



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

Member Profile

Scott Greenberg Has Something to “Wine” About

BY OONA STEIGLITZ

On a beautiful spring Sunday, on a bench outside of Burning Tree Elementary School, I met with Scott Greenberg to interview him for this profile. Something about him looked so familiar. After a few minutes of Jewish geography, we figured out that we had met before. I had been the preschool teacher for his son Brian in the Hearts class at Adas Israel a decade ago. Now Brian is 14, and Scott and his family are active members of Beth Chai Congregation.

Scott describes himself as “California Jewish” and his mellow outlook proves it. Scott grew up in Bakersfield, Calif., and went to college at the University of California Irvine (go Anteaters!), where he met the woman who would become his wife, Cindy Welsh.

Both came to Washington, D.C., for graduate school intending to study medicine. And both originally planned to return to California. But things didn’t work out exactly that way. Cindy did, indeed, study medicine at Georgetown University and became a physician (her specialty is radiation oncology). Scott, on the other hand, switched gears and decided to study pharmacology.

After graduating, he spent two years as a legislative aide to Sen. Pete Wilson of California, taking advantage of his studies to serve as an expert in health and science issues. He also spent those years moonlighting as a bartender at some night spots in Georgetown well known to many of us: J. Paul’s, Houston’s and The Third Edition. He recalls those hectic days with amusement and no whining.

Editor’s note: This article is part of a new series of profiles of Beth Chai members. If you are interested in being profiled, or have a suggestion of a member you’d like to know more about, please drop us a line at browne.hughes@gmail.com.

At the time, there was no way to know that this night job would foretell his current expertise—that of a wine connoisseur. But more on that in a moment.



In June 1985, Scott and Cindy married. That November, he “fell into” the insurance business. Despite the fact that the industry has an 80-percent failure rate, he thrived at it for 16 years. Then, in 2001, Greenberg—along with partners David Wexler and Keith Eig—started his own firm.

Through his work in the insurance business, Scott developed a friendship with an advisor, Jim, an estate planning attorney, who introduced

Scott to the world of wine ... mostly drinking and buying, but some selling. Over time, Scott and Cindy built and stocked a small wine cellar in their home. According to Scott, this interest in wine “changed my life.”

Then in spring 1998, there was a tragedy in the wine community—and Scott’s life. Bruce Bassin, whose father founded the iconic wine shop Addy Bassin’s MacArthur Beverages in D.C., died of a sudden heart attack, leaving behind his wife and three very young children. Scott had been scheduled to accompany Bassin on a wine trip to Bordeaux, France, just two weeks after this terrible event.

With the speed of a popping Champagne cork, Scott met with Ruth Bassin, Bruce’s mother to try to find some good from such a terrible event. Scott, then on the board of directors of the local chapter of the American Heart Association, convinced Ruth that they should hold a fundraiser for the AHA and start a foundation in memory of Bruce. He proposed they hold a French wine tasting (Bruce’s passion) at his home.

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**Please Join Us ...
Last-Day-of-School Gathering
to Honor Education Director Rain Zohav**

Please join us on Sunday, May 16, the last day of Sunday school, to wish our outgoing Education Director Rain Zohav a fond farewell and best wishes.

We'll enjoy music and a light lunch immediately following the end-of-the-year class presentations at approximately 11:15 a.m.

We welcome donations of dessert and beverages—and help with setting up and cleaning up. Please



contact any of the following organizers if you'd like to help:

Michele McNally
(mcsturm5@verizon.net or 301-986-1887),
Phyllis Kristal
(kristal@fr.com), or
Shannon Rudisill
(slrudisill@cox.net).

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Volunteers Chair	Keith Parsky*	ketih@parsky.org
Tot Shabbat Coordinator	Joe Gitchell	jgitchel@pinneyassociates.com
Website Manager	Daniel Korn*	dkorn@comcast.net

Financial Need Policy: Beth Chai welcomes anyone to attend services, become a member, or have their children attend our Beth Chai Sunday school, regardless of ability to pay. Considerations available include extended payment plans, service exchange, and fee reduction. Financial aid determination will be made on a case-by-case basis. Please contact Joe Gitchell, treasurer, for assistance.

