



CHAI-LIGHTS

May 2008

Affiliated with
The Society for Humanistic Judaism and the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Volume X. No. 9

BRINGING YIDDISH to the ESKIMOS ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

presented by Berty Segal Cook

Saturday, May 31st, 2:00 PM

at the home of
Lee and Zena Jacobi

Berty Segal Cook is an experienced ESL and Foreign Language teacher... a dynamic enthusiastic speaker. She is rated one of the top teacher trainers in the field of Language Acquisition, ESL/Foreign Language. She has also served as a county ESL teacher trainer, and a district resource specialist.

She is the author of the highly practical teaching guide **Teaching English Through Action**, a comprehensive guide of 102 daily lesson plans implementing the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach. This book is available in English, Spanish, French, German, Japanese, and Russian. She has also authored the well-known **Practical Guide for the Bilingual Classroom**.

Berty has presented numerous seminars for school districts, colleges and professional organizations across the United States, Alaska and in Canada, Mexico, Japan, China, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Micronesia, Belgium, England, Finland, Sweden, and Estonia.

Please RSVP: 714-838-2836 or leejacobi@earthlink.net

PC PASSOVER IN THE GARDEN '08

Photography by Felix



MAY DINE-OUT - SATURDAY, MAY 31st at 6:00 P.M.



Quinn's Old Town Grill

405 El Camino Real
Tustin, CA
714/731-2263

RSVP to Karen Knecht at
Knechtfour@aol.com or 714/739-1366
by May 28th



*Mark
Your
Calendar*

Sunday, May 4th 10:30 AM

BOARD MEETING
at the home of
Shirley & Ken Klipper

Tuesday, May 20th 7:00 PM

FILM CLUB
The HARMONIST
at the home of
Shirley Spiegel
(see Page 4)

Saturday, May 31st 2:00 PM

TEACHING YIDDISH TO THE ESKIMOS
ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE
at the home of
Lee and Zena Jacobi
(see page 1)

Saturday, May 31st 6:00 PM

DINE OUT
at the
QUINN'S OLD TOWN GRILL
Tustin
(see Page 1)

Saturday, June 28th 7:30 PM

FINAL SEGMENT OF COLLOQUIUM '07
at the home of
Lee and Zena Jacobi

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Fellow Pacific Community Members:

I am very happy to report that our first-ever pot luck seder was a success, by all reports! Thanks to our hostess, Phyllis Jacobs, we had a beautiful garden setting and lovely roses from her garden as each table's centerpiece, as well as lettuce from her veggie garden as a garnish for the gefilte fish. And special thanks to Bernice Stein, who worked so tirelessly to coordinate the event before, during, and after! Our gratitude, as well, to Karen Knecht, who delivered the tables and chairs. Thank you, also, to all of you who prepared a dish to bring. In fact, I heard nothing but favorable comments about how delicious the food was, how meaningful the Haggadah is, and how, in general, the whole thing was really hamisch.

At this writing our next event will be an outing to see a play put on by one of our sister organizations, the Sholem Community. I'll let you know next time how that turns out, in case you can't go with us. And, of course, please don't forget our up-coming Community Service Month project! We need any and all donations of canned goods, to be distributed to the needy in our area.

Lastly, please be on the look-out soon in your e-mail or, for some of you your snail mail, for our volunteer form. This will be our attempt to best utilize the manpower in our membership for the good of all in our organization.

Shalom,
Alice

Garage Sale Fundraiser

In March, Lee Jacobi conducted a garage sale as a fundraiser for the Pacific Community. Several PC members donated items, ranging from old TVs and appliances to clothing and LPs, for the sale. A local realtor advertised a neighborhood-wide garage sale.

Our sale took in \$130.

Many thanks to Lee who handled the sale all by himself.

COMMUNITY SERVICE MONTH

May is Community Service Month for The Society for Secular Humanistic Judaism and, as their affiliate, for us. To this end, we have decided to hold a canned food drive. The food will be donated to S.O.S. (Share Our Selves), an organization dedicated to giving assistance in the way of basic living essentials to the Orange County Homeless. We will be collecting canned or packaged food from all donors throughout May, so please bring these types of items (whatever you can afford) to any of our programs during this month

DON'T FORGET!!!

Remember, tikkun olam (healing the world) is what we're all about!

