

A tribute to Ralph Gordon (1931-2020)  
written by his daughter Kayla Gordon Maister

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## **My dad, Ralph.**

Dad lived a long and happy life, and it's really a blessing he left us with no fanfare, so peacefully.

He was an imposing figure of a man, A tall, dark, handsome character whose reassuring presence we always felt. Our very own Omar Sharif.

'Great sense of humour and a very kind man', That's what everyone said about him.

For me, Dad's finest quality was his patience: an inherent ability to listen, to absorb and to offer his point of view but always leaving us to make our own choices. I think I am as strong as I am today because of the confidence he instilled in me to make my own decisions. When I was 12 and going downtown to theatre school on Princess Street he said you go ahead, you can take the bus yourself. And on the ski slope at sugar hills, he taught me with patience and then said "You can get to the bottom on your own". He'd show me what to do and off I went.

Dad was always busy – a man in constant motion – but never too busy to share his love of life with those around him. He had an enormous capacity to give of himself. Many people have told us that dad taught them how to play tennis, got them up on water skis, helped them up the bunny hill, and the list goes on. He encouraged whole families to come to Quadna, and Sugar hills to have their very first skiing experience.

When I was a teenager he was the 'cool dad'. Leather fringed jacket, motor cycle and disco parties.

He taught us to love so many things and he was always such an optimist. That optimism gave him confidence to try so many things and it guided Marshall, Sherwin and me. He made each one of us believe that anything was possible.

He continually broadened his horizons with daring decisions and unique experiences. Here are a few....

At 10 He was a Yo-yo champion

At 11 he delivered telegrams by bike

When he was 13 he went by himself and his wooden skis to the Canoe club so he could learn to ski.

At 14 he was Manitoba Jr tennis champion

At 16 He played bugle in the Jewish legion band

At 17 he delivered coca cola

He was in 3 operas at St. John's tech high school

In first year university he bought Zaida Feivel's hudson that had a huge hole in the bottom, he fixed it and he carpooled three other women, not my mom to university every day. My mom had Baba Sallys car. Such a lady's man

In university, he was crowned king of the phi sigma phi sorority.

After graduating from university, the first time Ralph had many jobs as Mathew pointed out. We all remember going with him to pick up the cheques from properties Baba Sally managed. Sherwin specifically remembers going with him on the Saturday morning ritual to collect the rent and then have lunch at Simon's Deli.

In 1973 he took my mom and the three of us kids when we were teenagers from London to Wales through Italy and back in a 'Volkswagen bus' with little to no reservations from there we flew to Israel. What an experience that was.

At 40, he bought a Tr7. He loved sports cars, my friends all thought he was cool in that one. Marshall said it was a nightmare

He also dabbled in Photography in his 40's. I believe My love of photography started when he was developing film in his dark room. He rode his bike to work and back when he was almost 50 And of course, at 60 Ralph and Ethel were the winners of the disco contest competing against dancers from the royal Wpg ballet. At 75 he played horseshoes in Palm Springs And at 88 in his own way was Still dancing with Ethel.

Around 2004, dad started getting symptoms for Parkinson's, when the Parkinson's got worse and mobility became an issue he seemed happiest sitting in his favourite perch on the front porch at Westhawk contemplating all the things he had built, and wondering what to build next. This upcoming summer he wanted to fix the back entry.

His great grandchildren, Keira, Blake, Hallee and Kenny, His grandchildren Jacob, Cara, Carly, Adam, Avril, Angela, Aaron and Brittany will miss him dearly. And as well his adoring wife, my mom Ethel, married for 64 years. She was devoted to him and his care for the better part of 20 years. The night before he passed she told me he called out hey google (something they often did to fill the house with music) and he asked google to play the Whitney Houston I will Always Love you from the body guard. Mom said He held her hand and it shook from the Parkinson's. She said it almost felt like they were dancing again, like they had so many times before

It's strange to think that I can't just give him a call or pop around to have one of our good old chats.

As we gather here today to remember and commemorate his life, let's bid him farewell as we mourn the loss of a lively, dignified and kind soul.

If you are wearing a tie today, i ask you to remove it in his honour because if you knew him well you'd know he hated ties, they made him feel restricted. He marched to the beat of his own drum. And although it was sometimes frustrating never knowing what was coming up or where we might be staying on any given night in our family trips (he rarely made reservations), that's what I loved that about him. He threw caution to the wind. And it never hurt us one bit. He was a true adventurer. , he loved life, and in his quiet way did so much for so many.

Ralph brought joy and an appreciation for life to all of us and his legacy will live on forever.

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