

MICHAEL Z. COHEN 1959 - 1992

“He found favour in the eyes of God and Man”

Michael Cohen started out as a young Cub at the 10th Green and Sea Point Group, moving through the ranks as a Scout, Patrol Leader, Troop Leader and then as a Scoutmaster. He took the Troop from strength to strength, stimulating in his Scouts a great sense of adventure and love for the outdoors.

In later years Michael took on many roles – as District Commissioner, on the 1st Gilqua PLTU, on the Scout Mountain Club, and on numerous other courses, competitions and Scout activities – all of which he carried out admirably. He had tremendous vision, and his encouragement was instrumental in starting Gilqua PLTU.

He believed absolutely in Scouting, and in its potential to develop our youth. He insisted on playing Scouting by the rules and insisting that the fundamental principles were never compromised. Michael always placing the interests of the Scouts above all else, and was a champion of so many important causes – for religious tolerance, removal of prejudice, acceptance of others, and the need for safety in our activities.

His contribution to Scouting was huge, not only in quantity, but also in the quality of his input.

Michael's love of music was great and his voice was legendary. Being deeply religious, it was not surprising that he studied and became a cantor, officiating at the Claremont Synagogue where he was held in high esteem and affection. In his capacities as Chazan and Choirmaster he surely touched the hearts of thousands of worshippers, leading and inspiring them in prayer.

He had a huge capacity to live life to the full, and insisted on sharing this enjoyment with others. As soon as Tanzania reopened its borders to South Africans, Michael was off with a group of Scouts to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. One could only admire and respect his enormous drive and energy, with envy. Every challenge was tackled with boundless enthusiasm.

His love for the outdoors and for nature found him on the mountains near and far, under the trees and along the river, camping, and on the seas and lakes, sailing.

He was a keen ornithologist and a skilled photographer. He loved travelling and attended three World Scout Jamborees. With all these activities he still found time to help others and as a result was a most popular young man. Possibly the most commendable achievement of Michael's life was that he succeeded, in every sphere of his involvement, to reach out and touch the hearts of all with whom he came into contact.

It is a mark of esteem in which Michael was held by so many that so energetic a person, with such a zest for living life to the full, should be considered virtually invincible. It is so sad that someone who was once described as the antithesis of death could be taken away so soon. Michael was only 33 years of age when he lost his life in a tragic yachting accident near Cape St Francis in November 1992. He was fulfilling another of his dreams when stormy seas wrecked their yacht on a reef during the night.

Michael travelled far; his mind travelled further. But his heart travelled furthest of all, and expanded to find a place for everyone. He forgot no-one, neglected no-one, and blazed a trail through thousands of lives. Everyone he touched, he marked indelibly. Michael's compassion and love went higher than the mountains he climbed, deeper than the oceans he dived, further than the trails he hiked. He will forever be remembered for his abundant friendship and all the wisdom and values he shared with us. May his memory be an inspiration to us all.