



# CHAI LIGHTS

May 2026

Pacific Community of Cultural Jews

Orange County, CA.  
PacifComm@aol.com

714-739-1366  
www.pccjews.org

**We Need To Laugh — Times are tough and we need to laugh - because life is short.**

**Please join us for an afternoon of Humor.  
Co-hosted by Jerry Zwick and Karen Knecht**

**May 16, 2026 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (approx.)  
Bob and Karen's Home  
7238 El Viento Way  
Buena Park  
714-739-1366 (landline)**

**Please bring a funny story or joke to share with the group.  
There will be schmoozing, snacks, and fun times for everyone.**

**Please RSVP to Karen at [Knechtfour@aol.com](mailto:Knechtfour@aol.com) or 714-739-1366  
No later than May 13, 2026. No exceptions!**

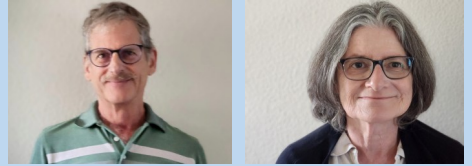
**HUMOR TIMES**

This June, we will be holding elections for the 2026-2028 Pacific Community Officers. The following positions are up for election: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chair(s), Program Chair(s), Publicity Chair(s).

If you are interested in having a voice in how our organization makes decisions, please let either Jim Rothman or Sylvia know, so they can add your name to our list of nominated officers.

## Co-Presidents' Message

The Jewish holiday of Shavuot falls on May 20. The holiday falls seven weeks after Passover and is at times referred to as the Festival of Weeks. It marks the end of the spring barley harvest and the beginning of the summer wheat harvest. In traditional Judaism, the holiday commemorates the day on which God bestowed the Ten Commandments upon the Israelites. In traditional synagogues, the Ten Commandments are recited. Dairy foods are eaten, though the reasons for this are more ambiguous and range from ideas of purity to the promise of Israel being the “land of milk and honey.” There is no particular way that secular Jews acknowledge the holiday. Some may find it a good occasion to enjoy their favorite dairy dishes (cheese blintzes, anyone?), others celebrate humanistic B’nai mitzvahs or educational achievements, still others enjoy a hike up a mountain or decorating their homes with flowers. As secular Jews, we might want to remind ourselves of the “Ten Commitments” of the Humanist movement (per the American Humanist Association): Altruism (helping others in need), Critical Thinking (practicing good judgment), Empathy (consider others’ struggles), Ethical Development, Environmentalism, Global Awareness (being a good global citizen), Humility, Peace and Social justice, Responsibility, and Service and Participation.



This month we have several activities planned, including the Dine-Out on Saturday, May 9, and Philosopher’s Café on Friday, May 15. More information can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

We look forward to seeing everyone soon.

Jim and Sylvia Rothman  
Co-Presidents, Pacific Community of Cultural Jews

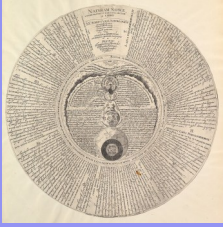


## DINE OUT

May 9, 2026 6:00 p.m.  
Claim Jumper  
7971 Beach Blvd.  
Buena Park



Please RSVP to Karen at [Knechtfour@aol.com](mailto:Knechtfour@aol.com)  
no later than May 6, 2026. No exceptions!



# Philosopher's Café

(Our Friendly Discussion Group)



**Friday May 15, 2026**

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

**The Zoom link will be sent out to those who RSVP to Jim Rothman by May 13, 2026 Look for it in your email. Then on May15th, 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 May



**Happy Birthday!**

**Marcia Mack - 5/3**

**Dave Okamoto - 5/8**

**Sheila Bass - 5/9**

**Eileen Harris - 5/20**

**Wendy Hames - 5/23**



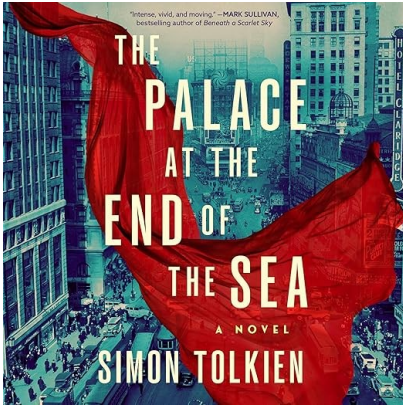
**Happy Anniversary**

**Mike & Celeste Mendelson - 5/27**

# BOOK REVIEW

## THE PALACE AT THE END OF THE SEA

BY SIMON TOLKEIN



Theo was a young man who was pulled in many different directions by the adults he cared about. His father, who ran a successful clothing manufacturing business in England prior to the Great Depression wanted him to take over the business when he was ready. His mother cared little about this but wanted him to follow her in her Catholic religion. His grandfather wanted him to learn about his Jewish heritage. Some of his friends at school, including his girl friend, wanted him to become an Anarchist.

