

IN MEMORY OF PAUL MILKMAN

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By Thomas Rayfiel

Paul Milkman—one of the Coop’s earliest members—died December 6, 2023. He was 75. Before retiring, Paul and his wife, Cathy Kaczmarek, usually worked a shift together, she as squad leader, he as a cashier. Paul was passionate about the Coop’s mission. He was also a serious cook. His friends Donnie Rotkin and Linda Ellman recalled how he:

*...took great joy in using high-quality, fresh ingredients. Over the course of many, many meals we can envision Paul, standing at the stove spatula in hand, regaling us with the excellent recipe that he usually adapted using food from the Coop.*

Paul’s professional life was long and varied, including running the progressive Camp Thoreau, famous for its coed skinny-dipping and left-wing songbook, as well as directing summer programs for the American Society for Jewish Service, where he led groups of teenagers who built housing for people in need.

But his most lasting and significant impact was as an English teacher at Midwood High School. Former students saluted him as being, “a memorable and inspiring teacher,” “a legend,” “literally my favorite teacher of all time,” and “a key feature in my intellectual development.”

Paul was a swimmer, a walker, a musician, a traveler, a historian, and a Mets fan. His death came after a long-planned 75th birthday celebration where, in his wife Cathy’s words:

*...he was showered with tributes to his passion, intellect and devotion. He spent two more days communing with family. Tuesday morning, he took his regular nine-mile walk with his dog, Roxie, before becoming unresponsive. He died less than eighteen hours later surrounded by those very loved ones he had recruited for celebration, having magically ensured not to be a long drawn-out bother to any of us. He died happy*

*and loved as infinitely as he loved us all.*

Paul is survived by his wife, his children Rebecca and Jesse Alson-Milkman and Caitlyn Milkman, son-in-law Craig Thomas, daughter-in-law Lauren Raab, grandchildren Elliot and Celia Thomas, sister Marilyn Milkman, brother-in-law Adam Gordon, nephew Joshua Meer, in addition to, in Cathy's words, "countless other cousins, friends, loved ones, campers, and students who constituted his private republic over the years."