Chai~Lights

May 2009 7 Iyar - 8 Sivan 5769

Birchat HaChamah - page 22

Shavuot - page 24

2009 Seder Season Review - page 27

Keys Jewish Community Center

P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • keysjewishcenter.com

May2009 7 Iyar- 8 Sivan

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Names denote leaders of Friday services. *Italicized* names are Oneg sponsors.					**1** Joyce, Gloria & Yardena *Stephanie & Larry Gilderman* *Gene & Mort Silverman*	**2**
3	**4**	**5**	**6** **Men's Club Casino Cruise** 7:30 p.m.	**7**	**8** Aaron Schmidt & Gloria Avner *Medina Roy*	**9**
10 **Mother's Day**	**11**	**12** **Lag Ba-O'mer**	**13** **Women's Holistic Health w/ Dr. Erica Garrett** 7 p.m. KJCC	**14**	**15** Bernie Ginsberg *Bernie Ginsberg*	**16**
17	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22** Steve Steinbock *Joan & Jim Boruszak* **Yom Yerushalayim**	**23**
24 / **31**	**25** **Memorial Day Observed**	**26**	**27**	**28** **Erev Shavuot**	**29** George Swartz & Yardena **6:30 Service** *Gene & Mort Silverman* **Shavuot Yizkor**	**30**

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CHAI-LIGHTS is the monthly newsletter of the
Keys Jewish Community Center
P.O. Box 1332
Tavernier, Florida 33070
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President's Message
Alan Beth

As I write, Holocaust Remembrance Week is approaching and Passover has just departed. We live in a country that enables us to explore our ideals and express our thoughts and our faith. There were so many times and places in our history that this has not been the case. There are many places in today's world that this is still not the case.

I look back at the activities of the past few weeks and am overwhelmed with all that we have accomplished. The Community Seder was again very well organized—thanks to Joan and Leslie—and very well led, thanks to Joel, Jim and Gloria. The Women's Seder, I heard, was a terrific success, the turnout larger than ever.

Gloria has done an amazing job since becoming our new head of Ritual. Those who attended the Community Seder, the Women's Seder, the *Havdalah* services and the *Birchat HaChamah* celebration at Harry Harris Park all know just how much Gloria and her special talents have elevated our synagogue.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Beth Kaminstein. Beth opened up her heart and studio and taught all the ladies of Sisterhood who wanted to learn how to craft their own special ornament for the Seder. Beth provided all the tools, materials and artisanship to help others craft something with their own hands. This shared experience in itself adds a new dimension to the way people know each other, an added dimension that leads to friendship.

Steve Smith, Yardena and her Holocaust Committee have again brought a very difficult subject to our house and hearts. Dealing with the Holocaust is a tough reminder for all of us. Steve put in countless hours on his presentation, and we give our heartfelt thanks.

It occurs to me that in other synagogues you primarily get to know the people only at services or at the Oneg. At our small synagogue we seem to know people on a multi-dimensional level, socially as well as inside the synagogue.

KJCC is providing excellent educational classes and lectures. I would encourage all of us to take full advantage of these. We work very hard to provide meaningful services.

To close, I am suggesting that we not take the all the things around us for granted, and we not take the synagogue for granted. It is here for all of us, in so many ways, and anything we give we get back ten-fold. So be involved!

Alan

Nosh

Men's Club Casino Cruise

The KJCC Men's Club is sponsoring an evening on the Suncruz gambling boat for Wednesday, May 6th. They will be meeting at the Holiday Inn in Key Largo at 7 p.m. The cost is $25 per person. Much of this is returned with free gambling, food and drink. Please send your RSVP or any questions you might have to Joan Boruszak at joanborus@aol.com. If you have replied previously, Joan asks that you please do so again so she knows she has a complete list. They do need to know in advance so the reservation is complete. See you there!

A Thank You To Joyce

On behalf of the officers and board of the KJCC, I would like to thank Sisterhood for the generous contribution you have made to the synagogue. The funds you donated will help us to continue providing for the needs of our Jewish community in our congregation.

Many Thanks.

-Alan Beth, President

Thank You, KJCC

We were absolutely stunned, and greatly moved, to hear our names called at the KJCC Community Seder on April 9th and then be presented with The Joel Cohen Fellowship Award. It is an honor to be included with the list of previous recipients, people who have given so much of themselves and so greatly contributed to the growth and vitality and good name of KJCC. Our heartfelt thanks, and we look forward to many more years with our KJCC mishpocha.

-Steve and Carol Steinbock

Welcome New Members

The KJCC has two new members. Please join us in welcoming Joan and Harvey Kay of Tavernier. We're thrilled to have you in our *mishpocha* and hope to see you soon.

Donations and Collections

Sisterhood is still collecting items always needed at the Domestic Abuse Shelter in Tavernier. Please contact Joyce or Nancy in Sisterhood about the full list, but a partial list includes personal health and hygiene items, clothing, and bedding. The demand for food assistance at Burton Memorial Church next door has grown dramatically in recent months. Please contribute what you can; our neighbors need our help. Collection boxes for both drives are in the lobby of KJCC.

Online Calendar Listings

Have you visited our KJCC web site lately? (It's keysjewishcenter.com, for those who have somehow managed to avoid seeing it before.) Alan has created a wonderful online calendar, updated often, with listings for all the activities at or of interest to KJCC and its members. Take a look. Just go to the home page and click on calendar. Let Alan know what you think.

New Membership Chairman

For those who don't know, Stan Margulies is KJCC's new Membership Chairman. So anyone who has new blood to bring in, or leads for possible members, or just ideas about membership, please contact Stan at smargulies@att.net.

Yizkor Service

The final Yizkor service for this year is at the end of May, during our May 29th Shavuot service. Yizkor, or remembrance, is said four times a year—on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret, Passover, and Shavuot.

Poet Gloria

Congratulations to Gloria Avner, who had a winning entry in the recent Robert Frost Poetry Competition in Key West. Look for it in the next issue of Chai-Lights.

Pauline Gets a Passport

A party was held on Saturday, April 18th at Candy and Alan's house to celebrate the fact that Pauline Roller, KJCC's 93-year-old matriarch, was finally issued a passport. It had been going on for years. You were born where? We can't prove your parents were naturalized. You say your name is Pauline, but your entry papers have some other name. (Her original name was in Yiddish, Sparky.)

But thanks to the Internet, and online immigration records, and an incredibly persevering friend in Candy, it finally happened: Pauline's U.S. passport was delivered in mid-April. It was too late for that cruise she'd hoped to sail on, but maybe now she can take that hiking trip along the spine of the Andes she's always dreamed about.

Joshua Bernstein Competes in O.M.

KJCC's very own Joshua Bernstein, son of Barbara and Dr. Paul Bernstein, is on an O.M. (Odyssey of the Mind) team that has won several rounds of local competition and is now headed for stiffer competition against other local winners.

We're all behind you, Josh, and the Sunday School (especially Ms. Gloria) is kvelling.

Book Club Meeting

Joyce is planning another meeting of the KJCC Book Club for the month of May. Contact Joyce at 451-0665 or joyce@adoctorsbag.com with any questions or for more information.

Ongoing Projects

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 Bea Graham, 852-0214.
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.

May Anniversaries

		Years
4th	Alan & Susan Cooper	23
14th	Alan & Chely Markowitz	18
24th	**Alfred & Sue Ann Weihl**	**50**
29th	Lawrence & Judith Weber	47
30th	Harold & Shelley Schenker	16

Women's Health Forum at KJCC

Please join Dr. Erica Lieberman-Garrett, D.C., holistic chiropractic doctor, in an exploration of women's health issues and aging well naturally, Wednesday, May 13th at 7:00 p.m. at KJCC. This will be an open forum, with discussion on issues related to women's health, including diet, exercise, hormonal balance and relationships. It'll be a schmoozefest; bring a dish.

New KJCC Historian

Effective Immediately, Mary Lee Singer is the new KJCC Historian. She asks for all of our support. So if you see any information that should go into the KJCC archives, or have any ideas about preserving KJCC's past and present, contact Mary Lee at mizleez3@bellsouth.net.

Oneg Sponsors for May 2009

May 1st — Stephanie & Larry Gilderman for Jordan's birthday. Gene & Mort Silverman for their anniversary.

May 8th — Medina Roy in honor of her parents' 89th birthdays.

May 15th — Bernie Ginsberg to celebrate his and Medina's shared birthday.

May 22nd — Joan & Jim Boruszak in honor of Joan's birthday.

May 29th — Gene & Mort Silverman for Mark's birthday.

