# BINAI BIRITH

PUBLISHED SINCE 1886 SUMMER 2019 VOL. 135, NO. 2

## Au Revoir, France. Bienvenue, Israel: French Immigrants Making Aliyah

By Dina Kraft

n a Monday evening on one of Tel Aviv's oldest streets, with buildings covered in purple bougainvillea and lined with cypress trees, an upscale kosher deli sells cheeses and sausages imported from France, and French is heard more than Hebrew.

"I loved my life in Paris," says Lison Nadjar, who immigrated in 2015 and says she is still struggling to learn Hebrew. She and a companion are sitting at a nearby outdoor restaurant whose tables are covered in white linen tablecloths. The menu is in Hebrew and French, and most of the clientele is chatting in French.

She adds: "I feel safer of course in Israel, although just last week there was a rocket attack," a missile fired from Gaza that set off warning sirens throughout the city.

Despite these occasional alarms, more than 47,000 French Jews have immigrated to Israel in the last five years. Typically, more affluent French immigrants settle in Tel Aviv and wealthy suburbs like Raanana. The more religious tend to settle in Jerusalem or the coastal city of Netanya, which some Israelis have dubbed "The Israeli Riviera." As housing prices climb, more have been settling in the southern coastal town of Ashdod and a smaller town called Netivot, also in the south. Some religious immigrants have moved in groups to West Bank settlements.

The number of French Jews peaked

in 2015 after the Jan. 9 attack on Hyper Cacher, a kosher supermarket in Paris. There a Frenchman took hostages and killed four people in the name of the Islamic State. Two days after the attack, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told those attending a memorial service at a Paris synagogue that they had a right to live equally and safely anywhere. "These days we are blessed with another privilege, a privilege that didn't exist for generations of Jews — the privilege to join their brothers and sisters in their historic homeland of Israel," he said. A month later, addressing European Jews, he said, "Israel is your home."

In the aftermath of the supermarket attack, the French government surveyed Jewish citizens. Some 60 percent said they never felt safe in France. That year, 6,628 Jews immigrated to Israel, a slight increase from the year before. But, since then, the numbers have steadily dropped; the mass wave some expected has not materialized, even though French Jews say they still fear for their safety and future in their own country — and anti-Semitic incidents have increased. France's interior minister announced recently that such acts rose by 74 percent in 2018.

Last year, on March 23, 85-year-old Mireille Knoll was found fatally stabbed 11 times in her Paris apartment, in an attack that officials labeled an anti-Semitic hate crime. Born in France, she had survived the Holocaust by fleeing to Portugal. Noa Goldfarb, Knoll's granddaughter who had immigrated to Israel years earlier, wrote in a Facebook post: "Twenty years ago, I left Paris knowing that neither my future nor that of the Jewish People is to be found there."

Ariel Kandel, chief executive officer of Qualita, a non-governmental organization assisting French immigrants to Israel, agrees. "There is no future in France, there is one in Israel, and the French Jewish community understands that (mass immigration) is only a matter of time," says Kandel, who formerly was the head of French immigration for The Jewish Agency, the Israeli government arm that oversees immigration.

"You hear people say, yes, in Israel there may be a threat of missiles," he says. "But when I walk on the streets every day I don't feel surrounded by anti-Semitism." Referring to some fatal anti-Semitic attacks, including the 2006 kidnapping, torture and murder of Ilan Halimi, a Frenchman of Moroccan Jewish ancestry, he adds: "Now that we have seen people murdered, it's a different situation. If before it was 'manageable anti-Semitism' in the form of tension and stress, now there is a sense that you could be killed in an attack."

"The Jewish community of France is worried," says Philippe Meyer, president

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Photo credit: Qualita

Offering skills workshops and advancing employment connections in its Tel Aviv and Jerusalem branches, Qualita is a non-profit organization that helps French people making Aliyah to find jobs.

of B'nai B'rith France. "The sharp rise in anti-Semitic acts in 2018 has been confirmed since the beginning of the year, and the trivialization of anti-Jewish hatred on a daily basis is very worrying. To traditional anti-Semitism has been added militant anti-Zionism. This situation for Jews of France is also part of a tense global climate of a society increasingly fractured and threatened by hatreds in which tensions are strengthening."

Meyer says community leaders work to strike a balance as they navigate between those who want to emigrate and those who choose to stay in France.

"In this difficult climate, many French Jews of course ask questions about their future and that of their children. Many have already left, to go to Israel or elsewhere, and many others are considering doing so. It is always a personal choice. But it is important that this choice responds to a life project linked to an ideal, rather than to a flight linked to fear." Meyer adds: "A successful Aliyah [Hebrew for immigration to Israel, literally "ascending" to the land of Israel]

for those who wish to leave and a Jewish community in France living in a peaceful climate for those who wish to stay are two complementary and compatible goals."

### ISO Employment at the "Job Hub"

In the Qualita building, on Lilienblum Street, a classroom instructor is switching back and forth between French and Hebrew. He is presenting a workshop on preparing for a job interview in Israel to a small group of French immigrants in their 20s and 30s. He tells them that about 40 percent of jobs here are filled through social connections, what in Hebrew is termed: "a friend brings a friend."

Finding a job in Israel is the main hurdle for French immigrants like these young people. According to a Qualita study, about half of those who have arrived in the past five years are unemployed or underemployed — not working in their professions in their new country, where the cost of living is high and salaries are generally lower than what they could earn in France.

Taking notes is Sarah, 32, who preferred to be identified only by her first name. Two

years ago she said goodbye to her parents and siblings and immigrated to Israel from Paris where she was an executive assistant at an international consulting company. She has since been working as a waitress in hotels, but she was currently unemployed and looking for a job in her field.

She says coming here was more about being drawn to Israel as a place and less about fears for her personal safety as a Jew, which some of her counterparts cite as motivation for leaving France. Anti-Jewish sentiment was something she had grown up seeing — not in violent acts, but in words and behavior. But in her experience, it felt more like background noise than an actual threat.

Israel, she says, smiling, "just feels like home. It's easier to be Jewish here. I just love it. I've always felt more Israeli than French, in a way, because I too prefer to be upfront, which in France can be a problem, but here they love it." She was referring, she says, to Israelis' tendency to be direct and outspoken.

Sitting behind her desk at Qualita's Tel Aviv office is Eva Cohen, a retired lieu-

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tenant colonel in the Israeli air force and a French immigrant herself (she came here with her family in 1986 as a teenager). She directs the organization's "job hub."

"We are focused on getting people to jobs, and jobs that are right for them," Cohen says. The nonprofit organization, founded by Mark Eisenberg, a French Jewish billionaire philanthropist, has another office in Jerusalem as well, and uses a digital platform to connect immigrants to Israeli employers. It also has an employee assigned to help new immigrants obtain professional licenses recognized in Israel. The organization's French-language Facebook page, with nearly 14,000 followers, and its popular online broadcasts, also delivered in French, attest to its widespread reach in the immigrant community.

Cohen says Qualita has found that many French immigrants are working in positions like French-language work at call centers that don't integrate them into Israeli society. There are also a significant number of families in which one of the parents, usually the father, continues to work in France and returns on occasional weekends and vacations to rejoin the family in Israel. There's a nickname for this kind of immigration, it's dubbed "Boeing Aliyah" in reference to the flying commute.

According to Arielle Di Porto, director of the Jewish Agency's Aliyah department, the Jewish communities in Parisian suburbs are shrinking.

"But it is really important to say, this is still an Aliyah of choice. This is not Venezuela or people in the Mideast fleeing for fear of their lives," says Di Porto. The image many have in Israel of French Jewish immigrants is that they are educated and wealthy, and it is true that many do come with college degrees, but most are middle class and even working class.

"But I think more would be coming to Israel if the state gave more help with housing. For example, many of the Jews in the



Photo credit: Amos Gil, PikiWiki.com

Brightly-colored tilework telling the stories of Israel's history and leaders decorates a building façade in Neve Tzedek, the Tel Aviv neighborhood where French immigrants socialize..

periphery of France live in public housing from the state. Here they get help for the first months with rent subsidies, but then are on their own," Di Porto says.

Those who work closely with the French immigrant community say the government has mistakenly assumed that most newcomers need less help than other immigrant groups. They repeat the same line: More needs to be done by the government to help facilitate their Aliyah. The feeling is that, unlike North American immigrants, whose Aliyah is handled by the semiprivate Nefesh B'Nefesh, and Russian speakers from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia who receive a wide array of benefits through the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, the French immigrants are assumed to be educated and more comfortable financially and get less assistance.

### Entrez B'nai B'rith

In a two-story municipal building that houses Qualita upstairs and an ulpan, a language school for immigrants, downstairs is a spacious sunny room that serves as the first French-speaking B'nai B'rith Lodge in Tel Aviv. Opened last year, it is named for Joseph Wybran, the former president of a B'nai B'rith lodge in Brussels, a physician assassinated in his hospital parking lot by a gunman associated with Abu Nidal, a notorious Palestinian terrorist.

The Joseph Wybran Lodge's president, Jacques Heller, made Aliyah from Brussels in 1997. It has two vice presidents, Emmy Wybran Sosnowski, Wybran's widow, who made Aliyah in 2011, and Lison Nadjar, who immigrated in 2015 with her husband André, also a longtime leader of B'nai B'rith in Paris. Nadjar had experience opening lodges; she opened two in Paris.

The two are close friends and are grateful to have a space to recreate here the camaraderie and volunteerism they had in their home cities. The new B'nai B'rith lodge, which meets monthly, started with 12 people and now has 50 members. "Even with a Kassem [rocket] I still feel safer than in Belgium," says Wybran Sosnowski.

For Nadjar, who did not plan to immigrate until her three adult children started to come, one by one, the transition to life

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Photo caption: Courtesy of Dina Kraft

Lison Nadjar (left), from Paris, and Emmy Wybran-Sosnowski, from Brussels, at a Neve Tzedek café. Now Israeli citizens, they are vice presidents of the French-speaking B'nai B'rith Joseph Wybran Lodge of Tel Aviv, whose membership has increased from 12 to 50.

here has been challenging, not only the language but the location.

"We had a good life in Paris, a nice apartment, very well located," says Nadjar. But her location here is all about family. One of her sons and her daughter bought apartments in buildings next to where she and her husband live in central Tel Aviv. Most Friday nights the family, now all living in Israel and including young grandchildren, gather around her table for Shabbat dinners.

### The New Arrivals

On the southeastern edge of Jerusalem is Ulpan Etzion, an intensive Hebrew learning program with its own dorms that was created especially for young immigrants with college degrees.

Ofra Toubiana, 26, who emigrated from Paris in January, shares a two-room dorm including a tiny kitchen with two other



Photo caption: Courtesy of Dina Kraft

New to Israel, Ofra Toubiana (left) enjoys collegial relationships with others who live and study at Jerusalem's Ulpan Etzion.

young women from France also in their 20s.

Her roommates each have a sibling who has made Aliyah, but Toubiana describes herself as "one of the lucky ones."

"All my family, except for one brother in New York, now live here ... My father fed us with Zionist dreams," says Toubiana, whose grandparents were Tunisian immigrants to France.

With degrees in law and business, she worked in Paris selling television rights to the international market. It is a niche profession she hopes to continue here, noting Israel's track record selling television shows to online streaming sites like Netflix.

"I felt at home in France, but I wanted to be in this young country, a place that wanted me, too — a place where I could grow up along with the country," she says. "It's crazy to think a country says 'Come! Come with your bags and we will grow together.""





### **Editor's Note**

mmigration is a current concern. Refugees fleeing gang violence, political persecution, poverty and changing climate appear desperate to seek asylum in the United States. Flocking to our southern borders, they meet official and even popular resistance. At the same time, self-described "sanctuary cities" offer to come to their aid. This is happening now. But not too many generations ago, we were the desperate refugees, Jews seeking to escape the Nazi genocide, and, even before then, simply seeking entry into the Goldene Medina (America) away from poverty and pogroms that marked life in the Eastern European Pale of Settlement.

In this issue of B'nai B'rith Magazine, we look at Jewish immigration, then and now. Then, a wily forger helped Jews with counterfeit visas in the early decades of the 20th century, until he mysteriously vanished. A decade later, Great Britain welcomed 4,000 German Jewish men threatened with imprisonment and worse after Kristallnacht in November 1938. Today, Jews are still emigrating to escape anti-Semitism, but this

time from France to Israel, where francophone sounds mingle with modern-day Hebrew in certain Tel Aviv neighborhoods. We take you there.

Mining happier news from the past, we tell the stories of three Jewish polar explorers who accompanied Admiral Richard Byrd on his expeditions to the bottom of the Earth. Our Vault column fondly recalls Warren G. Harding, among the most scandal-plagued and maligned of presidents, who was, we learn, a friend of B'nai B'rith and American Jews. Mark D. Olshan, our aging issues columnist, is happy to be back in the fray as an advocate in Washington for senior housing programs. Turning to Israel, B'nai B'rith President Charles O. Kaufman is cautiously optimistic as the Jewish state turns 71. And Daniel S. Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith CEO, appreciates non-Jewish allies who have enlisted in the age-old fight against anti-Semitism.  $\odot$ 

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B'nai B'rith Magazine (ISSN 1549-4799) is printed one time per year and published online throughout the year by B'nai B'rith International, 1120 20th Street NW, Suite 300 North, Washington, DC 20036, and is indexed in the Index to Jewish Periodicals. \$5 of member dues goes toward B'nai B'rith Magazine.