CSJO Conference 2008

May 23 - 26, 2008

The Whole Mishpokhe* - Diversity Rocks!**

Circle Lodge (Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring Facility)
335 Sylvan Lake Road Hopewell Junction, NY

www.csjo.org

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SHJ National Conference 2008

by Lee Jacobi

On April 4-6, six members of the Pacific Community attended the annual national Conference of the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ). As our Pacific Community is affiliated with both SHJ and CSJO (Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations), we are all members of SHJ. The Conference was held in Woodland Hills, making it easy for Southern Californians to attend.

The theme of the conference was "Connecting to Judaism: I Did it My Way". While that is a reference to founding Rabbi Sherwin Wine (deceased), it also refers to the entire Humanistic Judaism movement. There were about 90 registered participants from all parts of the US and from Canada too. The only registered attendee from Israel (a woman rabbi) was unable to make it.

There were only a few sessions involving the entire group (a large room was needed!). Most of the rest of the time we broke into small workshops which were presentations on various themes combined with discussion. But it wasn't all work. We had meals together, we had group Shabbat and Havdalah services, and we enjoyed klezmer music and Israeli folk dancing.

I attended the session on fundraising. It was suggested that the first order of business is to get 503-C-3 (non-profit) status so that people who make donations can get tax deductions. It was suggested to encourage those members who can afford it to be "Sustaining Members" who give a large annual contribution, above dues. It was noted that in typical non-profit organizations only Sustaining Members are allowed on the governing board. It was suggested to have fundraisers. For example, one of the SHJ groups buys a large block of tickets (at discounted price) to a show and sells them at full price and the "profit" goes to the group.

I attended the session on "How to Deal with God in the Classroom". The SHJ is very careful to never say "we don't believe in God". They prefer to say that it isn't relevant whether God exists or not, we need to act morally in either case. But I am disappointed that they won't say "we don't believe in any god".

Continued on page 4)

SHJ National Conference 08 continued. . .

My overall feeling about the Conference was "Wow! It feels great that we have groups all over the country that share our philosophy" Of course I had seen lists of community names on paper, but it is something else to meet members from Arizona, Illinois, Michigan, New York (I don't have to name them all, you get the idea). I enjoyed talking to people from places I had previously lived in. It was nice to know that there were now these SHJ communities where there had not been 20-30 years ago.

It made me a little sad that our Pacific Community's membership has shrunk, while other SHJ groups are thriving. I asked Rabbi Miriam Jerris of SHJ leadership for some suggestions for us to grow. She said first to advertise- as much as possible. To attract young families we should have a school. But, we said, we had to close our Sunday school due to lack of kids. She suggested that we should advertise that we have a school, and then make it happen when families with children respond to our ads. For this to happen, ads must be run in the summer, before Rosh HaShanah.

-Lee Jacobi

Celebrate Israel at UCI

Anteaters for Israel on the UCI campus -- supported by a grant from Jewish Federation -- proudly present the **1st Annual iFest, from Monday, May 5th through Friday, May 9th.**

Exciting events exhibits on the UCI campus will highlight the depth and breadth of Israel - from its food, music and dancing to its technological, medical and scientific advances benefiting all humanity

Remembering Israel's Fallen

The annual **Yom HaZikaron Observance** - the Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel's Wars and the Victims of Terror, takes place on **Tuesday, May 6th at 7:30pm** in the Myers Theater, 1 Federation Way, Irvine on the Samuelli Jewish Campus. The program, presented in English and Hebrew, is free of charge and the community is invited.



The FILM Club

About a dozen people enjoyed the **KOMEDIANT**, a film about the Burstein family, Yiddish stage actors both in Europe and the U.S. Although the various members of the family were very active on the stage through the 1980's and played along side of several well known actors, we were surprised that none of us had heard of them before.

Our next Film Club meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 20th at 7:00 PM**, at the home of Shirley Spiegel. The featured film will be the **HARMONIST**.



A dramatization of the rise and fall of a wildly popular German vocal group, all-male close harmony ensemble (5 singers plus pianist) that operated between 1927 and 1934. They disbanded as the Nazi's persecution of Jews escalated. The Comedian Harmonists were beloved for their comic and romantic songs performed in intricate harmony and they were on the brink of international superstardom when fate intervened. They were one of the most successful 20th century musical groups in Europe before World War II and were noted for using their voices to imitate musical instruments.

Please RSVP to Shirley at 714-378-1186 or SHIRL-B@SOCAL.RR.COM

Who's afraid of Darwin? Everyone.