May Birthdays

Jonathan Schenker	1st
Michael Solomon	3rd
Leon Kirschenbaum	4th
Pamela G. Marmar	4th
Richard Palacino	5th
Stanley Nason	5th
Kelley Greenman	8th
Sidney Boruszak	8th
Reid Schur	9th
Sheila R. Steinberg	11th
Madelyn Ruby Pollack	12th
Nyan Feder	12th
Rose Marie Gordon	13th
Bernie Ginsberg	14th
John Temkin	14th
Mark Burnett	14th
Medina Roy	14th
Paul R. Schur	15th
Andrea P. Silverman	18th
Jaime Boruszak	18th
Jonathon Hodgson	19th
Shelby Strean	19th
Rita Williams	20th
Tracey Greenberg	21st
Sharon Repua	22nd
Bianka Kirschenbaum	23rd
Jenny Margulies	23rd
Jules Seder	23rd
Nettie Seder	23rd
Carolyn Kaufman	25th
Matthew Birnbaum	25th
Robert Greenbaum	25th
Susan Schwaid	25th
Randy Robins	26th
Alan Beth	27th
Jeffrey Pollack	27th
Joan Boruszak	27th
Liati Mayk	29th
Nancy Zinner	29th
Robin Forman	29th
Julie Burnett	30th
Mark E. Silverman	31st
Robert Sherman	31st
Wes Conklin	31st

In Memoriam May 2009

In Memory Of

ROSE ROAZEN

By Sylvia Berman

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In Memory Of

HAL BURNETT

By Shirley Burnett

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In Memory Of

CHARLES S. COHN

By Nancy L. Cohn

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In Memory Of

SAM HITZIG

By Wes & Rita Conklin

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In Memory Of

GERTRUDE WEISBERG

By Frank & Gerri Emkey

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In Memory Of

BILLIE KORNBLOOM

By Erica Garrett

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In Memory Of

ALBERT GILDERMAN

By Larry & Stephanie Gilderman

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In Memory Of

JULIE GORSON-MARROW

By Janice Gorson

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In Memory Of

BELLE KIRSCHENBAUM

By Marilyn Greenbaum

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In Memory Of

MORRIS MOSHE GROSSMAN

By Stuart Grossman

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In Memory Of

ESTHER JACOBS

By Lawrence & Pearl Jacobs

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In Memory Of

JACK KANTOR

By Erwin & Barbara Kantor

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In Memory Of

CELE ROSEN

By Harvey & Joan Kay

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In Memory Of

FLORENCE SAVAGE

By Marjorie Present

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In Memory Of

LILYAN SAX

By Stuart & Lauren Sax

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In Memory Of

ROBERT SCHUR

By Lee Schur

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In Memory Of

ROBERT W. SINGER

By Mary Lee Singer

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In Memory Of

SAM WAINER

By Richard & Sheila Steinberg

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In Memory Of

ROSE WAINER

By Richard & Sheila Steinberg

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In Memory Of

SUSAN CIMKOWSKI

By Stephen & Carol Ann Steinbock

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In Memory Of

IDA S. REIDER

By George & Muriel Swartz

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In Memoriam

In Memory Of

PHILLIP TEMKIN

By Robert & Susan Temkin

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In Memory Of

ETIA TERNER

By Salomon & Mary Terner

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In Memory Of

ITKA RAIJ

By Salomon & Mary Terner

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In Memory Of

BENJAMIN WEBER

By Lawrence & Judith Weber

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In Memory Of

STUART WEISS

By Sheldon & Carole Weiss

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In Memory Of

NORMA CUTLER

By Donald & Nancy Zinner

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In Memory Of

WARREN J. SHEINKER

By Miltra Sheinker

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Tel Aviv at 100

Tel Aviv, the first modern Hebrew city, was founded on April 11, 1909. On that day, several dozen families gathered on the sand dunes on the beach outside Yafo to allocate plots of land for a new neighborhood they called *Ahuzat Bayit*, later known as Tel Aviv. The city expanded rapidly with massive waves of immigration in the 1920s and 30s, also bringing about a boom in Bauhaus-style architecture. Tel Aviv's status as the region's most creative, liberal and tolerant city received was furthered when Yafo joined the municipality in 1949. Throughout the decades, the city has flourished to become Israel's business and cultural center and has developed a unique atmosphere fusing Mediterranean and urban elements.

"One hundred years later, the vision of our city's founders - who looked at the sand dunes and saw the potential for a vibrant city - has been realized," says Mayor Ron Huldai. "Tel Aviv-Yafo is a thriving global city that 400,000 residents are proud to call home."

The centennial events opened with a gala celebration in Rabin Square on April 4th, featuring a 360° rotating sound-and-light show, a concert by the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by maestro Zubin Mehta, and performances by prominent vocalists and actors.

The city streets hosted an international marathon on April 24th (42k, 10k and 5k races), while the city's beaches will host spectators for the International RS:X Class European Windsurfing Championship (10-20 June), which is expected to draw hundreds of surfers worldwide, including recent Olympic medalists.

Tel Aviv's annual White Night celebration will take on a particularly festive air on May 27th, reviving the spirit of the city from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. The White City complex (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) will be reenacted on Rothschild Boulevard with the help of actors, costumes, scenery, and even stagecoaches; the Carmel Market will remain open all night and a special photography exhibit documenting the market's history will be on display; the nearby *Nahalat Binyamin* will host an all-night arts and crafts fair - all this plus the regular all-night entertainment, restaurants, cafes and bars.

The Blue Festival in Jaffa, June 17th and 18th, will celebrate Mediterranean culture, music and food, with events taking place in the recently-renovated port, parks and streets of Jaffa.

-Yardena

YEDA VE'TORASHA

Yardena Kamely

Aliyah: Immigration to Israel

The Israeli movie, "Like a Fish Out of Water," directed by Leonid Prudovsky, is about *Aliyah*, immigration to Israel, the life of *olim,* Jews that have immigrated to Israel, and their efforts to adapt and integrate into Israeli society. In order to land a role in an Israeli soap opera, Marcel, an Argentinean immigrant, must improve his Hebrew accent. Enter Anat, Marcel's religious teacher who dislikes both soap operas and her student. Add a pushy, matchmaking mother and a concerned daughter and you have the funny, heartwarming comedy that is "Like a Fish Out of Water."

In 1950, Israel's Knesset passed a remarkable law beginning with a few simple words that defined Israel's central purpose: "Every Jew has the right to immigrate to Israel." Two thousand years of wandering were officially over. Since then, Jews have been entitled to simply show up and declare themselves to be Israeli citizens and, thereby, all Jews everywhere are Israeli citizens by right.

During the first four years of its existence, while struggling for survival, Israel absorbed over 700,000 immigrants.

In 1949 the Jewish Agency brought 239,000 Holocaust survivors from camps in Europe and from detention camps on Cyprus to the Jewish homeland. That same year, the Jewish Agency airlifted 3,800 Yemenite Jews to Israel in Operation Magic Carpet. In 1950-1951, about 343,000 newcomers arrived from Eastern Europe and North Africa. In 1951, 110,000 Iraqi Jews were evacuated in Operation Ezra and Nehemiah. Nearly the whole of Bulgarian Jewry, more than half the Jews of Yugoslavia, 40,000 Jews from Turkey, and 18,000 Jews from Iran came to Israel during those first three years. My father's family arrived at that time from Persia. For one year they had to live in tents, near Haifa.

Since 1990, over 900,000 people have made Aliyah from the former Soviet Union, more than 44,000 from Ethiopia. Thousands of others have arrived in Israel from around the globe. Over 120,000 Jews have immigrated to Israel from North America since 1948. These *olim* (new immigrants) have contributed greatly to the social and financial vitality of the country. In 2007 nearly 20,000 *olim* from around the world have arrived in Israel, 3,018 from the U.S. and Canada.

The *Aliyah* continues. Even these days, a great effort is being made to help Jews to immigrate to Israel from countries where Jewish life is at risk. Such effort was made last year, when a group of 40 immigrants from Iran arrived in Israel at the initiative of the Jewish Agency. And I thought that no Jews were left in Iran.

Aliyah does not end with the immigrants' arrival at the airport in Israel, nor does it begin there. It is a long, multi-stage process. Some of the recent Israeli films present us with life stories of new immigrants to Israel, who faces many difficulties being absorbed into the very diverse Israeli culture. However, Israeli society as a whole has been constructed from new immigrants since the establishment of the state of Israel and helps these immigrants, especially in their first years of immigration. I recommend the movie "Like a Fish Out of Water"; it lifts the mood to see that *Aliyah* continues to be taken seriously and at the same time can be seen with Jewish humor. ◊

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.

Bookplates	*In Memory of*
Stuart & Lauren Sax	Sam Sax
Lee Schur	Robert C. Schur

General Fund	*In Honor of*
Anonymous	
Ferns, Freda & Bill	
Graham, Bea	Joel Pollack
Kluger, Kurt & Nancy	
Levi, Nancy	Jim & Joan Boruszak

General Fund	*In Memory of*
Silverman, Gene & Mort	Jean Tregerman
Kaufman, William & Carole	Marty Graham

KJCC Tree of Life Leaves	*In Memory of*
LaMarche, Blair & Stephanie	Irving Line
Line, John & Arlene	Irving Line

Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund	*In Honor of*
Peckman, Joyce	Friends of the IDF

Scholarship Fund	*In Honor of*
Plutzer, Arthur	Pauline Roller

Yahrzeit Memorial Plaques	*In Memory of*
Graham--Mayk Families	Marty Graham

Yahrzeit Contributions	*In Memory of*
Conklin, Rita & Wes	Mark Hitzig
Elson, Barry	Selma Elson
Elson, Neil	Selma Elson
Emkey, Gerri	Bob Kinney
Gilderman, Larry	Elsie Gilderman
Graham, Bea	Selma Elson
Krissel, Michael	Joseph Krissel
Kwalick, Teresa	T. Astray-Caneda

Yahrzeit Contributions cont.	*In Memory of*
Olsen, Gerald	Louise Weinstein
Present, Marjorie	Benjamin A. Savage
Present, Marjorie	Ida and Amos Present
Rutkin, Linda	Frank Idestone
Silvers, Jacky	Sara Cohen
Steinberg, Richard & Sheila	Sara Cohen
Steinbock, Steve	Theresa Steinbock
Temkin, Robert	Anne Temkin
Weiss, Sheldon	Ida Weiss

Yizkor Book
Ferns, Freda & Bill
Hershoff, Jay
Netzman, Alan
Sherman, Robert
Weiss, Sheldon

Oneg Sponsor	*In Honor of*
Joyce Peckman	Ulpan Hebrew Class
Medina Roy	Parents' 89th Birthday
Gene & Mort Silverman	Michelle's Birthday
Gene & Mort Silverman	Gene's Birthday
Gene & Mort Silverman	Elissa's Birthday
Gene & Mort Silverman	Mort's Birthday
Gene & Mort Silverman	Mark's Birthday
Gene & Mort Silverman	Kevin's Birthday
Gene & Mort Silverman	Matthew's Birthday
Gene & Mort Silverman	Gene & Mort's Anniversary
Martin Veiner & Margaret Shearon	Our family members who have left us and in thanks to the KJCC community.

