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THE

Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925

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Federation Represents Israel at MUS International Fair



Pictured are Janet Shipman, Lorraine Wolf, Phoenix Goldberg, Tal Nezry and Shelley Robbins, who represented Memphis Jewish Federation at Memphis University School's (MUS) International Fair. Nearly 500 students and faculty attended, learning about Israel, and enjoying challah with Federation staff and lay leaders. Tal Nezry, the Memphis Jewish Community Center's Community Shlichah, joined Federation lay leaders Janet Shipman and Shelley Robbins in representing Israel. Federation thanks MUS faculty, staff and students for the opportunity to participate in this fun and informative event. HW



Young Israel Thanks Local Heroes on Thanksgiving



Some of YI's children and adults visiting local firefighters on Thanksgiving Day 2024

Thanksgiving is a wonderful and obvious time to stop and say 'Thank You' to some very important people whom we don't often recognize – our local firefighters, police officers, Sheriff's deputies, and our friends at Veterans Security Group. After all, rather than spending Thanksgiving at home with their families, those hard-working heroes spend that day on duty keeping our neighborhoods safe and secure.

Nine years ago, Young Israel (YI) be-

gan the tradition of sharing some Shul-made pies and 'Thank You' posters with our local firefighters on Thanksgiving. This heart-warming program – named 'Pies for Our Guys' – has been very well-received. In 2020, YI added the Memphis Police Department, the Shelby County Sheriff's Office, and Veterans Security Group (VSG) to our list of pie recipients, and we excitedly continued the tradition this year as well. (The hard-working team of VSG security



YI's Rabbi Akiva Males sharing Shul-made pumpkin pies with Chris Edens (head of Veteran's Security Group) just before Thanksgiving 2024.

personnel help keep Young Israel safe each Shabbos and Yom Tov.)

YI thanks the many children and parents who joined at Shul on Sunday morning, November 24 to create appreciative posters, and to prepare / bake 68 (a new record!) mouth-watering pumpkin pies. Taking part in these activities was also loads of fun for all the participants.

In the days leading up to Thanksgiv-

ing, I delivered nearly 50 of the Shul-baked pumpkin pies and some of the 'Thank You' posters to our friends at VSG, the Memphis Police Department on Appling Farms Parkway, and the Shelby County Sheriff's Substation in Arlington. Each group was noticeably touched and was happy to bring YI's pies home and enjoy them with their families on Thanksgiving.

On Thanksgiving morning (Thurs., Nov. 28), YI brought dozens of children and adults together to say "Thank You" to our firefighters at Fire Station 21 (next to Kroger on S. Mendenhall Rd).

The children presented the final 17 of their pumpkin pies, as well as their hand-crafted Thanksgiving posters to the very appreciative – and noticeably touched – firefighters. The firemen gladly treated our entire group to a tour of their fire station, offered a close look at their equipment, and even let the children climb into their ambulance and trucks.

Visiting and thanking our fire fighters on Thanksgiving made the day so much more meaningful for everyone involved. Young Israel thanks everyone who helped sponsor this heart-warming program. YI also thanks the many children and parents who once again helped us express our appreciation to our community's first responders and our Shul's security professionals.

YIOM's Rabbi Akiva Males can be reached at rabbi@yiom.org [HW](#)

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My Teen Israel Experience



Rafi Davidovics with Memphis Boys on NCSY Kollel at the Kotel.
By Rafi Davidovics

Over the past summer I went on the NCSY Israel program, NCSY Kollel. NCSY Kollel is an exciting six-week program that takes place in Beit Meir, Israel. Over the six weeks, we enjoyed a variety of activities from exciting trips to inspiring Torah learning with the brightest minds around the globe. We connected more with our brothers and sisters in Israel by going to impactful places to witness the horrifying effects of the October 7th attacks, such as the site of the Nova festival.

