

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 929

In Memory
of
Martin Donald

WHEREAS, The Senate of the State of Texas honors and commemorates the life of Martin Donald, who died February 10, 2007, at the age of 86; and

WHEREAS, Martin Donald was an exemplary man who touched the hearts of countless people, and he was fittingly remembered and celebrated in the following words by his grandson-in-law, Rabbi Brian Strauss of Congregation Yeshurun in Houston:

Today, I stand before you as a rabbi to deliver the eulogy of Martin Donald, the ultimate survivor, a fighter, a man who had the tenacity and know-how to successfully live the American dream. I also stand before you today as a husband of one of his grandchildren, to deliver the eulogy of Pappa. It speaks volumes that to so many of us he was known as Pappa. Because Pappa was the ideal family Patriarch, a man of wisdom and generosity, whose tight bear hugs symbolized the great love he showered on so many of us.

Pappa always gave everything he could to those he loved. He also paved the way for future generations with his determination to make life even better for those who would come after him. I was blessed to be one of the recipients of his legacy, a legacy that I proudly share with you today.

Pappa's life began on May 2, 1920, when he was born to Robert and Freida Dorffmann in Berlin, Germany. Pappa had one younger sister, Erna. His dad was involved in the textile industry. Through his example, Pappa gained a great business sense which would serve him well later in his life. There was a large Dorffmann clan in Germany--uncles and aunts, cousins. They were proud Jews and proud Germans. Life was good for Pappa and his family. His parents were Orthodox Jews who observed Shabbat and other Jewish rituals and traditions. But they also loved Germany, and his dad fought for the German Kaiser during World War I. But everything changed when Hitler came to power in 1933.

Pappa was forced to quit school and help the family earn a living. So he got involved in the fur trade, finding himself a mentor.

That mentor was a short German Jewish man named Gustaf. Pappa had to learn quickly because when Pappa did something wrong, Gustaf would stand on his chair and hit Pappa on his head with his ruler. Many of the family members who were dispersed throughout Germany came to Berlin to support each other. But things only got worse for Pappa and his family.

German Jews like Pappa's parents never thought that something really terrible could ever happen to them. That Hitler would pass on. Pappa saw what was really happening. In January of 1939, he was able to secure working papers to leave with his cousin Leo for England. He was forced to leave the rest of his family and was left on his own in a new country at age 19. In England, through a mutual and eventual lifelong friend, Netti Speigel, Pappa soon met another refugee from Germany named Ann Speeseman. They quickly became good friends.

Unfortunately, Pappa had to leave Ann and his new life in London when the British, fearful of a fifth column, rounded up many of the German men (even some of the Jews) and sent them on prisoner of war ships to Canada. Fights broke out every day aboard ship between the Jews and Germans. Fortunately, the British soon realized their mistake and Pappa was shipped back to England two months later with an apology.

It was then that he realized he had to do something to help fight the Nazis, knowing his parents were still in Germany. He enlisted in the British army and, with his ability to speak both English and German, he eventually became a warrant officer in British Intelligence. He loved serving in the army. Being on his own, he liked the structure and discipline that army life provided. He landed in Normandy shortly after D-Day. He had to change his last name from Dorffmann to Donald to hide his Jewish identity because of the fear of being caught by the Germans.

He eventually went with his unit back to Germany and was devastated by the atrocities he witnessed at two concentration camps, including the infamous Bergen-Belsen. After the war, he obtained permission to go to Berlin to find out whether any of his large family was still alive. Unfortunately, all of his immediate family, including his parents, sister, uncles, and cousins were all murdered in concentration camps. In all, he lost over 40 family members.

Later he was assigned to occupied Hamburg to work on finding and interrogating German officers. There, he became good friends with a top colonel and he soon found himself as one of the few people actually running occupied Hamburg. Through his hard work they caught many former Nazi officers and officials, including the former German Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop.

