



Basil Alter

JCRS gala to celebrate its 75th Anniversary

When the Jewish Children's Regional Service (JCRS) fundraising committee was brainstorming ideas for its 2021 virtual gala, members wondered how they could match the success of last year's in-person event.

That fundraiser featured musical performances by the "Success Story Ensemble," a group of JCRS scholarship recipients – including Basil Alter of Memphis – who are currently pursuing advanced degrees in musical performance.

The Ensemble received such rave reviews that the committee decided to bring the musicians back for this year's gala – Jewish Roots Jubilee: Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Modern-Day JCRS on Sunday, April 11 beginning at 6 p.m.

Chaired by Barbara Kaplinsky and Carole Neff, the event will also feature lawyer and author Marlene Trestman, who received aid from the agency when she was orphaned at 11 years old and is now writing a book on the history of the Jewish Orphans' Home in New Orleans, the predecessor of JCRS.

An online auction focused on

once-in-a-lifetime vacations and experiences will round out the evening. Sponsorships and tickets are available at jcrs.org or by calling 800.729.5277.

JCRS, which provides college and camp scholarships to Jewish families in seven Mid-South states, boasts countless success stories. Recipients of college aid have gone on to become doctors, lawyers and scientists. They include educators, journalists and rabbis. And some, like those in the "Success Story Ensemble," are musicians.

The group features Joshua Dolney, a trumpet player from Deer Park, Texas; Josh Sadinsky, a pianist from Fayetteville, Arkansas; Basil Alter, a violinist from Memphis; and Caroline Samuels, a bassist from Baton Rouge. Bruce Miller, former JCRS president, and himself a JCRS "Success Story" from having received camp scholarships as a child, will accompany the group on drums.

"JCRS is beyond proud to play a role in helping so many young Jewish students pursue their dreams of a college education and beyond," said JCRS Executive

Director Ned Goldberg. "Basil Alter of Memphis, Tenn., and the other members of the Ensemble are great examples of our impact on the lives of Jewish youth."

When approached to perform for this year's gala, the four musicians couldn't help but say yes.

"I am thankful to the JCRS for their generosity in supporting my education, and for their support and encouragement throughout the year," said Basil, who is studying violin at the Manhattan School of Music.

Caroline, who is pursuing her master's degree in Classical Double Bass Performance at Boston University, also expressed her gratitude.

"JCRS has provided so many opportunities to me throughout the years; and it is my pleasure to give back to the organization that has given me so much," she said.

Joshua and Josh are equally thrilled to make a return performance, even if virtually.

"JCRS has helped fund my MFA at the California Institute of the Arts, which has been an important time for my development as an artist," Josh said.

"I am very grateful for the financial support from JCRS as it has helped me pursue my dream," said Joshua, who is studying for a Doctorate in the Musical Arts at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

Performances will be sprinkled throughout the program, with keynote speaker Marlene Trestman sharing research from her upcoming book, "The Most Fortunate Unfortunates: New Orleans's Jewish Orphans' Home, 1855-1946." Trestman's talk will be followed by Q & A.

Orphaned at age 11, Trestman grew up in New Orleans as a JCRS recipient, using that assistance to attend Isidore Newman School under the spirit of its founding charter to educate Jewish orphans. She later attended Gaucher College and George Washington University Law School and began her career as a public lawyer.

Trestman is a former Special Assistant to the Maryland Attorney General, where she started her 30-year legal career in 1982 and has taught law at Loyola University of Maryland's Sellinger School of Business & Management, where she earned her MBA. Trestman twice received the Attorney General's Exceptional Service Award and in 2004 was named Isidore Newman School's Distinguished Alumnus.

She is also the author of "Fair Labor Lawyer: The Remarkable Life of New Deal Attorney and Supreme Court Advocate Bessie Margolin." It was through her research on Margolin, one of the Jewish Orphans' Home's most accomplished alumni, that her curiosity about the home deepened.

Since its inception as an orphanage in New Orleans in 1855, JCRS has cared for Jewish children and families in and at all levels of crisis and well-being. Today, JCRS remains vital, impactful, and more necessary than ever. In 2020, over 1,800 children and families were served from more than 200 communities across a seven-state region through needs-based scholarship programs – college aid, Jewish summer camp grants, special-needs assistance – and outreach programs such as PJ Library and the Oscar J. Tolmas Hanukkah Gift Program.

Marjorie Taylor Greene calls David Cicilline 'Rep. Mussolini.' His response: 'I'm an Italian and a Jew.'



Rep. David Cicilline
Credit: Graeme Jennings/Pool/Getty Images

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Marjorie Taylor Greene, the Republican congresswoman from Georgia not known for being understated, called Rhode Island Democrat David Cicilline "Mussolini" for seeking a rule change to stop her disruptive tactics.

"I'm an Italian and a Jew," Cicilline shot back on Twitter. "Mussolini was a fascist dictator in league with Adolf Hitler, who murdered six million Jews. Marjorie Taylor Greene can get lost."

Attempting to frustrate the passage March 10, of President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion pandemic stimulus, Greene on several occasions sought to exploit a rule that allows individual House members to seek an adjournment. The House, including many Republicans, loudly said "No!" in a voice vote, but Greene, a freshman, then exercised her right to seek a time-consuming roll call.

