On Wednesday, January 19, 2022 the BOD of the WRJC had a historic meeting passing 7 resolutions allowing our community to move forward choosing a contractor to begin renovation of our new Elkhorn home.

This is an exciting time for our WRJC and we want to thank all of you, our donors for being so generous, and making this project possible. We thank you for your continued and future support of this incredible project.

Our 15 member Board of Directors have all played exceptional roles moving us forward and we are indebted to their enthusiasm and dedication throughout this long process. Our building committee co-chairs, Marty Lyon, Jeffrey Rose and Judy Teller Kaye, have expended hundreds of hours throughout all the building phases of our new home – their dedication has been remarkable. Phil Goldstein, Juli Roos, Ron Greenspan, and our legal consultant Bob Safron have all been instrumental in getting us to this construction phase. Moving forward Ron Greenspan will serve as WRJC’s “Owner Representative” during the construction process. As you will be reading in the next few pages Jeff Rose will continue as our building fundraising chair as we ask you to recommit/commit your charitable giving for our new home.

While much of our focus concerned our new home, Rabbi Robbi led Zoom Friday services November through February. We want to thank Robbi for her spiritual leadership and guidance through a difficult Covid winter for herself, her family and many of us. Our Sunday school has 22 students taught by Morah Dana Henry using our Shalom Learning Curriculum. School registration is up thanks to new young families joining the WRJC.

We are currently co-sponsoring an initiative with Congregation Ahavath Bet Israel (CABI) in Boise of a virtual Adult Jewish Education program throughout Idaho. Our first Zoom was hosted by the ADL on antisemitism and had registrants from all over Idaho.

Our Ladies Social on February 14, snowshoeing at Adams Gulch was well attended on a warm sunny day. The coffee & desserts were appreciated by all.

Our Adult Education committee is currently finalizing plans for our summer & fall in person programs, dates will be posted in our newsletter. The Sun Valley Jewish Film Festival is scheduled for July with the final dates to be announced soon.

Our Mezuzah Project for new members, chaired by Barry Karas, will offer a mezuzah to be affixed in a ceremony conducted by Rabbi Robbi. Many of our new members have graciously accepted our gift and we hope to eventually expand this program.

Our WRJC membership reached 200 families and your board will work diligently in maintaining our programming and services to our members. All this and more could not be accomplished without the dedication and commitment of our Executive Director Claudie Goldstein. She is instrumental in making our WRJC successful. From membership to our financial health, Claudie’s heart and soul makes our WRJC so meaningful for all of us.

Yasher Koach to all,

Josh Kleinman and Susan Green
Dear Members and Friends,

Everyone affiliated with the Wood River Jewish Community should be so proud that our community has grown from a few families celebrating holidays to the only Jewish community and synagogue within a hundred miles.

Today we have 200 members here in this wonderful valley that we all love. This would not be the same without a Jewish community offering lifelong learning, worship and related spiritual activities. In order to make all this happen we are privileged to have our very own part time Rabbi and religious school staff who bring us the programs that are a crucial part of Jewish life. This would not be possible without your support in giving generously to our Annual Jewish Life Appeal which is part of our annual sustainability campaigns.

We ask you to make your contribution today. Our community begins right here as The Wood River Jewish Community will now join nearly a dozen churches in the valley with a place to call home. We will genuinely be a part of the community.

We urge you to join in making this campaign a success.

Sincerely,

For the Development Committee,
Jeff Rose, Vice President

Claudie Goldstein, Executive Director/Director of Development
Development Committee members: Margaret Gold, Phil Goldstein, Joanne Mercer, Bob Safron, Gail Stern, Rhea Schwartz

Give because without You there is no “Us”

ANNUAL RABBI SUPPORT CAMPAIGN
Enclosed is my/our contribution. Enclosed is my/our pledge to be processed before June 30, 2022

$5,000 $2,500 $1,000 $500 $360 $180 OTHER: $...........

CHECK ENCLOSED:  DONATE ON LINE: visit our website: wrjc.org/donate
CREDIT CARD #: ________________________________ Exp. Date ________ CV_______
BILLING NAME: _______________________________________________________________________
BILLING ZIP: __________ PHONE: ___________ EMAIL: _______________________________

Please recognize this donation in honor/memory of: ________________________________

Please keep this gift anonymous.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT
Even those in our society who are not religious – of any faith - in personal practice or history know the story of Passover – the redemption and Exodus of the ancient Israelites from 300+ years of slavery in Egypt. Many great films depict this story - my favorite being Cecil B. De Mille’s 1956 epic film, “The Ten Commandments,” starring Charlton Heston. Four hours in length, with a soaring score and some very dated special effects, the Hollywood-ized story (Edward G. Robinson is even in it!) remains a true classic today. I assign all my Bar and Bat Mitzvah students this movie as homework in our studies together. With that in mind, I would love to present some...

Interesting & Fun Facts About Passover!

- Passover is the MOST observed of all the Jewish holidays. Many Jews who do not participate Jewishly throughout the year still find their way to a Passover seder.

- The word in Hebrew for Egypt is “Mitzrayim” (MEETZ rah-yim), which means “a narrow place.” Narrow spaces? Narrow mindedness? Discuss.

- The English term, “Passover,” specifically refers to the angel of death “passing over” the houses of the Israelites when the 10th and final plague, the slaying of the firstborn, hit Egypt. According to the Torah, the Israelites were told to put lamb’s blood on the doorposts of their homes to identify themselves as Israelites. We mourn the loss of life of the Egyptians in our at Passover seders.

- “Seder” (which means “order” in Hebrew) is the name of the festive ritualized meal with special (and delicious!) foods, taking place on most commonly on the first and second nights of Passover, although any night is ok.

- During the seder, the doors are flung open wide to invite in all who may be hungry.

- “Haggadah” (“the telling”) is the name of the Jewish text explaining the complete story of Passover, and is used during the seder. Haggadot can be customized and there are hundreds of different versions.

- Food included in the ritual seder: charoset (cha-RO-set), a mixture of apples, nuts and wine to represent the mortar used by the Israelite slaves to build Pharaoh’s cities; parsley, representing spring, dipped in salt water to represent the tears of the Israelite people; horseradish, represent the bitterness of slavery; a shank bone (not eaten) to represent the lamb (and lamb is often one of the courses for the seder meal, as well); egg to represent the renewal of life; and, matza, the unleavened bread that represents that the hastily departing Israelites that did not have time to let their bread rise in their retreat from Egypt.

