

Melvin Wax remembered as a mensch, jokester and dedicated past president of New Light Congregation

“Good.” “Kind.” “Giving.” “Pleasant.” “Generous.” “Happy.” “A good man.”



A long line of mourners waits out front of Ralph Schugar Funeral Chapel to pay respects to Melvin Wax, 87. ROSSILYNNE CULGAN / THE INCLINE

Rossilynne Culgan
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Melvin Wax's jokes echo in the hearts of the people he made smile.

“He always had a joke. ... He just enjoyed telling jokes,” said Kara Keane, who used to work at the Squirrel Hill apartment building where the 87-year-old lived. Today, she stood outside of Ralph Schugar Funeral Chapel in Shadyside, where a long line of people waited to remember Wax, who was fatally shot at his Squirrel Hill synagogue on Saturday.

Mourners tearfully described Wax, each repeating the same refrain:

“Good.”

“Kind.”

“Giving.”

“Pleasant.”

“Generous.”

“Happy.”

“A good man.”

“A mensch.”

The retired accountant loved his religion, his grandson, and the Pittsburgh Pirates, his [obituary](https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/postgazette/obituary.aspx?n=melvin-wax&pid=190605388&fhid=4365) (<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/postgazette/obituary.aspx?n=melvin-wax&pid=190605388&fhid=4365>) noted. Wax was a devoted member of New Light Congregation, where he was a past president. He was a [pillar of the congregation](https://www.yorkdispatch.com/story/news/2018/10/28/shooting-victim-melvin-wax-remembered-sweet-sweet-guy/1799767002/) (<https://www.yorkdispatch.com/story/news/2018/10/28/shooting-victim-melvin-wax-remembered-sweet-sweet-guy/1799767002/>) who always arrived on time for services, the *Associated Press* reported.

Julie Christy grew up at New Light, one of the three congregations that meets at Tree of Life. “He always came over to my three girls and (would) tell a joke,” she said. “He’d tell corny dad jokes.”

Hugh Casper, a recently reconnected childhood friend of Wax's, said he was the same in 2018 as he was in the 1940s.



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A lot of sadness today outside of Melvin Wax's funeral, but a lot of his friends couldn't help but smile remembering him. His friend Hugh Casper gave us an example of one of the bad jokes Melvin liked to tell

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“(He told) terrible jokes, but you had to laugh at them because they were so bad,” Casper said.

What kind of jokes? “Some of them, you can’t repeat them,” he said.

But there was one Casper remembered off-hand: A doctor was having trouble with his plumbing, so he called a plumber to fix it. When the doctor saw the plumbing bill, he was shocked. “The doctor said, “Doctors don’t charge this much!” “The plumber said, “Yeah, I know. I used to be one.”

To Keane, who knew Wax from his apartment building, he was always “Mr. Wax,” even though he told her to call him “Mel.”

“I am so much better off for having known him,” she said.

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