

Blue 20, 5748
09/02/1988

EULOGY FOR MAX MARGOLIS

Our thoughts about people we know too often lean toward the obvious. We remember the grand gesture, we recall the personality quirks - the humorous anecdotes - the dramatic events. We don't often look behind the veneer to reflect on the inner man. We concentrate on glamour while ignoring substance. We are satisfied with superficialities, allowing what is truly important to remain hidden.

Brad has a memory about Zeyda Max. During the family Seder, it was always Max who would hide the Matza - and he took that job seriously - always finding creative hiding places. I asked Brad if he remembered the most difficult hiding place. "I'd tell you," he answered, "only we're still not sure where it is - we're still searching."

On this day when we gather to share our memories and love of Max, we search for those hidden qualities which are too often neglected during one's lifetime.

Being born into a family of seven children taught Max the importance of a tightly knit family. He was a loving husband and a devoted father and grandfather. His marriage to Esther was a case of love at first sight. He met her on January 6th of 1921 on his arrival by train. He must have projected a dapper image at the time, courting Esther in one of the three buses in the whole town, but with Aunt Sarah always accompanying the young couple as chaperone, he had to work fast - they were married less than a year after they met.

Esther speaks of him as a quiet unassuming man who went through life being pleasant. A man about whom no one had a bad word to say. During these past months, their love for one another was tested in time of crisis. After Esther returned from the hospital following her heart attack, Max took care of everything - from household chores to ferrying her around on the bus - never letting her be removed from his sight. And when Max was hospitalized during his recent illness - Esther was there every day - bringing homemade goodies and offering encouragement

and hope. For sixty-six years they were together - sharing their life - their love - taking long walks - enjoying a quiet loving relationship.

Esther and Max had one son, Bob, on whom they doted and later a daughter-by-marriage, Terry, entered their lives. They were very proud. They encouraged Robert, stressing the importance of education and Max had the ultimate joy of living to see his son's success as a husband and a father of three children and as a professional. And to Brad, Todd and Shauna, Zeyda Max was a doting grandfather and a generous man. He was a man who was always interested in what they were doing - who would never forget a birthday or other milestone and was always available when needed. Brad remembers that Max would always encourage him to excel, "He always told us to be good people - that goodness always wins out at the end." Recently, when Todd was home, he visited his grandfather every day, and Shauna remembers him as simply a nice man - a loving grandfather.

Bob remembers his dad as a very modest person. A follower not a leader. He was a man who was willing to give of himself to the Community. When he lived in Saskatoon, he was particularly active in the Jewish Community, serving on the Chevra Kadisha - the Jewish Burial Society, and on the Board of Talmud Torah and B'nai B'rith. He belonged to many organizations and was well liked by everyone. He was unassuming - not interested in fanfare or Cavod yet everyone knew Max. He was everybody's friend and he didn't have an enemy in the world.

It is these simple "hidden" qualities that Max will be remembered for and, for a man with these characteristics, we, even on this day of sadness, feel a sense of satisfaction for a life well lived. He was blessed with a family who returned his love. He was blessed with a long life during which he was able to see his grandchildren grow to young adulthood. He was blessed with a son who always did him proud and he was blessed with his love for Esther.

Our faith teaches of the immortality of the soul, a life beyond this life, a life free from pain and heartache. But this is little consolation to us here on the earth who must go on without our friend, without our grandfather - our father - our husband. The Torah portion we read this morning contained the following verse, "The hidden things belong to the Lord - but the open revealed things are ours and our children's'." This verse is usually interpreted to refer to the mystical rules of the universe that are beyond our ken. But on this day, I'd like to suggest perhaps another meaning - these words can be read as a condemnation of human nature - too often we see the obvious - the outer person - while it is only God who is able to see the inner soul of each human being - the hidden.

On this day, let us remember Max for those simple hidden qualities that, like Brad's Matza, should be searched out and held up as an example for us all and those who knew and loved Max will always carry with them the blessing of these simple hidden qualities that are the core of our humanity and that made Max a true Mensch.

And Esther, when you take a walk along the River Valley, know he still walks with you.

May his soul be bound up in the
bond of eternal life.