One of the most beloved Eastern European foods is matza ball soup, a rich broth with dumplings, made from matza meal. Different Jewish ethnic groups have different food traditions – Syrian Jews eat differently than Eastern European Jews or Moroccan Jews or Indian Jews.

- A popular and traditional Hebrew song performed during Passover is called "Dayeynu" (“it would have been enough.”) It’s VERY catchy!

- During the eight days of Passover only unleavened bread (matzoh) is eaten and foods containing yeast or leavening at all are strictly avoided.

- According to tradition, four cups of wines are consumed at the festive meal. Those who cannot have so much wine can have grape juice instead.

- During World War I, in Vilna, Poland, when it was very difficult to find kosher wine, the rabbinical authorities made a special announcement to allow sweet tea in the Seder, instead of the traditional four cups of wine.

- Many centuries ago, Jewish people who lived in the Sahara desert used to abandon their fortified villages on the Passover day and march into the desert, in memory of the first Passover. Many Jewish people today do the same today: camping and celebrating in the desert.

Chag sameach!
Passover: Remembering that We Were Remembered

By far the most celebrated holiday/festival in Judaism is Passover – 70% of Jews in the US find their way to a Passover seder. Even those who consider themselves Jew“ish” enjoy the customs and foods and I bet no one forgets to sing “Daiyenu.” (It would have been enough!)

Judaism is a religion of remembering, and the tradition of Passover is a great example of how the concept of memory preservation works in Judaism. The story of Passover includes multiple occasions of God protecting the Israelites because God fulfills the promise S/He made to them. Passover, then, is the time when Jews remember that God remembered them.

Passover is a holiday about freedom because it celebrates the Israelites’ liberation from slavery in Egypt. But it’s also a holiday about reaching Israel which for almost 2,000 years (since Roman times) was an unfulfilled aspiration. But after Israel was established as a state in 1948, that part of the holiday has taken on a whole new layer of significance.

The Passover story in Exodus has been extremely resonant for those who are not Jewish as well. African American slaves, in particular, used the story of Exodus as a metaphor for their struggle and an expression of hope for their own liberation. The spiritual “Go Down, Moses,” is about both ancient Jewish and antebellum African American slaves, and Harriet Tubman, the leader of the Underground Railroad, became known as “Moses” herself.

Because the Seder (the traditional Passover dinner) is organized around telling the Passover story, it’s an opportunity for Jews to connect themselves with their history; to think more consciously about those who are still oppressed today; and to hope that people today will know freedom. Many Jews make an effort during the Seder to connect the suffering of ancient Jewish slaves to contemporary oppression of Jews and all people, addressing ethnic strife and migrant rights, poverty, or other issues. This year, our hearts are with the Jews in Ukraine.

Passover also distinguishes itself from other Jewish holidays because it’s a holiday primarily celebrated in the home. However community Seders, where we can raise our voices together in gratefulness, help us realize our blessings as Am Yisrael - the people of Israel. This can make the holiday feel more like Thanksgiving than like a traditional, “dress up and go to” services holiday. It also means that individual families have a lot of leeway to create and maintain their own Passover traditions. With so many different customs, Haggadot choices and family traditions, there are no two seders alike!

The Seder traditionally ends with participants saying, “next year in Jerusalem” which historically has been an aspirational call for the return to the Jewish homeland. Since the creation of Israel, having next year’s Seder in Jerusalem has become actually doable – my family’s seder I attended there lasted well after midnight – and required the eating of four entire pieces of matzoh! As my mom Felice Sherwin always said: “Israel is the miracle that God gave us in our lifetimes.”

B’ chol dor vador chayav adam li’rot et atzmo k’ilu hu hatza miMitzrayim. In all generations it is our duty to consider ourselves as if we had come forth from Egypt.

May your celebrations be joyous and meaningful! Chag kasher v’sameach”—Mark and I wish you a happy and kosher holiday!

Rabbi Robbi
THE BROOKS FAMILY

Roger and Toby Brooks have three children and seven grandchildren. Both of us grew up in West Los Angeles. After marrying we moved to Beverly Hills where all of our children went to school. We lived there for 34 years. As our children married and had children of their own they moved to Calabasas and the Valley, so we followed them. We now live in Encino and when we’re in California we split our time between Encino and our home in La Quinta.

A few years ago we were introduced to the Treasure Valley and immediately fell in love with it. We purchased a home in Hailey and then bought a lot in Zinc Spur where we just finished building our house. It is important to both of us that we be connected to our Jewish roots so we’re delighted to be new members of the WRJC.

THE STEGMAN FAMILY

Elaine and Marc Stegman, new members of WRJC, recently became part-time residents of Ketchum. Living in Memphis, TN, they never imagined they would one day have a home in Idaho. But four years ago, while visiting their daughter, Jessica, who moved to Ketchum to work as a nurse at St. Luke’s Hospital, the Stegmans quickly fell in love with the area. In addition to their daughter who now lives in Cascade, Elaine and Marc have two sons and daughters-in law: Wesley and Brittany in Nashville, and Ryan and Carmen in Orlando. The newest addition to their family is Moe, a rescue dog they adopted last year.

Prior to retirement, Elaine was an assistant professor at The University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Department of Dental Hygiene. Being an avid genealogist, she enjoys helping others research their family history. As the daughter of Holocaust survivors, Elaine is a member of the Memphis Holocaust Memorial Committee and has served as chairperson for several community programs. Marc is a physician, specializing in the field of nephrology, and has been in private practice for 33 years. Additionally, he serves on numerous medical advisory boards. He enjoys providing care for his patients and continues to practice.

Elaine and Marc are avid travelers, both domestic and international, and enjoy biking, skiing, hiking, tennis, and cooking as a team. They love to entertain, whether it be for an evening or a house full of guests coming for an extended stay. Anxious to see what other adventures and hobbies await them in the Wood River Valley, Elaine and Marc look forward to meeting new friends and becoming an integral part of the WRJC!
THE ROSENFELD FAMILY

Hello WRJC! We are Nanci and John Rosenfeld and are so happy to have joined the congregation.

