

Eulogy for Herman Burick, *Chaim ben Moshe*

Date of Death June 30, 2008 -- 27 Sivan 5768

Rabbi Eliezer Havivi

Rabbi Peretz Rodman tells the following story:

In Mt. Rainier National Park in the State of Washington, there is a grove of trees on a small island in a river. The trees' location has protected them from fires, avalanches and floods for ten centuries. Because of that, some of the trees in this virgin forest have grown to gigantic proportions, and because of those trees, the area is known as the Grove of the Patriarchs. Along marked trails you can see huge western hemlocks. You can find ten towering Douglas firs with a circumference of 25 feet, one of them 35 feet around. You will come across twenty amazing western red cedars each of which is also 25 feet around. These are trees of a strength and magnitude rarely encountered.

Winter storms are the main threat to those trees. Many of them have battered-looking tops, and once in a while one of those breathtaking ancient trees succumbs to the force of the winter winds.

At a certain place on the trail, the National Park Service has posted a sign to make sure you sit up and take notice of a surprising phenomenon. Two trees have fallen, having been knocked over in one of those storms, and these two adjacent trees have fallen in exactly opposite directions, with their uprooted trunks facing away from each other. Why, asks the Park Service's rustic wooden sign, would one storm knock down two trees not in the same direction but in opposite directions? The winds, after all, blow one way and not the other.

The answer is also on the sign: Only one of the trees was felled by the storm. The two trees, though, had grown side by side for so many hundreds of years that their root systems had become intertwined—*inextricably* intertwined. When the winds toppled one ancient tree, the other could no longer cling to the earth and in short order it, too, swayed and fell.

So it is, not infrequently, with two human beings. After decades of sharing every day with each other, their roots, the source of their nourishment and stability, grow to be inseparable. When one is felled by the ravages of illness or misfortune, the other finds it difficult to remain anchored, to draw sustenance. Like those trees in the Grove of the Patriarchs, together they reach great heights, and together they return to the earth.

We are here today, to offer tribute, and to lay to eternal rest, Herman Burick, only three weeks after we brought his beloved Lillian to her eternal resting place. Tiger Lily and Tiger Herman, they were inextricably linked. They cared for each other, and once his job of caring for Lil was done, he too, could lay down to rest.

Herman was a big man, a strong man, in the model of men of his generation. He cared first for his wife, and second for his family. He worked hard for a living - In the early days, when the family was still in Philadelphia, he only allowed himself to see them on weekends, because he was working here In NC, and his role, was to support them.

And yet, he was a good father - He gave each of his children, and in fact, his nieces and nephews, and his grandchildren, their first bath. He taught his children how to drive. When they were in a jam, he was there to get them out. He was not demonstratively loving - that only came later as a grandfather, when

he softened and loved nothing more than playing Go Fish or War with David and Jordan and Alex- but his way of showing love was to support and assure the wellbeing of his family.

Herman was a man's man. - He was never too sick to work, he never took a day off, he loved to watch sports, especially college basketball, on TV, and play bridge and poker, and he had a passion for golf. He loved to tinker and to fix things. He was practical and organized. Herman served in England for three years in the US Army during WWII.

He was occasionally the life of the party, he was gregarious at times, for many years he dressed up in women's clothing and was part of the HiLo's - a singing group which entertained at mothers' day brunches at the synagogue. He made people feel at ease, he was a smooth and easy speaker, and he was able to take control of a situation when he needed to step forward.

There is so much to say about Herman - some of whom he was is detailed in his obituary. But more important are the lessons he left behind for his children and grandchildren. Be strong and resolute. Insist on doing the right thing. Have high standards - high morals standards, and high standards for the quality of your work. Be honest. Focus on what's important - keep your eye on the goal. Be calm in the face of trouble. Be charitable. Help others. Pay attention to detail. And most important, among all these lessons that Herman Burick's children learned, not from listening, but from watching the way Herman lived his life, most important - take care of your mother. Because that's exactly what he did.

Two old trees, the first felled by a storm, the second, after its most important work of 61 years was done, could not live without the other.

Herman Burick, *Chaim ben Moshe* left this world after 85 years of life, on the 27th day of the Hebrew month of Sivan, 5768.

To those who loved him the most -

To his beloved children: to Paul, and Larry and Babbie, to Beth and Gary, to Lisa, and to Scott – with whom Herman and Lil have now reunited;

To grandchildren – David and Jordan and Alex;

To Marvin and Elaine;

To sisters who are not here today, but mourn along with us - Mary and Rosie and Lena, and beloved friends and relatives;

And to all who knew Herman and respected him, and honored him,;

Our hearts and arms reach out to each other in comfort and consolation.

Herman's memory –, will always be an inspiration and a source of blessing for us.

Shiva will be at the home of Beth and Gary Fuchs, 3609 Timberoaks. Minyans will be at the house this afternoon and tomorrow afternoon, at 5:45 PM.