

## **Eulogy Max Bushewsky 11/16/01**

Friends and relatives thank you for joining us here today to say farewell to Max.

Max, Matis, Mr. Bushewsky – I knew him as Dad.

I'm eight. Dad tells me stories of Pinsk, the winter, the woods and the wolves. It played with my vivid imagination.

We lived in a house behind his grocery store. It was located at the corner of 95<sup>th</sup> Street and 108A Ave. Today the store is called the Italian Center. It was a seven day a week family business. After school I would go to the store to fill the shelves, package phone in orders and set up the fruit and vegetable displays.

House and store were in an immigrant neighborhood. Max conversed with customers in Polish and Ukrainian. There were also Italians, French Canadians, Gypsy's and a few black families. The Jews were largely gone.

I suppose it was then that I started to learn about Tzdakah. Dad would put a little extra in the packages of those families in need. I can still hear him say, "Just a little more and something for the children," dropping a chocolate bar into the bag.

In 1960 Dad sold what was by then a successful store to a new immigrant by the name of Frank Spinelli over a hand shake. It had become time to move the family closer to the synagogue and the center of Jewish life. Yiddishkite was important to Max and he was a regular at shul.

Dad was born in 1904 in Pinsk in what is now Belarus. He was the youngest of five children and the first to leave home.

In 1926 Max went to the Hula swamp area of Palestine. There he founded one kibbutz and helped to build another. It was hard work. Just day's ago he told me about one of his jobs, "hacking shendle," or breaking rocks for use in building construction. His co-workers included Ben-Gurion. I'm not sure who else he knew, but he was able to pull strings when I lived in Israel during the 60's.

I believe Dad became ill while working in the swamps. For reasons of health he came to Canada in 1930 to join his older brother, Uncle Alter. He arrived in January – that must have been quite a shock.

Life must not have been any easier in Canada. His first job was grading eggs. He also taught Torah to Jews in small secluded Alberta communities. After a number of relatively menial jobs and working in his brother's cigar shop he opened his first grocery store in the late forties. In 1942 he married mom and together they raised Gordon and me...

Mom would not have him at home after he sold the store. At 56 Max became a realtor. He gave up the profession because it didn't suit him. He then worked as a warehouseman for his brother-in-law, my Uncle Izzy and then at the age of 65 started a 15 year career as a salesman at Army and Navy. Perhaps you bought a suit from him?

When he finally retired for good Dad became a patron of the Edmonton Public Library. He had always been a fan of the Yiddish poet Biyalik. And I remember him being an avid newspaper reader, taking the Forward as well as local newspapers.

When I think of the man I think of someone who suffered terrible losses and never got over them. He lost his entire family during the Holocaust aside from Uncle Alter.

Mom and dad made contributions to just about every Jewish cause. Many donations were made in memory of his family. He taught us about the lost family they could never be part of and the evil of anti-Semitism and war.

A few months ago Dad gave me a copy of a document called "The Holocaust and the Revolt in Pinsk." It was printed in Israel in the '70's. He would say repeatedly, "only four Pinksers survived," and then shake his head. He never forgot and never forgave.

My mother, her sister Aunt Fannie, my daughter Kalya and I would routinely go out for lunch on Saturdays. After he retired from the Army & Navy, Max was craving interaction with others. He wanted to go along. "Where are you going?" he would ask; and mom would reply "Out for lunch." "Can I come?" dad asked. Mom would say "Only if you pay". That did it. He continued to sit at the kitchen table, look out over his yard and went back to reading the paper.

Gardening was his hobby. He was so proud of his produce. I remember him bringing in his harvest to mom. Fresh tomato sandwiches, vegetable borscht, the menu changed during the summer.

Max had his faults. You may know him as a generous man, making a major contribution the Talmud Torah and other Jewish agencies. To family members and to himself he was at times less than generous.

When I think of Dad I think of a life of self reliance, few friends, demanding, unforgiving, a pioneer in Israel, leaving the nest too early, enduring hardship and prevailing.

I wish for us all that we could live a life with as much vigor, determination, and independence as Max.

Max died at the age of 97.