Standard postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.

Notification of address change should be sent to Circulation, 1120 20th Street NW, Suite 300 North, Washington, DC 20036, or call 888-388-4224. Please allow six to eight weeks for change.

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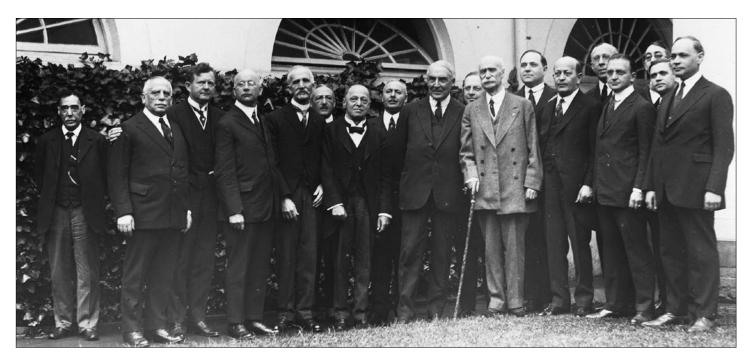
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### From the Vault

## President Harding Backed B'nai B'rith and a Jewish Homeland

By Cheryl Kempler



arren G. Harding's presidency was marred by a major bribery scandal and rumors of infidelity, but lately he has undergone something of an image makeover. A constant then and now was his close ties to American Jews, whose votes contributed to his 1920 landslide victory.

Jewish entertainer Al Jolson recorded the candidate's campaign song, "Harding, You're the Man for Us."

Weeks after Harding's March 1921 inauguration, the White House hosted a reception on May 5th for Simon Wolf, a prominent Washington lawyer, personal associate and former B'nai B'rith president, and member of B'nai B'rith's executive committee.

Wearing a light-colored suit in the photo, Wolf stands at Harding's left, and to Wolf's left is Executive Secretary A.B. Seelenfreund, while B'nai B'rith President Alfred Kraus, in bow tie and wing-tip collar, appears on the president's right.

Harding admired B'nai B'rith's aims. "I hope that all America will catch the spirit of B'nai B'rith in campaigning against all movements aimed to rend the concord of American citizenship," he wrote. "Fraternity must be the abiding purpose of our people."

Days later, Harding referenced the 1917 Balfour Declaration, noting that he was "very glad to express my approval and hearty sympathy... in behalf of the restoration of Palestine as a homeland for the Jewish people." Despite his connection with anti-Semitic auto magnate Henry Ford, and his 3 percent cut to immigration, Harding did not alienate his Jewish constituents.

Delivering the first Rosh Hashanah message from an American president on Aug. 22, 1922, Harding observed: "This has been a year notable in Jewish annals ... their long aspiration for re-establishment of Jewish nationality in the homeland of this great people is to be definitely realized. This is an event of significance not only for the Jewish people, but to their friends and well-wishers everywhere, among whom the American nation has always been proud to be numbered." One month later, Harding signed a resolution endorsing the Palestine mandate.

When he died in 1923, massive crowds watched the train bearing his body travel from California to his home state of Ohio. B'nai B'rith's magazine eulogized the Republican president who "brooked no distinction between any class of people." Even New York City's Jewish Socialist Party congressman Meyer London agreed that "all factions had love for him as a man."





### **From the President**

## Our People in the Worst of Times Deserve the Best of Times

By Charles O. Kaufman
President, B'nai B'rith International

t age 71, the modern State of Israel is in full Renaissance mode. The food, the art, the music and the literature are all winning international acclaim. Even with the ongoing internal political divisions and religious squabbling, the Jewish state is brimming with a unique air of confidence. Some might read these positives with caution, perhaps foretelling tough times ahead.

Over the expanse of time, we've experienced evil and good, vicious tyrants and celebrated leaders, from Haman and Hitler to King David and Bibi Netanyahu.

Generation after generation, with the predictability of a pendulum, we've gone from desperate straits to miraculous survival. We survived slavery, then celebrated a flight to freedom. We faced extinction, but the lamp oil lasted a miraculous eight days, and we survived. We survived the Inquisition, escaped exile, lived in darkness, suffered through pogroms and the Holocaust. Then, we found some comfort in settling and assimilating in the Diaspora.

Long before Charles Dickens, Jews have lived through the worst of times and the best of times.

Such is the resilience of the Jewish people, a history that B'nai B'rith has witnessed since its founding in 1843.

The path to the Israeli Renaissance did not have to be so turbulent and tragic. It would have been enough had our enemies accepted the United Nations partition plan in 1947, or if neighboring countries allowed Jews to live among them in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. Or if the Palestinian people ignored their Arab warlords and lived in their own state under the United Nations mandate. Had Palestinian leadership abandoned terrorism and accepted Gaza and much of Judea and Samaria, the propositions outlined by Prime Ministers Barak and Olmert ... Dayenu.

Had they not chosen to corrupt the United Nations with false narratives and hateful resolutions ... Dayenu. Or resorted to anti-Semitic boycott, divestment and sanction strategies, which hurt the well-being of Palestinians ... Dayenu. Had they not squandered hundreds of millions of dollars on tunnels and "pay to slay" tactics ... Dayenu. Had they not poisoned the minds of generations of Palestinian children to hate and kill Jews and vilify Israel ... Dayenu.

But they did, and this time and every time since 1948, the Palestinians have followed leaders who have taken them down a road of



Photo credits for all the pictures: Charles O. Kaufman

Photographed on the site of the Mount of Olives, this panoramic view of the Old City reveals millennia of Jewish burials and the remarkable expanse of modern-day Jerusalem.

futility. Only the Palestinians can find a road to peace. It won't come through a war; it will come with an agreement. It will come through compromise, not through accusations of apartheid or comparisons to Hitler.

They're losing friends in the region as leaders and entire countries begin to realize that Israel has much to offer.

On the world front, miracles continue to appear like buds from dead limbs. Honduras joins Guatemala, the Czech Republic and the United States in announcing moves of their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Brazil is taking a small step as it contemplates a similar move. Other countries seem to be testing the waters in their own way.

### Imagining the Unimaginable

Who would have imagined that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates would see Israel as some variety of an ally?

B'nai B'rith's delegation to U.N. meetings in Paris and Geneva in mid-March, the 40th session of the Human Rights Council, witnessed slightly shifting winds in the nonetheless irrepressible voting majority with its tsunami of tiresome, lying rants against Israel.

### **From the President**

## Our People in the Worst of Times Deserve the Best of Times



The Knesset at dusk in the capital of the Jewish State of Israel — Jerusalem.



Newly inducted soldiers prepare to move onto the next phase of training after a face-to-face encounter with their roots.

Among the nearly 60 ambassadors and others with whom we visited, Israel's friends showed more strength in their opposition to hateful resolutions. Surprisingly, Great Britain delivered on its promise not to consider resolutions presented under Item Seven, titled "Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories," aimed at one country — Israel. Britain and Denmark both voted against Item Seven resolutions at the U.N. Human Rights Council. Even Austria's ambassador to Israel tweeted that he was against this "accountability resolution."

Audrey Azoulay, director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), took a courageous stand against the anti-Semitic, demonizing displays at the carnival celebration in Aalst, Belgium.

Even the Palestinian delegation understands the disenchantment that years of these tactics are creating and combined some of the resolutions to create a perception that it somehow is reducing the volume of vitriol against the Jewish state. Of course, this tactic amounted to nothing more than some diplomatic sleight of hand.

Nonetheless, miracles come in many forms. More countries are showing more courage in an increasingly dangerous world. Other ambassadors have stayed the course in perpetuating the narrative of an oppressed people on stolen land.

Palestinians have the power to break the shackles of their corrupt leaders. Many have chosen to live outside "refugee camps" and make a life for themselves among Jews. A growing number of them are publicly talking about a better life in Israel. The truth sadly gets drowned out by propaganda or the adherence to an agenda laced with ageless hate.

Amid the accounts of what might be miracles, we see the growing blood libels — images showing an Israel Defense Forces soldier with horns, and fliers stating, "Jews worship the Devil (Satan)," "Jews rape kids" and "the Holocaust is a LIE."

### How is this possible in 2019?

It's possible in the same strange way a generation of social media-attuned Jews accepts propaganda about Israel. If they read history, they would reject the concept of occupation, of apartheid. They would appreciate Zionism and a Jewish state.

### A Call to Action

So, here's what B'nai B'rith members throughout the world must do:

• Recognize that anti-Semitism is real.

- Practice your Judaism.
- Show your Jewish pride and love Israel, an innovative, diverse and multicultural country. Of more than 900 individuals who have won Nobel Prizes at least 20 percent were Jews. Jews comprise less than two-tenths of a percent of the world's population.
- Teach college students about the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 and Intifadas 1 and 2. Get the facts straight about partition. Arabs were not kicked out. Property was not stolen. During the ingathering of Jews significantly from neighboring or nearby Arab countries, as this magazine has well documented, people were kicked out and property was stolen. Remind them Jews were in Judea, Jerusalem and Hebron almost 4,000 years ago.
- Love the country in which you live.

A strong Israel means Jews are never going into exile again.

The Israeli Renaissance, with its technological mastery and faith, is anchored in its ability to manage and correct worst-case scenarios. B'nai B'rith will continue to work in the same vein, allowing this great organization to enjoy the best of times. •





## **Friends in Deed**

By Daniel S. Mariaschin B'nai B'rith Chief Executive Officer

his past Passover, while surfing with the TV remote, I stopped along the way to watch the news. Not long after settling in to the newscast, I was drawn in to a holiday message from Britain's then embattled and now former Prime Minister, Theresa May.

May's greeting was not just the usual. She did open by noting that "Jewish families around the world come together at the Seder table to tell the story of their ancestors' deliverance from slavery." She also referenced "the incredible and enduring" contributions of British Jewry to life in that country.

But what followed was less history than a serious observation of the persistence of anti-Semitism over the millennia, including that which is spiking in the United Kingdom, not to mention within its Labour Party, today. The "descendants of those Moses led to freedom," she stated, "have continued to face hatred, discrimination, and violence. It's a situation that continues to this day including, I'm sad to say, here in Britain."

May said this situation is "something I have consistently taken action to tackle .... The story of Passover," she concluded, "teaches us that that, while wrong may triumph for a time, the arc of history always bends to the righteous ... so let us all pledge to stand up and make our voices heard in the face of anti-Semitism."

May's Passover message, simple in its construction but profound in its real-time relevance, was inspirational. Through the broad expanse of history, there have always been those, not Jewish, who went the extra mile to convey a certain sensitivity to our

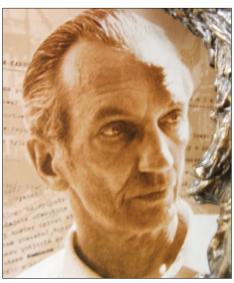


Photo credit: Jan Karski Society/Wikipedia

A diplomat who joined the Polish Resistance during World War II, Jan Karski (1914-2000) told Allied leaders the truth about atrocities committed against the Jews. In 2012, President Barack Obama posthumously awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

condition, including some who made monumental contributions to the survival of our people. When we'd discuss this subject around the dinner table, my father always reminded us about Persia's Cyrus the Great, who called for an end to the Babylonian captivity and opined that the Temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt and returned to Jewish worship.

### Honoring the Righteous

In modern times, we all know the stories of Oskar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg. But Yad Vashem's Avenue of the Righteous



Photo credit: The Green House, Vilnius/commons.wikimedia.org

Defying his government's orders, Chiune Sugihara (1900-1986), the head of Japan's consulate in Lithuania, chose instead to issue the necessary visas which enabled hundreds of Jews to emigrate before the Nazis invaded in 1939. He is honored among Yad Vashem's "The Righteous of the Nations."

honors thousands of others who risked arrest, capture, torture or death for the simple act of saving the life of a Jew in peril. The rescue of the Jews of Bulgaria — 48,000 of them — was the work of many people: church leaders, members of parliament, intellectuals, workers and everyday citizens who would not accede to the deportation of their friends and neighbors to certain death in Nazi concentration camps. In that same category would be Jan Karski, a leader of the Polish resistance, who warned President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1943 about the situation in

### Friends in Deed

Poland and the Nazi persecution of its Jews.

Japan's Chiune Sugihara, the consul in Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania, issued hundreds of visas to Jews frantically seeking to flee the deadly hands of the Nazis. We've come to learn about other courageous diplomats, from Portugal, Guatemala and other countries who engaged in similar activity, often at the risk of being recalled or dismissed from their positions abroad.

Pope John XXIII was a giant in that regard. The Second Vatican Council that he convened lifted the millennia-old, church-imposed collective stain on the Jewish people for the killing of Jesus.