While there were many incredible trips and experiences over the course of these inspiring six weeks, the most impactful was our mountain climb up Har Shlomo. Har Shlomo is in the south of Israel near Eilat and is around four hours away from Beit Meir. Because of the distance, we left at midnight the night before our climb/hike. Many of us did not sleep on the bus ride, but when 4 a.m. came, it was all we could do was get off the bus and mentally prepare ourselves for the rigorous task ahead. We barely saw through the darkness and were in the middle of the desert, but despite this we met up with our tour guide and journeyed on.

The first part of the hike was tame and was mostly uphill walking, which was for the best considering our lack of sleep. In the black of night, we journeyed on until we got to the first real climb. Most of us were not expecting to see a wall of rocks, and we were not certain of our ability to climb it, but as we made our way up the mountain and quickly got the hang of it. After what seemed like an eternity it finally started to get brighter as the sun slowly crept

up on the horizon, and we felt a wave of relief wash over us as now we would be able to see. We kept pushing on up the mountain approaching closer and closer to the summit fueled with more energy as we went on despite the exhaustion.

By the time we reached the summit, we all took a minute to catch our breath and drink some water and while we were sitting down, we saw the sun slowly break free from the shackles of the horizon. It seemed as if a wave of sun rays had washed over us, and we realized at that moment that there would be no better time to daven shacharit. We took out our tefillin and our siddurim and began our morning prayers and honestly, it was the closest I have ever felt to Hashem (G-d) while davening. As we looked over the beautiful land that G-d created for us, gave to our forefathers, and gave us the privilege to inherit, I was overcome with gratitude to Hashem for the multitude of blessings He has given me daily.

Thank you to Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund for helping to make my NCSY Kollel trip possible.

Rafi Davidovics, son Dr. Deena Davidovics and Rabbi Noam Davidovics, is a junior at the Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys. Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund provided him with a Teen Israel Experience grant to offset the costs of his NCSY Kollel program. All rising juniors and seniors are eligible for grants of up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for 2025 are open and can be accessed at jcpmemphis.org/lemsky-endowment-fund. [HW](#)

THE Hebrew Watchman

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Dec. 13, 2024 / 12 Kislev, 5785.....4:31 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. Dec. 14, 2024 / 13 Kislev, 5785 5:30 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Vayishlach

Israel Eliminates Terrorist Who Tortured Gazans



Israeli Air Force F-16 fighter aircraft in flight, May 9, 2019.
Credit: Moshe Shai/Flash90.

(JNS) – The Israel Air Force last Wednesday struck and eliminated several terrorists who were in the humanitarian zone in Khan Yunis, with the help and direction of the Israel Defense Forces and the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet).

Among the terrorists killed was Osama Ghanim, a senior member of Hamas's Internal Security Force. He was involved in activity to suppress the residents of Gaza and was responsible for the terrorist group's violence within the Gaza Strip, the IDF said in a statement.

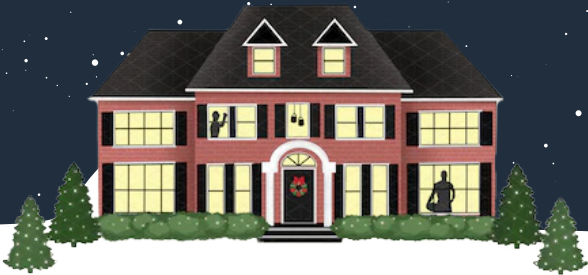
Ghanim played a key role in implementing the brutal methods of Hamas, which included conducting harsh interrogations of civilians while violating human rights, suppressing residents suspected of opposing Hamas, and persecuting civilians from the LGBTQ+ community.

Numerous steps were taken before the airstrike to mitigate the risk of harming civilians, including aerial surveillance and acquiring additional intelligence information, and then precise munitions were used, the IDF said.

That the terrorists were hiding in the humanitarian zone is further evidence of Hamas's "cynical exploitation" of the civilian population and infrastructure as human shields for terrorist activity, the IDF said.

