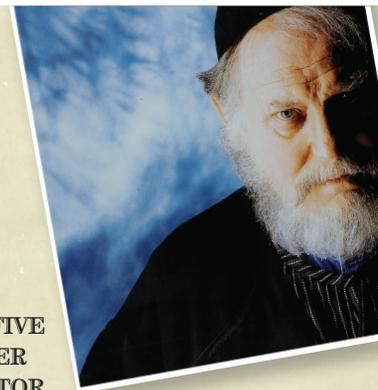


OUR BELOVED KING OF KENSINGTON

REMEMBERING A CANADIAN TV LEGEND FOR HIS PASSION, INTEGRITY AND
TIRELESS SUPPORT

By Suzanne Alyssa Andrew

Photos provided by The Waxman Family



OVER THE COURSE OF A CAREER SPANNING FIVE DECADES, AL WAXMAN WAS INVOLVED IN OVER 1,000 PRODUCTIONS, AS AN ACTOR OR DIRECTOR FOR TV, FILM, RADIO AND THEATRE.

Waxman started early, at age 12 on CBC Radio, and after university studied acting in New York City's renowned acting schools. It was his breakout role in CBC TV's hit sitcom *King of Kensington*, in which he starred from 1975 to 1980, that first garnered him attention and accolades across the country.

Like Larry King, the convenience store owner he played on the show, Waxman spent his early years in Toronto's Kensington Market neighbourhood. He was born in Toronto in 1935 to a Jewish family and grew up near Spadina Avenue and Nassau Street. His parents were originally from Poland and owned and operated a downtown restaurant.

After *King of Kensington's* run, Waxman went on to star in major Hollywood films and shows, including CBS TV's Emmy Award-winning drama *Cagney and Lacey*. He was awarded the Order of Ontario in 1996 and in 1997 was honoured with the Order of Canada. That same year he won a Gemini Award for his role in the CBC movie, *Net Worth*. In recognition of his honest portrayals in police force roles he was also named an Honorary Chief of Police by the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force and received the rare recognition of Honorary Police Lieutenant by the New York City Police Department.

"He was a man who had tremendous belief in himself, in what he had to give and in the stories that he believed must be told," says his son, Adam Waxman, an actor and executive editor of *DINE* magazine. "Acting and directing were his passion. He had a disarming honesty and brought that emotional truth into his work. That's what made him so watchable, so relatable and so loveable."

Waxman was integral to the development of the Canadian film industry as an advocate for union issues and as a founding member of the Director's Guild of Canada and as chair of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television.

His support for young Canadian talent was tireless. He ran Al's Gym, an informal mentorship program through which he freely gave his advice, time and energy to young actors.

Adam Waxman says his grandmother was his father's inspiration for all of the community and charitable work he did during his lifetime. "She was a strong woman with depth and generosity of spirit, and she taught him the importance of *zedakah* and of giving back," he says. "My father believed it was important to use his celebrity for the good of others."

"He had a larger than life quality, a great sense of humour and gave the best hugs in the world," says his son. "In an industry that is often not conducive to raising a family, we are one of the fortunate few who can say that our father was a family man. For him, family always came first."

Waxman died in January, 2001, at age 65 as a result of elective heart surgery. Friends and family packed Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple to remember him, and his legacy lives on — in his productions, the actors he mentored, the community projects he supported and the many lives he touched. His wife Sara and sons Adam and Tobaron Waxman continue his legacy of *zedakah*, each in their own way.

The statue of him in Kensington Market sculpted by Ruth Abernathy bears one of his most memorable lines: "There's lots to do down the road, there's always more. Trust your gut instincts. In small matters trust your mind, but in the important decisions of life trust your heart."

THE CINEPLEX LEGENDS HONOUR

Each year Cineplex Entertainment presents this honour posthumously to a Canadian pioneer in film, television, music, sports, arts or innovation in recognition of a long and respected career. Previous recipients include Lorne Greene, Jeff Healey, Oscar Peterson, Phil Hartman, Mordecai Richler, Doug Henning, Norma & Douglas Shearer and Raymond Burr.

Suzanne Alyssa Andrew is the author of the novel, Circle of Stones (Dundurn Press, 2015) and an editor for Taddle Creek magazine.

*Al Waxman's favourite aphorisms:
"Time is on your side, but time is never to be squandered."
"Wherever you have a curious mind, there you have school."
"You have to find the love and the humour in your work and in your life."*