When I was a youngster, Boston's Cardinal Richard Cushing came to speak at a community lecture series in my hometown in New Hampshire. In the time before the Vatican Council's landmark Nostra Aetate document absolving the Jews of collective guilt, there were serious issues with the Church about anti-Semitism within its doctrinal practices. Cushing was known as one church leader who had consistently reached out to the Jewish community. My parents took me to that sold-out lecture, and, because of what I had been told about his friendship, I summoned the courage to go up to him at its conclusion to shake his hand.

We mustn't forget Bayard Rustin, the eminent civil rights leader, who championed the cause of Soviet Jewry and spoke often of Israel's vibrant democracy. When I worked for the Anti-Defamation League in the late '70s and early '80s, I had the opportunity to meet him several times.

And Martin Luther King, Jr., who made several comments strongly supportive of Israel, once wrote to an anti-Zionist friend, "Don't talk like that. When people criticize Zionists, that means Jews. You're talking anti-Semitism." How relevant to the



Photo credit: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston/commons.wikimedia.org

A 1965 recipient of B'nai B'rith's Interfaith Award, Cardinal Richard Cushing (1895-1970) brought a new spirit of ecumenicism to the Catholic Church. He decried "any inequity, hatred or persecution of our Jewish brothers."

### Friends in Deed



Photo credit: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston/commons.wikimedia.org

A 1965 recipient of B'nai B'rith's Interfaith Award, Cardinal Richard Cushing (1895-1970) brought a new spirit of ecumenicism to the Catholic Church. He decried "any inequity, hatred or persecution of our Jewish brothers."

challenges we are facing today.

Senator Henry (Scoop) Jackson (D-Wash.) and Congressman Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) were longtime leaders in the effort to free Soviet Jewry, calling global attention to the movement by highlighting the plight of refuseniks and the entire Soviet Jewish community.

### Good Friends, Fighting Back

Today, when anti-Semitism is spiking worldwide, and especially in Europe, good friends from outside our community are fighting back. Katharina von Schnurbein, the European Commission's Coordinator on combating Antisemitism, is one of them,

working tirelessly within the European Union to confront this growing menace. B'nai B'rith Europe conferred an important award on von Schnurbein, in recognition of her friendship and untiring efforts to call out anti-Semitism and to develop strategies to turn it back.

Sensitivity and acts of kindness need not have been on a global scale. I've written before in this space about my third-grade teacher, Annette Phippard, whose kindness extended to asking me to tell the story of Hanukkah to my classmates, none of whom was Jewish. Or my fifth-grade teacher, Florence Kellom, who called me out of class to tell me that a swastika had been found

on the wall of the boys' bathroom, and who wanted to assure me that the school custodian had washed it off. And there was my seventh-grade teacher, Ed Main, who was always understanding of my status as the only Jewish kid in my class, and only one of four in our school. He has remained a lifelong friend. As have others with whom I started out in the first grade right through high school and who, together with their parents, never saw my being Jewish as making any difference between them and me.

This list is by no means complete, nor is this story ended. In every era, no matter how tragic the circumstances or how difficult the odds, there have been individuals



### Friends in Deed

from outside our community who stood up for us in a variety of ways. Today, the challenges are immense: the threats to Israel by Iran and its terrorist proxies, the BDS campaign that seeks to delegitimize Israel, a United Nations system rife with discrimination — or worse — against the Jewish state, and the aforementioned dramatic increase in anti-Semitism around the world.

In the age of the internet, where there are few secrets and where obfuscation is near impossible to impose, we can easily see what our enemies, detractors and critics are up to. Take, for example, the World Heritage Committee, a body affiliated with UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). It has, in response to Palestinian pressure, sought to erase Jewish history by appropriating our holiest sites — beginning with Jerusalem's Temple Mount. As these kinds of challenges mount, we'll surely need friends and allies in the battles that will ensue.

It's not necessary to wait for a special date on the calendar to pause to remember and honor those who went the extra mile for their Jewish friends. The act of making a difference for us, oftentimes unpopular, and many times dangerous, should be the only criterion by which we judge.

Clichés become so because they usually are truisms. In this case, "a friend in need, is a friend indeed" — or "a friend *in deed*" — has resonated loudly for us over the millennia of our history.



www.ayelet.com.

By Kenneth D. Ackerman

don't have a photo of Joseph Rubinsky. I know he was short and skinny. U.S. law enforcement files peg him at 5 feet 3 inches tall, 112 pounds, with brown hair and brown eyes.

But here's something better: a sample of his work. What you see in the accompanying illustration is a 1926 American entrance visa, a rare gem at a time when millions of refugees from warscarred Eastern Europe were trying to reach the United States but were blocked by newly imposed immigration quotas. It sold for a fortune on the black market, a beautiful, profitable, elegant fraud. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of illegals, mostly Polish and Russian Jews, fooled Ellis Island inspectors with Rubinsky forgeries between 1922 and 1926 to reach the Land of Liberty.

Breaking immigration laws made Rubinsky a criminal. Police jailed him at least four times during the 1920s in Poland, Germany and France. Each time, Rubinsky bought or connived his way out and went back in business.

### Hero or Villain?

Was Joseph Rubinsky a hero, savior of Jewish refugees from persecution and the upcoming Holocaust? Or was he a villain, a parasite who soaked desperate people of their last pennies? We too easily forget the painful compromises that litter our past. Thousands, probably tens of thousands, of our grandparents and family members entered this country illegally, by forgery, smuggling or secret border crossings, not unlike human trafficking on the American southern border today. Rubinsky reminds us of this truth. He prompts us not to be smug.

I first encountered Joseph Rubinsky researching my own family, digging through old diplomatic files at the U.S. National Archives, exploring how my grandparents came from Poland in the 1920s. Here, I discovered a 1926 cable reporting the arrests in Berlin of six people carrying fake travel documents. The listed included Hinda Bronfeld — my future mother, then 14 years old — and two siblings, my future uncle and aunt. Except it wasn't them.

Nobody in my family had heard this story, and all of that generation — parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents who made the immigrant journey in the 1920s — had died years earlier. Months of research confirmed our family had been victims of identity theft. Only dumb luck had avoided my family being detained and marooned in pre-Holocaust Poland. For me, the story became personal.

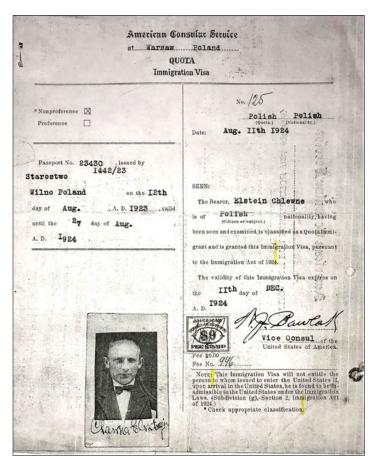


Photo credit: Courtesy National Archives, College Park, Md.

Rubinsky's handiwork: a visa from a counterfeit passport, complete with fabricated official stamps and forged signatures, carried by the author's grandfather in 1924. Immigration officials detected defects in the type and other irregularities.

### Who Was Rubinsky?

Born in Kiev in 1892, Joseph Rubinsky came to America as a teenager and settled in New York City. He talked fast, had an eye for business and an ear for languages: English, Russian, Polish, Yiddish, French, German and others. And he was a fighter: authorities reported a vicious scar on his left jaw.

He'd built what seemed a nice life for himself in New York, with a wife Ida, daughters Henrietta and Dora, and a Bronx apartment.

But, in December 1921, he left for Europe. He called it a business trip, claiming to import furs and to represent a shipping firm, the Russian American Relief Package Forwarding Company.

Within a year, Polish police in Warsaw arrested him and seized a large stash of blank visa applications signed by a purported New York notary, plus blank U.S. nationalization forms. Investigators confirmed that both of Rubinsky's American businesses were shams. He spent the next 10 months in a Polish prison before being released on bail. Weeks later, he was back in business.

### **His Customers**

Rubinsky provided a service much in demand. Between 1881 and 1914, more than 2 million Eastern European Jews left their homes to escape persecution. A few went to Palestine, but the bulk came to America, congregating mostly in New York and other cities to form large, vibrant communities.

But the outbreak of World War I, the naval blockades and U-boat attacks largely blocked trans-Atlantic crossings until the armistice in late 1918. For Jews left behind, things got worse. The war's Eastern Front had battered most of the Jewish Pale of Settlement. After the armistice, a new wave of violence swept the region. The 1917 Russian Revolution sparked a three-year civil war pitting Bolsheviks (including many high-profile Jews) against reactionary White Russians, replete with massacres of Jewish communities. Nationalist movements in Ukraine and Poland also spawned anti-Jewish pogroms, while in Germany pre-fascist rabble-rousers blamed a Jewish "stab in the back" for the country's defeat in the Great War. Death tolls of Jewish civilians murdered in these years topped 50,000.

Desperate to escape, Jewish immigrants to America returned to pre-war levels in 1919 and 1920, but America, too, had changed. The welcome mat was gone. Congress was preparing to slam the door.

Americans had long resented immigrants



Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints and Drawings Division, Washington, D.C. Published in a Yiddish newspaper in 1920, this cartoon depicts anti-immigration Congressman Albert Johnson slamming a gigantic door on Eastern European Jews attempting to enter the United States.



Photo credit: Courtesy of the National Archives, College Park, Md.

Employees of the American Consulate in Warsaw in 1926. Some of them may have provided the means for forgers to obtain blank forms and completed applications.



Photo credit: Kenneth Ackerman Collection

Bronfeld family members were photographed in Zawichost, Poland shortly before they immigrated in 1926. The author's future mother, who was arrested with a fake passport, stands at the extreme left.

and despised foreign-born socialists and radicals. Peace in 1918 brought economic shocks that heightened this nativist streak: spiking unemployment and living costs, labor strikes, a Red Scare, race riots. Recent immigrants, primarily Jews and Italians, were singled out as dirty, suspicious and disloyal, stealing jobs from native-born Americans. Rhetoric grew ugly. Rep. Albert Johnson (R-Wash.), chairman of the House Immigration Committee, called them "the scourings of the sewers of Europe."

Congress' new Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 effectively closed the era of open entry into America. Annual immigration fell from pre-war levels of over a million people to about 150,000. The new laws also imposed quotas based on each nationality's foreignborn residents in 1890, with limited exceptions for families. This formula caused visas for Eastern European Jews to plummet 90 percent.

Back in Europe, a booming business

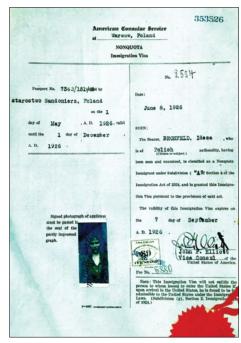


Photo credit: Kenneth Ackerman Collection

An official visa, issued to the author's grandmother in 1926.

arose among entrepreneurs — forgers and smugglers — willing to supply travel documents to those seeking escape. They could charge the moon for a quality fake ... which brings us back to Joseph Rubinsky.

### Rubinsky's Gang

By the mid-1920s, Rubinsky and his gang — police claim he had at least seven partners — operated out of two cramped apartments, one in Warsaw, one in Danzig (modern-day Gdansk). Similar rings operated in Rotterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg and other ports. They hired webs of accomplices, crooked railroad conductors, steamship agents, hotel keepers and local police willing to take bribes. To produce convincing forgeries, they stole or purchased blank American visa forms from U.S. consulates, bribing staff officials when needed. The best forgeries sold for \$500 or more (about

\$15,000 in today's dollars), plus surcharges for passage across Europe or smuggling over national frontiers.

Rubinsky's name appeared again in diplomatic cables in late 1924, when 26 counterfeit American entry visas were seized from a group of Polish Jews crossing from Germany into Belgium. A similar group had been captured in Paris, and another 53 counterfeit visas discovered in Marseilles. The documents all bore stamps and signatures from the U.S. consulate in Warsaw, all fake. French police quickly traced the frauds to Rubinsky and an accomplice operating in Germany. American diplomats immediately compiled a list of indicators — mostly tiny typesetting discrepancies — to distinguish the forgeries from genuine visas, and shared them with steamship officials, police and consulates across Europe. This resulted in more counterfeits being discovered.

Rubinsky was arrested in Breslau, Germany, and spent much of 1925 in a Warsaw jail. Then authorities released him again.

Rubinsky went back to work. By now, U.S. consulates had instituted new tracking systems to detect counterfeits. To avoid detection, Rubinsky needed to include in each new forgery the name, age, date and quota number from an actual legitimate visa. Where did he get this information? There was only one place — from the American consulates. Whether by bribe, theft or trickery, he soon had dozens, perhaps hundreds.

### My Family

This is where my family comes in. My grandfather came to America by himself in 1920 to escape the Polish-Bolshevik War, then spent five years saving money to buy passage for his wife and children. He also became a naturalized American citizen, qualifying the family for non-quota visas, which they obtained from the American Consulate in Warsaw in April 1926.