The IDF and Shin Bet said they will continue to target anyone who took part in terrorist activities against Israeli civilians. [HW](#)

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Israeli Drone Strike Targets Terrorists in Jenin Area



An Israeli military operation in Jenin on Nov. 20, 2024. Credit: Nasser Ishtayeh/Flash90.

(JNS) – Israeli forces carried out a drone strike against terrorists in the Jenin area of northern Samaria, the Israeli military said last Sunday morning.

The Israel Defense Forces provided no details on the circumstances of the incident.

In a joint statement last Wednesday, the Israel Defense Forces and Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) revealed that Israeli security forces had recently thwarted an attempt by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to smuggle heavy weaponry to Palestinian terrorist cells in Jenin.

On Nov. 24, Israeli forces killed two Palestinian terrorists in the town of

Ya’bad, 12 miles west of Jenin in northern Samaria, according to the Palestinian Authority’s WAFA news agency.

In the first six months of 2024, Judea and Samaria saw more than 500 Arab terrorist attacks each month on average, according to data made public by Hatzalah Judea and Samaria (Rescuers Without Borders).

During that period, first responders recorded 3,272 acts of terrorism in the region, including 1,868 cases of stoning, 456 fire bombings, 299 incidents involving explosives and 109 shootings.

Terrorists murdered 14 people and wounded more than 155 others in Judea and Samaria between January and July, the rescue group said. **HW**

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

Lunch is Monday–Friday at 11:30 a.m. All programs start at 12:15 p.m. Monthly Luncheon is at noon.

Monday, December 16
Speaker, Rabbi Ian Lichter, Head Rabbi of Baron Hirsch Congregation
Rabbi Ian Lichter joined Baron Hirsch Congregation in August 2022. Previously he served as the Assistant Rabbi at the Great Neck Synagogue in Long Island, New York, for 12 years. He received his rabbinic ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University and earned his master’s degree in education and administration from Azrieli Graduate School. Rabbi Lichter strives to provide for a diverse and vibrant community by fully immersing himself in the spiritual and physical well-being of the congregation. He provides both inspiring and practical drashot, shiurim, and Divrei Torah to the shul as well as a caring and compassionate ear for its congregants.

Wednesday, December 18
Big Monthly Luncheon
Get excited about The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Monthly Luncheon featuring vocalist Stephen Len White. Stephen is a native Memphian and classically trained vocalist who will sing anything from the American Songbook for you to enjoy. He has performed with the New York Grand Opera. He is equally trained on the musical stage and has appeared in dramas and musicals, including appearances in “The Sound of Music” and “As You Like It,” at Playhouse on the Square, and with the Tennessee Shakespeare Company. His selections for the senior luncheon will be the kind of mu-



Vocalist Stephen White

sic that everyone will enjoy. He and his wife, Deborah, on piano will have you singing along with them in no time. The cost for the Monthly Luncheon is only \$5. The MJCC Bus is available for those that live near the MJCC for only \$2 roundtrip. Call Steve Kaplan with any questions.

Monday, December 23
Year End Game of Team Trivial Pursuit
This time the game will feature most of the questions on Music, Movies and T.V. from the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Come have fun and a nice lunch with friends previous and new.

Wednesday, December 25
No Lunch in the Senior Lunch Room!
The MJCC facilities will be open on 12/25 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Please join us Monday through Friday for a delicious kosher lunch from the kitchens at Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab. The cost is only \$2 for seniors. Reservations are required the day before by 1 p.m. by contacting Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator, at 901-259-9220 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. Steve works Monday thru Thursday 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. **HW**

Israel Raises Threat Level for Armenia, Maldives, Lowers it for Brazil

(JNS) – Israel’s National Security Council lowered its travel warning for Brazil last Thursday, while raising its alert levels for Armenia and the Maldives. The travel warning level in the South Caucasus country was increased to Level 2 (occasional threat) “due to an increased risk to Israelis/Jews in Armenia from terrorist elements.”

