



# CHAI LIGHTS

January 2026  
Pacific Community of Cultural Jews

Orange County, CA.  
PacifComm@aol.com

714-739-1366  
www.pccjews.org



Please join us as we visit the  
**Hilbert Museum of California Art**  
**January 17, 2026 10:30 a.m.**  
(directly across the street from the train station)  
**167 N. Atchison St.**  
**Orange**  
**714-516-5880**

Then join us for lunch at the  
**Streamliner Lounge and Café**  
(located at the train station, across the street from the museum)  
**January 17, 2026 12:30m p.m.**

Please RSVP to Suzy Baron at [Bryonbaron@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Bryonbaron@sbcglobal.net)  
No later than Monday, January 12, 2026 . NO  
EXCEPTIONS!



If you are interested in joining us for lunch but not the museum,  
RSVP to Suzy no later than January 12, 2026. NO EXCEPTIONS!



## *With Deepest Sympathy*

*Our thoughts go out to Bryon and Suzy Baron on the passing of  
Bryon's sister, Zisha Kerr. Zisha had been a member of Pacific  
Community for several years and always had a smile on her face.  
She will be missed.*

## Co-Presidents' Message

We wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year. Many people have personal rituals for welcoming the new year. On New Year's Day some people take part in a "polar plunge" where participants immerse or swim in very cold or icy water. The motives for participating in a "polar plunge" range from fundraising, meeting a physical or mental challenge, or socially engaging with others. Many describe an intense rush of adrenaline and clarity at the moment of immersion which can have lasting emotional effects.



The experience on the whole is a metaphor for pushing beyond our comfort zones to do something new or different in the coming year, no matter how small. Challenges can range from listening to music outside our usually preferred genres, engaging in a new activity, or traveling to a new place. We can also think about new ways to work to engage with our communities in advancing Tikkun Olam. This can be done in small ways such as donating to a food bank or taking stands on social justice issues. Jews for Secular Democracy hosts regular webinars on various social issues.

Last month, our Chanukah celebration had a very good turnout. Attendees enjoyed each other's company along with a Chanukah feast with latkes, jelly donuts and delicious side dishes. Rather than do a gift exchange, this year attendees brought donations to a local food bank and unwrapped toys for children in need. A special thank you to Suzy Baron and everyone who helped make this event a success.

On Christmas Day there was a short hike at the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve. This was followed by lunch at a local Chinese restaurant which was well-attended.

We look forward to seeing everyone at our planned events for this month. Details are listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Jim and Sylvia Rothman**

**Co-Presidents, Pacific Community of Cultural Jews**



## DINE OUT

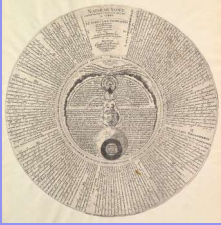
**Sat. Jan. 24, 2026**  
**Irrawaddy, Taste of Burma**  
**7076 Katella Ave**  
**Stanton,**  
**6:00 p.m.**  
**714-252-8565**



**Please RSVP to Knechtfour at [Knechtfour@aol.com](mailto:Knechtfour@aol.com)**

**Or 714-739-1366.no later than Jan. 21,2026.**

**No Exceptions!**



# **Philosopher's Café**

(Our Friendly Discussion Group)



**Friday January 16, 2026**

**7:30 p.m. Via Zoom**

**The Zoom link will be sent out to those who RSVP to Jim Rothman by Jan, 14, 2026 Look for it in your email. Then on Jan. 16th 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](mailto:jrbythec@aol.com), so he can include you.**

## **Congratulations** **January**



### **Happy Birthday!**

**Jeanne Lepowsky - 1/10**

**Di Bunin - 1/20**

**Vykki Morgan - 1/24**

### **Happy Anniversary!**

**Aviv & Hana Avishay - 1/15**





# Jews to Know

## Peter Sichel

(September 12, 1922 – February 24, 2025)

Peter Sichel was a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who became the first CIA Station chief in post-war Berlin and a key player in Cold War espionage before taking over the family wine business and popularizing the Blue Nun wine label. His family managed to flee to France in 1939. A relative was able to get them to New York in April 1941. He volunteered for the U. S. Army the day after Pearl Harbor.

As a 19-year-old German émigré who spoke German, French and English he was quickly recruited to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the CIA. He recruited German prisoners of war to infiltrate German lines and report back to him. A novel and film “Decision Before Dawn,” were written about one of these cases.