At almost the exact moment my family

left Warsaw for the long trip across Europe to Antwerp and a ship to America, a second group started the trip as well, this one carrying forged visas and passports with the names of my family members, purchased from Rubinsky at top dollar. In Berlin, German police happened to stop this second group for questioning, checked their papers, discovered the fraud, and arrested them on the spot. Hence the flurry of diplomatic cables listing the arrested people as my future mother, aunt and uncle.

Had the second group managed to reach Antwerp first and board the ship, then my family would have been the ones detained and accused of carrying fake documents. Untangling the mess could have taken years as America's doors were closing, leaving them stuck behind to face a dark future.

A few days after the Berlin arrests, police arrested Rubinsky in Danzig along with six accomplices. His apartment yielded a treasure trove of forgery paraphernalia: seals, consular stamps, blank forms and the rest. By then, just 35 years old, Rubinsky had had enough. He bought himself out of jail one last time, disappeared, slipped back into the United States via Cuba under a false name, then vanished into Canada. Not even J. Edgar Hoover's G-men could find him.

What made Joseph Rubinsky, this small, unremarkable man, leave his comfortable home and family in New York, cross the ocean and become an underworld smuggler? What drove him to face repeated arrest and prison, deal with swindlers, extort the

last pennies from destitute refugees? Was it just greed? Or vanity? Did he see himself a hero, a profiteer, a gambler?

There is no exact count of how many Eastern European Jews entered the United States illegally during the 1920s, but the number was certainly large. By 1927, U.S. immigration officials estimated, more than 100,000 illegals were entering America each year, and over a million were already living inside the country. That year, U.S. border patrol officers also reported arresting more than 18,000 trying to cross the border from Canada, Mexico or Cuba.

Whatever their motives, Rubinsky and his fellow forgers/smugglers had a massive impact on thousands of lives. As American Jews, they are part of our story.



https://vimeo.com/309999603/

By Linda Topping Streitfeld

Irmgard Brill was pregnant with her first child, and she was terrified. Nazis had burned down the synagogue, violence reigned in the streets, and she and her husband Walter had been forced to hide in the home of a friend. After years of increasing abuse and discrimination against Jews in Germany, this horrific night focused their dilemma. Irmgard must have wondered if they should stay in their hometown of Munich, Germany. And if not, how could they manage to get out?

Nov. 9, 1938 became known as Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, when Nazis looted and destroyed synagogues and Jewish businesses across the country. Dozens of Jews were killed, and thousands of Jewish men were arrested and imprisoned.

A short time later, Nazi police came for Walter Brill. He was sent to Dachau, one of Hitler's German internment camps, where prisoners were starved, humiliated, tortured and literally worked to death.

This story might have ended there, one more tragedy among the 6 million, but for an extraordinary effort that was taking shape across the English Channel. A resourceful and well-connected group was working feverishly to create a safe space near the town of Sandwich, England, for Jewish men who were at risk from the Nazi regime — men like Walter.

The fascinating tale of the Kitchener Camp has remained almost unknown for eight decades.

But now, another resourceful group has revived its memory and engaged dozens of descendants. In cluttered attics, dusty boxes and German postcards, "Kitchener kids" are finding their own connections to a spare collection of wooden huts near the southeast coast of England, where, in less than

two years, 4,000 men were rescued.

Clare Weissenberg of Sandwich spends "most waking hours" on the Kitchener project, answering queries and organizing about three events a year with speakers for descendants and others who are interested.

### British Jews Step In; Britain Steps Up

Energizing her this year is the planning for what she hopes will become a traveling exhibition of photos and artifacts. The exhibit will open in September 2019 at the Jewish Museum in London, with a daylong

program of talks and workshops.

In part, it will illuminate how the desperate and determined leaders of the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) lobbied the British government for permission to bring in the refugees, leased a decrepit WWI-era military training camp, hired the staff, developed criteria for choosing the men who would be rescued and organized a system to identify and transport them from Germany, Austria, Poland and elsewhere.

This group of about 10 Jewish leaders, including the future founding president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, also had to raise all the money, since the British government



Photo credit: Kitchener Rescue Camp

Music-making Kitchener camp residents, 1939.



Credit for the photo: Ordnance survey OpenData: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index. php?curid=12131887

Kent County is colored red on this map of England. The town of Sandwich, where the camp was located, is in the Northeast, near the coast.

contributed only its permission for the men to immigrate. They managed it in a few months, between November 1938 and February 1939, when the first refugees arrived.

Just as important, Weissenberg is

creating a forum to bring together the descendants and to tell the stories of their fathers, uncles and cousins. "I suppose I have come to regard the Kitchener project as a form of commemoration — of all our families," she wrote in an email. "It was a remarkable rescue. Yet, we have so many to mourn as well. Kitchener men lost parents, wives and children to the Shoah — when war was declared and their families became trapped. And it's crucial to keep this aspect of the Kitchener Camp rescue at the forefront of everything we do."

The Kitchener Descendants Group (KDG) numbers more than 60 in England, and its five-member steering committee is expanding recruitment efforts in the United States, where many of the men ended up.

The heart of the outreach is a website that began as a personal collection of letters and artifacts documenting the journey of Weissenberg's father, Werner Weissenberg, from Dachau to Kitchener. Now, with contributions from dozens of descendants, the site has blossomed into a rich, accessible archive of photos and stories, as well as a timeline, a map and the all-important list of names.

### The Survivors List

Walter Brill is on that list.

Even before the November pogroms, the Nazis had transferred full ownership of the furniture factory that he ran with his father Hugo to Hugo's Christian partner, leaving him without a job. It was Irmgard who spied a help-wanted ad for a furniture-maker to instruct Jewish boys and men. Walter, an expert carpenter, was hired.

But now, in Dachau, he was crowded into



Photo credit: Courtesy Alan Mildwurm and family.

Robert Mildwurm's Kitchener work detail identification card.

> a cell with 40 other men, desolate and fearful. Men around him were being tortured and shot. He could not fathom a way out.

> Walter likely did not know that the Jewish Agency in Berlin and German authorities worked together to manage the emigration of Jewish men, a goal they shared. The Jewish Agency knew Walter through the carpentry classes he had taught. So, when the

Kitchener directors requested builders and carpenters to renovate their fledgling camp, Walter Brill was a logical choice. With the help of a hefty fee paid by Hugo Brill, he was released to England, arriving in April 1939.

A few months later, Irmgard was allowed to leave as well. She arrived on the day her baby was due, but Winston Brill waited five more days before making his appearance on June 16, 1939. He was the first, and perhaps the only baby at Kitchener Camp.

Today, Winston lives in Redmond, Washington, and is still piecing together his parents' story. "My parents hardly ever talked about it. Whenever I brought it up, they always started talking about something else," he said. But he knew the name Kitchener and connected with Weissenberg, who pointed out that his picture had been published not only in a magazine produced at the camp, but in several books. It is a



hoto credit: Courtesy of Winston Brill and family.

This picture of Winston Brill and his parents appeared in a magazine published by the Kitchener Camp in 1939.

> touching portrait of new parents holding their son, a tightly cropped photo that hides — almost — the trauma of Dachau, the fear for relatives still in Germany, anxiety about the future.

> The Kitchener founders agonized over the criteria for choosing who would be rescued. Their pragmatic solution prioritized men over women, since they were immediately at risk, and those with useful skills such as construction, cooking and agriculture. Not only could they help build or run the camp, but they were expected to more quickly be accepted for immigration in another country.

### Who Would Go? Who Would Stay?

"My dad always said he was a very lucky man, and this is proof of it right here," said Alan Mildwurm. "How did he get to be one of the 4,000?"

Mildwurm always knew that his father, Robert, had been a refugee from the Nazis,



Photo credit: Courtesy Ruth Mildwurm.

Alan Mildwurm (right) visited Sandwich to learn more about his father's experience. He was photographed at the courthouse with writer Claire Ungerson, her husband William and a bailiff.



Photo by Sally Carrol

Descendants of Kitchener inmates who attended the May 22 event at Leo Baeck Institute, New York City.

that he had spent time in Dachau and that by some miracle he had ended up in England, at Kitchener. Even his dad, who died in 1998, didn't know exactly how that miracle occurred.

"One day they opened the doors to Dachau and said 'get out.' He didn't know if he was going to get shot in the back or what," Mildwurm said.

His father became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1945.

Still, there was a lingering sadness. Robert never knew what had happened to his brother Walter Mildwurm. The family lived in Vienna, Austria, but when Robert was detained and shipped off to Dachau, his brother was in a sanitarium in Holland, recovering from tuberculosis.

When Alan was a child, his family went often to Europe, always searching for Walter, but they never turned up anything. Only a few years ago, with the help of archivists at the Wiener Library and through cross-referencing documents, did they solve the mystery.

Because he was in Holland, Walter's last name had been given a Dutch spelling. Once that was established, they were able to trace him to Westerbork, a transit camp in the Netherlands, then to Theresienstadt ghetto, then to Auschwitz, then to Gross-Rosen, and finally to Dachau, where he died in March 1945.

"It felt good to finally know," Mildwurm said.

He and his wife recently traveled to England, where they connected with Clare Weissenberg and Clare Ungerson, author of "Four Thousand Lives: The Rescue of German Jewish men to Britain, 1939." Ungerson, 75, lives in Sandwich, and her very readable account blends an academic affection for facts with diary entries and anecdotes in a compelling portrait of the Kitchener Camp from conception to its closure in mid-1940.

A bonus for Mildwurm was the discovery that a previously unknown second cousin in London was doing parallel family research. They connected by phone and spoke for two hours.

### The Reunion

Mildwurm was part of the first reunion of "Kitchener Kids" in the U.S. on May 22 at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. "The best part of the reunion was meeting some wonderful people," he said.

Organizer Ronnie Wolf, 65, of Manhattan, brought together 29 people represent-



Photo credit: Courtesy of Ronnie Wolf

Gerhard Wolf. His daughter was unaware of her father's history until she discovered his diary, postcards and mementos that were with him at Kitchener.

ing 13 Kitchener men. Each family took a few minutes to share what they knew of their ancestor's story. For Wolf, the reunion was a satisfying step in her personal journey.

Wolf's search began with a postcard she couldn't read. It was handwritten in

German, addressed to her father Gerhard at Kitchener Camp, dated 1939 and had been languishing in a box of family mementos.

Wolf happened to meet a German-speaker at a party, who translated: "My dear, dear boy," it opens. Gerhard's father writes that he is boarding a ship from Italy to join Gerhard's mother in New York. "We will do everything so that you can come over. … I love you and be kissed 1,000 times."

"There started my journey," said Wolf.

A few years later, another treasure surfaced from a forgotten box. Her father had kept a diary from 1933 to 1939, starting at age 10. Neatly typed in German on numbered pages, it comprises "a fluid and accurate description of his life and details around him," Wolf said. She has posted an excerpt of the diary in the Memories section of the Kitchener website, and she said one expert compared it to "The Diary of Anne Frank."

For Ann Rolett, 60, of New Rochelle, New York, discovering lost family members was emotionally draining. "I knew all these people had died, but with the research, the people come alive and then it kind of breaks your heart."

Still, Rolett has devoted many hours to finding and sharing the stories that were hidden from her as a child. "The family didn't talk about it. My grandmother was very bitter about Germany," she said.

Her mother's first cousin, Kitty, married Victor Cohn in January 1939, when she was only 17. A few months later, he was accepted to Kitchener, and she eventually followed him to England to work as a maid.

Once war was declared, Victor was one of many Kitchener men who joined the British Army as part of the Pioneer Corps. They did not carry weapons but handled many noncombat duties. After Germany's defeat, he went with the army to Berlin and learned the sad fate of his parents and his sisters.

Some of Kitty's family had survived the war in hiding in Berlin, including her cousin — Ann Rolett's mother, Ingrid, then 10 years old. Without ration coupons, the family had traded everything of value in exchange for food on the black market. Wild thistle and dandelions supplemented the bread and potatoes, but they were quite

malnourished. Victor's arrival with the army greatly improved their lot in bombed-out Berlin. He was able to supplement their sparse supplies, and Rolett said that for her mother, it was a great relief to reunite with at least one family member.

### A Spirit of Generosity

It is impossible not to reflect on the generosity of spirit that allowed World War II-era Great Britain to accommodate 4,000 Jewish men, as well as 10,000 German Jewish children in the Kindertransport, which occurred almost simultaneously.

"The Holocaust is one of the most extreme examples of what can happen when you 'otherize' people, and if you hate, so it feels really relevant today," Rolett said.

The Kitchener rescue "would be impossible now," Ungerson said. "The Brexit vote is an indication. There's been this enormous increase in xenophobia, in hatred of foreigners in the U.K."



