

In Memory of Harold Richman

Frank Farrow

It's a privilege to be here with so many people who loved and admired Harold and to celebrate his life together. I have admired and loved him for over 35 years.

I'd like to start by sharing a recent experience which I think will be familiar to many here. Two months ago I attended a meeting with someone whose work I'd heard about for a long time. As I listened to her remarks throughout the day, I was intrigued by all her insights and observations. During a break we struck up a conversation and discovered something we had in common: knowing Harold. And our conversation changed immediately. First, her delight: "Oh, you know Harold!" Then the warmth in her voice as she spoke about him. Then, a quiet smile as she said, "You know... he changed my life."

Yes, I do know. He changed mine as well. And I suspect most of us here would say something similar. We're all people whose lives have been touched, and probably changed, by the joy of knowing Harold Richman.

Harold was extraordinary. He had all the qualities you'd want in a mentor or a colleague, and then some. He was fiendishly smart, of course, and funny, disciplined, irreverent...wise. He made our lives more vivid and interesting. He was incapable of pretension...and had a natural dignity that commanded respect. He was a born leader and almost pathologically modest. His influence was enormous. He shaped the minds of thousands of students. His writing was ahead of its time. He built new organizations – Chapin Hall, the international policy centers – that reflect his values, maintain his standards and have made huge contributions to the well-being of kids and families.

Ultimately, though, what Harold cared most about was people. His most far-reaching influence, I've come to think, is through the hundreds, probably thousands of people who over the years viewed him as a unique mentor, colleague and friend. We're a diaspora of people with whom Harold shared his gifts – and whose work is finer, whose understanding of the world is richer, and whose motivation to make a difference is keener because of him.

Harold could change your life with a light, almost invisible touch. He was one of the world's great listeners. Matt Stagner from Chapin Hall reminisced last night and described a quintessential exchange with Harold. One would ramble on, sharing a jumble of thoughts, and Harold would listen patiently through it all, asking an occasional question. Then, at some point he'd pick out the one idea of genuine value, reflect it back to you, and leave you convinced that that was your central point all along. I came to think of those as "rebound insights" from Harold – and of course relied on them.

A long time could pass between contacts with Harold. It didn't seem to matter. When seeing him again, his interest in *you*, his seeming understanding of *you*, were as intense as ever.

The purest joy, though, was working with him closely, month after month, year after year, on something you both cared about. It's then that one understood fully the focus, the discipline of purpose, the commitment to achieving a goal that animated everything he truly cared about. He was about taking action, doing, making things better.

Judy Meltzer and I met Harold when we were students at the School of Social Services Administration here at the University, just after he'd become Dean. My start with him wasn't promising. We had different philosophies about attending classes. When I'd run into Harold on campus, something I tried to avoid, he'd suggest that every once in a while I should drop in at the school. Eventually, both Judy and I enrolled in his policy course, not realizing it was the beginning of a lifelong pattern of learning from Harold.

Over the years, the work we did together changed, but the bond among the three of us never did. With Tom Joe, Harold helped create the Center for the Study of Social Policy, a home base for a number of us here, where Harold was the first and then the most recent board chair. And as years passed, Harold weighed in on the important decisions of people there, keeping us on track with the values of family, of community and of social justice that he stood for.

The important point, though, is that our strong ties with Harold were not at all unique. Harold nurtured them with many people here and many others around the world.

Harold was not perfect, of course. He had a dark side that emerged only on the squash court. When you met him for a game of squash, he was his usual solicitous self as you walked to the gym, chatted in the locker room, warmed up before the game. But when the first serve was in play, he morphed into the Rafael Nadal of Hyde Park – with half the biceps but twice the intensity. He defied the laws of physics. Those short legs could not possibly move him around the court so quickly, yet there he was, just where he couldn't be. He was joyously competitive. Once during a game that I was losing badly, I explained that my recent retinal surgery made it difficult for me to see the ball. He murmured, "Oh, too bad" – and slammed another forehand past me. He said it was another type of lesson in focus.

Harold and I spoke in the last weeks, when his voice was just a thread. He had very specific advice about the Center and its future and nothing was going to stop him from sharing it. Judy Meltzer and I were both in my office for one of his last calls, as was Lee Schorr, who meant a great deal to him. I told him that we'd watch over the organization that he'd created. Modest as ever, he said, "I didn't create it. Tom Joe did". Across the room, Judy said to me, "But he created us". I repeated that to Harold, and there was a long pause. "OK", he whispered. "That I'll take".

Harold, from all of us you helped create, from all of us you inspired, from all of us whose lives are infinitely better for knowing you, we celebrate you. Your voice will be with us for the rest of our days.

That *we'll* take.