



Ehud Havazelet

July 13, 1955 - November 5, 2015

Father, husband, award-winning author and teacher of writing, Ehud Havazelet, passed away peacefully in Corvallis on Nov. 5, surrounded by his family, at the age of 60.

Born in Jerusalem on July 13, 1955, Ehud and his three sisters were raised in an Orthodox Jewish household in New York City by their father, Rabbi Meir Havazelet, a biblical scholar and professor at Yeshiva University, and their mother, Sarah, a hospital administrator. In childhood the stories of the Talmud instilled in him a deep love of learning and literature. He later said he had the “study habits of a dray (draft) horse. Anyone who goes to 12 years of yeshiva has great work habits,” and he applied them to his passion for the arts.

In 1977, after graduating from Columbia University, where his teachers included literary theorist Lionel Trilling, he briefly pursued the jazz guitar at the Berklee School of Music in Boston before earning a master of fine arts degree at the renowned Iowa Writers Workshop. He received a Wallace Stegner Fellowship from Stanford University in 1984 and taught creative writing as a Jones Lecturer at Stanford until 1989.

Ehud’s first book, a collection of short stories entitled “What Is It Then Between Us?” was published to wide critical acclaim by Scribner’s in 1988. The following year he was hired to teach at Oregon State University, tracing

the footsteps of one of his literary heroes, Bernard Malamud, who had lived and taught in Corvallis in the 1950s. At OSU, Ehud helped found the MFA program in creative writing. In 1999, he joined the faculty at the University of Oregon, where he was professor of creative writing at the time of his death. He also taught occasionally in the low-residency MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. His second book, "Like Never Before," a collection of linked stories published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in 1998, was named a New York Times Notable Book and a Los Angeles Times Best Book.

Of his third book, the novel "Bearing the Body" (FSG, 2007), Francine Prose wrote in the New York Times Book Review that it was "extraordinary," succeeding in taking "huge risks," a novel, as Virginia Wolfe remarked about "Middlemarch," "written for grownups." Among his many literary honors were a Pushcart Prize (1988), a Whiting Award (1999), a Rockefeller Bellagio Residency (2000), a Guggenheim Fellowship (2001), a Wallant Award (2007), and two Oregon Book Awards (1999, 2008). His story "Gurov in Manhattan" was selected for inclusion in "The Best American Short Stories 2011." His work appeared on National Public Radio, in many literary journals and The New York Times, and was translated into Hebrew, French, Dutch, Italian, German and Romanian. After being diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of leukemia in 2002, Ehud continued to write and publish fiction. He had completed several new stories at the time of his death.

Despite his accomplishments in the literary world, when asked by an interviewer how he defined himself, he answered "as a father." He is survived by two sons, Michael, 27, of Chicago, from Ehud's first marriage to his lifelong friend, Camille Orman, of Philadelphia, and Jacob ("Coby"), 14, from Ehud's marriage to his wife of 16 years, Molly Brown, of Corvallis.

He once said, "I don't believe in happy endings in art," but he declared that his marriage to Molly had made him "a very happy man" and had given him

“direction.” Ehud shared his generous spirit beyond family, friends and students. He volunteered in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society’s First Connections Program, helping men and women diagnosed with blood cancers, including many who, like him, had received life-giving bone marrow transplants.

In addition to his sons, wife, former wife and father, Ehud’s other survivors include his sisters, Leora Friedman (Jay), Tali Havazelet (Mark Sameth) and Ruth Havazelet; nieces and nephew Aviva, Sam, Liana and Yakira; and parents-in-law Aaron and Brenda Brown.

A celebration to honor Ehud will be announced later. The family suggests those wishing to remember him consider making a contribution to one of the many causes he held dear — the arts, humanitarian relief, human rights — or simply think of him as they watch a movie, read a book, listen to music or enjoy a good red wine.

A website has been set up for sharing memories of Ehud at www.forevermissedd.com/ehud-havazelet.