

Selma Weiss Bernstein was born on January 13, 1926 at Woman's Hospital. She was raised in a conservative kosher home at 210 West 101st Street where the kitchen was the center of the universe; the aromas of Shabbat and the holidays still linger on. Selma attended public school and graduated from Julia Richmond high at age sixteen. Selma continued her education at Columbia and graduated from Teachers College, eventually going on to complete a Master's degree in reading disabilities at C.C.N.Y.

Selma's first position was at the Hamilton Madison Settlement house on the Bowery where she witnessed firsthand the extreme poverty of immigrants. She taught at the Bentley School for seven years, and during the war she worked at the Stage Door Canteen. As a representative of the Bentley School, Selma met and had dinner with Eleanor Roosevelt.

In 1950, Selma met Dr. Bruce Bernstein, and they were married on the rooftop of 210 West 101st Street. Their first son was born at Ft. Devans, MA. After the war they moved to New Rochelle, and raised four children. Selma has six grandchildren.

Selma taught at Temple Israel for 22 years. She also founded the Thomas Paine chapter of B'nai Brith and headed the Volunteer Reading Program for New Rochelle. She became a reading teacher at Mayflower School during the turbulent years of racial integration in the schools. Selma went on as a facilitator to start the Open Classroom Program, modeled after the British infant schools, which led to the development of the alternative high school program known as the 3 I Program.

Selma joined LT in 1980, and she continues to be an active member on the social action committee. She is an enthusiastic theatergoer and a lover of the arts.