



Photo: Peter Hasenson

## Alec Hasenson

1927 - 2021

PETER HASENSEN

A general medical practitioner, an author, a steam train and Pullman coach enthusiast, a collector of stamps, an encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of Dover harbour, an expert on the American Civil War, a military historian, a lifelong diarist, an avid collector of post-cards and stationery, a keen photographer, a cataloguer of post boxes, a talented violinist. These were just some of Alec's passions.

Dr Benjamin Alexander (Alec) Hasenson was born in 1927 on 16th December in Hamburg, Germany. When Hitler came to



'My favourite view of the Suburb' (Photo: Alec Hasenson)

power, Alec's father saw the writing on the wall. Alec recalled seeing the stormtroopers marching in the neighbourhood and not understanding why his mother pulled him inside, forbidding him to watch the soldiers parading down the street. Not long after, the family moved to England, settling in Hendon Central, and Alec was enrolled in the local school. He didn't speak a word of English and this, coupled with the fact he was German, meant he had to fend off the bullies by showing them the one magic trick he had managed to master. The disappearing coin trick seemed to work and he was accepted.

Shortly after settling in Hendon, war broke out and Alec and his mother were evacuated to the Lake District for the duration of the war. Alec recalled wonderful memories of happy schooldays filled with lessons, one inspiring teacher and plenty of sports.

Alec was a dedicated student and on his return to London after the war, continued his studies finally qualifying in Medicine at the Royal Free Hospital Medical School in 1958.

His whole working life was spent serving the community of Stoke Newington as a GP.

In 1955 Alec was introduced to Pat Phillips at a party. He was smitten. They married in 1957 at Alyth Gardens synagogue, eventually settling in the Suburb, first in Blandford Close and then in Linden Lea. There Alec and Pat enjoyed many years of Suburb life, their four children attending local Suburb schools – Kerem House Nursery then Brookland Infant and Junior Schools.

As a keen photographer, Alec took many thousands of photographs of the Suburb and HGS events developing his black and white photos himself in his home dark room. Many of his photographs are being digitised and will eventually be uploaded onto the HGS Virtual Museum's archives for everyone to enjoy. The photographs make a wonderful visual record of how the Suburb has changed (or not) over the past 50 years. Some were recently circulated on the HGS List prompting many shared memories and stories between residents.

Alec will always be remembered with huge respect and will be missed greatly. As his children recall he was one of those people who always saw the good in others. Family was the heart and soul of his life. Long after Alec became deaf and couldn't hear the lively Friday night and Sunday lunch chatter around the dining room table, he would sit and smile at everyone, holding small conversations with whoever was sitting either side of him.

## Michael Shamash

1958 - 2021

NAOMI ANGELL

Michael Shamash, disability rights campaigner, transport enthusiast and Suburb resident died unexpectedly at the age of 63, after a routine operation on 23 September 2021.

Although small in stature (3 foot 6 inches in his cotton socks), Michael had a very big personality and presence in the lives of those who knew him. A Suburb resident, Michael grew up in Winnington Road and spent the last decade of his life in Hampstead Way where he lived with his partner Helen and their adored daughter Lydia who, at only two, is already a feisty personality, taking after her dad.

Michael attended University College School and read sociology and politics at Warwick University before joining Camden Council as a social work assistant. Later he completed an MA in criminology at Middlesex University.

At Camden Council Michael was active in NALGO – the union that later became Unison. A former colleague, Rory Heap, said "He always had the right things to say. He could discuss disability in ways that didn't make people feel awkward. He had a huge impact on perceptions of disability." Rory and Michael joined forces as shop stewards for the local branch of NALGO, where Michael was passionate about social justice and worked hard to represent the interests of Camden Council staff.

For several years Michael chaired the Restricted Growth Association and was a director of the disability advocacy organisation, Shaping Our Lives. Michael also lectured and wrote on disability at Middlesex and Bedford universities. He will also be remembered for the entertaining and challenging

talks he gave at Joseph's, the former bookshop in Temple Fortune. Though a lifelong disability rights campaigner, Michael never allowed himself to be defined by his disability.

One of Michael's passions was with the Trabant car, the signature vehicle of communist East Germany. This fascination led to a Radio 4 series of a car journey he made with his old school friend, Will Self, in a beat up Trabant. The road trip started at BBC HQ in Portland Place ending at the Trabant factory in Zwickau in the former East Germany. Will, at almost twice Michael's height, had to learn to slow down to keep to Michael's pace. "Simply slowing down to accompany him began to teach me a little of the patience that must be essential if you're a disabled person trying to negotiate an abled world." Will recalls how Michael, who couldn't really sit on the passenger seat only prop himself against it, never uttered a word of complaint.

Michael was a font of wisdom about the things that make living in the Suburb special. For those who recall the Temple Fortune of the 1970s, Michael loved to reminisce about the interior decor of Capriccio's Italian restaurant, Lindy's patisserie or the layout of Kendrick's Toy Shop. Temple Fortune Waitrose's long term employee, Jim Driscoll, recalls Michael lighting the shop up with his beaming smile and cheeky sense of humour. Waitrose staff regularly wheeled Michael's shopping trolley home for him and when they heard of his death announced it to all staff and customers in the shop that day.

Michael cared deeply about his surroundings and had little time for those in positions of power who failed to contribute to making our neighbourhoods better for all of us.

Will Self describes Michael as a charismatic man – good-looking and a charmer – who deployed these characteristics to pave his way in an often hostile world.

He was all of these things and so much more. He will be deeply missed by Helen, Lydia and the rest of his family and many friends.



Photo: a family friend



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