

Remembering Charles Julian - 12/14/1920 – 4/01/2011

Looking at the entry in the Alumni Directory for Charles Julian we note with interest the phrase “At Sea (British)” next to date of birth. There must be a good story in that. Clearly, Charlie was going places from the very start.

Charles was sweetness personified. He was responsible for my first “professional” engagement. Charles was a senior (class of 68) and was serving a congregation in Laurelton in Queens, NY with Rabbi Ronald Millstein. Charles invited me, along with Shlomo Bar Nissim and two women (we did not have women in the School then) to serve in a quartet at a special Friday evening service. I remember singing Lewandowski’s Mah Tovv and Binder’s V’shomru (Hibbath Shabbat). Shlomo went on to succeed Charles in Laurelton and I went on to a small congregation, Temple Isaiah in Great Neck. At the time Shlomo and I were both first year students and later proud members of the class of ’72 along with Howard Stahl, Jon Haddon and Avraham Jacobi.

I shared an email “conversation” recalling Charles, with my classmate and good friend, the aforementioned Howard Stahl. Howard remembers Charlie as a gentle, sweet man who obviously found his way to the cantorate later in life than we teenagers. It’s hard to believe that he was about our parents’ age. One might surmise that being a cantorial student was probably a challenge for him, but it also meant a great deal to him. What we took for granted, Charlie never failed to cherish and embrace. Some of his classmates had a lot of swagger and bravado. Charlie had none of that. He was humble and kind, and he made the best of his God-given vocal talents. He was a Hazzan whose ministry was suffused with incomparable pastoral warmth and empathy.

Thinking of Charles on a more personal note brings to mind the following incident. The 72nd street IND subway station served as the commuting connection for many of us in the old 68th street HUC. One particular afternoon after classes, I happened to be waiting for my train, staring into the tracks, alone with my thoughts. Charlie just happened by. He gently and quietly told me do my dreaming at a safer distance from the ledge. That little moment of caring somehow touches me these 40 years later.

Charlie led what we generally think of as a long life. This in itself is evidence of great z’chut. We hope his life was a happy one. We remember him with love and embrace his family, his wife, Sally and children, Peggy, Andrew, Emily and Martha. Rest in peace good friend. We, and countless others, will be blessed always for having known you.

Submitted with great affection by Howard Stahl and Fred Herman. Tuesday, May 18, 2011