

CD-1028 Transcription

American Jewish Committee memorial for Marc H. Tanenbaum. 1992.

Bruce:

[00:00] -- his contributions were enormous. His leadership of inestimable value. With Marc's Georgette, and their child here with us today, Rabbi Jim Rudin will conduct a memorial service. He will be followed by Bob Jacobs, who chaired the Interreligious Affairs Commission from 1979 to 1983. Bob will pay tribute to Marc. Jim?

Jim Rudin:

Thank you, Bruce. This is the first board of governors meeting since Marc's death. All of us encountered Marc over the years on both a personal and professional level. For Judith Bank and for me, it was an extremely close relationship, as it was for Judith. Over the years, [01:00] we spent many hours with Marc in this very room. Many, many hours, meetings, conferences, consultations. On July the third, at the age of 66, the AJC lost its interreligious and international affairs director emeritus, and its consultant, but we also lost one of the pioneers in the field that we at the American Jewish Committee take so seriously, building bridges between Jews and people of other

religions. We are very pleased that Marc's wife Georgette, and her son who was just born on August 24<sup>th</sup>, at 5:25 or six o'clock in the afternoon on Monday, which was the very day that the hurricane hit Miami, but thank God here in New York there was no hurricane. And we're very thrilled and honored that Joshua is here. And joining [02:00] Georgette are also members of her family. Bob Jacobs served, as Bruce said, as the chair from '79 to '83, which were the last years that Marc served as interreligious affairs director, before moving over to international relations. And it is, as someone once said in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, altogether fitting and proper that Bob Jacobs deliver the memorial to Marc, and then we will conclude with the saying of the *kaddish* prayer. Bob Jacobs.

**Bob Jacobs:**

Jim, thank you very much. As I've said, I did serve with Marc as the direct-- as the lay chair of interreligious affairs for four years. And one department was the market buildup. Jim [Ruden?] didn't say it, but Jim was there. Judy Bankey was there. Rita Reznik had been with Marc for many, many years as his secretary and more than secretary. [03:00] And they accomplished so much, and it was such a thrill and a privilege to work with them, and above all, to work with Marc. From a layperson's point of view,

it was a learning process, and it was a challenge, and it was a thrill. It was a time when the religious right was rising up again, and Marc taught so much to me, and to others, about the various elements that made up those beliefs. We learned about the various Christian denominations. He took people like myself that really didn't have an understanding of theology, or the Christian denominations, and explained everything, laid it out as clearly as could be. I walked out of there, I know learning what eschatology meant, and millenarianism, and a few other words that I had never heard of before. He taught, and he knew people. He taught everyone, he taught about things. It was an exciting time. Marc knew cardinals, he knew bishops, he dealt [04:00] with Billy Graham. We all know the dealings he had at Vatican II, what a magnificent job he did. He dealt with religious leaders at all times. And there were good times, there were some good things to remember as well. I remember Rita and I used to comment, we had no idea where Marc would be from day to day. And we decided that one year, we were going to put a beeper in his heel, so that we'd have some idea of what city at least Marc was in, if not the exact location. And he was an amazing man in terms of his ability to do things. I remember one occasion, when the Pope was here, it was in the early 1980s, and there was a service in St. Patrick's Cathedral. And Marc, of

course, was invited as the premier Jewish representative to attend that. An honor he richly deserved. And I happened to be in New York that day, and Marc said "Come on, we'll go over to St. Patrick's together." I said "Well Marc, I don't have a ticket. You can't get past the first Secret Service person there, let alone into the church itself, without it." He says, "Come with me." We took a piece of paper, he waved a piece of paper [05:00] in the air and said "This man's with me." And somehow or other, I ended up there on the equivalent of the *bema*, with Marc. I'm not sure how it happened. No one checked credentials, because when Marc Tanenbaum said this person belongs there, that person belonged there. They were wonderful times.

He also gave lay people like myself and all of you an opportunity to carry out the programs and the beliefs of the American Jewish Committee. Whether it was in Oberammergau in 1980, in Germany, when all of a sudden it turned out this man spoke fluent German -- no one had any idea that he did -- whether it was dealing in Catholic relations, whether it was getting beyond the merely -- the purely Jewish aspects of it, into world problems, such as the boat people, this man permitted us to do that which we are here for. To carry out our programs,

and to do that which we think is right. And he did it in a way that was sharing with the lay people. There were no limits on his interests. [06:00] He really put our program into effect, and he represented the true sharing of responsibility, and of opportunity between lay people and staff people here at the American Jewish Committee. And we are ever indebted to him for that. He has left a legacy on a personal basis, Georgette and Marc, young Marc, Joshua Marc. On a professional basis, he has left a legacy of a sea change in Jewish Christian relations, which couldn't have happened without him. Now I will speak personally, on a personal basis, he was, in the truest sense of the word, a rabbi. A teacher. And for that, I for one am ever -- will forevermore be indebted to him, to his memory, and I think all of us here share it now. And Georgette, we will never forget him.

**Jim Rudin:**

Once on an airplane, [07:00] flying back from the South, in turbulence, Marc and I were together, and his favorite motto, as many of you know, and that's the one I think we would like to remember him, he said "Jim, let's make a difference. Let's make our time count, let's make our efforts count, let's look at the hardest job in interreligious relations, and let's really make a

difference." And because there was so much that he did in Christian-Jewish relations, he believed that the American Jewish Committee should be at the forefront, and not being passive, not standing idly by, but making sure that this organization that he served with such distinguished honor over three decades, let's really make a difference. I would ask you now to stand, and let the floodgates of memory open wide, those of us who knew [08:00] and worked with Marc Tanenbaum over the years. Wander through our hearts as we remember him making a difference wherever he went. And in that spirit of memory, let us say that prayer which has echoed through centuries of Jewish life, and has linked the living with the dead, the past, the present, and the future together. As we who knew him the best, his organization, we now say:

**Group:**

*Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei rabbah. B'alimah dee v'rah chir'utei v'yamlich malchutei. B'chayeichon, uv'yomeichon, uv'chayei d'chol beit yisroel, ba'agalah u'vizman kariv v'imru: Amein. Y'hei sh'mei rabbah m'vorach l'allam u'l'allmei allmayah. Yitborach, v'yishtabach, v'yitpo'ar, viyitromam, viyitnassei, v'yit'hador, v'yit'aleh, v'yit'hallal sh'mei d'kudshah b'rich hu. [09:00] L'aylah min kol bir'chatah v'shirahtah, tushb'chatah*

*v'nechemahta, da'ami'ron b'almah, v'imru: Amein. Y'hei shlahma rabbah min sh'mayah, v'chaym ahleinu v'al kol yisroel, v'imru: Amein. Oseh shalom bim ro'mahv, hu ya'aseh shalom ahleinu, v'al kol yisroel, v'imru: Amein.*

**Jim Rudin:**

And we pray that God, who is full of mercy and compassion, will grant perfect peace and rest to our friend and our colleague, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum. And let us with faith, with friendship and love say, Amen.

**Group:**

Amen.

**Jim:**

Please be seated.

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