

## Nelly's Story

### THE MURSTEIN FAMILY FUND



*Nelly and Bernard Murstein*

[Photo by Felipe Bida/Lasell University]

Nelly Murstein and her late husband, Bernard, enjoyed long and accomplished careers as professors and scholars at Connecticut College in New London.

Later, in establishing the Murstein Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, they lovingly memorialized Nelly's role model — her mother, Rebecca Elnekave Cassel. It was she who had begun the family's legacy of learning.

As a single mother during World War II, Rebecca worked four jobs while raising five children in Beirut, Lebanon. They had little money, but certain memories stand out to Nelly: Her mother making time to be the compassionate confidante to other hardworking women; and her mother caring for the swollen hands of laundry workers, then giving them clothing, money, food, or advice.

And this: Nelly's mother traveling by bus from Texas to New York, showing up at her daughter's door after Nelly had decided not to attend college. "She literally took me back by the ear so I'd go to college, because my mother always told me that women had to be financially independent. It was the most wonderful thing that could have happened to me," Nelly recalled.

Years later and by then a mother of two, Nelly earned her Ph.D. from Rice University. Incredibly, her mother earned a Ph.D. from Rice just a year earlier.

The Murstein Family Fund will continue to benefit women and girls in southeast Connecticut for generations to come. In creating the fund, Nelly and Bernard aimed to open up more educational and job training opportunities for women. And if that meant child care to allow women to work, the fund would cover that, too. The couple wanted women to be able to realize their dreams of greater self-sufficiency in life.

To Nelly Murstein, there's no better way to honor her mother.



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of Eastern Connecticut

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