. She was my bridesmaid when we got married in July 1965! A genuinely a good person, and a wonderful friend. I have very happy memories of wonderful times with her, and Brian, including their 6 months stay in Sydney all those years ago! We saw them often and shared much special time showing them around our beautiful city.”

~ Barbara & Syd Cohen

“One always knew when Jean was at a party! Her infectious, special laugh was heard before you even walked in. Made everyone present happy. She was the best.”

~ Stephanie and Norman Gilinsky

“Jean Tobias, dear friend and teaching partner; full of love, South African colloquialisms, and beautiful memories. She wore a contagious smile,

harbored a bit of mischievous criticism, and exuded unmatched enthusiasm. In her vernacular it is a "bloody" shame that she's gone. May she rest in peace."

~ Mary Lee Sirkin

"I taught at Yavneh for many years with my dear sweet friend Jean. Our 'teacher bond' was unique! We laughed, sang, danced, and even cried, but we loved every minute of our time together. A real wonderful friendship grew. Her warm personality permeated every room that she entered. We teased her whenever she used her 'special' language —especially when she frequented the "loo." Even my girls Lindsey and Sarah loved tagging along with my lunches with Jean cause she was so much fun! RIP my friend! Your legacy will live on forever in the hearts of all who loved you!"

~ Patti Wise

"A very bright light in this world has been dimmed with the loss of Jean Tobias. To know someone you can laugh with, dine with, engage in lively conversation with, and enjoy each others company is a gift.

Jean was that and more... she was the gift that kept giving and I am grateful for the time I had with her and will miss her terribly. She was very loved by many."

~ Barbara Schwartz

"As Jean said many times, the best times were our years of teaching together at Yavneh (Rockwern). Especially lunch time! We found true friendship that lasted through good as well as tough times and continued well after retirement. She will be missed and ALWAYS remembered."

~ Rita House

“It is a rare occurrence to have somebody in your life, other than a parent, that loves you unconditionally as if you were their own child. Jean used to tell me that the reason I was her favorite (sorry Toni) was because I gave my parents such a tough time as a toddler. Maybe Evan really does take after me! She was always cheering me on and made it obvious how proud she was of me — when I graduated law school, started my career, signing the ketubah at my wedding 20 years ago this October, when my children were born and all the milestones in between. I have been very lucky to not only have amazing parents, but to have many of my parents friends, Jean included, that were like bonus parents. I grieve alongside my parents, my siblings, Jean's children Jonathan and Debbie, her grandchildren and the rest of their family and friends. I feel so blessed to have had her in my life. She was one of a kind and I already miss her like crazy.”

~ Carla Loon

My Darling Jean

You are my sister from a different mother. We had such an intense, honest, caring & special friendship which I miss on a daily basis.

I've always kept a photo of you on my desk and am constantly 'in touch' with you, believe me.

You were my soulmate in every sense of the word & I will miss & cherish you forever.

Rest in peace my dear friend.

Nola Miller

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

AUG **16**. 1:30 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Weil Kahn Funeral Home  
8350 Cornell Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45249

# Tribute Wall



“ Weil Kahn Funeral Home created a Webcast in memory of Jean Hilary Tobias



Weil Kahn Funeral Home - August 15, 2022 at 12:55 PM

BK

“ Jonathan, I am so sad to hear of your mom's passing. I have fond memories of her from our years together at Yavneh Day School. She was so kind, and she always made me feel special. Seeing photos of her, I can still hear her voice like it was yesterday. My sincerest condolences.



Bryna Kirzner - August 30, 2022 at 06:59 PM

JC

“ We have known Jean since she was schoolgirl, a university student, and a mother. She was a close friend, bright, vivacious, loving and loyal, and we will miss her. Our condolences to Brian, Jonathan, Debbie, and grandchildren.

Lorraine and Jonathan Clain

jonathan clain - August 16, 2022 at 09:43 PM

DK

“ *Jean's presence colors many of my childhood memories. From the way she'd squeeze my cheeks when greeting me, to the patience she displayed handling my incessant phone calls asking if Jonathan would go skateboarding with me, I always felt good around Jean.*



*I feel so fortunate to have been one of the many children to experience her love and warmth, and will always remember her fondly.*

*Love to Brian, Jonathan and Debbie*

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**David Kreitzer** - August 16, 2022 at 07:08 PM

“ *Meaningfully impact the life of even just one child, and you’ve lived a good life.*”

*By this definition, Jean Tobias lived an amazing life.*

*I haven’t been in regular contact with Jean for almost 20 years, but when I was growing up, my family was over at the Tobiases on a regular basis. We lived right down the street, so that made it convenient. But what made it easy, second nature...like family, was Jean. She had a special, facade-less manner and infectious energy that would make even a shy kid, like me, feel instantly at home in someone else’s house.*

*As a child, I took this for granted. That’s just how your parents’ friends behave. As an adult, with my own child, I know this isn’t often the case. It takes a special effort. When I see a shy kid, in the corner at a family gathering, I try to engage them and bring them out of their shell in the same way that Jean would when I was little. It’s been almost 40 years, but this gift from Jean endures. It continues to impact how I interact with children, and I hope to pass it down to my daughter, Juno.*

