

**Herb Foster Memorial Service**  
**Wednesday, March 3, 2021**  
**Eulogy by MVHC President Robert Herman**

I was asked to keep my remarks to just a few moments and as a tribute to Herb I will define that as 20 minutes. At my son's bar mitzvah, I asked Herb to offer some words and since then the rabbi and I are still looking for an appropriate hook to pull speakers off the bima, Herb was going on close to havdalah. The non-Jews in attendance will need some help with the first few jokes.

I am truly honored to have been asked to speak. For those who only met Herb once for less than 15 minutes let me tell you some things about him which I shared in common. Herb was from Brooklyn, he had a doctorate, he was president of the MVHC and a proud practicing member of our faith. Now where we diverge. Herb had a great sense of humor. Herb loved the Knicks, a professional sports team I am told. Herb had a paralyzed vocal cord as a result of the swine flu vaccine. On reflection I realized how few of us knew what Herb once sounded like. But we all know who Herb was. Someone said he was like a father to me. This is far from my perspective of Herb. Herb was a friend. He was a mentor, and he was at heart a young man who Peter Pan exemplified, Herb did but didn't want to grow up. He was always honest and always spoke his mind. He was profound and sometimes profane. He was respected for his accomplishments and admired for his determination to finish projects he had in the works. The next best seller was only a few moments away. The next worldwide lecture tour previewing on the island was always in the planning stages. There were WOOF tickets to distribute and, more salacious public discussions to conduct, there was always the need to point out injustice, prejudice, systemic racism. Herb was in his classroom pointing out bigotry before it was the expected and necessary of educators' responsibilities. His introduction to fellow soldiers included being patted on the rear in order to detect his tail. He educated a room full of people about Billy Holiday's song "Strange Fruit" 70 years after it was first recorded. He decided we as a Jewish community needed to commemorate MLK and honor our veterans. He was a veteran who told his parents in his first week of college that he was dropping out of school to join a war in its final days. He went to the South Pacific. He married a woman he knew was smarter than him. He proudly portrayed a B&W picture of himself and Anita on the beach, he a youthful Jewish Adonis bare chested towering over her small frame, she being held by her adoring boyfriend who would say his proudest achievement was marrying her. He would put his head down once a week and observe the Sabbath. He dedicated his presidency of the Hebrew Center to the memory of his parents. He held his 50th wedding celebration at the HC and asked all gifts be donations to the Center. He was a father, grandfather, suitor of Joan and a friend and uncle to us all, He was a boy scout, a NAACP member, a Library trustee, a proud veteran.

A professor who donned robes once a year in Buffalo, he had an annual birthday celebration where guests were asked to donate to the Island food pantry. These celebrations attracted hundreds of people, true he invited thousands. He was the first place finisher in the paddle and oar race for his age group for many years, and yes he was the only representative for many of those years in his age group. He fit in his army uniform, it did look tight. He wore shorts in the winter and I once put the back windshield up in his Jeep, in December. He never stopped wanting to feel young again and no one his age could do as much. He made friends everywhere he went, he was not shy. He was perpetual motion and an example of living life to its fullest. He resented his body failing him, and he fought it. He was noble, he was a giant and we are proud to say we lived with him in his time. He will live on for all of us in memory. I was blessed to have known him.

As is my custom I will now quote from who Herb referred to as my guy, Bob Dylan, for in these words I see Herb.

Half-wracked prejudice leaped forth  
"Rip down all hate," I screamed  
Lies that life is black and white  
Spoke from my skull. I dreamed  
Romantic facts of musketeers  
Foundationed deep, somehow  
Ah, but I was so much older then  
I'm younger than that now

A self-ordained professor's tongue  
Too serious to fool  
Spouted out that liberty  
Is just equality in school  
"Equality," I spoke the word  
As if a wedding vow  
Ah, but I was so much older then  
I'm younger than that now

Girls' faces formed the forward path  
From phony jealousy  
To memorizing politics  
Of ancient history  
Flung down by corpse evangelists  
Unthought of, though, somehow  
Ah, but I was so much older then  
I'm younger than that now

In a soldier's stance, I aimed my hand  
At the mongrel dogs who teach  
Fearing not that I'd become my enemy  
In the instant that I preach  
My pathway led by confusion boats  
Mutiny from stern to bow  
Ah, but I was so much older then  
I'm younger than that now