

February 2010

17 Shevat - 14 Adar 5770

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Keys Jewish Community Center P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • keysjewishcenter.com Chai-Lights February 2010 I

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CHAI-LIGHTS is the monthly newsletter of the Keys Jewish Community Center P.O. Box 1332 Tavernier, Florida 33070 chailights@keysjewishcenter.com

### President's Message Alan Beth

As I write this message it is very cold outside, but I feel the warmth coming from our community. I would like to thank you all for your nice words, your cards, your emails and general good wishes you sent to my family and me after the passing of my father.

February is the time when we say goodbye to the existing KICC Board of Directors and officers and welcome the new Board. By now you should have received a letter from Steve Steinbock representing the nominating committee. It states that the general election will be held in the KJCC sanctuary on February 14th at 10:30 a.m. 1 encourage you to attend. I will present a short overview of our accomplishments the past year and share the results of our survey. Also, the Board is recommending an important change to the KJCC bylaws. This change requires your approval at the upcoming general meeting. Thanks to Stuart and Stan for working on those changes. We should thank the outgoing Board and the officers for their hard work and dedication to the running of our KICC.

A few new committees have been formed and are currently starting to make progress: The meditation garden committee, led by



Steve Steinbock, is investigating allocating space on our property for a place to honor those that have passed away and to find a quiet area to relax. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Picture project, led by Susan, has begun requesting pictures of all the children (and adults).

Next time you come to our synagogue be sure to look for a beautiful work of art created by Rosie Biskar, located at the entrance doors to the Sanctuary. Thank you, Rosie, for your most generous donation to the KJCC.

Thanks also to Bill and Freda Ferns for graciously opening up their new home to us last month. We enjoyed a wonderful end to Shabbat there, celebrating dinner and a *Havdalah* service with Bill and Freda and their family from Canada.

KJCC congratulates our own Dr. Steve Smith for winning the prestigious Country Doctor of the Year Award. (See the full story on page 23.)

I promised last month that I would give a review here of the survey results. That will have to wait till next month. As I noted, though, I will give a summary at the general election meeting.

Wishing you all warm and healthy days.

-Alan

# February 2010 17 Shevat - 14 Adar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5 Joyce Peckman Barbara & Steve Smith	6
7 Sisterhood Meeting 9:30 a.m.	8	9	10	11	12 Alan Beth Joyce Peckman	13
14 Board Meeting 9:00 a.m. KJCC General Meeting 10:30 a.m.	15	16	17	18	19 Jim Boruszak & Gloria Avner	20
21	22	23	24	25 Ta'anit Fast of Esther	26 Stuart & Lauren Sax 6:30 Service Rita & Jim Williams Kathy & Joe Shabathai	27
28 Purim Megillah & Brunch 10:30 a.m.				Names de Italiciz	note leaders of Friday ed names are Oneg spo	services. onsors.

## Nosh

The KJCC extends deepest condolences to

Alan, Candy and Joe on the death of Alan's father

Laurie Beth

#### The KJCC General Meeting

Will be held Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. in the sanctuary. Lunch will be served afterwards. Alan will present a brief review of the year and an overview summary of the survey. Several votes are pending, such as amending the by-laws, that must be made by the full membership.

## **BOOK PLATE**

In memory of Laurie Beth

By Joel and Linda Pollack

#### **Kvelling over Cory**

Cory Wasser recently returned from a Florida Bandmaster's Association Statewide Performance and Critique event. Part of the Coral Shores High School Marching Band, Cory's Color Guard performance, to the music of John Williams, won the highest of five possible ratings--Superior. Mazel tov to Cory and the whole Wasser family.

## **Ongoing Projects and Programs of KJCC**

*General Donations* – can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds; e.g. Holocaust Education Fund, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, or General Fund. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Call Linda Pollack 852-8575.

*Gift Shop* - We have many lovely gift and holiday items on hand and can special order for you as well. Contact Joan Boruszak 852-0833.

*Jewish Youth Enrichment Program* - will assist in involving our children in Jewish activities. Call Neal Rakov 852-9400.

*Sunshine Committee* - If you know of any member who should receive a get-well, congratulations or condolence card from the Center, call Rene Rose, 852-3959.

*Cemetery Information* - If you wish to plan for the very distant future, you can reserve space at the Kendall Mt. Nebo Cemetery in the KJCC section. Call Bea Graham, 852-0214.

*Picture Postcards* - We have beautiful picture postcards bearing the Millard Wells representation of the KJCC, which was commissioned by Sisterhood. Quantities can be packaged to fit your needs and mailed to you or your gift recipient. The price is \$36 per hundred but we will sell lesser quantities. Contact Joan Boruszak, 852-0833.

**Oneg Shabbat Sponsor** - To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman, 451-0665. **KJCC Tree of Life Leaves and Rocks, Sanctuary Seat Plates, Yartzeit Memorial Plaques, Bookplates for Siddurim**. Call Linda Pollack to arrange your donation, 852-8575.

**JNF Trees in Israel** - A gift of a tree, or two or more, makes a long-remembered way to honor a loved one, a relative, a friend or an occasion. Both Israel and the KJCC benefit. Call Nancy Kluger, 852-4353. **Chai-Lights Mitzvah** - Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, to make your donation.

*Advertisement in Chai-Lights* - Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, for the low annual rates.

Call the names listed above for assistance or send your request and check to the KJCC, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Recipients of your gifts will be notified by card and listings will appear in Chai-Lights as well.

#### **February Birthdays**

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	Roy Pollack
	Linda Rutkin
	Caeleigh Stuart
3rd	Dick Bromwich
5th	Rebecca Smith
5th	Robin Kantor
	Martin Field
7th	Erica Lieberman-Garrett
7th	Larry Jacobs
9th	Deborah Kaplan
9th	Ron Garrett
10th	Shirley Burnett
th	Justin Solomon
l 2th	Johnny Knowles
l 2th	Paul Roberts
l 4th	Debbie Madnick
l 4th	Steven B. Sanders
l 5th	Judith Weber
l 8th	Beth Hayden
21st	David J. Marmar
21st	Marshall Gorson
22nd	Harry J.C. Friedman
24th	Emily Caryn Gershowitz
24th	Muriel Swartz
24th	Suzie Greenman
25th	Rita Conklin
26th	Jim Williams
26th	John D. Schur
26th	Renee Green
28th	Arlene Line

### **BOOK PLATE**

In memory of Robert Bakst

by Harvey and Susan Schwaid

#### It's Scholarship Application Time

Anyone wanting a KJCC scholarship application, please contact Kurt Kluger at 394-7571 or e-mail kurtkluger@bellsouth.net.

#### February Anniversaries

		Years
<b>9</b> th	Uri & Liliam Kamely	17
	Joel & Linda Pollack	
20th	Bill & Susan Gordon	22
21st	Murray & Claire Cooper	61

#### Help for Haiti and Fernell

KJCC is attempting to do its small part in helping the ravaged nation of Haiti. Linda is accepting cash donations; please mark any checks "Tzedakah for Haiti." Candy has also placed a box in the KJCC lobby to collect clothes and non -perishable food items. As of this writing, Fernell (one of Jim's favorites), who keeps KJCC's building clean, has not been able to contact any of his family in Haiti.

#### Oneg Sponsors for February 2010

February 5th—Steve & Barbara Smith in honor of Rebecca's birthday.

February 12th—Joyce Peckman to celebrate visiting family.

February 26th—Rita & Jim Williams in honor of Jim's birthday. Kathy & Joe Shabathai in honor of their 24th anniversary. They will be bringing food! (She advised us to come hungry.)

#### Adult Ed Lecture Series to Continue

Yardena's fascinating lecture series, "Jews of the Diaspora," continues in February with the fifth installment, the Jews of China, on Sunday evening, February 14th at 7:00 p.m. in the David Kamely classroom at KJCC. Previous lectures have been on the Jews of Babylonia (Iraq), Persia (Iran), Afghanistan (if you weren't there, "stan" as a suffix means "territory of"), and India.

