

Abraham Goldman

Funeral Service

Saturday, August 20, 2011

Minister Julian Branston's Introduction

We are here to celebrate the life of our beloved friend, Abraham Goldman, and to express our gratitude for the privilege of having shared our lives with him.

The meaning of a student's life is not to be found in its large events, in its apparent successes or failures. The moment C Influence first touches one, the true significance of one's life is revealed: the transformation of a play, lovingly designed and guided by the Gods for a divine purpose.

At the death of a friend, we can see their play as a whole. We can see it as we cannot yet fully see our own: as a miraculous destiny, fully guided by a higher hand, perfect. Abraham's play has come to fruition, so that he might now truly say, "Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do".

Let us stand and honor Abraham with our silent presence.

(Silence)

Music: Michael Goodwin

Bach Air.

Reading: Roger Kent

Walt Whitman, *Proud Music of the Storm*:

Proud music of the storm, filling the midnight late, bending me powerless, entering my lonesome slumber-chamber, why have you seiz'd me?

Come forward O my soul, and let the rest retire.

Listen, lose not, it is toward thee they tend,

Parting the midnight, entering my slumber-chamber, for thee they sing and dance O soul.

A new composite orchestra, binder of years and climes, ten-fold renewer, the straying thence,

the separation long, but now the wandering done, the journey done, the journeyman come home,

and man and art with Nature fused again.

Then I woke softly, and pausing, questioning awhile the music of my dream, and all the artless plaints of love and grief and death, I said to my silent curious soul, 'Come, for I have found the clew I sought so long, let us go forth refresh'd amid the day, Cheerfully tallying life, walking the world, the real, Nourish'd henceforth by our celestial dream.'

Eulogy: Geoffrey Rowland

Abraham Goldman, 1949-2011

When one of our fellow students completes his role, it is always a shock. In the case of our beloved friend Abraham Goldman, that shock cuts particularly deep. Because Abraham was so masterful at concealing his suffering – because he always greeted us with one of his sweet smiles or a warm hug – his death took us by surprise.

Higher Forces though are also masterful in revealing a profound design in his passing. So here we are today to express our love for Abraham, to honour the love and devotion he felt for his Teacher, for his family, and for his friends, and to bid him safe passage as he continues his journey beyond this life.

Abraham was a servant. Our Teacher called him “The Shield of Apollo.” He was a member of the Fellowship for over 32 years – more than half his life – and for much of that time he served as the Fellowship’s legal counsel, navigating our ship through difficult waters, never abandoning his responsibilities, never swerving in his support of our Teacher and Higher Forces. Abraham was completely devoted to Robert. And through his unwavering devotion to the School, he gave something of himself to each one of us. He gave more to the School, in fact, than most of us will ever know. But he never called attention to himself. One friend said that “service was his signature”. As a true servant, he was content in the simple well-being of those he served.

Those of us who were close to Abraham will remember him for his kindness, his generosity, his valuation, his love. For the “nobility of his heart.” For his ability to “be the words.” Abraham’s mother had been the personal secretary of their Rabbi and as a child Abraham had often helped out at the synagogue. He had even considered becoming a Rabbi himself. But then he discovered his love of the law. The law enabled him to express his desire to help people in need. The oppressed. The maligned. The injured. The forgotten. He repeatedly took on cases no one else would take. He was deeply involved in civil rights litigation in Chicago, where he was born, and when faced with a challenge, a difficult case that he believed in, he would not give up, even if it took years for a decision to be reached. He became known as a “peacemaker,” someone who built bridges between opposing groups. The law was where Abraham’s inspiration flowed, where he could bring his patience, his compassion, his keen intelligence. As a lawyer living at Apollo he represented many of us over the years in our legal battles. As the Fellowship lawyer he successfully represented the School for an untold number of occasions.

