

Eulogy for Harold Rodnunsky (Z"L) as written by Lawrence Rodnunsky – son

This week's Torah portion is Tzav – when translated it means "Command". It expresses a Command from G-d about the donation of offerings in the Sanctuary, relating to the general concept of giving Charity. Tzav also has another meaning "Connect". It expresses the idea that G-d's laws establish a connection between the individual and G-d.

In times of sorrow and mourning, we must also take the time to celebrate life – Harold's – life.

Harold was born as the oldest of he and his twin brother Albert (of blessed memory) on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1926 here in Edmonton. They were the first Jewish twins here. It was always easy to tell that he was the oldest of the two, given that when they were 16 years old and went to the YMCA – My Uncle went in - my dad followed a few minutes later.....the attendant mentioned "your son just went in."

He spent part of his youth with the rest of the family growing up in the small community of Kingman before returning back to Edmonton.

My Father held many jobs in his lifetime, but teaching was his greatest joy, given he did it for almost 30 years.

He married Isabel over 50 years ago and had two sons, Peter and myself.

It is difficult to stand here and sum up a man's 83 years of life in a few minutes, so I will give you a brief glimpse into the life of my dear father. You will probably notice a pattern in a short time.

So here it goes!

**Adventurous:** In his youth, Dad along with his brother, cousins and friends fearlessly tobogganed the hills by Alex Taylor Road on nothing more than some cardboard. Dad also chauffeured a family he hardly knew and who hardly knew him, across Canada and the United States when he was in his early 20s.

**Bridge:** Dad loved to play bridge and repeatedly failed to teach Mum, Peter, and I the nuances of the card game. However that didn't stop dad, Uncle Hymie and Uncle Albert (all of blessed memory) from playing from a very early age. Dad

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went on to playing with Shelby Smordin and won the Edmonton Duplicate Bridge championship in 1955. Even when Dad was in long term care, it didn't stop him from playing the daily game in the Newspaper and remembering hands from long ago.

**Curling:** Dad was an avid curler, both as a participant and spectator. When he was younger, he met another curler – Abner Rubin – and the two became fast friends. I remember dad telling me the story when he was the skip of one team and the third on another team, and they ended up playing each other. Talk about a tricky situation.

**Dedicated:** It didn't matter who, what, where, when, why or how.....Dad was always dedicated to his wife, family, friends, community and city. Whether he helped raise his sister Honour, or was photocopying work for his students at 2AM at the high school, helping his dear cousin Alfie Simons (of blessed memory) prepare for his Bar Mitzvah at the tender age of 80, or ensure that my Mum knew how to drive a standard (Oy), he always saw things to a conclusion.

**Engineer:** Sort of. He made luggage and trunks as owner of Edmonton Luggage. However, not so much when he helped me with a grade 4 project of building a kite....Let me tell you, it was sturdy enough to stand up to any hurricane or typhoon mother nature would throw at it, but fly, not a chance. We made it out of 1x2 lumber!

**Family:** He got this mainly from "The General ", his father (of blessed memory). Family was the key to my father. Without family, there is nothing. He used to tell me you have to know your Yiches (roots)! He was committed to keeping up to date with the family tree, something he did with his dear cousin Elsie (also of blessed memory). Up to a few weeks ago, dad kept asking me about a branch of the family we didn't know much about.....he wanted me to seek out new information .... which is a promise I plan to keep.

**Giving:** In many senses of the word, Dad was a very giving person, whether it was Tzedakah to the numerous charities (even though they didn't have much money) or giving his time from working bingos and casinos, or tutoring students and kids who were having problems...no mitzvah (good deed) was too big or small for dad. As long as he could give something of himself...that was all that mattered.

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**Haggle:** Dad would always ensure to haggle for most things. His view was that if you didn't haggle for something, then you would pay too much. Plus he secretly enjoyed the art of haggling. He learned this at a young age when he helped run his father's store.