It was then that he was asked to reenlist in the army. Not knowing what he should do, he looked for advice from his friend Ann, who was still in London. He wrote her letters asking her advice on whether he should stay in the army or return to civilian life in London. She advised him to come back; that he couldn't stay in the army his entire life. Perhaps she had other motives as well, because six months later they were married. Their close friendship had quickly become something more.

On June 15, 1947, they took the first step in a journey that would last them 59 years together as husband and wife. Throughout their marriage, their respect and admiration grew year by year. They often balanced each other well and were always there to support each other and enjoy life to the fullest.

With a close friend, Pappa soon started a fur business named Donald and Brooks. He was doing well and they were beginning a new life together in London. But they had to make another decision. It had always been Ann's parents Mawtel and Sala's dream to move to America. And so in November of 1947, aboard the *Queen Mary*, Nana and Pappa came to America to begin their American dream.

Throughout his life in America, Pappa often said that there was no better country in the world because America became the place they could fulfill all of their worthy desires. Their American dream began quickly when in May of 1948, on his 28th birthday, Nana gave birth to their oldest child, Florence.

Two years later, their second child, Mark, was born. Life was not easy at the beginning of their new life in America. They lived in a tiny apartment and Pappa promised Nana that within the year they would be out of that apartment. He kept his word, and within the year they moved to a larger and nicer apartment in Brooklyn. He started in the fur business, working for his Uncle Mannie Wieser. Eventually, he and his cousin Leon Dunnegar and his good friend Sam Zor started their own fur business.

It was hard work. Every Sunday night he would pack up his car and early Monday he would begin his drive throughout the country selling his furs. Eventually, business became very good in Texas. So in 1960, they moved to Dallas. In Dallas, he started the Elegant Furs Company.

After the fur business ended, with his friend Bob Statman, he started a costume jewelry business. Eventually, Pappa and Bob owned Dallas Woodcraft, which manufactured picture frames and was a key vendor for Don Carter's Home Interiors business. Dallas Woodcraft was finally bought out by Home Interiors and Pappa retired at age 60. Retirement was not easy for Pappa.

The structure and discipline of work was important to him. Despite his drive to earn a good living for his family, he was always there for his loving family. He had been cheated out of his family by the Nazis, so he was determined not to be cheated out of his family again. Family became his central passion in his life.

When distant family members found their way to America, he was there to help guide and support them. He always went out of his way to keep in touch. He would often call family members all over the world.

He considered his many close friends he made in Dallas his family as well. Pappa was strong-willed, he had high expectations, he was a traditionalist, he demanded respect, and his family always gave him the respect he deserved.

He was also his children's first advisor. He would often give his children his advice by helping them work towards those decisions through his great wisdom and insight on business, politics, and life in general. He supported Florence in her politics and Mark as a writer. He was the foundation for their success. He was also there for his son-in-law, Howard, and daughter-in-law, Esther, when they came into his life. He thought of them as his children and he loved them dearly.

They helped give him the great joy of six grandchildren--Lisa, Todd, Staci, Adam, Max, and Lilly. They too could always go to him with anything they needed. He made them feel important and special because he believed in them. He loved to give them his huge bear hugs and kisses in the ear.

When they were children, Lisa, Todd, and Staci would spend the night with Nana and Pappa every Friday night. While there he would play and interact with them. He loved to tell them stories and jokes. He loved to swim and play games. He did many of the same things with his younger grandchildren, Adam, Max, and Lilly. He was their number one fan.

When Adam started a band with his friends, he went to Pappa for some financial backing. Of course, Pappa never turned anyone away and helped back the band. So they "honored" him by naming their band "The Rockin' Pappas."

He was at his grandchildren's sporting events, graduations, weddings; at the births of his six great-grandchildren, at every important moment in their lives, he was there.

He was extremely generous and supportive to his grandchildren, and in turn they all loved and adored him.

He loved his six great-grandchildren as well--Joshua, Noa, Ari, Ella, Sam, and Zachary. If he saw Max, Lilly, and Joshua here today, he would tell them they look as sharp as a matzoh ball. (We're still trying to figure out what that means.)