By MARGARET WENTE

March 8, 2008 -- We mainstream Canadians like to congratulate ourselves that we're immune from the fundamentalist religious mania that exerts such an alarming grip on American public life. Thank God (if She exists) we don't have to fight off those wacky creationists up here! But wait a minute. It turns out that even in rational, secular, forward-looking Canada - even in downtown Toronto! - evolution is still too hot to handle. Just ask the Royal Ontario Museum, where a widely acclaimed Darwin exhibition opens today. Despite ecstatic reviews in New York, where the show originated, the ROM couldn't rustle up a single corporate sponsor. Even in Canada, no public company dared to link its name to Charles Darwin.

This timidity is nothing new. "In the 1980s, we planned to open a Gallery of Evolution," says Allan Baker, who heads the ROM's Department of Natural History. "But there was too much opposition." The Darwin show could hardly be described as controversial. It is a treasure trove of Darwin's original specimens, manuscripts and notes, and traces his life and times from his early years collecting beetles to the publication of the works that shook society to the core.

Organized by the American Museum of Natural History in collaboration with the ROM and several other leading museums in the U.S. and Britain, it has yet to find a single corporate sponsor anywhere.

The controversy over evolution has rocked the U.S. for decades. Americans believe in science, but when science clashes with their religious beliefs, religion generally wins out. The Pew Research Center's most recent poll on evolution and religion found that 42 per cent of respondents directly rejected evolution, saying they believe that humans and other living things have existed in their present form since the creation. About half (51 per cent) of Americans believe that evolution has occurred, but many of them think it was guided by a supreme being or higher power, a notion that roughly describes the views of the "intelligent design" movement. Only 26 per cent believe in evolution through natural selection.

To Canadians, these are stunning numbers. Conservative Christianity is so far from the mainstream that Stockwell Day was laughed off the stage when he confessed to believing that dino-

sours had walked the Earth with man. But don't feel too smug. An Angus Reid poll last year found that only 59 per cent of Canadians believe in evolution - which, scientifically speaking, is somewhat like finding that only 59 per cent of us believe in gravity. Twenty-two per cent agreed that "God created human beings in their present form within the last 10,000 years"; 19 per cent weren't sure. (Not surprisingly, the most secular province is Quebec, where 71 per cent believe in evolution.)

Why is the U.S. such a religious outlier among the advanced industrialized nations? "It's the only country that hasn't taken the Enlightenment seriously," says Darwin scholar Michael Ruse of Florida State U.

"After the Revolution, America became a uniquely Protestant religious country, where the Bible plays a crucial role. And that has persisted to this day." The evangelicalism we see in Canada (which is mostly rooted in the West) is largely a U.S. import.

Why does Darwin's big idea continue to inflame the passions? Prof. Ruse says the fight over evolution isn't really a dispute about the fossil record. It's about modernity itself. It's about gay marriage, capital punishment, abortion, cross-dressing, pornography and the breathless pace of social change. "The big mistake is to think the argument is about scientific issues. It's not. It's about social and cultural ones."

Darwin laid out the mechanisms of natural selection long before the discovery and decoding of DNA. Since his time, science has continued to confirm his theory in ways he never could have dreamed of. And thoughtful people - many of them by no means creationists - are still struggling with the biggest question he raised: Without God, where's the moral compass?

"Intelligent design" offers one way out of this box, because it allows for God and evolution, too.

Ironically, the new science of sociobiology - one of the many offshoots of evolutionary theory - offers another. Evolutionary Psychologists argue that morality, altruism and even the religious impulse itself can be explained by genetics, as adaptive behaviors that improve the odds of individual and group survival.

In fact, the fight over Darwinism and its implications is very far from over. And in the next few years, social liberals will have as much or more to fear than
(continued on page 6)

the creationists. That's because the new fields of evolutionary biology and psychology and DNA mapping are yielding some uncomfortable truths about human nature.

"The new sciences of human nature resonate with assumptions that historically we're closer to the right than

to the left," writes MIT psychology professor Steven Pinker. "They undermine the Utopian outlook that until recently dominated large segments of intellectual life." In other words, we aren't a blank slate after all. We're a product of our genes, and our genes predispose us to some behaviors that aren't very nice. Ethnocentrism, for example, isn't the product of a flawed society. It's hard-wired into the human race, and that means that group-against-group hostility comes far more naturally than peace and love. Dominance and violence (and patriarchy, alas) are universal, along with the genetic and neurological mechanisms that go with them.

