

organization of Orthodox Jews in our country.

I was privileged to have known Rabbi Sherer for many years and to benefit from his wise counsel. He lived an extraordinarily righteous and productive life, and was a kindly but driving force in the unprecedented growth of his organization and its perspective within America. Rabbi Sherer was also a very successful bridgebuilder to other faith communities in his effort to spread the light of religious truth throughout our country.

I shall miss Rabbi Sherer, and wish to extend to his wife, Deborah, and his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren my condolences and best wishes.

Mr. President, I ask that the full text of two articles from the New York Times of May 19, 1998 be printed in the RECORD. The first describes Rabbi Sherer's remarkable life, and the second the effect of his death on the more than 20,000 people who came to his funeral in New York two days ago.

The articles follow:

[From the New York Times, May 19, 1998]

RABBI MOSHE SHERER, 76, WHO CONTRIBUTED TO RISE OF ORTHODOXY'S RIGHT WING IN U.S.
(By Gustav Niebuhr)

Rabbi Moshe Sherer, who built a relatively small Orthodox Jewish organization, Agudath Israel of America, into a politically and religiously influential force among American Jewish groups, died Sunday afternoon in Manhattan. He was 76 and lived in Brooklyn.

He died after an illness of several months, a spokesman for the group said.

Rabbi Sherer had served since 1963 as president of Agudath Israel of America, an educational and social service organization that also represents hundreds of Orthodox religious schools, or yeshivas in the United States and Canada.

Through his work at Agudath Israel, Rabbi Sherer played a leading role in the rise of Orthodox Judaism's right wing, which has gained in influence and self-confidence since the 1960's, at the expense of Orthodoxy's more moderate wing.

That shift seemed unlikely when Rabbi Sherer joined Agudath Israel as its executive vice president in 1941, when it was a small group with few employees. In an interview last year, he said some people warned him that Agudath Israel's rigorously traditional Orthodox approach had little future in America. But, he said, "it's a growth stock today."

Sociologists say that Orthodoxy's strict traditionalists have benefited from charismatic leadership, a high birthrate and anxiety among many Orthodox Jews over signs of moral turmoil in society.

Today, Agudath Israel, with headquarters at 84 William St., Manhattan, has branches throughout the country and a Washington office that lobbies the government on religious issues. It belongs to the Agudath Israel World Organization, of which Rabbi Sherer was appointed chairman in 1980. In Israel, it is associated with the strictly Orthodox United Torah Judaism Party, a member of the governing coalition.

Among Agudath Israel's earliest projects under Rabbi Sherer's leadership was sending food shipments to Jews in Nazi-dominated Eastern Europe and producing affidavits to help refugees immigrate to the United States. After World War II, the organization

shipped food and religious articles to Jews in displaced persons camps and assisted those who wanted to immigrate.

With Agudath Israel's constituency of religious schools, Rabbi Sherer served a world that prizes scholarship. Born in Brooklyn on June 8, 1921, he was educated at Torah Vodath, a Brooklyn yeshiva, and Ner Israel rabbinical college in Baltimore. He told associates that his main mentor was the late Rabbi Aharon Kotler, who founded a highly regarded yeshiva in Lakewood, N.J.

Yet Rabbi Sherer was known as an organizer rather than an intellectual, with diplomatic and political skills that enabled him to forge coalitions within the decentralized and contentious world of Orthodox Judaism, and with other religious groups.

"He was able to take disparate groups, bring them together and get them to cooperate in the areas where they would agree," said Rabbi Nosson Scherman, general editor of *Artscroll*, a major publisher of Jewish texts.

Rabbi Steven M. Dworken, executive vice president of the Rabbinical Council of America, which represents about 1,000 Orthodox rabbis, said Rabbi Sherer "was responsible in many, many ways for placing Agudath Israel on the map."

As the most strictly observant of the Orthodox community became more visible and organized politicians took note. In January 1994, Rabbi Sherer delivered the invocation at the first inauguration of Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York. Vice President Al Gore was the speaker at the organization's 76th annual dinner, held in New York the day Rabbi Sherer died.