Sisterhood General Fund
Merle & James Peterson
With a matching gift from Mutual of America.

Sisterhood

Joyce Peckman

April was seder month for Sisterhood. It began the very first day, a Wednesday evening, with fifty-four women packing the Ruth Richardson Social Hall at the Keys Jewish Community Center for the sixth annual Women's Seder. Somehow Meredith managed to arrange the tables and comfortably fit everyone, and then our ladies arrived with more food than those tables could hold. Not only did we have multiple types of *maror* and *charoset* and wine, but also there was homemade *shmorah* matzoh, homemade gefilte fish (dolphin – not cod!), matzoh ball soup, salads, two amazing chicken dishes, delicious brisket and sinful desserts.

But this seder wasn't just about the food. Beth covered the large table with the pottery we had created and glazed and fired, under her guidance, at her studio. Somehow our experiments in playing with clay turned into interesting and often beautiful ceremonial washing cups. Gloria, as always, led a beautiful and touching service, in which everyone participated. This year the Women's Seder was dedicated to the memory of Sara Cohen, one of the founders of KJCC along with her husband Joel. In addition, Beth Kaminstein was made a surprise honoree and presented with several lovely books, and Meredith was presented with a hand-made picture frame.

Money raised from the Women's Seder is dedicated to "*tikkun olam,"* specifically helping women and children in need in our community. This year the funds will be distributed to The Healthy Start Coalition, Burton Memorial food bank, the Domestic Abuse Shelter, and Voices for Florida Keys Children. In addition, seed money will be given to begin a KJCC *Tikkun Olam* Fund, to help continuing outreach from the KJCC to the community. It's something we've discussed for a long time, and now this fund will be a reality.

Our annual Second Seder, organized at the Islamorada Fishing Club by Leslie Dillon and Joan Boruszak, was as usual fully booked. A number of people were there for the first time, and I'm told they all were to be sent home with doggy bags. It is gratifying to be able to provide the opportunity to celebrate this holiday together, and to be able to include friends, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, from outside KJCC. I'm sure everyone is looking forward to next year's seder and hope it will again be led by the august duo of former KJCC presidents Jim Boruszak and Joel Pollack.

I'm hoping that the book club meeting, scheduled for April 22 at my house, was successful (it's still in the future as I write this, preparing to go to Denver for two weeks to celebrate Passover with my oldest son and his family). There's another one scheduled for May. Keep an eye open for further information. A book club, again, is something we've often talked about, with so many avid readers among our membership. The key, as always, will be to keep everyone interested and stimulated.

The final Sisterhood meeting of the season will be our annual brunch, to be held at the Pilot House in Key Largo at noon on May 3rd. Both lunch and brunch menus are available. Please RSVP to me by phone at 451-0665 or e-mail at joyce@adoctorsbag.com, so we can make sure the restaurant reserves enough seating. This should be an enjoyable way to end our season, before many of us disperse to other parts of the country for the summer. We have a lot to talk about, and a lot to congratulate each other for. My gratitude to all for a successful season. ◊

Remembering Bob Berman

An Influential and Generous Early Member of KJCC

How exciting it was. The plans were in front of us and it seemed like such a big undertaking. One architect/contractor would be in charge of everything and it seemed it suddenly was happening. Next to a small house that was the shul we were building a "real Temple." Bob was there every day, probably in the way, but enjoying every minute. It was a simple plan, with big ideas, stained glass windows, a ceiling that would reach to the sky, new landscaping, and lots of seats for both the current members and the people that would join.

Bob on July 28, 2008, on the water he loved.

I can't say we finished in record time, as there were lots of glitches along the way (the county required only certain plants which we could only purchase from one nursery, the new road into the shul was moved at least once), but when we decided on the dedication day, everyone pitched in. We had a barbeque, but we needed chairs and microphones. The chairs came from the church (Burton Memorial Methodist) just south of the shul and the microphone was borrowed from an entertainer. Everyone came from different parts of the Keys. Religion didn't matter. It was a happening. A new building for a new synagogue brought Christian and Jew together as always. Father Ed, from St. Justin's in Key Largo, was there, and he was also a big part of our Passover seders for years. The best part: halfway through the dedication, a man walked in and took the microphone and all its equipment. He had a show to do and our time was up.

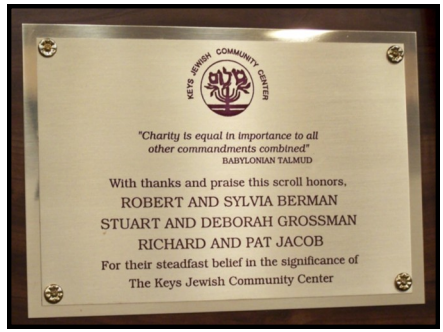
What you enjoy today was through the effort of many members, both here and gone, and the community. What you are enjoying today is a reminder that all faiths work together to improve the surroundings for one another.

Our favorite part of the service: when you invite people who are attending for the first time to stand and introduce themselves. Followed by your comments, "Now you are family."

Our grandson, Jacob DeVita, was the first Bar Mitzvah held in the new sanctuary, in 1992, officiated by Irving Stein and our family. Bob taught Jacob his *haftorah* while fishing. Each time Jacob learned a paragraph he was rewarded with a fishing trip. Aren't memories great?

Bob would want me to thank you for the years of joy you brought to our family, and the many warm Friday nights we spent at KJCC.

-Sylvia Berman



The plaque in the sanctuary honoring Bob and Sylvia's contribution to KJCC.

World Jewish Report

Medina Roy

Helping Elie

Two alumni of Boston University have begun an e-mail campaign to rescue Elie Wiesel's foundation in the aftermath of the Bernard Madoff scandal, encouraging one million people to donate six dollars each in remembrance of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. So far the campaign has raised $400,000. Wiesel lost $7 million of his personal fortune and his foundation lost $15.2 million in Madoff's now-unmasked Ponzi scheme. Some of the money raised was given directly to Wiesel and his wife Marion, but the Wiesels turned the donation over to his foundation, which supports after-school centers in Israel, international conferences and a variety of humanitarian awards and prizes. Wiesel has taught at B.U. for over 30 years.
(www.jta.org, 3-30-09)

Touro Synagogue Temporarily Closes

The Touro Synagogue, the oldest existing synagogue in the United States, announced in early March that it is canceling tours due to financial difficulties. The good news, however, is that even though its paid staff has been disbanded, the Touro Synagogue Foundation is still going ahead with plans to open a new museum at the synagogue this summer. John L. Loeb, who is financing the project, stated that the tours would be resumed when the museum, the George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom, opens its doors. In 1492, thousands of Jews fled religious persecution in Spain and sought refuge in the Netherlands, Caribbean Islands and South America, later finding sanctuary in the newly founded colonies of America. In 1658, a group of fifteen Sephardic Jewish families sailed into Newport, Rhode Island Harbor. There they founded Congregation *Jeshuat Israel* (Salvation of Israel) and in 1677 they purchased and consecrated property as a Jewish cemetery to bury their dead according to Jewish tradition. In 1758, Isaac Touro, a Dutch Jew, became the congregation's first spiritual leader. The synagogue was completed and dedicated in 1763 during the festival of Chanukah. It became an American icon in 1790 when President George Washington, in his letter "To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport," declared that the new nation would "... give to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." In 1946, the synagogue was designated a National Historic Site by the National Park Service. It was renovated in 2005.
(www.israelnationanews.com, 3-9-09)

A Jewish Mother in Your Pocket

"Your father didn't work sixteen hours a day for you to go to a state school." That's just one of more than 100 guilt-inducing phrases from "My Jewish Mother," a new iPhone application that can be personalized for you. Developed by Jewish comedian Steve Hofstetter together with Gotham Wave Games, a game technology company, the application provides a Jewish woman complete with glasses and curly hair inside your phone. Hofstetter and Gotham Wave Games have given synagogues and other Jewish organizations permission to sell the application as part of fundraising activities, allowing them to keep a percentage of the profits. The application sells for 99 cents.
(The Forward, 3-11-09)

