

Eulogy for Sara Uretsky

August 12, 1994

ALL OF US PRAY FOR THE BLESSING OF LONG LIFE BUT TO SEE NOT ONLY YOUR GRANDCHILDREN, BUT GREAT GRANDCHILDREN GROW TO MATURITY IS A WISH FEW OF US ARE GRANTED.

SARA URETSKY WAS GRANTED THAT BLESSING. SHE LIVED TO BE 98 YEARS OLD AND WAS BLESSED TO HAVE KNOWN THE LOVE OF 3 GENERATIONS WHO ADORED HER. SHE WAS AN ACTIVE WOMAN EVEN INTO HER 90'S, LIVING IN HER OWN HOUSE UNTIL SHE WAS 93.

RICK REMEMBERS HER TAKING THE BUS TO SAFEWAY AND COMING HOME WITH BAGS FULL OF COCA COLA AND POTATO CHIPS EVENS WHEN SHE WAS "KENAHORA" 90 YEARS OLD. BUT THE BLESSING OF OLD AGE WAS TEMPERED BY SADNESS. HER SON HARRY WAS SHOT DOWN OVER GERMANY IN WORLD WAR II. HIS BODY WAS NEVER FOUND. TODAY, HE IS REMEMBERED ON THE WAR MEMORIAL IN FRONT OF THIS CHAPEL. IN 1969, HER BELOVED HUSBAND ALEX PASSED AWAY. WITHIN MONTHS, SHE LOST HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER FACED THE TRAGIC NEWS THAT HER ONLY REMAINING CHILD ABRAHAM HAD CANCER. OVER THE NEXT 4 YEARS, SHE SPENT MANY MONTHS IN VANCOUVER HELPING ABE THROUGH HIS ILLNESS UNTIL HE EVENTUALLY DIED IN 1974.

TO SOME WOMEN THE TRAGEDY OF LOSING BOTH CHILDREN AND A HUSBAND OF OVER 50 YEARS COULD HAVE LED TO A LIFE OF GRIEVING AND LONELINESS BUT SARA URETSKY WAS STRONG-WILLED ENOUGH TO GO BEYOND HER GRIEF AND CONTINUED TO LEAD A FULFILLED LIFE.

IF YOU KNOW THE HISTORY OF SARA URETSKY THIS IS NOT SURPRISING.

SHE WAS TRULY A EDMONTON PIONEER. SHE CAME TO EDMONTON FROM EASTERN EUROPE WHEN SHE WAS BARELY IN HER TEENS. SENT BY HER FAMILY TO LIVE WITH AN UNCLE, RABBI PINSKY WHO HAD SETTLED HERE, SHE FOUND WORK

AND WHENEVER SHE EARNED ENOUGH MONEY IT WAS SENT TO THE OLD COUNTRY AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER, ONE OF HER BROTHERS OR SISTERS ARRIVED. SHE CONTINUED TO WORK SENDING MORE MONEY FOR HER PARENTS TO COME, BUT ANOTHER SIBLING CAME INSTEAD AND SHE NEVER SAW HER PARENTS AGAIN. ANOTHER BENEFICIARY OF HER TOIL WAS HER FUTURE HUSBAND, ALEX URETSKY. SHE KNEW HIM IN THE OLD COUNTRY AND SOON AFTER HE ARRIVED IN EDMONTON THEY WERE MARRIED.

TOGETHER THEY CONTINUED TO WORK HARD OPENING BAKERY AND GROCERY STORES IN THE CITY. THEY WERE GENEROUS TO THE GROWING JEWISH COMMUNITY AND WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED FOR THE HELP THEY GAVE MANY NEWCOMERS AND THE INSTITUTIONS WHICH STILL EXIST IN EDMONTON TODAY. WHILE TODAY JEWISH CONTINUITY IS SUDDENLY A CONCERN AMONG COMMUNITY LEADERS, TO SARA URETSKY IT WAS A WAY OF LIFE. SHE RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT JEWISH VALUES AND TRADITIONS WERE PASSED ON TO HER GRANDCHILDREN.

