

Fifty eight years ago, in August 1963, I first met Dick and Bella in their backyard in Washington, DC - the night before the March on Washington. As always, Dick and Bella were a partnership, welcoming the UAHC delegates attending the March to a backyard barbecue at their home. That unforgettable evening soon after Dick and Bella moved to Washington with their young children to assume leadership of the Religious Action Center began our relationship. Throughout the years since, especially in this final Boca Raton stage of Dick's wonderful life, I have been privileged to be closely associated with Dick and Bella.

Throughout his life, Dick has been BOTH a passionate advocate of liberal political values AND the architect of Reform Judaism's embrace of Zionism. If he had only been the founding director of the Religious Action Center, DAYENU, "it would have been enough" to make him one of the giants of Twentieth Century Reform Judaism. But, to have then moved the headquarters of the World Union to Jerusalem, to have raised the resources to build the world campus together with HUC-JIR, to have championed Progressive Judaism throughout the world, to have established a Progressive Jewish movement in the Former Soviet Union - the list goes on and on.

During my years as a rabbinical student in the late 60's, Dick took personal interest in all of us. The HUC-JIR student seminars at the RAC were indispensable parts of our preparation for becoming rabbis. In the summer of 1968, hearing that I was studying in Israel, Dick invited me to evenings with Israelis in their apartments as he and Bella were sowing the seeds for the growth of Progressive Judaism in Israel.

Every trip to Israel for the rest of the Twentieth Century involved some kind of visit with Dick and Bella. Dick was instrumental in my move to London in 1998 to become Senior Rabbi of the West London Synagogue of British Jews. He always introduced me with great pride as his student - and I was always proud that he was always my teacher.

When Suellen and I retired from London to Florida in 2010, we saw Dick and Bella regularly when they spent time in their Aventura apartment. When they then moved to Sinai Residences - five minutes from where we live in Boca Raton - we visited with Dick and Bella often, either in our condo or at Sinai. Bella's decline and death a few years ago hit Dick really hard. But he recovered sufficiently to continue in his role as a leader of the community of Sinai residents. No matter where Dick was, in every stage of his life, everyone around Dick felt drawn to his handsome smile and magnetic personality.

As it happened, Dick and Bella were voters in the precinct that Suellen and I have led for the last ten years. We registered them to vote by mail, and in every election Dick and Bella loved to consult with us about their voting decisions. The last time we met together was about six weeks ago, just before Suellen and I left for a long trip North to visit with family and friends all over the Eastern US. As usual, we discussed Israeli politics, American politics, and the struggles of Reform Judaism worldwide. Returning to Boca this week, I expected to see Dick, to encourage him to get his Covid booster immediately. Somehow I still cannot fully digest his death. No one outside of my family has had such an incredible impact on me throughout my life. For me, and for so many others, Dick and Bella have been indispensable parts of our lives.

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