

Eulogy--Ida Kline

Passed away September 20, 1998

One of the ongoing themes of the High Holy Days is the concept that God has 'books' that he writes our names in, writing down who will live and who will die, who will have a good life and who will have a bad life. Can it be that when the books were sealed on Yom Kippur last year that it was decreed that Ida Kline would leave us only hours before the year ended? When considering the good deeds that Ida had performed in her 91 years did God weigh them against the illness and pain she has fought in recent years and decide that one more year would be too much? Or perhaps even God is no match for the cutbacks in Alberta health care that may have caused delay in treatments for the bad fall she took last week.

While her loss weighed heavily on us as we asked for long life for ourselves in synagogue earlier this week, today we reflect on the life of a woman whose love for family and dedication to her community will be an inspiration to us for many years to come.

Ida was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, April 18, 1907 but moved to Canada with her parents, Maurice and Miriam Joel, when she was only three years old. After a short stay in Toronto her adventurous father headed off for the new province of Alberta to establish a general store in Edson. The venture was short lived as a fire destroyed the store after less than three years in business, and they lost everything. Although the Joel's headed back to Toronto in 1917 they made close friends in the small Edmonton Jewish community including members of the Kline family who were among the founders of many of our community institutions.

This connection was renewed a few years later when Mo Kline, the son of H.B. Kline, the founder of Kline Jewellers, was sent to Toronto to study Dentistry at the university and stayed at the Joel's home. Here he met Ida who was completing her secretarial and commercial training.

And the circle was completed a few years later when Ida moved back to Edmonton to work for Irving Kline and stayed at the home of Irving and Lily. Within a year she was engaged to Irving's younger brother Mo, and they were married in H.B. Kline's home in 1930.

Mo began his dental practice in Edmonton but the harshness of the depression meant few rewards for his years of study and hard work. Despite their small income, Ida chose to stay home to raise their two children, Terry and Harry. Even though circumstances meant that luxuries such as family vacations were non-existent, the boys still remember their early years as full of fun as there were always cousins, uncles and aunts from the large Kline family to entertain them. Holidays meant warm family gatherings and it seemed there were always weddings and bar mitzvahs to celebrate.

Terry and Harry also have fond memories of the old neighborhood on 95th Street where they shared good times with their extended family including the Wassermans, Lutsky's, Glassmans and Mickelsons.

During the war years Ida was active in National Council of Jewish Women, collecting and sending magazines to troops overseas. She also volunteered for Hadassah, working in the Thrift Shop and at the annual bazaar.

Everything changed for the family in 1950 when Mo passed away at the age of 49. With her sons in university and starting careers Ida returned to the work force to ensure that the tragic loss of their father would not prevent them from continuing their studies. She worked as the credit manager at Johnstone-Walker and later for the Friedman family at Walk-Rite, staying there until the store was closed. She dedicated her life to the boys, foregoing an active social life so that they would be successful in their lives.

For many years after the boys left home Ida lived quietly alone enjoying visits from her five grandchildren, celebrating holidays with family and becoming a regular at services at Beth Shalom. In her later years she was challenged by health problems including operations on both knees and a mastectomy but she always bounced back from the trauma and turmoil of these operations with high spirits.

Her last years as a resident of Canterbury Court saw a rebirth of spirit and dedication that lay dormant for the years she spent by herself in her downtown apartment. She plunged in to the active social scene there with renewed vigour. She participated in every activity that was offered. She joined the Happy Gang, Canterbury's singing group, and traveled to other senior centres to entertain the residents. She even became a spokesperson for the Canterbury Foundation encouraging other seniors to move there. And of course she was an active participant in the monthly Shabbat services that I have the privilege of leading for the many Jewish residents.

Many times I would get a phone call from Ida if there was a mix up on the dates I was supposed to be there, or to remind me to bring wine for Kiddush. If there was a problem, I could count on Ida to get the word out to the other residents, and if someone was missing from the service Ida always seemed to know where they were. She wasn't being nosy - she felt that the Shabbat service was important to the residents and she made a point of reminding them through the week to be there.

I saw Ida last on Shabbat less than two weeks ago. As she left after the service she handed me the seat ticket for the high holidays that the synagogue sent her. She said she wasn't feeling well, and didn't think that she would be coming to shul and wanted the ticket to be given to some one who could use it. I took it reluctantly and told her that there would always be a seat for her and that I hoped she would at least come for Kol Nidre. The ticket is still sitting on my desk. I never gave it to any one, expecting that I would see her coming out of the elevator with her walker and slowly making her way to her seat.

Despite her 91 years and her recent health problems, I, like her family were not ready for her passing. She was a vital and strong-willed person to the end, and a fall and the subsequent delays in treatment may have robbed us of a few more years of her delightful company.

This week kaddish will be recited by her sons, Harry and Terry and her brother Aubrey in Toronto. This week, and every year on the anniversary of her death, the kaddish will be a little different than that recited the rest of the year. During the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we add an extra word. Instead of L'eila min kol birchata we say l'eila u l'eila meekol birchata. This change in the Kaddish, a prayer which reaffirms our devotion to God even in times of sorrow, stresses that God's majesty is even more pronounced during this period of judgment than it is all year around.

To Ida's family who treasured her presence and to those of us who knew and loved her, the extra word will always have a double meaning as we also recall that she also gave extra devotion, spirit and love to make our lives and community so much the better.

Tehi nishmatah tzroorah beetsror hachaim
May her soul be bound up in the bond of life.