

Sept 14, 1989

EULOGY

for

SAM SHAPIRO

Our synagogue, Beth Shalom, is blessed in that we have many Scrolls of the Torah - the five Books of Moses which are read as part of our religious service. One of those Scrolls is a Torah donated by Sam Shapiro who we gather to mourn this day. Sam went to Israel to purchase this Torah, and he brought it back with him, depositing it in our Arc to replace one of the Scrolls that had been burned when our synagogue was the victim of arson.

Perhaps it was bashert, something Sam believed in or perhaps it was only by chance, but the Scroll we read from, all this past year was the Scroll given us by Sam. In a sense, all the teachings and commandments, all the stories and ethics read throughout the year were a gift to us from him, and on this day of remembering, it is appropriate to allow some of those teachings to describe what Sam stood for.

In the very beginning of the Torah we read of the ideal love that should be found between man and wife. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

Sam and Rae lived up to the biblical charge. They were married for 45 years and they did many things together. He was a loving devoted husband. Rae remembers Sam as a man who loved life, enjoying every minute. It was Sam who was always full of energy. Always wanting to go, to do, to accomplish. He was never tired, and Rae remembers the difficulty she had keeping up with his energy - "He had to shlep me" she says. But together they always were. Sam was always protective of Rae, and during the difficult times we all experience, he never complained about the hardship of business, preferring to carry the whole load himself rather than to burden his beloved help mate.

The Torah, given by God to Moses at Sinai - and then given by Sam and Rae to Temple Beth Shalom also teaches about the mutual obligation between parent and child. The respect and honour due to one's parent is meant to be earned by the love and care that parent is willing to share with his offspring.

Brother Max and sister Anne remember that he was a good son to his parents - who spent their last years in Edmonton. Rae remembers him as an extremely good father - one in a million to his son David and daughter Irene.

He was, according to Rae, "A crazy father who had difficulty saying "no" to his children." He was gentle and affectionate and was demonstrative of his love - always ready with a hug and a kiss.

Whatever business pressures he felt, he always made room to spend time with his children. His "Irenekila" remembers her love for horses when she was young. Every Sunday, until that horse died he would take her out riding and nothing would interfere with that special time between father and daughter. Irene remembers as well her Junior High days when she and dad conspired to convince mom to allow them to keep a dog. When ORPHY was brought

home from the Humane Society he, or she? did what dogs sometimes do - right in Rae's arms - and somehow that led to love at first sight and a new family member that occupied their home for 13 years.

As Irene grew older Sam took great pride in her academic achievements, bragging even to strangers. Only recently Irene took a taxi from the Hospital to the airport. Engaging her in conversation, the cabbie said "You don't know me but I gave your father a ride, are you the daughter who is a lawyer?"

His love of family extended to his 13 nieces and nephews. To Jeffrey, and Brian, for example, Raye and Sam were like Bubbe and Zeyda - and every weekend uncle Moola would come and watch Jeffrey skate and then take him out afterward.

There is no greater burden in life to bear than that of losing a beloved child. David died under tragic circumstances - at the age of 28, taking with him all the dreams of his loving parents. That burden of sorrow can never be outlived, but how one deals with such sorrow tells us much of his/her character. Irene recalls that "when my brother died, we went on a walk and Sam turned to religion. He believed that it was bashert" - that it was meant to happen.

But, while turning to God for healing and solace, Sam did not forget the essence of his faith. His son's name was remembered in numerous acts of charity - the Torah of which we speak being but one.

He was a supporter of Israel - which he held very closely to his heart - travelling extensively and performing acts of charity. He sponsored a Room in Boy's Town where he was able to follow the progress of the four or five orphans who were being taught a trade supported partially by his act of giving.

In memory of his son, he gave a donation to Rabbi Frankel Shul in Israel and gave a speech at his son's Yohrzeit that was so fluent in Hebrew - those who listened thought he was a Sabra.

He took seriously those passages in the Torah he donated to our Shul that emphasized giving and sharing with those in need.

Our Torah also emphasizes Torah study. In Europe, Sam at one point almost became a Rabbi, and although he never received ordination, he continued his involvement in Jewish education. Sam had a library of Jewish Books in his home that attests to the importance of being kept informed in both Jewish and secular areas. Indeed, he came here from Europe - brought by the Supertein Family - as a Hebrew teacher for our Talmud Torah. He was a skilled artist and that talent combined with his interest in Jewish studies once led him to paint an elaborate tree that depicted the great Hebrew and Yiddish writers of our people.

The Torah donated by Sam and Rae informs us that "By the sweat of your brow shalt thou eat bread." Sam started with nothing but built his

various businesses up to the point of being very successful. His was the story of hard work and perseverance leading to success. He had many friends in both the business world and the Jewish Community. Some of his best times were had at business lunches or gatherings where politics and Zionism or other heady issues were discussed. His penchant for friendship was proven during his illness when so many of his friends went to extraordinary effort and travelled great distances to visit with him and bring comfort to his family.

There is another emphasis in our Torah - the Torah donated by Sam and read throughout the year in our Shul - that describes him.

The Torah tells us "Choose Life."

Sam lived his life fully - he had many interests. He enjoyed the symphony, dressing up - his family called him the Oldest Edmonton Hippy because of his long hair - he collected stamps and coins and books. He liked to sing - though his singing was, charitably speaking, not great, and brother Max and sister Anne remember the Passover Seders when he would sing - off key - but sing every song and louder than anyone else. Rae remembers the jokes he was so fond of telling and Raye also remembers saying to Sam "Ok you can tell your joke but don't forget to tell me when to laugh."

It was his love for life that allowed him to survive Europe and go throughout great trouble to bring himself and his family to Canada. And even during his last fatal illness, he clung to the life he lived fully and with great joy.

There is a religious promise I'd like to make to you this day Sam - as we say good-bye. I will not rotate Torahs as we usually do, reading a different Torah each year. This year, like last, our Shul will read YOUR Torah. And when we read of love or husbands and wives, of children and siblings - when we read of friendship and the rewards of hard work; when we read of Biblical personalities who lived life to its fullest, we will remember you. And then we will roll up the Scroll - parade it among the congregation - kiss it - and place it in the Ark - and both you and our Torah will never be fully removed from our Memory