

TRIBUTE TO RICHARD D. ARONSON

ISRAEL BOND DINNER

NOVEMBER 20, 1983

Ella Wheeler Wilcox once wrote:

There are two kinds of people on earth today,
Just two kinds of people, no more, I say.

Not the good and the bad, for 'tis well understood
The good are half bad and the bad are half good.

Not the happy and sad, for the swift-flying years
Bring each man his laughter and each man his tears.

Not the rich and the poor, for to count a man's wealth
You must first know the state of his conscience and health.

Not the humble and proud, for in life's busy span
Who puts on vain airs is not counted a man.

No! the two kinds of people on earth that I mean
Are the people who lift and the people who lean.

We know which kind Richard D. Aronson is. He is a lifter. He has raised our sights and our standards. He forces us to be better than we otherwise would be. He allows us to reach beyond our expectations and to succeed.

For Dick it has always been so. As the only son of Dolly and Sid Aronson of Gloucester, Mass. he grew up surrounded by their love, their teaching, and their example. He proved his worth early. While at the Tilton School, he was both Vice President of his class and captain of his soccer and hockey teams. Dick was also the winner of the John F. Thompson Memorial Award as Senior Class Speaker. Dick and I have shared the podium many times. He has even, on occasion, paid tribute to me. When I first learned that I would have the honor of paying tribute to him tonight, I thought - great. I'll have the opportunity to pay him back. And then I realized I couldn't. I don't own, as Dick does, a little book called, "Maine Humor".

Dick was a government major at the University of New Hampshire where he was treasurer of his class and president of his fraternity, the first of many presidencies and chairmanships he would later assume.

Dick was married, in this building, to Adele Silverman on August 16, 1959, one week before Joel and I were married. Our friendship didn't begin immediately, however. Joel and I went back to college. For Adele and Dick it was the military. Even they recognized Dick's ability. Before he left the service, Mr. Aronson had become Captain Aronson, United States Army.

By 1961 we had all settled in Portland. We were adjusting to young married life, starting our families and our careers. And that could have been enough. It was, and is, for many people. But not for Dick. There was a void in Jewish communal leadership. There was our parents' generation. They had done, and were continuing to do, all of the big jobs. But there was no one to follow them. So in 1965, Joel, Larry Laben, Buddy Finberg, and Dick Aronson started Portland's first YJLC - Young Jewish Leadership Council - committed to raising not just dollars, but people. Starting with ourselves.

In 1978 Joel was honored by the National United Jewish Appeal at a dinner in New York. His parents were in Arizona, mine were in Florida, and our friends were in Maine. So Joel and I and our children went to New York alone. But not as alone as we thought. When we arrived at the dinner, there was Dick, doing his darndest to represent family, friends, and community - and doing it well. I guess I have always known, but hadn't realized until that moment - how very special Dick Aronson is.

As the years went by, Dick, with Adele, raised a family - three sons who are a tribute not only to Adele and Dick, but perhaps more importantly, as you have already heard, to themselves. And Dick became an important person in the tire industry - again as you have already heard, both locally and nationally. And Dick has become involved in the community.

There is an old saying that behind every successful man there is a surprised mother-in-law. I don't think Betty is surprised any more. Or Joe either. Dick's successes just keep accumulating.

He is a former director of both the Jewish Community Center and the Portland Boys Club. He has been president of Temple Beth El and of the Jewish Federation Community Council of Southern Maine.

He has been chairman of both the federation campaign and the campaign for Israel Bonds.

He has been a doer, a shaker, a mover, and a lifter.

Dick-

If you had only lived amongst us, but didn't lead us	Dayenu.
If you had only lead us, but didn't enrich us	Dayenu.
If you had only enriched us, but didn't love us	Dayenu.

But you do even more than that. You enhance our lives. We walk tall, with pride and with dignity, secure in the knowledge that the Jewish people is a little better and the world a little brighter, because Richard D. Aronson is walking with us.

G-d bless you.