

Marcia Lieberman Popper

1932 - 2024



Marcia Popper Obituary

Marcia Lieberman Popper
08/04/1932 - 06/07/2024

Walking from San Francisco to Mexico to advocate for public access coastal trails was a very Marcia Popper thing to do. As was spending her 80th birthday climbing through the Exploratorium's tactile dome with her grandkids. She had an adventurous spirit and took great delight in sharing experiences with friends and family.

Marcia Lieberman Popper passed away peacefully on June 7, 2024, surrounded by family. She was nearly 92.

For 60 years, Marcia was a longtime advocate for San Francisco libraries and a prodigious theater and arts patron. She was a member of over a dozen art, civic, and science organizations, on the Council for Neighborhood Libraries and volunteered for Coastwalk for over 20 years.

Born on August 4, 1932, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Benjamin and Ruth (Persson) Lieberman, she was older sister to Edie and Jim. After experiencing life in the Bay Area when Ben was stationed there during the Second World War they moved to Oakland, where she graduated from Oakland Technical High School in 1949. Marcia then attended Sarah Lawrence College in New York, where she was student body president, active in civil liberties causes, and earned a BA in labor law.

In 1953, she went on a blind date with then-medical student, Robert Popper, who became her husband in a small ceremony in New York City in 1956. The next day they boarded the SS Île de France, an ocean liner bound for London, where Robert continued his medical residency, and they traveled the continent.

They returned stateside in 1957, to Camp Lejeune Marine Base in North Carolina, where Marcia worked for the Red Cross and the Jacksonville Department of Social Welfare, igniting a passion for social work. They returned to San Francisco in 1959, where Marcia reunited with colleagues from the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations in Berkeley and worked for the UC President's office while she pursued a Master of Social Work from UC Berkeley, completed in 1964.

She began her career with Catholic Social Services in San Francisco as a caseworker, starting in the juvenile justice system, and later serving as the Supervisor of Adoption, Foster Care and Pregnancy Counseling. She facilitated international adoptions for children from Vietnam and Cambodia and advocated for adoptions by gay couples. She was the first non-Catholic to work for Catholic Social Services, and worked while raising two boys, retiring after 35 years.

She and Robert enjoyed family hiking, backpacking, and skiing trips with their sons Stephen and Kenneth. Her kids loved the San Francisco Giants, so she and Robert also became devoted baseball fans, and the radio broadcast was a heartbeat to much of their lives, filling the kitchen with the play-by-play.

Marcia found everything interesting: Global events. People. Murals. Bus routes. She dallied on walks, picking blackberries, and lingered to read museum plaques. Her knowledge was as diverse as her scarf collection. She knew music and medicine, beer and books. She took up Spanish lessons in her retirement, engaged in book clubs and coffee klatches, went on regular Wednesday hikes, loved to cook and entertain, adding her signature nasturtium flowers from their garden to salads. Marcia filled their house with mementos of world trips, local crafts, posters from Pickle Family Circus, cards from the grandkids, cut out cartoons, and lots of buttons - from protests and political causes and civic ventures. She was the family authority on all things San Francisco, and a trusted source of advice on local elections. She started recycling before it was cool, filling the car with newspapers and glass and her two young children, turning a trip to the recycling center into a family outing.

Marcia and Robert traveled extensively. They were part of one of the first US groups to travel to China in the 1970s, and it's no surprise that she was chosen as the trusted and observant scribe for the trip. They also visited South America, Southeast Asia, India and Nepal, much of Europe, and US parks in the Rocky Mountains and southwest desert. They traveled most often to their house in Elk, a small town on the Mendocino coast, driving up on weekends with their kids, grandkids, and friends, and they remain connected to the Elk community.

Marcia was generous, brilliant, vibrant and brave. An activist. A saver. A doer. Marcia was that warm sunshine on a blue sky Bay Area day when the fog burns off-the kind that's perfect for a walk.

Marcia is survived by her husband, Dr. Robert Popper, sons Stephen and Kenneth, daughters-in-

law Elizabeth and Jen, grandchildren Owen and Hannah, brother Jim, and beloved extended family.

A celebration of life will take place at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations to the Friends of San Francisco Public Library or The Exploratorium. And enjoy a walk. Maybe not to Mexico, but with her spirit of curiosity and delight as company.

To plant trees in memory, please visit the [Sympathy Store](#).

Published by San Francisco Chronicle on Jun. 21, 2024.