Pappa not only had a passion for family but he also had a zest for life. He loved to laugh and tell stories. He enjoyed quiet moments outside bathing in the sun and the tranquil moments at night outside by his pool.

He loved his dogs, including Shepp, Ceaser, Rex, and most recently Parker.

He enjoyed the entertainment side of life. He had a passion for gin, tennis, and over the years got involved in horse racing as a part-time owner.

He loved to gamble. Once he even went so far as to tell his beloved wife that he had to extend a business trip, but instead was making a side trip to Las Vegas. When he returned home, Nana was so upset with him that she chased him around the house with a broom!

When he was gambling, we all wanted to make sure we were next to him at the craps table because when you were down on your luck, he would always slide you some of his chips. He wanted you to feel good and be a winner like him.

He and Nana traveled across the world to places like Israel, Russia, and China.

He enjoyed good times with his close friends. He became very close to his in-laws, Beedie and Harry, even though they were complete cultural opposites--Nana and Pappa were from Europe, Beedie was from Georgia, and Harry was from San Saba, Texas.

On his first visit to San Saba, Pappa was in a world he had never seen before. But everyone loved Pappa and he was soon wearing his first cowboy hat and boots. It was a sight to see!

He was involved in the community. Adolph Teitelbaum got him involved with an organization called SCORE, where he relished meeting with younger businessmen, giving them his advice. He was an entrepreneur, and this was his way of giving back.

Despite his experiences in Germany, Pappa loved being Jewish. He was a proud Jew, and to him, being a good Jew was being a good man.

He became a cofounder of the Dallas Holocaust Museum. He was involved in its inception and it became a very important place to him. He wanted to make sure that the memories of those who were murdered would always be preserved.

His home was a distinctly Jewish home, and for his grandchildren, it represented the place to celebrate the Jewish holidays. Hanukkah parties, Rosh Hashanah dinners, Passover Seders . . . Nana and Pappa's home helped define their Judaism.

I was blessed to see Pappa in his element at some of those dinners. Surrounded by those he loved the most, telling his stories, kissing us all, and giving all of us the encouragement and love only Pappa could give.

When I first met Lisa, she often told me that her Pappa was always there for her. And I was quickly blessed to see that Pappa was soon always there for me.

When I gave my first sermons as a rabbinical student, he would come to listen. When we went to his vacation home in Florida, we would spend nights out on the balcony as he shared more of his life stories and wisdom with me. He would inspire me again.

And when Lisa and I were first married, Pappa was there to take us to Vegas!

There are three recent experiences I had with him that I believe summarize his life.

Two years ago, his daughter, Florence, as Senate Pro Tem, served as Governor of the Day for the State of Texas. That day, Pappa, with his Nana at his side, was able to see his daughter serving as governor. Sixty-five years earlier, they were shunned by the country they were born in, almost losing their lives for being Jews.

But in America, they got to see their daughter become governor. Not only had Nana and Pappa passed on their Jewish heritage to their children, but they had fulfilled the American dream.

Both of their children had done extremely well in life. They had provided their children the opportunities, given them the encouragement and support they needed, so that now one of their children could even rise to the highest levels of government.

That morning, the entire Senate Chamber rose to give Nana and Pappa a standing ovation. It was a moment none of us will ever forget.

Last night, the President of the United States called Florence to offer his condolences. Today the Lieutenant Governor and members of the state House and Senate are here. When Pappa fled for his life from Germany in 1939, never could he imagine these things.

There was another moment none of us would ever forget. Last December, Pappa took his close family to the Bahamas. He was so excited about that trip. Yes, it was hard for Pappa to travel in his wheelchair. But it would be a chance for him to have fun with those he loved.

