

Fred Sherman's Funeral Service

An Ordinary American's Perspective #3

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Introduction:

I had the privilege of attending a very special celebration of Fred Sherman's life along with an "official" send off for his continued life's journey. I knew something special was about to happen when Leon Levy introduced Father Jim Cousidine to begin the services. Leon Levy, a long time friend of Fred's, very aptly lead the Jewish traditions and prayers while Father Cousidine did the same representing the Catholic traditions and prayers.

According to all, Fred had a hand in shaping his final celebration. I got to know Fred Sherman and Diane Williams through their involvement with and support for Surrey Services for Seniors in Berwyn, PA. Fred and Diane identified with Surrey's mission of helping older adults to live in their homes with dignity and independence *and continue as active members of the community*. Fred's life certainly exemplified this spirit of neighbor helping neighbor.

The Celebration, Stories and Eulogies:

The general theme here is that Fred made a big difference in many people's lives and he had a unique ability to change the "hearts" of other human beings. One of Diane's sons recalled a final phone conversation he had with Fred. Fred talked about his deep love for his mother and how much an important person she was in his life. Upon reflection, he realized how much Fred had helped Diane to love again and live a full life after the death of his father. Fred did not try to replace their father, but he did develop a special relationship with them—family love and respect. Fred practiced love by doing, and helped teach "love" to those closest to him.

Don Lancer clarified how Fred became a member of the KYW business news team and how he developed his famous "sign off"—I'm Fred Sherrrrrrman! Another KYW reporter had elongated some vowels in his name for a unique sign-off. Fred changed his career at age 60. He had been a stock broker for less than a year when he called Don to complain about the dull business reporting. Fred was an excellent writer who could spice up his pieces with wit, rhyme, and irreverence. Plus, he sounded like a nice guy and knowledgeable. Another recollection is that Fred was not a "bragger", but had a strong "wit about him". Upon learning that Fred grew up in Brooklyn, a KYW reporter (Jay Lloyd) indicated to Fred that he attended the same school as Dr. Henry Kissinger. Fred's response: I walked with Henry to school.

Diane's brothers recalled Fred's love of life and his family love. Fred never stopped loving his brother Hank, who died in Papua, New Guinea during WW II, which had a profound effect on everyone. Fred enjoyed eating out and occasionally smoking a good cigar. He won a number of "bets" for dinner based on who could keep the longest ash on a cigar before it would fall. Fred was "Interested and Interesting". John received a "motorcycle" card from Fred that reflected upon his passion for motorcycles. He inscribed on the card: ride on and on and on and on and on... For Fred, the life journey never ends! In Robert Frost's poem: The Road not Taken...Fred definitely took the road less traveled. Fred made a big difference in other people's lives because he could change people's hearts!

Diane's daughter indicated that Fred was a fighter and had "grace" under fire. A good example of this trait took place in Jamaica for the 2009 New Year's Eve party. Fred looked great in a Tuxedo and loved to dance, but he was having difficulty even walking. So Fred propped himself up by leaning against a pole and danced with his arms... No one ever thought that he would become a "pole" dancer. Fred could handle self ingratiating humor.

The "In Loving Memory" card for all attendees had a picture of a golf course with two golfers finishing a hole. The inscription had a lightness to it that made us feel good. A few golf stories were told, but here is one that captures Fred's spirit. Barry Abrams recalled one such incident. Barry had a four foot side hill/down hill putt for a win. Before he could putt, Fred said that's a "gimme" (the putt is good). Fred explained if I couldn't make the putt, I sure wasn't going to make you make the putt!

Mary, a restaurant owner, described how Fred could work his life adventures into his radio shows. He would talk about the excellent crab soup he enjoyed while out with Diane the other evening at...and name the restaurant. Mary appreciated the plug, but more importantly she learned how life can be enjoyed at older ages.

Sovereign Bank would periodically have a contest with its customers when Fred (Chief Economist) Sherman made personal appearances. Fred had a very distinct radio voice, but when he participated in a "line-up" with three other individuals, the "public" had a hard time picking the "real" Fred Sherman. In fact, Fred never did better than third! Fred had fun with it.

Diane Williams wanted some independent financial advice some 17 years ago, and decided to meet Fred Sherrrrrman because he sounded so knowledgeable and nice on the radio. Diane learned that Fred had been scheduled to give a talk to the Estate Planning Council of Montgomery County near her and she planned to attend. Diane (in a nice yellow dress) approached Fred after his talk and indicated to him that she needed some help and had brought a list of all her assets. Fred backed up a step or two, looked at her and said: "you certainly do have some assets"! Thus began a wonderful love between two very special people. Diane talked about their recent prayers together...

The services concluded with the Jewish prayer, Kaddish, and Psalm 23. Fred it is sad to see you go, but we are all so fortunate to have known you.....