#### Book Club, the Sequel

The informal book club will be meeting again, this time Wednesday, Feb  $3^{rd}$ , 2:30 at Bea Graham's house. RSVP to Bea at 852-0214 or to Joyce at 451-0665.

In Memoriam February 2010

#### Lou Roazen

Remembered By Sylvia Berman

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Ted Nyman

Remembered By Alan Beth & Candace Stanlake

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J.L. Fierberg

Remembered By Shirley Boxer

**Robert Kinney** 

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Remembered By Frank & Gerri Emkey

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#### Elsie Gilderman

Remembered By Larry & Stephanie Gilderman

#### Joseph Gorson

Remembered By Janice Gorson

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#### **Robert Greenbaum**

Remembered By Marilyn Greenbaum

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#### **Sunnie Bernstein**

Remembered By Paul & Barbara Bernstein

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Max Boxer

Remembered By Shirley Boxer

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Sarah P. Zalk

Remembered By Meredith A. Cline

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#### William Feinberg

Remembered By Arthur Feinberg & Patrice Gerard

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#### Rose Gilson

Remembered By Michael & Suzanne Gilson

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#### A. James Weiss

Remembered By Janice Gorson

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#### llona Ban

Remembered By Franklin & Judy Greenman

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#### Kitty Nyman

Remembered By Alan Beth & Candace Stanlake

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Ida Boxer

Remembered By Shirley Boxer

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#### Reuben L. Zalk

Remembered By Meredith A. Cline

#### Louis Geller

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Remembered By Milton & Claire Geller

# Charles Gilson

Remembered By Michael & Suzanne Gilson

#### $\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond\diamond$

#### Nicholas Goldenberg

Remembered By Bea Graham

# Fred H. Hermann

Remembered By Robert & Eileen Hermann

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## Meredith A. C

# In Memoriam February 2010

#### Ida Ratchik

Remembered By Ron & Dorothy Horn

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#### Pinchas Kamely

Remembered By Michal Kamely

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#### **Fannie Phillips**

Remembered By Henry & Patricia Isenberg

Irving Stockser

Remembered By Frank & Sandy Kaplan

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#### M. Teresa Astray-Caneda

Remembered By Teresa Kwalick

#### Irene Nobil

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Remembered By Jim & Lynn Nobil

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#### Ida O. Present

Remembered By Marjorie Present

## ~~~~~~~

#### Shirley Horowitz

Remembered By Pauline Roller

#### ~~~~~~~

#### Irving Sanders

Remembered By Steven B. Sanders

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#### Isaac Jacobson

Remembered By Melvin Jacobson

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Sylvia Kay

Remembered By Harvey & Joan Kay

#### Samuel Marmar

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Remembered By David & Pamela Marmar

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#### William Pollack

Remembered By Joel & Linda Pollack

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Amos M. Present

Remembered By Marjorie Present

#### ~~~~~~~~~~

#### Al Roller

Remembered By Pauline Roller

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#### John A. Schur

Remembered By Lee Schur

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## Joseph Krissel

Remembered By Michael Krissel

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#### Sara J. Cohen

Remembered By Jim & Lynn Nobil

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#### Malka Frank

Remembered By Joel & Linda Pollack

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#### **Russ Wayne Rolnick**

Remembered By Marilyn Rapp

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#### Sophie Samuels

Remembered By Sid Samuels

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8

In Memoriam February 2010

#### **Miriam Blinder**

Remembered By Steven & Barbara Smith

Ann R. Kapulskey

Remembered By George & Muriel Swartz

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**Minnie Berger** 

Remembered By Mark & Sofy Wasser

Samuel Wolfe

Remembered By Larry & Dorothy Wolfe

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COME TO THE KJCC GIFT SHOP FOR ALL YOUR NEEDS!

WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING:

HOUSE GIFTS

BAR AND BAT MITZVAH GIFTS AND CARDS

**Morris Estrin** 

Remembered By Ralph & Lillian Tallent

Morris Feinberg

Remembered By Larry & Dorothy Wolfe

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Sara J. Cohen

Remembered By Richard & Sheila Steinberg

Kitty Nyman

Remembered By Alan Beth & Candace Stanlake

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Paul Buchman

Remembered By Mel Taks

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#### Sarah Felder

Remembered By Stuart & Geri Smith

David C. Willner

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Remembered By Arthur Lee & Johanna Willner

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#### Ted Nyman

Remembered By Alan Beth & Candace Stanlake





WEDDING GIFTS AND CARDS

Yes, we have yahrzeit candles - traditional or electric!

CHALLAH PLATES, CHALLAH KNIVES AND MORE

If you do not see what you want, we can order it for you.

Call Joan Boruszak 852-0833.



# Tuesday, March 30, 2010 6:30 pm Islamorada Fishing Club

Your check is your reservation. Checks must be received no later than March 20, 2010.
Make checks payable to KJCC Sisterhood, c/o Leslie Dillon, PO Box 370736, Key Largo, FL 33037. Call Joan Boruszak at 852-0833 for information.



Children 12 and under are our guests.

# YEDA VE'TORASHA

Yardena Kamely



# Death In Haiti, a Personal Story

his month's article for my YEDA and TORASHA column was intended to be about Purim and the figure of Esther. I wanted to write about a type of woman who knows how to behave in a patriarchal society, but is not timid, who dares to defy the rules when necessary, is strong and resolute in mind and is prepared to take risks.

But before I started to write, a terrible human tragedy occurred in Haiti, the disaster of the earthquake that has killed so many people. This horrible disaster affected my family personally. My son, Andy Loi, his sister and brother—the whole Loi family— suffered the loss of a very close relative. Their cousin, Andrea Loi, was found dead under the collapsed U.N. building, after a desperate search of four long days.

I heard the sad news while teaching our Sunday School children at the KJCC. I was very moved by the reaction of our students to their teacher's grief, the support they gave, the empathy and solidarity they showed in those difficult moments. They gave me the opportunity to share with them the tragic story of Andrea's death, and also the story of a remarkable young woman.

I told the children that Andrea was the granddaughter of Holocaust survivor Sally Loi, who escaped from Rumania, the only survivor of her family. Andrea's grandmother and family now live in Chile, where Andrea grew up and became a lawyer. She dedicated her professional life to defend human rights in any troubled country in the world. That's how she came to work at the U.N. in Haiti for many years. She was very strong and resolute in mind, like Esther in the story of Purim, and courageous, defending the poor and underprivileged under very harsh circumstances.

When we heard that Andrea was missing after the earthquake, we tried desperately to find help. Her two brothers flew to Haiti from Chile, finding themselves caught in a situation of total chaos. They needed professional help; that was the moment when we contacted and asked the specialized Israeli rescue team that had arrived in Haiti to help us with the search. Their response was immediate. I explained to the children that the mission of the Israelis is to rescue the life of any people in distress, and that according to Jewish solidarity, *Klal Yisrael*, they consider it a privilege to rescue the life of their Jewish brothers and sisters from another country.

All during our conversation, the children were very attentive and showed concern and empathy for me, their teacher. They learned about the customs, *minhagim*, of mourning, and how the whole community helps and supports a family who is in mourning and sitting the *Shiva* (a religious ritual of seven days). And with the participation of Marc Bloom, Jane Friedman, and tutor Rachel Bloom, the children conducted a symbolic ceremony in class, singing *"Hine Ma Tov U'ma Na'im Shevet Achim Gam Yachad,"* reciting the Mourner's Kaddish, and reading *"Meditation Before Kaddish"* from the *Siddur*.

