

One of our colleagues recently said that some of the most meaningful moments they had experienced at an ACC Convention were the Azkarot for those of our colleagues who had passed away since we had last been together. Perhaps this is because we know one another in such a different way than our congregations know us. We understand, in such a personal way, the legacy we leave behind. It is therefore our responsibility and our privilege to remember those we will no longer get to sing with.

This year we mourn the passing of two cantors who served with distinction.

We remember Cantor Marshall Wolkenstein. Marshall is remembered by his classmate Cantor Dick Botton, who said this: He had a beautiful bass baritone voice, and his presentations were always extraordinary, both vocally and musically. He had a reserved personality, but when you got past “the invisible shield”, he was quite charming, with an excellent appreciation of humor!” Marshall was quoted in an article in his local newspaper. During the interview, which was primarily about his beautiful singing of opera arias well past his retirement from the pulpit, he spoke about the meaning he found in the one on one relationships he was able to nurture over his long career in the cantorate.

He fostered those relationships during his time serving congregations in New York City; Philadelphia; Birmingham, Alabama; Stroudsburg and Scranton and with his colleagues both in the American Conference of Cantors and the Cantors Assembly. He will be remembered as a loving husband and father, a sweet singer of Israel, and a beloved friend.

May his memory be a blessing.

We also remember Cantor Amy Miller who passed away just this month. Her daughter, Jackie, said that her mom possessed a sense of determination and a drive to get the most out of each day. Amy battled a chronic illness for the majority of her life. She was actually not expected to live past 30 and yet she far exceeded the expectations that had been laid out for her and lived a rich, meaningful, multi-layered life.

Cantor David Mannes recalled when he met Amy in 1989 at the first ACC convention he attended. The certification program had re-opened and he had applied. At that time, Amy was in the process of applying to the program. They talked about the reasons to follow a cantorial career and compared congregational experiences. They spoke of their respective spouses and careers which limited their geographical requirements for serving congregations, and difficulties in being parents, balancing career with family.

She was a gifted mezzo-soprano with a deep connection to her Jewish faith and passion for singing that inspired her to pursue what ultimately became her lifelong calling, the Jewish cantorate. She became a Cantor in 1992.

Amy served congregations in Pittsfield, South Windsor, CT and Newington, CT. She was enjoyed being a part of her local klezmer band.

David says Amy was passionate, encouraging, bright and optimistic. She followed her heart. Amy was an avid fan and possessed encyclopedic knowledge of all things classic movies and the Great American Songbook. She is remembered as a loving wife, mother, sister, friend, and clergy person.

May her memory be a blessing.