After the war, at the age of 23, Sichel became the OSS station chief in post-war Berlin. His intelligence uncovered that while the Soviet block of occupied Germany was not going to allow its residents to determine their political future as the Allies had agreed to. It also wasn’t going to invade any of the other occupied Germany zones.

Sichel worked as a spy for 17 years. First during the war in the OSS and then in the CIA from its inception until he resigned in 1959. He became disillusioned with the work as he believed that agents were sent into operations that had no chance of success and they were potentially being sent to their deaths. The common theme was sending agents behind enemy lines to instigate resistance to Communist regimes. This occurred in Albania, Ukraine and China. “There’s no attempt to learn from the past,” he said. “It’s an institutional mistake of this country.”

He also disagreed with covert efforts to depose political leaders in Iran and Guatemala. In “The Last Spy”, a documentary about his career in intelligence he said “If the intelligence doesn’t fit, they don’t believe the intelligence”.

Many of his agent colleagues thought that he would return to espionage after he left the CIA. Instead, he took over the family wine business. He inherited an antiquated and disorganized business and concentrated on promoting the company’s brands, primarily Blue Nun. It was called a liebfraumilch, meaning the milk of the Holy Mother, a generic term for Rhine wine. By the late 1980s, the world’s appetite for wine increased, but interest in branded wines like Blue Nun waned. Even with a business that was losing popularity, Peter Sichel, refugee, spy, wine merchant led a long and colorful life.

Written by Zena Jacobi

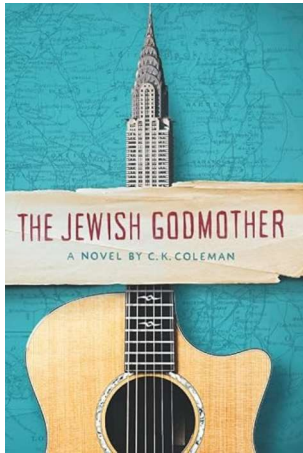
Credits: New York Times, March 4, 2025; Wikipedia; *The Last Spy* (documentary) directed and written by Katharina Otto-Bernstein



## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **The Jewish Godmother**

By C.K. Coleman



Klugh (pronounced same as clue) is a 17 year old boy growing up in New York. He is an extremely precocious guitar player as is his father, who has given lessons to a great many students, including Klugh. His mother was a music teacher also, but to elementary school students. Unfortunately both parents die and there is no other close relative left to raise Klugh, until his cousin Esther volunteers to do so. The problem is that she is Jewish and his parents are Catholic. Esther really wants to raise him, so she promises to raise him as a Catholic.

Things go relatively well until his estranged grandfather comes on the scene. He had been in prison and is violent and hostile. However, he wants to get custody of Klugh, mainly to get control of his inheritance which is sizable. In order to avoid this, Klugh and Esther escape out of town and stay in various locations. During this trip he rediscovers his guitar along with some skills he never knew he had. He also meets and develops a relationship with a girl who has a very positive influence on him when he needed it the most.

This book is well written and has many twists and turns. I would definitely recommend it.

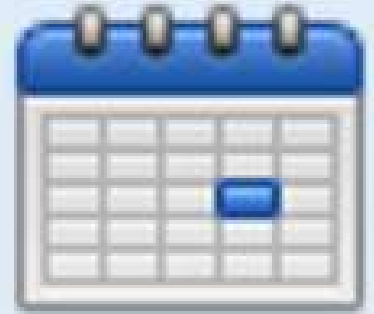
**Reviewed by Jerry Zwick**





# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

<b>Jan. 16, 2026</b>	<b>Philosopher's Café</b>
<b>Jan. 17, 2026</b>	<b>Hilbert Museum and Lunch</b>
<b>Jan. 24, 2026</b>	<b>Dine Out</b>
<b>Feb. 6, 2026</b>	<b>Philosopher's Café</b>
<b>Feb. 7, 2026</b>	<b>Lee Jacobi Memorial Hike</b>
<b>Feb. 14, 2026</b>	<b>Dine Out</b>
<b>Feb. 28, 2026</b>	<b>Jewish Improv</b>



