



*Ruth Adel
Torgerson Leffler
1908 – 1993*

Founder of the
Adel and Leffler Families' Fund for Queens in
The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022



Growing up in Queens.

Ruth Adel Leffler was a determined woman. Although a lawyer by training, she resolutely embarked on what some might at the time have called an unusual pursuit: golf. But for Ruth, golf was to become a serious passion.

Ruth was born in Kew Gardens in Queens, New York, to Frank and Alice Adel in 1908. Her father, a justice in the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court, was a prominent man in Queens County: a Democratic State Assemblyman from Ridgewood, and one of the founders of the Ridgewood Savings Bank. Her mother was from a prominent Queens family, the Meyerroses, originally immigrant farmers, who had parlayed their farmland over the course of several generations into substantial real estate holdings.

Young Ruth lived a life of privilege and accomplishment. After she graduated from Smith College in 1928, she went to Columbia University for a Masters degree. Then, in her

father's footsteps, she went on to New York University to study law.

Law, however, was to have a serious competitor. Ruth played her first round of golf in 1928. Her romance with the sport bloomed rapidly. By 1934, at age 27, she was Long Island's women's golf champion. The next year, she won the Jersey Shore Championship. "If you enter competitive golf, it gets into your blood as much as a circus does," she stated in a newspaper interview.



Ruth in her college years.

The struggle between law and golf continued throughout the decade. In 1935, the young champion was reported to be considering giving up golf for a legal practice. The

A determined golfer.



following year, however, golf gained an ally when Ruth married Reinert "Ray" Torgerson, a young Wall Street stockbroker and an amateur golf champion in his own right. They proceeded to also marry their talents on the links by winning the Metropolitan Golf Association's husband-and-wife tournament in 1937, 1939, and 1942.

In 1942 during World War II, Ray joined the Marines and served in the South Pacific. Ruth returned briefly to her law practice, and worked as a Red Cross volunteer. After the war, Ruth and Ray continued to win tournaments together, but it was Ruth's career that really soared. During the period between 1946 and 1954, Ruth practically "owned" regional women's golf. She won the Women's



Ray and Ruth during World War II.

Long Island Golf Association championship four more times. She also won the Metropolitan Golf Association title three times. But the absolute height of her achievement, and what made her the "most feared woman in New York State golf" (according to her longtime caddie, Rudy Klein), was her reign for five consecutive years, 1946 through 1950, as New York State Champion. In 1949, she took the Empire State's version of the triple crown, winning the Metropolitan Golf Association, Long Island, and State championships.

What made her such a golfing powerhouse? According to Rudy Klein, it was not one particular outstanding talent, but instead the talent to do "all things well." Ruth continued to compete throughout the 50s, and in 1958, she was elected president of the Women's Long Island Golf Association, serving through 1960.

The Torgersons' country-club idyll of endless rounds of golf, punctuated with hands of bridge, ended with Ray's death from cancer in 1962 at the age of 54. In 1967, Ruth married Francis C. Leffler, a New York attorney and a longtime family friend. Together the couple pursued their mutual passion for golf and traveling, until Francis's death in 1990.

Ruth remained active and in good health up to the very end of her life. Even in her 80s,

Practicing her top swing.



she would visit her beloved Meadowbrook County Club twice weekly to play and to practice with the club pro. She died in her sleep on January 11th, 1993, at the age of 85.

Ruth was a “people” champion as well as a golf champion. She inspired great loyalty among her friends and associates. Rudy Klein remembered her during the memorial service as a person who brought a particular graciousness to her generosity. She was, as he described, someone who “did a tremendous number of nice things for people without wanting recognition or publicity.”

In 1990, remembering her early “growing up” years, Ruth set up a fund in The Trust’s

A 1951 newspaper cartoon.

Winning Ways by Pap’



Ray and Ruth at North Hills Country Club in 1958.

corporate affiliate, Community Funds, dedicated to benefit the inhabitants of Queens County, New York, “by contributing to the support of the charitable, educational, and cultural organizations located and working in Queens County.” During the next three years, she met with Trust staff and showed a great interest in the projects she would support through the Adel and Leffler Families’ Fund for Queens. After her death, this fund was joined to a second fund set up by will in The New York Community Trust. Grants to Queens organizations involved in youth programs, cultural activities, economic development, and education will continue to enhance the quality of life in this New York City borough.

*The New York Community Trust
is a community foundation
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for charitable funds.*

*New York's major banks serve as trustees.
Trustee for the Adel and Leffler Families' Fund for
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