### WHO MADE IT HAPPEN?

A small number of Jewish men based in and around London used their political and financial connections to implement the Kitchener project:

- Norman Bentwich, head of Emigration and Training for the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF)
- Viscount Samuel, former High Commissioner in Palestine
- Viscount Bearsted, a former chair of Shell, chair of the CBF
- Sir Robert Waley Cohen, former managing director of Shell and vice president of United Synagogue
- Simon Marks, chairman, Marks & Spencer
- Harry Sacher, director, Marks & Spencer
- Frank Samuel, managing director of Unilever
- Neville Laski, president, Board of Deputies of British Jews
- Lionel de Rothschild, of the British banking family
- Dr. Chaim Weizmann, future founding president of Israel

In "Asylum for Birds of Passage," published in the November 1939 issue of The National Jewish Monthly (B'nai B'rith Magazine's name at the time), Norman Bentwich, one of the men who helped to establish the Kitchener Camp, shed light on its progress:

"In a few months," the magazine reported, "the camp has been turned into a place of the most lively activity, and its population already exceeds the adult population of the neighboring town of Sandwich. It is exclusively for young men between the ages of 18 and 45. ... The camp is a place of training and education, and almost all the instruction is given by refugees. They have made the [formerly dilapidated] encampment attractive with gardens; they have built concrete roads; they are converting into a market-garden some 60 acres of marshland; they have turned a gaunt, derelict hut into a cinema theater and a concert hall. They conduct a camp university where the intelligentsia lecture to small groups on all manner of subjects. ... The camp has been called 'Anglo-Saxon-Hausen' in contrast with the ill-omened Sachsenhausen concentration camp ... the strangers have won the goodwill of all the neighborhood."

Three of the well-connected men from London who helped to establish the Kitchener Camp were members of the English B'nai B'rith. Norman Bentwich (1883-1971) was the son of Herbert Bentwich, the first president of the London Lodge. A successful attorney who became an early and ardent Zionist, Herbert had been a prime mover in providing free legal assistance to World War I Jewish refugees through the organization. He went on to serve as B'nai B'rith's sole representative during the 1919 Paris meetings negotiating the Treaty of Versailles after the end of the war.

Norman had been involved with attempts to assist those suf-

fering under Nazism from 1933. A barrister appointed as the first attorney general under the Palestine Mandate, he had been a director of the League of Nations High Commission for Refugees Coming from Germany, a committee that investigated and reported on the possibilities of emigration for Jews persecuted by Hitler.

Another B'nai B'rith member whose efforts were integral to the Kitchener Camp's initiation was Neville Laski (1890-1969). A Q.C. [elite senior] barrister from Manchester, he was named in 1933 as president of London's Board of Deputies of British Jews—the umbrella group that encompassed most of the country's Jewish charities—when he helped to provide the funds that supported the thousands of men, women and children who emigrated from Germany and Austria in the next few years.

In June 1933, B'nai B'rith sent Bentwich and Laski on a fact-finding mission to the continent, where they assessed the potential for German Jewish immigration in Switzerland, Holland and Belgium. Traveling to Frankfurt and Berlin, they encountered the situation of the Jews there firsthand and met with B'nai B'rith's District 8 President, Rabbi Leo Baeck.

Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), the man who would become the first president of Israel, had immigrated to England in 1904, where he taught chemistry and conducted experiments at the University of Manchester. There, he was elected president of the B'nai B'rith Moses Gaster Lodge, where he attracted members including former colleagues and prominent locals whose devotion to Zionism, and to Weizmann himself, would further the creation and passage of the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Weizmann remained a lifelong B'nai B'rith member, both in England, and in Israel, where he settled permanently in 1937.

## **After the Shiva, Remember the Mourners**

By Paula Shoyer

As I write this, it is one year since my father passed away at age 91. Dad died a mere 17 months after my mother, so I had been a mourner according to Jewish custom for two years straight. At sundown today, my status ends, and I am ready to re-engage with the world.

One thing that we Jews get right is taking care of mourners during shiva. We bring them paper goods from Costco and enough food to feed an army. We organize shifts of people to set up, heat and clean up from meals. We even remember the eggs after the funeral, the pitchers of water outside the shiva home, freezer bags for leftovers and toilet paper. It is remarkable to behold when communities get it right.



Photo credit: Paula Shoyer; thekosherbaker.com
A chef and baker who
specializes in Jewish
cuisine, Paula Shoyer is the
author of this very personal
article focusing on her
experiences during her yearlong bereavement following
the deaths of her parents.



Credit: Wikimedia/Elipongo

Some mourners mark the

"shloshim," the 30-day point with another gathering of people for which another team steps up to the plate and arranges food.

Then, mourners go back to their lives. According to tradition, mourners say a daily memorial prayer called "Kaddish" if they have lost a parent, spouse, sibling or child, and the duration varies depending on whom you have lost. For a parent, the time period is 11 months, and the child recites the prayer daily. Observant Jews say it three times a day at services. The prayer can be said only among a group of 10 adult Jews, called a "minyan;" the orthodox count only men, while conservative and reform congregations count women as well.

Mourners saying Kaddish busy themselves finding ways to fit the prayer into their daily routines, whether at home, or away on a business or other trip. They are regulars on the "goDaven" app, they network with friends in different locations to find minyanim and try to forgive themselves for any lapses in attendance.

Daily minyan provides a place to grieve, a place to be among other mourners and, pretty quickly, a chance for each mourner to comfort the new arrivals. Yet, mourners not saying Kaddish are soon no longer surrounded by people focusing on their loss. And for those who have lost a spouse, the required time for Kaddish is merely one month, traditionally prescribed to allow the widower to find another wife.

I made the commitment to say Kaddish once a day for both of my parents.

According to traditional Jewish customs, for one year the mourner does not attend movies, theater, concerts, wedding and bar mitzvah parties or community events. Every mourner decides for himself or herself what customs to follow.

I decided not to listen to music except when I ran, as music made me sadder. I didn't attend movies in theaters, nor concerts and plays, and no community celebrations, with one exception that I came to regret.

It was a school fundraiser, and I attended as a friend of someone being honored that night. I put on a nice dress and did my makeup. Several people came up to me saying, with genuine excitement, "Paula, it's so great to see you in person. We see on Facebook that you're doing great and you're here and there and getting lots of publicity," and on and on they went about my seemingly glamorous public persona. A local rabbi grabbed me for a selfie, and, before I could stop him, I forced a smile before his waiting iPhone.

These people clearly did not know that my mother had died just a few months ago, 12 weeks after a lung cancer diagnosis. So I tell them, "I guess you don't know ..." As their faces drop, I see that I've just ruined their party mood. After one or two of these encounters, I just kept my mouth shut and smiled politely.

## After the Shiva, Remember the Mourners



Photo credit: B'nai B'rith International/Skirball Museum, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio

A 19th century silver memorial candle holder, probably from Austria, in the B'nai B'rith Klutznick Collection.

When you suffer a tragedy, you do not want to make small talk. You don't want to ruin someone's buzz with bad news, so it's better to stay home. When people see a mourner who somehow looks good, people never ask how they're doing. Somehow, they assume that if you've skillfully applied eye shadow, or you put on a fabulous dress, then you must be past the grieving period.

### Mourners May Cover Their Grief

People have to learn not to judge mourners by their cover. Rabbi Lauren Holzblatt of Adas Israel Congregation, in Washington, D.C., shared with a group of women baking for a chessed (kindness) project the following mishna (ancient Jewish oral tradition): she explained that during the time of the Temple in Jerusalem, when people would bring sacrifices, the custom was to walk up the right side of the altar, hand off your offering and walk down to exit left.

However, if you were a mourner or had been excommunicated that year, you walked up the left side and exited on the right. That way people observing would know that you were having a difficult year and ask "Ma L'cha?" (How are you doing?) and offer words of support and comfort. After being a mourner for almost two years

straight, I have concluded that there is not enough "Ma L'cha" in our community.

As I have attended maybe two community events over the past two years, there are people in my community I never see. I didn't go to concerts, theater and movies. I declined invitations by friends to go out on many Saturday nights. This experience has shown me who my true friends are, the ones who ask "Ma L'cha?" They know from experience that the grieving process is not short, confined to shloshim, and that losing a parent is a weight you carry on your shoulders every day, and some days it feels heavier. These are the people not fooled by my social and other media, because they know that my work life is what I do, but who I am might need some nurturing.

When you're attending evening services almost every night, it isn't easy to meet friends and go out for dinner. That leaves night after night of a rushed dinner with my family, 18 minutes of praying, followed by an evening of reading and watching Netflix, my own personal exception to media during this time.

### **A Lonely Time**

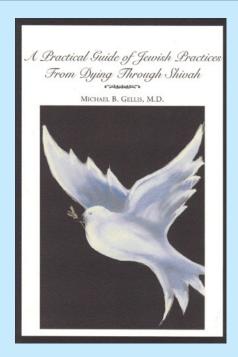
It was a lonely time. Because of my public life as a food writer, which looks very glam from a distance, many friends just did not check with me to see if I had plans. Remember, I'm not throwing parties or buying tickets to shows, so the only opportunities I have to socialize are Shabbat meals. Without Shabbat, I would not have gotten through this time. It is a haven of wine and food and song, and I was able to surround myself with people who would bring me joy and comfort.

If you attend Shabbat morning services regularly, you will see the mourners stand to recite Kaddish several times during the service. If you do not attend regularly, you will notice only those mourners who are your close friends.

My ask: after the shiva and the shloshim, shuls should have members reach out to their community's mourners every month. Maybe bake them a cake, bring them a challah, or invite them to a meal. Make sure they are not feeling isolated and alone. I would suggest it be done around Rosh Chodesh, the beginning of every Jewish month that many synagogues have started marking with events.

Mostly, don't assume that a mourner with a busy life isn't grieving and in need of comfort. Perhaps the mourner you approach really is doing well. But, sadly, there are always others who may not be. One day, the mourner will be you, and you will appreciate the smallest gestures of kindness and understanding, throughout your year of mourning.

## After the Shiva, Remember the Mourners



Written by Michael B. Gellis, M.D., B'nai B'rith's 2003 publication, "A Practical Guide of Jewish Practices From Dying Through Shiva" is a concise and sensitively written book that takes the Jewish reader through the mourning process, tracing the origins and meaning of these rituals. With each chapter providing the Hebrew and English texts of pertinent prayers, the guide will be especially valuable to those who may not be acquainted with Jewish law or ceremonies surrounding this lifecycle event, but who are tasked with carrying out the wishes of the deceased. A recitation of the Kaddish is heard on a CD appended to the book.

In his reflections as a physician and as a Jew, Dr. Gellis addresses the compassionate treatment of the sick and the dying, as well as the mourner. He also deals with issues of legal necessity and Jewish ritual, which can sometimes conflict. B'nai B'rith Magazine is offering readers the opportunity to own the book, which can be obtained by mailing an \$18 check or money order donation:

B'nai B'rith International Attn: Rhonda Love 801 Second Avenue, 14th Floor New York, NY 10017



## Honor and Recognition: Jews With Byrd at the South Pole

By Cheryl Kempler

Before the "Space Age," adventurers who were hopelessly obsessed with conquering the vast and unknown lands at the world's polar ends faced a harrowing scenario: If they didn't die en route, they risked death or madness from unimaginable cold, starvation and months of total darkness.

American naval aviator Richard E. Byrd (1888-1957) would triumph. His 1926 North Pole flight with copilot Floyd Bennett led to a much-publicized, privately financed Antarctic expedition two years later, when he and 41 technicians and scientists traveled in two ships to reach the South Pole before winter's onset. With them were three planes, land vehicles, 96 sled dogs and 300 tons of supplies. Their soon-to-be legendary base camp, "Little America," was equipped with radio towers that linked the crew and reporters covering the story to civilization.

On Byrd's Antarctic expeditions were three men of the Jewish faith who would distinguish themselves in these daring ventures.

Recommended for selection by the army, 5-foot-3 Jewish Sergeant Benjamin Roth was an expert plane mechanic who became the talk of the Lower East Side, where he grew up poor before enlisting at age 24 in 1916.

B'nai B'rith's magazine at that time reported that "he made the crew understand he was proud of his Jewishness," praying daily with siddur, tallis and phylacteries, observing the first Antarctic Passover and enduring the ceaseless "good humored" ribbing of his mates, who dubbed him "Jew fellow." Unloading supplies from the ship, Roth, a non-swimmer, landed in the frigid



Photo credit: Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center Archival Program, Admiral Richard E. Byrd Papers, photo album 2, file 232-2-621, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

American Idols: Admiral Richard E. Byrd and

American Idols: Admiral Richard E. Byrd and his dog Igloo at the South Pole.

sea when the ice collapsed under his feet. Byrd had to be prevented from jumping in for him, as the crew quickly launched a lifeboat, rescuing Roth.

When spring came, Byrd flew 800 miles from "Little America" to the South Pole, where he dropped an American flag from the plane to claim U.S. possession.

### **Feted With Parades and Medals**

After their return to the United States in 1930, the men were feted with parades and medals. A Congressional Act promoted Commander Byrd to rear admiral, and Roth was made a master sergeant. The South Pole's Mount Roth is named for him.



Photo credit: Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center Archival Program, Admiral Richard E. Byrd Papers, photo album 1, file 232-1-051, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

Pesach at the Pole in a parka: Sergeant

According to writer Avi Heiligman, Roth

Benjamin Roth.