Then we have the partial heritability of such essential characteristics as intelligence, conscientiousness and antisocial tendencies (to say nothing of gender differences, which we used to imagine were just a social construct). In other words, an individual's genetic endowment strongly influences her choices, behavior and life chances. The luck of the genetic draw means people will inevitably have wildly unequal life outcomes.

Even more explosive is the existence of non-trivial racial differences (such as the higher diabetes rate among blacks, the higher risk of heart attack among South Asians, and the widely acknowledged but toxic matter of racial differences in IQ).

Prof. Pinker argues that, in light of this deluge of new evidence, our social-liberal view of violence, poverty, dysfunction and inequality - that they can be fixed with better policies - is just as faith-based as the creationists' view of the origin of the universe. It is certainly every bit as deep-seated. And that's why, more than a century after his death, Charles Darwin's dangerous ideas are still rocking the world.

mwente@globeandmail.com

From "The Shofar", A PUBLICATION OF ORAYNU CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, Canada

This song was played on public radio's "Speaking of Faith" program on Humanism:

When I'm Gone
By Phil Ochs

There's no place in this world where I'll belong when I'm gone
And I won't know the right from the wrong when I'm gone
And you won't find me singin' on this song when I'm gone
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here

And I won't feel the flowing of the time when I'm gone
All the pleasures of love will not be mine when I'm gone
My pen won't pour out a lyric line when I'm gone
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here

And I won't breathe the bracing air when I'm gone
And I can't even worry 'bout my cares when I'm gone
Won't be asked to do my share when I'm gone
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here

And I won't be running from the rain when I'm gone
And I can't even suffer from the pain when I'm gone
Can't say who's to praise and who's to blame when I'm gone
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here

Won't see the golden of the sun when I'm gone
And the evenings and the mornings will be one when I'm gone
Can't be singing louder than the guns when I'm gone
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here

All my days won't be dances of delight when I'm gone
And the sands will be shifting from my sight when I'm gone
Can't add my name into the fight while I'm gone
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here

And I won't be laughing at the lies when I'm gone
And I can't question how or when or why when I'm gone
Can't live proud enough to die when I'm gone
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here

CLASS ACT

It started out as a Kansas high school history project and ended up changing lives. It helped Megan Felt discover the life of unsung Holocaust heroine Irena Sendlerowska who smuggled over 2,500 Jewish children to safety from the Warsaw Ghetto. To preserve their names, Irena wrote them on sheets of paper and buried them in jars out in her garden.

Since that project, Megan and former classmates have made four trips to Poland to visit Irena, now 98. During one trip Megan was with Irena to meet Renata Zajdman, a child whom she rescued. Renata was brought out of the Warsaw Ghetto by the underground organization Irena ran.

Megan's mother lost her battle with cancer in 2006. Before she passed away she was able to join Megan on a trip to visit Irena. "It was amazing to have the two most courageous women in my life meet."

CAPITOL BEAT | KIT WAGAR
New bill would guarantee 'right to pray'

JEFFERSON CITY - The Missouri Legislature is at it again. Despite failed efforts the last two years to promote a public role for religion and even to declare the United States "a Christian nation," conservative lawmakers are now trying to approve a constitutional amendment that would guarantee the right to pray in any public setting, including public schools.

Similar proposals have passed the House in the past, but have always died quiet deaths in the Senate. The twist this year is the tack that supporters are taking. They have dropped arguments that the proposal would restore religious rights that have been curtailed by Supreme Court decisions.

Instead, advocates have adopted the novel argument that the amendment is needed because it won't change the law. Rather, supporters say, the proposal would simply re-affirm the religious freedom clause already in the state constitution

The proposal's sponsor, Republican Rep. Mike McGhee of Odessa, said it would clarify the law by emphasizing the rights of citizens and school children to pray and exercise their faith in public.

"I just want everyone to know that whatever their faith, this is their right," McGhee said.

Jewish leaders in St. Louis questioned why such a measure is needed if even supporters acknowledge that it doesn't change the law. Karen Aroesty, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League for Missouri and southern Illinois, described the proposal as another in a long line of measures designed to stir up support among fundamentalist Christian voters.

"People already know how to pray," Aroesty said. "They know they have the right to pray and students can pray in school. They do it all the time, especially if they haven't studied."

