

Jerome Shestack

Martin Meyerson loved Philadelphia!

To be sure if we were to compile a list of the national and international institutions that Martin guided and inspired and all the governments he counseled, we would have a huge World Atlas simply entitled "Doing Good."

Still, as with a late-born favorite child, Martin loved Philadelphia. He loved this city from the moment he came here. He loved its diverse neighborhoods; its tree-lined streets; its inspiring history.

And he bestowed his talents generously on our City's institutions, particularly those devoted to books. He took King Solomon's aphorism "Of making books there is no end," not as a complaint, but as a blessing." And the University of Pennsylvania Press, the Jewish Publication Society, the University Library, The Rosenbach Museum, all were beneficiaries of his love of books and love of learning. He often worked together with his beloved Margie. Indeed, they both shared the same passions: a passion for each other, for books, and for the culture and the promise of this City.

One constant love was Philadelphia's Liberty Medal, which Martin led and nourished for 17 years. Martin saw the Liberty Medal as a way to remind the world that Philadelphia bore the torch of liberty when this nation began, a torch that should never be extinguished. That love of liberty also was a torch for Martin, and his efforts to keep it aflame are surely part of his legacy. I recall one time when the Medal's Selection Committee was having a difficult time choosing a recipient, Martin jokingly, or not so jokingly, asked: "Where have all the heroes gone?" Each of us -- except Martin -- knew that they were not all gone -- not while Martin was here. When Margie asked me to speak today, I thought of the huge array of causes and organizations which Martin served. So many. So vital. How does one even begin to list them, let alone describe them.

And I thought of the scores of mentees who have Martin's thumb print ingrained on their hearts, as it is on mine. I thought of what they might say in celebration of Martin's life. I think I know. They would speak of a man who was wise but unassuming, a man untainted by prejudice or envy. A man with the ability to give advice divorced from ego. A man who took every request for help as a mission, leaving no failed expectation behind. A man whose qualities you would wish to emulate in your own life. If only you could .

There is an old Rabbinic axiom that one's mission in life is to "repair the world." "Tikun Olam" are the words in Hebrew. I think that Martin believed in that mission and he was happiest when repairing, mending and healing. Whenever I sought his help, I knew that, without hesitation, Martin would use his vast resources and contacts and energy to help forge a resolution.

To repair the world -- what a wonderful mission. How vast was his mending. And how vastly we will miss him.