

Abraham Ostashower

Avraham ben Yehuda Halevi

Died March 5, 2002

Adar 21, 5762

Abe would have appreciated the scene that took place only a few hours ago in his home. Most of his immediate family gathered to share their thoughts and stories about him as we began the preparation for this service in his memory. Between the tears and the smiles the words came easily as the nearly impossible task of trying to sum up the life of this wonderful man for a eulogy was attempted. Those who were there and others who called on the phone each had their own memories but there was a common thread in all of their words. Abe was a man more concerned for others more than for himself, a man who was only satisfied when everyone around him was happy.

Having begun his life in poverty he knew the importance of helping others when he could and this was a lesson he lived and a lesson he taught. Abraham was born in Winnipeg to Louis Ostashower originally from Warsaw and Rebecca Perchansky, whose family emigrated to Canada from Ukraine. His father was a deeply religious Talmud scholar, who earned a meager living as plumber refusing to do any work that would interfere with his religious beliefs. Abe went to religious school and despite problems with his legs that he suffered in his youth he took a long walk every day with his father to synagogue. Somehow the family survived through the depression when his father refused to accept any government assistance but these memories never left Abe.

I think Abe would have appreciated the teaching attributed to a Hasidic Rebbe, known as the Leover, who taught, "If a person comes to you for assistance, and you tell him, 'God will help you,' you are acting disloyally to God. For you should understand that God has sent you to aid the needy person, not to refer him back to the Almighty."

Abe's first opportunity to go out in to the larger world and help others was at the beginning of the Second World War when he enlisted in the army with the Winnipeg Grenadiers. He served throughout the War including a stint as the head of a P.O.W. camp in Jamaica and in covert operations for the Americans in North Africa.

Returning to civilian life he chose to pursue careers in various businesses beginning as a taxi driver in Prince Rupert, B.C., and later moving to Alberta where he operated furniture stores in Calgary and Edmonton. It was in Calgary in 1953 where he met Dawn, the sister of a business associate. Smitten by her British charm they soon married and together they had five children, Rick, Jane, Joanne, Andrew and David.

Growing up with Abe was an experience that his children will cherish forever. Abe loved to read and was a font of information but rather than just pass on the answers to his children's homework questions he made them do the research as the words "Look it up" were repeated hundreds of times as each made their way through school. In the days before computers and search engines he taught them how to use the dictionary and the encyclopedia, a skill that each one is thankful for.

His early days of poverty also instilled in him a desire to collect things. Over the years his home became a repository for tea cups, clocks and cameras. He was a well known and popular figure at flea markets and garage sales. But if you admired something he owned chances are you would end up receiving it as a gift as he always wanted to make others happy and share the enjoyment he had.

Abe and Dawn were among the first home owners in the Rio Terrace neighbourhood, where they helped establish the community league and build the ice rink not only for their children but for all of the children of the area. Abe was a huge supporter of all of his kids activities and was always on the sidelines cheering. One year Abe and Dawn were voted fans of the year at the Jewish Hockey League and probably would have won it every year if it was allowed.

Abe loved to talk to people. He would strike up conversations with strangers all the time even telephone operators and telemarketers. He was so well known at Superstore for his kindness to others that one year the cashiers held a birthday party for him in recognition of the love he showed to others. He was a practical joker with a sharp wit that he never lost even in his final days as he joked with the doctors and nurses at the Cross Cancer Centre.

While everyone who knew him will remember his generosity and kindness it is his children, their spouses, and his eleven grandchildren who will miss his

presence the most. The kind of jokes we hear about in-laws did not apply in the Ostashower family. All of his sons and daughters in law feel blessed to have been able to become part of a family that shares so much love. Family came first for Abe even to the point of searching for others with the Ostashower name whenever he would visit other cities. After many years he was able to find Larry and Judy, the children of a sister, who now live in Los Angeles, and they are here today to help remember their uncle. This was important to him as he recognized that much of his family probably perished in Poland during the war. In probably one of the few times that he allowed himself to feel self satisfied for something he had accomplished he turned to Dawn at a family gathering and said "Look what we've done. We've saved the Ostashowers."

Abe not only saved his family's name but he also gave his children and grandchildren a start in life that will enable them to teach and inspire others to lead lives that show kindness and generosity. This is a goal we should all share as we try to make this world a better place for all mankind. In Abe's memory we should all be inspired to try even a little harder.

Tehi nishmato tzroorah beetzror hachaim

May his soul be bound up in the bonds of life

*June + Randy  
444 Wanyandi Road  
Wed  
Thurs  
Sun  
Mon.  
7:30 p.m.*