



Miriam Esther Adelman

April 21, 1948 - September 2, 2026

Washington, District of Columbia

Miriam Esther Adelman died in Washington on September 2, 2026. She was seventy-eight. Born there on April 21, 1948, she grew up knowing the Mall as a weekday shortcut, not a postcard, and she learned a carbon copy before she learned a campus. A correct file, she said, is a form of respect when a city already has too many speeches.

She spent twenty-eight years as a federal clerk, first in a basement that smelled of mimeograph, later keeping the correspondence that told a bureau which letter had been answered and which one had only been discussed. She treated a long line as weather. When the office put in a machine that was supposed to replace a person, she learned the machine and then taught it manners. After she retired she kept the books for a synagogue office because the work was the same: put names in the right order and do not put your own on the list.

She married David Adelman in 1971. They raised a daughter in a row house that needed storm windows and a son who needed a ride to Hebrew school at hours no one should be awake. David taught piano. Miriam packed lunches and considered a Sunday bagel a civic obligation. After he died in 2015 she read the paper with a pencil and argued, fondly, with the letters page.

Friends remember a woman who showed up to help move a dryer as if that were the natural use of a Saturday, who could explain a deadline without making it a sermon, and who kept one good coat. She loved a quiet gallery, a cup of coffee that was never quite hot enough, and the river when it looked like metal. She died in Washington, the capital she refused to narrate as a punch line. The files are closed. The fairness she practiced there is harder to replace than a docket number.

Services

A memorial in Washington. A gift to a synagogue benevolence fund or the public library suits her.

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