To have had the company of my students and KJCC *mishpoche*, and be part of this small ceremony, was very significant for me. My sincere thanks to all of you.  $\Diamond$ 

# **Contributions to KJCC**

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of those who support the Keys Jewish Community Center by remembering and honoring their friends and loved ones through their generous contributions. All donations made after the fifth of the month will appear in the following month's Chai-Lights. When you make a donation, please signify the fund it is to go to and the recognition of the name or names to be listed.

Book Plates Pollack, Joel and Linda Schwaid, Harvey and Susan	<i>In Memor</i> y of Laurie Beth Robert Bakst	JNF Certificates Sent By Boruszak, Jim and Joan	In Memory of Laurie Beth
Chai-Lights Kirschenbaum, Bianka	In Honor of Medina Roy	Mahjonggettes	In Honor of David Cohn's passing
General Fund Begam, Delores Davidson, Foster and Carol L Emkey, Gerri Frank, Marian	In Honor of askin Bea Graham's recovery	Weihl, Alfred and Sue Ann Yahrzeit Contributions Steinberg, Richard and Sheila Olsen, Jerry and Sheila	In Memory of Peter Steinberg Betty Weinstein
Hirsch, Gerald Matlins, Stuart Roberts, Paul and Susan		Present, Marjorie Conklin, Wes and Rita Terner, Salomon and Mary Isenberg, Henry and Patricia	A. Savage Yetta Hitzig Ernest Isenberg
General Fund Avner, Gloria Peckman, Joyce Schur, Lee	In Memory of Laurie Beth Laurie Beth Laurie Beth	Taramona, Hermine <i>30th Anniversary</i> Avner, Gloria Swartz, George and Muriel	Norma Robinson

## Did You Know ???

...that you can place an advertisement in Chai-Lights for an entire year for only \$120?

... that you can remember a loved one with a yahrzeit plaque? A candle will be lit on the memoriam date and at Yizkor services four times a year including Yom Kippur.

#### Contact Linda Pollack at 852-8575 for more information .

## **Sisterhood** Joyce Peckman

On the theme of Purim, unexpected and unfortunate events can produce good results. Let's hope that is the case with our Fashion Show, which did not take place in January due to the financial difficulties of the restaurant where it was supposed to be held. As it turned out, the date chosen (and abandoned) would have coincided with cruises and trips, keeping some of our favorite models and patrons from attending. Instead, we now have a new, hopefully better date, at the recently remodeled Snooks. So mark Thursday. March 4<sup>th</sup> on your calendar for an 11:30 luncheon and fashion show, when you will get the first chance to preview Angelika's newest spring and summer fashions.

I hope you all had a wonderful time at Yiddishkeit night. I know the food was delicious. Three cheers to our brave actors – Bernie Ginsberg, Georgia Landau, Dave Mont, Gene and Mort Silverman, Linda and Joel Pollack, Gerry Oshinsky, Gloria Avner, Steve Friedman and Jules Seder. Thanks also go to Bea Graham, Pauline Roller, Elaine Solas, Erica's friend Hindy Zeifman and Alan Beth the technical wizard for all their help.

For the literary among us, we are starting our Guernsey-type literary society again. We'll meet on Wednesday, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2:30 at Bea Graham's house, with whatever book we've all read lately that we'd like to talk about. It's not the traditional book club, but it brings up topics and authors that might not normally be discussed, and broadens everyone's outlook. It's also become a bit of an informal lending library. You can RSVP to Bea (852-0214 or martyandbea@gmail.com), or me (451-0665 or joyce@adoctorsbag.com). You'll even be welcome if you just show up.

Purim comes early this year, falling out on Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup>. Instead of a Friday evening dinner, we will celebrate this happiest of holidays with a costume brunch (mimosas anyone?) on that day. Megillah reading and



children's presentation begins at 10:30 a.m., potluck brunch at 11:30. RSVP to Erica Garrett, food coordinator extraordinaire, at hippiejap@hotmail.com or 305-393-1162.

Tickets for Miss Saigon, on March 7th at Actors' Playhouse in Coral Gables, are \$40 each. Reserve your seat with me or you can contact Nancy Kluger at 393-2129 or klugerkeys@bellsouth.net. You don't want to miss this one. If you haven't seen it and aren't sure what you'd be signing up for, see Linda's promotional ad on page 22 of this issue. I'll give you a clue: it's the old Madame Butterfly story transposed to Vietnam at the end of our fighting there. If you haven't already received the invitation to KICC's Gala 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, it's coming! Save March 14<sup>th</sup> for this special event. Let Gene Silverman know if you want to spend that night at Hawk's Cay. You can reach Gene at 664-3316 or gsilverman122@gmail.com. Or contact Beth Kaminstein at 664-2875 or bethkam@bellsouth.net for carpool information. Please note that the reply card needs to be returned no later than March 1<sup>st</sup>.

And finally, now is the time to begin thinking about Passover(!) Let Joan Boruszak know if you need anything special from the gift shop. You can reach her at 852-0833 or joanborus@aol.com. Contact Leslie Dillon at 853-2693 to reserve your place at the Second Seder, to be held Tuesday, March 30<sup>th</sup>. Your \$45 check will hold your place. (Dependents aged 12 and under are gratis, but you need to tell us they're coming.) The Women's Seder has been scheduled for Monday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Watch for information about pottery sessions led by Beth. In past years we've made goblets, soup bowls, seder plates...what's next? ◊ The whole Megillah--The real Megillah--The KJCC Megillah--

# Sunday, February 28, 2010

Wear a costume - Bring a dish!

10:30 Megillah Reading and Purim presentation 11:30 Brunch - Potluck

Megillah reading will be moderated by Joyce Peckman with participation by our students and congregation. Tzedakah will be collected to be used for Passover meals for those in need.

Contact Erica Garrett, (305) 393-1162, hippiejap@hotmail.com, to coordinate your dish.

## World Jewish Report Medina Roy



#### How about an even dozen?

According to Israel's Rabbinical Court Administration, a 50-year-old Jerusalem man has divorced for the 11<sup>th</sup> time, setting a new Israeli record for Jews. The divorces were granted both in Israel and abroad and were all in accordance with *halacha* (Jewish Iaw). The man said his custom is "to divorce every two years and look for a new bride immediately after." From all his marriages, the man has only one child (He regrets having divorced his first wife because "it set into motion a never-ending search for the next 'experience." The previous Jewish Israeli record for divorces by a single person was six. (*Jerusalem Post, 12-28-09*)

#### **Baseball's Jewish MVPs**

In late December, Ryan Braun, 26, leftfielder for the Milwaukee Brewers and Scott Feldman, 26, pitcher for the Texas Rangers, were named the Most Valuable Jewish Players of the Year by Jewish Major Leaguers, an organization dedicated to honoring Jews in baseball. Braun was selected player of the year and Feldman was recognized as pitcher of the year. To be selected, players are required to identify themselves as Jewish and have a Jewish parent or they must be converts. Feldman has achieved more victories than any other Jewish starter since 1980. There are currently 14 Jewish pros. *(The Forward, 12-30-09)* 

#### A new "Hatikva" (The Hope)

The longing to find considerable amounts of oil in Israel may come to fruition. In an announcement made on December 24<sup>th</sup>, Givat Olam (Hebrew for "hill of the world") Exploration Company found "significant quantities" of oil in a well in Rosh HaAyin, a city located east of Tel Aviv on the western edge of Samaria. Although the commercial potential of the oil field will not be known until calculations on production and processing can be completed, it is hoped that this discovery, plus the huge gas field discovered off the Mediterranean coast early in 2009, will further Israel's longtime wish to be energy independent and could happen in as little as three years. After the announcement was made, the company's stock more than doubled. (www.israelnationalnews.com, 12-24-09)

