

LOCAL DEATHS

Bette Sprague: Educator, psychologist and free spirit

By JOE ROSSITER
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Even though she enjoyed a successful career as a clinical psychologist and a professor at several local universities, Bette Erwin Sprague was the adventurous, free-spirited type who wasn't averse to tackling new challenges.

During her life, she authored a self-help book, was a congressional candidate on the Libertarian ticket and even operated a dating service for senior citizens.

Mrs. Sprague died Dec. 8 of multiple organ failure syndrome at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak. She was 69 and lived in Beverly Hills.

"She was a very controversial and outspoken individual who did things her way," said Donald Arvidson, a longtime friend and colleague. "Innovative and authentic, she was held in high esteem for her clinical and diagnostic expertise and widely sought out for her expert consultation skills."

Born Bette Erwin in Rochester, Minn., she received her bachelor's degree in political science and international relations in 1959 from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn. She came to the Detroit area around 1966 and attended Wayne State University where she received her PhD in psychology in 1973.

Besides tending to her private practice, she held teaching positions at the University of Michigan — where she was



Bette Erwin Sprague

voted Teacher of the Year in 1975 — Wayne State University and Oakland Community College. While teaching, she authored a self-help book titled, "Tests

Without Trauma," targeted to college students who experience anxiety while taking exams.

Mrs. Sprague ran for a seat in the House of Representatives in 1980 and the U.S. Senate in 1976 and 1982 as a member of the Libertarian Party, but was never elected.

After retiring from her practice, she established a dating service for seniors called Late Date.

"She was the standard for what a true friend should be," said Adrian Watts, an attorney and friend. "If I was ever at a loss for what to do, I could always be guided by her example and advice."

In 1998, Mrs. Sprague married her husband, Sam Sprague, who died six years later.

Survivors include her mother, Miriam Erwin; sister Dr. Carol Erwin; brothers Richard, James and Steve Erwin, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Memorial services are at 10 a.m. today in Acacia Park Cemetery in Beverly Hills.

Contact JOE ROSSITER at 313-222-6594 or jrossiter@freepress.com.