

EULOGY FOR RICHARD AMSEL, Memorial Services on November 19, 1985 by Michael Amsel

We have gathered here today to honor and pay tribute to Richard Amsel, who died on November 13th . . . just a few weeks short from his 38th birthday.

Death alone is enormously difficult to accept. But when death wins out over youth and goodness, it is almost too much to bear. Each day since this terrible tragedy I keep asking why. Why Richard? Why someone so gifted, so sensitive, so full of life? So harmless? Each day I ask these questions, and each day there are no answers . . . just the anger and pain and suffering that comes from losing a loved one.

In all this sorrow, though, there is a soothing image that keeps flashing before me. A clear, concise picture, like so much of Richard's work.

In it, he is leaning over his easel, lost in the creation of his art. Absorbed in giving life to a blank canvas. Happy doing the one thing he so dearly loved. Some men draw pictures with their brushes; Richard painted perfection . . . for that is how he wanted the world to be . . . in perfect balance . . . with harmony, beauty, friendship and brotherhood. Unfortunately we live in an imperfect world, where all is not just. Where sometimes evil lurks, snatching life from our midst. Taking away precious people.

In times like this there are no words to describe the loss . . . the horror of seeing someone so near and dear devastated in the prime of his life. But there is a measure of solace in knowing that Richard left a legacy behind him. A tiny legacy that will live on and on. Forever and ever.

My brother celebrated life through his art work . . . his way of reaching out and touching us from afar . . . and in doing so reached the pinnacle of his profession. More importantly, he made a statement. One which will have a lasting impact until the end of time.

My brother illustrated, with remarkable clarity, that nothing . . . nothing is beyond man's reach. He showed that if you want something badly enough you can attain . . . with hard work and a sense of purpose. And he proved that you can chase dreams and make them become real . . . with dedication and a commitment to excellence.

These were his messages. These were the things he taught me, and all who had the good fortune to know him.

Richard may not be with us anymore but his spirit, his statement and his strength are still here . . . living in our hearts forever.

In the end, when death was imminent, he did a most noble thing. . . sparing his loved ones the pain of seeing him suffer. Only exceptional people would have that kind of courage. But Richard, as all who knew him can attest, was that special breed of man.

Like so many of us, I never got a last chance to say thanks. To utter a loving goodbye. Nor did I get the opportunity to tell him how much he meant to me.

That is why we have gathered here today . . . to say our final farewell . . . to pay respect to a wonderful human being and extraordinary talent . . . to say we love you very much and will never ever forget you.

I take the liberty in speaking for everyone assembled here today when I say: I will see you again some day, my brother. Until then, may God bless your soul . . . and may you forever rest in peace.

Delivered at Beth David Reform Synagogue, November 19, 1985, Philadelphia, Pa.