

Beatrice Gottlieb Obituary, posted on [legacy.com](https://www.legacy.com)

Beatrice Gottlieb was born in New York City on June 6, 1925, in the middle of a record-breaking heat wave. The daughter of Joseph and Anna (née Slud) Gottlieb, Bea grew up in The Bronx. She graduated from Walton High School in 1941 and entered Cornell University, where she majored in German. She graduated in 1945 with a B.A. and subsequently earned an M.A. in English from Cornell in 1947.

For the better part of 20 years, Bea worked as an editor and writer for several different magazines. Her interest in modern dance led her to do both editorial work and write reviews for dance publications. She also worked for Today's Woman before joining the editorial staff at Sports Illustrated in time for that magazine's debut issue in 1954. Bea worked at Sports Illustrated for 13 years, leaving when she entered the doctoral program in history at Columbia University in 1967.

Bea pursued her doctoral studies with enthusiasm and dedication. She studied with many of Columbia's most distinguished historians, including Eugene Rice, John Mundy and her principal advisor, J.W. Smit. She focused on the social history of late medieval and early modern Europe, particularly marriage and the family. She spent a year in France doing her dissertation research in the archives of the ancient city of Troyes. Bea completed her Ph.D. in 1974.

Over the next 45 years, Bea worked as an independent historian, teaching, writing, and otherwise remaining vigorously engaged in her chosen profession. She taught courses at Barnard College, SUNY Purchase, and served as a visiting professor at Smith College. In the early 1980s, she translated from the French a foundational work of European religious and intellectual history, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais* by Lucien Febvre. In 1993, Oxford University Press published Bea's own work, *The Family in the Western World from the Black Death to the Industrial Age*. This book's description of family structures in early modern Europe offers a picture that differs in many ways from what 21st century readers might expect to discover.

An enthusiastic traveler, Bea traveled widely in the United States and Europe. Over the course of many decades, she visited most of Europe's great cities and many interesting places that were less well known. Though deeply rooted in New York City, Bea's curiosity about the world was enormous and far from satisfied at the time of her death.

Bea was exceptionally knowledgeable about organized religion, but identified herself as an atheist. For that reason, Bea's friends and neighbors will celebrate her life with a social gathering later this year. In a gesture, entirely consistent with her belief that human life could be improved, Bea left her brain to Mount Sinai Hospital, where researchers will examine what during Bea's life was a repository of remarkable intelligence.