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# Happy Birthday, Rabbi Lamm

**By:****Posted: 12/17/07**

If you were to ask Mindy Lamm which publication would be one of the first to wish her husband a happy eightieth birthday, she probably wouldn't guess The Commentator. In fact, if she guessed a hundred times, it's doubtful that Yeshiva College's official student newspaper would ever escape her lips. Though a history of YC's newspaper has yet to be written, it is apparent to anyone familiar that Commentator editors and Rabbi Lamm rarely worked in concert with one another. As Rabbi Lamm prepares for the final third of his life, we are honored to break that longstanding tradition and help celebrate the achievements of one of our community's valiant warriors.

It seems unnecessary to list Rabbi Lamm's scholarly achievements and administrative impact. Creativity was his mark, and it led to both cheers and boos. He took original positions that made him a hero for many and possibly too original to others. His annual shiur klali in the Main Beit Midrash demonstrated both his personal erudition and intellectual openness by citing the Gaon of Vilna and Tertullian. His conception of Torah u-Madda has comforted many, while appearing elitist and impractical to others. Undaunted by conventionalism and critics from inside and outside Yeshiva, Rabbi Lamm has always made sure to be candid with his thoughts and remarks, and never shy to offer comments he knows that some will scoff.

It has been suggested that the sign of a gadol is one's ability to be meikel when others prefer to stay conservatively machmir. If this is the case, then it follows that the sign of a scholar is the ability to write with conviction, when others prefer to be less than daring. While today's students struggle with the University's ideology, and often dismiss it as an unadvised or impossible belief, we must recognize that those who pursue this dream are noble (and 'nabled'). And those who champion it are brave, if not heroic.

As is the way with all ephemeral communities, the collective memory of the Wilf Campus student body is limited. Many of us cannot recall when Torah Tours was run by MSDCS instead of the CJF (three years ago), or even when the YC Dean's Office was located in the lobby floor of Furst Hall (last year).

It is quite sobering that many of our students while traversing campus walk past great scholars like Rabbi Lamm and Rabbi Moshe Tendler without a clue what these personalities represented to our parents' generation. Indeed, in a time when Jewish studies desperately sought Orthodox voices to steer its course, YU provided those individuals. Moreover, important periodicals like Tradition and the Orthodox Forum series were originally spearheaded by Rabbi Lamm.

Many students are quick to recognize the great strides made by Yeshiva under the leadership of President Joel but are too shortsighted to acknowledge how Rabbi Lamm saved the University from bankruptcy when he first arrived, or penned works that inspired our teachers to become great educators.

Too often we forget those who trailblazed our paths and made our accomplishments all the more attainable. Then again, nostalgic reflection of this sort tends to draw matters to a close. This should not be seen as the case here, as Rabbi Lamm still has forty inspirational years with us to go.

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