## **2024 - 2026 PACIFIC COMMUNITY BOARD ELECTED OFFICERS**

<b>Co-President</b>	<b>Jim Rothman</b>	<b>JRbytheC@aol.com</b>
<b>Co-President</b>	<b>Sylvia Rothman</b>	<b>Sobaysyl@aol.com</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Nancy Okamoto</b>	<b>949-386-0400</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Sylvia Rothman</b>	<b>sobaysyl@aol.com</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Leslie Zwick</b>	<b>jerlesz@verizon.net</b>
<b>Membership Chair</b>	<b>Barbara Price</b>	<b>BarbaraPPrice@aol.com</b>
<b>Program Coordinator</b>	<b>Suzy Baron</b>	<b>Bryonbaron@sbcglobal.net</b>
<b>Publicity Co-Chairs</b>	<b>Ellen Jacobs Laura Shapiro</b>	<b>ejacobs@socal.rr.com LShapiro501@gmail.com</b>

## **COMMUNITY AND BOARD POSITIONS**

<b>SHJ Representative</b>	<b>Sylvia Rothman</b>	<b>Sobaysyl@aol.com</b>
<b>Board Member-At-Large</b>	<b>Bryon Baron</b>	<b>Bryonbaron@sbcglobal.net</b>
<b>Board Member-At-Large</b>	<b>Di Bunin</b>	<b>DBF331@hotmail.com</b>
<b>Board Member-At-Large</b>	<b>Mike Mendelson</b>	<b>Mendelsons5@yahoo.com</b>
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	<b>Karen Knecht</b>	<b>Knechtfour@aol.com</b>
<b>Webmaster</b>	<b>Celeste Mendelson</b>	<b>Mendelsons5@yahoo.com</b>
<b>Sunshine</b>	<b>Sheila Bass</b>	<b>shekaba@aol.com</b>

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# PACIFIC COMMUNITY OF CULTURAL JEWS

## Calendar of Events 2025 - 2026

### EVENTS

Sept. 13, 2025 - Bowers Museum  
Sept. 21, 2025 - Rosh Hashanah Observance  
Oct. 2, 2025 - Yom Kippur Observance  
Oct. 25, 2025 - Sukkot/Succos & Potluck  
~~Nov. 16, 2025 - Jewish Jeopardy~~  
Dec. 20, 2025 - Chanukah Party  
Dec. 25, 2025 - Nature Hike and Lunch Gathering  
Jan. 17, 2026 - Hilbert Museum & Lunch  
Feb. 7, 2026 - Lee Jacobi Memorial Hike  
Feb. 28, 2026 - Jewish Improv  
Mar. 21, 2026 - International Food Event  
Apr. 4, 2026 - Passover Seder  
Apr. 25, 2026 - Yom Ha'Atzmaut Observance  
May 16, 2026 - Humor Event  
June 6, 2026 - Book Sharing Event  
Jun 14, 2026 - Year-End Party

For more information,  
contact Suzy Baron, or Karen Knecht  
bryonbaron@sbcglobal.net / 714-639-4906  
Knechtfour@aol.com / 714-739-1366

### DINE - OUT

Join us for lunch or dinner at a variety 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.

Oct. 18, 2025 (date change)

Nov. 8, 2025

~~Dec. 13, 2025~~

Jan. 24, 2026 (date change)

Feb. 14, 2026

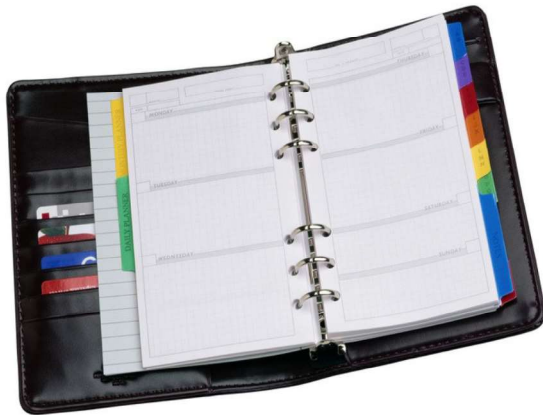
Mar. 14, 2026

May 9, 2026

June 6, 2026

July 11, 2026

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.

Sept. 19, 2025

Nov. 14, 2025

Jan. 16, 2026

Mar. 6, 2026

May 08, 2026

July 17, 2026

Oct. 17, 2025

Dec. 12, 2025

Feb. 6, 2026

Apr. 17, 2026

June 5, 2026

**Schedule subject to change.**

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