Rep. Jim Lembke, a Lemay Republican who is board chairman of Providence Christian Academy in St. Louis, said the wording would be a retort to people who have sought the removal of the Ten Commandments from public places.

"This will send a clear message to people who might want to mess with those rights to keep their hands off," Lembke said. In an effort to scuttle the measure, Skaggs suggested adding language that guaranteed citizens' rights to "acknowledge the inerrancy of the Bible."

The move created an awkward situation for many Republicans, who didn't want to go on record as opposing the inerrancy of the Bible. They ultimately approved the language, but stripped it off with a later vote. The proposal, House Joint Resolution 55, was approved by the House, 132-11. In the Senate, it has been assigned to the Pensions and General Laws Committee, which has not set a hearing.

Aroesty said the public needed to send an emphatic message that legislators' efforts to breach the separation between church and state were not welcome, particularly when major issues of public policy wait to be addressed.

"It is in the Senate's interest to concentrate on substantive bills that affect the public interest," Aroesty said. "We need them to work on bills that affect taxes, that affect health care - the things that hit people in their homes."

FEED ME BUBBE!

By Avrom Honig, Worcester, Mass.

I'd just graduated college, with a degree in communications. I had big dreams of breaking into the film industry. With YouTube and other online video sites exploding in popularity, there were more media outlets than ever - all looking for young filmmakers to provide content. Or so I thought. But every production company I went to turned me down. They wanted something I'd created - my "reel". I didn't have one. I was 23, with no job, spending the summer sitting around my parents' house. How would I ever make a demo reel? "What have you been working on all day?" my father asked that night at dinner. "A podcast." I sighed. "But I can't come up with anything people would like. "Someday we should record all your grandmother's recipes," Mom said, "so we won't forget how she made them. Maybe that's something you can film."

I looked through the viewfinder of the camera one more time, making sure the shot was just right. A kitchen bathed in warm light, ingredients spread out on the counter. The star of the show patiently standing to one side, was ready for her close-up. An internet cooking show wasn't exactly what I had in mind when I first dreamed of becoming a filmmaker. And the woman in front of me certainly wasn't the actress I'd dreamed of directing. She wasn't even a celebrity chef - she was my grandmother. My Bubbe.

That night I edited the footage and added my intro. I posted it online hoping a few people would watch. Two weeks later e-mails started pouring in from all over the world. We were getting 5,000 visits a day! A national newscast even interviewed Bubbe about her show. She was a hit! I'd wondered where I'd find material for my moviemaking career. It had been there all along, in Bubbe's kitchen.



Subject: English

There may be those among you who support including Spanish in our national language. I for one am 110% against this! We must preserve the exclusivity and above all, the purity of the English language.

To all the shlemiels, shlemazels, nebbishes, nudniks, klutzes, putzes, shlubs shames shnucks nogoodniks, and momzers that are out there pushing Spanish, I just want to say that I, for one, believe that English and only English deserves linguistic prominence in our American culture. To tell the truth, it makes me so farklempt, I'm fit to plotz. This whole Spanish schmeer gets me broyges, specially when I hear these erstwhile mavens and luftmenschen kvetching about needing to learn Spanish. Whatchutzpah! These shmegeges can tout their shlock about the cultural and linguistic diversity of our country, but I, for one, am not buying their shtick. It's all so much dreck, as far as I'm concerned.

I exhort you all to be menshen about this and stand up to their fardrayte arguments and mesh ugganah, farshtunkene assertions. It wouldn't be kosher to do anything else.

Remember, when all is said and done, we have English and they've got bubkes! The whole mynseh is a pain in my tuchas!

--Jackie Mason

HUMOR



JEWISH SURVIVAL

A new flood was predicted and nothing could prevent it. In three days, the waters would wipe out the world.

The Dalai Lama appeared on worldwide media and pleaded with humanity to follow Buddhist teachings to find nirvana in the wake of the disaster.

The pope issued a similar message, saying, "It is still not too late to accept Jesus as your Savior."

The chief rabbi of Jerusalem took a slightly different approach: "My people," he said, "we have three days to learn how to live under water."

THE PRAYER

A rabbi was talking to precocious six-year-old Mendel.

"So, you tell me that your mother says your prayers for you each night. That's very commendable. What does she actually say?"

Little Mendel replied, "Thank God he's in bed!"

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Chai-Lights

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