



## Rabbi Paul C. Silbersher

April 23, 1930 - April 26, 2020

Celebration of a Life

PAUL C. SILBERSHER

APRIL 23, 1930 – APRIL 26, 2020

Beloved Rabbi, Cantor, and Jewish Leader

in Kansas City for 40 years

SUNDAY May 23, 2021

2pm ~ Social Hall

Jewish Community Center of Kansas City (JCC)

5801 W. 115th Street, Overland Park, KS 66211

Please join in celebrating your great friend and my father Paul, who passed away just as covid began, leaving us no chance for the ceremony he deserved.

It is finally our time to come together and give that to him, and to each other. Please bring your thoughts, memories, ideas, humor, and prayers--as together we tell the story of Paul.

For donations, it would be particularly meaningful if you could direct them to the JCC to fund a plaque and furniture setting that has been installed in his name in the main lobby.

We all know Paul loved nothing more than sitting down and talking with people, so with your help this space will always bear his mark in a place he called home.

Donation contact: [alleyd@thejkc.org](mailto:alleyd@thejkc.org) or 913-327-8001

For event details: Ricky Silbersher via [silbersher@icloud.com](mailto:silbersher@icloud.com)

(Nibbles & hydration provided ~ Safety protocols in place)

Rabbi Paul Cyril Silbersher (90) of Overland Park, KS passed away there peacefully Sunday April 26, 2020 with family and friends surrounding him through the end.

Rabbi Silbersher was born to Louis and Rose (Skolnick) Silbersher, proud and religious

immigrants from Poland and Belarus who raised the family in Millburn, NJ.

As soon as he could, Paul was sworn into the Navy for the Korean War and spent 8 loyal years in the Reserves. His first civilian job was as a Theater Page at NBC Studios in the early days of television.

Paul's journey began with his rare ability to touch souls; he had a profound singing voice and patient speaking style, and was a loving listener. His calling to serve Jewish life led him to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion/School of Sacred Music, where he graduated with a BA in 1955 and also later earned a Doctor of Music Degree (Honoris Causa) in 1998. In between, he completed his Rabbinical studies at the Academy for Jewish Religion and was ordained privately as a Rabbi in 1972.

Paul first entered the clergy as Cantor, Educator and Youth Director at: Temple Beth El in Stamford, CT (1957-59), The Free Synagogue of Westchester, Mount Vernon, NY (1960-66), Temple Sinai in Stamford, CT (1967-70) where he was also appointed Asst. Rabbi for Education, and finally Woodlands Community Temple in Hartsdale, NY (1971-78). Paul's parallel love for social work took him to roles as Chaplain at the Hawthorne Cedar-Knolls & Linden Hill Schools in Hawthorne, NY (1970) where he provided Spiritual Care and Counseling for court-referred teenagers. He completed his BA in Philosophy at the New School for Social Research (1964) and an MSW in Social Work from Yeshiva University (1974). Paul was named Social Worker (1975-77) for special education students in the Stamford (CT) Public School system, and then as Headmaster of the Noroton School for Special Education in Fairfield County (CT) for impaired, delayed, and disturbed children. In 1978 he became Director of the Bridgeport Children & Youth Day Treatment (aka the Family School) for the State of CT.

In 1979, Rabbi Silbersher with his family left East Coast life to accept the position as Cantor and Music Director at The Temple, Congregation B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City, MO—1900 members strong. There at the request of Sr. Rabbi Michael Zedek, he assumed full responsibilities including worship services, Torah study, Hebrew instruction, adult B'nai Mitzvah, life cycle events, hospital/home visits and shivah services. In addition, Rabbi worked with the Pre-School Director, Sisterhood & Brotherhood Presidents, Librarian, provided counseling, and represented The Temple at public events for 21 years.

Paul's quiet crown during this time was being elected as President of the American Conference of Cantors (1987-89). He also deepened his commitment to social work by establishing and supervising graduate student social work placement with the Kansas University School of Social Work. This program went on to serve the needs of Temple

members and others in 32 nursing homes and 300 students in two Charter public schools.

With the turn of the new century, Rabbi Silbersher pooled his experiences into creating new congregations: Kol Ami (KC) in 2003, heading as Spiritual Leader and retiring as Rabbi Emeritus in 2010; and Temple Sinai (KC), where he was the Senior Rabbi until 2013. He augmented those duties as an Adjunct Professor at St. Paul School of Theology Methodist Seminary & Baker University in Baldwin City (KS).