That led Cicilline to propose stripping the right to adjourn from members who do not belong to committees. Last month, the House of Representatives stripped Greene of her committee memberships for peddling threats and conspiracy theories, including some with anti-Semitic themes.

Newsweek asked Greene for comment on Cicilline's proposal.

"Do you mean Rep. Mussolini?" she said. "Not only did Democrats unilaterally strip away my committees, now they want to remove any powers I have to represent my district. The Democrats run the House of Hypocrites with tyrannical control."

Israeli study finds vaccinated mothers pass coronavirus antibodies to newborns

The research discovered an increase in antibodies in the blood and in breast milk 14 days after the first shot and seven days after the second.

(JNS) – A new Israeli study found that breastfeeding mothers vaccinated against the coronavirus are able to pass on antibodies to their babies through breast milk.

"Encouraging data shows that vaccinating nursing mothers promotes the production of important antibodies in breast milk, thereby protecting their babies from dis-

ease," stated the new study conducted by Tel Aviv University and the Sourasky Medical Center (Ichilov Hospital), according to i24 News.

The study was aimed at discovering whether the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine could produce antibodies in mothers who nursed and analyzing the level of protection

they could potentially pass on to their infants.

The research, which took place from January to February on a very small sample of 10 vaccinated women, discovered an increase in antibodies in the blood and in breast milk 14 days after the first vaccine shot and seven days after the second.

The research also found that the antibodies in breast milk could possibly counter COVID-19.



A newborn baby at the Sha'arei Tzedek Medical Center in Jerusalem.

Photo by Hadas Parush/Flash90.

This Jewish female artist from the comic book golden age was overlooked for decades



Señorita Rio, one of Lily Renee's many characters, fought Nazis.
Credit: Lily Renée Collection

By Karen Chernick

March 11, 2021 (JTA) — Like the comic superheroes they invented, the Jewish creators of the characters often had secret identities — at least different names. Superman creators Joe Shuster and Jerome Siegel used the pseudonyms Joe Carter and Jerry Ess. Bob Kane, born Robert Kahn, created Batman. Jack Kirby, the pen name of Jacob Kurtzberg, concocted Captain America.

Although lesser known, the comic book heroine Señorita Rio was Hollywood starlet Rita Farrar by day and Nazi-fighting secret agent by night. The artist who drew Rio’s action-packed panels in the 1940s, and signed as L. Renee, lived a sort of double life, too.

“Everybody assumed I was a man,” artist Lily Renee Phillips has said of the fan mail she received at the time, which was always addressed to “Mr. Renee.” Fans knew neither Renee’s gender

nor her incredible origin story, which rivaled the plotline of Señorita Rio.

In the New York offices of Fiction House, the comic book publishing firm where Renee worked, she was a scrappy immigrant who worked her way up from erasing pencil marks to drafting her own heroines. Outside work she was a Vienna-born Holocaust survivor who fled Austria after the 1938 Anschluss, the Nazi annexation of Austria. She escaped to England on a Kindertransport and reunited with her parents in New York in 1940.

Unlike her co-workers, who genuinely loved the comic world’s clearly outlined arena of villains and justice-seeking vigilantes, Renee was just trying to make a living by doing something she had always done: draw.

Those drawings will be on view in an exhibition opening Thursday at New York’s Austrian Cultural Forum. “Three with a

Pen” highlights three Jewish cartoon artists who grew up in Vienna and escaped to safety after 1938: Renee, Paul Peter Porges and Bil Spira. The exhibit originally appeared at the Jewish Museum Vienna in 2019.

Renee’s pen and ink sketches have traveled to the birthplace she fled at age 17 and have returned to her adoptive home of over 80 years, where she still lives and will celebrate her 100th birthday in May.

Although she was unable to speak to a reporter, her daughter and colleagues spoke about her improbable life. Renee, they said, still remembers drawing under her family’s dining table as a child in Vienna, sketching ballerinas and costumed performers she had seen at the theater. A decade later in New York, she used these drafting skills to support herself and her parents, who surrendered their assets to Nazi authorities in Austria and were sharing a small Upper West Side apartment. She started out decorating wooden boxes for a shop, then drew publicity materials for Woolworth’s department store.

One day Renee’s mother saw a newspaper notice advertising that Fiction House was looking for illustrators and encouraged her daughter to apply. Renee took a drawing she’d made of Tarzan and Jane to her interview, and was hired after a brief trial period.

Beyond her artistic talent, Renee’s comic book career was partially a case of being in the right place at the right time. The American comic industry, which had been booming since the 1930s, was concentrated in New York. The 1940s were also the golden age of comic books, and the same war that rendered Renee a refugee also opened up illustration jobs as more men joined the service.

“Before World War II, women comic artists were a very rare breed indeed,” said Michael Freund, a co-curator of “Three with a Pen.” “It was mostly the turf of hungry young guys.”

Meanwhile, soldiers on the front lines were keen to have distracting reading material.

Renee’s first assignments at Fiction House were menial, like painting in backgrounds. But she worked her way up, and the first heroine she was assigned to draw on her own was Jane Martin, a brave wartime nurse.

“Her breakthrough came when she embellished — in every sense of the word — the character of Se-

ñorita Rio, a spy and secret agent for the Allied forces,” exhibition co-curator Sabine Bergler said. “Rio was not invented by Lily, but she contributed to the storyline and to the specific characteristics of the heroine — who was also a projection of her own desire to fight the fascist powers.”