**Integrity:** To dad, integrity was the key to trusting anyone. He used to tell me of a time when a man's word was all that was needed, or a handshake sealed the deal. Even though the simpler times have gone by over the years, dad had the most integrity of anyone I have known.

**Judicious:** Dad always had sensible and well thought out ideas. They didn't always work the way he wanted, but no decision was taken lightly.

**Kvel:** Dad always Kvelled (burst with pride) whenever any of his immediate family, or extended family, and friends brought him Naches (joy)

**Loving:** Once you passed through his outer shell, there was a very loving and caring person. You just needed a bit of time to get to know him, and for him to get to know you. As my Aunt Honour said yesterday....he really was a marshmallow inside.

**Music:** Dad loved to play and listen to music (except some of the noise of today as he put it). Both dad and Uncle Albert used to play piano duets when growing up. Dad went on to play violin and it was truly amazing to watch both he and my brother Peter play in the Medicine Hat Symphony orchestra.

**Nickel:** Dad always used to say don't take any wooden nickels. And then he would counter by telling Peter and I how much candy they could buy for a nickel when he was growing up....it was more than enough for a week.

**Opinionated:** Dad had an opinion about anything and would be sure to share that opinion with anyone, whether they had the time to listen or not. He was the type of person who, if by himself, could formulate 3 different opinions about a topic, debate them, and come up with a fourth opinion.

**Politics:** Dad was always a staunch supporter of the Liberal Party of Canada and always looked for an opportunity to debate with those of other political parties. His history minor in Education assisted with his love for politics.

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**Quality over Quantity:** One of dad's favourite sayings was "eine zehn fartig" – see the finished product. Dad always believed that the quality of the work or job completed was always most important. If you are going to do a job, do it right the first time.

**Respect:** Dad always had the utmost respect for others as others had respect for him. Dad always respected a person's decision for doing something, even if he didn't agree with it.

**Stubborn:** Also referred to as the "Rodnunsky - Duch" A term coined by My father and his brothers. It represents how our family is always determined to finish what they start and to never give up. This was evident when he ran for Mayor in Medicine Hat in 1977, only to come in 3<sup>rd</sup> in a three man race with a total of under 800 votes. He made his viewpoint known and made sure that the other two candidates remained on the up and up. The "Duch" is a trait that is hereditary and is inherent in all of the Rodnunsky Clan.

**Teaching:** Dad always found a lesson to everything in life....so much so that he had to educate everyone who he met, whether it was family, friends, students, the cashier at Safeways, and most recently the long term care staff. And it didn't matter if he was wrong or right. He instilled the values of education, learning and teaching to everyone. Except when he only gave me 75% in grade 9 typing, and told me that was all I was worth.

**Uralt (oor-alt')**: which means Ancient: Unfortunately dad never got involved with computer world of my generation. He lived in the "ancient" times and always preferred a manual typewriter or more recent his IBM selectric.

**Volunteer:** Dad was a volunteer at heart. In Medicine Hat, he had been president of the Lions club, Master of his Masonic Lodge, and President of B'nai B'rith for a number of years. He assisted with Bingos, Casinos, and fundraisers of all types. Plus he volunteered his time to visit the sick in hospital. If asked, he would always be there.

**Witty:** Dad had a wickedly dry "British style" sense of humour. He loved watching British comedy shows. His quips and comments were very subtle yet funny, once one actually caught on to the humour.

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**Xerox:** As a teacher, it didn't matter what the material was, Dad was always one to ensure there were copies available for everyone

**Yiddishkayt:** Jewishness and Jewish tradition were so important to dad, even though he didn't always agree with all of the customs and what the sages taught us.....he was a firm believer in ensuring everyone knew what it meant to be Jewish: That being Jewish was a way of living life, not just a religion.

**Zionist:** Dad was a Zionist and always supported Israel in any way he could.

Harold was a Mentsh and had a Gut Neshome. He touched a number of peoples' lives and we like to think he made a difference in our world. He will be missed but never forgotten.