Abraham was a devoted husband to Susan for 27 years, and a loving father to Rosie and Elan. One could feel the warmth and affection that passed between them. It was palpable. Abraham and Susan’s marriage was deeply founded in the Work. They worked together building centers in Rome and Chicago, and they worked together building Apollo; together they created a beautiful home, inviting students into an elegant environment of concerts and dinners and workshops, a loving chalice for the School. Abraham’s law office at Apollo also provided work for many students. When you visited his office, though, you didn’t see framed certificates or diplomas. You saw photos of the family, the children’s handmade cards for Father’s Day and their birthday

greetings in colourful crayon. The legal world can be a treacherous landscape, a minefield, a desert. Susan, Rosie, and Elan were Abraham's oasis.

Few of us could understand the suffering that Abraham went through with his hearing disability. He experienced terrible headaches, and he often coexisted with what he used to describe as 'an air raid siren and a fog horn' continually blasting in his ear. But as terrible as the physical pain was, the disorientation and isolation of being thrust into a world of silence was worse.

Our Work, however, teaches us that suffering is a fixative, a bracing gift from the Gods that, when silently transformed, makes presence permanent in us. So while Abraham worked silently and invisibly to meet his suffering, a part of him was created that could transcend suffering, and survive the shock of his death.

And in that shock we again see Abraham's role as a servant. For his death, and the many signs that have accompanied it, produced World Six in us. It's difficult to accept that the manner of Abraham's death was an inevitable part of his play. But here at Apollo and in centers around the world, Higher Forces have communicated that what has happened, was written. That his soul is safe. One cannot fathom the ways of the Gods. But as one of our friends observed, Abraham never argued against heaven's hand. So we too, in bidding farewell to him, we also accept heaven's hand.

Music: Michael Goodwin, Anicca Bat Adam

Bartok Dances.

Reading: Joanna Mortensen

Rumi, *My love*:

My love, you are closer to me than myself.

You shine through my eyes.

Your light is brighter than the Moon.

Step into the garden so all the flowers,

even the tall poplar can kneel before your beauty.

Let your voice silence the lily, famous for its hundred tongues...

What a miracle, you and I, one love, one lover,

one Fire, in this world and the next.

Minister's Conclusion:

May Abraham's capacity to serve inspire us to fulfill our own allotted tasks with greater resolve and courage.

May the intensity of his suffering deepen our understanding of how firmly the Gods may, in their wisdom, choose to press upon us; and our understanding of why.

It remains only to bid the hero farewell. The Teacher's farewell to Abraham was inspired by a eulogy written by Walt Whitman's for a fallen soldier:

Hard has been thy part,

To conscious life has it been enacted!

Abraham: father, husband, servant, warrior, friend, we thank thee.

Minister signals Marcus. Marcus, Anthony and David assemble. Marcus picks up the urn. Minister blows out candle. Funeral party leaves.

At the Cemetery: Minister's Introduction

Here on this beautiful day, we release Abraham to his home, and return his ashes to the earth.

Reading: Jean Taylor

From Conrad Cecil: Hummingbird Heart

Within the enclosure of a gentle swelling breast, at the epicenter of a warm embrace, a hummingbird heart seeks yours:

He wants to feel you thrill to the same delight that grasps him like a hand.
He has seen the smile breaking out on the beloved's face, sudden as lightning in summer.

And his eye tells you he knows it all and bears it all, and there's nothing to be done nor to change. "Only, help me carry this Cross a few yards, my friend. Then leave me quick and go back to the dance of the carefree lovers seeking God. I don't need to join that dance, for you see I am in His arms already.

And while you were carrying my Cross, I sneaked one of those long-loving embraces with Him."

O Hummingbird Heart you have shattered and sent shards of crystal spinning into each of us.

Now we are all seeking each other, thrilling to the same ungraspable ecstasy of longing and return.

And our eyes sparkle when we find each other; oh, and they remind us to carry each others' crosses a little more, too.

Music: Zoila Munoz

A cappella.

Minister guides Anthony to kneeling position. Anthony places urn in the ground. Jean offers Minister, Anthony, Marcus and David rose petals. Each places rose petals in the ground.

Minister's Conclusion

The earth returns to the earth and a divine spark returns to its divine source. "Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity". The circle of life is complete.

Jean offers rose petals to family. Two ladies stand with baskets of rose petals for anyone who wishes to put rose petals in the grave. The leaving begins.