Janet Rosenberg Jagan

On March 28th, Janet Rosenberg Jagan, the former president of the South American coun-

try of Guyana, died at the age of 88. She was the first woman ever freely elected as president of a South American country after her husband, Cheddi Jagan, who had been elected president in 1992, died in 1997. It is believed that she was the only Jew living in Guyana, a nation of 740,000 dominated by Hindus and Muslims of East Indian descent and Christians of African origin. She was born into a middle class Jewish Chicago family. In 1942, at the age of 22 as a nursing student at Cook County Hospital, she met and fell in love with Cheddi Jagan, a dental student from what was then British Guiana. They married and moved to Guiana's capital city, Georgetown, where the young couple got involved in leftist politics, spent time in jail and worked to help win independence for Guyana, an English-speaking nation. She was the country's longest-serving legislator. Guyana is geographically in South America but considers itself culturally and politically part of the Caribbean. Jagan and Golda Meir (who was from Milwaukee) are the only two Jewish women to have led a modern nation. *(The Forward, 4-2-09)*

Scottish Synagogue Guarded by Muslims

In mid-March, in an apparent anti-Semitic attack on a Scottish synagogue in Edinburgh, leaders of the Muslim community offered to protect their Jewish neighbors. In a letter written to Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation's rabbi after the synagogue's windows were smashed, Ken Imrie, chairman of the Scottish Islamic Foundation wrote, "We wish you to know that the Muslim community stands full square with you in revulsion and horror at this vandalism…That this is a respected place of worship, faith and spirituality makes the crime even more heinous." Imrie added in his letter that in the event that the synagogue did not have adequate security measures in place, his organization would physically guard the synagogue themselves.

The Jewish community of Edinburgh can be traced back to 1691, when an application was made by David Brown to reside and trade in the city. By 1780, an organized community took shape and by 1816 there were 20 Jewish families there. The Scottish Jewish community was boosted when it became a haven for refugees from the Nazis. According to the 2001 census, about 6,400 Jews live in Scotland, most of whom are in Edinburgh, followed by Glasgow and Dundee. *(www.israelnationalnews.com, 3-19-09)*

Feed Me!

Two Israeli scientists have developed a sensor that will send a text message to farmers when their crops need to be watered or to homeowners when their plants are thirsty. The device was developed by plant biologist Dr. Eran Raveh and ground science expert Dr. Aryeh Nadler after seven years of research. The sensor gauges moisture levels in plants and trees and sends real-time alerts to mobile phones or computers when water levels are low. The sensor not only cuts water usage but also avoids over-irrigation. The researchers claim that the device could reduce the cost of irrigation by up to 50 percent, an important consideration in a country where water is at a premium, and especially now, when Israel is suffering what might be the worst drought in the region's recorded history. The gadget is currently being prepped for international commercial markets. California citrus growers and vintners have expressed interest. *(www.foxnews.com, 3-17-09)*

Yiddish Literature Archive Now Online

The National Yiddish Book Center's archive of nearly 11,000 works of modern Yiddish literature can be read, downloaded and printed free of charge. The daunting project of putting three million pages online was undertaken through a combined effort of the Yiddish Book Center and the Internet Archive of San Francisco. "It's an historic moment for Yiddish culture," said Aaron Lansky, founder and president of the nonprofit Yiddish Book Center. "The magnificent record of a civilization the Nazis sought to destroy has been brought fully into the 21st century." Included in the collection are novels, poetry and drama and also nonfiction titles published in Yiddish over the past 150 years. Most out-of-print

Yiddish works are already in the public domain. Brewster Kahle, founder of the Internet Archive said, "This is the first time a full literature of a people has been available online. We hope others follow the Yiddish Book Center's pioneering example." *(Jerusalem Post, 2-24-09)*

Hebrew Manuscripts at The Vatican

With the help of the technical staff of the National Library of Israel, the Vatican has published a catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts kept in its library. The book was formally presented at an event that featured the Israeli ambassador to the Holy See as well as the Vatican librarian and former director of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts of the Jewish National and University Library. The book includes approximately 800 items. *(www.jta.org, 1-21-09)*

The Case of the Naked *Chametz*

A 28-year-old yeshiva student was arrested shortly before Pesach for removing all of his clothing (except for a sock covering his private parts) in a Tel Aviv supermarket. The young man was protesting the store's sale of *chametz* during Passover. Apparently, a law was passed by the Jerusalem Magistrate Court ruling that the *matzoh* law, which forbids the sale of *chametz* in public places during Pesach, does not apply to supermarkets since they are not considered public. The student disputed his arrest, saying he could not be taken into custody for public nudity since, according to the court's ruling, the supermarket is not a public place. *(www.jta.org, 4-6-09)*

Israel a World Leader

At the 5th International World Water Forum held in Istanbul on March 21st, Israel was praised by the United Nations for leading the world in the use of recycled water. The country recycles nearly 70 percent of its sewage water for agricultural use. Israel was also recognized as one of the world's leaders for its use of desalinated water. The report stated that using recycled water for irrigation is essential in many countries where clean water is in short supply. As many as 1.4 million of the world's children die each year as a result of drinking polluted water. The U.N. report went on to say that water purification is a continuing problem in developing countries, where more than 80 percent of untreated sewage flows to rivers and underwater reservoirs. *(www.haaretz.com, 3-22-09)*

Shared Jewish DNA

According to a recent study conducted by geneticists from the Universities of Leicester in England and the University of Barcelona, nearly one-third of the population of Spain has DNA of a non-Christian heritage, and nearly 20 percent have links to Sephardic Jewish ancestry. The findings in the study underscore Spanish civilization's strong historical evidence of Catholic, Jewish and Muslim cultures, in contrast to some contemporary claims that Spanish civilization was primarily Catholic. The study also reflects evidence of the forced conversion of Jews during the Inquisitions in the centuries after Christians, under the unified leadership of Ferdinand and Isabella, ousted Muslims from control of Spain in 1492. Jews began migrating to the Iberian Peninsula from early Roman times until the royal decree banishing them from Spain, also in 1492. Today's Jewish population in Spain is estimated at fewer than 15,000. *(Dateline: World Jewry, March 2009)*

Did you know...

-In preparation for Passover, workers at the *Kotel* (the Western Wall) in Jerusalem removed notes left in the holy site's cracks and crevices. The notes are left by visitors and usually consist of prayers and wishes. Twice a year the notes are removed to make room for new ones and are buried at Jerusalem's Mount of Olives cemetery. *(www.jta.org, 3-30-09)*

-Testimonies of Jewish migrants and refugees to Britain, many of whom survived the Nazi concentration camps, have for the first time been made freely available online, in their entirety, by the British Library. Over 440 hours of recordings explore 66 personal experiences. *(American Libraries, 1-28-09)* ◊

Photo Gallery

High season might be winding down, but there's still lots of activity surrounding KJCC. Upper left, Banu Gibson, the last performer in SFCA's season, poses with the volunteers, most of whom are from KJCC. Top, Gloria explains the mystical aspects of Lag B'Omer in an after-services get-together. Yardena, above right, in one of her Adult Education lectures, expounds on the leadership qualities of Moses. The students from the Coral Shores politics class, left, during Holocaust Awareness Day. (Molly Bloom can be found top center.) Below left, the private Singer seder, with Mary Lee and Debbie. At bottom, the Silverman seder, with Mort and granddaughter Elissa Denker from Davis, California.

Saturday, March 28 turned out to be a lovely evening for Havdalah at Joel and Linda Pollack's beautiful home on the water. Perhaps it was the venue, or the allure of a special host and hostess, but if you weren't there you were the exception. Gloria and Bernie and Alan led the service.

All the photos above are from a double mitzvah: there was a Havdalah service at Alan and Candy's on April 18, yes, but it was also a rousing celebration of Pauline Roller getting her first (ever!) passport. Our thanks to Steve Steinbock for the photographs. See Nosh for details on this often-frustrating and long-running story.

At bottom are photographs of the annual Levy/Feder first-night seder on the beach at Ron and Beth's home in Islamorada. The full moon is always as welcome and important a guest as Elijah. In the photo at bottom, the beauty seated next to Suzi Feder is, believe it or not, her mother. Gloria took the photos.

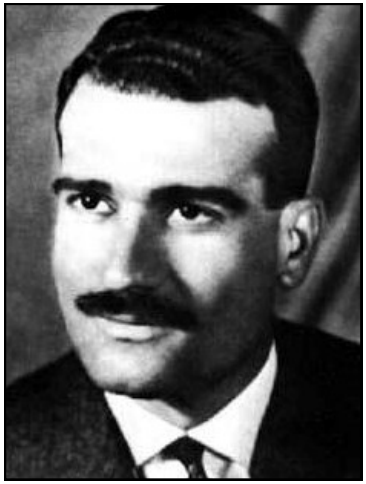
-This Month in Jewish History-

Eli Cohen, Israel's Greatest Spy

by Medina Roy

What is perhaps one of the most remarkable stories in the history of modern-day Israel is that of Eli Cohen, often referred to as Israel's greatest spy.