Rabbi Silbersher was a very proud and beloved Chaplain with the Overland Park Police and Fire Department. Awards from that work included "OPPD Volunteer of the Year" (2014) and the "FBI Kansas City Academy" (2006).

After a lifetime of inspiring people and building community, Rabbi turned his final attention to the creation of a Public Charter School— calling it Hope Academy—for students (aged 16-21) who had dropped out of public school in KC and who he believed deserved a second chance to complete their education, graduate with a degree, and continue to be empowered to contribute to society. Hope opened in 2016 at Zion Grove Missionary Baptist Church, moved to St. Anthony's Catholic School, and was preparing to build its own campus. Rabbi Silbersher was committed to the idea that Literacy is the road to Social Justice. He felt that Judaism calls us to see to it that those who are limited must be helped towards a genuine yearning to go beyond the bounds that contain them.

Paul was also a skilled and lifelong tennis player. Raised on clay and grass courts, he played with the Junior Davis Cup team (NY, NJ) and later won many mixed doubles titles from NY to Maine with his first wife Joan, and then daughter Ricky. He became certified by the APTA and spent many summers as the Head Tennis Pro at numerous clubs in CT & NY (1965-78).

He was preceded in death by his parents Louis and Rose, and his brother Marvin. Survivors include: his daughters Erica (Ricky) of Sydney, Australia, and Daniella of Palm Beach Gardens, FL; sons Mark of Bedford, NY, and Jed of Pound Ridge, NY; grandchildren Scout, Annabel, Charlotte, and J.J Silbersher; former wives, Joan Piken Silbersher of Pound Ridge, NY, Sherry Beckman, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, Dr. Marjorie Kaplan of Scottsdale, AZ; sister Shirley Churgin of Pacific Palisades, CA.

Rabbi Silbersher was an inspiring officiator to thousands of weddings, bris and baby namings, bar/bat mitzvahs, funerals, and other life ceremonies. His deep imprint will be felt and carried by many for years to come. In his own words: "May you always be a bearer of good news. Shalom...nothing missing...nothing broken."

Burial will be at the family plot at Temple Beth Israel in Woodbridge, NJ, that due to current covid practices in NJ only allows 3 loved ones to view from their car.

A memorial will be held in Kansas City on his Yahrzeit (a year from his passing) in April 2021, when all who wish to attend can celebrate together. Notification will be made public.

Contributions, if wished, would be graciously valued, to Rabbi Silbersher's beloved charities: Hadassah, Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, Jewish Family Services, Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, and Overland Park Police Department.

# Cemetery

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**Temple Beth Israel Cemetery**

Woodbridge, NJ,

# Events

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**MAY** **Celebration of Life** 02:00PM

**23**

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Jewish Community Center

5801 W. 115th St., Overland Park, KS, US

# Comments

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“ I got to know Paul as a teenager when he was Cantor and Youth Group leader at Free Synagogue of Westchester. For me he was a role model of an ethical, emotionally-intelligent person. When his study was redecorated he gave me his desk chair, which I still use every day - and think of him. 45 years ago this week he officiated at my wedding (pictures attached), which he helped us write. As we were looking at photos I thought of Paul and was sorry to learn of his passing. We had exchanged warm emails five years ago and I'm glad he had a rich, full life of spirituality and service. One test of a life well-lived is to have helped others live better, and Paul passed with flying colors! He will live on in our memories.



**Jon Fein** - May 20, 2020 at 12:56 PM

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“ I want to say that no words can express what a tremendous loss Paul's death is to those whos lives he touched. But this doesnt acknowledge how truly blessed we were to have had him in our lives. We owe a great deal of appreciation and gratitude to G-d for sharing one of his most special spirits with us, and be understanding that such a generous soul must eventually return home.

