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CHAI LIGHTS

April - May 2025
Pacific Community of Cultural Jews

Orange County, CA.
PacifComm@aol.com

714-739-1366
www.pccjews.org

Pacific Community's Passover Observance

Sunday, April 13th, 2025 12-3:00 PM

Debby Penley's Clubhouse.

4552 Michelson Dr. Irvine

Please join us in the reading of our revised secular Haggadah, music, candle lighting, followed by a catered traditional Passover meal.



If you are able to attend, please RSVP to Suzy Baron at Bryonbaron@sbcglobal.net or (657) 274-3440 **me NO LATER than April 8th, NO EXCEPTIONS as the caterer needs a final head count by the 8th.**

Everything for members is provided at no cost.
There will be a charge of \$25 for non-members/guests.

Yom HaShoah/ Holocaust Remembrance Day Observance

April 27, 2025, 2:00-4:00 PM

Home of Zena Jacobi

23 Alameda Irvine



Please join us for meaningful Yom HaShoah/Holocaust Remembrance Day Observance. Our special guest is Rochelle Dreeben, author of "One Dark Night." Hear her amazing story of escape. We will also have a name reading of those family members and friends who perished in the Holocaust, and candle lighting ceremony and secular kaddish to honor all who perished. (If you have any people you would like to include in our reading of names, bring a written list to the event).

RSVP to Zena Jacobi (zena.jacobi@gmail.com) or
Sylvia Rothman (sobaysyl@aol.com) by April 25, 2025

Co-Presidents' Message

Spring has finally sprung as well as Daylight Savings Time. We can now look forward to spending more time outdoors and appreciating our (generally) nice weather. The month of April brings two important days in our community calendar: Passover and Yom HaShoah. Both holidays contemplate justice and freedom. These are values we must not overlook, especially in these challenging times in the world.

This month we look forward to our community Passover seder on Sunday, April 13, 2025, from 12-3 PM. We hope you will attend and bring your friends and family. The cost is \$25.00 per non-member. This nominal cost will include a delicious, catered seder meal featuring all the traditional foods, and dessert as well. Please read all the Passover information in this issue of the Chai-Lights.

On Sunday, April 27, 2025, we will have our biannual Yom HaShoah observance, featuring a special guest, author Rochelle Dreeben. It will be a meaningful remembrance. Information is also contained in this newsletter.

In the month of May, we will have our usual Philosopher's Café on Friday, May 9, 2025. Our ever-popular Dine-Out is scheduled for Saturday, May 10, 2025. A Book Share is being planned for Sunday afternoon, May 18, 2025. Stay tuned for details.

We wish everyone a happy Passover and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events.

Jim and Sylvia Rothman

Co-Presidents, Pacific Community of Cultural Jews



DINE OUT

Sat. May 10, 2025

1:00 p.m.

Simply Fish Food
1534 Adams Ave.

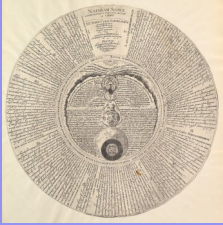
Costa Mesa

949-393-7401



Please RSVP to Knechtfour at Knechtfour@aol.com
Or 714-739-1366.no later than May. 7, 2025
No Exceptions!

(There is no Dine Out in April)



Philosopher's Café (Our Friendly Discussion Group)

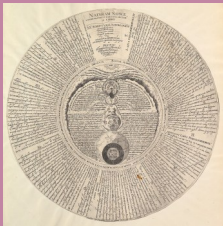


Friday April 11, 2025

7:30 p.m. Via Zoom

The Zoom link will be sent out to those who RSVP to Jim Rothman by Apr. 9, 2025 Look for it in your email. Then on Apr. 11th, click on the link and join in the fun.

To make sure we have your correct email address, please email Jim at jrbythec@aol.com, so he can include you.



Philosopher's Café (Our Friendly Discussion Group)



Friday May 9, 2025

7:30 p.m. Via Zoom

The Zoom link will be sent out to those who RSVP to Jim Rothman by May 7, 2025 Look for it in your email. Then on May. 9th click on the link and join in the fun.

To make sure we have your correct email address, please email Jim at jrbythec@aol.com, so he can include you.



