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John Kasmir ז"ל

Hesped by Stephen H. White (13 January 2019)

It is the custom of this Kehillah that Trustees, Life Presidents and Presidents start their final journey here in shul. I don't know when this custom started, but I'm sure that the rationale was to enable congregants to pay tribute to servants of the congregation who had given so much of their lives in devoted service.

I think there is a second reason. It will be true for all of them that THEY would have wanted one last opportunity to say goodbye to the building they spent so much time in and the congregation they had devoted so much care for.

And however much that sentiment will have applied to other officers of the shul it is overwhelmingly true about John Kasmir. John loved this shul. I dare say that apart from his devotion to his darling Betty zichronah livracha, his daughters, and sons-in-law, and his grandchildren and great grandchildren, Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation was his abiding love. John was born in Bournemouth; he had his Barmitzvah in this building, he got married in this building, he celebrated s'machot in the Menorah Suite downstairs, and I cannot even begin to speculate how many thousands of hours he spent sitting in the Executive office upstairs managing the affairs of the Congregation.

He served on the Board of Management for over 50 years, as Treasurer for 3 years, as President for a total of 8 years, he became a Trustee in 1976 and served in that capacity for 23 years, and then was Honorary Life President for a further 19 years.

And he loved the Congregation passionately. He was a part of the fabric of this building, and it was a part of him. There was not a nook or cranny that he did not know, indeed he had been involved in designing or building or raising money for their upkeep. He was instrumental in the development of and the fundraising for the Murray Muscat Centre, and it was absolutely deserved that the foyer of the complex downstairs is named for Betty and himself. Nothing will have pleased him more than that the first function in the newly built Menorah Suite was his own Silver Wedding celebration. In recent years, when the subject of relocation to the East Cliff was on the agenda, John's love of this building made him a vociferous opponent of that idea, and he will have been very satisfied that Wootton Gardens remained as he treasured it until the end of his time here.

But he was also passionate about the main purpose of this building; to provide a centre of traditional Orthodox Judaism for the community. He was a staunch member of the minyan, and he was always encouraging members to attend and make sure that there was a minyan at every service, 3 times a day, seven days a week. He did not do this because it was his job to do it, he did it because he had a fundamental belief and faith and he wanted others to



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share in it.

John was the last of those senior members who managed the kehillah in the glory days after the Second World War. For most of his time as Trustee he served alongside Harry Ellis and Sam Marks alav hashalom, and to the whippersnappers who came up behind them, people like myself, and Ivor, and Larry, and David Son and others, these were the titans whom we aspired to be. We stand on their shoulders, and John's dedication and outstanding energy was a beacon for all of us.

Our Congregation has been blessed to have had the benefit of John Kasmir. Communal workers as devoted and capable as him are rarities, and we have been lucky to have received his wisdom and endeavour. And I hope that I can say that John was blessed to have had us and our best interest in his heart. It enhanced his life, we were his hobby and his passion and we made him an even bigger and better person than he would otherwise have been. With his passing we are both diminished and inspired. He will stay in our hearts for a long time to come.

Stephen H. White