#### Another blow for Holocaust survivors

In the November issue of the *Journal of* the National Cancer Institute, a study conducted by Haifa University's School of Public Health revealed that Holocaust survivors are at a higher risk of getting cancer later in life than other Jews. The study compared the cancer rates of more than 315,000 European Jews who immigrated to British-ruled Palestine before or during World War II with the rates of those who arrived after the war. Men born between 1940 and 1945 who remained in Europe throughout the war years developed cancer at three to five times the rate of men the same age who went to Palestine during the war. Women born during the same time period who staved had a risk as much as 2.3 times greater. The incidents of breast and colorectal cancer were especially high among those who spent the war years in Nazioccupied Europe. The study also concluded that the risk was highest for the youngest survivors. (The Forward, 1-6-10)

#### The first increase in a decade

For the first time in ten years, the number

of immigrants to Israel rose in 2009. This according to Jewish Agency chairman Natan Sharansky and Immigrant Minister Sofa Landver. The number of people who immigrated was 16,244, a 17 percent jump over 2008 figures. Sixty percent of the new Israeli citizens were under the age of 36. The largest number of new immigrants still comes from the former Soviet Union, where the number increased by 21 percent. In addition, dozens of Jews fled to the lewish state from Muslim countries such as Yemen, Morocco, Tunis and Lebanon. Sharansky and Landver attributed the climb to the Jewish Agency's "Red Carpet" program, which guides olim (new arrivals) by offering them assistance with details like opening bank accounts, finding health care providers, etc. (www.haaretz.com, 12-28-09)

#### Jimmy Carter's Al Chet

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter wants the lewish community to forgive him for "any offense he may have caused when criticizing Israel." In a letter he wrote in December to the JTA, a wire service for Jewish newspapers, Carter sent greetings of the season and included wishes for peace between Israel and her neighbors. The letter concluded with Carter offering an *al chet*, referring to the Yom Kippur praver of forgiveness. (In modern day Hebrew, *al chet* refers to any plea for forgiveness.) In recent years, the former president has angered many lews with his declarations placing the burden of peacemaking on Israel and with statements linking Israel's settlement policies to apartheid. Ed Koch, former New York City mayor, responded by saying that if Mr. Carter is asking the Jewish community for forgiveness then, among other things, he needs to list what he believes he has done that requires forgiveness. To read Koch's full article--- "Carter's Al Chet: How Would One Know You Are Really Sorry?"—go to the Yiddish blog www.vosizneias.com/45771 (World Jewish Congress. 12-22-09)

#### A plea for help

Monika Krawczyk, president of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, has issued a warning that "hundreds of important Jewish historical and religious sites are in danger of deterioration and possible collapse." The Foundation is facing a dire need to raise funds to repair and refurbish "cemeteries, synagogues and other structures of inestimable lewish historical and cultural value." The Warsaw-based foundation was established in 2002 with the aim of reclaiming and managing communal properties that have been returned to the Jewish community under a state law passed in 1997. "There are about 1,200 Jewish cemeteries and 200 synagogues in Poland that survived the war." Krawczyk said. "But now many are in a terrible state of disrepair and are literally falling apart. If we don't act now to save these sites, in another 10 or 20 years there will be nothing left to see." Krawczyk is calling on lews worldwide, especially those with a family or historical connection to Poland, to get involved. (lerusalem Post. 1-1-10)

#### In Memoriam

Once again, the Jewish world has recently lost several noteworthy individuals. They are: --Percy E. Sutton, 89, one of the nation's most prominent black political and business leaders. For more than a decade. Sutton was the highest-ranking black elected official in New York City. As a young lawyer, he represented Malcolm X. A passionate civil rights activist, Sutton was arrested as a Freedom Rider in Mississippi and Alabama in the 1960s. A staunch advocate for the state of Israel, he was also one of the first and most consistently outspoken leaders on behalf of the struggle for freedom for Soviet Jews. He led the Black Coalition for Soviet lews and was a delegate to the World Conference on Soviet Jewry held in Brussels in 1976. It is said that Sutton's motives were not political; they came from a deep commitment to the struggle for the human and civil rights of the lews of the Soviet Union. (www.jta.org, 12-29-09) --Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, 77, considered "the leading lewish historian in the post-Holocaust age." Yerushalmi was first recognized in the early 1970s for his groundbreaking work on the Conversos, Jews who outwardly converted to Catholicism during the

Spanish Inquisition but practiced some Jewish rituals in secret. But it was his 1982 book, Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory, that put him on the map for scholars in other fields as well. Yerushalmi mentored a new generation of students at Harvard and then at Columbia University. They include many of the foremost figures in Jewish studies today. (*The Forward, 12-16-09*)

--Edward Sanders, 87, a national Jewish leader who played a key role in the 1979 Israel-Egypt peace treaty. He was a senior Middle East advisor to President Jimmy Carter and served as the leader of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. He worked closely with Stuart Eizenstat, President Carter's chief domestic policy adviser on issues of Soviet Jewry, Holocaust reparations and economic aid to Israel. (www.jta.org, 12-8-09)

-- Freya von Moltke, 98, a member of the Kreisau Circle, Germany's anti-Nazi resistance group that backed the failed attempt to kill Hitler during World War II. The group was led by her husband. Helmuth. The two opposed the Hitler regime from the start and assisted Jews and other victims of Nazism through Helmuth's law firm in Berlin. Helmuth was executed by the Nazis for treason in 1945. After the war, Freya and her two sons moved to South Africa where she worked as a social worker. She returned to Germany in 1956 because she rejected South Africa's system of apartheid and began publicizing the work of the Kreisau Circle. She later settled in the United States and became a citizen at the age of 75. (World Jewish Congress, 1-6-10) --Miep Gies, 100, the Dutch woman who helped hide Anne Frank and her family from the Nazis and the one who saved the girl's diary. Gies was a secretary working for Anne's father, Otto. She was the last living member of the group who helped the Frank family and four other people survive for two years while hiding in a secret attic annex in Amsterdam. Constantly putting her own life at risk. Gies supplied the Frank family with food and other essentials. In 1944 the Franks were discovered and deported to

Auschwitz, where the family became separated. Otto was the only survivor. When he returned, Gies handed him Anne's diary, believing it had value. (World Jewish Congress, 1-12-10)

#### Well, is it safe or unsafe?

According to the U.S. State Department's updated guide for the American tourist, aggressive driving is a serious problem in Israel because Israelis don't obey traffic laws, keep a safe driving distance or signal before changing lanes or turning (www.ynetnews.com, 12-28-09). Yet 2009 marked the safest year on Israeli roads since 1974, when traffic deaths numbered 706 people. Traffic fatalities in 2009 were 346 – a drop of over 22 percent from 2008. Israel is still number one in the industrial world in child victims of traffic accidents and third in pedestrian victims.

(www.israelnationalnews.com, 1-1-10)

#### Did you know...

-Twelve of the top 25 Christmas songs were either written or co-written by Jews. (*The Forward*, 12-22-09)

-On December 14th, Boris Gelfand of Israel became the 2009 Chess World Cup champion, beating Ruslan Ponomariov of the Ukraine. Gelfand was the number one seed in the event and, at 41, he was also one of the oldest. (The New York Times, 12-12-09)

-Romania and Israel have jointly issued a postage stamp honoring the world's first Yiddish theater. The stamp, which commemorates the theatre founded by Avram Goldfaden in the northeast Romanian city of Iasi in 1876, was issued at the end of November at an event at Bucharest's Jewish State Theatre. (www.jta.org, 11-29-09)

-Noam was the most popular name for Israeli babies born in 2008. The name was given to 1,970 boys and 515 girls. Some 156,000 babies were born in Israel in 2008. The information comes from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics. (www.jta.org, 11-18-09) ◊

### KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

# THE PRODUCERS

Sunday, April 25, 2010 2:00 pm Murray E Nelson Cultural Center Key Largo MM 102 Bayside

A shady Broadway producer and his nerdy accountant concoct a scheme to overfinance a huge flop and pocket the excess budget, but the show unexpectedly becomes a smash.