Congratulations
April

Happy Birthday!
Jerry Zwick - 04/14



Congratulations
May

Happy Birthday!
Marci Mack - 05/03
Dave Okamoto - 05/08
Sheila Bass - 05/09



Happy Anniversary!
Mike & Celeste Mendelson - 05/27



Jews to Know Maxwell Smart

**Born Oziac Fromm in 1930
In memory of the six million**

Don't let the name confuse you. This is a real story. Maxwell Smart was born in 1930. When he was a young child, the family moved from Czechoslovakia to Buczacz, a small city which was then part of Poland; now Buchach, it is part of Ukraine. His family was living a comfortable life until the war broke out. He remembers his uncle, a cartoonist for a newspaper, taking an interest in his art after Smart was praised for it at school. The family was offered safe passage to the Soviet Union, but his mother wanted to stay, not knowing of the atrocities that had already begun. The town of Buczacz, which had a large Jewish population, was part of the Soviet-occupied zone until the summer of 1941, when the German army attacked the Soviet Union and occupied eastern Poland. In their first anti-Jewish action, the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators rounded up several hundred Jewish men, including Maxwell's father, and shot them on August 27, 1941. Soon after the Jewish community was moved into a ghetto and forced into labor. At one point Smart and others were imprisoned for three days. He remembers being in jail without food or water. He was creative: he took off his shoe, pushed it out the window to catch snow and shared the melted water with the other prisoners. This was the inspiration for the opening scene of the film *The Boy in the Woods* which is based on his life during the war years (and how I learned of Smart).

When Smart's family was rounded up in November 1942, his mother begged him to run to save himself. He managed to escape, and Smart's aunt and uncle paid a nearby farmer, Jasko Rudnicki, to hide the boy with his family. Neighbors informed the police that the family was hiding a Jewish boy. The police did not find Maxwell but threatened to kill Rudnicki and his family if they were found. This, alongside the news that Smart's aunt and uncle had been found and killed, convinced Rudnicki it was no longer safe to hide Smart. He told Smart that he would have to hide out in the woods. He taught Smart basic survival skills: what to eat, what not to eat, how to trap a rabbit. He lent him tools so Smart could build a bunker and showed him how to make a fire. The forest posed three major challenges: detection, starvation and loneliness. To pass the time he'd often paint the forest in his mind. One night, Smart found a small boy, Janek – no more than 10, starving and wandering through the bushes. Janek and Smart spent six months holed up in the same bunker. One morning they awoke to gunfire. After a few hours they went to investigate. A nearby bunker had been discovered, and the dead bodies of its inhabitants lay by the river. Smart saw that there was a baby who was still alive on the other side of the river. Janek begged Smart not to go into the frigid water but together they crossed the river and rescued the baby. Smart found relatives of the baby in hiding who took the baby, but Janek developed a fever and died days later.

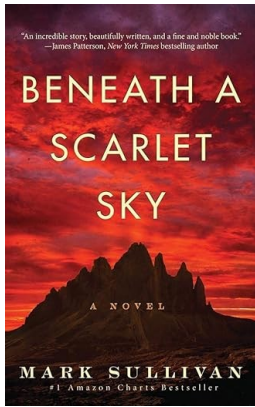
These are the most dramatic parts of Smart's story. Eventually he was liberated and moved to Canada where he married and raised a family. He was a successful businessman and continued to paint, opening the first of two galleries in Montreal in 2006. For many years he never talked about his experiences during the Holocaust. He was approached by director Rebecca Snow, who was making a documentary about survivors called *Cheating Hitler* and agreed to tell his story. The documentary crew found the 'baby', Tova Barkai, that Smart had saved. She survived the war, had a family and now elderly, lives in Haifa. Around 2010 Smart began writing his memoir, *Chaos to Canvas*, which describes how he survived the Holocaust and made a new life in Montreal. Smart has also tried to get Rudnicki the Righteous Among the Nations honor, for those who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. But, as he was the only witness to Rudnicki's courage, he is ineligible.

Written by Zena Jacobi

Credits: The Guardian, The Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program (photo from art.maxwell.com)



BOOK REVIEW



Beneath a Scarlet Sky: A Novel by Mark Sullivan

This historical novel takes place in Italy during World War II. The main Character is Pino Lella, a 17 year old Italian boy. During the years 1943 to 1945 Italy was in desperate need of man power to fight the war against the Nazis and the Fascists.

But Pino was sent to a monastery school to keep him away from the bombing and destruction of their town. At this school Pino met Father Re, the head master. He put Pino through an extremely rigorous regimen of mountain climbing and physical fitness. Pino succeeded with this and developed into a very talented and powerful adult with skills in mechanics, driving, and mountain climbing.

Unbeknown to Pino, Father Re had big plans for him,

One day a Nazi battalion rolled onto the school grounds, It was led by one of the highest ranking Nazi generals. Pino saw that the general's car broke down and asked if he could help repair it. Which he did. He was also told of Pino's excellent driving skills. So the general asked Pino if he would like to be his personal driver.