We have been visiting Sun Valley for over 28 years which began when our dear friends moved full-time from California in 1994. As our kids grew, we began to spend more time and fell in love with the Wood River area. After several summers of renting in Elkhorn (walking distance from the new synagogue) we bought our home in 2020. The pandemic brought us to Sun Valley for much of the last two years (one silver lining during a challenging couple of years) and we will continue to divide our time between our home in California and our place here. We both enjoy all the seasons have to offer….skiing and snow in the Winter and hiking, biking, concerts and the river in the Summer. Our boys are grown and hopefully will be spending as much time as their lives allow visiting us here in this magical place. Our oldest son Jared and his fiancé Casey live and work in the Los Angeles area as does our younger son Caleb.

Looking forward to meeting many of you in the future.

THE LYON FAMILY

Moghan, Tracy, and Griffin Lyon are thrilled to be joining the WRJC.

The family moved from Kirkland, WA to Hailey in 2018 with the hopes of slowing down, spending more time in nature and being closer to Moghan’s parents Marty and Mila Lyon. Griffin, now 6 years old, loves to ski, bike, read and beat his parents in rousing games of Uno. Tracy grew up in Carlsbad, CA and discovered her love of Judaism through NFTY and the many summers spent at Camp Alonim. When not leading research projects for Starbucks, you can find her attempting all of the great activities this valley has to offer. Moghan, a landscape architect who grew up in Tacoma, WA, is excited to live in the Wood River Valley after having spent countless summers and winters here since the early 90s.

If you look hard enough, you can find him skiing or mountain biking somewhere in the mountains.

We also want to welcome THE TOBIAS FAMILY, Ashley and her 2 children, Meyer and Brie.
I’M ALL THUMBS WITH A NEEDLE AND THREAD, DON’T CARE FOR CHIT CHAT, AND NOT MUCH OF a joiner.

Had I grown up in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when belonging to a synagogue or a temple sisterhood was the thing to do among middle-class American Jewish women, I would have been at a considerable disadvantage on the outside, looking in.

By the time I came of age, however, the synagogue sisterhood was on its last legs, the shrinking preserve of an aging cohort of women with time on their hands. No one I knew, not even my mother, belonged to one.

These days, sewing circles, and crafting more generally, enjoy something of a renaissance, as Jodi Eichler-Levine’s recent book, Painted Pomegranates and Needlepoint Rabbis - a contemporary portrait of Jewish women who gather in a Jewish space of their own devising to sew, knit, purl, and crochet - vividly demonstrates. The synagogue sisterhood, though, does not appear to have benefited from this boomlet.

Some remain active, like the Beth Meyer Sisterhood of Raleigh, North Carolina, which brings together women “of all ages and backgrounds to share in fun, exciting, and spiritually-inspired events,” or the sisterhood of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in Manhattan, a “home within a home” for the synagogue’s female members. Yet, when compared with how widespread, influential, and even formidable a force it had once been, the synagogue sisterhood is a shadow of its former self.

As a consequence of sweeping changes at home and in the workplace, as well as the professionalization of social work, voluntarism fell out of favor. Before it lost its luster, American Jewish women “dowered with leisure” made a point of belonging to and participating in ventures to “brace up” co-religionists in need.

From their inception in the early-to-mid 19th century as benevolent societies and “Hebrew ladies’ sewing circles” to their reincarnation many decades later as Sisterhoods of Personal Service, Jewish women’s groups were often the first port of call for those in distress. At a time when the urban social fabric was rent with many holes—illness, economic uncertainty, widowhood, the dislocations of immigration—while the existence of social welfare systems was a gleam in no one’s eye, the ladies of the synagogue sisterhood were at the ready.

Nothing if not “energetic,” they distributed a range of goods throughout the year, from hundreds of tons of coal in winter to hundreds of pounds of sugar come Passover; saw to it that young children were kept off the street by setting up neighborhood kindergartens; offered cooking classes, maintained an employment bureau, and sewed up a storm of sheets and pillow cases, undergarments, shirts, dresses, children’s clothing. Their steady output prompted one late 19th century champion to characterize sisterhood members as “lady-knights of the needle,” and another to define their efforts on behalf of the poor as “coming to their rescue.”

Mindful at times of the limitations of beneficence, of the bestowal of charitable gifts rather than the provision of services, Sisterhoods of Personal Service also sought to enable the objects of their largesse to stand on their own two feet by sponsoring sewing classes. At once a form of vocational training and an exercise in deportment, instruction in this area made it possible for the down-and-out to experience the “thrill of self-respect which comes from wearing new garments.”

In taking up sewing as a remedial communal venture, the members of the synagogue sisterhood drew on ample precedent. Both free-standing and church-affiliated sewing circles went way back in American history, so much so that by the early 19th century, they were just about everywhere.

“The plough is hardly a more blessed instrument in America than the needle,” observed Frances Trollope as she traveled across the country in the 1820s and 1830s. “How could they live without it?” Within the compass of their sewing circles women spun wool into cloth at a time when British imports were no longer available; clothed the soldiers of the Revolutionary Army; furnished the poor with bedding, and provided fugitive slaves, easily recognizable by their ill-fitting, coarse, and “shoddy” garb, with decent dress so that they might elude their pursuers.
Synagogue sisterhoods were no different. For much of their history, sewing was a key component of their efforts at amelioration, perhaps even their beating heart. But until quite recently few professional historians noticed: They were more inclined to relegate needle, thread, and fabric to the domestic domain than to account for its steady presence in the public sphere. Mea culpa: I, too, am guilty of that myopic practice. When, many years ago, I first set my sights on and explored the history of the synagogue sisterhood, I duly noted the robust presence of sewing-related activities in sisterhoods across the country, but didn’t go much beyond listing them. I now know better. Having been increasingly alerted over the years to the profound cultural significance of making things by hand, I’ve come to see sewing as a project rather than a pursuit.

When redefined as a duty, not just a hobby or a prerequisite of respectable womanhood, facility with a needle and thread not only brought Jewish women together to do good. It also affirmed their belief in the possibility of putting the House of Israel, along with their own, in order. As the Jewish Messenger noted in 1894, the needy were not the only ones to have benefited from “sisterly participation in good work … The ‘sisters’ themselves have felt the effect of doing good themselves.