Her colleague Nick Cardy conceived Rio, but Renee shaped her look: an athletic brunette who scrapped with Nazis and their allies in Latin America.

“I could live out a fantasy, if only on paper,” Renee told Freund of illustrating this fierce female spy, who was fighting the artist’s own persecutors on the page. “It was a form of revenge.”

Ultimately, Renee doesn’t call her work on Señorita Rio and other comic heroines the crowning achievement of her nearly century-long life.

“She was an artist, first and foremost,” said Nina Phillips, Renee’s daughter.

Phillips grew up watching her mother paint, but didn’t learn about her comic book illustrations until she was a teenager and opened the wrong drawer — one filled with her mom’s old paneled sketches.

“Drawing comic books was not looked at as a proper profession at all,” Phillips said. “She really erased it from her life, and she pursued all sorts of other creative endeavors.”

Starting in the 1950s, Renee worked as a freelance artist and textile designer. She took writing courses with Philip Roth, and wrote plays and children’s books. She befriended contemporary artists, including the photographer Diane Arbus. She was still drawing and painting until a few years ago.

Regardless of how Renee might introduce herself, her unique standing as one of the few female artists of the golden age of comics has been revived in recent years. Comic historian Trina Robbins rediscovered her in 2005 and turned Renee’s life into a graphic novel. Renee has been invited to speak at Comic Con panels, received belated awards and has been the subject of a short documentary.

To a generation of fans hungry for more comic heroines in print and onscreen, Renee represents a matriarchal superpower no less than Wonder Woman.

“She shied away from the word ‘feminist,’” Phillips said of her mother. “But she absolutely was.”

Steven Spielberg to write, direct film loosely based on his childhood in Arizona

It’s the first time since 2001’s “A.I.: Artificial Intelligence” that he will participate in the screenwriting process.

(JNS) Longtime director, producer and screenwriter Steven Spielberg, who is also the founder of the USC Shoah Foundation, is planning to co-write and direct a film about his life, sources told Deadline on March 9.

The yet-untitled project with Spielberg’s production company, Amblin Entertainment, will be loosely based on his childhood growing up in Phoenix, Ariz.

Insiders hinted that actor Michelle Williams is in talks to play a character inspired by Spielberg’s mother, Leah Adler. The film is scheduled to begin shooting this summer and expected to be released in 2022.

According to Variety, the film “will focus on a main character, who is not named Steven, as a young child and teen. The protagonist will be living in Phoenix, Arizona, which is where Spielberg lived in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The film will also examine the character’s relationship with his parents and be split across time periods.”

It’s apparently the first time since 2001’s “A.I.: Artificial Intelligence” that Spielberg—renowned in Jewish circles for “Schindler’s List”—will participate in the screenwriting process of a film.

According to Deadline, he will co-write the script with Tony Kushner, who penned “Munich,” “Lincoln” and “West Side Story” for the multiple award-winning director.

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No AIPAC conference? No problem. We're meeting for coffee on Zoom.

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — For years, the annual AIPAC conference has culminated with thousands of Israel supporters knocking on their congressional representatives' doors here to deliver three policy requests.

Last year, the conference in early March ended with anxiety about whether COVID-19 had spread after some of the country's first cases were detected among attendees. And this year, there's no throng and no door-knocking at all. Due to the pandemic, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee announced in May that it would not hold an in-person conference in 2021 for the first time in decades.

But the pro-Israel lobby says it's still engaging a broad swath of Americans — through a series of online events that spanned the course of the year rather than being packed into a five-day conference. And although both staffers and lawmakers say Zoom lobbying has drawbacks, AIPAC remains optimistic about its plan to present a three-pronged policy agenda to lawmakers next week.

"We have very active creative services and communications departments that have now adapted to this environment quite ably in being able to take the type of high-quality presentations that you normally see at the policy conference and adapt them to the virtual environment," said Marshall Wittmann, the group's spokesman.

The suspension of AIPAC's signature event came at a crucial time in U.S.-Israel relations: a new administration that is unlikely to be as solicitous to Israel as the Trump White House; looming elections in Israel; reconsideration of the Iran nuclear deal that Donald Trump as president exited; and backburner anxiety about support for conditioning U.S. aid to Israel.

Those dynamics have been topics of the group's online events. Instead of the keynote speeches on the U.S.-Israel relationship,

AIPAC held virtual sessions on the topic, including with President Joe Biden's secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and Trump's top adviser (and son-in-law) Jared Kushner before the election in November.

To replace the Shabbat-themed get-togethers on the Saturday before the conference, the group offered an online "Advanced Rabbinic Political Activism Summit." Those with specific interests — perhaps progressive outreach or women's engagement with Israel issues — had online programs just for them.

AIPAC held online events designed to engage the many non-Jewish Israel supporters who attend the annual conference, including several in February for Black History Month. Even the less formal events have been replicated, including the "AIPAC Village," a showcase for Israel's high-tech sector, and a "virtual coffee house" on Zoom aimed at approximating the ambient atmosphere of schmoozing with folks in the hallways.

Wittman registered a silver-lining assessment that many have shared during this year of online events, saying the virtual sessions attracted activists who might not otherwise have attended in-person events.

"We've found that many people who hadn't been involved in the past have now gotten engaged," he said, although he did not have hard numbers. Some 18,000 activists attended last year's conference.

