

Lee Harry Kay, *Yehuda Layb ben Tzvi v'Gitel*
Date of Death April 7, 2008 - 2 Nisan 5768
Rabbi Eliezer Havivi

This morning, I taught a class about the Jewish traditions in death and mourning, as part of the Shepherd Center Adventures in Learning program. As I looked around the room at First Baptist, I had a vision, a memory, of exactly where Lee used to sit, when he was part of Shepherd Center. It was in the back row, which is exactly where he used to sit when he came to shul – in the back row. His presence, his spirit, was very much in that room this morning, as it is with us here, today.

Within the Bible and Rabbinic literature there are many descriptions of the type of people upon whom our tradition places a high value. One of the most striking is given to us by the Psalmist in the 15th Psalm:

He who walks uprightly and practices justice,
Who speaks truth from his heart;
On whose tongue there is no deceit,
Who does no evil to his fellowman.

These were the qualities that characterized the life of Lee Kay. Lee was an honest and an upright person, who spoke the truth, and who was dedicated to the triumph of justice in our society. He was a person of principle, who stood up for his convictions to the causes that he believed in. There was no pose or camouflage in his makeup. *TOKHO K'VARO*: he was the same without, and within.

Lee was born in 1919, a first son to Harry and Gussie Kestenbaum, in Wilkes Barre PA, soon to be a big brother to Rita, born a few years later. Lee's father died young, but Gussie had the support of a large close-knit family in the area, and the children had happy childhoods. Lee went to high school in Kingston, studied at Lehigh and Penn State, and many years later, completed an MBA at UNCG.

After high school, he went immediately into the army, served in India as part of the Quartermasters Corps, and upon return, continued to serve in the US Army Reserve, until he retired with the rank of Colonel. He had some interesting postings - In India, he was involved with supplies for construction of the Burma Road, which was used to fight the Japanese, and in supplying horses for the famed Merrill's Marauders, and when in reserve, he served in the Pentagon, and as commandant of the 3284th USAR school in NC.

Lee was proud of his service to his country, and will be recognized by military honors at his burial.

After WWII, he married Fran, and worked for a while in her father's Hosiery Mill business, which brought him to Greensboro. Lee and Fran lived in Greensboro for 58 years. After he left the sock mill, he bought and operated the Guilford College bookstore, and, after studying for his masters at UNCG, eventually became the manager of the UNC bookstore in Greensboro.

Lee loved his family. When he was younger, he loved weekends at his grandmother's and kept up with all the cousins and aunts and uncles. He wrote to his mother every day when he was away during the war. He loved his three girls when they were little, and he loved them throughout their adulthood. He loved their husbands, and they loved him back. And he loved Fran. The early years, when Fran was healthy, were good years. And the later years, as Fran's illness progressed, were more difficult, but he

was steadfast in his love and support and care for her, in a truly exemplary and remarkable way. Lee and Fran were married for 60 years.

Lee loved to travel. And he loved to travel with his family. When he was younger, it was with Fran and the girls, and as he got older, it was with the girls and with their families, and some extended family, too. He traveled across the Midwest, and the West, and Hawaii, and England and France and Greece, and Israel. His last cruise was just a few months ago, to the Caribbean, with the family.

Lee had a good sense of humor; he loved words – plays on words, and puns. He loved music – He listened to classical music and music of the 40's and 50's. He was a graceful ballroom dancer.

Lee was thoughtful – He kept up with everyone's birthday, and he was kind and soft spoken and modest. He took his responsibilities very seriously – to his country, to his children, and to his wife. He didn't complain, even through Fran's bouts of illness, and when his own disabilities began to limit him. He was organized, and a planner, and a faithful caregiver, and most of all – a straight arrow. He walked uprightly and practiced justice, he spoke truth from his heart; there was no deceit on his tongue, and he did no evil to his fellowman.

Lee Harry Kay, *Yehuda Layb ben Tzvi v'Gitel*, left this world after 88 years of life, this past Monday, on the 2nd day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, in the year 5768.

To Lee's children- To his girls, Ellen and Barbara and Karen, who were the loves of his life – his best friends and his confidants, who he served as a high bar set to model whom *they* would eventually marry.;

Ellen and Vic, and Nadia; - Vic – you were always the one to suggest –“ Maybe your dad wants to come with us;” Nadia – you stayed with Lee in the hospital, and then later in hospice during his last days;

Barbara and Thomas, Thomas – you took care of Lee as if he was your own father;

Jonathan and Anthony;

Karen and Ken and Kristen – Karen - You came later on in Lee's life. It was a little tougher for him, mom was already sick – but he adored you as much as he did those first, perfect daughters. You gave him a run for his money. But he was incredibly proud of you, and you were the one who moved back to Greensboro to be with mom and dad. And you brought great joy to his life with Kristen.

Sister Rita, you were close and supportive of each other from the git-go, when you were children, until the very end of Lee's life.

Adopted daughters and sisters Kathy and Sharon ;

Dear and loyal friends Bobby and Gene,

And those who mourn Lee;

Our hearts and arms reach out to each other in comfort and consolation. May Lee's memory always be a blessing for us.

Bobby and Gene Weisberger ask that everyone come over to their house on Kemp Road for the meal of condolence after the funeral. Shiva and minyan will be today at 5:45 PM at the Weisbergers. After today, the children will each return for shiva to their own homes and their communities. Please rise for the memorial prayer.