A win-win situation. Perhaps the time is right to revisit and reinstate the synagogue sisterhood?

WRJC Community Gathering

When life threatened to hand off a few lemons, Claudie Goldstein and Sammy Mailman got creative and opted for chocolate instead.

The omicron surge cancelled the annual Ladies Luncheon for the second year in a row. But these two intrepid women were not to be denied.

Instead, they invited the women of the Wood River Jewish Community to meet for coffee and dessert at Adams Gulch, followed by a snowshoe trek around the white winter landscape.

The two defied all expectations, greeting each woman with a box featuring a croissant, frosted valentine cookie and plenty of miniature chocolate hearts. The showstopper: red-colored heart-shaped sunglasses that turned the snowscape into a colorful otherworldly scene.

It turned out that snowshoes were not needed, as trails had been stomped into the snow providing firm footing.

Some of the women found their inner child, diving into the snow to make snow angels. Others let their trigger fingers run wild on their cell phones as they took scads of pictures of a landscape that was new for them.

“I feel so virtuous!” said Coni Foster as she neared the end of the 45-minute outing.
COVID took us by storm in March 2020. I had returned from a professional conference on March 12. My husband had returned from China, the place of his research and work for many years. The world shut down, putting us in 24/7 proximity, something we had never experienced in over 56 years of marriage, of raising children and constant work. We were wholly unprepared for 24/7 togetherness. The back and forth of our interactions, not always careful of the feelings of the other, bore scrutiny. We needed to bring our marriage into a new spiritual space. We did this almost unwittingly and without discussion. I noticed my husband hesitate before he might say something that might bring a tart reaction from me, and phrase it in a gentler way. I invented workarounds for things that used to irritate me and provoke complaint. We learned to be newly careful and considerate in ways we had never thought to be before. And it happened seamlessly overtime. It’s a strange gift that COVID brought to our 60-year friendship and our 56-year marriage: a greater awareness of the other, fostering a greater empathy and bringing new depth to our bond.

My home office is small, compact and cluttered with photos and books. It has been my daily space for two years of COVID. I watch the sun rise and set and the leaves on the trees come into bloom and change color through my windows. I quickly converted my mediation and arbitration practice to Zoom who had ever heard of Zoom? and began to think about how I was reaching a wide world through my small space. But I missed something. My wide world was a world of business and money concerns, and I was totally disconnected from the pain of others. And helping others with their pain makes me feel whole. So, I reached out to Pennsylvania Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. I pitched in and appealed an improperly imposed property tax on one of the oldest not-for-profit arts academies in Philadelphia. It was hard work and a lot of fun. I got the tax rescinded. I reached out to the Senior Law Center and helped a senior stay in her apartment until she could move to her daughter’s by reaching out to her church who then reached out to her to help her pay her rent. I helped another senior negotiate with her landlord so she could stay in her apartment until after her husband’s surgery. These were very human things, small but so large in the way it made me feel – like I had a reason for being here which made my office feel like a small sacred space in a big, challenging and all too arbitrary world.
He used to joke that he knew Yiddish better than Italian, the language of his grandparents who emigrated from Apennines. The singer was a Catholic, but at the same time was friends with Jews since childhood in New Jersey. Frank’s mother often left her son in the care of a Jewish neighbor, Mrs. Golden, who could only talk to the child in Yiddish.

One of the most precious gifts, that Sinatra had, was a small mezuzah, presented by the same neighbor, Mrs. Golden. As he became rich he thanked his Jewish nanny by buying her a quarter of a million dollars of Israeli bonds.

In 1942, when information about Nazi crimes against Jews finally came to America, Sinatra bought hundreds of medals commissioned with the image of Saint Christopher (Christian martyr) on one side and the Star of David on the other. He handed out these medals at his concerts.

In 1943, he joined the national tour "We Will Never Die," a four-month dramatized performance in six cities hosted by Ben Hecht to draw public attention to the Holocaust. In 1944 Sinatra insisted that his Jewish friend, Mani Sachs, will be a godfather at the baptism of his son, despite loud protests by a Catholic priest.

In the late 1940s, he left the golf club, which did not accept Jews. One day, Sinatra overheard a reporter call someone a "Jewish bastard" at a party. Frank knocked him down...

There's a 1945 short film, "The House I Live in," where Sinatra sings a song with the following words: "...children of all races and religions in the playground are America for me...".

In 1947, Frank Sinatra participated in a benefit concert in support of the zionist movement. He spoke at a Hollywood Bowl action rally that drew 20,000 supporters.

In 1948 he helped in the illegal delivery of weapons to Israel. The representative of Hagana in the United States was then the future Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek... Sinatra was to hand over a bag full of cash to the captain of the ship on a wharf in New York to confuse the federal agents who had long grazed Kollek. The ship departed and arrived safely to its destination. Sinatra told his daughter Nancy: “It was the beginning of a young nation. I wanted to help, I was afraid they might fail”.

In 1962, the eleven-time Grammy winner gave seven concerts in six Israeli cities, handing over fees for the construction of the International Youth Center in Nazareth, which was named after the singer...

In 1964, Sinatra was officially barred from entering Lebanon because of his "moral and material support for Israel."

In 1970, under the patronage of Sinatra, a million dollars was raised for the construction of the student center of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and in 1978 the center was named after the singer.

Sinatra first met Simon Wiesenthal in 1979 when he told the Nazi hunter that "he was his hero for many years." When he learned that the Simon Wiesenthal Center was trying to make a documentary, Sinatra told them, "Although I'm not Jewish, the Holocaust is important to me". He also became a member of the Center's Board of Trustees. In the months that followed, Sinatra appeared four times on behalf of the Center, raising hundreds of thousand dollars to fund the film "Genocide," which won an Oscar for best documentary in 1981.

In 1976, a Hollywood banquet honoring Sinatra organized by the American Union of Friends of the Hebrew University raised one million dollars to build a student center on the campus of Mount Scopus. In 1978, the university named Frank Sinatra International Student Center in his honor. In 2014, NBC News reported that Sinatra's CD collection had been exhibited at Lebanon's March office in Beirut, with the note saying they had been banned for "zionist tendencies."