Now AIPAC is in the midst of what would ordinarily be the climax of its conference: constituent-to-legislator lobbying on Israel issues. The effort began right on schedule, with a letter this week to the Biden administration from 140 members of the U.S. House of Representatives urging an expansive effort to contain the Iranian threat. AIPAC urged its followers to support the letter.

Next week, AIPAC is expecting 900 activists to convene online for its National Council and replicate

the last day of the typical policy conference when thousands of activists knock on doors on the Hill promoting three requests. There are almost 500 congressional meetings scheduled.

This year, according to an AIPAC official who spoke anonymously to discuss particulars before their formal release, the requests will cover the Biden administration's plans to reenter the Iran nuclear deal, which AIPAC opposed when 2015 it was brokered in by the Obama administration; preserving the levels of defense assistance to Israel, currently \$3.3 billion a year, plus about \$500 million in anti-missile development; and upholding the Abraham Accords, the four normalization agreements between Israel and Sunni Arab states brokered by Trump.

The virtual lobbying has been effective, according to a senior congressional staffer not with AIPAC who deals with foreign policy.

"The same work is getting done," said the staffer, who asked for anonymity to speak candidly about dealing with lobbyists and activists. "It's the same conversations. It's just virtually. There isn't a dinner, but people are attending panels, and the operation on the Hill doesn't feel any different."

But some elected officials said Zoom strips some of the elements that make in-person lobbying effective.

"Zoom gets you most of the way there, but there certainly is the loss of personal contact," said Rep. Brad Schneider, D-Ill., who was an AIPAC lay leader before being elected to Congress. "Nothing replaces that face-to-face meeting."

"So, you know, it creates a challenge. You're sitting in an office, and there are a dozen people sitting around having a conversation, you lose the advantage of seeing every person speaking. It's much easier [in person] to get the interplay to ask the question, have a response, to get a question answered more robustly."

A top AIPAC lay lobbyist also said virtual encounters especially inhibited cultivating relationships with new members of Congress.

"If you have the relationship, it's fine. If you're working on building the relationship, it's hard to build a relationship on Zoom," said the lobbyist, who asked for anonymity to speak candidly about AIPAC's lobbying techniques.

Ted Deutch, a Florida Democrat who chairs the House Middle East subcommittee and has been close to AIPAC, said he was impressed by its virtual game.

"There's nothing like being able to sit across from someone and engage in meaningful conversation about the U.S.-Israel relationship," he said. "But the community has adapted during the pandemic and now the meetings take place on Zoom. So there's an opportunity to bring more people together from more places at

one time, and in some ways that provides an even better forum to interact with others, and they've been really successful using technology to engage."

Exactly what the future holds for the annual AIPAC conference remains unclear. At this point the group is still considering whether to convene in person in 2022. And as the end of the pandemic enters view, the future of major conventions — and their expense to stage and attend — is up in the air. AIPAC laid off some staffers specifically focused on conference planning last year and hasn't yet recreated those positions.

Wittman said one thing that's assured is that virtual outreach will continue.

"Activists have remained very involved within the comfort of their own homes on their computers," he said. "That's been heartening." already a big development."

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Residents receive Moderna Vaccine

Plough Towers marches into spring

By Harleen Tague

It has been a year since the pandemic overtook the lives of the residents and their families. Keeping residents safe has been a priority for staff, volunteers, board members and residents’ families – and they have successfully accomplished it.

More than 80% of Plough Towers residents have been vaccinated. Thanks to staff, board members, and Walgreens who came to the Towers, the staff and the residents can move forward with confidence. Mask-wearing, distancing and limited access is still a priority.

All residents now have access to iPads, thanks to Creative Aging of the Mid-South. Residents are taught to use the iPads to help them stay connected to family, friends and activities.

Plough Towers residents and staff extend a special thanks to volunteers who delivered Passover Care Packages and to Memphis Jewish Federation’s Fedovation Grant in support of “Jewish Holidays, Celebrating and Learning Together,” a lobby display case, which helps residents reminisce and learn about the holidays. In February, the case displayed Purim items and will showcase Passover during March.

While activity restrictions are still in place, residents look forward to the day that family and friends will be welcomed to join them. Please check the www.ploughtowers.org and Facebook for further information.

Memphis Jewish Community Center camp staff ready for summer fun

Mark your calendars for June 7, as the first day of summer camp 2021 at the Memphis Jewish Community Center (MJCC).

MJCC staff and counselors feel fortunate to bring joy into the lives of its Memphis-area youth through the MJCC’s annual Summer Camp. And the staff cannot wait to see those smiles during carpool line when children rush to the MJCC for a summer full of fun with their peers. And camp families are ready too.

Counselor and staff training will look a little different – just like last summer – as we adjust to new COVID-19 protocols, such as working with smaller camp groups, wearing masks and practicing sanitation procedures.

“Having worked at the MJCC the past three summers, I’ve met kids of all kinds,” said camp counselor Martin Dolan. “Not one of them is the same and that’s what makes this job awesome. Not only is it a new experience for them getting to meet me as their counselor, it’s also a new experience for me. One of my favorite things about working with the kids at the MJCC is that every day is a new day, and with it comes all sorts of new, and sometimes challenging, experiences. While COVID-19 has certainly turned upside down what our traditional camp usually is, this job has been nothing short of accommodating. We’ve improvised, we’ve overcome, and we’ve

conquered. We still have fun, we still go swimming, and we still provide the enrichment that every kid needs, especially at a time like this. All this is just one new experience, and all we do is take it day by day with a smile on our faces.”