Eliahu ben Shaul Cohen was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1924. His parents were Syrian Jews from the town of Aleppo, who instilled in their son Jewish traditions, a sense of Zionism and the culture of the Syrian Jewish community. In 1949, a year after Israel's independence, Eli's parents and three of his brothers moved to Israel. Eli remained in Egypt to coordinate Jewish and Zionist activities. After the failed *Operation Susannah* incident (in which Eli was not directly involved), where Egyptian-Jewish spies were caught spying for Israel in 1953, he was brutally questioned by Egypt's intelligence services. In the summer of 1955, Eli left Egypt and came to Israel.



By 1960, the border between Israel and Syria was heating up and the Mossad, Israeli intelligence, approached Eli about working for them. He was a perfect candidate: he was born in an Arab country, had dark features, spoke Arabic, English and French, and was known to give everything he had for a cause he believed in. His training was extensive. He learned high-speed evasive-driving techniques, topography, and, what turned out to be most important of all, radio transmissions and cryptography. He was even trained to learn the intricate nuances of Syrian Arabic in an effort to disguise his Egyptian accent. A new identity was created for Eliahu ben Shaul Cohen. He would now be known as Kamal Amin Ta'abet. In 1961, Chaim Herzog, Chief of Military Intelligence, who later became president of Israel, signed the document authorizing Cohen's use as a spy. Eli's wife, Nadia Majald, an Iraqi-born Jew, saw him off at the airport on his way to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to establish his cover as a Syrian émigré. She was told that he would be working for the Ministry of Defense but she didn't know where or in what capacity.

It didn't take long for Eli to fit into the social and cultural life of the Syrian community of Buenos Aires. People knew him as a wealthy businessman, generous, a good tipper and a man who loved the night life. In time, he became well-liked and respected and got to know politicians, diplomats and military officials. Eli's contacts eventually led to invitations to Damascus to set up a business venture there, which he did in 1962, posing as a businessman from Argentina returning to his native Syria.

Towards the end of 1961, the Ba'ath party was rising to power. Eli very carefully developed contacts with the Ba'ath leadership, holding lavish parties in his home which often turned into orgies for high-placed Syrian ministers and businessmen, and where Eli listened carefully to intoxicated officials talking freely about their work. Eli became a trusted member of the inner circle. He also lived somewhat of a James Bond-type life, with a ladies' man reputation. It is reported that he had seventeen lovers in Syria, all from high-powered families. Over time, Eli managed to connect himself to the highest echelons of power. By 1963, when the Ba'ath

party took power, Eli was deeply involved in Syrian high society. He was even considered for Syrian Deputy Minister of Defense.

At this time in Israel, and going back fifteen years earlier to the Jewish state's establishment in 1948, Syria had been firing mortar shells on a regular basis from the Golan Heights into the Jewish settlements in the Upper Galilee. The settlements were under constant threat. In addition, the Jordan River, which provided Israel with 30 percent of the water she needed, had three major tributaries, all originating in the Golan. The melting winter snows produce a huge run-off of water that irrigates the Hula and Jordan Valleys below. From there, the waters flow into the Sea of Galilee (the Kinneret) and south to the Dead Sea. Israel was developing a system which would divert water from the Kinneret into a pipeline that would irrigate much of the country, particularly the arid south. Israel tried to obtain the cooperation of her Arab neighbors for the plan but was unsuccessful, even when the United States tried to use its diplomatic leverage to further the plan. The Arabs, on the other hand, decided to divert water from the Jordan River, which originated in Arab-held territory, hoping to deprive Israel of the water she desperately needed. Syria brought in hydraulic engineers and diversion equipment. All the while, Syria continued to fire upon the Jewish settlements below. Eli provided Israel with the complex plans related to the water diversion project. He radioed Tel Aviv and carefully described in detail Syria's water diversion project. As a result, the Israeli Air Force bombed the bulldozers and other equipment in 1964 and obliterated the plan.

But what surely would become his claim to fame was Eli's contribution to the survival of the State of Israel and the Jewish people and perhaps even the history of the Middle East. Eli's connections made him privy to Syrian plans, including those relating to national security. They enabled him to see Syrian fortifications in the Golan Heights, the origin of the mortar bombardments. He was the only civilian to receive private VIP tours of military installations. He was shown every outpost on the Golan, including tank traps designed to impede any Israeli attack. He memorized and smuggled out sketches to the Mossad for the positioning of every gun, tank, machine-gun nest and trench. Eli had a plan. He recommended that the Syrians plant a tree on the Golan near each of their fortifications to deceive the Israelis into thinking it was not fortified and to provide shade for the soldiers stationed there. Eli immediately passed that information on to his Mossad handlers. Based on where the eucalyptus trees were planted, Israel could know exactly where the Syrian fortifications were.

By now changes were taking place in the Syrian government. The commander of Syrian Intelligence trusted no one and disliked Eli. The Syrian and Russian advisors became alarmed by the amount of intelligence that was leaking out of the country. Eli became fearful and wanted to end his assignment in Syria, but the Mossad asked him to continue. The information he had provided for so many years was just too good.

Eli continued to provide invaluable information, but early in 1965, counter-intelligence experts from the Soviet Union caught him in the act of sending a radio message. He was tortured but wouldn't divulge any crucial information. He was tried and convicted by a military tribunal. He was never allowed a defense at the trial, and on May 18, 1965, the government of Syria hanged Eli Cohen in Damascus' Martyr's Square in front of a crowd of 10,000 spectators, despite the attempted intervention from world leaders, the State of Israel and even the Pope. His body was never returned to his family.

Two years later, in the Six-Day War, the Israelis conquered the Golan Heights in just two days, in large part due to the intelligence provided by Eli Cohen. Today, if you go to the Golan, you can still see the Syrian bunkers destroyed in the war. The Golan Heights has been quiet now for 42 years. No one bombs the villages in the Galilee. Every Israeli child is taught about the heroism of Eli Cohen, the spy who played such a pivotal role in the successful defense of his country. We at KJCC honor the month of his yahrzeit. ◊

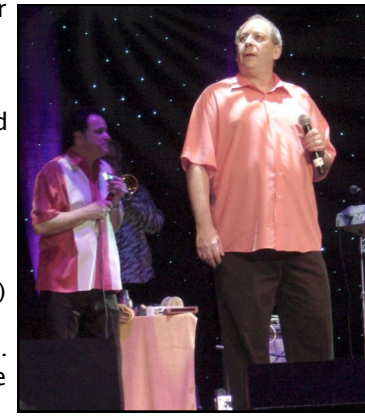
Cruising To The Music

by Mark Wasser

On MSC Cruise Line we had the most fun of any cruise we've been on, and there have been many. This cruise was a simple Caribbean itinerary. Sofy and I had visited several of the ports many times, but it was still fun and relaxing. Relaxing....that was really the important part.

Sofy with deejay Rick Shaw.

After a late night of dancing to the sounds of Blood, Sweat and Tears, Three Dog Night, Gary Lewis and The Playboys or maybe the Beatles (not actually the Beatles, of course, but a Beatles revival group called The Return), we definitely needed to take it easy during the day. Maybe some of you remember these groups; yes, the same ones from the 60s and 70s. They were awesome! Although not all of the band members were the original guys, each band had either the original lead singer or one that had been with the band since shortly after its formation. Three Dog Night had Chuck Negron, who was the original lead singer. He was as good as ever and, according to Sofy, quite good looking. Blood, Sweat and Tears had Steve Katz, one of the original founders of the band and Rob Paparozzi, who has been the lead singer with the band for about 25 years and really is a dead ringer for David Clayton Thomas. Gary Lewis and The Playboys (This Diamond Ring) had the original Gary Lewis. I'm not so sure about The Playboys, but they were good anyway. As for the Beatles...I mean the Return ... they might as well have been the Beatles.



Steve Katz, one of the founders of Blood, Sweat and Tears.

Up until this cruise I did not know what it was like to dance to and experience a live performance of the Beatles. Now I have a little flavor of it. It was great...for a moment it was like the Beatles were really there! I do not recommend the cruise line but we had a great time anyway. It was definitely all about the music. Oh, by the way, all the concerts during the week as well as the nightly music jams were hosted by none other than...Rick Shaw. Yes, it is true; I am old enough to remember all these groups and Rick Shaw!

(P.S. Sofy isn't.) ◇

Mark, Sofy and Gary Lewis of The Playboys.

The Light of Lag B'omer

by Gloria Avner

This year Lag B'Omer falls on May 12, or on the Hebrew calendar the 18th of Iyar. As religious rituals go, seven weeks of the counting of the Omer (grain offerings), day by day, doesn't exactly rivet the mind. But then there's Lag B'Omer, about two-thirds of the way through. What's the point of this particular day, and why, to borrow the Passover question, is it different from the other days of Omer? In her own unique way, Gloria goes inside this barely mentioned holiday to bring it meaning. This article is adapted from a parshah *reading of several years ago.*

I want to tell us a story, about *Lag B'Omer*, a day of great joyousness and celebration, the 33rd day of counting days of grain sacrifice since Passover. At this point there will be only 16 more days to go until we mark a full forty-nine, the seven weeks of wandering in the desert, from our escape from slavery to our arrival at Mt. Sinai and the completion of our spiritual preparation to receive the Torah.

