

## Eulogy for Julius Frankel

Passed away February 22, 1999 Adar 7, 5759

Arthur Talkins, Sheila's husband, flew out from Toronto with his family as soon as the word of Julius' sudden illness reached them. He had to return home but upon learning of Julius' death Arthur sent a message to the family which reads " It is with profound sadness that we see the passing of the patriarch of the Frankel family. A basic, wonderful and honest man; putting himself out for all was never a consideration. A selfless man who recently nursed his wife of almost 50 years back to a state of good health. I have seen and experienced incredible sibling strength amongst the Frankel children in these recent days. This could only have been achieved by a shepherd who knew how to tend his flock. Edmonton, for us is no longer the same, Julie is gone and within it a huge amount of heart. I too have lost my friend.

To Zena, my darling wife Sheila, Joanne, Michael and Gillian, I wish you all a long life and may the effluxion of time heal the wounds of your grief. May you one and all be comforted by Hashem in this your darkest hour." Arthur.

In a few brief words Arthur has captured the essence of a man many of us came to know, love and respect during his 18 years in Edmonton. His words also reflect the influence he had on his family. Arthur uses the words patriarch and shepherd when describing Julius, two words that could also be used when speaking of the greatest leader of the Jewish people, Moshe Rabbeinu, Moses our teacher. It should be noted that the seventh of Adar, the date in the Hebrew calendar that we will remember as the yahrzeit of Julius Frankel is also the birthdate and the date of the death of Moshe.

We can also often find a connection between the Torah portion we are about to read following the loss of a loved one and their life. In Parsha Tetzaveh which we will read this Shabbat, God commands Moses to make special garments for his brother Aaron and his sons who would wear them as they fulfilled their duties as the high priests of Israel. Throughout the portion we see the repetition of the word "*Ve-Aseeta*", "You shall make", as God gives explicit instructions to Moses on the design of the breastplate, the head covering and ornaments. Later there are instructions on the construction of an altar and the proper way to prepare animals for sacrifice.

I think Julie would love to read this portion. He would probably be back at House of Tools, gathering the implements he would need to build the altar, with a side trip to Fabricland for the appropriate royal purple wool . He would then gather his grandchildren around him to assemble some wonderful Purim costumes.

Julius would have been delighted to fulfill all of the orders given by God in Parsha Tetzaveh. He loved to keep busy, he loved to do things for others, especially family.

Raised in a traditional Jewish home in South Africa, Julius learned early in life how wonderful it was to be part of a warm and loving family. He was one of five brothers and sisters growing up in huge house that was always filled with relatives and friends. His father was a deeply religious man who attended synagogue twice a day but also involved himself in the larger community as deputy mayor of his town.

Julius attended public schools, as well as cheder after school and on Sundays, later enrolling in university to study medicine. He loved sports and was a tremendous athlete. He played soccer with the Jewish guild and won many trophies for his lawn bowling victories.

When World War II began, Julius immediately enlisted in the South African Army which fought alongside the British troops. Even though there was no compulsory military service he recognized the obligation to fight for his country. He served for six years, with active duty in North Africa, Italy and Palestine, rising to the rank of Sergeant. He returned home highly decorated, but did not return to university to complete his medical degree, joining the family retail business instead.

A few years later, in June 1949, he married Zena, and together they raised four children, Joanne, Sheila, Michael and Gillian. His children will always remember him as a devoted husband and father who committed himself to family activities. He was ahead of the times as a father who involved himself in every aspect of his children's lives. He was active on school committees so that he could have a say on the education the children were receiving. He was proud of all of their achievements, taking special pleasure that Joanne completed the medical degree that he never did.

He coached teams and took the children to any sports matches he could even to the rare ice hockey games that were held. He remained active in sports himself playing baseball on local teams. Perhaps he had a premonition that a home in North America was in his future.

He also was famous for the Sunday morning breakfasts he cooked for his family. The aroma of steak, eggs and fried tomatoes, and the sound of a spoon against the coffee pot was the signal for another family get together. Other mornings he would rise early to walk to the bakery to get fresh bread for breakfast.

Julius was blessed with a green thumb and created fabulous gardens. In fact Zena believes that it was the garden of their home in Johannesburg that clinched the sale of the house before they emigrated to Canada. Nancy remembers that on one of his trips to Memphis, Julius found a fig tree that she had thrown out, sure that it was dead. He proceeded to trim it, repot it and nurse it back to health and it now stands seven feet high in Michael and Nancy's home.

He recognized the need for his children to leave South Africa and never regretted the decision he and Zena made a few years later to move to Edmonton. He arrived here in 1981, plunging in to the community, joining Beth Shalom, and making new friends who welcomed his warm and outgoing style. He quickly becoming a surrogate father to many of the South African expatriates in the Edmonton Jewish community as well as a grandfather to their children. He joined the House of Tools, helping them expand to another location and managing the west end store until he finally retired at the age of 72.

Julius was a fit and healthy man who always seemed younger than his age. He had only been in the hospital one night in his entire life. He loved the mountains. He visited Banff regularly and delighted in taking overseas visitors there, who watched in amazement as he literally ran up the slopes, and then relaxed with him in the hot springs pool.

He and Zena loved to travel and his passport included stamps from, Hong Kong, Japan, Spain, Israel, and Italy as well as other European countries and Hawaii.

Of course his favourite times were those spent with his grandchildren. There were frequent trips to Memphis to be with Brendan and Brook and to Toronto where Dale and Daniel often walked with him to a store that sold Biltong, a South African specialty. When he wasn't visiting there were long phone conversations so he could take part in their school progress and Bar or Bat Mitzvah preparations.

His relationship with Darren, Kevin and Lorne, always close, became even more important as he was a role model and a father to them after Gerry passed away tragically two years ago. They will miss the Shabbat dinners with him, watching Jeopardy together and helping him with his crossword puzzles.

Julius' grandchildren and children have all been blessed with the guidance of a man who always looked for ways to please and help others. He loved to volunteer-there was not a lazy bone in his body. He would go to schools to talk to the children about his experiences in the war, telling them how horrible it was. He continued to garden both in his home and at Joannes.

His family and those that knew him as Jules or Grandpa Julie will miss the pockets that always had a candy for children, the practical jokes he would play on Halloween, his passion for hockey and other sports and his incredible memory for obscure statistics.

Julius, who spent a lifetime serving other people, through his bravery in the armed services, his devotion to family, and the strong relationships he built with his customers, asked little in return. Being able to help others was all of the thanks he needed.

His death came quickly. Even his final actions reflect the way he lived. Returning home and suddenly feeling ill he still managed to pull in to his garage, park his car, turn off the engine, and signal with his horn so that Zena sensing something was wrong was able to get him to the hospital quickly. His children and grandchildren came together quickly to share final precious moments with him, something that many of us are deprived of today because of distance. While he may not have known of their presence, each of them in their own way were able to hold him and thank him for being the wonderful husband, father and grandfather that he was.

In the last lines of our Torah we read "*Velo kam navi od beIsrael keMoshe*", Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses." There may never again be another person like Julius Frankel, a unique individual whose passing we will mark on the same day each year as that of our greatest leader. Those of us who knew and loved him are privileged to have memories that will continue to inspire us to lead lives that are dedicated to making this world a better place for those we cherish.