

Eulogy for Jacob Wener      Sept. 21, 1993

IN A FEW DAYS, OUR PEOPLE WILL GATHER IN THEIR NUMBERS TO RECITE THE YIZKOR PRAYERS, THE MEMORIAL PRAYER FOR THE DEAD RECITED ON YOM KIPPUR.

YIZKOR CAN BE SAID BY ANYONE. BUT FOR THE MOST PART IT IS RECITED BY A SON OR A DAUGHTER, A HUSBAND OR A WIFE -- AND GOD FORBID, A FATHER OR MOTHER.

FIVE SHORT YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A SMALL DEDICATED NUCLEAR FAMILY. A FATHER, A MOTHER AND A DAUGHTER. TODAY THEY WILL ALL REST IN THIS CEMETERY.

WHO NOW WILL RECITE YIZKOR?

WHO WILL SAY KADDISH ?

IS THERE ANYONE TO REMEMBER A FATHER, A MOTHER AND A DAUGHTER SO QUICKLY GONE?

CAN IT BE THAT THERE IS NO TRACE LEFT OF THIS LOVING FAMILY NOW THAT THE FAMILY PATRIARCH IS DECEASED.

IN TALKING WITH HIS RELATIVES LAST NIGHT, IT BECAME CLEAR TO ME THAT JAKE WENER WILL BE REMEMBERED BY MANY. FOR HIS DEVOTION AND HIS GOODNESS; FOR HIS DEDICATION TO HIS FAMILY AND FOR HIS CAPACITY TO LOVE AND TO GIVE.

FOR SO MANY YEARS, JAKE SHARED HIS LIFE WITH MURIEL. THEIR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER WAS VERY DEEP. THEY WERE A

HANDSOME COUPLE. HE ALWAYS ~~WAS~~ IMPECCABLY DRESSED AND SHE  
~~WAS~~ ALWAYS THE ELEGANT LADY. THEY TRAVELED THE WORLD  
TOGETHER. THEY ENJOYED LIFE AND EACH OTHER. TOGETHER THEY  
SUFFERED LIFE'S TRAGEDIES. <sup>they buried a baby</sup> ~~BURYING A BABY TOGETHER~~ AND THEN  
<sup>found</sup> ~~FINDING~~ COMFORT IN THE LOVE THEY HAVE FOR EACH OTHER. <sup>P</sup> THERE  
MUST HAVE BEEN A SPECIAL STRENGTH IN JAKE AND MURIEL. A  
STRENGTH CAPABLE OF TURNING TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH.

WHEN SHIRLEY WAS BORN 60 ODD YEARS AGO AND DIAGNOSED AS  
HAVING DOWN'S SYNDROME, HER PROGNOSIS WAS POOR. MANY  
FAMILIES WOULD HAVE CONFINED HERE IN AN INSTITUTION. PEOPLE  
WERE UNAWARE OF THE POTENTIAL OF SUCH CHILDREN TO GROW UP TO  
BE CAPABLE OF FEELINGS, TO LOVE AND TO ACHIEVE.

EVEN TODAY, WHEN WE SEE SOMEONE VISIBLY HANDICAPPED, WE  
FEEL DISCOMFORT. WE STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT WORDS. PERHAPS  
WE SEE A LOOKING GLASS INTO OUR OWN SOULS AND RECOGNIZE OUR  
OWN PERFECTION HIDDEN BUT NEVERTHELESS REAL.

AFTER SHIRLEY'S <sup>diagnosis</sup> ~~BIRTH~~ IT BECAME THE CRUSADE OF JAKE'S LIFE  
THAT <sup>she</sup> ~~SHIRLEY~~ BECAME A HUMAN BEING WHO WAS DIFFERENTLY ABLED  
RATHER THAN A RETARDED WOMAN.

AND SHIRLEY'S ACHIEVEMENTS. HER LENGTH OF YEARS, HER  
EDUCATIONAL TRIUMPHS WERE ALL THE RESULT OF JAKE'S  
DETERMINATION.

*Thanks*  
~~THAT~~ TO JAKE AND MURIEL, SHIRLEY WAS NOT A HELPLESS  
*productive caring human being,*  
PERSON, BUT A HUMAN BEING AND IN THE END, IN A REVERSAL OF  
ROLES, IT WAS SHIRLEY WHO WAS CAPABLE OF CARING FOR HER FATHER.