In December 2018, Sotheby's auction in New York sold personal belongings of Frank Sinatra and his wife Barbara. Items (art, jewelry, books and others) were sold for millions. The proceeds were earmarked for the Barbara Sinatra Children's Center. Frank and Barbara created this non-profit organization in 1986 to support victims of child abuse. Among the personal items of "Mr. Voice" on display at the world-famous auction was a handmade kippah, owned by Frank Sinatra with embroidered notes and the inscription "Frank."

It is not known who made this kippah, but the description of the lot emphasized that Sinatra all his life sympathized with Jewish values.

Reprinted from Jewish Adventures
We are now completing our third week of intensive construction on the Wood River Jewish Community’s permanent home. With interior demolition finished, local contractor Conrad Brothers has been working to create a place in which we will all be proud to gather, laugh, learn, and worship.

As the vestiges of the old community market disappear, more of the dynamic space and its potential have become apparent. This coming week will see painting of our ceiling and upper perimeter walls followed by framing to create our offices, classrooms, and kitchen. Our Board member Ron Greenspan has been designated as our “owner’s representative” and is working with the architects, builders. All involved on the project are committed to the ambitious goal of being in our new home by the fall.

With the High Holidays falling late this year, we’re relying on the force of G-d to be able to celebrate the High Holidays in our new sanctuary. Ron’s years of high-level experience in the real estate industry are beyond helpful. If you bump into Ron and his wife Susan on the local Nordic trails, please thank him (and thank Susan for sharing Ron with us!!!).

As we recently discussed with Sun Valley’s Mayor Pete Hendricks and his team, our permanent home is also a place that the wider community can visit, hold events, and congregate when WRJC has availability. We deliberately designed the space for these multi-uses, including our own – where we will have flexible space to accommodate holidays, next year’s Passover Seder and Hanukkah party and all the gatherings that used to be in the basement of St. Thomas’s.

There have been some wonderful donations to the WRJC Building Fund recently. Many thanks to all our donors. And we thank all of you who, when looking at your charitable goals for 2022, consider making this project a priority.

We hope that if you’re curious you’ll reach out to our Executive Director Claudie Goldstein to set a time to visit the building.

We hope that you will be as pleased with the progress as we are.

Warmest,

Jeff Rose, Marty Lyon, Judith Teller Kaye
Co-Chairs, WRJC Building Committee
The Wood River Jewish Community invites our families and friends to

Passover Seder

April 16, 5:30pm

Limelight Hotel Restaurant

We look forward to seeing you all, happy spring.

Menu

Gefilte Fish
Matza Ball Soup
Latke with Gravlax
Honey Roasted Chicken
Roasted Vegetables
Chocolate Hazelnut Torte with Salted Caramel and Fresh Berries
Wine - Coffee - Tea.

$55 Adults
$40 Kids
Gratuity Included

Book now, reservations are required

Tel: 208. 726.1183
Online: www.wrjc.org
Check: P.O.B 837. Ketchum, ID 83340
No walk-ins
Dear Memoir—Memories—Mom

Marlene B. Samuels
marlenesamuels@gmail.com

Introduction

What exactly, inspired me to contemplate everything I don’t know about my parents — that unimaginable void in my family background that stirs an envy I keep in check when listening to friends talk about their grandparents, sometimes even their great-grandparents? Simple. One of my sons asked me whether my mother’s mother also had been born in Romania. I couldn’t answer a definitive “yes” or “no” but instead said, “You know, I haven’t a clue.”

“Really? Why not?”

“Because I never thought to ask. And as totally ridiculous as this might sound to you, would you believe that when I was growing up I didn’t realize that your grandparents are your parents’ parents!” Today, it amazes me how little I know about each of my parents’ likes and dislikes, about their families and all the seemingly mundane details that made them who they were.

Several years ago, I taught a workshop for the WRJC entitled, Memoir: Why Everyone Must Write Theirs. So, what could be the point of such an undertaking since most of us are neither writers nor interested in publishing a book? Simple, again.

You write your memoir for your children, your grown children, your grandchildren, and beyond. Within your memoirs live answers to questions your descendants may, one day have but hadn’t thought to ask you while you were available to answer them.

Memoir and Memories

Dear Mom:

So, so many questions I hadn’t asked you and wish I could ask you especially now that I myself am a mother, especially now that my two sons are adults. I listen to questions they ask me but, in my opinion, not nearly enough of them. Sad to admit that when I was in my teen years and a young adult, it never entered my naive, optimistic mind to ask you even the simplest of questions about yourself. If only I’d thought to ask about your likes and dislikes, your feelings, preferences for specific foods — dark or milk chocolate?

You always bought Hershey bars or ate chocolates from those gift-boxes your friends brought whenever they came to our house for dinner, *mitbringens* you called them. Did you buy Hershey bars because they reminded you of that young American G.I. who carried your sixty-pound body out of Dachau? Did you like roses and tulips or maybe you preferred lilacs because they made you think of your mother’s garden? The answers, if I had them, could hold secrets about the woman you were.

I do know about one of your favorite foods, something you called *mamaliga*, the Romanian version of polenta. You made for my brother and me when dad wasn’t around. He refused to eat it, insisting only peasants ate such stuff in pre-war Europe. But I never did ask you about any of the other foods you loved or what your own mother made when you were growing up. Then there was Montreal. Was there something special you liked to eat or cook there when you’d immigrated?
Now I realize the most relevant question of all questions I wish I’d contemplated: what if I’d been a realist? Would I have considered the possibility you’d be gone from my life so shortly after we’d become strong friends? What would you have done differently, if anything, if you’d foreseen the real likelihood I’d outlive you?

One blink of an eye, *in eine augenblick*. My fate was sealed and in too many ways destiny had determined I’d repeat the difficult and lonely experience you faced when you had your first baby.

How did you carry on each day without a mother to guide you? Was there an older woman, that “someone special” you found to turn to for guidance and advice? And if so, who was she? Was she the German woman in whose home you all were boarders for three years after the liberation? Did she help you and give you advice once she got over fearing you — those Jews in her house? She fell in love with my brother, with you, with dad, and cried bitterly when you moved to Canada. Did you miss her when you found yourself, yet once more, in another new land with no family?

