

## My Graveside Eulogy for Joseph L. Osnos, died Aug. 29, 1996

On the occasion of Dad's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, I searched for a way to describe his life. The word that came to mind was Pride: Pride in his family, pride in his place, pride in his past. Now that he's gone, pride is still the central fact of his life and genealogy.

How proud Dad was of six generations of college graduates, of the Chief Rabbi of the Austro-Hungarian empire, of Marcius's honors, of his sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. One of his last thrills was the birth of Eli. I think of how Eli mixes the genealogy of Stanford White and Zymunt Bychowski, of how Katherine mixes the blood of Elizabeth and Robert Browning and several Osnos brothers and sisters, one a Red Army colonel, six Holocaust victims and her proud grandfather.

Dad's was a classic 20<sup>th</sup> century life. The Russian revolution and World War I, Paris in the 30s, Prague, Warsaw, Bombay, New York. Robert and I would not, of course, be standing on this hillside if Dad had not somehow managed to get those Romanian visas; if Mother had not stood on that balcony in Berlin and threatened to jump if she didn't get money for that railroad ticket; if they had not survived the earthquake in Turkey or the rigors of an overland journey only a few steps ahead of Hitler.

At 40, he started over. He and Mother made glorious full lives here. There was White Meadow Lake, Bridge, Airvel, Thanksgiving, Passover, Mahopac. Good grief how Dad could brag, but why not? The irony is that he almost never bragged about himself. It was always one of us. When we did something right, he was ecstatic. When we did something wrong, Dad waited patiently for the next something right. He did not

have a place in his life for defeat, because he was never ever beaten – until perhaps the end.

Susan has said that for the past few years, the vessel of Dad's life was full. It never occurred to him that he would live longer than Mother and the truth is he didn't like it much. We all would have liked for him to be happier but Dad was a stubborn man – which is why he was so successful for most of his life and so determined in the end not to change anything that was familiar.

So, he got his wish. He lived in the apartment until the end. He drank cognac and tea in a glass. He listened to music. He told the same stories over and over again. But what Dad did was make a choice of his own free will. He was in control and that was better to him than any alternative.

How will we remember him? His crinkly eyes when he laughed or how when he was really impressed.

Big, strong, handsome, elegant, a practical man, a provider. A highlight of any year was his Happy Birthday call.

My last contact with Dad came in the Cat Scan room. They wanted him to be still. He found that impossible. I tried endearments in Polish and Russian and then began to hum "Moscow Nights." Amazingly he hummed back. In the last few hours of his life, he could sing.

Now he is back with Marciu. Will they find each other? I feel certain that they will. After all they managed to be reunited in hell and fight their way out. Can there be any doubt that they will get together in heaven?

Juzoo Kohanyu. We loved you. We honor your life. We will miss you. But we know that at the end of your incredible journey, you are in a better place. Slava bogu. Thank God.