

IN THE COURSE OF OUR LIVES, EACH OF US WILL FACE HARDSHIPS AS WELL AS JOYS, ADVERSITY AS WELL AS TRIUMPH - PAIN AND PLEASURE. THE MYSTERY OF LIFE DOES NOT GIVE EACH HUMAN BEING THE SAME BALANCE. SOME OF US WILL SUFFER MORE THAN WE CAN BEAR, SOME OF US WILL TRIUMPH MORE THAN WE DESERVE.

ONE OF THE PARADOXES OF LIFE IS THAT ONE OF THE TRUE MEASURES OF OUR HUMANITY IS FOUND IN HOW WE DEAL WITH ADVERSITY. SOME PEOPLE, WHEN CONFRONTED WITH PAIN OR HARDSHIPS BECOME IMMOBILIZED. THEY FEEL THAT THEY CAN'T GO ON. DEFEAT DRAGS THEM DOWN SO LOW THAT THEIR LIVES BECOME AN UNBEARABLE BURDEN. OTHERS LEARN HOW TO COPE WITH THEIR DEFEATS. THEY LEARN TO PICK THEMSELVES UP AND BEGIN ANEW. THESE PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF LEARNING FROM AND JOURNEYING BEYOND HARDSHIP - BUT THE VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE AMONG US TURN THE VERY HARDSHIP AND ADVERSITY INTO TRIUMPH AND JOY.

MURIEL WENER, WHOSE DEATH WE MOURN AND WHOSE LIFE WE RECALL THIS DAY, FITS WELL INTO THE LAST OF THESE CATEGORIES. HER DAUGHTER SHIRLEY WAS BORN AT A TIME WHEN OUR CONSCIOUSNESS WAS NOT YET RAISED IN THE AREA OF THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED. AT THAT TIME PEOPLE LIKE SHIRLEY WERE HIDDEN AWAY IN INSTITUTIONS. NO ONE RECOGNIZED THEIR CAPACITY TO LEARN, TO LOVE, TO GIVE AND TO RECEIVE. THE GREAT POTENTIAL THAT LAY COVERED BENEATH THE VENEER OF THEIR HANDICAP WAS NEVER REALIZED AND MANY SONS AND DAUGHTERS BECAME PRISONERS OF AN UNCARING SYSTEM, UNWANTED AND UNLOVED.

MURIEL REFUSED TO FOLLOW THIS EXAMPLE OF HER TIME. SHE DID NOT HEED THE WELL-MEANING ADVICE OF THOSE WHO URGED HER TO INSTITUTIONALIZE HER DAUGHTER. SHE RECOGNIZED THAT SHIRLEY'S HANDICAP DID NOT MEAN THAT SHE COULD LOVE LESS OR GIVE LESS OR FEEL LESS. SHE SAW IN SHIRLEY A DAUGHTER TO LOVE AND TO BE WITH ALWAYS. SHE MAY HAVE PUSHED YOU HARD SHIRLEY TO FULFILL HER DREAMS FOR YOU, BUT YOUR HARD WORK AND HER PERSEVERANCE HAVE PAID OFF WELL. SHE WAS VERY PROUD OF YOU - SHE WAS PROUD OF HOW YOU TOOK CARE OF JAKE - ALWAYS GETTING HIS PILLS IN ORDER AND HOW YOU TOOK CHARGE OF THE KITCHEN.

SHE WAS PROUD OF HOW YOU WERE ABLE TO KEEP THE FAMILY TOGETHER - SHE WAS PROUD OF HOW YOU OVERCAME YOUR HANDICAP TO LEARN SO MANY THINGS.

BUT MOSTLY SHE WAS PROUD OF YOUR LOVE FOR HER AND THAT LOVE AND INSPIRATION YOU HAVE WITH YOU ALWAYS.

THE TRIUMPH OF SHIRLEY'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS WEREN'T SUFFICIENT FOR MURIEL AND JAKE. IT WAS, AFTER ALL, A PERSONAL TRIUMPH, AND BEN RECALLS THAT MURIEL WAS A GIVER, NOT A TAKER.

JAKE, YOU RECALL THE DEEP LOVE YOU HAVE FOR MURIEL, HOW SHE TOOK CARE OF YOU, HOW SHE WAS DEVOTED TO YOU. YOU ALSO REMEMBER THE TRAGEDY YOU SUFFERED WHEN YOU LOST A SMALL CHILD SO MANY YEARS AGO. MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SUCH A LOSS HAVE BECOME BITTER AND CYNICAL, BUT NOT YOU AND MURIEL.