This show has taken its place as one of the all-time great comedies.

Book by Mel Books and Thomas Meehan Music by Mel Brooks Lyrics by Mel Brooks Directed by Debra Ginsberg Original Choreography Recreated by Gerri Caruncho & Serena Salva Musical Director: Randy Lichtman Produced by the Miami Acting Company

Contact: Linda Pollack to reserve your ticket lindap4000@earthlink.net Donation: \$25

## Eye On The Arts Gloria Avner



One of the joys of winter in the tropics, living on this string of beautiful islands, is our ability to enjoy cultural activities and exhibits outdoors as well as in. Here are some events for strolling as well as sitting, nearby and far enough away that you might like to invite co-participants to share the ride and the fun. (A mini-review from last month: Steve, Carol, Joyce and I spent a great evening listening to Itzhak Perlman at the Arsht Center. It was an easy drive—thanks to Steve—and the encores alone made it a truly stellar event: Perlman playing Heifetz playing Gershwin's "It Ain't Necessarily So." Aaaah.)

Key Largo / February (dates to be announced): Our community theater troupe, The Keys Players, present "Dearly Beloved," a comedy, on successive weekends at the Lion's Club. MM 100. Info at (305) 453-0997; www.thekeyplayers.org, (time and price to be announced).

Islamorada / February 6<sup>th</sup>, Saturday at 8 p.m: I.C.E. presents American Shakespeare Center's "Romeo and Juliet." Depending on weather, this exciting young company will perform at the amphitheater in Founders Park or at the Coral Shores PAC. They have given us amazing performances at both venues for the past three years. *An event not* to be missed. www.keysice.com

#### Marathon / February 6-7:

**16th Annual Pigeon Key Art Festival.** Marathon Community Park, MM 49, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; a great combination of local and Florida fine artists and craftspeople, a well-juried show. *A number of us went last year and enjoyed it.* 305-289-9555.

#### Ft. Lauderdale / February 15th

Joshua Bell, Broward Center for the Performing Arts, 8 p.m. Joshua Bell has captured the public's attention like no other classical violinist of his time. Playing a 1713 Gibson ex Huberman Stradivarius, Bell's acclaimed recordings in the past year include Vivaldi: The Four Seasons and film soundtracks Defiance and Angels & Demons. Tickets: \$35-\$75.

#### Marathon / February 15<sup>th</sup>

Middle Keys Concerts presents Miami String Quartet, with Jodi di Salvo. Praised as having rich, precisely balanced sound, a broad colorful palette, and unflagging energy, the Miami String Quartet is among the most widely respected quartets in America. 8 p.m., San Pablo Catholic Church, 550 122nd Street. Tickets: Lynda 305-743-4687,

#### Key Largo / Friday, February 26th

Annual Garden Walk: From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. we can stroll among and view native plants and lush landscaping, while getting ideas for tropical gardening, during this annual Garden Walk presented by the Upper Keys Garden Club. 305-332-0535 or dbarreto@bellsouth.net

#### Tavernier / February 26th and 27th

I.C.E. Presents The New York Children's Film Festival. Last year's films were amazing, many of them a delight to behold by grownups too. The event moves indoors this year. Coral Shores Performing Arts Center, MM 90 Oceanside. Info *www.keysice.com* (times and schedule *t.b.a.*)

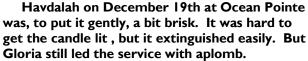
#### Islamorada / Sunday, February 27th

"LOVE IS IN THE AIR." The Keys Community Concert Band performs at Islamorada Founders Park, Bayside, MM 87, Plantation Key. Bring your chairs and blankets. The entire family will enjoy the experience of listening to traditional concert band music in a lovely Keys setting. Admission to all concerts is free. 4:00 p.m. For more information e-mail keyscommunityconcertband@yahoo.com.

#### Islamorada / February 27<sup>th</sup>

Islamorada Street Fair and Sidewalk Art Show. Food, fun and safety exhibits are to complement local artists' booths and displays. The event is to help commemorate the history of Red Cross houses and community recovery during the 1935 hurricane. Located at the Hurricane Monument, mile marker 81.6, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Contact: 305-852-9612 E-mail: HuntJB@usa.redcross.org. ◊

# Photo Gallery





Middle left, at Yardena's December 20th lecture on the Jews of Persia. It was still cold, as you can see from the clothes. Lower left is the Sunday School celebrating the 6th birthday of Natalie Werth-

amer. The photo lower right is from another happy Sunday at Camp KJCC. The top five photos are from the annual Christmas Day open house of Carol and Steve Steinbock. In the

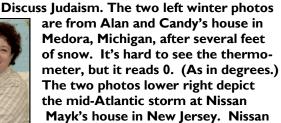
photo at right we have a relatively rare Beth Hayden sighting.





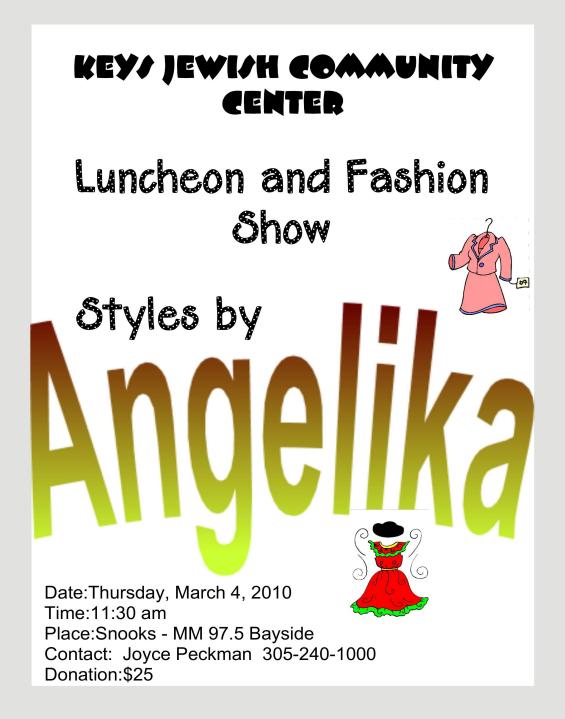
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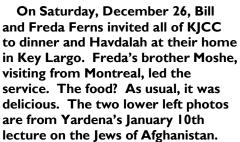
Plantation Key School at the invitation of her friend Pam Brown to



is explaining things to the goats, while Shyella shows us just how much snow fell.







At bottom is a photo of the "Bach to the Future" concert held Saturday, January 16th at the Coral Shores PAC. This was the first in the renewed Upper Keys Concert Series, managed by Gloria Avner, Joyce Peckman and Mary Lee Singer of KJCC.

Gloria wanted to express her gratitude to "all the donors, volunteers and attendees from KJCC, our community's cultural backbone."



# KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER Sunday, March 7, 2010 2:00 PM Actors Playhouse, Coral Gables

A classic love story is brought up-to-date in one of the most stunning theatrical spectacles of all time. In Miss Saigon, Alain Boublil and Claude-Michael Schönberg, creators of last season's acclaimed hit, Les Misérables, along with Richard Maltby, Jr., bring Puccini's Madame Butterfly to the modern world in a moving testament to the human spirit and a scathing indictment of the tragedies of war. An international sensation, Miss Saigon is an epic, daring pop opera that is universal in its emotional power even as it deals with controversial, contemporary issues. In the turmoil of the Vietnam War, an American soldier and a Vietnamese girl fall in love, only to be separated during the fall of Saigon. Their struggle to find each other over the ensuing years creates an unparalleled drama and a must see musical theatrical experience.

Donation \$40 Contact Nancy Kluger klugerkeys@bellsouth.net 305-393-2129



# One of KJCC's Own Gets National Recognition:

Steve Smith is selected Country Doctor of the Year for 2009.