According to writer Avi Heiligman, Roth was in Iceland during World War II and was stationed in both the Philippines and Panama. He died in New York in 1967.

Three-time Congressional medal winner Isaac Schlossbach (1891-1984) was a member of 11 polar expeditions. Big and brawny, "Ike" was born in Bradley Beach, New Jersey, in Neptune Township, where his family was involved with B'nai B'rith's Asbury Park Shore Lodge. The U.S. Naval Academy's first Jewish graduate, he would later command submarines, captain ships, fly planes and dirigibles and head up the first aircraft carrier bombing squadron. The loss of his left eye (under unknown circumstances) curtailed his naval career

## Honor and Recognition: Jews With Byrd at the South Pole



Credit: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.

Byrd's-eye view: a 1934 map of the South Pole.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Robert Inglis

Fearless flyer: Lieutenant Commander "Ike" Schlossbach.

in 1930, but one year later, Schlossbach, undeterred, manned the controls of the "Nautilus," the first submarine attempting to dive beneath the North Pole.

Dubbed "Admiral Byrd's ace flyer" by B'nai B'rith's magazine, Schlossbach battled intense ice storms as captain of "Bear of Oakland," the ship that transported Byrd's second expedition team to Antarctica in 1933. On arrival at "Little America," he resurrected an abandoned plane, in Byrd's words "from five years entombment [in ice], emerging chrysalis-like from the grimy concealment of the tent," where he had repaired it, while he also kept the newly arrived aircraft in working order. Braving ferocious blizzards, "Skipper" Schlossbach also flew supplies deep into the continent, where Byrd and other team members were stationed.

Noting Schlossbach's versatility, the crew praised his physical strength and his

capacity to work longer and harder than men half his age. He flew planes until he was almost 70.

### Shooting the Northern Lights

Murray Weiner, a U.S. Air Force officer, photographer and physicist, was an integral member of Byrd's scientific team. Like Schlossbach, he hailed from Bradley Beach. In 1937, both men traveled with the MacGregor Expedition to Greenland. There, the 28-year-old Weiner photographed and mapped the path of the Aurora Borealis, whose famed "northern lights" were reputed to impact radio signal transmission.

During this time, Weiner, a charter member of B'nai B'rith Spinoza Lodge in Columbia, Missouri, radioed Maurice Bisgyer, executive secretary at the organization's Washington, D.C., headquarters, to convey: "Fraternal Greetings from Etah, Greenland, 700 miles from the North Pole, to all B'nai B'rith from a Ben B'rith." Bisgyer acknowledged: "We send you our appreciation and best wishes for a safe and successful journey."

Weiner, again acting as aureole observer, served under Schlossbach as a member of Byrd's highly successful 1939 governmentsponsored South Pole expedition, when many important discoveries were made about the South Pole's climate and vegetation. To commemorate his first Antarctic experience. Weiner planted B'nai B'rith's banner, a present from Manhattan's Washington Lodge, at the third "Little America" base camp. When Weiner came home to Bradley Beach in 1941, Life magazine included a photospread documenting the shearing of his tremendous beard — two years' growth of facial hair — while newspapers touted his engagement to a woman he romanced by radio from the South Pole.

After America entered World War II, Schlossbach led a meteorological unit in

## Honor and Recognition: Jews With Byrd at the South Pole

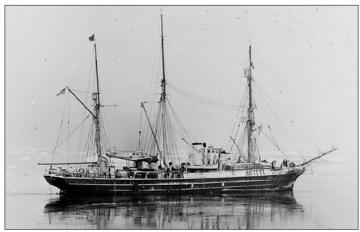


Photo credit: NNAM.1985.131.036, Mitch Templeton Papers, National Naval Aviation Museum, Pensacola, Florida.

Tip of the iceberg: Byrd's own ship, Bear of Oakland, built in 1874, navigated the dangerous waters for the 1939 Antarctic expedition.



Antarctic initiations immanent? Murray Weiner's 1941 selfie at "Little America."

Labrador, Newfoundland, before coming out of retirement for duty as an aircraft commander at Guadalcanal, while Weiner was stationed with an air rescue operations division at Mount Olympia in California.

After the war, the two men would rejoin Byrd's team and continue to be involved in polar expeditions. Schlossbach acted as Byrd's personal representative during the year-long scientific mission Operation Deep Freeze (1955-56), concluding a

few months prior to the admiral's death. (Weiner was given the honor of selecting Byrd's Arlington National Cemetery gravesite). Schlossbach accompanied an Australian expedition to the South Pole's Ellsworth Station base in 1955. He made his last trip to the South Pole as a naval consultant at age 70. In the South Pole, a cape in the Weddell Sea and a mountain are named for him.

As one of Byrd's personal staff, Air Force

liaison Weiner, promoted to major, was known as a recognized authority on polar survival and traveled to the South Pole twice more with the admiral. In 1956-57, he was a member of Operation Deep Freeze II, dedicated to oceanic research and the construction of permanent housing, air fields and research facilities. Weiner Peaks, a series of rocky outgrowths on the South Pole's northern coast, is named for him. He was living in Arizona when he died in 1987.





### B'nai B'rith International Podcast

Featuring quick but meaningful policy discussions on national and international topics such as fighting global anti-Semitism and the dire shortage of housing for low income seniors, author talks and even Jews in baseball, the B'nai B'rith podcast includes analysis from some of the top subject matter experts around. We investigate, we enlighten, we inspire.

Hosted by B'nai B'rith International CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin.



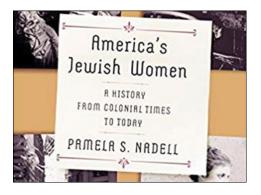




http://bit.ly/2WVCmuR



http://bit.ly/2ZEu4UW



### Podcast: America's Jewish Women

Since colonial times, Jewish women have played a major role in shaping American life, from the labor movement and workers' rights to identifying and filling charitable needs in their own communities and beyond. Listen to our podcast with author, historian and professor Pamela Nadell as she discusses her new book, "America's Jewish Women: A History from Colonial Times to Today," with B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin.





http://bit.ly/2XyB74w



Aviva Kempner and Daniel S. Mariaschin

### Podcast: The Spy Behind Home Plate

"The brainiest man in baseball," an Ivy League-educated professional ballplayer who spied for the United States during World War II, is the subject of documentary film-maker Aviva Kempner's latest, "The Spy Behind Home Plate," and B'nai B'rith Podcast Episode 49. B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin interviews Kempner about her movie focused on Moe Berg, who spoke 10 languages and gathered intelligence for use against Germany. Kempner tells Mariaschin that Berg was "one of the most important American spies for America" and also "an American Jewish hero."



Bhai BYth International
The Spy Who Played Major League Baseball: Filmmaker Aviva Kempner on Moe Berg

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## B'nai B'rith's Worldwide Disaster Relief

By Katherine Dolgenos

n just the past year, B'nai B'rith has been aiding disaster recovery efforts throughout the United States and all over the world. This year's aid upholds a practice that started 154 years ago. "B'nai B'rith includes disaster and emergency relief as one of its main pillars because the organization was founded 175 years ago to aid human kind," said Rebecca Saltzman, B'nai B'rith International senior vice president and chair of the Disaster and Emergency Relief Committee, "Our commitment stemmed from our founders' desire to assist widows and their children. Victims of the Baltimore flood in 1868 were the first recipients of B'nai B'rith's disaster relief funds. Since our founding, we have continued to assist communities in need."

B'nai B'rith opened the Fund after the attack on the Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha Congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in October 2018, and allocated the funds raised to support projects for community healing and recovery.

In May, the B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) held its annual B'nai B'rith Managers and Service Coordinators Training meeting in Puerto Rico, which is still recovering from damage caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017. In choosing to hold the meeting there, the CSS team contributed to the island's short-term recovery, by volunteering for a day with local nonprofits, and with its long-term economic recovery by bringing business to the island.

During the day of service, which the B'nai B'rith International Disaster Relief



B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services staff and senior residences personnel who traveled to Puerto Rico for the 2019 Managers and Service Coordinators Training meeting in May joined forces for a day of service at an ecological farm outside of San Juan.

Fund sponsored, 33 B'nai B'rith volunteers planted seedlings, mulched and watered the land on a farm outside San Juan called Siembre Tres Vidas. Our volunteers worked with the World Central Kitchen, a charity run by Washington, D.C.-based celebrity chef José Andrés.

Since 1865, when it raised funds in pre-state Israel to help victims of a cholera epidemic, B'nai B'rith has continued to help needy communities. "We are not just a senior housing provider," said Janel Doughten, associate director of CSS and an organizer of the service trip and conference in Puerto Rico. "We are B'nai B'rith International, with this whole community service part of us, and it brings something extra, and it's very special." You can listen to an episode of the B'nai B'rith podcast focused on the CSS conference and service in Puerto Rico here.

### B'nai B'rith's Worldwide Disaster Relief



Partnering with Jewish disaster relief organization NECHAMA, B'nai B'rith raised funds for the repair and renovation of buildings in Puerto Rico which were damaged during Hurricane Maria.

Internationally, B'nai B'rith has directed relief funds toward the victims of natural disasters.

In the summer of 2018, during a widespread heat wave in Europe, wildfires ravaged coastal areas in the Greek region of Attica, where Greece's capital, Athens, is located. The fires killed more than 100 people, and hundreds more had to evacuate their homes. The B'nai B'rith Disaster Relief Fund, working with the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association and the American Hellenic Institute, directed aid to the neediest areas and organizations.

B'nai B'rith also helped after Japan experienced its worst flooding in decades in the summer of 2018. Working with IsraAid, a Zionist humanitarian organization, the B'nai B'rith Disaster Relief Fund allocated funds to aid survivors. Previously, in 2016, B'nai B'rith helped disaster recovery efforts after Japan was hit by an earthquake. In 2011, part of the fund went toward disaster relief after another earthquake and devastating tsunami in the country.

The B'nai B'rith Disaster Relief Fund also helped with disasters in California and Hawaii in the summer and fall of 2018. Wildfires struck Southern California, and B'nai B'rith helped provide funds for food, utility bills and medical supplies for the Idyllwild HELP Center, a charity and thrift store that helps needy individuals and families. In Hawaii, B'nai B'rith provided assistance to the Ahava 'Aina Synagogue, the only synagogue on Hawaii's Big Island, after the eruption of the Kilauea Volcano and damage from a

When Haiti was hit by a devastating earthquake in 2010, B'nai B'rith Disaster Relief sponsored the long term support which continued to provide medical assistance and other vital services.



Volunteer Eric Steinberg, a member of New Orleans Unit #182, spent one month there in early 2018, serving as the project's team leader.

tropical storm. The disasters hampered the rabbi's efforts to find a permanent home for the synagogue, and the spreading lava left many members of the congregation homeless. As B'nai B'rith was providing recovery funds, members of Ahava 'Aina were struggling to celebrate the High Holidays even as many of them remained in temporary shelters.  $\odot$ 



## B'nai B'rith Hosts Senior Housing Experts at Puerto Rico Training Session

By Janel Doughten, Associate Director, B'nai B'rith International Center for Senior Services

he B'nai B'rith Managers and Service Coordinators met May 14th-16th in San Juan, Puerto Rico, a year and a half after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. This annual training meeting is for the on-site building staff of B'nai B'rith-sponsored senior housing built under Section 202 of the 1959 Housing Act. The attendees focused on issues affecting day-to-day activities of staff and residents. Although B'nai B'rith does not sponsor Section 202 buildings in Puerto Rico, the meeting was open to staff from affordable senior housing providers in Puerto Rico.

The meeting began with 33 B'nai B'rith volunteers traveling an hour and a half outside San Juan to the mountain town of Aibonito to aid residents in conjunction with the World Central Kitchen, a charity established by Washington, D.C. chef José Andrés. Along the way, they saw lingering evidence of the hurricane's destructive force, from downed trees to destroyed or

partially destroyed homes. One of the farm workers noted that what our nearly three dozen volunteers did in the morning was the equivalent of a few days work for him. Because labor is expensive, the farms can only employ a few workers, so the farms depend on volunteers to help do a lot of the work.

Back in San Juan, four staff members from the Jacksonville office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which oversees the Section 202 properties in Puerto Rico, participated in panels and gave updates on HUD policies and procedures.

Participants heard from their affordable senior housing colleagues on how to prepare for a building-wide emergency and also learned what to do in case of a large-scale disaster in their communities. This portion featured a presentation from Janet Golrick, the National Disaster Coordinator from HUD; the Red Cross; and staff from Grupo

HIMA • San Pablo, the largest hospital system in Puerto Rico.

The meeting also included a discussion with Jenefer Duane from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to raise awareness of scams aimed at seniors. Other speakers included Jasmine Borrego, president, TELACU Property Management, Inc., Los Angeles, California; Amanda Atkins, president, Atkins Consulting Professionals, Eugene, Oregon; and Colleen Bloom, CASP, director for housing operations, LeadingAge, Washington, D.C., as well as the Center for Senior Services staff.