**Ray Jagoda** - May 11, 2020 at 09:39 PM

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“ Rabbi Paul was our cantor at Free Synagogue of Westchester and co-officiated with Rabbi Leon Jick at our wedding in 1965. We have remained in touch over the past several years .. When I was in high school he was Alfredo in our concert version of “La Traviata” with Lucia Albanese as Violetta. That has always been my favorite opera and Paul has always held a special place in my heart. What a full and productive life he led. He will always be in my thoughts. Love and deepest sympathy to his family

**Ellen Gold** - May 04, 2020 at 12:07 AM

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“ I remember Paul from the time that he was Cantor at the Free Synagogue in the 1950s. He was a young man then His voice was like the Angel Gabriel come down to earth. He worked with a wonderful Rabbi then, Rabbi Leon Jick. My family belonged to a conservative synagogue in the town but I would go on Friday nights to hear Cantor Silbersher and Rabbi Jick because they achieved an inspirational level of connection to the congregation and to the Almighty that I have never, in 76 years, experienced again. I have read all of the memorials on this wall to the wonderful mitzvahs Paul performed all his life and it was clearly a life well-lived with continued inspiration and comfort to so many people.  
My deepest condolences to the many loved ones Paul left behind. He will be so missed.  
Diane Eder Pincus

diane pincus - May 02, 2020 at 10:31 AM

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“ I will always be grateful to Cantor Silbersher. As I reconnected with Judaism in the 1980s and 1990s, I looked forward to rehearsals and services with the B'nai Jehudah volunteer choir. He spoke often of kavanah, of intention, and radiated that same kavanah. He taught me so much about cantorial work, liturgy, and Torah, always with understanding and humor. I can count on one hand the number of klei kodesh who have called me just to talk, and he is one of them.  
  
One of his favorite questions was: "If you woke up in the morning and couldn't remember anything, who would you be?" The question was meant to evoke the pondering of how important it "lizkor," "to remember" is to us. Paul, I will always remember you. Thank you, and rest b'shalom.

Andrew Curry - May 01, 2020 at 07:39 PM

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“ Dearest Daniel and Mark,  
Please accept my warmest condolences on the passing of your dad. Your dad was very involved in the Holmes Preschool during and long after you adorable kids had graduated. I had you in my class. The children and teachers looked forward to singing with him (and he with them) for years at the Holmes building and when the new education building was built and we had 2 schools (for three years) your dad still came down to 69th to sing with us. I also remember when he called my son early in the morning to go over this Bar Mitzvah Torah portion. He cared about everyone he touch and they cared about him  
Marshall and I had dinner several times with him at a friend's house. We sat for hours just kibitzing. I knew him as a Rabbi, Cantor, and friend- he wore many hats throughout his life and wore them well. He was a very interesting and admired man who will be missed by his many friends. May the memories you shared give you peace and comfort.  
Hugs,  
Lois Rose Bernstein (Miss Lois)

Lois Rose Bernstein - April 30, 2020 at 06:54 PM

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“ I had my Bat Mitzvah in 1980 and Canter Silbersher was the best teacher I could have asked for. He was very patient with me and kept me from giving up. He will be dearly missed. My condolences to his family.

Barbara Baker - April 30, 2020 at 06:38 PM

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“ I was his stand in during the years 1994 and 1995 at Bnai Jehudah. I helped with his Bnai Mitzvah program. He had such a beautiful way of teaching that age. I learned so much from him and Myra Braverman. i remember him looking like the picture on the left .  
Baruch Dayan Emet  
Leiba Levine

Leiba Levine - April 29, 2020 at 10:40 PM

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“ I was abused during my early childhood in Iowa. I lost my "voice" for decades until I met Rabbi Paul Silbersher. Rabbi Silbersher taught me how to find my voice. He was an empathetic listener. He taught me to ask questions, listen to others' points of view, and make time to hear their stories. I am finally beginning to use my own voice after 50 years of silencing and dismissing myself. I am finally acknowledging my own "story" as Rabbi Silbersher always encouraged me to do. I'm not afraid to trust myself any longer. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to speak with Rabbi Silbersher by phone prior to his death and say "Thank You" to him for the specific lessons he taught me. May Rabbi Silbersher live on through the valuable life lessons he taught all of us, and may we carry his good works forward by serving others and sharing these lessons with them. May we always give the ultimate thanks for Rabbi Silbersher's life directly to our Creator. Rabbi Silbersher taught me: "We are never really free until everyone is free." We still have much work to do in this broken world. You were right, Rabbi Silbersher. "We had a good run!"

