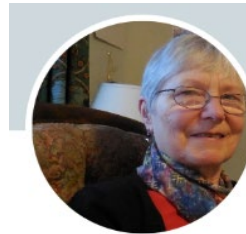


## Janet Shapiro née Howe (1939 – 2023): An Appreciation.

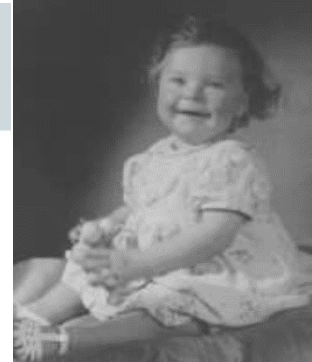
*John Bibby*<sup>1</sup>

Our dear colleague, comrade and friend Janet Shapiro died suddenly on Saturday July 29th 2023. She will be sorely missed.

Janet joined Radstats in 1982, was treasurer from 2006 to 2016 and served on the Troika and Editorial Board.



**Janet Shapiro**  
@JanetJrms



About 100 people attended Janet's memorial service on August 13 at Lauderdale House in North. London. These included Jeff Evans and Diana Kornbrot from Radical Statistics. About ten people spoke, including National Pensioners Convention and local reps, Muswell Hill Labour Party. Speakers paid tributes to Janet's energy, drive and effectiveness

She left some interesting Memoirs which recalled her happy working-class childhood in Sheerness despite being "a surprise ... born when the last boy was eighteen". Her mother Lilian née Smart was brainy - "her speed at mental arithmetic frightened me". Her father Robert was a dockyard carpenter - "he was a good craftsman". Born in 1939, Janet recalled wartime fears of bombing aggravated by spiders in the Anderson shelter. She had scarlet fever as a child and spent time away from family in an isolation hospital. She passed the eleven-plus and went to Sittingbourne Grammar School and later to Hockerill Training College where she qualified as a mathematics teacher. No-one from her school year went to university. "At college I shared a room with a girl from my school, Frances Hughes. We did not get on well but our surnames both began with H".

Janet then went on to teach, learned that secondary schools were not for her, met her husband Ray (also a teacher) through contacts in the Young Communist League, and had two children. In 1995 she

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completed her PhD on simulation modelling while bringing up two teenagers.

Eight years later “After my husband’s death I gradually became more actively involved in campaigning organisations, quickly taking on the treasurer role for Radical Statistics; later I became an editor. My activity increased in those groups that I already belonged to such as the Labour Party, Friends of the Earth, other local environmental groups and the Hornsey Pensioners Action Group who play a big role locally. We take up local concerns like the location of the W7 bus stop and support important facilities such as local Libraries and the Muswell Hill Bowling Club. ... Local activity is so important; ... people should care about what is happening about them and feel that they can make a difference. ... Many influences have combined to make me politically conscious, and thus get involved in more causes than is good for me; some may call this ‘scatty’.”

Comments received from Radical Statistics members and others highlight not only her industry and effectiveness, but also her exceptional amiability, vivacity and good humour:

*“Janet gone, oh dear, she was such a bright face.”*

*“I overlapped with Janet through our membership of RadStats troika for a few years and was welcomed as a house guest of hers in London when working part time there for a limited period (gratis in payment through giving her piano lessons!).”*

*“Janet was assiduous in dedicating herself to causes she believed in and was the master of fine detail. One such was her work with local senior citizens and with trade unions. She took over the task of running the Radstats Essay Competition with similar dedication. Family was very important to her. She showed substantial skills in life drawing which become a big part of her interests.”*

*“I have nothing less than admiration for the energy, diligence and perseverance that she showed in all her voluntary activities.”*

*“Her research was impeccable which gave her the confidence to speak on so many issues from the rights of disabled people, to the devastation over the last decade of the NHS and to discounted Silver Screen*

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*cinema seats. She campaigned tirelessly and genuinely made a difference in her community.”*

*“She was a mathematician and her accounts were always written meticulously.”*

*“She fought on so many fronts with such knowledge.”*

*“I was amazed how many issues she managed to keep abreast of, even when she was already seriously ill.”*

*“A remarkable and resourceful woman with an abundance of energy, drive and intellect.”*

*“Janet set us all a great example in showing us what we need to do to help activists with hearing loss: ‘Speak up, use the mike, stand where I can see your lips’”.*

*“I remember Janet as energetic and tenacious, but also as a kind and supportive colleague.”*

*“She realised that not only do we have to work for today's pensioners but for the younger generations because they will be the future pensioners.”*

*“As a statistician Janet’s financial statements were clear, transparent and digestible. She was an asset to the group in terms of her clarity of thought, quiet demeanour, patience and willingness to listen. ... As a pensioner, colleague and friend Janet will be remembered for her strength of character, selflessness, commitment, consistency of her principles and values and her achievements.”*

*“As the Greek poet Costas Ouranis put it: ‘The departed die only if we forget them’. Goodbye Janet. You will not be forgotten.”*

*“Activist, Academic, and Artist,  
Beautiful in spirit and heart,  
Considerate and Committed,  
Energetic,  
Friendly and a Fighter,  
Generous to all with her time and advice,  
Humble and Hospitable,  
Intellectual, intelligent, inspired and inspiring,*

Kind and knowledgeable,  
Loving,  
Modest,  
Non-compromising,  
Optimistic,  
Passionate,  
Questioning and challenging injustices and inequalities,  
Revolutionary and Reliable,  
Selfless,  
Trustworthy,  
Uncompromising,  
Voracious reader,  
Wise,  
eXcellent listener  
Young at heart with unparalleled  
Zest for life.”

A recent email from Janet indicates how she kept up to date with current concerns and campaigns:

- Social media - merely exploitation from Big Companies, or does it promote true communication and debate?
- Is modern debate and democracy helped by social media?
- What is the modern role for the BBC? Does it contribute to national well-being and/or boost the economy?
- Are Trade Unions making good use of Statistical evidence?
- How can Radical Statistics help Trade Union members make more effective use of statistical evidence?

She has left us a legacy on which we must build.

### **Notes**

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