The National Security Council stressed that it was not a call to leave the country, but to exercise caution. For the Maldives, an archipelagic state in South Asia in the Indian Ocean, the travel warning was escalated from Level 2 to Level 3 (medium threat) “due to the presence of terror supporters in the islands and growing hostility toward Israelis and Jews.” The recommendation is to avoid nonessential travel to the country. For Brazil, the alert level was lowered from Level 2 to Level 1 (no warning), except for the tri-border area between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. **HW**

Even on Thanksgiving!



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Holidays do not mean the real estate market stops! I have sold homes on New Years Day, Christmas, Labor Day, Memorial Day and, this year, Thanksgiving AGAIN was no exception. While out of town, I negotiated two more transactions, which proves my point. Thinking of selling? Talk to 2-3 real estate Brokers but make sure that I am one of them! And, remember...

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Concerns about Hunter Biden’s Pardon Ring Hollow as
Republicans Sidelined

Congressman Cohen’s Constitutional Amendment that Would have Limited Pardons

Currently no substantive check on the President’s broad clemency power

Congressman Steve Cohen (TN-9), a senior member of the Judiciary Committee long concerned about the potential abuse of the presidential pardon power who has sought to amend the Constitution to protect against perceived conflicts of interest, today [Dec. 5] released the following statement:

“President Biden has lost one son and would do anything he could for his remaining son. I’m in no way surprised at this pardon since the father-son bond is so strong. It’s also clear that Hunter Biden was targeted because he was the son of the President and held to account in ways similarly situated people would not have been. The pardon power is supposed to be a safety valve against injustice, and I understand why President Biden thought it appropriate in this instance.

“But to all those who find this pardon distasteful, I encourage you to co-sponsor and support the constitutional amendment I have introduced in the last several Congresses to reform the pardon power. The measure would eliminate pardons for the President’s self, the President’s family, Administration officials and campaign staff, and those who commit crimes on behalf of, for the

benefit of, or at the direction of the President – all instances with inescapable perceptions of conflicts of interest. The amendment also clarifies that no pardon issued for a corrupt purpose – past, present, or future – is valid. The measure has never received a Republican cosponsor, though, with their new recognition of the issue, I sincerely hope that will change.” **HW**

Suspect in October Hate Crime Shooting of Orthodox Man Found Dead

in Chicago Jail



A police car pictured in Chicago on April 13, 2024. Credit: Kyle Mazza/Anadolu via Getty Images

By Jacob Gurvis

(JTA) – The man accused of shooting a Jew on his way to synagogue in Chicago in late October has been found dead in his jail cell.

Sidi Mohamed Abdallahi, 22, had been arrested and charged with terror-

ism and hate crime charges for shooting the Orthodox man in Chicago’s West Rogers Park neighborhood on Oct. 26, a Shabbat morning.

Abdallahi, an immigrant from Mauritania, had subsequently exchanged fire with law enforcement when police and paramedics arrived on the scene, and was taken to a local hospital after sustaining a gunshot wound.

Abdallahi was initially charged with 14 total felony counts — including attempted first-degree murder and aggravated discharge of a firearm toward a police officer. But the shooting unleashed a firestorm in Chicago, where the initial lack of hate crime charges drew sharp criticism from local Jewish leaders. Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson also faced backlash for omitting mention of the victim’s Jewish identity in his response to the shooting.

Days later, amid the blowback, hate crime charges were filed against Abdallahi.

At a detention hearing on Nov. 22, prosecutors presented evidence showing that Abdallahi had mapped several Chicago synagogues and Jewish day schools in the days prior to the shooting, including a synagogue one block from the scene of the attack, according to the “Chicago Sun-Times.”

