



# Robert Berman

APR 29, 2018



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## Robert Berman

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**R**obert Berman was born in Boston on November 3, 1929, son of Bessie and Harry Berman. He married Myra Shraiar on December 23, 1956; their three sons are Harry (Luzviminda), of Chino Valley, AZ; Eric (Roxanne), of Brookline, MA; and Andrew (Lilinet), of Bridgewater, NJ. There are four grandchildren: Jason, Cheryl, Adrienne and Ashley.

Robert's father, Harry, had a distinguished career as a mineralogist; he had been professor of mineralogy at Harvard and curator of Harvard's mineralogical collection, before his life was tragically cut short by an airplane accident during World War II. Robert was determined to pursue a career in mineralogy, and was awarded a doctorate in this field at Harvard in 1957. However, by this time, the science of minerals was contracting; instead of thousands of professionals, there are now only a few hundred in the world.

Accordingly, Dr. Berman became an engineer for Westinghouse, in Pittsburgh, PA. He was an expert on materials: their identification, fabrication, and properties. He was active in such problems as corrosion, fatigue and heat transfer of metals and ceramics used in nuclear submarines. Quite early in his long career, which extended over thirty-seven years with Westinghouse until his retirement, he became acquainted with some of the first computers available commercially. He was a pioneer in applying this new tool to the problems of materials science, writing the first programs in the primitive computer language available for them.

Through the subsequent years, he explained and interpreted the computer to his colleagues in materials science and engineering; and also explained the needs of materials engineers to his colleagues in computer programming. Being in both camps — speaking, as it were, both languages, he could interpret between the groups. As a culmination of these efforts, he co-authored a book, entitled "Thorium Dioxide: Properties and Nuclear Applications." Thorium dioxide is among the



chemically most stable compounds, and also one of the highest-melting solids. In addition, Dr. Berman was the author of about forty articles published in the scientific literature.

One of the proudest accomplishments of Dr. Berman in the earth sciences was something that was undertaken strictly on his own initiative: a street map of Baldwin, Whitehall and Pleasant Hills, Pennsylvania. He had settled with his wife in the new residential southern suburbs of Pittsburgh, which had mile after mile of curving streets with pleasant but indistinguishable names. Visits to friends or committee meetings meant long, confusing telephone conversations for directions – this being before the days of computer map guides. The map was based on available surveys, together with street names obtained by driving the area. It was essentially a solo effort by Dr. Berman. Advertisements of local businesses were obtained for the margins, and 2000 copies were printed and sold, door to door, to the profit of their synagogue, Beth Israel Center.

Dr. Berman refused all offers to become a member of management. To his knowledge, he never, in his career, exploited or discharged a fellow human being. He was a man of constancy. He had a long marriage and long career; he and his bride built a home in Pleasant Hills, Pennsylvania, and lived there until the last of his sons went out on his own. And yet, he was also a man who adapted to change; to the computer world, and to a new world of retirement to Florida. Life is change. During his retirement, he lived in Jupiter, Florida, in a condo with a view up and down a straight stretch of the Intracoastal Waterway. He never tired of watching the boat traffic, and more particularly, the bird life: the herons and cranes, the hawks and ibises and, yes, even the crows

Chapel services will be held on Monday, May 7, 2018 at 1:00 PM at Beth Israel Memorial Chapel, 11115 Jog Road, Boynton Beach, Florida 33437. In memory of Dr. Berman the family asks that you donate to a charity of your choice in lieu of flowers. For those who wish to pay their respects, the family will be sitting shiva at their residence following the service from 4:30 PM to 8:00 PM



# **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Robert by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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