

WILLIAM BARON - IN MEMORIAM
Words Spoken by Rabbi Irwin Groner
At Service January 15, 1976

Dear Friends:

With sorrowful hearts have we gathered to express our deep sense of loss at the passing of William Baron. His passing was so sudden. His dear ones can literally say he was with us one moment - devoted husband, brother, uncle, father, grandfather, friend - and taken from us the next moment. How difficult, therefore, to summarize our thoughts about Bill, his life, his influence, the depth of his devotion. How do we associate the inertness of death with the vitality and the presence of Bill? So you understand that my words will be fragmentary and inadequate.

I read, at the very beginning of the Service, selections from the First Chapter of the Book of Psalms, "Happy is the man that hath not walked in the way of sinners, or stood in the counsel of the wicked, or sat in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord." We see fit to glorify heroic acts, the soldier under attack, the fireman rescuing a child, or other events of great bravery. The psalmist picked a different kind of heroism and moral excellence. He praises the person who lives by fidelity to truth and honor, a man who expresses consistent loyalty to spiritual ideals. I see Bill in the light of that perspective.

He lived by principles all of his life. When he was 11, his father died. There were older brothers to recite the daily prayers, but since he insisted on saying Kaddish also, for 11 months he attended services daily. At the age of 11, he would not deviate from that principle he had determined he would follow.

He was meticulous in his personal matters and business affairs. He ordered his life in a firm, consistent and regular pattern. At the very center of that pattern was his devotion to family.

Consider another episode of earlier years. Bill's mother had been an invalid and couldn't attend the Synagogue, even on the High Holy Days. In order to enable her to fulfill the special mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah, hearing the shofar sounds, Bill mastered the difficult art of shofar sounding so that her spiritual need could be fulfilled by

his devotion at her home. Subsequently, at the Chicago Boulevard Synagogue, he became the person responsible for sounding the shofar on the solemn days of the year.

These family loyalties were fixed and unchanging, and were at the very center of his life. Indeed, the members of the Baron family have had an exemplary history of family devotion, concern and solidarity. The loyalty and the love that existed between Bill, Herman, Mettie, Belle and Dorothy does not need further elaboration from me, because anyone who knows this family knows the constancy and depth of these relationships. The family gets together every Friday night after dinner, to share in talk, reminiscence and discussion. This is a fixed and unalterable commitment on their weekly calendar.

Bill was a devoted husband to Sally, and she was a devoted wife to him. They had been married 15 years. Each found in the other's presence understanding, love and companionship. They enjoyed a mutuality of interests and a sharing of activities that brought mutual strength and light to their lives.

The Rabbis say that when a person is summoned by the Heavenly tribunal, certain evidence is brought that demonstrates the quality of his life, and among that evidence are the stones of a person's house. Bill's house was an island of refuge, a place of peace and serenity. Having built it from his own design, it had become a source of great meaning and comfort to him. Whether it was gardening in the summer or pursuing his electronics interest, he found ease and relaxation from the pressures of life in his home.

All the members of Sally's family were very dear to him. He expressed fatherly affection, interest and helpfulness to Carol and Ronald. He took great delight in Beth, Jennifer and Wade. To all the members of Sally's family he extended the depth of his concern, responsiveness and love.

His loyalty to the Synagogue was lifelong. He drew from the Synagogue those sources of Jewish inspiration which enabled him to meet the challenges of life and to form and shape his own values. But he was not a joiner, and he was not involved in organizational life. It was within the private sanctuary of home, family and close friends that the fullest expression of his personality could be appreciated. He rejoiced in the simple

pleasures of life and found in them satisfaction and joy.

Bill did not wear his emotions on his sleeve, as it were. For those who did not know him, it might have seemed as though he maintained an emotional reserve. But that impression was deceptive, for those who shared with him in life and love and aspiration knew a depth of feeling, concern and affection that welled up beneath his calm exterior.

How painful it is to say farewell. His years should have been longer. But the Jewish Tradition tells us that we should not measure a life by years, but by the gifts of devotion, commitment and achievement left with the living. Bill leaves with us a heritage of memory that, we pray, will bring strength, healing, and guidance to his dear ones.

May God bring solace to those who are bereaved. May He enable them to understand that neither life nor death can separate us from Him. May He enable us to create out of our shared memory of Bill, and the fidelity and integrity that he personified, a sanctuary of enduring meaning. May we so act as to preserve Bill's memory as a source of unending blessing.

Heavenly Father, be with those who mourn. Grant them Thy presence, Thy healing and Thy light. Enable them to say in the end the wisest words that ultimately can be said.

וְיִשְׁמַח אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכֹחַ זֵכְרוֹ וְיִשְׁמַח בְּכֹחַ זֵכְרוֹ.

In His infinite compassion, God has given us this life. In His unknowable judgment, He has taken it unto Himself. Despite our sorrow and despite our pain, we shall praise the Name of God now and always. Amen.