

Introduce Yourself

What's Your Story?

Hi, I'm Laurie Gantz. I was born at Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My dad was born in Philly and my mom was born in Brooklyn. From the age of 4 through 9, I lived in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. I am the oldest of three children and have two brothers, Jeff and Mitch Fleischman.

We left Cherry Hill for Downey, California when my dad accepted a job as an aerospace engineer at North American Rockwell. Downey was the home of the Apollo Space Mission for most of the 1960s. My family and my boyfriend (later my husband), got to see the moon rocks on display before the public. It was very exciting.

When my family lived in New Jersey, we belonged to a Conservative congregation. When we moved to Downey, there was only one synagogue, Temple Ner Tamid (Eternal Light). I liked it and continued on to Hebrew and Sunday schools and then confirmation in 10th grade. My best and still-close friend was the rabbi's daughter.

During high school I was very active in NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth). I was the vice-president of NFTY (Ner Tamid Temple Youth). I met my husband, David Gantz, through SCFTY (Southern California Federation of Temple Youth). He was the President of T.O.T.S. (Teens of Temple Shalom) in West Covina. We met when we were 15. He was the funniest, smartest, cutest, and most mature guy I ever saw. Lucky for me, his parents gave him a used Corvair when he turned 16. So he was able to drive to Downey most weekends to take me out on dates! At age 20, we got married. (Yes, that's very young.)

I received my bachelor's degree in history from Cal State Fullerton. At this time, I also spent a year teaching pre-kindergarten in Fullerton. Once I graduated, I decided to go into fashion and retailing.

I was offered the opportunity to open a women's sportswear store in Orange County. I did that for a year and then moved to Berkeley where David was accepted to study law. During that time, I worked for Macy's in San Francisco as a buyer of jewelry and women's accessories. Later I worked at Robinson's in Southern California doing much the same.

I have two wonderful children and four adorable grandchildren. My oldest, Ken, is a real estate attorney who is now the vice president of a major building company in Boston. My daughter, Deborah, is a successful international corporate attorney in Toronto.

David and I were happily married for 43 years. He was well known by many people at Temple Isaiah. He was a highly respected attorney and a partner in the Century City firm of Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell for 34 years. David passed away two-and-a-half years ago. It was much too soon but we had a great life together.

I have been active at Temple Isaiah for many years. I was president of our sisterhood, Isaiah Women, and served on the Board of Trustees for five years. I co-chaired Roots and Wings (our mentoring program at Santee and University High), and I am a long-standing member of Daughters of Torah.

I recently traveled to Spain with a wonderful group from our temple, led by Rabbi Zoe. It was a fascinating trip with amazing friends. I love to read and go to the theater and museums. I play the piano and listen to all kinds of music. Mostly I like to learn new things.

I enjoy ChaiVillageLA. Some favorite activities are the current events group and TED talks. I especially loved joining my friends on the Amazon fulfillment tour. I hope to do more once we are through with social distancing.

Did you enjoy Laurie's story? If so, let her know at lbgantz@sbcglobal.net.

If you would like to introduce yourself in the newsletter, send an email to IdelleDavidson@gmail.com.