



Irwin Harold Silberberg

February 25, 1926 - March 15, 2021

Irwin Harold Silberberg was born February 25, 1926 in Austin. His family roots in Texas go back far – his mother’s family arrived in Austin in 1874, and his father’s family came to Red River County in northeast Texas in the 1860s, eventually taking up residence in Clarksville, where his father owned a dry goods store.

Growing up in Clarksville, Harold developed a wide range of interests, including tennis and especially photography. He had his own home darkroom and was able to develop film and print photos using his homemade enlarger. He particularly enjoyed the long family vacations each summer, where buying trips for the store were expanded into a wide exploration of our country. They eventually visited almost every state during their travels.

Harold was an outstanding student, graduating as valedictorian of his class at Clarksville High School. He particularly enjoyed his chemistry class and entered The University of Texas in 1943 as a chemical engineering major.

He also became a member of Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity, serving twice as president. In the social settings of university life, Harold’s quick wit and fine sense of humor became well known. At one party, a young woman he did not know came up to him and announced, “I hear you are funny – say something funny!” He may not have been able to deliver on demand at that moment, but

he definitely had a gift for humor and brought laughter to others throughout his life.

Harold continued to excel academically, eventually working with his graduate advisor and mentor, the legendary John McKetta. The dynamic Dr. McKetta bestowed on Harold what would become his professional nickname, “Hal”. Ever after, to all professional and academic colleagues, he was Hal.

While a student, one evening Harold was attending a large fraternity party, and at one point the elevator door opened and he saw in front of him a striking young woman. Black evening dress, vivid red hair – he was instantly wowed. A few years later, in 1949, he married her – Adele, his life partner.

Harold continued his graduate studies in chemical engineering as he and Adele started a family. Four children were born between 1952 and 1956 – Jay, John, Celia, and Harriet. In addition to a rapid acquisition of a brood of kids, he and Adele also provided a home for numerous cats. Harold had a deep fondness for cats, and at various times over his life provided loving care for many.

After completing his studies and earning his PhD, Harold’s family moved to Dallas as he began his career. After just a few years in Dallas, he was recruited back to the UT campus to join the petroleum engineering department as Assistant Director of the Texas Petroleum Research Committee. There, he continued to conduct research and also mentored the PhD candidates in their research and dissertation work. The department was very international, and students from all over the world benefited from Harold’s guidance and experience.

Shortly after returning to Austin, Harold and Adele began their search for a small piece of property on which to build a home. In 1961, they acquired 11

acres outside of town. Harold worked closely with architect Frank DeGroot on the design, bringing his creative ideas to the project, as well as the precision thinking of an engineer. He enjoyed the process immensely, and in 1962 the family moved into their “ever after” home, nestled among centuries-old live oak trees. Here, Harold and Adele developed their life-long interest in gardening and landscaping. Clearing brush, establishing lawns, planting fruit trees – every weekend was filled with caring for and enhancing the natural beauty of the setting.

For recreation, there was league bowling, another shared interest for them. Harold was quite a good bowler, breaking 200 several times. And in summers, long family trips were built around the professional engineering conferences he attended, reminiscent of his own family trips growing up.

Harold and Adele were members of Congregation Beth Israel from 1960, when the family returned to Austin from Dallas. Over the years, he was able to bring his precise, analytical thinking and his creative problem solving to help address the challenges that the growing Congregation Beth Israel community encountered.

The next generation began with the first grandchild in 1980, and over the next several years grew to five – Jennifer, Linda, Melissa, Andrew, and Pamela. He was a doting grandfather, lovingly known as “Grandad,” and he and his grandkids were an active mutual appreciation society. Harold filled their childhoods with unforgettable memories that continued to be made well into adulthood, and whenever they speak of him, they do so with a fondness reserved only for a grandparent. He was very proud of each of them, and that delight carried over to his eleven great-grandchildren, whom he affectionately referred to as “The Greats”. He will be missed by them every single day.

With his kids grown, it was time to start back up with filling the home with cats. The family home became home to a series of beautiful and loving cats. Harold was devoted to them, and the bond he had with his cats was quite special.

And it wasn't just cats in his life. As Austin grew to surround the home, it became a bit of a wildlife sanctuary, especially for deer. Harold always was happy to see his deer "family" roaming the yard, especially noting with fondness the new fawns each season. As the years went by, Harold went to half-time at the university, then quarter-time, and then eventually retired.

His passion for creative and analytical thinking always stayed with him, and he brought that to various endeavors, from advising grandchildren as they grew up, to discussing photography technique with a son-in-law, to his later-in-life dedication to working the daily Jumble word puzzle in the newspaper.

Harold's role as an editor began at UT. He was instrumental in helping graduate students and colleagues polish their writing. He continued as an editor of professional publications. His zeal for editing carried over into his personal life, often to the chagrin of those around him. He particularly enjoyed the word-play cartoon portion of Jumble. Word-play, puns, humor, all were a part of his life. Even as recently as January this year, Harold's quick wit and word-play talent were on display. Following the January 6 events at the US Capitol, while watching the news coverage, Harold quipped that he wasn't sure it was a "coup", but he did think it was "cuckoo".

