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Short eulogy for Harry Cohen by Peter Underwood at his Memorial Service, 18th May 2024.

Dear friends, and family of Harry – and... particularly... his sister Rachel, and his children Alinta, Joel and Sebastian – and of course, the indefatigable, the irrepressible wife of nearly seventy years....

June,

I am Peter Underwood... long-term friend, and—well as-much-as-we-peaceniks-can-be—comrade-in-arms to Harry.

I will be speaking to you from each of those two roles, friend and activist, and particularly from the second, as a member of the Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW) of which I am a long-serving office bearer, and Harry was a founder and a devoted member.

But – and I hope this pleases you! - I want to share, not so much a list of Harry's many lifetime achievements, which were many and noble and in varied fields such as medicine, women's rights, the environment, the community, peace and many others.

No, today I wish to tell you a bit more *about the person* behind those extraordinary achievements. This personhood seems to me more inspiring, and *this*, I will try to signal and sketch today.

Some years ago – it might have been at Harry's 80th birthday – a small group of us got together with him, and I asked everyone to reflect on Harry, and after a minute, find one word or tiny phrase that immediately jumped into their mind when they thought of him.

Let's, for 30 seconds, do that now.

[waits a few seconds]

I remember, those years back, we were delivered some wonderful words!

The obvious and the beautiful included:

wise

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*caring**principled**inspiring**brave**never-gives-up*

and this next from a somewhat embarrassed former obstetric patient whose twins I know for a fact were delivered by Harry

Drop-dead-gorgeous!

But it strikes me now that true to Harry as each of those words are, they belie something greater: here was a person who usually gave us an almost disconcerting impression: we sensed that *he knew more than he said*.

As I reflect on this, it seems one key to the man, and why he affected us as he did: we felt a gravitas that was inexpressible in ordinary ways: we sensed it not from his words, and even only partly from observing and sharing in his activities. I see this feeling, tender, rare, fragile, arising through *our* own feelings, *our* intuition in response to his.... *soul*. And I use this word carefully as we all know Harry loved to poke fun at all established religions!

Even in public, this inner presence could be transmitted. Once, when both of us had been addressing an anti-war crowd, a person came up chuckling. 'You two are so different', she said, 'You Peter, go *to* the audience, while Harry, he brings them to him'.

I think Lao Tsu, two thousand years ago, captures this quality of *our* man

*What is in parts becomes whole**What is crooked becomes straight**What is deep becomes filled**What is exhausted becomes refreshed**Thus wise persons regard the world as their pattern*

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They do not display themselves

Therefore they are illuminated

They do not define themselves

Therefore they are distinguished

They do not make claims

Therefore they are credited

They do not boast

Therefore they advance.

To become whole,

Turn within.

In short, I believe that it was this ‘within’ - that intellectual gravity of Harry’s – that space of ‘knowing more than he said’ - that we sensed... and that *he then invited us to join and share... And to believe in.*

And when we did find ourselves in that inner space, we discovered something else; here was a profound belief in *goodness* – that sustaining *trust* that inspires, *but transcends action*. This quality made him a unique leader of men and women.

And, specifically, Harry felt deeply about the wrong of war and violence. And he understood – in that soul of his - that since these twin evils cause profound and long-lasting damage to human health, *it is simply a part of our job as doctors and healers to do our utmost to prevent them.*

Even more, I believe that he saw us as addicted to war... and so addicted to the shrivelling of our sublime and survival-generating capacity for love, creating a misery lasting for generations after

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generation. ‘What about the children’, he said to me, deeply moved, a few months ago as we spoke of Ukraine..., ‘And *their* children?’

Thus, as he saw it, *fostering peace... was fostering love.*

And how MAPW?

MAPW had its origins in the Cold War when the two blocs were facing madness... and MAD or Mutually Assured Destruction. First in 1980 came the International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, and when the Australian affiliate MAPW soon followed, Harry was at its beginning, then starting the MAPW-WA Chapter in 1981. During the 1990s Harry also took on the role of MAPW National President and later of Vice-President.

With the WA Branch up and going, so began our regular meetings at the beautiful old rambling Nedlands home of June and Harry. Their home became, in a touching way, the home and crucible of *our* little group... and was to remain so for an incredible thirty-nine years. Here, with Harry pouring the wine, we found time to chuckle with him at the world’s craziness... and soon began to discover and catch, if we were brave enough, our own inner, human possibilities... of trust and of hope.

While working with our National Office and joining members at regular national and international meetings we kept going at local peace activities, including liaison with other peace groups such as the People for Nuclear Disarmament, public rallies, and specific projects, including two significant Peace and Art Shows. And Harry Cohen was first our leader and chief activist, then, in later years, our mentor and inspirer.

He never faltered - even when necessary, taking on the conservative members of the medical world, and becoming a brave and rare voice within his own Jewish community supporting the cause of Palestinians.

So reminding us again on Taoist leaders....

Not putting on display,

They shine forth.

Not justifying themselves,

They are distinguished.

Not bragging,

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They never falter.

Harry Cohen put on no display, but shone forth; he did not justify himself, but was distinguished ... He didn't brag ... and he never faltered ...

While you may or may not believe in a personal God presiding over an after-life for the departed, we do know that our bodies are made from the stuff of stars.

So they incubated *this* earth ... from which we humans arose ...

And Harry Cohen remains ... *our* star.

How lucky are we... to have the chance to take in a little of his light...

1120 wds now approx 8 minutes