I am stunned at how much there is to learn from this supposedly minor holiday. Most of us probably know a few tidbits, that people go out in the country and have picnics and that children play with bows and arrows. Some of us may know that there is a period of serious mourning during the whole forty-nine days in which you can't celebrate *simchas*. All during the seven weeks we are supposed to be working seriously on our inner spiritual development. You can't give a child a first haircut. You can't even get married. Except for this one day, *Lag B'Omer* (*lamed gimel* being the numerical equivalent of 33) is the exception. This day is totally joyous.

I don't know about you, but I have lots of questions -- so many questions and so little time. What have we been mourning? Why have we been mourning for so many days? Why are we so happy today? What are we celebrating? The answers are layers thick and deep, of course. There is so much drama to the story I am surprised no one has written a historical novel about it. The main characters are Rabbi Akiva, Shimon bar Kochba, and Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai.

During the years 132-135 C.E., some 60 years after the first rebellion against Roman rule that resulted in the destruction of the Second Temple, Shimon Bar Kochba led what was initially a successful revolt against Roman rule. He had the backing of Rabbi Akiva (a latecomer to scholarship, who went to school with his own children before becoming the preeminent Torah scholar of his time), who believed Bar Kochba could be the Messiah. This was to be the third and final rebellion of the Jews against Roman rule.

Bar Kochba had tremendous strength, leadership skills, and scholarly knowledge. He fielded an army of 100,000 men who actu-

ally succeeded in ejecting the Romans from the land of Israel. The Jewish people declared independence and started preparing the building materials for the Third Temple.

This the Romans could not allow. Hadrian, then emperor, sent Julius Severus—who had conquered England—to crush the revolt. At first they were unsuccessful, to the extent that the entire 22nd Roman legion was destroyed. By the end of the Bar Kochba revolt, the Romans had placed almost half their entire army--12 of 28 legions and 120,000 soldiers--in Judea trying put down the Jewish revolt.

But Bar Kochba did something that Rabbi Akiva could not stomach; he killed another rabbi who he thought had betrayed secrets. Rabbi Akiva withdrew support. It took them two more years, but the Romans ground down the rebellion. At its end, some 500,000 Jews lost their lives and a thousand towns and cities were wiped out.

During the next three years, Rome embarked on a policy of massive spiritual and physical destruction of Judea. They executed many of the generation's leading sages, including Rabbi Akiva (supposedly by tying each of his four limbs to separate horses and then causing them to run). Jews became a minority in the land of Israel for the first time in 1,000 years. It would remain that way for nearly 2,000 years more.

Those are the bones of the story. But the flesh consists of what Rabbi Akiva did, believing that Bar Kochba could have been the Messiah. He made his students join the fray, spiritual scholars joining forces with Jewish warriors. There are hints of misbehavior, of egos, of people held to a high standard, not treating others with respect. A plague struck the students and 2,400 of them died within the first days of counting the omer. And then the plague stopped, on this 33rd day—*Lag B'Omer*—leaving a handful alive.

We mourn the students and we mourn the half million, and we mourn the end of hope, for more than 1,800 years, for a rebuilt Israel.

Still, there is always balance. A ray of light shines through the darkness. We celebrate the end of the plague, but even more important we celebrate the life and work and *yahrzeit* of Shimon ben Yochai, one of Rabbi Akiva's surviving students. What he created for us was wonderful in the extreme. It was he who, seeing the decimation of Rabbi Akiva's students, decided to put the sacred, secret hidden teachings of the Torah into writing lest they be lost. He created the *Zohar*, the text of the Kabbalah.

There is so much drama to the story that I am surprised no one has written a historical novel about it.

Today, in Israel, on *Lag B'Omer,* nearly 250,000 people make pilgrimage to Rabbi Shimon's place of birth. It is said that when Rabbi Shimon was writing down his teachings, a blindingly bright light came from his head. In honor of that light, children scavenge wood for months in advance and build great structures 20 and 30 feet tall. On *Lag B'Omer*, the wood is lit and bonfires blaze everywhere from streets to rooftops. Tents are set up with food and drink for visitors. There is dancing and singing in the streets. Planes flying over Israel are confused. Smoke and fire and celebration illuminate everything.

There *is* much to celebrate today. The dream of an independent Israel was delayed but not destroyed. The teachings from Mt. Sinai are fully among us to choose to learn from and live by, or not. We also have bright lights among us, and myriad lessons to be learned from the lives of our ancestors. Most of all, we have the gift of the Torah to help us, the Jewish people, be a light to the world if we so choose. (We celebrate the giving of the Torah on *Shavuot*, the end of the seven weeks, but that's another story.) ◊

Let the Sun Shine!

KJCC celebrates Birchat HaChamah

by Gloria Avner

The sun rises first on any given day in the South Islands of New Zealand. Excited Jews were there with a purpose on Wednesday, April 8th, the morning of *Erev Pesach*. They recited the same prayer and read from the same psalms as millions of Jews did later in the day, from Australia to the Ukraine to the coast of France to Jerusalem (where tens of thousands gathered) to New York City and nearly every other place in the world where Jews live, including the southeast corner of the United States, in Tavernier, Florida, at Harry Harris State Park.

KJCC members and a puppy celebrate the sun at Harry Harris Park.

Though until a few weeks prior to the event, none of us had ever heard of this rare mitzvah (mentioned in the Talmud) that memorializes God's placement of the sun in the heavens on the fourth day of Creation, we left our *chametz* searches and chopped liver prepping behind for an hour that morning so we could join Jews worldwide in saying the blessing: "*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, Oseh Ma-a-say, B'reishit. Blessed are You, Lord of the Universe, Who has wrought the work of creation.*"

This time will not come again for another 28 years. I am proud of us, not just the 25 people from age 9 to 93 (and the months-old puppy) who attended, but also the people who called in to listen on speak-

That's Harry Friedman keeping warm.

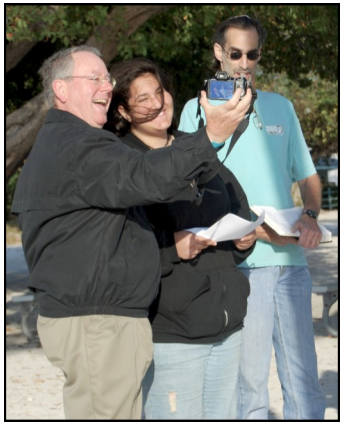
Note the only person who came in shorts and shirt-sleeves.

erphone and those who were excited when their friends and relatives and newspapers talked about the event.

We looked at the sun and then looked away before saying the prayers. We were not worshipping the sun but praising the sun's Creator. We were connecting with the original energy of creation. We were focused and grateful at the exact anniversary moment when, according to the complex calculations of our sages, the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars were in precisely the same alignment as they were on that fateful fourth day of Creation.

Much like the Antarctic penguins, the KJCC women huddle together for warmth.

What was once an arcane ritual observed only by the most ultra-orthodox among us, now speaks to all Jews concerned with ecology and our place in the world, who want responsible interaction with our environment, who are eager to leave a functional, beautiful planet to the next generation, just as it has been handed, originally by God, then generation after generation, to us.



As part of this observance, we are assembling items for a time capsule. Feel free to contribute, both ideas and material. (Call Gloria at 619-0216 or e-mail Chai-Lights.) What do we want the future members of our KJCC community to know about us? What are our goals, our hopes, our dreams for our shul, our children, our community, our world? There is something awe-inspiring about being part of something so much larger than oneself, particularly something that happens only once every 28 years.

May many of us be privileged to be among those present for the next KJCC observance of *Birchat HaChamah.* (I am counting on, in particular, Harry Friedman, Rachel Bloom, and Pauline Roller.) ◊

Shavuot

Agricultural, Spiritual, Milchik

Shavuot, which translates literally as "weeks," did not receive much attention in the ancient rabbinic literature. No tractate about it appears in the Talmud. All of its laws are contained in one paragraph of the Shulchan Arukh. *This is interesting, since it is one of the three Pilgrimage festivals, along with* Pesach *and* Sukkot, *when healthy males—women were often excluded, because they had more important things to do at home—were expected to travel to Jerusalem to bring crop offerings to the Temple. But today, what we like to think of as modern times, there are many aspects to the celebration of this holiday. It may have begun as strictly an agricultural holiday, but today it is infused with many levels of significance, especially because it is believed to be the time when, with the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, the ragtag wandering Hebrews, former slaves in Egypt, became at that moment the nation of Israel and a major player in world history.*

The Agricultural Origins

In Israel, Shavuot is the holiday celebrating the spring harvest season. Even in Biblical times it was a harvest festival. It was known as *Chag HaBikkurim*—literally, holiday of the first fruits—to ancient farmers, who would, in a gesture of thanksgiving, take to the Temple sacrifices of the seven species of Israel: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.

The farmers would begin their spring harvests with the barley crop at Passover. The harvest would continue for seven weeks (there is much more to come about this notion of seven weeks and its many-layered meanings) as other crops and fruits would ripen. Watching carefully, the farmer would tie a ribbon around the branch of each type of fruit as it emerged. The ribbon marked each as *bikkurim*—first fruit—not to be eaten, but offered in sacrifice.

At Shavuot farmers would gather the *bikkurim* into baskets and take them to Jerusalem, where they would be eaten. Farmers living close to Jerusalem would bring fresh fruit; those who had to travel long distances would bring dried raisins and figs.

