



## Gila Altshuler Einstein

June 11, 1937 - February 23, 2018

Gelia (Gila) Altshuler Einstein, 80, died peacefully on February 23 in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Gelia was born in Harbin, Manchuria, China, in 1937. Her parents, Isaak and Zhenya Altshuler, had escaped from violent antisemitism in Russia by heading east on the Trans-Siberian Railroad to Harbin, home to a thriving Russian Jewish community. After the death of her father in 1940, Gelia and her mother moved to Shanghai to be near her mother's sisters. In 1949, in the aftermath of the Chinese Communist Revolution, they left China, joining the throngs of refugees from across the globe in the new State of Israel. They lived in tents in a refugee absorption center near Haifa for a year before being relocated to Nahariya. After Gelia finished high school, she served in the Israel Defense Force as a social worker, attaining the rank of sergeant.

While visiting relatives in New York for a summer, Gelia joined the staff of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC. She met her future husband, J. Ralph Einstein, on a blind date. Ralph, taking a break from preparing for his doctoral exams, had gone to a beach, and hearing people speaking Russian, had stopped to chat, since his parents had escaped from the Soviet Union in the early 1920s and many Russians in New York at that time were Jewish.

The inevitable "Do we have a girl for you" subject came up, and the next time Gelia visited New York, Ralph was invited to take her on a date. An accomplished pianist in addition to being a scientist, Ralph took her to a performance by the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Leonard Bernstein, hoping to make a good impression. He did.

After their marriage in 1960, Ralph and Gelia lived in the Bronx while Ralph completed his post-doc at Columbia. An offer for a position in the Biology Division of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory brought the couple and their two adorable children, Ruth and David, to Oak Ridge in 1965. Daughter Miriam (also adorable) was the native Tennessean of the family.

The Einstein family were long-time members of the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge. Gelia was a member of the Sisterhood for many years, and was also a lifetime member of Hadassah.

Gelia spoke five languages fluently: Russian, Hebrew, French, Yiddish, and English, though she had some sort of accent in all of them. She was a creative, endlessly inventive cook, coming up with delicious low-fat, vegan dishes for Ralph after he endured heart bypass surgery. He often credited her cooking with saving his life. Gelia loved opera, especially Placido Domingo, and she and Ralph went to just about every Oak Ridge Symphony concert and chamber music concert until his death in 1999.

Gelia spent her final years at Patriot Hills Assisted Living facility, and the family wishes to extend their deep thanks to the staff for the love and care shown to her.

Gelia is survived by her daughter Ruth Einstein and her wife Marian Broida, son David Einstein and his wife Laura, daughter Miriam Einstein, and granddaughter Ava Einstein. Donations in Gelia's memory may be made to the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge or to a charity of your choice. Online messages may be left for the family at [www.martinfuneralhomeoakridge.com](http://www.martinfuneralhomeoakridge.com). Services entrusted to Martin Oak Ridge Funeral home. 864 483-4341

# Comments

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“ Dear Ruthie, David and Miriam,  
I was so sorry to learn of the demise of your beloved Mother. Your Dad and Mom were so much a part of our Jewish Community and the Community at large. They are both missed. Each year it is a privilege to be a part of the Hadassah Youth Concert that remembers your Dad. Know that they and all three of you are loved.  
A friend of many years.  
Mel Sturm

**Melvin Sturm** - March 02, 2018 at 03:45 PM