
IN MEMORIAM—JOAN ROSNER

In 1975 Joan and Hy Rosner retired from their respective professional careers, Joan as a New York City Community District Science Coordinator and Hy as a New York City Welfare Department social worker and Chairperson of Community School District 25 in Queens. They prepared to relocate to Albuquerque close to their daughter, Lynn Rosner, and to spend time in Miami with their daughter Suzi Doucha, and her husband Roger and family. At that time, a local Queens newspaper ran a laudatory story about their many accomplishments with the headline *Mr. and Mrs. Environmental Education*. Indeed, their achievements are a history of environmental education in New York City.



never expected more from anyone than what she was prepared to give of herself. We who worked with her learned from her example and she brought out the best we had to offer. Who could resist her soft, smiling manner wrapped around her strong convictions?

Joan's activism made the world a better place. She organized a protest when there was a proposal to build a new airport runway into Jamaica Bay which would have had a harmful effect on the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. She rallied support for the establishment of Gateway Environmental Study Center, which provided an opportunity for New York City school children

and teachers to learn in the outdoors where they could see the horizon.

Joan and Hy were pioneers in the field. They were founders of Alley Pond Environmental Center; organized the Mohonk Conference on Environmental Education, which evolved into the Environmental Education Advisory Council; developed the Children's Natural Science Workshop leading to the establishment of Gateway Environmental Study Center; created and directed the Watson Workshop for Teachers. Together they collaborated with cultural institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History, Wave Hill and the Queens Botanic Garden. They reached out to industry, e.g. Consolidated Edison of New York, to support their good works. Their efforts reached hundreds of thousands of students and teachers in metro New York.

In New Mexico and Florida, Joan and Hy continued their efforts. In Florida they co-edited *The Dade County Environmental Story* and were honored as volunteers for the Senior Mentor for Creative Students Program. *Albuquerque's Environmental Story, Educating for a Sustainable Community* was first printed in 1978 and is described as "an award winning teaching resource." Former Mayor Jim Baca was quoted in the *Albuquerque Journal*, saying about Joan, "She was sort of a pioneer, and so was her husband. They were really onto this a lot sooner than most people were, on the importance of how cities should function. They were way ahead of their time."

There was a large gathering of the people whose lives they touched at their farewell dinner so many years ago. I was honored to be one of the speakers that evening. I searched for the appropriate words of tribute then, just as I now search to express my feelings of personal and professional sadness at the loss of Joan Rosner seven years after her beloved husband. Then, as now, I turn to the poet James Russell Lowell who wrote, "Not what we give, but what we share—for the gift without the giver is bare."

In recent years Joan worked on her autobiography and it is now being published. In addition to her public persona, it tells of her private life, the sadness of the tragic loss of her daughter Lynn, her husband, her granddaughter Amy Doucha, and her devoted son-in-law Roger Doucha. Joan persevered as well as her failing health allowed. She died on September 17 a few hours short of her ninetieth birthday.

Joan, in loving partnership with Hy, gave of herself by sharing her talents, her intellect, her determination, her dedication, her creativity and her love and interest in the world around her. She

Joan was my mentor, my role model, my friend. She broadened my horizons and changed my life. I will be forever grateful for having had the benefit of knowing her. Her memory will remain as an example of a life well-lived. Joan and Hy Rosner made the world a better place. They will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

Ruth Eilenberg, October 6, 2008

