

Dr. Herbert Keyserling passed away on June 18, 2000. Dr. Keyserling was a founding member of our Society and a pillar of the Beaufort community. His funeral was a wonderful reflection of Jewish life in Beaufort. Rabbi Belzer officiated, the Hallelujah Chorus sang gospel music, and the casket, draped in an American flag, was afforded full military honors.

Eulogy for Dr. Herbert Keyserling
June 21, 2000 - Beaufort, South Carolina
by Pat Conroy

Herbert Keyserling was always his own best story.

The story begins in 1869 in a *shtetl* in Lithuania and ends today in a Jewish cemetery in Beaufort, South Carolina. His story carries with it tales of pogroms and Cossacks and the invasion of Tsar's men as his father, William Keyserling, hid in a farmer's wagon and smuggled his way across a heavily guarded Russian border. In that year that same boy decided to become an American. William was the first Keyserling to arrive at Ellis Island in the shadow of the great statue the world calls Liberty. It was this father who came to Beaufort to plant the Keyserling name, yes, the famous Keyserling name, yes, the honored, revered Keyserling name, in the social history of this town. Such stories are the ones that define the glorious paths that turn immigrants into Americans and Americans into great men like the one we bury today - Dr. Herbert Keyserling.

Think Herbert lacked greatness? Think again. He had it written all over him. Pick a child of a certain age in Beaufort and there is a good chance that Herbert was present at his or her birth. Think I exaggerate? He delivered half of my own children and when Megan and Melissa say they were "birthed" by Herbert Keyserling they say it with a fierce and unstoppable pride. They knew what Herbert and his family have stood for because I have told them. Any woman who has found Herbert standing over her during the great storm and freight train that is childbirth and listened to his calming, stoic words as he coaxed her child into life can tell you the secret things about his quiet greatness. Ask a poor black man or black woman anywhere in this county who they would trust among white people in this county and Keyserling would often be the first name that you would hear. The Keyserling family did not do their good work for black people in the slums of New York - no, they did it in Klan country. Herbert did it for black people every day of his working life as he did it for white people with the same overpowering sense of awe and love for the profession of medicine.

As a young man Herbert Keyserling was the kind of man that America would send to war. How'd he do in wartime? He did well enough at Guadalcanal to win a Silver Star. Know what a Star is? It is one of our nation's highest awards for uncommon valor under fire. They only give them to heroes of the first order. Herbert Keyserling crawled to the sides of critically wounded soldiers on the front line of the Battle of Guadalcanal. Men were dying all around him. He did the job that America had sent him to do and he did it with exemplary courage. We bury a Silver Star here today and we honor this cemetery by so doing. Herbert Keyserling was fighting in the greatest war to end tyranny ever fought. As he fought in the Pacific, other Americans were planning the landing on D-Day when American boys would fight the forces of Hitler and inch their way toward Auschwitz and the butchers of Bergen-Belsen who emptied the ghettos of all traces and memories of its Jews. Today, we honor a Jew who fought against them.

The honesty of Herbert Keyserling was both a form of genius and greatness. He often told you things about yourself that you would not want to know. His honesty could be a cutting thing, but if you were sick or hurt or in need, the soft, sweet care of Dr. Keyserling is what you found ready to be of service to you. Whenever I was sick, Herbert was the man I needed by my side. When I say the word "doctor," the words "Herbert Keyserling" spring instantly to life. Whenever I have had need of a doctor in one of my novels, I have always named the guy "Herbert Keyserling." The words mean healer and physician to me. He was the layer on of soft hands. In a town made up of fabulous doctors, Herbert became mine. He was one of the men who taught Beaufort what to expect of its doctors.

Herbert Keyserling taught us to expect everything; to demand the best, and to ask for the highest standards. His only flaw as a human being is that he told about 100,000 too many jokes in his lifetime. I think his humor was another way for his sweetness to leak out.

His greatest achievement: he extended his father's legacy by leaps and bounds. He and his extraordinary wife Harriet, his brothers and sisters, his cousins and his children have made the Keyserling name a great and honored one when the

(Continued on page 4)