

# Bennett Yanowitz, lawyer and leader of Jewish organizations from Pepper Pike, dies at 88

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By **Ed Wittenberg, special to cleveland.com**



Bennett Yanowitz

PEPPER PIKE -- Bennett Yanowitz was a mentor and inspiration to many people, said Stephen H. Hoffman, president of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland.

“He was the best volunteer partner a professional executive could have,” Hoffman said. “He was wise, discreet and a consummate consensus builder.”

Yanowitz, of Pepper Pike, died May 31 at MetroHealth Medical Center due to complications from a recent fall in a parking lot. He was 88.

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Funeral services were held June 3 at Park Synagogue Main in Cleveland Heights. He was buried at Bet Olam Cemetery in Beachwood.

A lawyer, Yanowitz served in many positions in local, national and international Jewish organizations. He was an honorary life member and past president of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland and a life trustee of Menorah Park Center for Senior Living in Beachwood.

“He had an outstanding grasp of what was needed to advance the goals and objectives of our Jewish community,” Hoffman said in a statement. “His analytical skills and calm, logical approach to problem-solving gained much respect among his colleagues.”

'A giant among men'

Yanowitz co-founded the Cleveland law firm, Kahn Kleinman Yanowitz and Arnson, in 1962 and was a partner in it for many years. He specialized in real estate and corporate law.

Howard Bobrow, a partner in the same firm now known as Taft Stettinius and Hollister, said Yanowitz was “really a giant among men.”

“They don’t make them like that anymore,” he said. “He was really an incredible mentor and philanthropist, a great lawyer and a good friend.

“His community involvement was unrivaled, and his dedication to social

justice causes was unmatched.”

Bobrow, who joined the firm in 1999, said everyone in the company looked up to Yanowitz as a good teacher.

“As one of the younger lawyers (in the firm), one of my biggest regrets is that I didn’t practice law with him as long as I would have liked,” he said.

Yanowitz retired his law license three years ago, but he continued to come into the office almost daily until last fall, Bobrow said.

“He spent a lot of time on the phone, talking to clients and advising them,” he said. “Even though he was no longer practicing law, they still valued his advice highly.

“The joke around the office was, when Benny Yanowitz retired, that meant he was only going to work 80 hours a week.”

Received many awards

Yanowitz also led the Mount Sinai Health Care Foundation, American Jewish Congress, Jewish Educational Service of North America and what became the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

He was the first president of Akiva High School in Beachwood.

Yanowitz received many awards, including the Jewish federation’s highest honor, the Charles Eisenman Award.

He and his wife, Donna, established the Bennett and Donna Yanowitz Leadership Award to recognize an outstanding leader under age 40.

Yanowitz was active in civil rights causes and efforts to free Soviet and Ethiopian Jews. He led a trip to Ethiopia for U.S. Jewish leaders, and he and Donna traveled to the former Soviet Union and went to Israel and Washington many times.

A former Shaker Heights resident, Yanowitz grew up in Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood and graduated from Glenville High School. He was inducted into the school's hall of fame.

During World War II, he was a captain in the U.S. Army, stationed with the Quartermaster Corps in Italy and the Philippines.

He graduated with honors from Western Reserve University Law School and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan.

In addition to his wife, Yanowitz is survived by sons Alan of Beachwood, Joel of Mill Valley, Calif., and Jerry of Moraga, Calif.; and seven grandchildren.

Donations are suggested to Jewish Educational Service of North America, 318 W. 39th St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10018, or the Hebrew Cultural Garden, care of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, 25701 Science Park Drive, Beachwood 44122.