Supersymmetry – 30

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We gathered here today to honor the memory of Yuri Golfand.

Any one of you can describe his contribution to physics, and his place in the history of science, far better than I.

I would like to speak then only of what I know best: Yuri—the man, my husband and my friend.

Yuri's life and my life, and our life together, were indelibly marked by the Soviet culture, a culture shaped by totalitarian dictatorship, which sometimes saw scientists as the enemy. The Soviet police state could not easily control their influence on society, though it tried.

Despite that repressive culture, Yuri was a free man. He was one of the freest men, one of the freest scientists, I have ever known.

Physics was Yuri's nationality, with its own language, culture and values. When Yuri worked he was able to continue his life under any conditions.

Yuri did not set out to be any kind of a political rebel. Rather, it was his curiosity and his original mind that got him in trouble. He came to physics not as his final destination, but as a tool for understanding the world, the Universe.

He expected that eventually he would understand what God had in mind when He created the world.

Similarly, Yuri studied Hatha and Radja Yoga and the philosophy of Indian Lamas as a tool for understanding the relationship of mind and body: the human condition.

In 1973 Yuri and I asked for permission to emigrate to Israel. Our request was denied, and we became refuseniks for a long 17 years.

From the beginning of these years Yuri was fired and we survived on my small income and with the help of my parents. In addition, a Jewish organization—the Israel Crises Management Center (ICMC)—helped us on a regular basis.

Fortunately, theoretical physics is done in the brain not in labs, so Yuri could continue to work at home. It was difficult, however, because he was isolated from his peers. Fearful for their own carriers most of Yuri's colleagues avoided him. But he enjoyed visits from a few old friends, from his student and friend Evgeny Likhtman, from his colleagues abroad.

After six years pressure from colleagues overseas convinced the Soviet Government and the Soviet Academy of Science to permit Yuri to resume his research.

I will never forget what it meant to us, to feel embraced by this great global camaraderie of science. We felt your support for all those seventeen refusenik years, years of danger and poverty.

There were some remarkable people who helped us in our new life when we arrived to Israel, in 1990. And now I want to thank first of all Professor Misha Marinov, who was Yuri's main colleague and best friend in the Technion.

I want to thank the ex-Minister of Science of Israel, Professor Yuval Ne'eman and his colleague Dr. Baruch Eyal, who really became our friends not only at work. I also want to thank the ICMC for all their help to us when we were refuseniks in Moscow and new repatriates in Jerusalem.

There were some young physicists around Yuri in Technion, who used to enjoy discussions with him about their craziest ideas in physics. When Yuri listened to another person his attention was undivided and deep. He understood every word, every nuance of feeling, and when he saw a way that he could be of help, he did not wait, but jumped up to do it.

Human warmth, and complete understanding in relationships were his most cherished values.

That readiness of apprehension, that sharp intelligence and empathy epitomized my Yuri. He was not a superman. He was just the best man I ever knew.

Thank You all for coming here today to remember Yuri and to honor his life's work.

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