*Another short, but favorite, memory of Jean was when I came home from university after my Junior year. Jean came over to visit my Mom. She hadn’t seen me for a year or so, but immediately greeted me with ‘My Jason, but you’ve gone fat’. I briefly contemplated the defensive, ‘No, I’ve been lifting, it’s muscle, I’m bulking up...’ But, I quickly realized there was no malice, this was just Jean being Jean, speaking without filter. Only someone who truly cares about you, and knows that you know that, feels comfortable giving you direct feedback like this. I tell this story often.*

*Jean Tobias had a meaningful impact on my life. I’ll miss her, but I treasure what I learned from her, and I aim to keep those lessons alive with my daughter.*

*All my love to Debby, Jonathan and Brian.*

**Jason Kreitzer** - August 16, 2022 at 03:28 PM

SH

“ *Steven Herman lit a candle in memory of Jean Hilary Tobias*



**steven herman** - August 16, 2022 at 02:33 PM

GB

“ *When we first moved to the U.S. from South Africa, I attended Yavneh. Jean was a presence then, as she has always been, for those that were blessed to grace her presence. Truly beautiful words, Jonathan; my heart goes out to you all. May Gigi's memory be for a blessing now and always!*



**Gavin Blumenthal** - August 16, 2022 at 02:12 PM

MZ

“ *We shall miss our vivacious, beautiful Jean, who filled everyone's lives with laughter, love, gorgeous smiles and caring. Our deepest sympathy and condolences to the whole family. With all our love, Maureen and Astor*

**Maureen Zieper** - August 16, 2022 at 11:51 AM

LF

“ Way back when my kids had the priviledge to have Jean as their teacher at Yavneh. I so remember her kindness, humor, and passion for teaching...I also remember her laughing at her not so perfect singing voice!!! After the school year she invited us to her home in Blue Ash for a very proper South African tea...tho thirty some years ago I remember it vividly. She was very special...may her memory be for a blessing.

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**Linda Schottenstein Fisher** - August 16, 2022 at 09:48 AM

CB

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Claire Berman** - August 16, 2022 at 09:48 AM

SK

“ I feel like I won the jackpot when Jean became my neighbor more than 40 years ago . We became friends and then family. Reading all these tributes is a testament to the impact Jean had on so many lives. Her's was a life well lived!

Rest in well deserved peace “my liefie” I will love and remember you always.

Shari

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**Sharon Kreitzer** - August 16, 2022 at 09:46 AM

GS

“ Loved meeting Jean & Brian when we came to Cincinnati 15 years ago. Just loved her smile and fun personality with always an Afrikaans connection. Gone too soon. May her memory be for a blessing. Hugs and love to all her family. Ghita & Ian Sarembock

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**Ghita Sarembock** - August 16, 2022 at 08:19 AM

MK

“ Jeannie

*Ek het so vreeslik van jou gehou. Jou lag en daardie wonderlike glimlag!!.*

*Ek kan albei nog sien. Ek praat nou met jou, nie oor you. Dit klink net reg.*

*En onse fudge tradisie!*

*Elke jaar, op my verjaarsdag, die lekkerste Suid Afrikaanse fudge op my voorstoep. En ek praat van die egte fudge, wat van kondensmelk gemaak word.*

*Jeannie, ek sal jou mis. En dis nie net die fudge nie.*



*Mel*

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**Mel Kreitzer** - August 15, 2022 at 08:42 PM

JR

“ Jean was one of the wonderful warm and welcoming Women who embraced me when I lived in Cincinnati for a short time many years ago. Her sunny personality stood out - her warmth and sincerity unique, her giggle and sense of humor infectious and her natural ability to give of herself was a gift. A shining light departed this world it will continue to shine in the loving memories of all whose lives she so warmly touched. My condolences to Brian and all her family to celebrate her life with all the beautiful memories of a special woman. Jackie Rosenberg  
With

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**Jackie Rosenberg** - August 15, 2022 at 06:57 PM

JJ

“ We were heartbroken to hear of Jean's passing. I have such fond memories of Jean when she visited Cradock with her family to see Grandma Leah.. We had such fun as children and always looked forward to her visits. We reconnected when we left Cradock and settled in Cape Town. Jean was such a presence - so vivacious and outgoing. Always smiling and one considered oneself fortunate to be in her orbit. Once more we reconnected when emigrating to Canada and we attended each other's simchas. Jean made a lasting impression on all those she met and she will be sorely missed by those who knew and loved her. Juliet Joseph

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**Juliet Joseph** - August 15, 2022 at 05:28 PM

BS

“ A very bright light in this world has been dimmed with the loss of Jean Tobias.

To know someone you can laugh with dine with engage in lively conversation with and enjoy each others company is a gift. Jean was that and more.. Jean was the gift that kept giving and I am grateful for the time I had with her and will miss her terribly. She was very loved by many.

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**Barbara Schwartz** - August 15, 2022 at 04:30 PM

CL

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Carla Loon** - August 15, 2022 at 04:27 PM

BH

“ We are so sorry to see such a wonderful woman pass. The world will definitely be different without her, but we will cherish her kind spirit and remember her fondly. Our condolences to Brian, Jonathan, Debbie, and the entire family. Our hearts go out to you. May Jean's memory be a blessing. 💕💕

All our love,  
Beth and Michael Headrick

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**Beth Headrick** - August 15, 2022 at 04:02 PM

HC

“ *Brian, our most sincere condolences on Jeans passing  
With many fond memories  
Aliza and Hirsh Cohen  
Chicago. IL*

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**Hirsh Cohen** - August 15, 2022 at 02:36 PM