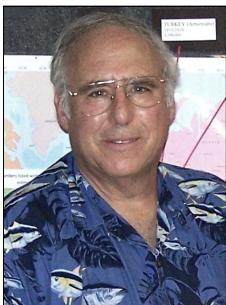
Imost everyone at KJCC has a Steve Smith story. To Jim Boruszak he's the one who often called before a Board the evening, he sees general practice patients, up to fifty in a day. He's done whenever the last patient leaves his office. He

Meeting to ask: "do you need me to pick up some bagels on the way?" To Pauline Roller he's the dear friend who takes her along on rare family vacations, and who not long ago ran back early from Massachusetts to care for her when it seemed as though she'd need surgery. (She did.) To Steve Steinbock he's the doctor who didn't want him to have to wait too long for care for a potentially dicey situation, and showed up at Mariners at 11:00 at night to see him.

To KJCC members and the Upper Keys public Steve Smith is the one who wrote, produced and presented a memorable PowerPoint presentation on Kristallnacht last

year on its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Those who value the lessons and meaning of *Yom HaShoah* can point to another PowerPoint show Steve produced about his father's role (also a surgeon, by the way) in the liberation of Dachau. To his fellow members of the KJCC Board of Directors he's a thoughtful and respected voice.

Those who know Steve Smith well have long marveled at his commitment to his profession. He's often on call at night, or working the emergency room at Fishermen's Hospital in Marathon. By his own admission, he's up at 5:30 each morning and quickly on his way to surgery or E.R. or to make hospital rounds. Each afternoon, and often well into



even—get this—still makes house calls. And he's kept up this pace for over 30 years, since he wrote letters from a residency at Tulane in New Orleans asking about openings in the Keys.

As many of you now know. Steve Smith has recently earned national recognition for his years of dedication and excellence. He has been named Country Doctor of the year for 2009. (Let that sink in for a moment: this is a national award. Steve Smith has been voted Country Doctor of the year for the entire United States.) This award has been given each year since 1992 to doctors of special and ongoing merit

who practice in communities of 20,000 or less, by Staff Care, the leading temporary physician staffing firm in the United States. Until this year all recipients have been family practitioners. Steve Smith is the first winner who is board certified in general surgery.

So what, exactly, does he win? Well, there's the engraved stethoscope, the monogrammed lab coat and the plaque featuring a country doctor making his rounds with a horse and buggy. But he's also provided with two weeks off, with a temporary physician to fill in for him. Steve Smith, meet leisure time.

KJCC offers its warmest congratulations, Steve. We're very proud of you. We can only imagine how proud your father would be. ◊

# Keys Jewish Community Center

Monday March 22, 2010 5:30 PM @ KJCC Homemade Seder Dinner w/Wine

Limited seating - Contacts: Beth (305) 393-4013 bethkam@bellsouth.net Erica (305) 393-1162 hippiejap@hotmail.com

Dinner-Chai Donation \$18

Additional Tzedakah donations will be welcome.

Join us in celebration as we continue our efforts of Tikkun Olam - repair the world.



# RON AND BETH'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE



Beth made good use of the hammock on their bamboo porch, right. Below, Judy waves from the dinner lodge at Sapibenega. W henever she has a significant birthday, Beth Kaminstein's mom Judy likes to celebrate by taking the family on a unique vacation. This

year, for her 80th, they all went to the San Blas Islands in the Caribbean off Panama. We thought you'd all like to see the album. Beth agreed.



Beth shopping for a great lovemolas--far right. The family piles into a launch for a day's excursion, right. Below, Ron at the restaurant, where fresh veggies and seafood were the fab and fresh fare.





The building below housed the kids, with Brieze and Stellar on the right.



# -This Month in Jewish History-February

682 - King Erwig of Visigothic Spain presses for the "utter extirpation of the pest of the Jews," and makes it illegal to practice any Jewish rites.

1095 - Henry IV of Germany issues a charter to the Jews and a decree against forced baptism. He attempts to protect the Jews even during the Crusades. He also permits forcibly baptized Jews to return to Judaism. The Church criticizes his actions.

1201 - In Worms—an important medieval German city for Jews on the Rhine—the Jews take up arms to fight alongside the city's non -Jewish residents against an attack. At this time, Jews are still permitted to bear arms in various cities in Germany, although this privilege is soon to be abolished.

1258 - Baghdad falls, and under Genghis Khan the Mongol dynasty replaces the Abbasid Moslems in Persia. The Mongols are for the most part tolerant of Judaism. An Arab writer reports 36,000 Jews and 16 synagogues in Baghdad on the eve of the Mongolian invasion. Most of the city is destroyed during the siege. Some 800,000 civilians are slaughtered.

1336 – Alfonso X of Castille is persuaded by the apostate Alfonso of Valladolid to ban the prayer *Alenu*. Alfonso alleges that the prayer is anti-Christian. As a result, many Jewish communities excise a sentence from the prayer, which has only begun to be printed again in recent years.

1349 – In Strasbourg, France, a riot begins after corn prices fall. The Jews are accused, despite protests by the city council, of a conspiracy. The entire Jewish population (2,000) is dragged to the cemetery and burned to death. Only those who accept Christianity are allowed to live. A new council is elected, which decrees that Jews cannot return for 100 years; their property and possessions are divided among the burghers. Twenty years later, the Jews are readmitted.

1481 - In Seville, Spain, the first *auto da fe* (which translates as "acts of faith," but which were in reality merely bonfires) is staged. Six Marrano men and six women are burned for allegedly practicing Judaism, practices which could include not eating pig, washing hands before prayer, and changing clothes on the Sabbath.

1807 – In Paris, Napoleon convenes the first Grand Sanhedrin since Biblical times, under the leadership of The Assembly of Jewish Notables. The Court is presented by Napoleon with twelve questions on the positions of Jewry regarding polygamy, divorce, usury, other faiths, and, most important, whether they consider France to be their Fatherland.

1860 – Uriah P. Levy is appointed Commodore of the U.S. Eastern Mediterranean fleet. Levy, the first Jewish officer in the U.S. Navy, surmounts many anti-Semitic obstacles in his career, including seven courts-martial. Also responsible for the abolition of flogging in the U.S. Navy, Levy becomes fascinated by the story of Thomas Jefferson, then saves and restores Monticello, which by the 1840s is virtually in ruins.

1886 - Ha-Yom ("Today"), the first daily newspaper published in Hebrew, begins publication in St. Petersburg, Russia.

1928 - Russia attempts to set up a Jewish district in Birobijan in Eastern Siberia and to transfer all its Jews there. Ultimately, for many reasons, the project is a failure, in part because most of Birobijan's 14,200 square miles are uninhabitable due to floods and also not arable. ◊

# Home for the Holidays

## The Myriad of Riches That Were Available Just by Staying in the Keys.

#### by Gloria Avner

Over the last few years, I have mostly chosen to "go away" for winter holidays. I traveled for celebration and adventure. Once I went to Orlando to spend time with a teacher/friend visiting from India. More often, I would fly to Mexico to paint and collect indigenous art for my summer gallery in Maine. Three years ago, I traveled to Southeast Asia to bring medical and art supplies to an orphanage in Cambodia and celebrate full moon with a small town in Vietnam. This year

was different—and maybe the most meaningful of all.

This year, for the first time in my thirty years as a Keys resident, I was here home—for the fall holidays, the High Holidays. It was an auspicious beginning. I also stayed home for the winter school holidays and had two deep experiences-adventures in *not* "going away." I have to

thank you for it. If I had not been asked to represent us, the KJCC *mishpocha*, I might not have gone to either event.

Carol Steinbock put out the call for the first one. When I heard that it was taking

This was about remembering the unremembered, about honoring the dead. This was *Yizkor* for the truly disenfranchised, the Florida Keys homeless who had left us in 2009.