New activities and camp programs are being developed in a way to keep campers in their designated small groups and socially distanced. Examples are Camp Science, where MJCC campers have the opportunity to make baking soda volcanoes and vinegar filled bottle rockets in small groups.

Lindsay Martin, mother of a 6-year-old camper, stated last summer, “My son looks forward to the JCC Summer Camp program every year. The staff is so kind and makes each summer truly special. We were so thankful when the camp opened this year, and the staffers have done an excellent job of keeping the children happy and safe!”

The most amazing part for the entire staff is seeing a child’s smile through their mask. Who knew how much you can see of a hidden smile through the bright eyes of a MJCC camper?

For information about donating to our camp scholarship fund, please visit www.jccmemphis.org/campaign. For information about becoming a camp counselor, visit www.jccmemphis.org/campstaff.



Celebrating Israel Day at Camp Yavneh in New Hampshire. Credit: Campy Yavneh via Facebook.

Jewish camps get \$10 million to expand enrollment and incorporate COVID-19 protocols

Many, if not most, summer camps that are part of the Foundation for Jewish Camp network were closed last year due to the pandemic.

(JNS) Jewish summer camps will be getting a financial boost to help expand their enrollment this summer while maintaining coronavirus safety regulations. The \$2.6 million Capacity Expansion Grants from the Jewish Community Response and Impact Fund (JCRIF) will benefit more than 30 Jewish camps.

“Camps want nothing more than to provide a safe, healthy and joyful Jewish environment for campers, and although many challenges and uncertainties remain, I feel optimism and anticipation as FJC and our camp partners work diligently to ensure a safe and successful summer 2021,” said Jeremy Fingerman, CEO of the Foundation for Jewish Camp, which worked to secure the funding.

Fingerman estimates that the fiscal dollars will allow camps to

welcome more than 3,000 new children this summer.

Additionally, another \$8 million in grants from other donors will be available to camps that meet donor-specified criteria, including geographical location.

Felicia Herman of the JCRIF said the organization’s supporters, including the Jim Joseph Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, Aviv Foundation, Maimonides Fund, Paul E. Singer Foundation, and Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation, “were impressed with the number of strong and creative applications FJC received and are proud to help enable even more kids than ever to attend camp this summer.”

Last year, many, if not most, Jewish camps that are part of the FJC network were closed due to the coronavirus pandemic. The closures significantly impacted the bottom line of the camps, which also could not rent out their grounds during the off-season months for events or programs, losing yet another source of funding.

Bernstein Scholarship Fund application deadline approaching

In 2001, Nate and Minnie Bernstein set up a scholarship fund to assist Jewish students with educational expenses. Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service (FJFS) at the Memphis Jewish Community Center has been administering that fund since its inception.

FJFS is accepting applications during its open enrollment, which began in January 2021 and will end on March 30, 2021.

Recipients will be notified in May of the amount of their award; and awards will be disbursed in August.

Bernstein Scholarship eligible

criteria include that the applicant:

- Be Jewish
- Reside in Memphis/Mid-South Area
- Funds must be used for educational expenses

Recipients of other scholarship funds administered by Jewish Community Partners are ineligible for this fund.

All disbursement checks will be made out to the educational institution that the student will be attending. To obtain an application for the Bernstein Fund please contact Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service at 901.767.8511.

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HON. STEVE COHEN
Of Tennessee
U.S. House of Representatives
Thursday, February 18, 2021

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Herman and Bobbie Goldberger on their retirement. Their family-owned labor of love, The Hebrew Watchman, has been a cornerstone of the Jewish community in Memphis for 95 years. Founded in 1925 as The Memphis Watchman by Leo I. Goldberger, Herman's father, it has chronicled Memphis Jewish life with grace and devotion for generations. I am very pleased to see that Jewish Living of the South Inc., and Jewish Scene Magazine editor and publisher Susan C. Nieman, have acquired this important and beloved cultural institution and have pledged to keep it going for another 95 years. I want to thank Herman and Bobbie Goldberger for their stewardship of The Hebrew Watchman and wish them well in retirement.



Beth Sholom congregants stock the Kosher Food Pantry at Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service at the MJCC

Beth Sholom members take Purim mitzvot project to next level

During Purim, everyone looks forward to assembling and delivering mishloach manot (food gift baskets) and matanot l'evyonim (giving to those in need). And this year was no exception.

But Beth Sholom Synagogue members took this mitzvot to a whole new level through the donation of both kosher food items and financial support for the Kosher Food Pantry at the Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service (FJFS) at the Memphis Jewish Community Center.

Initiated by Naomi Katz, Beth Sholom's vice president of programming, and spearheaded by the members of Beth Sholom's Tikkun Olam Committee, the food drive was enthusiastically embraced by synagogue leadership and congregation members.

Within a couple of weeks, the area set aside for food pantry donations was full of a variety of kosher, shelf-stable items for clients served through the FJFS food pantry.

Several congregants participating in the Purim drive were already aware of the community needs served by the pantry. Some donate fruit throughout the winter and glean donated produce from an area farmer's market during the growing season. Others deliver kosher meals and produce to FJFS clients on Friday mornings throughout the year.

Synagogue and Tikkun Olam Committee member Michelle Glazer and her daughters are involved in several aspects of the FJFS food program. She said her motivation for being involved in

the food drive and supporting the FJFS food program year-round is truly a family affair.

