

Oral History 85-181, 85-172, 85-138, 85-137

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/newsminer/name/judith-kleinfeld-obituary?id=58506925>

# Judith Karen Kleinfeld

1944 - 2025



## BORN

1944

## DIED

2025

## Judith Kleinfeld Obituary

Judith Karen Kleinfeld passed away on May 16, 2025, in Fairbanks, Alaska. Born on May 29, 1944, in Dayton, Ohio, Judy studied her way to Wellesley College and then to Harvard graduate school where she earned her Masters and Doctorate in education. She met her beloved husband, Andrew Kleinfeld, in 1966. Positive that he had found a gem, he proposed three weeks later. They journeyed to Alaska in the summer of 1967 and came to stay in the summer of 1969.

Judy began work at the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research, whose director, Victor Fischer, told her "Do something for Alaska, and

keep yourself funded!"

Did she ever. When the Alaska State Legislature honored her for her 41 years of service to the University of Alaska, they wrote, "Few scholars in Alaska have covered more ground more thoroughly than she has in the past four decades, or made a greater impact on the direction of public policy." Her extraordinarily wide and deep research covered challenges in rural education, where her groundbreaking work on boarding schools changed Alaskan policy and allowed rural communities to have their own high schools. Her work on children with fetal alcohol syndrome helped numerous families raise happier and more fulfilled kids, and provided practical wisdom on how they could thrive as adults. Her books exploring the influence of the frontier on the Alaska and American psyche showed the importance of frontiers for growth and exploration. In 1991, she created the Northern Studies Program, a first-of-its-kind interdisciplinary program to study issues shared across the circumpolar north. For 25 years, she wrote a bi-weekly column in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner and Anchorage Daily News on social science, parenting, and daily life that lived on the refrigerator doors of numerous Alaska families.

Dr. Judy Kleinfeld received numerous honors for her work, from the Edith R. Bullock Award for Excellence from the University of Alaska, to the Robert Piacenza Award for Teaching Excellence, the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Community Service Award for the university professor making the greatest contribution to the community, and the Emil Usibelli Award for Distinguished Research. She contributed all funds from such awards back to the university to create scholarships for students - which are still ongoing.

However, she always considered her greatest achievement the family that she created with her husband, Andy, to whom she was married for 58 years. When their three children, Daniel, Rachel and Joshua, entered their lives, Judy poured into them her immense love, intense educational focus, and care for their many extracurricular

activities and interests. She also raised an endless succession of kids' pets and much-loved family dogs. Although her work enriched the lives of thousands of students and her research improved the lives of so many others, her three children and husband were the most important part of Judy's life.

Judy Kleinfeld is survived by her loving husband, her three grown children, and six grandchildren ranging in age from 13 to 6. Her life was blessed with meaning and enriched by the love of those closest to her. In keeping with her general refusal to make a fuss about herself, she did not want a public service, and her family has already held a small memorial in her memory. In lieu of flowers, donations could be sent to Fairbanks Jewish Center at [www.jewishfairbanks.org/donate](http://www.jewishfairbanks.org/donate) or 1417 28th Ave, Fairbanks, AK 99701.

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Published by Daily News-Miner on May 29, 2025.