MESSAGE FROM THE RABBI



As I write these words, my heart is still glowing from the joyous experience of our recent congregational Passover Seder. As I'm sure you're all aware, the Seder focuses on reliving the experiences of the past—expatriation, persecution, poverty, homelessness and, finally, the establishment of our nationhood. But it is significant the Seder ends by invoking the name of the Prophet Elijah and the promise of the Messianic era—the future age of world peace and human fulfillment.

I think it's unfortunate that so much of how Jews today connect with our heritage is by identifying with our past. We rabbis are constantly calling upon our members to revere ancient wisdom and to remember the words our ancestors. In some ways, this makes Judaism today seem parasitic—like living off some kind of spiritual trust fund that was established four thousand years ago.

Yet this approach to the interpreting of Judaism today, as pervasive as it is, is not authentic. Ours is a covenant religion. In the Torah, our archetypal ancestor Abram makes a pact with God, leaves Babylonia, changes his name, and heads west, putting all history away. This consciousness was all future-looking, new-forming, yearning for the future, no mourning for the loss of the past. Our family history was reset to zero, all the pointers set to the unknown, the wilderness, the becoming.

Yet the various forms of institutional Judaism in America today—Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, Renewal, Humanistic, whatever—all have betrayed that Covenant. The most observant, the most fervent, the most idealistic, the purist, the most devoted, the most fanatical seem to have lost sight of the Covenant and its inherently forward-looking nature. Instead we have turned the pointers of our ethnic consciousness 180 degrees. We have set them completely backwards. We have become preservers of the past.

Lack of observance is not the problem with Judaism today, paucity of knowledge is not the problem, lack of commitment is not the problem, intermarriage is not the problem, assimilation is not the problem. The problem is we have no vision, no yearning, no expectation of the messiah, no hope, no struggle for redemption.

With no future to work for, no wonder the present eventually disappoints us; no wonder when we come together to celebrate as a people, we really expect to go back in time, to return to the past, to “get in touch with our heritage.”

To the extent that our numbers are dwindling through assimilation, it is not because our children have lost the link to the past, but because they have no link to the future. I believe that we're wasting time teaching Jewish history to our children if we can't also provide a forward-looking sense of purpose as a people.

And until we forge a sense of purpose as a people—a vision that cuts across denominations and movements and parties—we will not be able to nourish ourselves existentially. Our Judaism will continue to be all self-reference, nostalgia, and the worship of relics. We plant nothing, and so we reap nothing. We feed on the past, we consume the remembered remains of our ancestors' lives.

When we symbolically open our doors to Elijah the Wanderer, we are renewing our journey to spiritual redemption. Redemption for the Jews in America will come when we stop being esteemed for our traditions, and start being admired for our aspirations.

Redemption for the world will come when all those who dwell in darkness will be bathed in light, when the lost and the forgotten and the broken will be found and remembered and made whole. And when the strangers within our midst will be revealed to us as our own flesh and bones and blood, as one with our own minds and our own hearts.

Rabbi Arthur Blecher

OPINION

The Righteous American Jew

BY HOWARD FEINSTEIN

Recent adult education sessions focusing on courage under fire—particularly those gentiles who took great risk on behalf of the Jewish population—bring to mind the American phenomenon of the Righteous Jew: our brethren who, while experiencing anti-Semitism themselves, chose to work to foster opportunity for other groups, rather than wallow in their own victimhood. Despite considerable effort, I have never really understood this phenomenon any more than I understand why certain people in the South, in my civil rights days, stepped up to the plate, while others always



Rabbi Heschel (second from right), marching for civil rights with Dr. King and others at the forefront of the movement.

managed to come up with a good excuse to keep their heads down.

Although failing miserably to come up with any brilliant theory to explain the roots of righteousness, I remain obsessed with this topic. I need to know whether the relatives of our Norwegian neighbor were Quisling collaborators during World War II, or took part in resistance activities. If I meet a fellow attorney who, like me, was in Alabama back in the day, I have to know what stand he or she took when bullwhips, police dogs, and tear gas ruled the day. When I learn that one of my students at the University of Maryland is from Wyoming, I try (not particularly tactfully) to dis-

cern whether she protested the crucifixion of gay college student Matthew Sheppard.

