

I knew Rabbi Hirsch (“Dick”) for over forty years, but although our professional paths were deeply intertwined, our relationship was more personal than professional. I imagine that many colleagues felt that way; Dick’s special power was collecting people and making each one of us feel like we were intimately connected. I was blessed to be among those he embraced with warmth and friendship.

Rabbi Hirsch and my uncle, Julian Feldman z”l (Executive Director of Washington Hebrew Congregation for many years), were good friends. So when I got to Jerusalem for my first year of rabbinical school in 1980, Dick made a point of looking out for me and taking me under his wing. There was no ‘awe and trembling’ around him, despite his legendary role; though I was just a young rabbinical student at the time, he treated me as a family friend, colleague, and fellow traveler on a leadership journey. He was always happy to share his wisdom and insights, yet just as happy to catch up on family matters. Whenever our paths crossed since that time, no matter how many years had passed, each conversation picked up where the prior one ended. I became an extension of his and Julian’s friendship and he never failed to ask about the family, remembering each of my cousins (Julian’s kids) by name, and recalling details about each one.

When I became Director of the Commission on Social Action, Dick regaled me with tales of the early years of the RAC. When I became the WRJ Director, I heard fabulous stories about Jane Evans, Norma Levitt and the other NFTS/WRJ women who were such powerhouses during those years. I enjoyed more than a few juicy tidbits about the “good trouble” he got into with Al Vorspan, Ellie Schwartz, and other *gedolei hador*.

Like so many others, I was honored to know Rabbi Hirsch and treasured our many conversations over the years. Our world will be a bit dimmer without him in it.

My condolences to Rabbi Hirsch’s family. I pray they may find strength in the love and support of his many friends and colleagues and the memory of their beloved father, as well as their beloved mother Bella who predeceased him. Their memory is a blessing to us all.

With prayers for healing and with my deepest sympathy,

Rabbi Marla J. Feldman
WRJ Executive Director