

MARVIN SILVERMAN, R.I.P.

This is a true story and one in which I played a small part. The fact that it happened ten years ago is, to me, irrelevant, I remember all the significant details as if they were burned into my memory only yesterday.

I met Marvin at the first holistic vet meeting we every had, which was back in 1983. He was the owner and main act for a company he started called Prozyme, a company that basically sold only two products, Prozyme, a digestive enzyme for pets, and Tymezyme, the same thing for people. Everyone seemed to know Marvin and he knew everyone. Even though he only had a high school education (if that), Marvin knew more about enzymes than anyone we'd ever met. As if that weren't enough, Marvin was a one-man-band, telling jokes, telling medical stories and basically enjoying live. In my whole life I never met a man who truly had a good joke for every occasion. To give you a picture, he looked and sounded exactly like Buddy Hackett. Once, back in the early 60's when Marvin was in Vegas, he was walking through a casino and came face to face with the real Buddy Hackett. So, what did he say? He approaches Buddy, who immediately saw the resemblance, and said "Hey, Buddy, do people come up to you all the time and say "Man. You look just like Marvin Silverman!". That's Marvin.

I don't know if there really was such a thing as the Jewish Mafia back in Chicago where Marvin grew up during the Depression, but he said there was and he was actually part of it. He had many stories of Chicago in the Elliot Ness days and many were rough. No one I knew had been around when Marvin forged his enzyme company but he'd been in business at least twenty years when I met him. Same with his education. Self-taught but still instantly recognizable as not a "sales pitch" but a mountain of scientific studies and product trials, many of which funded by Marvin out of pocket. He was an Old World guy and ran his business out of his very fat wallet. Literally. He'd ask me to write an article about some pet issue and hand me five \$100 bills asking if I could write one for that. There was never any doubt or asking around, it was all done direct. Likewise, when he'd take you to dinner, it was always on Marvin, always the best and always cash. Credit cards irritated him. There was not a holistic vet that I knew, nor many, many conventional vets who weren't 100% loyal to Marvin and his excellent products. It didn't hurt that the products were the very best. But mostly it was Marvin.

Marvin was, as he said, "short, fat and ugly" but even more he was plagued with many illnesses from decades of bad living in the past, probably, but I never knew him to complain even though I know he must have suffered. In his late 60's when I met him, he had diabetes, a bad heart, terrible blood pressure and many other chronic problems. Marvin worked day and night and probably never took a day off. He and his wife raised several nice children. By the time I met Marvin his long-suffering wife had also been virtually house-bound with a plethora of diseases of her own.

As Marvin's company grew it became necessary for him to take on a couple of venture capitalists so he could fund his growing business. These investors were older acquaintances of Marvin's but knew nothing about medicine, enzymes or anything

else that Marvin was passionate about. That didn't bother Marvin because he only needed them for operating money. Unbeknownst to Marvin the two investors allowed their growing resentment of Marvin's business style to cause them to plot against him. Tired of trying to get him to change, to record things, to stop running the business with cash, they decided the only way to get him out of the picture was to join their stock portfolios. Marvin didn't notice that they had over 50% of the company stock between them.

One cold winter day when Marvin came to work as usual, he tried his key and it wouldn't work! Hoping a secretary was in he began knocking on the door. Finally, a meek secretary came to the door but refused to open it. She told him through the closed door that the locks had been changed and that she had been told that Marvin no longer worked at the company that he founded and that he had fought for over several decades. Marvin nearly blew a gasket at that news and began angrily pounding the door trying to knock it down to get to the two men he saw as mutineers. After a couple of warnings, the police were called and Marvin was arrested and hauled off to jail. During the fight with the police Marvin had a stroke.

Bitter court fights ensued but things only got worse and Marvin lost more and more ground, not to mention paying large legal fees. Of course, everything Marvin did was based on the Old World system, a handshake and a deal, but never anything on paper. The take-over weasels were in charge.