The amazing record of Jewish leadership in American social movements emanates, in great measure, from the unprecedented and transformative freedom and confidence which developed in the American Jewish community during the generations following the initial immigrant period. The religious and cultural aspects of this phenomenon (downplayed by most Jewish scholars and commentators) are compellingly documented by Rabbi Blecher in *The New American Judaism* (Palgrave MacMillan: 2007). This development effectively freed American Jews—both economically and psychologically—to expand their horizons beyond their own community for the first time, and to make tremendous contribution to the promise of a new America, truly committed to its birthright promise of Liberty and Justice for All.

The litany is endless:

Labor Movement: In *The Beginning*, the struggle for decent compensation and working conditions was led by Jews. Samuel Gompers, father of the American labor movement, founded the American Federation of Labor. David Dubinsky, leader of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (to which my grandmother belonged), was also a founder of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. ... “You don’t have to be Jewish” to lead an organization of teachers (arguably our most underpaid occupation) but it doesn’t hurt any: consider national officials such as Albert Shanker, David Selden, Sandra Feldman, and Randi Weingarten. Closer to home, there’s our own Tom Israel, executive director of the Montgomery County Education Association. ... The longtime counsel and chief strategist for the United Farmworkers Union—as economically deprived a group as one could imagine—was Jerry Cohen. ... The politically indispensable leader of today’s “new” labor movement is Andy Stern, head of the Services Employees International Union.

Civil Rights Movement: The NAACP, the country’s pre-eminent civil rights organization, was founded by and led by Jews for almost all of its first 65 years. Its annual medal is still named for Joel Spingarn, its founder. ... Martin Luther King’s chief early advisor, counsel, and strategist was

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NOTES FROM THE EDUCATION DIRECTOR: Farewell To Beth Chai



Dear Congregants,

As I visit classrooms and listen to teachers, I can't help but be pleased with what I see and hear. I see students engaged in learning in every classroom. I hear teachers saying, "My students worked right through their recess, because they wanted to keep discussing the issue of where their values come from," or "My students were so full of questions today, we couldn't finish everything I had planned." As I meet with teachers one-on-one, I keep affirming that each teacher "attends to children's questions and comments with care and respect," a key component of what we together have created at Beth Chai.

It will be hard to leave. As I write this, my last column for the Beth Chai newsletter, I am struck by how many, many people I want to thank for the past 10 years. There is no way to list you all. But here are some categories that many of you will recognize. If you are one of the many parents who schleps your children regularly to Sunday school, thank you. If you are one of the parents that volunteers to set up snack, checks classrooms, helps with holiday parties, brings supplies, returns coffee mugs or the coffee urns, sets up chairs, cleans up the all-purpose room, or puts order into the supply cart, thank you.

If you are a parent that has participated in the Parent Council, coming up with so many ideas for improvement of the school, thank you. If you make it your business to welcome new members warmly into the community, thank you. If you connect with your child's teacher about any concerns or suggestions, thank you. If you have invited friends, neighbors and family to Beth Chai, thank you.

If you are a teacher at Beth Chai, then you have sent in lesson plans, conferred with the education director and other teachers, listened to your students, played with your students, devised great activities that allow each student to have a chance to shine and a chance to grow, integrated the arts into your lessons, been attentive to the classroom set up and clean up, thought about individual students' needs, and provided for cognitive, emotional, social and even physical needs of your students within the confines of our very short time. But most importantly, you have created a classroom community that fosters respect, integrity, consideration, critical thinking skills, individual responsibility, and a commitment to Tikkun Olam—to repairing the world. Without you, the school would not exist. I can't thank you enough for the great job each of you has done this year—and for some of you, for many years.

If you are one of the people who has helped me think about the school, you know who you are. You have helped to make so many of my years at Beth Chai a joy. Thank you.

