

Al Schloss
by Eric Schloss

The Four Way Test for Rotarians of the things they think, say or do is:

1. Is it the Truth
2. Is it fair to all concerned
3. Will it build good will and better friendship
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned.

My father governed his life by these four tests. He was the most non-judgmental person I have ever known. I never heard him ever say a bad word about anyone. He respected all other people regardless of their religion, color, or social status. He was universally respected. He led an exemplary and dignified life. He was an outstanding role model for his children and his community. He was selfless in his service to his community and to his family.

Al Schloss was born on October 25, 1902, and, with his older sister Fanny and his younger siblings, Sarah, Bill and Roy, was raised and educated in Winnipeg. As a young man, he spent years in the retail clothing industry in the Eastern United States, where he met his lifetime partner Ann. They were married in her hometown, Philadelphia, in 1930. In 1935 they decided to move with their daughter, Sondra, to Alberta to accept a business opportunity. Their intention at that time was to survive the Great Depression and then return. When they arrived in Camrose they were greeted with a sign, "Welcome to Camrose". They saw it as a warm personal welcome for themselves. They liked Camrose so much that they simply never left. They had two more children Eric and myself, and they raised their family in Camrose. My parents made numerous lifetime friends in Camrose, and later, after their retirement, in their adopted winter home in Palm Springs, California.

My father operated Lawrence's Department Store in Camrose for 40 years. He was an exceptionally innovative, creative and industrious businessman. He was the first person to initiate sales by credit; he advertised his store extensively in newspapers and in flyers, distributed in Camrose and also to far away destinations past the Saskatchewan border. He put on fashion shows, and he was the first to bring Santa Claus to Camrose in his store. His merchandising methods were way ahead of their time in the 1930's. In his view, buying was the key to success in a retail clothing business. My parents were a great team in buying merchandise for their store. The store was a huge success. Lawrence's was probably the largest and most successful retail clothing business in Alberta outside of Edmonton and Calgary. My father had a keen analytical mind in business matters and he was fanatically organized. He seemed to have the innate ability to quickly and thoroughly analyze his business goals and problems, to consider and weigh all his options, and to quickly make sensible and wise business decisions.

My father was one of the original investors, promoters and organizers of Radio Station CFCW in Camrose. In his later years, he became a successful real estate developer and investor. His business acumen led to success in all his business endeavors.

Al Schloss was also extremely active in the community. He was a Past President of many organizations, including the Camrose Chamber of Commerce, Camrose Rotary Club, Overture Concert Association, Retail Merchant's Association, Home and School Association and the Camrose Golf

Club. He was an Alderman of the City of Camrose and was a long time board member of St. Mary's Hospital in Camrose. He was also a member of the Masonic Order and of the Shriner's Al Shamal Temple, and, since 1935, the Beth Shalom Congregation in Edmonton.

He was proud of Camrose, and he strived to make it a better community. Thanks to Dad, Camrose to this day does not have parking meters. He always believed that free parking was essential in order to attract outside markets. Through his efforts there is now an impressive entrance into Camrose from the west, and a parks system surrounding Mirror Lake that is the envy of most other communities. He spearheaded approval of the development and construction of Camrose's City Hall. He worked laboriously and creatively towards establishing the successful Camrose Jay Walker's Jamboree, and he worked tirelessly in promoting and providing for the needs of the Orphan's Home in Gwynne.

In recognition of his service in Camrose, he was honored with Life Memberships in the Camrose Chamber of Commerce and in the Camrose Golf Club. He was also honoured locally by Camrose Composite High School, St. Mary's Hospital and Camrose Rotary Club.

Rotary International recently honored Dad for his distinguished record of 63 years of perfect attendance. He was also honored with a Paul Harris Fellowship in Rotary International.

But it is my memories of Dad's personal and family life that I cherish most. I idolized him as a child. I still do. We were great pals. In the early 50's he always took me with him to visit the geologists and oilmen in the burgeoning oil industry around Camrose. While travelling around the countryside, we always had great discussions with each other. We spent hours playing gin rummy and cribbage. He was a fantastic gin rummy player. He was unbeatable. In the summertime, we golfed together most evenings. He had the most uncoordinated, awkward golf swing I ever saw - but his drives were always straight down the center of the fairway, his approaches were always on the greens and he rarely two-putted. In his prime he played to a 10 handicap. In the winter, we curled together. He had a unique, unconventional hack delivery, but he somehow usually made his shots. As an adult, I have benefited from his vision, wisdom and counsel, and his care, compassion and friendship. His children, Sondra, Eric and I, his daughters-in-law, Elexis and Maureen, and his eight grandchildren, John, Jane, Robin, Jay, Jody, Michael, Daniel and Gillian were all PERFECT in Dad's eyes. He made every one of us feel very special. And the love and respect that he continuously bestowed upon and shared with my mother over almost 68 years of marriage was always evident. They were an awesome team. They had a marvelous marriage.

I also loved his unique funny quirks. For instance, my father had a favorite spoon - a big, ugly worn out table spoon. He took it with him everywhere in his travels. It was an essential item for him at home and away.

My father loved music. He was an opera buff. He enjoyed singing. Whether it was the National Anthem, or whatever, one could always hear his voice over everyone else, always singing in harmony. He had his own style.

My father was always immaculately dressed and groomed. He exuded style. His signature was a handkerchief tucked into his jacket pocket. When he was 85 years of age he purchased patent leather shoes for his tuxedo. On his 95th birthday he luxuriated at Avanti's Spa in Edmonton wrapped in a terry cloth robe while he was massaged and manicured. He was a man of taste.