But the organization was also considered important earlier. When *The New York Times* described the growing influence of local religious groups in a 1974 article, it quoted Rabbi Sherer as saying about Agudath Israel, "There is hardly a legislator from any Jewish neighborhood in the city who does not know how we stand on issues that concern us and how thorough we are about informing our constituents about positions the legislators take on these issues."

Still, he did not have the visibility of some of his counterparts at other Jewish organizations. "He wasn't a headline-maker," said Samuel C. Heilman, professor of Jewish studies and sociology at the Graduate School of the City University of New York. Instead, Professor Heilman said, Rabbi Sherer worked quietly "to keep the channels of communication open" between Agudath Israel and other Jewish organizations.

What helped is that Agudath Israel reached out to the entire Jewish community with its programs promoting Jewish identity and learning. Last September, for example, the organization sponsored a celebration for men who had completed a seven-year program of reading the entire Talmud, the Jewish civil and religious law, at the rate of a page a day. An estimated 70,000 people participated, filling Madison Square Garden and other arenas.

Rabbi Sherer sometimes took positions at odds with non-Orthodox organizations. He supported aid by Federal and state governments to religious schools, a stand that placed his organization on the same side of that issue as the Roman Catholic Church but nettled some Jewish groups that supported a strict separation of church and state.

Testifying before Congress on this issue in 1961, he said, "Classical Judaism has, from the very inception of the Jewish people, placed religious education in sharp focus as the centrality of life itself."

More recently, he helped lead an effort to counter attempts by Reform and Conservative Jews to gain official recognition of non-Orthodox rabbis in Israel. Last Novem-

ber, he announced that Agudath Israel would spend \$2 million for newspaper advertisements to promote the view that within Israel, conversions and other rites should remain under Orthodox control.

Agudath Israel's spokesman, Rabbi Avi Shafran, said Rabbi Sherer's stand stemmed from the conviction that "the only unifying force for the Jewish people is the Jewish religious heritage."

Rabbi Sherer is survived by his wife, the former Deborah Portman; two daughters, Rochel Langer of Monsey, N.Y., and Elky Goldschmidt of Brooklyn; a son, Rabbi Shimshon Sherer of Brooklyn, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

BOROUGH PARK MOURNS JEWISH LUMINARY

(By Garry Pierre-Pierre)

The armada of yellow buses that usually clog the narrow streets of Borough Park, Brooklyn, shuttling students from yeshivas to their homes, was nowhere in sight yesterday. Instead, the streets were filled with thousands of people mourning the death of Rabbi Moshe Sherer, whom many considered the elder statesman of the American Orthodox Jewish community.

The mourners crowded the streets, stood on rooftops and sat in their living rooms to listen to eulogies, broadcast throughout the neighborhood by loudspeaker, for a man known for his tireless efforts to unite Jewish sects and to reach out to the secular world.

Within hours of his death on Sunday afternoon, his followers had begun gathering on the streets around the modest brick building of Congregation Agudath Israel of Borough Park. By late yesterday, more than 20,000 had lined up to pay their respects.

When Rabbi Sherer's white coffin, draped with a black velvet cloth, was carried from the hearse into a sun-soaked street, a huge cry of grief rose from the crowd. The coffin was supported by about 20 men and seemed in danger of toppling as the men jostled for position.

"He had the power and charisma to bring the secular and religious groups together," said Joseph Rappaport, an officer with Congregation Agudath Israel. "He was able to create bridges."

Rabbi Sherer, who died at age 78, had for more than 30 years headed Agudath Israel of America, an advocacy organization that he helped transform from a small group into a formidable movement that claims 100,000 members and has branches around the country.

Among those paying respects yesterday were Gov. George E. Pataki, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and other politicians and dignitaries. The crowds grew so big that the police blocked car traffic from 13th through 16th Avenues and 43d through 50th Streets.