"My husband and I think it's important to teach our girls that there are people less fortunate than we are and to teach them about tikkun olam and about taking the small steps we can do to help heal the world," said Glazer. "My grandfather did Meals on Wheels deliveries when I was a kid, and it made a huge impact on me. It was something I learned the importance of at an early age."

In addition to over 300 food items, Beth Sholom congregants also made a large financial donation – almost \$800, which will be used to purchase other needed items for food pantry clients in the coming year.

The impact of the donation is very apparent to Miriam Cauly-Crisp, FJFS staffer who packs the food bags for clients every week. She noted, "Our Kosher Food Pantry bags are packed with love. We pack nutritious pantry staple items with the intent to offer balance to any meal. With the generous pantry donations from Beth Sholom Synagogue members, we will be better able to feed our community and help curb food insecurity among our clients and families."

For more information about Beth Sholom Synagogue and the Tikkun Olam Committee, contact the synagogue office at 901.683.3591. For more information about the Kosher Food Pantry or to find out about volunteer opportunities, contact the Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service of Memphis Jewish Community Center at 901.767.8511.

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Eisenberg's deli, NYC institution since 1929, closes indefinitely

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) — New York City's Eisenberg's deli, which had sold sandwiches and old-school Jewish dishes like egg creams and matzah ball soup since 1929, has closed.

New York magazine's Grub Street reported Thursday that a source familiar with the situation said the building's landlord wants to reopen the restaurant at some point, but its future is uncertain. The current owner, Warren Chiu, who bought the deli in 2018 with the goal of keeping its menu exactly the same, reportedly hadn't paid any rent since before the start of the pandemic.

He also reportedly moved to San Francisco, where he had opened an Eisenberg's in the city's Warwick International Hotel last year. As of 2018, Chiu was the vice president of development for the Warwick hotel group, which his father founded in 1980.

New York magazine said that Eisenberg's motto used to be "raising New York's cholesterol since 1929." In addition to the now rare egg cream, the deli also sold Dr. Brown's Cel-Ray soda.

Netflix premieres new docuseries about former 'haredi' fashion mogul

"My Unorthodox Life" will focus on the life of Julia Haart (nee Talia Leibov), who left the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community soon after marrying at the age of 19.



Julia Haart. Source: Instagram.

(JNS) – Netflix announced on March 10 the premiere of a new documentary series about fashion entrepreneur Julia Haart, a former member of the ultra-Orthodox haredi community.

"My Unorthodox Life" will focus on the personal and professional life of Haart, who was born Talia Leibov. She is now the CEO, co-owner and chief creative officer of Elite World Group, an international talent agency that represents more than 5,000 top models and celebrities across 50 countries.

The synopsis for the docuseries provided by Netflix stated, "Since taking the reins of a global talent empire, Haart has been on a mission to revolutionize the industry from the inside out, all while being a mother of four. Her children include a TikTok star, an app designer, a lawyer and a high-schooler torn between two conflicting cultures. Haart helps them reconcile their Orthodox upbringings with the modern world."

In addition to Haart, the project's executive producers include Jeff Jenkins from "Bling Empire," Ross Weintraub and Reinout Oerlemans. The docuseries is slated to premiere later this year.

Leibov left the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community soon after marrying at the age of 19. She is also the former creative director for the Italian luxury fashion brand La Perla.

Temple Israel offers learning Hebrew at any time, any place

Mitzvot help us to make our lives sacred. However, Jewish sages made a distinction between what they called "lighter" and "heavier" mitzvot. For example, Maimonides classified the act of celebrating a festival as a light mitzvah (in Hebrew, mitzvah kallah) and the mitzvah of learning Hebrew as a more serious commandment (in Hebrew, mitzvah chamurah). It is never too late to begin learning Hebrew or brushing up on what you once learned.

TIU (Temple Israel University) has amazing teachers who make learning Hebrew fun. Zoom has made it even easier during the pandemic. You don't even have to leave your house. Next semester classes require no pre-requisite and begin on Sunday, March 21, 2021, and run through Sunday, August 22, 2021.

"When I registered for this course, I didn't really know what to expect," said Susan Dreyfus. "Our teacher, Teri Peacock, is an awesome teacher. She is patient and understanding. As a class, we have become a very supportive group. We meet (through Zoom) during the week to study together. I look forward to our class each Sunday morning!"

"I have always loved learning new things, so when I read about the virtual Hebrew class at Temple, I was excited," said Deedee Perel. "Barbara Mansberg has made learning to read Hebrew fun. Not only does Barbara help us learn to pronounce and 'speak,' but she also explains the history behind many of the customs and pronunciations, teaches us the background of prayers, and makes the class come alive. I am amazed and thrilled that each week I can read more and more quickly."

Carolyn Mizne never learned Hebrew as a child but began learning at the age of 73 in the Adult Ulpan class at Temple Israel. "I completed the beginner class with Barbara Mansberg just before COVID-19. I was able to continue in the next class on Zoom this year with Teri Peacock's excellent teaching, and a wonderful group of other adult learners. I am finding new meaning in the prayers, and the best part may be that I am able to tell my children to never believe they are too old to learn something new."

For more information or to register, please contact TIU, Registrar Lynn Owen, at lynno@timemphis.org. All are welcome!



