

## Marilyn Sachs, influential SF author and political activist, dies

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**IMAGE 1 OF 80**

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Ms. Sachs was the author of 40 books spanning 42 years, with her first book (“Amy Moves In”) published in 1964 and her final work (“First Impression”) in 2006.

Ms. Sachs was known for tackling serious topics — such as depression, divorce, body image and bullying — long before such matters were common fodder for authors of young adult

novels. She often said that she turned to public libraries, and to the reading and writing of fiction, as an escape from bullying. "Small, skinny and a crybaby, I was an easy prey for the local bullies," she wrote on her website.

On her website, she wrote that the traits children are often bullied for are "promising qualities for future writers."

"If you are a coward, you will probably spend more time at the library than you would ordinarily, and if you tell lies, it just shows that you have an imagination, even if others don't always appreciate it," she wrote. "Crybabies tend to be sensitive, which is also a plus for writers."

Ms. Sachs was born in 1927 into a Jewish family in the Bronx section of New York. She attended Hunter College in New York and later studied library science at Columbia University. She and her husband, Morris, who were married for 70 years, met in 1946 through the progressive group American Youth for Democracy. Their first outing together involved going door to door and advocating for the integration of professional baseball.

After working as a librarian in Brooklyn, Ms. Sachs moved in 1961 to San Francisco, where she worked in the children's room of the Main Library. Her husband, a sculptor, taught in the wood shop at Lick-Wilmerding High School.

Money was often tight, and it took Ms. Sachs 10 years to get her first book published. In interviews she said she continued to write despite "childhood sicknesses, peace marches, flooded toilets and all the other demands life made on my time." By 1968, when she had published four novels, the books were generating enough income that she was able to quit her librarian job.

Her book "Veronica Ganz" received a Notable Book designation from the American Library Association in 1968, "The Bears' House" was a National Book Award finalist in 1972, and "A Pocket Full of Seeds" received an Outstanding Book of the Year designation from the New York Times. Her books were translated into nine languages, and she toured the U.S., giving talks at libraries and schools.

“My father was very supportive of her career,” said her son, Paul Sachs. “They had a very good, shared relationship. My father was ahead of his time.”

Ms. Sachs also threw herself into politics. She fought for the integration of San Francisco public schools. She marched against the war in Vietnam. She campaigned for progressive San Francisco politicians. In 1990, she helped organize a group of authors and illustrators to contribute to “The Big Book for Peace,” the proceeds of which were donated to peace organizations.

Miranda Sachs said her grandmother was a natural storyteller who loved talking to children. Until recently, she would make an annual visit to Jefferson Elementary School on Irving Street.

“She did not have an easy childhood — she lost her mom when she was young — yet she was always able to weave humor throughout the stories she told,” Miranda Sachs recalled. “No matter how difficult life got, there were always interesting tidbits that came out of it.”

She is survived by her husband, Morris; a son, Paul; daughter-in-law, Ann; and five grandchildren, Miranda, Lena, Sarah, Sam and Nathan. Funeral arrangements are pending.

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