



Richard Louis Lightman

OCT 25, 1919 - JAN 18, 2013



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Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Tribute Wall	Page 5



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RICHARD LOUIS LIGHTMAN died peacefully on the evening of January 18. He was 93 years old and had lived a long life marked by quiet integrity, intellectual curiosity, a dry sense of humor, modesty, gentleness, generosity, and steadfast devotion to liberal causes. Lightman was born on October 25, 1919, in Nashville Tennessee, the son of M.A. Lightman Sr. In 1929, the family moved to Memphis, where M.A. was laying the groundwork for a movie theater circuit that would eventually be called Malco. Richard attended McCallie preparatory school and then started at Vanderbilt and graduated from University of Pennsylvania. He studied English and history. During World War II, Lightman was a lieutenant in the Navy and commanded a fleet of landing boats. After the War, Lightman began working in the family business. His specialty was advertising and unusual promotional events, which drew on his artistic ability and sense of humor. In 1946, he married Jeanne Garretson, who died in 1997. In 2000, he married Carol Levy, who died in 2009. During the early 1960s, Lightman played a quiet but pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement. Working with Vasco Smith and others at the NAACP, he integrated Malco's movie theaters, one of the first group of businesses in Memphis and the South to be desegregated a courageous act at the time, as other businesses sometimes met violence when they attempted to desegregate. Lightman's sons learned about his pioneering work in civil rights not from his lips, but only decades later, in a book about the history of Memphis. Over the years, Lightman contributed to the cultural life of Memphis, with active participation in the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Theater Memphis, and other organizations. In the late 1960s, he cofounded Concerts International, which brings world famous musicians to Memphis. He himself played the flute and recorder and, for some years, convened a group of chamber musicians at his home on West Cherry Circle. His other hobbies included sailing and reading. In his later years, he read a couple of books a week, with



a special interest in history, biography, and crime thrillers. He was a generous member of Temple Israel. He was famous among some of his friends for telling what he called “shaggy dog stories,” which are very long jokes that do not have a single punch line. One of his most celebrated shaggy dog stories was called “The Cooshmaker,” about a military officer with the title of Cooshmaker First Class. No one knew what the Cooshmaker actually did. Lightman never said a mean thing about another human being. He never used sarcasm. He lauded the noble and the good in others, while minimizing his own accomplishments. He gave so generously to liberal, environmental, and political causes that his financial advisors warned him that he was running out of resources. He was a quiet inspiration to all who knew him. A recent incident, at age 91, illustrates Lightman’s character. One morning he woke up horrified to realize that he had forgotten to leave a tip at Marciano’s restaurant, where he had dined the night before. So, he had his attendant drive him back to the restaurant that morning. In the rain, he shuffled into the restaurant on his walker, sought out the manager, and left the tip. In recent years, Lightman was particularly fond of his neighbors, Elizabeth and Arsen Manugian, and the three women who took care of him, Hazel Harris, Pauline Jackson, and Teresa Addison. He is survived by three sons, Alan, John, and David; daughters-in-law Clayton Lightman, Jean Lightman, and Barbara Gordon; and grandchildren Zachary, Taylor, Jacob, Anna, Erin, Elyse, and Kara. A fourth son, Ronnie, predeceased him. A memorial service will be held for him at Memorial Park Funeral Home at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, January 21, with a reception immediately following at his home



Tribute Wall

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Mr. Moore posted:

Our deepest condolences to the Family of Richard Lightman,The Family of Willie and Hattie Mae Moore

January 28 at 6:21 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Richard by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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