On this bright and chilly December morning, wind whipping around us so fiercely that the 54 candles representing the departed could not be lit, I stood with Carol and four local ministers on the raised cement platform of the gazebo at Friendship Park, just behind Sunshine Market in Tavernier. Thirteen people stood on the grass facing us, backed by a clear blue sky. After each name of a departed

> was read. a short prayer was said by one of the ministers. Carol passed out Yizkor books and led us in a beautiful poem. I recited the Kaddish. joined by Carol, Nettie, lules, and my dear friend David Gitin. Other words were spoken, including exhortations to get involved. But everyone present was already involved. It hurt to hear that two



Gloria and David stand on Whale Harbor bridge on a crisp New Year's Day morning.

> of those who had died were children, one an infant, one a ten-year-old. It is my hope that more people will attend and be supportive next year. Just being there, with good KJCC friends, acquaintances, clergy, and caring

place on the morning of December 25<sup>th</sup>, I confess that my mind fleetingly flashed "not our holiday." But this was not about Christmas.



strangers, I felt our community and the perception of us by the larger community expanding. I could see all of us, all of the Keys, its



belly flops. See the myriad boats of all description—from huge commercial fishing and charter vessels to modest pleasure craft to a one-man paddler with its, well, paddler standing balanced on his board—all lining up for the blessing of the fleet.

There were five of us offering the blessings, four ministers and me. George Swartz should have been there. He's been among

Steve, Carol and Sarah aboard their new cat. Gloria with the ministers, below.





the blessers for years. But George had asked me to join him this year as another representative of the Jewish Community. Though I had intended only to be understudy, George needed unexpected hospital care (he is fine as of this writing, *baruch ha-shem*) and I

was suddenly thrust from the wings onto the stage, weak knees and all.

Everything worked. George was home recovering, the line of boats kept expanding, and the blessings began. It was wonderful to be speaking Hebrew words out loud in the

caregivers and its care-needers, enfolded and sheltered under our big metaphorical KJCC "tallis," at least for this one day.

Such are the pleasures of being "home," even when the event is sad.

When the event is joyous, like the annual New Year's Day "Blessing of the Fleet" in Islamorada, the magnification is almost beyond words. If you were present, bathed in sunlight on the water or standing high above it in the middle of Whale Harbor Bridge, you have the memory. If you were not, enjoy the photos and use your imagination.

See and hear the giant spotted ray showing off beneath the bridge, flinging him (or herself; who among us can tell?) out of the water, catching our attention with thunderous



sunshine (thanks to Jim Boruszak for the reminder to turn up the volume). It turns out that I was the first female blesser in the long history of the event.

Being in Key Largo for the New Year, both religious and secular, I am suddenly present, rediscovering unbounded home, from shul to community and back again. Sometimes gratitude finds us, sometimes we have to find it.  $\diamond$ 



Purim is generally regarded as the most joyous of Jewish holidays. But the Megillah is far from all there is to the story.

Original art by Gloria Avner

# The Holiday of Hidden Miracles

#### by Joyce Peckman

This Purim we at KJCC will celebrate with a costume party brunch. But why costumes? Didn't we do our costume thing in October? (Meaning Halloween, of course.) Actually, the costumes and motives behind them are very different for these two holidays. Our costumes on Purim are not meant to frighten

demons, spirits or the neighbors, or extort candy. The custom is instead based upon the two themes of Purim – hidden miracles, and the joy of celebration.

The Rabbis asked: "Where does the Torah allude to Esther?" They pointed to Dvarim 31 : V'Anochi haster astir panai...(And I will surely hide My face). Haster—"to hide"—and "Esther" are phonetically alike. From this it is taken that hiding one's face is proper on Purim. Hence masks, and costumes.

Purim is known as the Holiday of the "*nes nistar*," the "hidden miracle." The root of the Hebrew word *ester* is *saiter*, meaning "concealment." Concealed motives and identities run through this story. Esther kept her Jewish identity a secret from the time she entered the palace in Shushan until the moment she confronted Haman. A secret plot to assassinate the king played a key role in the twisted outcome of this story: Because Mordechai waited anonymously beside the palace gates each day, seeking somehow to protect Esther, he was able to overhear the plot and report it, thwarting the murder. Then there is Haman, who outwardly appeared to the world as a courtly advisor, but was really (according to later rabbis) the evil incarnation of Amalek, representing all of those who talk smoothly, try to disguise themselves



in garments which are not theirs and pretend to be pious and just, while inwardly harboring only evil, deception and cunning.

Most importantly, in *Megillat Esther*, G-d is the hidden character. As the events were

played out in real time, few were able to see His hidden presence behind the coincidences that created this dramatic story of despair and ultimate victory. It was rather the way that events were tied together – the fall (literally) of Vashti, the choice of Esther over hundreds of others, overheard conversations, the pride of a tyrant that "went before his fall," the sleeplessness of a King, the wisdom and bravery of the uncle and his beautiful niece.

The small miracles of Persian history are hidden, and G-d's Name doesn't appear here even once. The salvation of the Jewish people seemed to be accomplished simply through the actions of men and women. The theme of Purim is that G-d no longer shows power through large miracles as in the time of Exodus, but rather through the hidden miracles that occur in the lives of men and nations.

So we dress up as Queen Esther, Vashti, King Ahasueros or Haman (or, like my grandchildren - ballerina, Spiderman and ladybug) and have a joyous day, celebrating the often unnoticed miracles of life.  $\Diamond$ 



## Ani Purim!! Ani Purim!!

#### by Gloria Avner

Here come the children--crowns, beards, masks, and three-cornered hats slightly askew, princess dresses twirling, makeup and glitter over the top, and sometimes all over. Voices rise, in varied states of fidelity to the actual tune:

"Ani Purim, Ani Purim, Sameach oo m'vadeyach Ha lo rok pa-am b'shanah, Avo l'hitareach"

*"I am Purim! I am Purim! Glad to entertain you.* 

*I visit you but once a year. My story will regale you."* 

The *Megillah* reading from the scroll of Esther is about to begin, the children's song a perfect introduction. It hides as much below its simple surface as the masks that cover the children's faces. As with so many Jewish teachings, it is a story beneath the story. What (and who) is Purim anyway (besides the happiest of Jewish holidays)?

On the surface, we see an anti-Semitic plot in ancient Persia go awry. We see masks and disguises, a world where nothing is as it seems, where coincidence and fate and timing rule the day. *Megillat Esther* shows the hand of God in every scene and yet never once mentions God's name. Around this story of a selfish king, a megalomaniacal villain, a wise man, and a brave, righteous woman has arisen a rich tradition of ritual and performance, special foods and special customs that imbue Purim with a raucous, joyous nature unlike any other Jewish holiday.

We laugh at our enemies and we laugh at ourselves. We get drunk as skunks and have trouble telling friend from foe. Most important, we make enough noise to drown out the evil villain's name. From wearing outrageous masks (*tachposot*) and parading in costumes (*adloyada*) to "drinking till we drop," telling tall tales, singing funny songs, and eating the "ears" (*oznei Haman*) of the anti-Semite, Purim is about making the best of an imperfect world. It is about finding higher meaning and even inspiration in difficult times. Most of all, it celebrates the inevitable downfall of evil to the forces of good, with the help of God.

So be a part of the parade, even if you never have before. Wear a costume, mask, or funny hat. Be other than you are. Consider it

a *mitzvah* to join the fun and our children in reading, singing, stomping, groggering, and acting out *Megillat Esther*. Then we can all sit down to a delightful meal, our costume brunch, drink our fill and eat so many Haman's ears (boo! hiss!) that even he will not be able to hear his dreadful name. Then we can each, not just our children, say "Ani Purim!" and

mean it.

