

Marvin Staiman

(01/18/2021)

But I am constant as the Northern Star,
Of whose true fixed and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.

- Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Act 3, Scene 1.

While spoken in an altogether different context, these words aptly describe the life of Marvin Staiman.

It seems as though the lives of many of us have been totally defined by Marvin and his activities in this community. It is hard to find anyone active in the religious, social, political or eleemosynary component of Williamsport life who was not touched by Marvin Staiman.

My own involvement with the Staiman family began soon after I arrived in this city from Washington DC. I was invited to the home of the Staiman family, and before long Marvin's connection with Congregation Ohev Sholom became my network as well.

I soon learned that Marvin's ancestors, Hassidim from Upper New York State, came to Williamsport in 1905 to help maintain a traditional Jewish community in this city. Though Marvin and I did not agree on everything, we did work as partners in maintaining Ohev Sholom as the bastion of North Central Pennsylvania Jewish observance. While many congregants, a few Rabbis and other visitors to the Jewish community came and went, Marvin was akin to the North Star in terms of his consistency and devotion.

Marvin was at Synagogue every morning to daven shacharit, putting on his tefillin and his prayer shawl. He led prayer services often, and was always in a leadership position. Even when it was difficult to get a minyan in this community and it was just down to the Rabbi and Marvin, he was there every morning and evening. Shabbat services were defined by Marvin and his view as to how services should be run.

No mistake about it. When you work with somebody for 30 or 40 years in an intimate environment, you will not always agree. Whenever we disagreed, Marvin would have me over for tea at The Ross Club or to his home. We would discuss our differences and work them out. It is that form of cooperation that seems so lacking in our civic life today.

When I daven now, either on my own or in some other Synagogue, I often think of Marvin's style. My children were greatly influenced by the way in which Marvin served this community. Marvin had become part of our family, and we were part of his.

At holiday season, the trunk of Marvin's big Lincoln would be stuffed with turkeys, booze, and other treats for his area friends and compatriots.

One of the great pleasures of my tenure in this community was organizing a tribute dinner for Marvin and Jean Staiman. The community outpouring was overwhelming. I had more help and more offers of ideas as to honor this very special couple than I knew what to do with. The event was great, and I know that Marvin very much appreciated the tip of the hat which this community provided to him.

Few people who read this piece will not know of the Israel Bonds Dinner that Marvin and Jean organized every year. What made that event special was the outreach to the non-Jewish community. Marvin understood that Israel and Jewish people could never live alone and bereft of supporters. Our numbers are just too small and there is too much hate in the world. The Israel Bonds Dinner was an opportunity for Marvin not only to showcase other marvelous people in this community, but also to educate fellow Williamsporters to the specialty of the State of Israel and its robust democracy. I was honored frequently to introduce speakers and to mingle with the guests at what was always an immaculately planned event.

A fond recollection I have of Marvin is when I was relatively new in this community. There were a number of instances of bigotry. Marvin asked me to go with him to talk with newspaper people at the *Williamsport Sun-Gazette*. We were well-received and respectfully treated. Marvin would, always in a direct and clear way, explain his concern and the support from the press was much appreciated.

For many years, I was President of Congregation Ohev Sholom. During that time, I had the opportunity of working closely with Marvin and personally witnessing his devotion to every component of this community. He was the permanent CEO, Emeritus! To me, he was neither father figure nor boss, but rather a unique colleague of uncompromising energy.

Upon the passing of a soul, we say to the mourners: Baruch Dayan HaEmet, Blessed is the True Judge. When we say Kaddish, never do we mention death or mourning. Rather, the so-called Mourners Kaddish is a tribute to our faith in G-d and our acceptance of G-d's judgments. Marvin will now rest securely in the Holy Land with his devoted wife and life partner, Jean Staiman. May both of them rest in peace.

Thank you, Marvin and Jean, for the work you have done for this community, the positive influence you have had on the lives of those you have touched, and for your many contributions to a better society. It would be very difficult to emulate the contributions of Marvin and Jean Staiman, but all of us can try, as best we can, to give back, to take gingerly, and to share with others the fruits of our labors.

*Clifford A. Rieders, Esquire
Rieders, Travis, Humphrey,
Waters & Dohrmann
161 West Third Street*

*Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 323-8711 (telephone)
(570) 323-4192 (facsimile)*

Cliff Rieders is a Board-Certified Trial Advocate in Williamsport, is Past President of the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association and a past member of the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority. None of the opinions expressed necessarily represent the views of these organizations.