Giving of the Torah

According to the Torah, it took the Hebrews exactly 49 days (seven weeks) to depart Egypt, traverse the Sea of Reeds, wander the Sinai Desert and finally arrive at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Leviticus 23:21 commands "and you shall proclaim that day (the next day, the fiftieth day) to be a holy convocation." That day is Shavuot.

So, here they were, at the foot of Mt. Sinai. The desert was arid, and barren. The mountain, though, was lush and green, covered with grass, flowers and trees. On the third of Sivan, Moses was told to prepare his people for God's descent and visit. On the sixth, three days later, the people were awakened by thunder and lightning. The mountain was shrouded in dark clouds. Sounds of the ram's horn, the Shofar, were heard across the desert. The earth began to shake. Then a voice came out of the clouds, as God spoke. And on this day, Shavuot, the sixth of Sivan, God gave the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people. Which is why Shavuot is also known as *Zeman Matan Torateinu*, the Season of the Giving of Our Law.

Observing Shavuot

Many traditions and customs associated with Shavuot are based on legends and stories describing the astounding events said to have taken place at Mt. Sinai. (Just imagine

being there, a hungry, confused, probably pretty cranky and footsore escaped slave, and witnessing such things.) According to tradition, everyone actually overslept on the morning of God's visit. To compensate for this—perhaps the most egregious act of hosting malpractice ever?—Jews traditionally now stay awake from dawn to dusk on Erev Shavuot, reading and studying Torah and Talmud. This custom is called *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*, the Restoration of Shavuot Eve, and symbolizes Jewish commitment to the Torah and to always be awake and ready to receive it.

Most of the more mystical Shavuot practices stemmed from the sixteenth-century group living in Safed, in Palestine under the Ottomans, under the guidance of Isaac Luria. In addition to symbolic apologia for their ancestors at Mt. Sinai, the mystics believed that at midnight the heavens open and are receptive to the prayers of those commemorating the revelation of the Ten Commandments. Moroccan Jews believed that staying up guaranteed you life for the next year.

It is actually the *giving* of the Torah that matters. The entire holiday is referred to as the time of the *giving* of the Torah. We are said to receive it every day; we are constantly in the process of receiving it. But this is the one time it was *given*, a moment to always be celebrated. Passover may have freed us from physical bondage, but the giving of the Torah seven weeks later freed us from bondage to idolatry and spiritual darkness.

Shavuot is also the end of the 49 days of the counting of the Omer. As there are seven days in any week, and the seventh day is Shabbat, the number seven (seven times seven, remember, is 49) has major significance in Jewish measurement of time. Each seventh year is called a *Shemitah*, or sabbatical, year. After seven such cycles (that multiple again) comes a *Yovel*, or Jubilee, year.

From the legend that the Israelites, when being given the Torah, found Mt. Sinai to be green and abloom, has come the tradition to decorate Jewish homes and synagogues at Shavuot with green tree branches and flowers. Some synagogues decorate their Torah scrolls with wreaths of roses. This was apparently an ancient custom, because Haman complained to King Achashverosh about such an observance among the Jews. There was once a custom to actually bring trees into the synagogue, but that practice was squelched by the Vilna Gaon, who derided it as being *chukot haGoyim*, meaning "adopting the customs of the gentiles." (Hanukkah bush, anyone?)

In many synagogues, particularly Ashkenazi, the Book of Ruth is read during morning Shavuot services. There are many explanations for this, none definitive. The most common is that Ruth (Judaism's most famous convert, with Elizabeth Taylor getting honorable mention) came to Israel, following her mother-in-law Naomi ("whither you go, I will go…"), at the time of Shavuot. Some say her acceptance of the Jewish faith was analogous to the Jewish people accepting God's Torah. Still others say that it is because Ruth was the great, great grandmother of King David, who it is believed was born and died on Shavuot.

A relatively new custom for Shavuot, originating in the early 19th century in Europe by Reform Judaism, is Confirmation. Though now often eclipsed in popularity by the bar or bat mitvah, Confirmation asks a slightly older teen, usually 16 or 17, to "confirm" a commitment to a Jewish life.

Shavuot and Dairy

One of the most enduring customs of Shavuot is the eating of dairy foods. The most common explanation is because it was at Mt. Sinai that Jews were first given the dietary laws and, now obligated to follow its teachings, realized that they could not properly prepare meat or their utensils there. So they ate dairy instead.

But food is involved here, so there are many more explanations. It is said that baby Moses was placed in the river on the sixth of Sivan (the future Shavuot) and found by Pharaoh's daughter. It is also said that Moses refused to nurse from an Egyptian woman, which led to his sister Miriam's suggestion that Yocheved, his birth mother, be brought in as his "wet nurse." Moses, who was to eventually teach all of Israel the tenets of the

Torah, could not drink mother's milk from a non-Jew. So the day is commemorated with dairy dishes.

Some take their guidance from the Torah (given on Shavuot), which speaks in Exodus of a land flowing with "milk and honey." At Sinai, the Israelites were said to be as innocent as newborns, whose food, of course, is milk. Some sage noticed that the initials of the four Hebrew words in Numbers 28:26, where the sacrificial meal offering for Shavuot is described, spell *mei chalav* (from milk), which suggests that dairy is the intended food for the festival. Mystics have noted that the *gematria*, the numerical value, of the word *chalav* (milk) is 40, the number of days Moses spent on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments and other teachings. And that Mt. Sinai itself has eight names, one of which is *gavnunim*, because its appearance resembles that of cheese, which in Hebrew is *g'vinah*.

Those with a gustatory bent, however, focus on the menu of traditional Shavuot dairy dishes. There's cheesecake. And cheese blintzes. And yogurt with honey. And lasagna. And burekas, a Sephardic dish of cheese stuffed in dough. Even kreplach are sometimes cheese-filled.

So when Shavuot comes at the end of May, remember that it celebrates the harvest and our gratitude for it, and the end of counting the Omer, and that it's one of the three Pilgrimage festivals, and that you can decorate your house and shul and Torah with greenery and flowers, and that it represents the giving of the Torah, the single act that essentially created the Jewish people.

And then, guilt-free for the only time all year, have an extra, but very spiritual, helping of cheesecake. ◊

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The 2009 Seder Season

High season is coming to an end, and many members of KJCC are about to depart the Keys for their summer residences. But spring brings Passover, and Passover means Seders and some of the best memories of the Jewish year. There are three major Passover events now on the KJCC calendar: the Women's Seder, the Community Seder, and the Children's Seder. A retrospective of all three follows.

The Sixth Annual Women's Seder

by Beth Kaminstein

For me, Passover begins a couple of months before the holiday, when we begin to think about what we can make out of clay in my studio. This year we made (at the suggestion of Gloria and Joyce) a ceremonial hand-washing vessel. It is a joy for me to have my community at my studio making things. I think we have all come to realize how much fun we have together, how much we like each other, and how much tolerance we have for each other that makes our individuality special.

The Women's Seder is an event that brings all the elements of Passover into an inclusive, contemporary, vision while honoring the past. We have such an inspiring group of women within our KJCC community. The seder allows us to truly feel that bond that we have as women. We feel it historically, with our connections to the great women of the past, as we honor the mothers of all the children of Israel. We feel it contemporarily with our need to "do something," be part of our community and repair the world. The Ma'yan Haggadah is the vehicle that helps restore our belief that, as women, we are part of the Passover narrative and that we are, and need to be, active participants within our communities. We take it as our responsibility to help create a world where freedom belongs to everyone. That is why it is so important to us that our Tikkun Olam Fund reaches out to our community. It is our way of "repairing the world."

These pictures show pre-Seder work in Beth's studio. The finished products are shown in the center photo.

My favorite part of the Passover Service is the Dayeinu from the Ma'yan Haggadah. A couple of lines that stand out for me are:

If we teach our students and children to pursue justice with all their strength,
If we care for the earth and its future as responsibly as we care for those we love,
If we create music, art, dance and literature, dayeinu.
If we realize our power to effect change,
If we bring holiness into our lives, homes and communities,
If we honor our visions more than our fears, dayeinu v'lo dayeinu.

Our Women's Seder is a time and place where we can be together, transcending time and place. It is bigger than any one of us. It is truly a community event. We all make it happen.

How did we get here?

by Gloria Avner

I can still see that original group of women sitting in the back of the sanctuary, looking through a radical new Haggadah prepared by women for women, discussing whether this was something we could or even wanted to bring to fruition among our own circle by our own efforts. The answer was a resounding "yes" from most of us, skepticism by some, and a resounding "no" by others who thought that a Passover ceremony without men was not just unnecessary but improper.

Over the ensuing years nearly all the doubters and nay-sayers have become attendees, agreeing that the bonding created among the women who look forward to attending this event each year surpasses what even the originators thought possible. (And we still love our men and attend our family seders.)

Beth Kaminstein was definitely the guiding light behind the project. She voiced the initial desire and gathered a group of cooperative, creative doers; then, by making her studio space available each year for creation of hand-built vessels for our *chag sameach*, she provided the medium for our growing even closer. Our interactions in the studio allowed us to learn more about each other than is possible at an oneg or fund-raiser brunch. Each year, the relationships deepen.