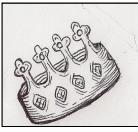
(We are celebrating Purim at KJCC, and reading the Megillah, a little differently this year than in years past. Please see the details on page 12 of this issue. – Ed.)  $\Diamond$ 

## **Purim Tidbits**

Like all the Bible stories, there's the actual story—the text—and then there's the commentary. Usually the commentary is longer and more complex than the original. (Remember how most discussions go: first there's "on one hand," which is followed up by "and on the other hand..." We should be grateful we weren't created as octopi.) We've compiled a few of the interesting small things that appear in the Book of Esther commentary.

• The book of Esther is unusual in that it is the only book of the Bible that does not contain the name of G-d.

• Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, which is usually in March. The 13th of



Adar is the day that Haman chose for the extermination of the Jews, and the day that the Jews battled their enemies for their lives. On the day afterwards, the 14th, they celebrated their survival. In cities that were walled in the time of Joshua, Purim is celebrated on the 15th of the month, because the book of Esther says that in Shushan (a walled city), deliverance from the massacre was not complete until the next day. The 15th is referred to as Shushan Purim.

• The word "Purim" means "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman (Boo! Hiss! Twirl

Grogger!) used to choose the date for the planned massacre of the lews.

• The book of Esther is commonly known as the *Megillah*, which means "scroll." Although there are five books of Jewish scripture that are properly referred to as *megillahs* (Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations), this is the one people usually mean when they speak of *The Megillah*.

• A common treat at this time of year is *hamentaschen* (literally Haman's pockets). These triangular fruit-filled cookies are supposed to represent Haman's three-cornered hat.

• Esther's name probably is derived from Ishtar, a Babylonian goddess, and Mordecai's name from Marduk, a Babylonian god. Equivalent names today might well be Mary and Christopher. (In other words, they weren't Jewish names at the time.) But some rabbis of the Talmud see the name Esther as derived from the Hebrew word Hester, which means hidden. In Persian, Esther means "star."

• Esther's Jewish name is Hadassah, which translated means "myrtle."

• We are told in the following Talmudic passage (from *Megillah 7A*) that Esther needed to lobby the sages in order to have her story included in Jewish memory. Rav Shmuel Bar Yehuda said: Esther sent a mes-

The Talmud instructs that on Purim one should drink until he knows not the difference between "Blessed be Mordechai" and "Cursed be Haman."

sage to the sages: Place me in Jewish memory for all generations!

Sages: Your story would incite the nations against us.

Esther: [It's too late for that.] My story is already recorded in the chronicles of Medean and Persian kings.

If this is true, why were the sages so unsage-like as to not recognize the full, enduring significance of this event?

• All the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are found in the Book of Esther, chapter 3, verse 13.

• The Hebrew word *Mishteh*, meaning banquet, occurs 20 times in the Book of Esther (which is equal to the total of ALL the other times it is found in the rest of the Bible).

•The longest verse in the Bible appears in the Book of Esther. It has 43 words in Hebrew (and approximately 90 words in English). It appears in chapter 8, verse 9.

•The Talmud instructs that on Purim one should drink until he knows not the difference between "Blessed be Mordecai" and "Cursed be Haman." Interestingly, the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in each of the phrases amounts to a total

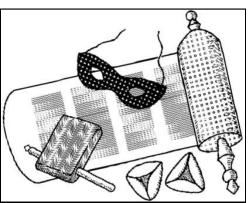
of 502.

•The drinking of wine is significant, because several key events of Purim happened through wine. Ahasuerus got drunk and killed Vashti, paving the way for Esther to be made queen. Esther gave wine to King Ahasuerus and lowered his defenses, which resulted in his killing Haman. Thus the *Megillah* tells us that we should celebrate by "feasting." The Hebrew words for "feasting" mean bread, cooked food, and drinking wine. The Talmud therefore tells us to drink on Purim "more wine than we usually do."

• Esther and Mordechai together were said to have composed the Book of Esther, which therefore becomes the only full Book in *Tanach* (the Jewish Bible) directly composed by a woman. (Several women are quoted, such as the Prophetess Deborah in Judges, but she did not compose the Book of Judges

itself. The song she composed comprises only one chapter in the Book of Judges.)

•Shushan, the city of the Book of Esther, is the Susa of Greek and Roman writers, once the capital of Elam. It lay in the uplands of



Susiana, on the east of the Tigris, very near the modern border of Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia and Babylon), about 150 miles to the north of the head of the Persian Gulf. It is the modern Shush, on the northwest of Shuster.

Once a magnificent city, it is now an immense mass of ruins. Here Daniel saw one of his visions (Dan. 8); and here also Nehemiah (Neh. 1) began his public life.  $\Diamond$ 

## Purim and Persia: A Brief History

In one of the momentous dates in Jewish history, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered-and proceeded to virtually destroy-the Kingdom of Judea in 586 B.C.E. Many of the elite lews were deported, or exiled, to Babylon. They went in shackles but very soon thrived in Babylonian life. The poor and unimportant were left behind, what was left of them. This obscure little nation on the periphery of mighty Babylon had not had the grace to succumb guietly; they waged armed resistance three times, once defeating a full Babylonian army and forcing Nebuchadnezzar himself to come to quell the disturbance. Finally, the Temple was looted and destroyed and the entire city of lerusalem

was reduced to mere rubble.

Empires, though, however vast and powerful, never sleep easily. Less than fifty years

later, the surprising Persian dominance of the known world began. Cyrus, one of the few historical figures truly worthy of the title "The Great," had struck out from Media, a small kingdom south of the Caspian Sea (which is actually not a sea at all but the world's largest lake) and quickly conquered Babylon in 538 B.C.E. Within ten years the world was ruled by Persia.

But Cyrus died in 529. After a brief interregnum, Darius I seized power, and to help legitimize his rule married Atossa, the daughter of

Cyrus the Great. Darius was skilled and able, and as with many great empire consolidators built energetically. He had several capital cities, among which was Susa, or Shushan, in western Persia.

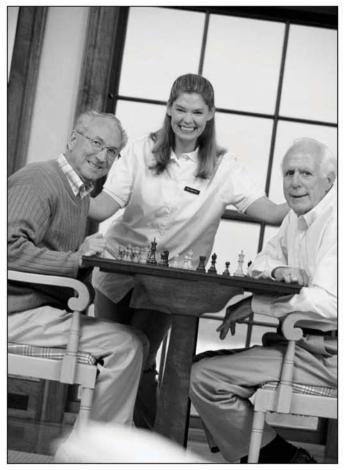
Darius' designated successor was his son by Atossa, Xerxes I (pronounced Zerk-sees). Xerxes became king in 486 B.C.E., and ruled for 21 years, until 465, when he was murdered. His father Darius had been defeated by the Greeks at the famed battle of Marathon. After having guelled rebellions in Egypt and Babylon, Xerxes formed a huge army and navy, crossed the Hellespont (today's Dardanelles) and attacked Greece. He defeated the Spartans at Thermopylae and pillaged Athens. but the Persian navy was clumsy and suffered defeat. His army was then defeated at the battle of Plataea, in 479. After that he withdrew to Persia and a life of the court and harem intrigue.

"Xerxes" is the Greek version of the king's actual Persian name, which to us would be unpronounceable. The Hebrew version of his name, however, was Ahasueros, or Ahashverosh. He is the king in the Purim story, the husband of Queen Esther.

Seven years after Xerxes' murder, in 458 B.C.E., the new king, Artaxerxes I, the son of Xerxes and stepson of Queen Esther, sent Ezra the Scribe back to Jerusalem with full authorization to re-populate the city and rebuild the Temple. ◊

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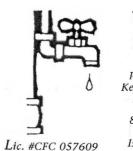
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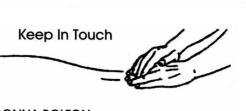


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