I could go on and on, but I'll save that for my memories. My father was a happy man. He enriched the lives of everyone he touched. He was a wonderful husband, father, and grandfather. He was a gentleman. He had a life well-lived.

Barry Schloss

Al Schloss

Our Dad had many wonderful qualities and strong interests. His chosen work and profession as a merchant and department store manager was a central and vital part of his life and our mother worked closely with him. Dad really enjoyed his business life and showed us a model of such a strong work ethic, his work week was often a full seven days, with regular Sunday and often Wednesday afternoon buying trips to see travellers and wholesales in Edmonton. Barry and I spent many Sunday afternoons in the old Library wing of the Macdonald Hotel with our comic books and sports magazines while our parents were working. Later Mom and Dad became famous around the Hotel as they always brought their faithful Basset Hound, Sam, with them to the Sample Rooms and around the Hotel. I have a patient who was the chief Bell Captain at the Hotel for many years who always asks me how my Mom and Dad are doing and to give them his regards.

There are so many memories of events at the store. His staff were very loyal, and so many served long term and have kept in close contact, even though he retired over 20 years ago. I know that Mom is pleased that some are here today; Irva was there even before Dad arrived, and that was over 63 years ago; and Mervin started while in high school and eventually was able to start his own store (as many of Dad's staff were eventually able to do, usually with Dad's guidance and encouragement).

So much of both my Dad and Mom's life revolved around the store, the business and their customers. Many of the stories were humorous, such as the inebriated man buying a suit for his daughter's wedding, who when asked the date of the ceremony suddenly realized that he was already half an hour late!

Dad and Mom made sure that Barry and I worked in the store during high school as they thought it was an essential experience and training to work with the public. But there was never an intention of full time as we always had a choice for a profession in our family...actually two choices, a Doctor or a Lawyer. I guess we were the quintessential Jewish Family!

Dad's wonderful reputation in business in Camrose was a source of great pride for him and our Mother. Even today she has so many people telling her of Dad's kindnesses to them, extending credit without hesitation or donating clothing or merchandise. I have a Medical School classmate, now a long time cardiologist at the Mayo Clinic, Gerry Gau, who grew up in Camrose, and he made a point of visiting with Mom and Dad on a recent visit and telling my Dad how wonderful an influence and role model he was for him as a kid when he delivered the Calgary Albertan to Dad at the store. He sincerely appreciated Dad's help and encouragement.

Dad had a very wide range of interests and activities. He loved sports and actively participated in golf and curling and he was a particularly avid football fan. He was an original Edmonton Eskimo season ticket holder in 1949, and never missed a game for almost 40 years, driving in and back to Camrose with Mom, who loyally attended, though I am not sure she ever fully understood the game.

When our father developed an interest he really went into it with intensity whether it was stamp collecting, gardening (he often brought us beautiful gladiolas), bridge or golf. He had strong willpower and determination, and when he wanted to accomplish something it was invariably DONE. This was reflected in his 63 year record of perfect attendance in Rotary. He would make a point of attending meetings wherever he was, and on some family trips drove many miles out of our way to get to the right meeting. He even once had a doctor postpone an operation so that he could get in his weekly attendance.

As a child we remember him always with a cigar. But he decided one day to stop and THAT WAS THAT! (ALMOST 50 YEARS AGO). We also never thought that he would ever retire, but he again fooled us, and suddenly that also was that!

Dad had a strong community and social sense and was responsible for many good

works, particularly in and around Camrose, and usually without any fanfare. When President of the Rotary Club he became aware of an orphanage near Gwynne (not far from Wetaskiwin and Camrose) which desperately needed assistance, and he almost single-handedly arranged their on-going permanent support from Rotary and the Provincial government.

Although Dad was not a formally religious man, like his Father, he had a strong sense of loyalty towards his Jewish tradition, and he made certain that Barry and I had Hebrew lessons and Bar Mitzvah training. I remember that it was also very important to him that we had a new suit for the High Holidays each year, and he would always have a new fedora for Yom Tov. They were dedicated members of the Beth Shalom Congregation since their arrival in 1935.

Dad and Mom loved to socialize and had tons of friends in Camrose and wherever they met people. Their friends were very important to them. For many years, after retirement, they loved going to Palm Springs for winter vacations. They also made many close friends there.

Unfortunately Dad did not listen to the words of his Dermatologist son and loved to spend hours baking in the sun.

On moving to their new condo five years ago, Mom and Dad were fortunate to widen their circle of friends and meet many fine people, many of whom are here today. One of the highlights of their week was the Wednesday morning coffee party at the Condo. I know that Mother is deeply appreciative of the kind and considerate support she has received during Dad's illness from so many of their friends.

Dad was proud of all his children and grandchildren and gloried in their successes and achievements. Even a few days ago he underwent a remarkable change and visibly brightened when he saw his grandchildren, Robin and J.J. And he was looking forward to Daniel's Bar Mitzvah.

Always the main love of his life was his wife, Ann. They were devoted to each other for 68 years. Few couples ever lived and worked so closely together. After Dad passed away, I stayed over in Camrose with Mother, and in the morning when I woke her, she was startled, as she thought that it was Dad. She said that he always took her arm like that and kissed her in the morning.

We will all deeply miss him and cherish his memory.

Eric Schloss