So speaking about family, I know almost nothing about yours except amazingly that all but one of your four full siblings survived the camps. And about your parents, I heard bits and pieces from you while I was growing up but nothing about your grandparents or your father’s origins. I never heard anything about your mother’s family. To be clear, Mr. Hitler made sure of that.

I’m almost certain I’ll never find any of that information save for a miracle in genealogical research. What did they look like, your mother and father? You once told me your father was a tall man, twenty-two years your mother’s senior, possessed of a full head of thick curly blond hair and a neatly trimmed beard. Handsome by any measure! Did the fact that he was so much older than your mother bother you? She was short, right? Petite and beautiful with very dark hair — a young mother who looked much younger than her years. Did anyone ever mistake her for his daughter?

What about his six children from his first marriage? His oldest daughter was close to your own mother’s age, right? Did you know what his first wife died of or how old she’d been? Did you ever ask or was that a forbidden discussion in your family? Also, did you know how long after his first wife died and left him with all those kids, did your father marry your mother? I can’t help wondering if you were ever confused because your step-sisters and step-brothers were close to your own mother’s.

Only two photographs of you from before the war survived. There’s one in which you, your younger sister, Esther and your nephew, Yacov pose together in what looks like a lush forest. Surely, you were in Romania, but where — maybe near your parents’ house? And who actually took that photograph? The three of you are dressed in a way that makes me pretty sure it was warm outside, but what month was it? Could you possibly have remembered?

How old were you when this picture was taken? Yacov looks as though he might have been somewhere between eight and ten. Maybe you and Esther were supposed to be taking care of him, the son of your oldest stepsister? Esther was taller than you so even though she was five years younger, she looked older.

I know this is a difficult, maybe even insensitive, question but could you ever in your wildest imagination have thought so much horror and loss, suffering and pain, would befall all of you?

I know this is a difficult, maybe even insensitive, question but could you ever in your wildest imagination have thought so much horror and loss, suffering and pain, would befall all of you?
May I ask, without upsetting you too much, how soon after this photo was taken did humanity take a nosedive until in short order, no such thing as humanity prevailed?

Possibly you had a strong sense of impending doom but just like me, you simply never trusted your own perceptions or instincts? You had told me once about some of the subtle, yet significantly terrifying, changes that were taking place all around you. Why did you listen to those naysayers who insisted your imagination was getting the better of you? Why, even when your friends began to disappear, one by one?

What books did you read? I know you loved reading more than anything and that you often hid among the tall grasses in fields behind your parents’ house so you’d be able to read undisturbed. Because you were fluent in so many languages, in which did you read? Did you have a favorite author? Maybe you wrote poetry or stories? You told me your mother used to tell you and your sisters stories about her own childhood. What were they and why hadn’t I ever thought to ask you if you remembered any of them?

You resisted your father’s intense pressures to marry young and to become a good Jewish wife. Was your resistance because you saw what your mother and older sisters dealt with on a daily basis or was it really because you had a strong sense of foreboding? When I was a college student, you told me that you always wanted a career, to be somebody. But this leads to my next question: what opportunities could possibly have existed for you during a time and place where being both a female and a Jew imposed unimaginable limitations?

As I think about what I wish I knew, it also never dawned on me to ask you more simple questions, more answers that would give me insights into your personality. Did you have a favorite color, for instance? I know to a certainty you detested yellow but was that true even before the Nazis forced you to sew yellow Stars of David on all your clothes?

I wish I knew also: how did you manage emotionally when you had my older brother in the year after you’d been in the Red Cross hospital for six months? Did you think, constantly, about not having your mother with you during those very difficult first days with a new infant while still living in Germany? Did you cry? You once told me you never cry because all your tears dried up in the camps and you no longer had any. Was that true, is that even possible?

How were you so strong? I was without you, my mother, when I too had my first son. So many times it was near impossible for me to repress my anger and tears, knowing that the causes of your premature death were attributed to abuses you’d endured in the camps. During my early years of motherhood, I was able to find answers to many of my dilemmas by asking myself a single clear question: “What would Seren Tuvel do?” But in another kind of life I would have done what most other women of my generation did: simply pick up the phone, call mom and say, “Mom, what should I do?”

So many years have passed and still, I miss you, your love and all your wisdom.

Your daughter, Marlene
This weekend I “attended” another funeral via Zoom. I hate them. They lack all the important earmarks of Jewish mourning. Hugs, food and avoiding that crazy third cousin you never call.

But it got me thinking about the nature of grief and how we as Jews find ways, even in the most challenging times, to make meaningful the lives of those we loved and lost. And I am no exception.

My father was a tangential victim of another albeit more regional crisis, Hurricane Katrina. And I also mourned him virtually, just not on Zoom, on eBay.

Leonard Moss was 89 years old and living with his second wife in New Orleans when the rains came. His first wife, my mother, had died in 1993. After a respectful amount of time for a lonely musician, not very much time at all, my dad decamped Los Angeles for New Orleans to marry Bobbye, the woman who had turned down his proposal 53 years prior. But that’s another story.

Bobbye had lived in NOLA for thirty years. She didn’t need to be told twice to evacuate. She packed their Camry and headed for her son’s home in the woody outskirts of Atlanta. Sudden relocation is disorienting for anyone, but it’s calamitous for a man struggling with Alzheimer’s. My father’s sweet and funny nature was soon eclipsed by blind confusion and violent outbursts.

After several agonizing trips to Sharpsburg, I felt we had found a pleasant facility where my father would be safe and those he loved safe from him. Bobbye was to move into some truly beautiful independent housing next door. It was perfect.

My dad was in the unit four days when I got the call that he had fallen and broken a hip. He died in the hospice two weeks later.

A memorial in Los Angeles followed. My dad’s old musician friends were there. Some played. Other’s spoke. It was nice. It was also a blur.

That was September 2005. It was December before Bobbye could move back to her home, even though it sustained only minor roof damage. And April of the following year when I was finally allowed to go pack up my father’s things. I knew it would be emotionally draining. A dusty walk down memory lane fraught with difficult decisions and one or two surprises. The birthday cards I didn’t know he kept. The smell of a sweater. But I was in for a much bigger surprise, my dad’s music collection. An entire room filled with sheet music.