One mourner, Morton M. Avigdor, leaned against a police barricade in front of the congregation building and explained how Rabbi Sherer had fought for government benefits and services for children in nonpublic schools by allying himself with Catholic school advocates.

"He felt that people of all faith should be entitled to education," said Mr. Avigdor, a lawyer. "It is truly a great loss."

TRIBUTE TO NICHOLAS "NICK" LEIST

● Mr. BOND. Mr. President, across our great nation there are thousands of teachers dedicated to the development of young minds. In Missouri, as a former Governor and U.S. Senator, I have had the opportunity to meet many educators and have a great deal

of admiration for their commitment to our youth.

I have found, however, some teachers are special and go beyond the call of duty to lead their students toward a rewarding and productive life. Today, I rise to speak about one such teacher who is retiring this year, Nicholas "Nick" Leist.

For thirty-six years Mr. Leist has dedicated his life teaching music to young people in Missouri. Mr. Leist has not only been an educator, he has been a friend and inspiration to literally thousands of students. Over the last thirty years, he has taught more than 9,000 students at Jackson High School, and his musicians have had a phenomenal record, having achieved twenty-seven consecutive number one ratings at district music contests. More than eight dozen students have gone on to become teachers themselves, following in the steps of their mentor.

On May 5, 1998, Mr. Leist conducted his last Jackson High School band concert which brought tears to the eyes of students and their Mr. Leist. They will miss Nick Leist at Jackson High School next year; however, the impact he had on students will live on for generations through the people he inspired to greater personal heights. I join the many who wish Mr. Leist happiness in the years to come. ●

HONORING TIMOTHY CORDES

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I would like to bring to the attention of Members of Congress and the country a young constituent of mine.

Some of you may have read about Timothy Cordes in Monday's Washington Post. For those of you who didn't, Tim—who is from Eldridge, Iowa—just received a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Notre Dame, with a 3.99 grade point average. Tim was the valedictorian of his class and will begin medical school at the University of Wisconsin this summer. These would be outstanding accomplishments for any young person. They are especially remarkable in this case, because Tim is blind—only the second blind person ever admitted to a U.S. medical school.

Tim has a genetic condition that gradually diminished his vision until he was blind when he was 14. Doctors diagnosed him with the disease when he was two. They talked about how blindness would limit Tim's life. But his parents wouldn't accept that for their son. His mother said that after talking with the doctors, "I went home and just ignored everything they said." Thank goodness for that!

I have spent much of my time in the Senate working toward a society in which all Americans, those with disabilities and those without, have the same opportunities to succeed. That's what all people with disabilities want—an equal opportunity to succeed. Some will succeed and some won't, but it will be because of their abilities, not their disabilities. Tim personifies the fact

that when society accommodates people with disabilities to allow them to reach their full potential, we all benefit.

At Notre Dame, Tim overcame his blindness by asking fellow students to describe the molecular structures they were studying and by using his computer to re-create the images in three-dimensional forms on a special monitor he could touch. In addition to his academic achievements, Tim earned a black belt in tae kwon do and jujitsu, went to football games and debated with this friends whether the old or new "Star Trek" is better.

Tim's biochemistry professor called him a remarkable young man and the most brilliant student he's ever had. One of Tim's roommates said that he was "simply amazing to be around."

Tim doesn't mind being an inspiration to others, but he doesn't think of himself that way. In his words, "[i]t was just hard work." Well, that's for sure!

For my part, I am honored to represent Tim and his parents and to be able to take this time to congratulate him and his parents for all their great work. Congratulations!

Mr. President, I ask that the full text of the Washington Post article be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Washington Post, May 18, 1998]
BLIND VALEDICTORIAN IS HEADED TO MED SCHOOL; NOTRE DAME STUDENT CREDITS "JUST HARD WORK" FOR HIS SUCCESS

(By Jon Jeter)

SOUTH BEND, IN.—Sure but sightless, Timothy Cordes arrived on the University of Notre Dame campus four years ago, an 18-year-old freshman from Eldridge, Iowa, who wanted to enroll in the biochemistry program. Faculty members tried, politely, to dissuade him. Just how, they wondered aloud, could a blind student keep up with the rigorous courses and demanding laboratory work of biochemistry?

