

Regal Role Model

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To the Editor:

I was delighted to read “My Mother And Queen Elizabeth” (Dec. 9) written by her loving and devoted daughter, Naomi Klass Maurer. Seeing the regal and radiant photo of Irene Klass, who served for many years as Women’s Editor at The Jewish Press and author of countless articles, poems, book reviews and more, brought back such warm memories for me! I grew up in Manhattan Beach at a time when there were very few religious families. My mother was a dear friend of Irene Klass.

But even more important was that my mother was Irene’s true admirer. I so often heard my mother proudly say that her friend had “a remarkable gift of prose” – a talented writer who could express her thoughts with such eloquence and fluency. She also credited Irene for being “independent-minded.”

As a young person in the 1970s, I was actively searching for female role models in my religious community. I wanted very much to have a career, and the era augured well for women, as doors began to open in graduate schools and the professions. However, as a young Orthodox woman, I was so afraid to navigate in a world where morality had run amuck, and where most women my age were embracing a radically independent lifestyle which I could not.

Then, one day I had the fortuitous opportunity to sit down with Irene at a hotel in the Catskills where I was vacationing with my parents as a young adult. I confided in Irene my desire to write articles and books and to get “out into the world.” But I was so afraid that as an Orthodox woman I would flounder. Irene held my hand and gave me words of encouragement that I will never forget. What a blessing she was to me at a time that I needed direction from role models in my community. Irene was legendary in so many ways, but for me she was my role model.

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