Sheet music ranging from a 1925 copy of “My Yiddshe Momma,” to ten pristine copes of Bobby’s Sherman’s hit “Julie Do You Love Me?” complete with a fold out poster of Bobby. There were compilation books of pop songs from Billy Holiday to Bacharach, Gershwin to The Beatles. Published copies of my dad’s arrangements for marching band, along with his own adaptations of hundreds of standards he’d learned as Whole decades flew by as I sorted through titles from “Toy Trumpet” to the theme from “Titanic.”

There were arcane jazz books from Bill Evans and George Shearing, sepia stained books of international folk music, Brazilian Sambas, Viennese Waltzes and Polish Polkas. And for some weird reason the theme song to the old vampire soap opera, “Dark Shadows.”
And if it sounds organized it wasn’t. Alzheimer’s fingerprints were all over that room. First and third trumpet parts to his big band arrangement of “My Satin Doll” were in with pencil roughs for jingles he wrote in the 60’s. Applications for credit cards in between the pages of compositions he named for his son and daughter. And wife. Both of them.

It was overwhelming. I could have easily tossed it all in one of the many dumpsters dotting Bobbye’s neighborhood. Just more of Katrina’s sad detritus. I couldn’t. My dad’s whole life was in that room. Music that had traveled with him from his native South Africa through Asia and Europe to Canada, Los Angeles and finally New Orleans. Songs so deeply learned that Alzheimer’s couldn’t loosen them from memory. The ability to play the piano was the last thing my dad lost.

So I packed it all up and shipped it magazine rate to Los Angeles. My dad’s handwritten piano arrangements went to a friend who still plays them, an entire file box of classical music to my daughter’s piano teacher and the marching band arrangements to a local high school. But I still had boxes and boxes left.

That’s where eBay came in. eBay was hot in 2006. I was already selling my daughter’s out-grown skate boots and old electronics on ebay. Why not sheet music? So I started listing.

Some of the items were standalones, while others I packaged with like product. “Back On Broadway” included song sheets from “Phantom of the Opera” and “Porgy and Bess.” “The Best of the 70’s” featured songbooks from Frampton and Elton and Chicago. There were four or five such 70’s packages, each one a little less “best of” than the last.

But it all started selling. Each time I shipped a package, it felt like a kind of yahrzeit. My dad was living on. But I wanted to know with whom? And why? So I contacted the buyers and asked them.

Some were collectors. The sheet music to Cher’s “Half-Breed” will be displayed in someone’s Cher Museum, next to the original 45 and a Cher doll in her “Half Breed” costume. My Dad’s copy of the Canadian Centennial Theme (didn’t know there was one) is now available on a website dedicated to the World Exposition of 1967 in Montreal.

The rest of the buyers were either amateur or semi-professional musicians. One said he was replacing a Dave Brubeck book he’d lost and he found the pencil notions my dad made were identical to his. I teared up reading that.

I never heard back from the person who bought the “Dark Shadows” theme. Go figure.

But the sweetest response by far was from a man who bought all ten copies of Bobby Sherman’s “Julie Do you Love Me?” It was to surprise his sister at her 50th birthday party. She was a huge fan back in the day. He even hired a pianist to play it. It gives me great solace to think a little part of my dad was at that gig. And what more can I ask from the digital age than that.
A century ago, amidst the greatest wave of immigration in Jewish history, seventeen refugees made their way from the Russian Empire to the wilds of Idaho. They were assisted in their westward journey by the Industrial Removal Office, a short-lived and long-forgotten aid organization—one whose history offers a fascinating window into the challenges faced by the American Jewish community during a moment of great consequence. This is their story.

**Unprecedented Immigration**

Between 1881 and 1924, more than two and a half million Jews emigrated from eastern Europe to the United States, fleeing antisemitism and chasing economic opportunity.

Most Jewish immigrants lived, at least for some time after their arrival, in New York City. The neighborhoods in which they settled quickly became overcrowded. By 1900 the city’s Lower East Side was home to more than 500,000 Jews, making it both the world’s largest Jewish community and the world’s most densely-populated neighborhood.

In addition to overcrowding, the Lower East Side also endured poor sanitation, concentrated poverty, high rates of disease and crime, and nearly half the city’s deaths by fire. Jacob Riis, a photographer who famously shined a spotlight on tenement life in his 1890 publication *How the Other Half Lives*, wrote that he found in three rooms father, mother, twelve children, and six boarders. They sleep on the half-made clothing for beds.” He added that

In order to attract participants to the resettlement program, the IRO stationed agents on Ellis Island, set up a storefront recruiting center in the Lower East Side, and placed ads in newspapers. They particularly targeted young, male immigrants who were experiencing economic hardship, promising to cover the cost of their move and help identify a well-paying job and short-term lodging for them in their new city.
At the same time, the IRO sent agents across the country to identify cities willing to accept Jewish refugees. They often enlisted the cooperation of local Jewish communities, including synagogues and B’nai B’rith lodges, to secure housing and employment.

According to internal IRO records, 79% of participants in the resettlement program were men—most of whom moved alone—and the average age at removal was 28 years old. 75% of them had fled from Russia while the remainder were from other countries in eastern and southern Europe.

In 1921, the United States government introduced a national quota system that sharply reduced the number of immigrants allowed into the country, leading the IRO to shut its doors the following year. But during its 20 years of operation, the IRO successfully resettled 79,000 Jewish individuals from New York to more than 1,000 other towns and cities in the United States, transforming lives and communities in the process.

Idaho Awaits

As IRO agents sought out communities that could accommodate refugees from eastern Europe, they looked everywhere—including Idaho.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the state’s only Jewish community was in Boise. The Wood River Valley had hosted a thriving Jewish community in the 1880s, but it was decimated by a mining bust in the 1890s which drove ambitious prospectors and merchants elsewhere. Boise, by contrast, had survived the mining bust and was home to several dozen Jews and a brand new synagogue around the turn of the century.

