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Patti Payne: Hundreds attend a memorial service for Jack Benaroya in the hall that bears his name



BUSINESS JOURNAL PHOTO | Marcus R. Donner

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Members of the community turned out by the hundreds, enough to nearly fill the main floor of Seattle's Benaroya Hall, known fondly as "the house that Jack built," for an afternoon public memorial service for Jack Benaroya on May 14. The Benaroya family patriarch, as well as business, civic and community leader, died peacefully in his sleep on May 11. He was 90 years old.

So many people showed up that ushers ran out of programs. In the elevator an hour before the service, son Larry Benaroya said the family was holding each other up. "We're all here. All of us," he said. "They were married 70 years," he said, when I inquired how his mother, Becky, is doing. "70 years," he said, smiling.

Jack and Becky Benaroya were a team. We heard that throughout the service. Rabbi Daniel Weiner elicited a soft laugh from the crowd when he said that before Bradjolina, there was Jack and Becky, "spoken," he said, "as a single word." The rabbi shared Jack Benaroya's last words, and they were to his wife: "You mean the whole world to me."

Weiner said Jack Benaroya lived his best life every day, not for the praise, but for the pure necessity of the act.

Son Larry echoed the theme, saying that his father believed his greatest asset in business was his good reputation. And he taught his children never to sacrifice their name for short-term gain. You could hear the rustle of tissue as people dabbed at their eyes, especially when Larry said he was not going to cry, but agreed with the emails he was receiving from friends saying they treasured the time they spent with his father.

"As his child for 61 years and his business partner for 40 years, I agree" (with those sentiments exactly), he said.

Another speaker, Joshua Gortler, executive director of the Caroline Kline Galland Home, told how the lives of thousands of people in the Jewish community were improved through the Benaroyas' generosity. And, Joel Benoliel, Jack's general counsel in the development business, likened his boss and friend to being the leader of his own business orchestra, making beautiful music with the hundreds of instruments he knew so well. "I played in his orchestra," he said. "He challenged each of us to play to a higher standard."

Virginia Mason's Gerald Nepom touched on Jack's medical philanthropy in the area of diabetes. "His legacy started with his grandson, who had (diabetes). ... The path towards the cure is a long one, but because of (Jack) the starting gate is way behind us," he said. Because of the **Benaroya Research Institute** at Virginia Mason, the diabetes community globally has Jack as a hero.

Jack's first-born granddaughter, Renee Herst, spoke of the joy of being with him, and said she aspires to follow in the footsteps "of his size 13 triple-A shoes." And others who spoke, including grandsons Michael Benaroya and David Naness, as well as Gerard Schwarz, David Austin and Joshua Dickson, echoed that Jack was a man who worked hard, loved his family and was of the highest of moral fiber, always putting others' needs ahead of his, despite the fact he was battling Parkinson's.

Some memorable "Jackisms" shared with the crowd:

— "Say what you mean and mean what you say. But don't say it mean."

— "The harder I work, the luckier I get."

— "Never, ever assume."

Those who came to this service won't forget the emotion, the uplift and the incredible music, performed as a gift by the musicians of the **Seattle Symphony Orchestra** under their former leader of 25 years, Maestro Schwarz. After all, they were in the hall that bears the Benaroya name — in 1993, he and his wife Becky gave the \$16 million gift that was the seed money for the symphony's new home.

Former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, seated with me in the hall, recalled how his phone rang at midnight when he was in D.C. for a national conference of mayors years ago. It was Maestro Schwarz on the other end. "We want to move the symphony downtown," he told the mayor. "Here's Jack." With that, Rice says, Jack Benaroya said simply, "Norm, I think that would be a good idea. Can you do something about it?" The rest is history.

You could have heard a pin drop in that hall at the memorial. Among those taking it all in and honoring the grieving family were names like Skip Kotkins, Jeff and Susan Brotman, Ginny Ruffner, Irwin Treiger, Marco Abbruzzese, Dick and Mary Foley, Jeff Lyon, Dr. Gary Kaplan, Rick Friel, Jerry Grinstein, Mark Sidran, Bernie and Sean Griffin, Jon Fine, John Nesholm, Colleen Willoughby, Pat Wallace, and Rebecca Kelly.

I could go on for paragraphs. Needless to say it was a showing of people who spanned the sectors of Jack Benaroya's memorable life — civic, philanthropic, business, religious, medical, the arts, and of course his beloved family.

Son Larry closed the service, inviting people to the lobby to share two things that Jack loved — Arnold Palmers and chocolate ice cream.

Perhaps usher Don Kindred, who has been at Benaroya since it opened, and who helped Jack get seated many times, said it best. "He was a wonderful man."