One night in the Bahamas, he sat in his wheelchair at the craps table. He was soon on a roll. He would lift himself out of his wheelchair, put the chips down, and roll the dice. Girls at the other end of the table were yelling "Go Pappa!" That night, he won nearly \$5,000 and he was Pappa once again. Having fun, enjoying life surrounded by his family.

Last May, we celebrated Pappa's 86th birthday with a luncheon in his honor. One last time, Pappa got to see his family and friends come honor him. Many of us toasted and hugged Pappa that day. We wanted to make sure that he knew how proud we were of him and thankful for everything he had always given to us.

That day he knew. Despite the discomfort he was in, he was so grateful. He was so happy to say thank you, I love you.

At that birthday luncheon, I mentioned that according to Judaism, age 80 is considered the age of strength.

Age 80 seems like a strange age to be called an age of strength?

But it is considered an age of strength because at 80 some are fortunate enough to be respected for their great common sense and insight to life. Pappa was certainly one of those people.

And in many ways, when he was 80 he was still physically strong.

But soon after he turned 80, he began to lose his physical strength.

The last several years were not easy. He was often in and out of the hospital. He was in pain. But many men could have not survived as long as he did. But most men are not like Pappa.

He was blessed throughout his struggle to have his caretakers and doctors, his children and his grandchildren, and first and foremost, his loving Ann at his side.

It was she that was there for him to the very end as she had always been. She was there as his security blanket, his first support and love.

Pappa was a man whose experiences make the cost of his children's and grandchildren's lives seem easy and simple.

But the reality is that he persevered throughout his life so that his children and grandchildren could live those relatively easy lives.

The Nazis wanted to end his life. But they could not stop Martin Donald. Despite their efforts, he gave this world two children, six grandchildren, and now six Jewish great-grandchildren and counting.

Today, Hitler is rolling in his grave because of men like Martin Donald who he could not stop. Today, Pappa is reuniting with his parents and sister in heaven, smiling at what he left in this world.

Years ago, he would often tell his children about the time when he was forced to say goodbye to his mother. As he boarded the train to leave Germany, his mother told him that she feared that she would never see him again.

Unfortunately, she was correct. She never did see him again.

And he would tell his children this story again and again to emphasize to them the responsibility they had to preserve their Jewish heritage they would one day have to pass on themselves.

Pappa succeeded and now, because of the way he and Nana raised them, they are also succeeding. And so are their children. They are following the ways of their Pappa.

Today, we lay to rest Martin Dorffmann, who became Martin Donald, who became Pappa.

It would have been admirable enough for him to have just been Martin Donald. Considering everything he had experienced, if he would have come to America and just built his successful business, that would have been enough.

But he was more special than that. He became a Pappa, a Patriarch and advisor, a man of great generosity and love, a man with a passion for life, family and helping those in need.

A man whose presence will live on for many years to come because he became a Pappa.

Zikrono Livracha "May his memory be for a blessing always."

And to his precious life, let us say Amen.

WHEREAS, An extraordinarily devoted husband, father, and grandfather, he was beloved by his family and countless friends, and he will long be remembered for his generous spirit, his keen insight, his perseverance, and his zest for life; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 80th Legislature, hereby extend sincere condolences to the bereaved family of Martin Donald: his beloved wife of 59 years, Ann Donald; his daughter, the Honorable Florence Shapiro; his son, Mark Donald; and his six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be prepared for the members of his family as an expression of deepest sympathy from the Texas Senate, and that when the Senate adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Martin Donald.

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| | | Nelson |
| Averitt | Harris | Shapiro |
| Brimer | Hegar | Shapleigh |
| Carona | Hinojosa | Uresti |
| Deuell | Jackson | Van de Putte |
| Duncan | Janek | Watson |
| Ellis | Lucio | Wentworth |
| Eltife | Nichols | West |
| Estes | Ogden | Whitmire |
| Fraser | Patrick | Williams |
| Gallegos | Seliger | Zaffirini |

Dewhurst, President of the Senate

President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on May 2, 2007, by a rising vote.

Secretary of the Senate

Member, Texas Senate