Holding the meeting in Puerto Rico allowed B'nai B'rith International to aid in the island's long-term recovery, beyond assisting with disaster relief. As a bonus, the meeting gave our own senior housing building staff an opportunity to see B'nai B'rith International as more than just a housing provider, but as an international Jewish community service organization.



Emergency preparedness, procedures to follow in the event of a large-scale disaster, and scams aimed at vulnerable senior citizens were among the issues discussed by panelists at this year's B'nai B'rith Managers and Service Coordinators meeting, which took place in May in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

## B'nai B'rith Hosts Senior Housing Experts at Puerto Rico Training Session



On May 14, participants traveled by bus to Siembra Tres Vidas, an ecological farm in Aibonito, where they contributed a day of service as volunteers under the program run by World Central Kitchen, the foundation established by noted Washington chef and philanthropist, José Andrés.





## Our Leaders On The Move

his spring, B'nai B'rith leaders addressed Jewish audiences seeking guidance in the aftermath of the tragic synagogue shootings and other hate crimes. Local lodges have been present at these programs, lending support. President Charles O. Kaufman and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin also attended UNESCO and other meetings in Belgium, Switzerland, France and Israel. In April, Mariaschin served on a delegation focusing on the issue of Holocaust survivors' restitution in Croatia and Slovenia. During May, a first time B'nai B'rith mission to Beijing with additional days in Tokyo fostered engagement between the group and government officials, diplomats and Jewish community representatives from China, Japan, Israel and the United States to advance Israel's cause, as well as to develop connections with Jewish groups in these lands.



B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin (right) and Metronorth Region Vice President for Finance and Horeb Lodge President Harold Miller (subject of this issue's Planned Giving profile) photographed at New Haven's Jewish Community Center with the lodge's historic charter. Mariaschin shared "Reflections After Pittsburgh: Anti-Semitism in the U.S. and Worldwide" there on March 23rd, and at Manhattan's Congregation Talmud Torah Adereth El on March 30th.



Photo: courtesy of Toni Greenbaum

An April 14 evening at the Youngstown JCC featured B'nai B'rith President Charles O. Kaufman (far left), who urged unity in confronting the spread of anti-Semitism. With him are (from left) Allegheny/Ohio Region President and International Executive Board of Directors member Dr. Steven I. Smiga; Aaron Grossman Lodge Vice President Alan Samuels; Dr. Harriet Schor; Aaron Grossman Lodge President Neil Schor; Rabbi Frank Muller, Congregation Rodef Sholom, Youngstown.



Photo: courtesy of Toni Greenbaum

Alan Samuels (left) and Charles O. Kaufman flank Cleveland attendees (from left) Adrienne Schaeffer; B'nai B'rith Heights-Blaugrund-Weingarten Lodge Financial Secretary Robert Grossman; B'nai B'rith Cleveland Professional-East Lodge past President and current Financial Secretary Herbert Braverman; Marilyn Kapucinski.

### Our Leaders On The Move



U.S. Ambassador to China Terry Branstad welcomed mission participants at Beijing's American Embassy. From left: B'nai B'rith International Executive Board of Directors member Eric Engelmayer; B'nai B'rith Director of U.N. and Intercommunal Affairs David J. Michaels; Jennifer Kaufman; President Charles O. Kaufman; Ambassador Branstad; CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin; Michal Mariaschin; B'nai B'rith Chair of the Center for Community Action and Executive Board of Directors member Ira Bartfield.



Ambassador of Israel to Japan Yaffa Ben-Ari (front row) and staff with mission members at Tokyo's Embassy of Israel in Japan.



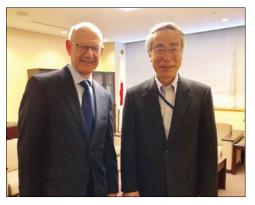


In Beijing, the group had a foreign policy briefing at the Israeli Embassy with Ambassador to China Zvi Heifetz (center) and Deputy Chief of Mission Jonathan Zadka (second from left).



Photo Credit: japan.kantei.go.jp

In Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and staff met with mission members. The Prime Minister acknowledged the organization's humanitarian assistance during the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and the tsunami and earthquake following in its wake in 2011.



Daniel S. Mariaschin in Tokyo with former Japanese Minister to Israel Ambassador Hideo Sato, a longtime friend of B'nai B'rith International and the Jewish community.

From Left: B'nai B'rith United Westchester President Andrew Miller; B'nai B'rith International Director of Legislative Affairs and Deputy Director of the International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy Eric Fusfield; and B'nai B'rith Metronorth region past President Dr. Edward Feinberg at Bet Torah in Mt. Kisco, N.Y., where Fusfield spoke about "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions: Fighting Back" on May 22nd.

## B'nai B'rith Connect Roundup

By Katherine Dolgenos









For its missions to Japan, B'nai B'rith Connect partners with Kakehashi (Building Bridges)
Project, a government-run program intended to promote tourism through enhancement of the country's image.

cott Knapp, senior vice president and chair of our B'nai B'rith Connect (formerly Young Leadership Network) since 2018, has taken the lead in organizing several exciting activities and networking opportunities for our next generation leaders, including a retreat in Florida in February 2019. Participants enjoyed a Shabbat dinner, featuring expert wine assistance from a sommelier, planned future events, had a Super Bowl party and workshopped ways to keep B'nai B'rith moving forward.

B'nai B'rith Connect members also served breakfast one morning at the B'nai B'rith Deerfield Apartments, an affordable housing complex for low-income seniors. The B'nai B'rith Connect members are eager to schedule more community service events during national B'nai B'rith conferences, including at the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, scheduled for Sept. 22-24, and are actively exploring ways to get involved with more community service projects aimed at helping seniors in B'nai B'rith-sponsored buildings.

B'nai B'rith Connect activities are by no means limited to community service. Chapters hold local events in major cities, and there are national and international opportunities. Domestic events include humanitarian relief projects, events featuring Jewish leaders and holiday parties. International events extend to pro-Israel advocacy at international institutions, meetings with diplomats and foreign officials and disaster relief around the world.

The international components of B'nai B'rith Connect's work are important to Knapp. "As a grandchild to Holocaust survivors, combating anti-Semitism has always been a central part of my life and B'nai B'rith's global impact in that endeavor is unmatched," says Knapp. "We work with the next generation of leaders to connect them with each other, connect them with our rich history and connect them with opportunities to participate in B'nai B'rith's global voice."

The regional chapters of B'nai B'rith Connect have also been busy recently. The Colorado chapter held its first Jewbilee bash on Christmas Eve. Billed as "the hottest non-Xmas party of the year," the event garnered more than 350 attendees and featured dancing and networking. The group plans to make Jewbilee an annual event. The New York chapter held an event at law firm Skadden Arps with 87-year-old Holocaust survivor and memoirist Isaac Shapiro, the author of "Edokko: Growing Up a Stateless Foreigner in Wartime Japan." The book chronicles his experiences as a refugee in

wartime Japan and his time in Hiroshima after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the city. Laura Hemlock, a participant in last year's B'nai B'rith mission to Japan, also spoke.

This year, B'nai B'rith and the Japanese government co-sponsored another mission to Japan as part of an initiative known as the Kakehashi (Building Bridges) Project, which aims to increase the number of tourists who visit Japan annually and promote the country's image abroad. The 2019 delegation comprised 11 young leaders and three B'nai B'rith International staff members from our headquarters in Washington, D.C. Participants met with Israeli diplomats serving in Japan and Japanese government officials; visited tourist sites in Tokyo, Tsuruga and Kanazawa; and learned about the life of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese national who was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations for saving the lives of thousands of Jews during the Holocaust by illicitly issuing them transit visas that allowed them to travel through Japan, escaping the fate that awaited them in Europe. We hope that the Kakehashi Project trips will continue in 2020 and beyond. B'nai B'rith Connect is also planning future events, including community service projects. 🖸

## Seeing Our Benevolence: BBUK Visits Ukraine

By Alan Miller, National President, B'nai B'rith United Kingdom

Credit for all photos: Courtesy of Alan and Edna Miller

fter many years of supporting charitable programs in Ukraine, 21 members of B'nai B'rith United Kingdom (BBUK) set off to see the projects for themselves and to try to learn about the history, the rich Jewish culture and the people of a land that played such a large part in our Jewish history.

We flew to Kiev and immediately started our walking tour of the historic capital city. We ended the day meeting Svetlana Levitas, the contact for our project to supply medicines to the clinic organized by the B'nai B'rith Lodge of Kiev, with whom we have a long-standing working relationship.

For our first cultural encounter, we attended the beautiful National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Ukraine.

World Jewish Relief (WJR) had helped considerably with our tour planning. We visited Evrodom, a Hesed facility including a day center, synagogue and sheltered housing for the elderly. It is an amazing resource, where we talked to those who had lived and fought during World War II, plus those born later. We spoke to them in their apartments and danced with them in the day center.

The visit to Babi Yar, the ravine on the edge of Kiev where some 100,000 Jews — mostly women and children and the elderly — were slaughtered during the Holocaust, was a time for reflection and prayer. But the fact that the ravine has been filled in and is now used as a public park made it difficult to imagine the enormity and horror of the crimes.

We then had a brilliant experience with the 36 members of the B'nai B'rith Kiev Lodge. The range of members was so interesting and included an internationally-known artist, a leading filmmaker and survivors of the Holocaust, plus a Righteous Gentile named at Yad Vashem.

Lodge President Felix Levitas and his wife



BBUK members enjoying the sunshine of Odessa.



Kiev Lodge President Felix Levitas (left) and his wife Irena receiving a presentation from BBUK President Alan Miller.



in Kiev.

Irena welcomed us warmly and impressed upon us the huge importance of the provision of medications to the patients of the clinic. In Ukraine, if one cannot afford prescribed drugs, you do without. A lodge member who had suffered two heart attacks movingly thanked us for saving his life. B'nai B'rith United Kingdom is the sole sponsor of the medication project; if we ceased our support, it would end, resulting in a devastating effect in a country where the life expectancy for a man is 64 years and for a woman is 75 years. Seeing the positive impact of helping

those in need through this B'nai B'rith program inspired us to increase our support.

In Koziatyn, through the WJR "Warm Homes" project, we visited an "elderly" lady living on the fourth floor of an old Soviet apartment block with no elevators, where she is virtually stranded. It turned out that at 69, the "old lady" was younger than our own lodge members! This visit stressed what wonderful work is being done for people in difficult circumstances.

One of our most chilling and moving experiences was our visit to the town of

### Seeing Our Benevolence: BBUK Visits Ukraine



Our friends in Bratslav.

Bratslav. We were led to the most beautifully picturesque riverside by the grandson of a Righteous Gentile and stood by the memorial to the 250 Jewish children who, one freezing February night in 1942, were marched naked from the orphanage and thrown into a hole made in the ice of the river. Those who did not initially die of the shock of the freezing water were clubbed or shot by the Nazis and assisting Ukrainian police collaborators. Someone in the village had saved one girl who had escaped the march and sheltered her throughout the war. The effect of hearing about such a horrific crime taking place in such peaceful and idyllic surroundings was more than upsetting to us all. We also visited the graves of those killed in the pogroms of 1919 to 1921 and those of the Chasidic rabbis, much visited by their devoted followers.

The trip continued with a walking tour of the castle outside the "peninsular" (350 degrees surrounded by a river) town of Kamianets-Podilskyi, where we commenced an arduous journey (in pouring rain) to our final destination, Odessa. The spartan train station has had absolutely nothing done to it other than the addition of very steep steps to reach our platform, the site of rust bucket locomotives.

The following day was spent at the Tikva Children's Home, which BBUK has supported for many years by providing the funds for the purchase of shoes. This brilliant facility, which looks after 200 children on



Alan Miller (far left) and Mary Green (second from right) of BBUK, who presented her life story to the leaders of the community of her birth, returning to Chernivtsi for the first time in sixty-nine years.

multiple sites, seems to offer a wonderful secular and religious environment for babies up to age 18. One of the lowlights of the entire trip was being taken to the former "home" of two of the children at Tikva. I had never before been exposed to people living in such a squalid scene of deprivation and desperation. It was brought home to us that if you did not work, in this case due to alcoholism, then you get no help from the State, and must exist on the most basic level.

We were treated in Odessa to the enthusiasm, knowledge and insight of our guide, Elena, for an engaging walk around Jewish Odessa. She brought to life the lives of Shalom Aleichem, Bialik, Jabotinsky, Isaac Babel, Golda Meir and showed us the house of the Odessa Committee, where Zionism was born in the late 19th Century. To remind us of the present, we were prevented, by a uniformed soldier, from photographing a rather attractive building which turned out to be the headquarters of the Ukrainian Secret Service.

We visited memorials to the unspeakable horrors of both the Nazi and Soviet regimes. We learned about post-war anti-Semitism and the emergence of religious freedom since breaking free from the Soviet Union.

Our final evening was spent at the Odessa Opera House watching a performance of "Carmen," sung in French with Ukrainian supertitles. A good job we already knew the story!