WITH HER OWN CHILDREN GONE, SHE TREATED HER GRANDCHILDREN, RICK, KAREN, JERRY AND TRUDI, AS IF THEY WERE HER SONS AND DAUGHTERS AND SHE WAS LIKE A GRANDMOTHER TO HER 12 GREAT GRANDCHILDREN.

KAREN REMEMBERS HER GRANDMOTHER'S FAMOUS CINNAMON BUNS, MADE FROM SCRATCH. HER APPLE PIES, KMISH BROIT AND SUGAR NOTHINGS WERE LEGENDARY. JASON CHERISHES THE MEMORY OF THE HUGE ROAST CHICKENS THAT SARA MADE EVERY SHABBAT.

RICK LIVED IN HIS GRANDMOTHER'S BASEMENT DURING SOME OF HIS UNIVERSITY YEARS. HE REMEMBERS THAT HER POKER GROUP WOULD OFTEN START PLAYING CARDS AROUND 10 P.M. AND CONTINUE THROUGH THE NIGHT FINALLY CALLING IT QUILTS AFTER LUNCH THE NEXT DAY. U OF A MADE RICK A DOCTOR BUT SARA URETSKY TAUGHT HIM TO DRINK TEA THROUGH A SUGAR CUBE.

SARA URETSKY WAS TRULY A LIBERATED WOMAN. NOT ONLY BEING MORE THAN AN EQUAL PARTNER IN THE BUSINESS BUT ALSO DRIVING A CAR EARLY IN THE CENTURY WHEN FEW WOMEN DID. SHE TRAVELLED TO MIAMI FOR THE DOG RACES AND LAS VEGAS TO PLAY POKER. SHE LOVED LIFE ESPECIALLY IF IT WAS ACCOMPANIED BY COCA COLA, POTATO CHIPS AND SUGAR.

KAREN REMEMBERS HER EATING CHOCOLATE BARS UNTIL JUST A FEW DAYS BEFORE HER PASSING. SARA URETSKY LIVED A LONG AND FULFILLED LIFE. HER STRENGTH OF WILL WAS HER ABILITY TO PASS EACH OF LIFE'S STAGES AND STILL HAVE THE WILL TO GROW AND PERSEVERE.

HER GRANDCHILDREN RECALL THAT IN HER FINAL YEARS SARA BEGAN TO MELLOW AND A NEW SIDE OF HER WAS REVEALED. WHEN SHE MOVED TO HER FINAL HOME IN THE YOUVILLE CENTER, SHE BECAME A GENTLER PERSON. SHE APPRECIATED THE MANY VISITS BY HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS. AS RECENTLY AS LAST PURIM, SHE JOINED IN SONGS WITH RABBI ROSNER WHEN HE VISITED WITH JEWISH RESIDENTS IN THE RESIDENTS IN THE YOUVILLE.

SARAH IS SURVIVED BY HER 4 GRANDCHILDREN, 12 GREAT GRANDCHILDREN, HER SISTER ANNE MACKIN IN VANCOUVER AND MANY NIECES, NEPHEWS AND FRIENDS. THOSE WHO LOVE HER REALIZE THAT HER DEATH IS NOT A TRAGEDY. TODAY, WE CELEBRATE HER LIFE AS MUCH AS WE MOURN HER DEATH. WE ADMIRE HER STRENGTH AS MUCH AS WE ARE SADDENED BY THE ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION OF EVEN THE STRONGEST OF PEOPLE. AND FINALLY, WE PRAY FOR JUST A LITTLE BIT OF THAT STRENGTH OF WILL THAT WILL ALLOW US TO GO BEYOND OUR GRIEF TO A POINT WHERE WE TOO CAN HOPE FOR THE BLESSINGS SHE ACHIEVED.