

Eulogy for Walter Simon
ben Yosef vPenina

Walter Simon was born on December 31st, 1925 in Wiesbedon, Germany. He was born to Joseph and Paula Simon and had one older beloved brother Eric. The family lived a wonderful life in Germany until the terror of the Shoah. They built their life in a resort town with hot springs about a ½ hour from Frankfurt. Walter's father Joseph's family had a grain and feed business and Paula's parents had a spirits business. They lived a fine life in Germany until the war. Walter's grandfather had begun to put money in a Belgium Bank when things started to turn in Germany. The cousins in the United States began to demand that the Simons leave Germany and come to America but they had a good life in Germany. In 1936 Joseph, Walter's father visited Cleveland and said about America, "I am not going to live there." They believed so much that they would stay in Germany that when they came up in the queue to get visas in Germany, they took a pass. Eric eventually convinced Joseph that they needed to get the visas.

By the time Kristallnacht hit, they knew they needed to get Joseph out. They had friends in Rotterdam – one came on a train – Joseph met her at the station and they exchanged the train ticket secretly. Joseph boarded the train in her place and he was off. Paula went to the travel agent and got tickets for the rest of the family out safe. The following day the travel agent was taken by the SS. When the SS came looking for Joseph – Paula famously said "why are you bothering a woman with 2 children?" Paula and the kids made it out and they all got passage through Rotterdam, traveling first class and taking their furniture, carpets and dishes. They eventually landed in Cleveland where they had family. In Cleveland Walter would learn English and 3 months after his 14th birthday he knew enough English to have his bar mitzvah.

Walter and his brother Eric were very close – they never fought – only 18 months apart they did everything together. Hiking, enjoying music, vacationing – every night they would say good night. As a teenager Walter loved to sing. He used to usher at concerts so he and Eric could go and watch. He introduced Eric to his wife at the Jewish summer camp – Eric didn't want to go – but after some convincing he ended up meeting his wife of 70 years there. When it was time for college, Walter attended Case Western, also in Cleveland. He earned an engineering degree while Eric pursued a PhD in Biochemistry. Walter got a job in Chicago at George Saul Melding and he moved in with his newlywed brother and sister in law. This was where Walter first learned one of his greatest skills...doing the dishes. He would do the dishes until well into his 80s, and grocery shop! But he shopped like a German – though he was American to his core – the need for efficiency never left his blood. Bob recalled going to the supermarket with Walter – for Bob the supermarket was a place to leisurely walk through the aisles and relax a bit – when the 2 of them entered the store Walter said, "Let's divide up the store. I'll take aisles 1, 3, and 5 - you take 2,4, and 6 and we will meet back here." Like I said - a German sensibility. Efficiency was important to Walter. Dinner on the table every night [at 6:30pm](#).

But I digress. It was at the University of Chicago where Walter met his first love, Marilyn. They started dating in 1949 and were married on March 15th, 1950 at the University of Chicago. Marilyn's mother Caroline baked, and the bridesmaids wore dresses that were shared. It was a marriage of opposites but they shared a love of each other throughout their lives. There was a lot they disagreed on but their values aligned on a love of family, Judaism, education and music. Marilyn and Walter were blessed with 4 wonderful children. Nina, Maurine, Jacob and Linda. And eventually wonderful sons and daughters in law. As kids the family went on many vacations to the Catskills to Lake Placid – these trips would continue well into the kids adult lives and the lives of all of the

grandchildren. The family skied in Vermont and Switzerland – resorts in France and Zermatt. One year Eric was on sabbatical in Paris and the family went to visit. This was a trip that Marilyn really loved. Visiting museums and sketching. Walter was a wonderful father. He worked – but when he came home, he was home. Every child had to learn to swim, he played tennis, card games, ping pong, and he loved the gossip that he would get from driving the kids from here to there.

Walter was committed to staying healthy and working out. He was a regular exerciser until just 1 year ago. Walter was successful in business and loyal to his business partner Leonard Leof. They built the Delaware Valley Smelting company as the first recyclers, and then Superior Zinc. He treated everyone fairly and was always concerned about discrimination. Throughout Walter's life he loved companionship. Though Marilyn and Walter divorced they stayed connected. Walter also had a longtime relationship with Janet Cantor. Walter did marry again to Barbara Shepper Simon. They were married in 1995 and separated in January of 2001. Walter loved being with people. Companionship was a part of his life. Walter loved his grandchildren and even lived to see great grandchildren as well. He was extremely generous with his family and was always there for them. He also deeply cared about many causes – raising money for the Jewish Federation and for the Cancer society. Walter lived out his last years at the Ring House and they were great years.

Walter was a part of a generation of Jews who were torn from their homes, forced to learn a new language and rebuild their lives. A generation who saw the horrors of what the Shoah wrought on the Jewish people – but he also was an example of one of the greatest acts – growing life – living life – regenerating life. He was a father, an engineer, a businessman, a Jew, a dancer, a singer, a lover, a bridge player, an Opa, and he was a living example of the resilience of our people. May his memory forever be a blessing.