

Eulogy for Al Herman
Shmu'el ben Shlomo v'Esther
Date of Death 3/19/08 13 Adar II, 5768
Rabbi Eliezer Havivi

The whole world has adopted the sayings of the wisest of kings, Solomon: **TOV SHEM MISHEMEN TOV** - "Better a good name than the most precious of oil."

But why is a good name compared to oil? Why don't we say better a good name than a great treasure?

We find the answer in a peculiar quality of the oil. Oil when poured upon any other liquid remains on top. But if you take a little oil and pour it out on the ground - a short time goes by, and there is no mark of the final resting place of that oil.

"But," said the wisest of kings, "better a good name than the most precious oil." Because a good name, even when the individual is brought to his final resting place in the ground, remains forever alive in the hearts of the living. Al Herman was a person who carried a good name.

Al was born in 1924 in Freiberg , Germany, an only child to Ela and Fritz Gunzberger. He came to the US with his parents just before he was ten years old. His mother, from Basel, was one of 13 siblings, of whom only six managed to flee Europe for the United States. They settled with other German immigrants, in NYC in Washing ton Heights, and lived an Orthodox life. After high school, Al went into the Air Force as an air flight controller. After the war, he started working for his uncle in NY selling raincoats.

In 1942, he came to Greensboro to start selling, as a manufacturer's rep, on the road. His customers couldn't say Gunzberger, so he adopted the name Al Herman – Herman was actually his first name, and Alexander was after an uncle. He was an eligible bachelor for quite a while, and one day in late 1956, he was in NY for a meeting and met Sheila on a blind date. Three weeks later they were engaged, and by December, between sales seasons, they were married. Al and Sheila lived in first in Latham Park, then Guilford Hills. Andrew came first, then Cathy, and then they built the house on Westbourne Court where they lived for many years until they moved to Northline Court.

Their friendship group was mostly focused on the synagogue – Evelyn and Joe, Shirley and Bert, Leon and Mary, Don and Rita Hirsch, the Gladsteins, Ben and Florence Shoenthal and others.

Al traveled during the week, but was home most weekends, and all Jewish Holidays. They had a big seder every year. When the kids were growing up, he spend time with them on weekends and during summers – For Al, when he was not on the road, it was children, and golf, and Sheila. He was involved in the shul, in the Mens' Club and on the Ritual committee. He and Bert Lynch ran the Caddilac dinner before it became a B'nai Shalom fundraiser. He was on the board of the Blumenthal Jewish Home for many years, He ran Mensch Night as a benefit to the home, and in 95-97 he was the president of the Home, and was instrumental in planning the kosher kitchen for Jewish residents of the current Blumenthal home.

The Hermans vacationed with the Bernards and with the Lynches, and with Eddie and Marilyn Benson – they traveled to Israel, to the beach, one year they went to Germany and found Al's old home town and old shul.

Al was passionate about golf, he loved to read, he loved his wife, and he loved his children and grandchildren. Once Stuart and Amanda were around, they became the focus of life: Al and Sheila drove down to Atlanta every six weeks or so. For 13 years, he shlepped to Atlanta for VIP day at Epstein Academy to be Stuart's VIP. When Andrew was younger, Al tried in vain to interest him in golf – Andrew wanted no part of it. Fortunately, Ronny, wanting to be in tune with his father in law, learned how to play and shared that interest with Al. All of the grandchildren had much experience putting in house with Al. In fact the only thing that Al would give up golf for was to be with Eliana. She became part of the family in '03, and all she had to do was to blink and eye, and Al said yes. From the time they were born, Al doted on his three grandchildren – He never said no to them, he didn't miss any one event in their lives, and in turn, they worshipped the ground that Al walked on. A great shared pleasure was for Al and Stuart to sit together in the living room, and watch TV sports together.

Al was a quiet gentleman. He never yelled, but his kids knew when he was serious. When Sheila's father died Stephen was only 14. Al took over as a surrogate father and big brother.

Al loved life, he loved people, He was a good man, he was compassionate, kind, a softy. He rarely said a harsh word, and in return, he was loved by many people who knew him.

When Al was still single, living here in Greensboro, the Lynches' took him in, and he was really part of their household. Sheila tells the story that when she came to meet Al parents, she wasn't really nervous about meeting her new mother in law. But she was scared about meeting Shirley Lynch. Now, Al is together with Shirley and Bert, Shirley is doubtless cooking for him, and he'll have seder with them once again. .

Al Herman, *Shmuel ben Shlomo v'Esther*, left this world after 83 years of life , on the eve of Purim, the 13th day of the Hebrew month of Adar Bet, in the year 5768. To those who loved him, and were loved by him;

Sheila – you had 51 wonderful years of marriage with Al.

Andrew and Erica;

Cathy and Ronny,

Stuart - you were fortunate to take your spring break, and spend it with him, just last week;

Amanda – you were Poppa's pussycat, and Eliana was Poppa's princess.

Lenore – you brought him his beloved babkes from NY when you came to visit.

And to all of Al's friends – our hearts and our arms reach out to each other in comfort and consolation.

Tov Shem Mishemen Tov – a good name is better than fine oil –

Al Herman's name, and his memory, will always be a blessing for us.

Shiva will be at the Herman home, 12 Northline Ct. beginning today. Minyans will be at the synagogue tonight at 6, tomorrow morning at 9:30, and Shabbat afternoon at 5:45; and then Sunday Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 5:45 PM.