Harold approached the changes he encountered in his long life with grace and kindness, and of course humor. He showed deep appreciation and loving affection for the people in his life, his now-large family, his caregivers, and friends and colleagues who came to visit. His kind heart and generous spirit were evident to all.

His way of being with people could be summed up as follows: Appreciate the people in your life. Be kind to the people in your life. Be of assistance to the people in your life. And if opportunity presents, make 'em laugh.

Harold is preceded in death by his beloved wife of 66 years, Adele. He is survived by his children, Jay and Langdon Silberberg, John Silberberg and Missey Morgan, Celia Silberberg and Barry Jucha, Harriet and Alan Schwartz; his grandchildren, Ryan and Jennifer (Schwartz) Benator, Matthew and Melissa (Schwartz) Bittel, Andrew and Stefanie Schwartz, Brian and Linda (Silberberg) Wynne, Pamela Silberberg and fianc? Dario Giles; his great grandchildren, Lily and Austin Benator, Olivia, Brayden, and Caleb Bittel, Nathan and Alice Schwartz, and Logan, Remi, Isabelle, and Dean Wynne.

The family wishes to thank Harold's caregivers, Linda Valadez, Deborah Garcia, and her team from Texas Home Care Partners.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial contribution may be made in Harold's honor to the Silberberg Family Fund at Austin Community Foundation (bit.ly/haroldsilberberg), the Silberberg Endowed Undergraduate Petrophysics Teaching Laboratory at The University of Texas Petroleum and Geosystems Engineering Department (www.engr.utexas.edu/connect/giving), or Congregation Beth Israel (bethisrael.org)

Previous Events

Computer Accessible Graveside Service

MAR 18. 1:00 PM (CT)

Austin Natural Funerals Facebook Page
<http://facebook.com/austinnaturalfunerals>

Tribute Wall



“ *Austin Natural Funerals created a Irwin Harold Silberberg Funeral Service in memory of Irwin Harold Silberberg*



Austin Natural Funerals - March 18, 2021 at 04:43 PM



“ *Irwin Harold Silberberg*

October 14, 2022 at 12:02 PM



“ *Harold was a Wonderful Witty kind intelligent Soul,, So easy to be around And share an afternoon, I enjoyed Designing and installing fruit and trees flowering trees native mountain Laurel And many other varieties of plant material, What a gorgeous Homestead the family maintained, Harold truly reminded me of my father from Canada And just recently and am so glad I had had a deep soothing lengthy conversation with Harold,, I celebrate his life and the fact that he made the world a much better place Comfort to all his family and friends,,Mitchell Brown*

Mitchell Brown - April 06, 2021 at 01:22 PM

GS

“ Stanley Strum never tired of talking about how brilliant Harold Silberberg was. Stanley also enjoyed Harold's sense of humor. I loved taking a private walk one year with Harold as he explained in great detail each addition to the complex that was their home and why each portion was added. Harold seemed to relate to my real estate business. He and Dell were so very different but they complimented each other and provided a warm loving home for friends and family. I will miss Harold.

Glenda Strum
Waco Texas

Glenda Strum - March 24, 2021 at 01:21 PM

JK

“ Harold was one of the kindest, most gracious people I ever met. When Celia and I were in the midst of a complicated move from Austin to Reno, Harold and Del generously invited me to stay at their house for a few days. They made what could have been an awkward situation feel perfectly natural. I also got the impression that Harold could talk comfortably with anyone, on whatever level was appropriate for them. Truly a mensch, as Charles said.

John Kupersmith - March 19, 2021 at 05:41 PM

KK

“ Bruce and I send our condolences, Celia. He sounds like an amazing person. We're glad you & Barry were able to spend so much time with him. Love to you both, Kathy & Bruce Kravitz.

Kathy C Kravitz - March 19, 2021 at 01:36 PM

KS

“ As DDD mentioned recently, your dad and mom ran the 1st JCC in Austin! Thank you for sharing your home and family with us. What good times we had together.

Harold and Adele were pillars of the Jewish community and affected not only us Jews but the greater Austin community and far beyond our small town as well. Your parents were intelligent strong leaders, visionaries and great role models - sweet and at the same time, stern. I'm happy to have known them. Truly good people, mensches for sure.

Sending my love and sympathy, Kent Samuelson

Kent Samuelson - March 18, 2021 at 08:58 AM

JS

“ *Harold was a warm, wonderful man. He was always interested in others and so enjoyable to visit with. I am grateful for such good memories. Sending love to Celia, John, Jay, Harriet and their families.*

Juliette Forchheimer Schwab - March 17, 2021 at 11:43 PM



“ *A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Irwin Harold Silberberg.*



March 17, 2021 at 07:38 PM

CG

“ *Harold was not only one of the smartest people who I knew, but also one of the kindest. He was truly a mensch. The entire Golenternek family and extended family will really miss this extraordinary man. He lived a wonderful and truly productive life.*

Charles Alexander GOLENERNEK - March 17, 2021 at 05:07 PM

SG

“ *I will miss Harold's wisdom and sense of humor. He has been such a major part of the Golenternek family and reunions. My thoughts and prayers go to Jay, John, Celia , and Harriette.*

Sheldon Gross

Sheldon G Gross - March 17, 2021 at 02:55 PM