YOU AND MURIEL DEVOTED YOUR LIVES TO HELPING OTHERS. YOU ARE AMONG THE FOUNDERS OF THE WINNIFRED STEWART SCHOOL FOR THE MENTALLY DISABLED, WHERE ONE OF THE RESIDENCES IS CALLED BY YOUR NAME: MURIEL SERVED THAT SCHOOL AS A VOLUNTEER - DOING _____ DOING THE RIGHTFUL THING - GIVING NOT ONLY TO YOU AND SHIRLEY - BUT TO STRANGERS AS WELL.

PAUSE!

MURIEL IS RECALLED AS AN ELEGANT WOMAN - PROUD AND REGAL A TRUE LADY. SHE ALWAYS TOOK PRIDE IN HER APPEARANCE.

NONIE RECALLS HOW, EVEN BUT A FEW YEARS AGO, WHEN SHE TOOK A TRIP TO PARIS, SHE ASKED HER AUNT WHAT SHE COULD GET HER. MURIEL ASKED FOR HER TYPE OF PERFUME - AND ALTHOUGH NONIE MUST HAVE SHOPPED AROUND IN 50 STORES TO FIND IT - SHE KNEW HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS TO MURIEL - SHE FINALLY FOUND IT. NONIE REMEMBERS THAT FEW PEOPLE IN THEIR EIGHTIES WOULD BE SO CONCERNED ABOUT A PARTICULAR BRAND OF PERFUME - BUT MURIEL WAS.

THERE WAS A DOWN SIDE TO HER PRIDE AS WELL. MURIEL, WHO WAS SO WILLING TO GIVE, HAD DIFFICULTY TAKING. SHE DIDN'T LIKE TO BE BEHOLDEN TO PEOPLE. AND WHEN SHE LOST HER VISION, SHE HAD DIFFICULTY ACCEPTING RIDES OR OTHER HELP. BUT THAT WAS PART OF HER PRIDE - AND IN GENERAL IT SERVED HER WELL.

MURIEL WAS ALSO QUITE COSMOPOLITAN - SHE TRAVELLED EXTENSIVELY

- ALL OVER THE WORLD. SHE WAS WELL-READ. SHE FOLLOWED THE NEWS DAILY AND WAS QUITE A CONVERSATIONALIST. SHE BELONGED TO, AND WAS ACTIVE IN, JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS, SERVING AS OFFICERS IN BOTH HADDASAH AND WOMEN'S LEAGUE. SHE WAS INTERESTED IN THEATRE, IN ART AND THE SYMPHONY. BEN RECALLS THAT WHATEVER DIFFICULTIES LIFE BROUGHT HER - THEY COULDN'T STOP HER ZEST FOR LIVING - SHE LIVED LIFE FULLY.

MY SWEET FRIENDS, OUR TRADITION TEACHES US THAT WHILE THE BODY DIES, THE SOUL RETURNS TO GOD WHO GAVE IT. WE BELIEVE IN A LIFE AFTER THIS LIFE - IN A WORLD TO COME - A PLACE WHERE SOULS ARE REWARDED. BUT THIS OTHER-WORLD SALVATION GIVES LITTLE COMFORT TO US HERE ON THIS EARTH - WHO MUST GO ON LIVING - WITHOUT OUR SISTER - OUR AUNT - OUR FRIEND.

BUT THOSE WHO KNEW HER - HAVE THE POWER TO CONFER UPON MURIEL AN AFTER-LIFE IN THIS WORLD AS WELL. ALL OF US HAVE OUR LIVES SHAPED BY THOSE WHO ARE MOST DEAR TO US. ALL OF YOU WHO LOVE MURIEL WILL CARRY HER MEMORY IN YOUR SOUL. WHAT YOU ARE IS PARTIALLY WHAT SHE IS -

YOU CARRY A PIECE OF HER WITH YOU ALWAYS.

THERE IS A GIFT YOU CAN GIVE HER. AND THAT GIFT WILL PROLONG HER LIFE. IF YOU CAN LEARN FROM HER LIFE - IF YOU CAN TURN YOUR PERSONAL TROUBLES INTO TRIUMPHS - IF YOU CAN, AS SHE DID - FIND

THE INNER SPIRIT AND COURAGE TO CONTINUE TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL-
EST EXTENT DESPITE WHATEVER ADVERSITIES YOU SUFFER. IF YOU CAN
LEARN TO GIVE, AS SHE DID - NOT ONLY TO THOSE CLOSEST TO YOU -
BUT ALSO TO STRANGERS - IF YOU CAN BE INSPIRED BY HER TO BE AS
DEVOTED AND CARING AS SHE WAS TOWARD YOUR FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES,
THEN YOU WILL BE GIVING HER A CONTINUING GIFT - AND YOU WILL ENSURE
THAT SHE WILL BE FOUND IN THE BOND OF EVERLASTING LIFE IN BOTH
THIS AND THE NEXT WORLD.