His respected running coach wanted him to develop his excellent running skills and use them to play rugby for his school. He also indoctrinated him into Communism. In addition, his stepfather showered him with many expensive gifts in the hope of using him to gain the favor of Theo's mother.

So Theo spent much of his youth trying to determine which direction he should pursue. This was very complicated because he wanted to please all of these significant others and he was quite torn. His main problem was that he couldn't find his own identity.

I enjoyed this book because Theo's issues were similar to those faced by so many other young people of different eras and different times.

Reviewed by

Jerry Zwick





# Jews to Know

## Mel Mermelstein

September 25, 1926 – January 28, 2022

Mel Mermelstein was a Holocaust survivor born in what was then Czechoslovakia. During World War II, anti-Jewish persecution upended his family's life. In May 1944, he and his family were deported to Auschwitz. He was separated from his parents and siblings and in January 1945 was sent on a death march with 3,200 other prisoners to the Gross-Rosen concentration camp. From there he was sent by train to Buchenwald where he arrived with typhus and weighed only 68 pounds. Mel, partially obscured, was in the top bunk at the far right of the famous Buchenwald liberation photo. Elie Weisel is also in that picture. Mel was the sole survivor of his family.

After the war, Mel immigrated to the United States and settled in Long Beach, California. He built a life there and became a businessman.

In the 1980s, he confronted Holocaust denial in a well-known legal case against the Institute for Historical Review (IHR). The IHR, a tiny Holocaust-denial organization issued a challenge: \$50,000 to the first person who could prove that gas chambers had existed. Mermelstein took up the IHR challenge. In 1980, he submitted to IHR his and other survivors' declarations of internment at Auschwitz, plus Zyklon B gas crystals. When IHR refused to pay up, Mermelstein sued them. In 1981 Judge Thomas Johnson of the LA County Superior Court ruled that the utilization of gas chambers at Auschwitz was an indisputable fact. It was the first time a U.S. court took "judicial notice" of the Holocaust (defined by the judge as "facts and propositions of generalized knowledge that are so universally known that they cannot reasonably be the subject of dispute"). The stipulated judgement required IHR and its associated entities and individuals to pay Mermelstein \$100,000; accept Judge Johnson's ruling; and issue an apology to Auschwitz survivors for intentional infliction of emotional distress. Such an apology from Holocaust deniers had never been obtained before. Mermelstein's lawyers declined to bill for their services and Mermelstein donated the \$100,000 to charity. The case was made into a 1991 TV film *Never Forget*, starring Leonard Nimoy as Mermelstein.

Starting in the late 1960s, Mermelstein made annual trips to Auschwitz and other camps, bringing back innumerable artifacts. Some pieces were kept as historical objects, and some he incorporated into mixed-media, assemblage-style artworks using materials such as barbed wire and recovered metal. The artifacts and art are exhibited at the Holocaust Museum Orange County in Newport Beach which provides education programs, especially for visiting school groups. The experience educates visitors about the dangers of unchecked hatred and the critical need to prevent genocide. At the same time, visitors are guided and inspired with effective tools and methods for tolerance, moral courage, resilience, and personal integrity. It's in our own backyard. I encourage everyone to visit it.

Written by Zena Jacobi

Credits: Co-pilot; Wikipedia; Auschwitz Study Foundation website; Holocaust Museum Orange County website; PCC Chai Lights April 2022; Jewish Currents October 9, 2012



# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

<b>May 9, 2026</b>	<b>Dine Out</b>
<b>May 15, 2026</b>	<b>Philosopher's Café</b>
<b>May 16, 2026</b>	<b>Jewish Humor Event</b>
<b>June 5, 2026</b>	<b>Philosopher's Café</b>
<b>June 6, 2026</b>	<b>Book Share</b>
<b>June 14, 2026</b>	<b>Member End of the Year Party</b>
<b>July 11, 2026</b>	<b>Dine Out</b>
<b>July 17, 2026</b>	<b>Philosopher's Cafe</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
<del>Nov. 16, 2025 -</del>	<del>Jewish Jeopardy</del>
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 & Purim
Mar. 21, 2026 -	International Food Event
Apr. 4, 2026 -	Passover Seder
<del>TBD</del>	<del>Yom Ha'Atzmaut Observance</del>
May 16, 2026 -	Humor Event
June 6, 2026 -	Book Sharing Event
June 6, 2026	Dine Out
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 15, 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