Temple Israel students learning Hebrew pre-COVID-19
Photo Credit: Diane Reich

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By Ted Roberts

Editor's note: Reprinted in memory of Ted Roberts in appreciation of his longtime service as a newspaper columnist. Mr. Roberts died March 2, 2020, in Huntsville, Ala.



Having been married more years than I care to reveal, let me tell you that during our marital partnership we've only argued about two things: 1) the number of raisins per cubic inch in kugel, rolled cabbage, and bread pudding. My minimum requirement is five and she ranges from three to four. And once in a while I down a hefty forkful and post swallowing realize with horror that I didn't chew a single raisin. And 2) leaves – the kind that fall in your yard and according to her, must be raked up in piles and deposited in the gutter for city pickup. To summarize, 68 years of bliss interrupted by approximately six raisin disputes and one leaf discussion a year.

Every year for 68 years (oops). I must admit that we once argued about a member of her family who thought we were a dandy and cheaper alternative to a room at the local Hilton. I won that one by deducting 50 per cent from the price of the local Hilton and adding the same to the Roberts rate.

So, over many years I've acquired some skills in debating – except for the annual leaf argument. I really won only once when I paid a homeless drunk a half-used bottle of 40-proof Burgundy to sub for me behind the

G-d rakes the leaves

rake. I can't count that as victory though, because her view that leaves should be raked prevailed.

The discussion is boringly identical every year: "Look, the yard is full of leaves."

My answer is clever – even scientific – and never works. "I read in a Harvard study by a yard scientist, a new field of study, that it's good for the grass."

"I'd like to see that study."

"I lost it."

Next, I try to impress upon her the immensity, the impossibility of the task. "Do you know how many leaves there are on your average Oak tree? Don't you understand that as I rake, say 10 leaves, 10 more are in the air and 10 times 10,000 more are on that leaf factory we call an Oak tree. And every time I create a substantial pile of leaves, the wind that plucks the leaves off the tree is scattering my pile all over the yard."

"And the Harvard study that I lost..." I try to continue. She just retrieves the rake that I've thrown across the yard, with a one-word reply, "Here." And during our conversation the tree – whose object is to drown us in leaves – has released more battalions of green paratroopers. It's impossible. I'm on a backwards treadmill. But there is one great hope that sustains me – that soothes my aching shoulders and arms. The wind. Oh, for a brisk, 40-knot wind from the south-southeast that will dump my leaves on my neighbor's yard and not hit the yard of my other neighbor (we live in a circle) who is south of me. A narrowly armed Northwest Zephyr that blesses me only – that's what I need.

If you can out-argue the wife and pray hard enough at bedtime for that precise 40-knot breeze that you need, you can watch the ball game instead of pulling a rake through a weed carpet of a yard. Delay – a slow strategic retreat to put it in military terms – will often avoid two hours of old-fashioned rural labor – the kind our ancestors fled from – in an unheated yard.

Tired and cold and no end in sight – exactly what the Great American Dream avoided. I need only one of three things: 1) an automated, you-sit-in-the-den-and-watch-the-game Rake Robot, 2) that homeless wanderer who needs an alcoholic lift and doesn't know the minimum wage has been raised from 50 cents an hour, to 75 cents. 3) yard with no trees, which means I'd have to remove five Maples that reach to the sky. No good. Chopping down trees with my steak knife (my only equipment besides that lousy rake) would exceed the energy requirement of my raking assignment.

Of course, there is one horrid fourth alternative – an all-out nuclear solution – get rid of the wife and find a sweet, young thing who has read that Harvard study. Nah, I'll wait for that precise wind that piles up all my leaves in my neighbor's yard.

But I'm not worried. If science has figured out watermelons without seeds, onions that don't make your eyes water, and lean pigs without fat – well, how long before they invent trees without leaves.

The syndicated humor of Ted, the Scribbler on the Roof, has appeared in newspapers around the U.S., on National Public Radio, and numerous web sites.

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Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Jeremiah and Elicia Rothschild of Atlanta, Ga., on the birth of their son, Noah Jacob, on February 20, 2021. Jeremiah is the son of Carolyn Marton-Rothschild and Elicia is the daughter of Marilyn Berman of Chevy Chase, MD.

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Kustoff appointed to U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council for 117th Congress

WASHINGTON, DC — Congressman David Kustoff (TN-08) announced his re-appointment by Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, which works in coordination with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, consists of 55 members appointed by the President, five members from the U.S. House of Representatives, five members from the U.S. Senate, and three members from the Departments of Education, Interior, and State.

"I am honored to once again be appointed as a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council for the 117th Congress. Our work on this important council is to lead our country in commemorating the 6 million Jews and millions of others who perished at the hands of the Nazi regime during the Holocaust," said Rep. Kustoff. "I look forward to continuing to carry out the mission of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council and ensure this evil never happens again."

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Brazilian police raid church whose pastor prayed for another Holocaust

By Cnaan Liphshiz
(JTA) — Federal police in Brazil raided the church whose pastor had prayed with congregants for another Holocaust.

Friday’s raid in Rio de Janeiro was part of an operation titled “Shalom” by the federal police against Tupirani da Hora Lores, who heads the Pentecostal Generation Jesus Christ Church, Globo reported. Police confiscated literature there.

Last year, da Hora Lores was filmed preaching and praying with his congregants, saying “Massacre the Jews, God, hit them with your sword, for they have left God, they have left the nations.” His congregants are heard repeating his words passionately.

