

My name is Sarah and I'm the middle daughter in the Davis family and we've been neighbors with the Cohen family for 52 years – just 3 doors to the north on Madison Avenue. Almost every afternoon, my parents – Ab and Janet – would visit Al when they brought him their copy of the LA Times. And during their visits they would catch up on family events, the news of the day, and reflect on meaningful memories from the past.

As we all know, Al spent time in the Navy and my dad made an interesting observation that **Al could have chosen a life of power; and instead he chose a life of influence.**

And Al was influential! He did things that grabbed people's attention and sparked their imaginations. Like taking a giant metal ball from a 76 Gas Station, painting it black so it looked like a bomb and parading down Colorado Boulevard during the Doo Dah Parade to express his opposition to nuclear weapons.

He was also influential to kids like me. I remember a Halloween when I was 12 and when I arrived at the Cohen house to trick-or-treat, Al greeted me at the door and he asked me to decline candy made by Nestle because they were using unethical marketing tactics to sell baby formula to women in underdeveloped countries instead of letting them do what was healthier for mother and child. Now, I love candy and the big haul we would collect in pillowcases on Halloween night was really fun – but Al had asked me to decline Butterfingers & Nestle's Crunch bars - and I did! About a month ago and I was reminded of something else in terms of Al's enduring influence. I was cleaning out a closet and I found a paper written in college called "The Nestle Boycott" – so the impression he made when I was 12 really stuck with me!

He was also influential on a personal level because he set an example for the importance of marking special occasions. And of course, Al was there to officiate over ALL of the important occasions for our family – from weddings to christenings to most recently, on his 91st birthday, a 30th anniversary vow renewal for me and my husband. We asked a lot of Al – and he always gave his everything to make sure the occasion was a meaningful celebration.

Al's influence was also expressed through his support for other people. As some of you may know, I run a nonprofit that develops housing and provides services for people experiencing homelessness. We opened a building in 2019 for homeless veterans, and Al was gracious enough to attend the grand opening ceremony and he also came to the ground-breaking ceremony for another building in South LA. At the event in South LA, he was recognized by one of my staff members who is an activist and who has proudly been arrested eight times. Anyway, he knew of Al and was excited to meet him because of his activism and fights for social justice.

In Al's obituary, it says he had a “... **deep and abiding commitment to prodding, pushing, pleading and cajoling the world toward the right path – to preserve this earth and raise up those less fortunate.**” And as I continue my work, I am going to try to honor Al's legacy.

In closing, I want to mention one more thing about Al's influential life. The Cohen's gave my dad a beautiful piece of wood and asked him to make the box for Al's ashes, which he did. The family wanted to affix a symbol on the box and after considering a few options, they chose a Compass. And this seems very fitting because a Compass is a tool to help people find direction – and this is the influence Al had on so many of us -- he helped to point us in a positive direction.