As all of you look to the future, I want to ask that you keep in mind the central value of continuing to build community. I believe this one of the most important elements that has made Beth Chai such a unique congregation and the Beth Chai Sunday school a place where, when children are asked if they want to attend, they answer, "Yes." This sense of community is grounded in the Jewish and humanist value of respecting each person for who they are. It stems from knowing that our intellectual learning goes well when we also attend to the social and emotional needs of both adults and children. Community does not happen automatically. It is the result of very deliberate and conscious thought and action on the part of many.

I will never forget the friends I have made at Beth Chai and hope that we can keep in touch. I wish the best possible future for the Beth Chai Sunday school and the congregation as a whole.

Have a lovely summer.

B'Shalom,

Rain Zohav

Board Elections to be Held at May 23 Annual Meeting

Please join us for Beth Chai's annual meeting and elections of our 2010-2011 board of directors on Sunday, May 23, at 6 p.m., in the Fireside Room of RRUUC. All interested members are encouraged to attend.

Beth Chai's nominating committee—comprised of Lisa Sanfuentes, Marji Ross, and Elise Browne Hughes—presents the following slate of candidates.

Nominated to serve one-year terms as officers of the board:

- Marji Ross, president
- Rob Rosenberg, vice president
- Joe Gitchell, treasurer
- Sara Duke, secretary

Nominated to serve two-year terms as committee chairs:

- Deborah Balaschack, liturgy chair
- Howie Feinstein, music chair
- Ken Jacobson, programs chair
- Daniel Korn, webmaster

Filling out the board are members who will return to serve the second year of their two-year terms:

- Elise Browne Hughes, communications chair
- Michele McNally, membership chair
- Keith Parsky, volunteers chair
- Julie Vigdor, social action chair

Further details about the annual meeting will be announced soon. Watch your email inbox for details.

RIGHTEOUS—continued from page 4

Stanley Levison. ... Perhaps the movement's most shocking act of violence, which galvanized national support, was the martyrdom of black Mississippian James Chaney and two New York Jews, Andrew Goodman and Mickey Schwerner, principally at the hands of law enforcement officials, Klansmen, and clergy. ... In the front row, hand in hand, of the Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march were King; Rev. Ralph Abernathy; Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel; and Maurice Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. ... Peggy Robin and her family, as well as Fred Mittelman and other Beth Chai members also played their part in America's finest hour.

Women's Movement: It has been said that most women's liberation meetings in the movement's early days took place in New York synagogues, to cut down on travel expenses. ... Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, provided the intellectual spark.



Gloria Steinem

... First among several equals as tactician and public face of the movement was Gloria Steinem. ... Congresswoman Bella Abzug was the primary early legislative congressional and political leader.

Gay Equality: Almost all of the organizers of the landmark Stonewall March in New York were Jewish. ... The movement's first major openly gay public official, and foremost martyr, was Harvey Milk. ... The founder of Act Up, the organization that led the battle for AIDS research and public funding, was Larry Kramer. ... Playwright Tony Kushner ("Angels in America") has been the movement's prize-winning artistic chronicler.

With the exception of Rabbi Heschel (who, after all, was born into a rabbinical family in Poland), the individuals listed above, and many more, were so-called "non-observant" Jews. Most, I suspect, would be quite comfortable in the friendly confines of Beth Chai. They were, in effect, Jewish humanists, although they probably did not know it.

They surely experienced no small amount of anti-Semitism themselves, but devoted considerable energy to ensuring that others would not have to endure similar—indeed, generally far worse—indignities. By the 1960s, anti-Semitism remained alive and well in the United States (for readers younger than me, trust me on this one!). However, due to the sacrifices and wisdom of our parents—whose earlier American experience enabled them to transmit to us a sense of optimism and relatively boundless expectations—we baby-boomers were able to surmount these prejudices in our own lives and careers.

As our beloved late member Ron Leve used to say, we are, if nothing else, a "tribe." As such, we are resented, and sometimes discriminated against, by others. However, for the most part, we have reached the point in this country where those prejudices will not deter us from achieving our individual goals. Those tribal members who continue the tradition of transmitting this sense of optimism and high expectations to others—for whom prejudice will likely never completely disappear—shall be known as The Righteous among us.

