

## A true mensch

**GRAHAM LASKY**

JOHN was born on October 20, 1943, the only son to Sadie and the late Allan Brustman. He had a great sister Glenys who he adored. He married Helsie in 1969 and a few months ago they celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. He was a devoted brother-in-law to Barbara and Michael Rozenes and beloved uncle of Shaynee, Dean, Veronica and Buddy, Gabby David Nicholas and Liam, Laini, Ben Charlie and Lola, Georgia Andrew and Nicholas. He also had a wonderful friendship with Helsie's late mother Ida.

John had a wonderful childhood. I know this because I had the good fortune to share it with him. We were two young Jewish boys from Ivanhoe who spent two-and-a-half hours each day travelling to and from Mount Scopus Memorial College on the school bus in the 1950s. It was at Mount Scopus where he learnt strong traditional Jewish values. He loved Scopus and had lifelong friendships with many of his school mates.

He was passionate about his Judaism, and loved and believed in the State of Israel. He was on the board of North Eastern Jewish Centre for many years and headed United Israel Appeal Doncaster. Most nights after school and most weekends we spent playing countless games of football and cricket. It was during this time that I learnt what John was all about. A warm, kind, gentle, caring and sensitive boy with a wonderful sense of humour. As John grew into manhood these qualities only became enhanced. He was a real mensch. He never lost his sense of humour in spite of his trials and tribulations, and when told he had to undergo chemotherapy, a daunting program as we are all aware, John quipped "Oh well, I suppose at least I don't have to worry about losing my hair".

After Scopus John joined the family business and eventually changed direction and started a linen business. His greatest passion was his love for Helsie, Mum Sadie and sister Glenys. He had a close and loving bond with them in every way. He always wanted to protect them. They were his top priority. He loved his late dad Allan – such a great bond they shared. He had enormous respect for his parents. He was an extraordinary son.

John's other great passion after his family was of course the AJAX Football Club. He was a goal umpire for an incredible 621 games, as well as serving on the committee for 43 years in virtually every capacity except president. He was *The Australian Jewish News* correspondent for 41 years, and served as secretary of AJAX for 17 consecutive years. When I asked him why he didn't take on the presidency, he said he couldn't see much point because the secretary did most of the work anyway – that was typical of John. This loyalty and dedication was rewarded when the club held a luncheon in his honour two months ago. Fortunately John was still in a position to appreciate the accolades that came his way that day – not that he was a man that ever looked for such things. He was humbled and overwhelmed by the event.

John was inducted into the Maccabi Hall



**JOHN BRUSTMAN**

**1943-2009**

of Fame a few years ago and he fought hard to ensure that the principles of Maccabi clubs were always upheld.

When John married Helsie he realised that life would never be dull, colourless or boring. He idolised and doted on Helsie through their 40 years together and was so proud of all her communal achievements and, in particular, her Australian honour of an OAM so richly deserved, which she received last year. She always said he was the best husband one could have – a precious jewel.

In life we are all faced with difficult challenges and John and Helsie were no different. But they buckled down together, faced the challenges head on, worked through the tough times with determination to come through even stronger than before.

John and Helsie had no children of their own so they adopted the community as theirs. The large gathering here today is testimony to that.

John bore his terrible diagnosis with courage and dignity, giving 100 per cent to try to fight it and yet never losing that famous sense of humour.

I know Helsie is eternally grateful to the special medical team headed by Professor Grant MacArthur at Peter MacCallum. She would also like to thank his amazing doctor Harold Cashmore, who John adored, and also Helsie's cousin Dr Steven Szentel.

John endeared himself to all and enriched the lives of all he touched. He was a real gentle man, good to the core.

To those special friends who drove him for the last few months, you made him feel enriched, and to those who made him his favourite foods, he truly was so grateful.

John truly adored Rabbi Shimshon and Rebbetzin Yurkowicz and when reciting the psalms with Shimshon in hospital on Sunday afternoon, John was smiling and calm.

May our tears of grief be replaced by tears of joy for having known such a man who we trust is now at peace. His passing has created a void in our lives. The world was a better place because of John. We will miss you JB, our very dear special friend.

May his memory be a blessing.

This is an edited version of the eulogy presented by John Brustman's good friend Graham Lasky at John's funeral.