“They contrived, went with prostitutes, and when they were



Pastor Tupirani da Hora Lores
Courtesy: Sinaggoa Sem Fronteiras

told to repent they said they’d do it but they lied,” the pastor said, possibly in reference to the forced conversions to Christianity during the Inquisition.

“God, what you have done in

World War II, you must do again, this is what we ask for in our prayers to you: Justice, justice, justice!” da Hora Lores shouted at his church, a small and radical evangelical congregation.

Raniery Cavalcanti, a lawyer for Sinagoga Sem Fronteiras, a network of Jewish communities in Brazil, filed a complaint for incitement against da Hora Lores. The Jewish Federation of Rio de Janeiro and the CONIB National Jewish umbrella also took legal actions against da Hora Lores.

The pastor “should have been detained,” Rabbi Gilberto Ventura, the Sao Paulo-based founder of Sinagoga Sem Fronteiras, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “But the fact police raided his church is already a big development.”

Brooklyn rabbi who fled to Israel to escape sexual assault charges in 2010 extradited to US

By Shira Hanau

(JTA) — A Brooklyn rabbi who had fled to Israel in 2010 to escape arrest on charges of sexually assaulting children was arraigned in a Brooklyn courthouse on March 11.

Gershon Kranczer, 65, had eluded authorities for years in Israel before being arrested in January 2020. He was denied bail in his first U.S. court hearing, which took place a day after Kranczer was extradited from Israel.

Israel has become a haven for dozens of Jewish sexual abusers fleeing charges in recent years, particularly those in the haredi Orthodox community who are aided by Israeli friends or relatives.

In another prominent recent case Malka Leifer, a former principal of a Jewish school in Australia, was extradited in January to face prosecution there for sexually abusing students at her school nearly eight years after fleeing to Israel.

Kranczer was the principal of a Brooklyn yeshiva before fleeing to Israel, where he did not immigrate or have a residency permit, amid a criminal investigation in 2010. The U.S. Justice Department asked Israel to extradite Kranczer for years, but Israeli authorities tried and failed to find him until January 2020, when he was arrested.

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said in a statement Thursday that Kranczer would be charged with “second-degree course of sexual conduct against a child, second-degree criminal sexual act and second-degree sexual abuse.”

Gonzalez said the abuse of the two children occurred on multiple occasions between August 1996 and February 2003 beginning when the children were 6 and 11 years old.

Czech prime minister opens Jerusalem embassy office on COVID-related Israel trip with Hungarian counterpart

By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) — The Czech Republic opened a branch of its embassy in Jerusalem, becoming the second EU member state to make such a move after Hungary.

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis attended a ceremony Thursday marking the opening of the diplomatic mission in the west of Israel’s capital city. Also visiting Israel Thursday was Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. During a joint news conference with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the visitors said they had come to learn from Israel’s experience in fighting COVID-19.

Netanyahu thanked both visitors for opening missions in Jerusalem and for how “they assist us on the international stage as true friends do.” The two leaders came to “see how we can cooperate on COVID,” he added.

Israel, where most resident have received at least one vaccine injection, has “become the example on how to fight COVID,” Babis said, adding, “It feels reassuring to know the Czech Republic has a friend it can rely on.” Orban called Israel “a world champion in fighting COVID.”

The Czech Foreign Ministry has told journalists that the new mission is not a recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital city, which the United States in 2017 recognized but the European Union and many other countries and international bodies have not pending Israeli peace talks with the Palestinians.

But observers such as Petr Kratochvil, a political science expert from the Institute of International Relations Prague, have argued that the mission’s opening cannot be seen separately from the debate about the status of Jerusalem.

“Rudolf Jindrak from the

OBITUARIES

Dr. Marvin R. Bensman

Dr. Marvin R. Bensman of Weston, Fla., formerly of Germantown, Tenn., passed away March 2, 2021 at the age of 83.

He was born in Two Rivers, Wis., to David and Rose Swerdlow Bensman. He was devoted to his wife, Harriet, his children and grandchildren.

He leaves his daughter Lauren B. Adkins of Weston, Fla., and his son David A. Bensman (Saiko) of Bartlett, Tenn. He also leaves his grandson Berret Adkins and two granddaughters, Rebecca Bensman and Raven Adkins; his sister, Laeh McHenry, his sister-in-law, Sandra Bresnick and his uncle, Morton Swerdlow, as well as nephews, nieces and great-nephews and -nieces.

Dr. Bensman received a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin and a J.D. from the University of Memphis. He taught at the University of Vermont and at the University of Memphis. He was a noted scholar in the field of Broadcast History and Communications Law. He was a member of the Broadcast Education, an author of three books and scores of articles and was chairman of the Germantown Cable Board for 25 years, where he was named a Hometown Hero. He loved old radio, movies and was a voracious reader. He and his family were longtime members of Beth Shalom Synagogue.

The family requests donations be made to the Kidney Foundation, Jewish Family Service of Broward County, Florida, Beth Shalom Synagogue in Memphis, or a charity of the donor’s choice.



[Czech] presidential office described this as a highly significant symbolic step and the president’s spokesman, Jiri Ovcacek, even connected it directly with the effort to move the embassy there,” Kratochvil told Radio Prague International.

The new office will focus on cultural issues and be staffed by a diplomat and a consular department employee.

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