In 1903, as the IRO considered Boise as a potential destination for resettling Jewish immigrants, the agency wrote to Moses Alexander. Alexander was a German Jewish merchant who served as head of the city’s Jewish community and had just concluded two terms as mayor of Boise. “We have not as yet done as much with the communities in the Far West,” the IRO wrote to Alexander from New York, “and in order that we do not overtax our friends in the Middle West and in the South, the cooperation of cities in your part of the country would be most desirable.”

In a later letter, the IRO added: “The immigration of our people into this country is gradually increasing at an alarming rate and extraordinary efforts must be made on the part of all Jewish communities to cooperate with us in order to meet this problem manfully. May we therefore ask you to be so kind as to let us know what you can do for us, that is to say how many families you can take at the present time for whom there is promise of independence and self-support.”

Alexander did not provide the IRO with a specific number of families, but he wrote back to them several times to arrange transportation and payment for specific individuals. For example, the agency archive contains 10 letters from November and December 1903 in which Alexander and the IRO coordinated the resettlement of a 26 year old Jewish refugee named Abram Jukofsky.

Jukofsky, who had arrived in New York from Russia four months earlier, had trouble finding steady employment and asked for help moving to Boise, where his uncle already lived. Alexander wrote to the IRO insisting that Jukofsky bring his wife if he were to come at all. “We people here do not desire to separate man and wife and wish to bear no part in such a transaction as that,” he made clear. “Under no circumstances do we desire that he should come by himself and leave his wife in New York to struggle along the best she can and after a while probably have to return back home.”

After investigating the matter, the IRO reported that Jukofsky’s wife was still in Russia, so they sent him to Boise alone shortly after Christmas 1903. In return, Alexander collected a payment of $37 from Jukofsky’s local uncle and mailed it to the IRO to cover the cost of the journey.

Others Follow to Idaho

Jukofsky was the first, but not the only, Russian Jewish refugee to be sent to Idaho by the IRO. Records indicate that the agency sent sixteen more between 1903 and 1917, including Louis Ginsburg, Louis Cohen, David Rosenthal, and Abe and Mamie Goldstein and their three children.
In addition to the refugees sent to Boise, the IRO also sent refugees to Rupert in the southern portion of the state and Deary in the north. All of them were from Russia and all the adults were between 20 and 30 years old. Based on IRO resettlement patterns elsewhere, it is likely that some of the refugees chose to stay in Idaho permanently while others eventually moved back to New York or to different locations across the American West.

During the same twenty-year period that the IRO operated, dozens of Jews found their way to Idaho on their own without the organization’s assistance. Boise’s Jewish community grew so fast that, in 1912, a second synagogue was established in the city. The new congregation was Orthodox and made up largely of Russian Jews, while the earlier congregation was Reform and mostly German. In 1913, the city’s leaders reported to the IRO that they now had two synagogues, a B’nai B’rith lodge, easily-obtained kosher meat, and a community of approximately 200 Jews out of a total city population of 25,000—just under 1%.

A century later, the story of the Industrial Removal Office offers an interesting window into a critical moment in American Jewish history, teaching us about the ways that our forebears - in Idaho and across the nation - rose to meet an enormous challenge. It was due both to organizations like the IRO and to ordinary Jewish Americans like Abram Jukofsky’s uncle that an American Jewish community of just 260,000 people was able to assimilate two and a half million newcomers between 1881 and 1924. Accommodating ten-fold population growth in a 40 year period required creativity, grit, and most of all, compassion.

The story of the Russian Jews who ended up in Idaho also offers us an example of the way that Jewish events around the world have affected our state. Despite Idaho’s isolated location and small Jewish population, antisemitic pogroms in Russia profoundly reshaped our community. Later events, including the Holocaust, also impacted Idaho—although that is a story for another time. From each, we are reminded that we are part of a global Jewish story.
Wow! I feel as if I just got off of a merry-go-round....a merry-go-round of words, ideas, humor, jokes, biblical treatises, historical discourses and I can barely wrap my head around what else. Let me start by making it clear that for better or worse, this book is not about Bibi Netanyahu, although he does make a brief and significant appearance as a young child.

Based loosely, very loosely, on a snippet relayed to Cohen by the late, great literary critic Harold Bloom, the story is set in the fifties when our protagonist and storyteller, Ruben Blum becomes a professor at a small college in upstate New York. Corbin College is a thinly veiled stand-in for Cornell. Ruben Blum is the first and only Jew on the faculty and he and his family are the only Jews in town. There is more than considerable adjustment when he, his wife Edith and daughter move upstate from Manhattan.

Although Blum is a professor of tax history, he is asked by his department chair to sit on the interview committee for a visiting professor of history and religion. The Chair maintains that Blum is a logical choice for the committee as the candidate is himself a Jew. Blum begs to differ as he has no expertise in Jewish history. The candidate is Benzion Netanyahu, the father of Benjamin Netanyahu. Thus the stage is set for the main subtext of the book: the tension between the Diaspora Jew and the Jew of Zion. Although this is a powerful confrontation of world views and ideas, it is a source of such hilarity that the reader cannot help but explode in laughter.

This tension is but one of many examined by Cohen. They are in turn uproariously funny and seriously intellectual. Edith’s family are secular German Jews who live on the Upper East Side. Ruben’s family are religious Jews from Kyiv who live in the Bronx. The cultural dissonance between the families is a constant undercurrent which culminates in the daughter’s efforts to have a “nose job”. Perspectives on Jewish history, the history of Zionism, anti-semitism, Jews in higher education, Jewish assimilation in the United States are all tackled by the author in a fascinating and rigorously academic manner, with enough amusement and folly to keep the reader actively engaged.

But back to Benzion Netanyahu, who shows up at Blum’s house during a snowstorm with his entire family in tow...his wife and three young and wild boys. The comedy of manners which ensues is of the highest order of humor... unruly sons, a wife who misunderstands everything spoken in English, Benzion’s assumption that all Jews hold to certain tenets, even a tryst between a Netanyahu son and Blum’s daughter. Things do not improve when Benzion gives a guest lecture at the college where he denigrates and embarrasses, well, just about everyone. The absolute genius of Joshua Cohen is that he takes the dour and shadowy figure of Benzion Netanyahu, who has long been on the outs with the Israeli establishment and makes him a comic protagonist of a hilarious book.

This is a novel that is as intelligent as it is entertaining. It is an absolutely dazzling book!
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have a nice spring