

Eulogy for Jack Newhouse (June 19, 1910-February 2010) written and read by his daughter Miriam Newhouse.

I remember my Auntie Lottie remarking once about early pictures of Dad, that he was always hanging upside down from something – a tree branch, the fence, out of a window – if you wanted to see a picture of Jack Newhouse right side up, then you had to accept that the rest of the world was going to be upside down. Which is often the way it was when Dad was around.

Dad was the only son of Joshua and Rose Newhouse. He was adored and spoiled rotten by his two sisters, Tryna and Lottie. But in return, he was their little champion, who'd protect them and fight for them. The fact that he quite enjoyed the fights for their own sake was just an added bonus.

Because Dad was a scrapper. He was little and he was fast. He always said that being a good runner was essential in those days if you were scrawny, funny-looking and Jewish. But he learned to box and stopped running.

Dad was a natural athlete. He had extraordinary co-ordination and an instinctive grace of movement. He found the Y at thirteen and never looked back. Besides the aforementioned running and boxing, Dad was a gymnast, a high diver, a handball player, a curler, a golfer, and, most amazing of all, a basketball player. We always assumed he was so effective because he was able to run between the other players' legs. He was certainly below their eyeline – they probably didn't even know he was on the court – except he tended to be the one shooting the baskets.

So, Dad grew up in a household of adoring women. It seems he saw the positive benefits of that and, in his own household, ended up with another harem – this time his wife, Fanny; three daughters, Esther Rose, Miriam and Judy; a bird and a dog (both female).

And I have to say, he was the coolest dad in the neighbourhood. Other dads entertained little kids in the traditional way – you know, the severed thumb trick – that sort of thing. But our Dad – he was the one doing really bad tricks – like showing us how he could swallow a lighted cigarette. Now that was cool!

Both before and after Mum and Dad were married, Dad travelled as salesman for Newhouse Wholesale, the wholesale grocery started by his father. He had story after story about his life on the road, which he would tell at the drop of a hat. One of my favourites of his travelling tales was about the time he was driving from St. Paul to Edmonton to get married. It was the middle of May, but it was ice all the way. He said it was more like skating than driving. Along the road he counted fourteen cars in the ditch. He'd then add that he was so nervous about getting married, he kind of hoped he'd be number fifteen.

Dad and Mum had the warmest, happiest, most loving relationship for 44 years. As children, we thought every household was like ours – where laughter regularly rang out at the dinner table. It was quite an eye-opener to discover later in life that other families just didn't have as much fun as we did. How lucky we were.

We've heard people say about our father that he had a charmed life – but there were tough spots. The death of his father – Dad revered him – and many of his best stories were about Grandpa. The loss of his business was a blow. Our mother's death – the biggest blow of all.

But maybe those people who said his life was charmed were right. Because after the love of his life, my mother, died, Dad met a little lady, Rose, and after 44 years with our mum, Dad embarked on his second romantic adventure, one that lasted another 24 years. As our cousin Michael says, he's had two wonderful lives.

Besides his close family, Dad had two great loves – women in general and children. And both those groups reciprocated with the greatest enthusiasm. I think the women responded to his charm, his sense of fun, his obvious

appreciation and his adorable smile. The candy handouts didn't hurt, either. I think children instinctively recognized that he was one of them. Because I think there was a part of Dad that never grew up – that remained the same funny, impish little kid with a quick quip and a quicker jab.

For a little guy, Jack Newhouse cast a huge shadow. People who knew him count themselves lucky. For those of us who were in the charmed inner circle – we're the luckiest of all.