

Tribute to Erica Jesselson

(National Foundation for Jewish Culture)

In the two minutes so graciously allotted to me, I have the delightful but unenviable task of introducing to you Mrs. Erica Jesselson who is to receive the annual Patron Award of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

I say "unenviable" because, having known her for more than half a century, it would take me more than two days or even two weeks to enumerate her prodigious virtues which commend her for this honor to this sophisticated audience.

I shall opt, therefore, for an introduction that requires far less time and constitutes a much shorter list, namely--her faults, the "Vices of Erica Jesselson!"

First, Erica Jesselson is extremely, perhaps overly, generous--and that puts so many of her affluent peers to shame. She not only dispenses great philanthropy on her own behalf and in behalf of her late and much lamented husband Luddy to major institutions of Jewish education, Israeli universities, hospitals, etc., and to The National Foundation for Jewish Culture, but also to countless smaller institutions and to individuals. She cannot resist an outstretched palm, an earnest request. She gives *tzedakah* far in excess of the limits recommended by Jewish law. So, she is generous to a fault--a vice indeed!

Second, she gets personally involved in her causes. She opens not only her purse but also her heart. She gives not only her dollars, but also her time and concern and her personal service and her love and her leadership. She is often so involved that those who are close to her fear that it will prove injurious to her emotional and her physical health--and even a drain on her highly creative talents in public relations, taste, esthetics, and quality in general.

Third, Erica Jesselson shuns honors far too often. She, like her late husband, revels in anonymity. The National Foundation for Jewish Culture is lucky that she consented to accept this tribute; other organizations have been less fortunate. She is a hoarder--she *hoards mitzvot* for their own sake, and has little patience for those who seek to award her with praise though so well deserved. This too - she over-does....

So, I conclude this listing of Erica Jesselson's estimable vices with this pious wish as an afterthought--that all those many who are insufficiently generous, who refuse to get personally involved, and who yearn for honor and glory shamelessly--learn to adopt her faults rather than their own-- by presenting to her the Patron Award in the form of a medallion especially minted and engraved by the San Francisco artist, Marie Symogy.

I do so on behalf of all her many admirers and hope and pray for her life and health--and may these faults as well as her far numerous virtues become the models for hundreds and thousands of others.