

**Samuel Charles Kayman, June 5, 1949 – January 9, 2005 (29 Tevet 5765)**

While Sam was growing up on Long Island, exciting new discoveries in genetics fired his imagination. By the time he reached high school, he was looking ahead to a career in biological research. After his graduation from Cornell, followed by a year as a tech in a medical school research lab, Sam was accepted to MIT, where he earned a PhD in molecular biology.

Sam and I had met when we were college sophomores. We were introduced by Ira Salzman, a fraternity brother of Sam's who'd been a close friend of mine since Hebrew School and Junior Congregation at Jamaica Jewish Center, a Conservative congregation in Queens. Naturally, Ira was the best man at our wedding, a few weeks after graduation. Once Sam finished his doctoral work, we moved to the Upper West Side, where one of the first things we did was join the West Side *Minyan*. What we'd heard about it from friends was what led us to move here. In no time at all, we felt at home.

Sam's Jewish education was from a supplemental school in a Reform congregation. He wasn't adept at learning any foreign language, including Hebrew and, when he sang, his pitches were always off-key. But he deeply valued the way the *Minyan* worked as a community and, usually from behind the scenes, he supported it wholeheartedly. At the time, the WSM simply rented space at *Anshe Chesed*. But the congregation was at a low point and, to survive, AC needed to forge a stronger relationship with the autonomous minyanim. Sam represented the WSM on the committee that was formed to write new bylaws for the reconfigured congregation. He was instrumental in defusing distrust and fostering constructive discussion.

Today, it's not uncommon for congregations and *havurot* to coexist but, back then, it was unheard of. AC pioneered this innovative structure. Sam subsequently served several terms on AC's Board of Directors.

At heart, Sam was a perfectionist and a private person who scrupulously avoided the limelight, not only at the *Minyan* and AC but also at work. He was most at home at the lab bench, planning and implementing experiments, and collaborating on grant proposals and manuscripts. He also mentored and supported colleagues in their efforts to develop their own projects and papers. A lover of puns, bebop, crosswords (solved in ink) and many other kinds of intricate patterns and puzzles, Sam was drawn to complex problems. He dedicated the last 16 years of his life to HIV vaccine research, a quest that remains elusive to this day.

Sam and I also shared a feminist vision that was gaining momentum in the 1970's and '80's. He took on child-rearing, laundry, cooking, and other household tasks to a degree that was extraordinary for men at the time. I was a late-bloomer, but he had believed in me from the first. With his encouragement, my ambitions grew larger, and his support expanded to match. He adjusted his schedule to make room for me to take classes, give performances, meet academic deadlines, and even leave town for weeks at a time to provide respite care for my brother Daniel, who was sick with AIDS. It wasn't easy—what author Arlie Hochschild called “the second shift” never is!—but he did it.

Sam was a skilled horseman, rock climber, and back-packer, and both of us were certified in scuba diving less than a year before he fell ill. He didn't care for small talk, but those who connected with him in serious conversation, one-on-one, found him to be a great listener who asked important, helpful questions. He also was very generous and patient with non-scientists who were curious about his work.

Sam started feeling unwell in the summer of 2004. By Sukkot it was clear that he needed to see a specialist. Diagnosis takes time and, though Sam's wasn't confirmed until just after Thanksgiving, we had a pretty good idea by then of what we were facing. In mid-December, Sam was admitted to the hospital and, early in January, he died. His mind was clear to the end.

Sam was inclined to attribute his lung cancer to what he called “six years in a cloud of chloroform.” Though generally attentive to issues of safety in science, it seems that he never seriously considered using the ventilation hood in the lab at MIT.

Sam is buried next to his mother, Ruth, at King Solomon Cemetery in Clifton, New Jersey. Though I’ve never believed in an afterlife, it makes me smile to imagine Sam and Ruth picking up where they left off, in the excited–but–friendly debate that had been their trademark. If indeed there is an afterlife, I’d bet anything that they’re still at it.

Deb Kayman, 20 December 2022