Though Sara Cohen, our dear departed

matriarch and first mother/hostess of the KJCC in its infancy, was the official honoree this year, Beth Kaminstein was also honored as the motivating force behind this event. Who ever thought in that original meeting that we would in our sixth year host 54 women, many of them highly appreciative non-Jews, and be able, through our seder's *Tikkun Olam Fund*, to contribute several thousand dollars to our neighborhood Food Bank, to a program giving a "healthy start" to pregnant mothers and their infants, to the Keys' Women and Children's Abuse Shelter, and to the Keys' Guardian Ad Litem program, "Voices for Children." One of the *mitzvot* enjoined upon us at this Passover season is to take care of others, to "repair the world." We were led out of slavery in Egypt not just for ourselves. Every Haggadah and all our sages and storytellers point out that none of us can be truly free until all are free. We acknowledge that when pockets of the world are hungry, when women and children are abused, we all are abused.

We feel privileged each year to sit together, to prepare beautiful, bountiful tables full of our finest food (make sure you pick up a copy of our very own recipe book put together by Meredith Cline), to read meaningful poetry, sing silly songs, bless all the ritual foods, ask the four questions in our own way, and drink the requisite four cups of wine. Personally, while leading the seder this year, I was most moved by the readings, the sincerity and oneness of 54 women's voices reading aloud in perfect unity at such a pitch that one could not tell whose voice was whose. There was one voice. And it was beautiful. ◊

An Evening of Connection, Joy, and Celebration: the Women's Seder.

by Erica Lieberman-Garrett

This year's Women's Seder was a celebration more joyous and scrumptious than ever. Personally, this was my second seder, and I thought that it couldn't have been any better than it was last year. But it was.

The camaraderie of joining other women at Beth Kaminstein's house to make hand-washing pottery was fun, yet challenging, and the opportunity to spend creative time outside of the shul, with our wonderful women, was great. Sharing that experience and then showing off our bowls at the seder added another level to the joy of the evening. I felt like a kid in kindergarten at show and tell.

Luckily my bowl held water all night and didn't leak all over the table! And according to Linda Perloff, it didn't look like a urinal, which it did before I fixed it!

The opportunity to spend an evening of delicious food, and Jewish tradition, without the usual responsibilities that go with children and husbands, is rare.

The wonderful leadership of our glorious Gloria Avner, as well as the intellectual and inspiring insights of Beth, created a delightful service, which included a beautiful *haggadah* that was easy to follow and understand. The songs of joy and tradition, with the instruments provided, made a fun addition to the seder.

And then there was the food. Thanks to the hard work of Meredith Cline, and the wonderful women of our Jewish community, we all feasted on the most scrumptious and yummy food. It took Gloria and me a full

week to work off Suzi Feder's bark. Mmmmmmmm.

We are blessed to have the most wonderful women in our shul and the opportunity to spend this type of evening together, where all are welcome.

Thank you to all who made this possible. ◊

It was only fitting for Beth be an honoree at this year's seder, as she was the driving force behind it in the beginning. Her mom Judy and daughter Stellar, below, make up three generations of strong Kaminstein women.

The KJCC Community Seder

We usually call it the Second Seder, because it's always on the second night of Passover. But it's a major KJCC event. Here's a report of the night in photographs, with accompanying text by Gloria Avner.

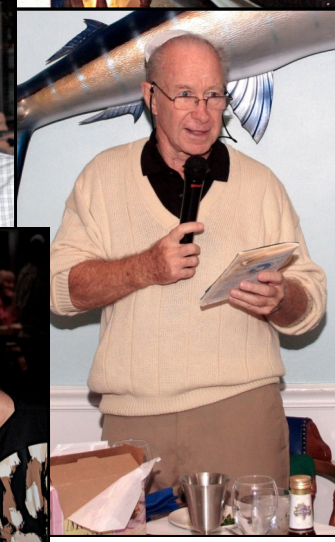
More than a hundred strong, members of the KJCC, our friends, families, and visiting strangers (who quickly became friends and family), gathered at The Islamorada Fishing Club to celebrate the second night of Passover on April 9th, 2009. Our traditional seder "fathers," Joel Pollack and Jim Boruszak, led the group in a lively retelling of the story of our escape from slavery in Egypt to our journey towards freedom. Singing assistance was provided by Gloria Avner. Four of our KJCC Religious School students—Cammie Berk, Moira Knowles, Harry Friedman, and Joshua Bernstein—tunefully asked the "Four Questions." Speakers at each table shared storytelling duties. Blessings were said, ritual foods eaten, and the well-prepared meal enjoyed.

The pace was brisk, the songs animated, and by the time the fourth glass of wine was drunk, the last verse of "*Chad Gad Ya*" breathlessly chanted, and a rousing chorus of "These are a Few of My Passover Things" sung (not exactly traditional, but it got this crowd going), the room was filled with satisfaction and laughter. The smiles on the faces of Carol and Steve Steinbock, showing their genuine surprise and delight at receiving the well-deserved Joel Cohen award for exceptional and selfless service to the KJCC, made for a fitting climax to the evening.

This year's Joel Cohen Fellowship Award honorees were Steve and Carol Steinbock, shown at left in happy post-presidential bliss.

Not one person left before the seder was finished (!). Joan Boruszak, Leslie Dillon, Jim Boruszak, and Joel Pollack deserve much praise and congratulations for a difficult task well done. Judging from the smiles on participants' faces, either Elijah appeared and turned this gathering into the most favored and exclusive club in Jewish history, or everyone simply enjoyed tremendously each other's presence at this annual, and annually sold-out, event. ◊

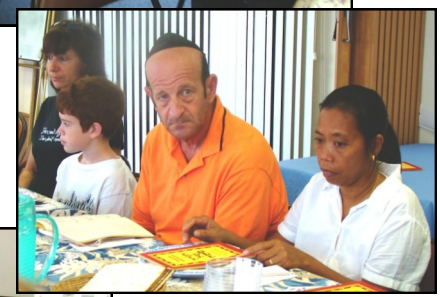
We are deeply grateful for the time and professional photography expertise of Richard and Barbara Knowles, who shot the Second Seder photographs.



The four questions this year were sung by Joshua Bernstein, Cammie Berk, Moira Knowles and Harry Friedman, with a little coaching by Gloria.

-KJCC Religious School Seder-

Sunday, March 22 saw the Children's Seder. All the parents and interested others were, as always, invited. Bernie Ginsberg officiated, as he has so well in past years, with stalwart help by our teachers, Yardena and Gloria.



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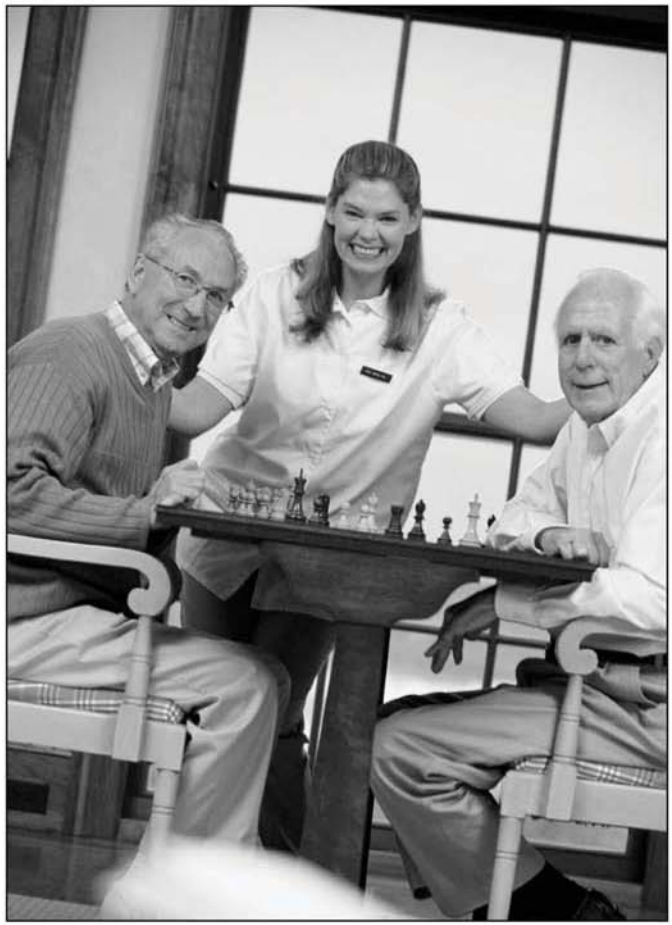

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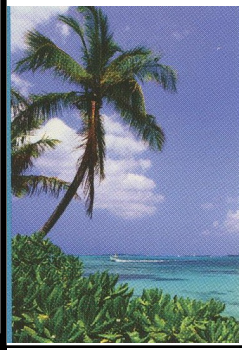

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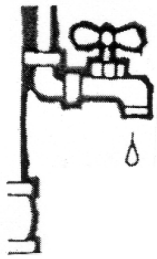

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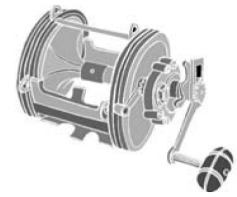

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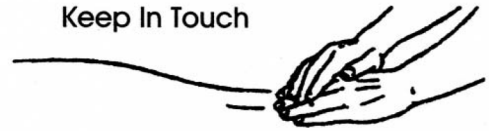

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