When he told his parents about this, they were horrified at first about it. But then they realized that with this job he would not be a fighter and would thus not be in danger. When he told Father Re about it, he said that in this position he would be able to give the resistance invaluable information about Nazi troop movements so he would then be a spy for the resistance. Pino was excited for the chance to help the resistance so he accepted.

However, the downside of this was that he had to wear a Nazi uniform. He was then accused of being a traitor by those who didn't know his true mission of spying. Also, while working for the general, he found out that

Father Re was hiding Jews in the school's basement. If the general would have discovered this, he would have executed him. He would have suffered the fate of many Italians that hid Jews from their Nazi executioners.

This book tells about Pino's true story as best as he could remember it. It was filled with many close calls and dangerous adventures. I really enjoyed it and would recommend it.

Reviewed by Jerry Zwick



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Apr. 11, 2025 | - Philosopher's Cafe |
| Apr. 13, 2025 | - Passover Seder |
| Apr. 27, 2025 | - Yom HaShoah Observance |
| May 9, 2025 | - Philosopher's Café |
| May 10, 2025 | - Dine Out |
| May 18, 2025 | - Book Sharing Event |
| June 13, 2025 | - Philosopher's Café |
| June 14, 2025 | - Dine Out |
| June 21, 2025 | - End of the Year Party (Members only) |



2024 - 2026 PACIFIC COMMUNITY BOARD ELECTED OFFICERS

Co-President	Jim Rothman	JRbytheC@aol.com
C0-President	Sylvia Rothman	Sobaysyl@aol.com
Vice President	Nancy Okamoto	949-386-0400
Secretary	Sylvia Rothman	sobaysyl@aol.com
Treasurer	Leslie Zwick	jerlesz@verizon.net
Membership Chair	Barbara Price	BarbaraPPrice@aol.com
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Co-Program Coordinator	Suzy Baron	Bryonbaron@sbcglobal.net
Co-Program Coordinator	Pnina Shichor	Info@BoundToTravel.com
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Affiliated with
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COMMUNITY AND BOARD POSITIONS

SHJ Representative	Nancy Okamoto	949-386-0400
CSJO Liaison	Leslie Zwick	jerlesz@verizon.net
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Board Member-At-Large	Di Bunin	DBF331@hotmail.com
Board Member-At-Large	TBD	
Newsletter Editor	Karen Knecht	Knechtfour@aol.com
Webmaster	Josh Moss	cincinnati@yaho.com
Sunshine	Sheila Bass	shekaba@aol.com

PACIFIC COMMUNITY OF CULTURAL JEWS

Calendar of Events 2024 - 2025

EVENTS

Sept. 14, 2024 -	Bowers Museum
Sept. 29, 2024 -	Rosh Hashanah Observance
Oct. 5, 2024 -	L.O.W. Voters - Propositions
Oct. 12, 2024 -	Yom Kippur
Oct. 20, 2024 -	Sukkot/Succos & Potluck
Dec. 12, 2024 -	Klezmaties
Dec. 22, 2024 -	Chanukah Party
Dec. 25, 2024 -	Nature Walk and Lunch
Feb. 9, 2025 -	Song Circle
Feb. 16, 2025 -	Tu B'Shvat Hike
Mar. 16, 2025 -	Purim Celebration
Apr. 13, 2025 -	Passover Seder
Apr. 26, 2025 -	Yom Ha Shoah Observance
May 18, 2025 -	Book sharing Program
June 21, 2025 -	Year-End Party

DINE - OUT

Join us for lunch or dinner at a variety of restaurants once a month. All locations will be decided upon the month before and announced in our newsletter. All lunches are at 1:00 p.m. and dinners are at 6:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

All dates are always tentative.

August 10, 2024
November 2, 2024
December 14, 2024
January 18, 2025
February 15, 2025 (new date)
March 8, 2025
May 10, 2025
June 14, 2025
July 19, 2025

For more information, or for suggestions for restaurants, contact Karen Knecht
714-739-1366 or Knechtfour@aol.com



PHILOSOPHER'S CAFÉ

(via Zoom)

People get together on a monthly basis to discuss a topic - either issues of the day, or any topic of general interest. Where they meet is up to the group. The discussions take anywhere from an hour to . . . ?

Philosopher's Café is being held via Zoom. Please check our monthly newsletters for information on our Philosopher's Café.

Schedule subject to change.

Pacific Community is an affiliate of the Society for Humanistic Judaism,
an international organization