Sabra Sandy - April 29, 2020 at 09:55 PM

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“ We were fortunate and blessed to have Rabbi Silbersher work with both our son's Bar Mitzvahs. Brad now 40 years old and Matt now 35 years old. Rabbi will always hold a special place in our hearts 27 years ago as he does today. His beautiful voice singing L'Chi Lach always touched me in an emotional way and it will always remind me of his warm incredible heart and kind caring soul. He truly was a blessing to everyone lucky enough to have him apart of their lives. The Johl Family



Bev and Justin Johl - April 29, 2020 at 09:55 PM

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“ Cantor Silbersher was the most significant factor in the Bar and Bat Mitzvah of Morgan and Brittany Welch. He was truly a holy man and we felt it in his presence. He was very gifted in so many ways, it was a life event for the Welch family to know him in some small way. He lives on in our lives.  
Richard Welch

Richard Welch - April 29, 2020 at 08:43 PM

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“ Helen Apple Farbman lit a candle in memory of Rabbi Paul C. Silbersher



**Helen Apple Farbman** - April 29, 2020 at 09:55 AM

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“ I had the opportunity to work with Paul at Kol Ami Synagogue for many years while I was teaching Hebrew and Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Paul was always great to work with and his congregation really loved him. I'm glad that I visited him a few months ago.

**Robert Sokol** - April 29, 2020 at 05:00 AM

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“ Silbersher Family,

My family had the honor of establishing a close bond with Rabbi, beginning with Kol Ami and Temple Sinai. His kindness, compassion and most unique, fabulous voice will forever be etched in our memories of him. We had the distinct honor of having him officiate at our daughters weddings and he always was there for us for whatever, whenever. Rest in peace, Rabbi and may the family take comfort in the person he was.

Carla and Mickey Lieberman

**Carla Lieberman** - April 28, 2020 at 08:36 PM

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“ Rabbi Silbersher made a deep and profound impact with our entire family. His preparation for bar and bat mitzvahs surpassed almost every educational opportunity. Not only did he elicit the "hows" of leading a service but he taught the "whys". The sermons that were presented elevated our children's analytic skills.

He related "soul to soul." His voice and his wisdom will always be cherished and remembered.

Merilyn and Loren Berenbom and family

**Merilyn Berenbom** - April 28, 2020 at 04:45 PM

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“ Walter Fink lit a candle in memory of Rabbi Paul C. Silbersher



**Walter Fink** - April 28, 2020 at 02:03 PM

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“ To the family of Rabbi Paul C Sibersher may his memory be a blessing to all of them.

Carol and Marvin Goldstein



**Carol and Marvin** - April 28, 2020 at 01:50 PM

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“ My wife and I remember him when he taught a class during our Rabbinic Association Conversion Class in 2010-11. He loved to break out into song, and we loved to hear him. He will be sorely missed, and his memory WILL be for a blessing!!

Michael Woolverton - April 28, 2020 at 01:04 PM

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“ To the family Rabbi holds a lot of memories for our family. He helped with our daughters B'at Mitzvah and he presided at her wedding. What a wonderful man and his memories with us are many. Rest is Peace Rabbi. David and Sara Yukon, Stacey and Calvin Allison.



Sara Yukon - April 28, 2020 at 12:51 PM

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“ "Paul's journey began with his rare ability to touch souls; he had a profound singing voice and patient speaking style, and was a loving listener." What I will cherish about his memory the most. Thank you for this posting.

Jeff Friedman - April 28, 2020 at 12:24 PM

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“ I am sorry for your loss. Over the years Rabbi Silbersher generously donated his time and talent on countless occasions to entertain the guests at the National Council of Jewish Women's Parties for the Blind. Everyone looked forward to his visits. Although the program ended many years ago, we all have fond memories of the Rabbi.

Symie Menitove

Symie Menitove - April 28, 2020 at 11:20 AM

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“ Rabbi Silbersher was a beloved mentor, colleague and friend for nearly fifty years. I shall remember him fondly and miss him dearly. - Cantor Gail Karp, Emerita, Temple Emanuel of Davenport Iowa

**Gail Karp** - April 28, 2020 at 10:58 AM

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“ I have said a lot already in some posts and he was so important in so many life events with my family. But what many don't know is that he did so many little things to help others without seeking any recognition. That is just the man that he was. He was loved by all and will be missed and thought of forever. Mike Boresow

**Mike Boresow** - April 28, 2020 at 10:17 AM