THERE IS A USAGE OF OUR LANGUAGE THAT HAS ALWAYS  
TROUBLED ME. WE ARE INTRODUCED TO SOMEONE AND WITHIN  
MINUTES THE QUESTION IS ASKED: "WHAT DO YOU DO" AND WE  
ANSWER, "I'M A RABBI, I'M A ~~DIRECTOR~~ *Doctor*, I'M A SHOE SALESMAN. AS IF  
WHO WE ARE ~~BY~~ OUR ESSENCE WAS DETERMINED BY OUR METHOD OF  
EARNING. *Money*,

MY FEELING IS THAT IF YOU ASKED JAKE "WHAT DO YOU DO?"  
HE WOULD HAVE ANSWERED I'M A HUSBAND, I'M A FATHER, FOR THAT  
WAS THE ESSENCE OF THE MAN.

JAKE'S CRUSADE FOR THE DISABLED DID NOT END WITH HIS  
DAUGHTER'S REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT. HE DEVOTED HIMSELF TO  
HELPING OTHERS WITH THE SAME PROBLEM. HE WAS AMONG THE  
FOUNDERS OF THE WINNIFRED STEWART SCHOOL FOR THE MENTALLY  
DISABLED. AND IN THAT SCHOOL THERE IS A WING THAT BEARS HIS  
NAME.

JAKE WAS A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN, FIRST AS A STORE-KEEPER  
IN VERMILLION, THEN AS AN OWNER OF A CHILDREN'S SHOE STORE HERE  
IN EDMONTON.

HE WAS CONSCIENTIOUS IN BUSINESS, DESPITE MAINTAINING A STAFF OF WORKERS, JAKE WOULD CHECK EVERY SHOE, AND IF ~~THEY~~ <sup>+</sup> DIDN'T FIT PROPERLY, IF ~~THEY~~ <sup>+</sup> DIDN'T GIVE PROPER SUPPORT HE WOULDN'T SELL THE SHOE. THE KIDS HATED THE CONSERVATIVE STYLE OF THE SHOES, BUT THEY ALWAYS FIT. HE WAS MR. SHOES EVEN TO HIS FAMILY.

BUT HE RECOGNIZED THAT BUSINESS WAS A MEANS TO AN END. HE SOLD SHOES TO TAKE CARE OF HIS FAMILY, TO EDUCATE SHIRLEY, TO SUPPORT THE WINNIFRED STEWART SCHOOL.

HE SOLD SHOES TO GIVE <sup>||</sup> PROPER SUPPORT <sup>?</sup> TO HIS FAMILY. AND HIS SENSE OF PRIORITIES WAS EVIDENT WHEN HE MADE SURE THAT ONE MONTH A YEAR, HE WAS FREE TO TRAVEL OR VACATION AT THE SUMMER COTTAGE WITH MURIEL.

HE LOVED PEOPLE, LOVED TO TALK TO ANYONE ABOUT ANYTHING. AND HE WAS A MAN WHO INSPIRED OTHERS TO DO THEIR BEST. NOT ONLY SHIRLEY, BUT DOROTHY WHO FOR THE LAST 3<sup>+</sup> YEARS TOOK CARE OF HIM, TOOK HIM ON TRIPS AND DEDICATED SO MUCH TO HIM <sup>\*</sup> AND TO JUDY AND GEORGE WHO LOOKED AFTER HIM DURING THE YEARS THAT AGE WAS ROBBING SO MUCH OF HIS VITALITY, AND <sup>to</sup> BOB AND NONI WHO CARED SO MUCH FOR HIM.

*Per Dorothy says  
in the end she received so much more from  
the family than she was able to give*

DURING HIS LAST YEAR, HE WAS DEPRIVED OF MUCH OF HIS  
MEMORY. HE WOULD REMEMBER PEOPLE, <sup>and events</sup> AN ~~EVENT~~ FROM THE  
DISTANT PAST, BUT LONG TERM MEMORY WAS GONE.

TODAY, WE REMEMBER HIM NOT FOR HIS RECENT YEARS OF  
ILLNESS, BUT FOR ALL THE YEARS OF VITALITY. WE REMEMBER HIS  
LOVE FOR HIS WIFE, HIS DETERMINATION FOR HIS DAUGHTER AND HIS  
HONESTY IN BUSINESS.

WE REMEMBER

AND THAT IS WHAT YIZKOR IS

THAT IS WHAT KADDISH IS ALL ABOUT

IT IS ABOUT REMEMBERING AND LEARNING.

SO, IN A FEW DAYS, WHEN YOU SAY YIZKOR AND REMEMBER THE  
MEMBERS OF YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY WHO PASSED ON; SPARE A

THOUGHT AND A TEAR JAKE WENER. HIS MEMORIAL IS IN HIS ~~DEEDS~~. *Life*

*his deeds*