To complete our experience the following



Malcolm Factor of BBUK presenting sports equipment at Tikva.

morning, we walked the catacombs previously used by the Partisans and then went to the Arcadia District, the recently constructed seaside of Odessa featuring signs in Hebrew advertising new apartments in the sun. Is the wheel coming full circle?

Our Ukrainian experience, wonderfully and painstakingly organized by Alan and Ruth Silman of Cheshire Unity Lodge, was worth all the effort and certainly fulfilled our expectations.

We gained knowledge of the Jewish experience, good and bad; we learned about early Zionism and its meaning to a people trapped under the rule of the Russian Czars; the Holocaust; the Soviets; and the recent renewal of Jewish life. We met everyday people, speaking to them about their hopes and fears for the future.

On a personal level, this trip demonstrated to me the vital importance of B'nai B'rith as an international force for good, providing the links between Jewish communities throughout the world and offering support both financial and moral. We saw the direct benefit of our projects, unique to B'nai B'rith, which allows all Jews to feel that they are part of one unified community. This inspired us all to transmit our experience to our members and try to enthuse every Jewish person with the message that B'nai B'rith is not only "A Global Voice of the Jewish Community" but one that actually delivers benevolence, brotherly and sisterly love and harmony.

May 2019



### **Planned Giving**

## **Five Generations of Volunteerism and Nachas**

By Marna Schoen

arold Miller is a man filled with nachas. He smiles widely and his eyes brighten when speaking about his family, his volunteering endeavors and the B'nai B'rith projects he's been a part of for many years.

Harold was born and raised in New Haven, Connecticut, where he has deep roots. His grandparents were married there in 1914 and shared 74 years of matrimony. That same year, his grandfather Isadore, a pillar of the New Haven Jewish community, opened a small tailor shop that grew into the men's clothing store Miller Clothes. Harold always felt a great deal of pride spending time with his grandparents.

His grandfather belonged to the B'nai B'rith Horeb Lodge, which was founded in 1856 — one of the earliest lodges in B'nai B'rith history.

Harold's father went into the family clothing business and was also active in the Horeb Lodge. Sadly, he passed away when Harold was in high school. Harold followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps and became a B'nai B'rith member. He fondly remembers the day a good family friend brought him to the Horeb Lodge in the 1970s. He enjoyed it immensely. He felt that the lodge was filled with "a lot of good people, doing a lot of good things. It was always easy to feel comfortable and participate in meaningful projects. I loved what they did and what they stood for."

Harold's first community service project there was a Christmas Eve event at a Veterans Administration hospital in West Haven. Lodge members volunteered to honor service people around the holidays, which was especially meaningful to the veterans who didn't have visitors. One Christmas Eve, Harold dressed up as Santa Claus. Lodge members, along with BBYO kids and parents would visit the ninefloor facility, singing Christmas carols in patients' rooms, passing out song sheets and delivering presents. For this project, Harold collected donations from local businesses, such as Foxwoods Resort Casino and the BIC Corporation. The veterans would receive playing cards, pens, caps, wallets, toothbrushes, coffee mugs and other items. Although the times and military conflicts have changed, this program continues. With great pride Harold notes, "You leave that place feeling like you've made a difference. You can see you've made a difference, and you feel good about yourself."

The second big project that Harold is involved with is Project H.O.P.E. — Help Our People Everywhere. This is a community action project whose major goal is the collection and distribution of food packages to poor and elderly Jews during Passover.



Photo credit: courtesy of Bobbie Mille

A third-generation member of New Haven's Horeb Lodge, Harold Miller has donated his time and efforts to many activities, even playing the perfect Santa on Christmas Eve at the West Haven Veterans hospital. He is pictured with his son Steven.

The Connecticut program began in 1976 and just completed its 43rd year. Harold and other volunteers work with Jewish Family Services (JFS) in Southern Connecticut, in cities such as New London, Greenwich, Bridgeport and New Haven. Harold and his team raise funds to purchase the food for the holiday baskets from friends, B'nai B'rith members, local Jewish foundations and the Masons, another organization his grandfather also belonged to.

Harold and his family write appeal letters and stuff envelopes together at their dining room table. After the funds are collected and the items purchased, a driver brings food from New York City the Friday before Passover. On the following Sunday the bags are filled and distributed. JFS arrives at the distribution spot to pick up the number of packages they requested. Volunteers help to fill their cars with packages to distribute to those in need. These baskets contain matzoh, gefilte fish, grape juice, vegetables, tea, tuna,



### **Planned Giving**

### Five Generations of Volunteerism and Nachas

candies, horseradish and other items. This year, 312 families in need were served.

The third program is a great source of pride for Harold. In the mid-1990s, he and other volunteers worked together to create a subsidized senior housing facility in New Haven. Harold and his team were able to get some land donated. It had an abandoned house, had been used as a dumping ground and needed a lot of cleanup. In 1997, he put a team together with the help of Mark D. Olshan, B'nai B'rith International associate executive vice president, and the late Eugene Fogel; hired a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) consultant and an architect; and applied to HUD for funding.

The plans were approved quickly, and the project moved forward, with weekly meetings at the construction site. "It was fantastic to me, the whole process. It is amazing to see how much that building means to so many people." The facility, Fountain Heights, opened in 2000 and today has a two-year waiting list for the 40 apartments.

"I'm really proud of this project. And I know that when I look back at the end of my lifetime, it will be here a long time after I am not."

Harold, a newly retired certified public accountant, and his wife Bobbie (whom he met on a blind date in 1972) have two sons, Wes and Steven, who are also committed

to volunteering. As children they always helped in their dad's B'nai B'rith endeavors and now volunteer in their own right as adults. "They learned what volunteering is all about, and how important it is." Last April, his granddaughter Erica joined the Miller family in helping to fill baskets for Project H.O.P.E. This act officially marked five generations of volunteerism in Harold Miller's family.

Given Harold's deep and multi-generational commitment to B'nai B'rith, he decided to include a bequest to the organization. As a result, Harold became a member of B'nai B'rith's 1843 Society — an esteemed group of individuals who have included B'nai B'rith in their estate plan. Asked why he made this commitment through his will, he said, "I've appreciated the opportunity that B'nai B'rith has given me. I've worked so long and so hard for B'nai B'rith, and I've gotten so much nachas out of the work. There's no substitute for it. You give of yourself, whatever you can. The people I've met have been fantastic. I really enjoy being a part of B'nai B'rith."

For more information about supporting B'nai B'rith through a bequest, endowment fund, charitable gift annuity or other planned gift, please contact the Planned Giving Department by mail at 1120 20th St., NW, Suite 300 North, Washington, DC 20036; by phone at 800-656-5561; or by email at plannedgiving@bnaibrith.org.



Miller (right) was at the forefront of the initiative that led to the construction of Fountain Heights, a B'nai B'rith senior residence in New Haven, Conn. He is pictured at the building's entrance with B'nai B'rith International CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin.

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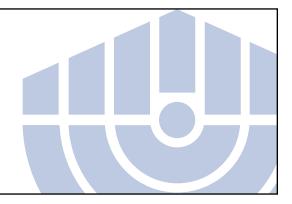
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### **About Seniors**

## Advocating for Affordable Housing: It's Like Riding a Bicycle

By Mark D. Olshan, Associate Executive Vice President, B'nai B'rith International

ike most kids growing up in Newark, New Jersey, during the 1950s,

I rode my bicycle everywhere ...
for transportation, to race my friends and to proudly display my collection of baseball cards in the spokes of my wheels. However, as I learned to drive the family car, my bike found its way to the back of the garage, in storage and no longer my preferred means of transportation. Who needed a bicycle, when I could drive our brand-new 1960 Ford Falcon?

Some years later, after college and a stint in the military, I found myself living in Los Angeles, a city known for its suffocating traffic congestion. Simple solution: Time to think about getting a bicycle again.

And, to my surprise, despite more than a 10-year hiatus and some mild trepidation, I found that my bike riding skills were still there, if not better than ever. So, what does this bit of riding nostalgia have to do with advocating for affordable housing? In some ways, my bike riding abilities over the years have mirrored my work here at B'nai B'rith.

In the mid 1980s, as the new director of B'nai B'rith Senior Housing, I was a regular fixture on Capitol Hill, frequently speaking with members of Congress and their staff about the need for more resources. Additionally, I met with countless Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department officials, including HUD secretaries and their staffs, as we worked to strengthen the programs and make them even more productive.

I am proud to recall that we were actively involved with influencing the final markup of the Cranston-D'Amato National Affordable Housing Act, which made the



suggest the need for more options, not less. Can you blame me? For years,

construction of affordable housing easier, less expensive and, most importantly, introduced the need for service coordinators to help residents "age in place." These were the good old days. But I never realized how good they really were.

### Critical of Congress, and Cynical, Too

As readers of my columns over the years can attest, I have been increasingly critical of the federal government's policies on affordable housing and other programs that benefit older Americans. Admittedly, I have gotten quite cynical about the ability of Congress to get big things accomplished, particularly in creating additional affordable housing for lowincome seniors, when the numbers clearly

Can you blame me? For years,
Congress has eliminated funding for
additional apartment units. Today, most
congressional staffers have no idea what
the programs we relied on were all about.
Year after year, I would venture up to the
Hill to educate and advocate for more
resources. But, after a while, you tire of
having to explain the issues, repeatedly,
and why these programs are actually
becoming more, not less important, as
our nation continues to age. To put it in
perspective, by the year 2035, someone
65 or older will head one-third of all U.S.
households.

Yet, no one seemed to want to listen. When you continually bang your head

## Advocating for Affordable Housing: It's Like Riding a Bicycle

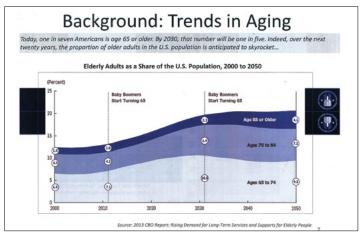


Photo credit: 2013 CBO Report: Rising Demand for Long-Term Services and Supports for Elderly People, reproduced by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

against the proverbial brick wall, at some point, you must stop or suffer permanent damage. So, I retreated to the office and vowed to stay out of the fray. Basically, I gave up the fight.

Fast-forward to today. My B'nai B'rith colleagues visiting congressional offices have seen some small but significant changes in how the issue of senior housing is being received. No one is suggesting that we're going to receive funding as we did in years past, but the reception is far less chilly, and there appears to be a greater understanding of the overwhelming need.

So, I decided to see if getting more proactive again would be worth the expected pain. Was it time to see if I could take my bike out of storage and out for a spin? I would say yes, but I had to start slowly. I'm a lot older, and it's been a long time since I've tried to ride.

Not long ago, I agreed to go with my colleagues to a meeting at HUD to discuss the overall funding situation with a career employee with whom we had developed some rapport. I was surprised and pleased to find out that, when we arrived at the reception area, my photo still appeared in their security data base and I was welcomed back after more than a few years. I even admit to a pleasant feeling of nostalgia as we walked the long, somewhat barren hallways of a building in which I had long ago spent so much time.

During our meeting, even the old "facts and figures" we used to toss around came roaring back. It was almost as if I had never left.

More recently, I was asked to participate in a private discussion of housing finance hosted by the members of Congress and staff directly responsible for the legislation that funds the affordable properties we have developed over the years. I could feel the juices flowing again, as they genuinely seemed interested in the history of the program, its problems, past miscalculations and, most surprisingly, potential solutions. They even echoed the need for more units and expressed an honest understanding of the burgeoning problem.

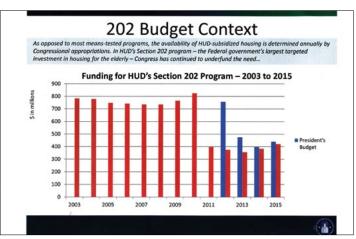


Photo credit: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

### Seems Like Old Times

It seemed like old times. I explained the value of the housing program to their local districts, the role nonprofit sponsors like B'nai B'rith play in the program and how key personnel can assist older residents to remain in their units as they age.

Further reinforcing my feelings of making a difference, I was watching a public hearing that included members of Congress who were present in our closed-door session. And, to my amazement, one member specifically referred to the housing program we traditionally used and expressed the same thoughts and concepts I had explained a few weeks earlier.

So, here I am. Skeptical as ever about Congress seriously addressing the affordable housing crisis in any meaningful terms, yet beginning to believe that maybe, just for a moment, there may be a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel.

And, of course adding to my dilemma, are the numerous congratulatory emails and Facebook posts from former industry colleagues encouraging me to "keep up the good fight" and to keep pushing for what we believe is needed in this country, that is, a national, more humane approach to providing housing and services for older persons on limited incomes.

While the days of my using my bicycle to get around town have been long over, I don't rule out the possibility of pounding the pavement every now and again in order to push for the programs we care about. Like riding my bicycle, I didn't forget how, it's just a matter of how far I can go.

So, let's take the old bike out for one more spin, and prepare for another ribbon-cutting ceremony at a B'nai B'rith Senior Housing facility, maybe even constructed in your community. •

Mark D. Olshan, who holds a doctorate in psychology, is Associate Executive Vice President of B'nai B'rith International and Director of the B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services.