Cordes graduated today from Notre Dame with a degree in biochemistry and a 3.991 grade-point average. He was the last of Notre Dame's 2,000 seniors to enter the crowded auditorium for commencement. His German shepherd, Electra, led him to the lectern to deliver the valedictory speech as his classmates rose, cheered, applauded and yelled his name affectionately.

Cordes starts medical school in two months, only the second blind person ever admitted to a U.S. medical school. He does not plan to practice medicine. His interest is in research, he said: "I've just always loved science."

His life has been both an act of open, mannerly defiance and unshakable faith. And this unassuming, slightly built young man with a choirboy's face awes acquaintances and friends.

Armed with Electra, a high-powered personal computer and a quick wit, Cordes managed a near-perfect academic record, an A-minus in a Spanish class the only blemish. Two weeks ago, he earned a black belt in the martial arts tae kwon do and jujitsu.

"He is really a remarkable young man," said Paul Helquist, a Notre Dame biochemistry professor. Helquist at first had doubts but ultimately recommended Cordes for medical school. "He is by far the most brilliant student I've ever come across in my 24 years of teaching," the professor said.

If others find some noble lessons in this life, Cordes perceives it more prosaically: He's merely shown up for life and done what was necessary to reach his goals.

"If people are inspired by what I've done, that's great, but the truth is that I did it all for me. It was just hard work. It's like getting the black belt. It's not like I just took one long lesson. It was showing up every day, and sweating and learning and practicing. You have your bad days and you just keep going."

Despite his academic accomplishments, Cordes led a fairly ordinary life in college, debating, for example, the merits of the old and new "Star Trek" series with Patrick Murowsky, a 22-year-old psychology major from Cleveland who roomed with Cordes their sophomore year.

"The thing about Tim is that he's fearless and he just seems to have this faith. Once we were late for a football game and we had to run to the stadium. He had no qualms about running at top speed while I yelled 'jump,' or I would yell 'duck' and he would duck. And we made it. He is simply amazing to be around sometimes," said Murowsky.

Cordes has Leber's disease, a genetic condition that gradually diminished his vision until he was blind at age 14.

When doctors at the University of Iowa first diagnosed the disease when he was 2, "it was the saddest moment of my life," said his mother, Therese, 50.

"The doctors . . . told us: 'He won't be able to do this, and don't expect him to be able to do this,'" Therese Cordes recalled. "So I went home and just ignored everything they said."

The ability to conceptualize images has greatly helped Cordes in his studies, Helquist said. The study of biochemistry relies heavily on graphics and diagrams to illustrate complicated molecular structures. Cordes compensated for his inability to see by asking other students to describe the visual sides or by using his computer to re-create the images in three-dimensional forms on a special screen he could touch.

Cordes applied to eight medical schools. Only the University of Wisconsin accepted him. (The first blind medical student was David Hartman, who graduated from Temple University in 1976 and is a psychiatrist in Roanoke, Va.)

"Tim has always exceeded people's expectations of him," said Teresa Cordes, who, with her husband, Tom, watched Tim graduate. "He really does inspire me." ●

TRIBUTE TO DR. JOHN H. MOORE JR.

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Dr. John H. Moore Jr. for his humanitarian efforts on behalf of Operation Smile, an organization that provides free medical care to children around the world.

Dr. Moore distinguished himself when he started the Philadelphia Chapter of Operation Smile in 1988. Since then he has expanded this group to provide annual missions to Nicaragua, the Philippines, Vietnam, Liberia, Kenya and other third world countries. Locally, Operation Smile provides free care for school children in the Philadelphia area. Working with philanthropic organizations, the group brings physicians from other countries to Philadelphia for advanced training in techniques used to reconstruct child deformities.