

Obituary: Sharon Hope Gittleman

Sept. 16, 1958 – July 7, 2015

BY JAN STEVENSON

Sharon Hope Gittleman, 56, had been a writer for *Between The Lines* until she became disabled eight years ago due to kidney disease. After two failed kidney transplants and an extended illness, she ultimately succumbed to complications of dialysis July 7.



Sharon Gittleman

Gittleman grew up in Detroit and graduated from Roeper High School in Birmingham in 1976. She went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree in 1980 from the University of Michigan and later graduated from law school at the University of Detroit. After passing her bar exams, Gittleman worked at several law firms and insurance companies in the greater Detroit area until she discovered her true passion – journalism.

In 1987, Gittleman left her legal career to become the editor at the *Royal Oak Mirror* where she remained for 11 years until the paper was sold in 1998. "She loved being a journalist," said her brother, attorney Steven Gittleman, who described his sister as both intelligent and stubborn. "While at *The Mirror*, Sharon always insisted that the paper have at least one 'feel-good' story."

After the 1998 sale of *The Mirror* to *Hometown Newspapers* she continued her journalism career as a successful freelance writer for many publications including the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Macomb Daily*, the *Oakland Press* and *BTL*. Her editors appreciated her clear writing style, attention to detail and her ability to understand and communicate complex stories, particularly if they involved legal issues.

Steven described Sharon being fearless as a reporter. He recounted when he and Sharon attended the 2001 North American Auto Show at Cobo Hall in Detroit during the height of the domestic partner debate. "Sharon marched right up to all the CEOs of Toyota, Daimler, Ford and GM and demanded to know what they were doing for their LGBT employees, specifically on DP benefits. The Toyota CEO was left open-mouthed," said Steven.

Steven, who was a devoted caregiver to Sharon throughout her illness, said they had a close yet fiery relationship. "We would fight all the time," he said. "One story I love to tell about Sharon was when we went on a family trip to Israel in 1979. We were in Beersheba near the Negev desert at a huge Arab market. Everything was for sale. This Bedouin guy came up to me and kept asking 'how much' in Hebrew. It took me a while to realize he was asking about Sharon and that he wanted to trade his camel for her because he was drawn to her red hair – a rarity in the Middle East. As I continued the negotiations, Sharon came up, and when she figured out what was going on, she started screaming. It was hysterical. I still think about that camel," said Steven with a laugh.

Sharon loved needlepoint and knitting. She was an avid animal enthusiast and active member of the *Detroit Zoological Society*. She is survived by her brother, Steven Mark Gittleman. The funeral was at the Hebrew Memorial in Oak Park July 9.