Community Work Day: A Success, Indoors and Out

Sunday, April 25, was Beth Chai's annual Community Work Day. While the day threatened rain, it ended up being a beautiful and busy day for many Beth Chai members.

The 40 or so people who came for the morning activities at Burning Tree Elementary made about 300 bags of trail mix and about 130 toiletry kits for the DC Central Kitchen, created over 50 get well and thank you cards for the wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and almost finished stitching together knitted and crocheted squares to make a charity afghan. It was a fun and busy morning!



People were so energized we ran out of supplies before we ran out of energy. It was particularly great to see the excitement and enthusiasm our Sunday school kids have for spending a morning doing something for someone less fortunate than them. But even with all the work we accomplished, there was still time for people to socialize and enjoy coffee and bagels.

Then in the afternoon, about a dozen people made their way

to Mark Israel's organic farm in North Potomac. Not too hot, not too cold, and not raining ... perfect farming weather! Those who turned out helped plant potatoes and cauliflower, thinned a spinach patch, repaired a deer fence, and weeded, among other farming activities. Mark was amazed that our Beth Chai farmers were so productive—he also ran out of jobs before the workers ran out of steam.

So it was a productive and rewarding day—inside and out. I hope those who helped felt good about the time they spent; I'm sure those on the receiving end of our efforts are appreciative and grateful.



Thank you to everyone who helped make the day a success—including the parents who helped their kids figure out that a healthy bag of trail mix needs more than just M&Ms and chocolate chips! If you didn't make it to this year's Community Work Day, I'm sorry you missed out on the fun because that's really what it was. In fact, maybe next year we'll rename it Community FUN Day!

—Julie Vigdor
Social Action Co-Chair

SCOTT GREENBERG—continued from page 1

When word got out about Bruce's untimely death and the fundraiser, Robert M. Parker Jr.—“The King of Wine” in the United States—arranged for 25 chateau owners (and more than a few cases of their best wines) to be flown in from France for the tasting. It was a great success—so great, in fact, that the event quickly became too large for Scott and Cindy's house. Now held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, “Heart's Delight” has been raising funds for the American Heart Association for 11 years.

In matters of their home, things have not been as sweet as a glass of Sauternes for the Greenbergs. In November 2000, they came to find out that the home they loved on Rockwood Parkway N.W., near American University, was sitting atop a former chemical weapons dump. Toxic compounds had been carelessly buried on the site after they were no longer needed by scientists at the university after World War I. When the university offered the Greenbergs a tidy sum for their property, they accepted and headed for the suburbs.

Now their home in Potomac is where they toast their good fortune and raise their three sons: Sam (16), Brian (14), and Andy (12). All three of them play ice hockey. Sam is a defenseman, Brian a goalie, and Andy a forward. Brian also plays at the junior varsity level at Churchill H.S. and their team just won the state championship. Plus, Andy's youth hockey team won their house championship! Their choice of sport comes as no surprise as their Dad acts as

one of the commissioners of the Montgomery County Youth Hockey Association, which has about 1,300 players. This year, Scott—after a five year run—will (finally) retire as commissioner.

Perhaps he'll spend the newfound time helping Andy prepare for his Oct. 5 bar mitzvah, or picking out the right wine for the occasion!

Scott is also happily busy sharing his knowledge about the fruit of the vine. On radio station WTOP 103.5 FM, he provides a commentary called “wine of the week.” You can hear him every Friday evening at 6:50 p.m.—or on one of the rebroadcasts offered three times over the weekend. He also writes a weekly syndicated wine column, “The Vine Guy,” that runs in D.C. (in the *Washington Examiner*), Denver, and San Francisco. Cindy contributes as a guest columnist (“The Vine Gal”) four to five times a year with an emphasis on wine related travel.

What adventures lie ahead for Scott and his family? This summer they will explore Turkey, and the Ministry of Wine has invited them to tour the Turkish wine country as part of their two-week excursion. So if you hear someone talking about the delights of Turkish wine on the radio, chances are that it will be Scott.

Wrapping up this interview, I couldn't help but ask: What is Scott's favorite wine? With a beaming smile, he replies, “the wine I'm sharing with friends!”



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