Abdallahi was found dead Saturday,

Nov. 30 at 3:30 p.m. during a routine security check at the health center in Cook County Jail. He was found unresponsive in an “apparent suicide attempt by hanging” in his cell, the Cook County Sheriff’s Office said. He was then taken to Mount Sinai Hospital, where he died.

The Illinois State Police Public Integrity Task Force is conducting an investigation, according to the sheriff’s office, which said there was no sign of foul play, and that Abdallahi was not considered a suicide risk. An autopsy is also being conducted, according to a local ABC affiliate.

“My community has been on edge for quite some time,” Alderwoman Debra Silverstein, herself an Orthodox Jew who represents West Rogers Park, told the ‘Sun-Times.’ “I hope this will bring a small measure of closure.”

Silverstein, who had expressed outrage at the initial lack of hate crime charges, also said she hoped the investigation would continue. “We would still like to find out all the details about what happened,” she said. **HW**

‘Don’t Spend a Lot of Time Worried about My Legacy,’ Austin Says, asked if Israeli Actions are a ‘Stain’



U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin speaks with reporters after attending the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defense Ministers’ informal Meeting in Vientiane, Laos, Nov. 20, 2024. Credit: U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jack Sanders/U.S. Department of Defense.

(JNS) – During a press briefing in Laos last Wednesday, Lloyd Austin, the U.S. defense secretary, was asked if he worried that Israeli actions would “stain” his reputation.

“You’ve told us before about how you’ve really pushed Israel to follow humanitarian law in Gaza and how that’s been important to you, but we’ve all seen the imagery and videos, particularly of women, coming out of there and displaying civilian harm,” the reporter said.

“There was also a new report from the State Department that came out today of 500 cases, I think, of U.S. weapons being used against civilians,” the reporter added. “So I was wondering if you’re concerned Israel’s actions in that sense are going to reflect a stain on your legacy since it was under your leadership?”

“Yeah, you know, I don’t spend a lot of time worried about my legacy,” the defense secretary responded. “But if there were legacy issues associated with this, I would point to the fact that we moved urgently to support Israel in its efforts to defend itself. Moved heaven and earth, and we were able to do that because of all the lessons we learned in providing prompt support to Ukraine.”

Austin noted that he has “consistently emphasized that you can be effective and achieve your objectives and also protect humans or civilians in the battle space, as well.

“I truly believe that, and that’s why we enacted an initiative in the Department of Defense that focuses on providing protection to civilians in the battle space,” he said. “We’ve done a lot there. As a matter of fact, our guys, our staff have really kind of created the gold standard for, you know, focusing on civilian harm in the battle space and making sure that we’re following the right procedures.

“We’re learning from mistakes in the past and that sort of stuff,” he added. **HW**

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Temple Israel Judaica Shop: Where Community and Tradition Meet



“We are proud to showcase a diverse collection of art and items from talented Jewish artists,” said Nancy Shainberg Kline, manager of the Sisterhood Judaica Shop at Temple Israel. The Judaica shop is also the ideal place to shop for Chanukah gifts.

The Temple Israel Judaica Shop is more than a retail store – it’s a cornerstone of Jewish life in Memphis.

Located in the Welcome Center at Temple and part of the building since 1976, the shop serves as a hub for spiritual growth and tradition. It offers a variety of Judaica, and purchases help the Temple Israel Sisterhood support local organizations vital to the Jewish community, including:

- Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab – Providing compassionate care for elderly Jewish residents.
- Plough Towers – Offering affordable housing for Jewish seniors in Memphis
- Kosher Food Pantry at the Memphis

Jewish Community Center (MJCC) – Ensuring that no one in the community goes hungry.

- Henry S. Jacob’s Camp – Offering Jewish children a chance to grow, learn, and experience camp life.

Unlike many seasonal stores, the Judaica Shop at Temple is the only shop in the tri-state area open year-round and offers a wide variety of Jewish-related items – from holiday items to books, clothing, and gifts for all ages.

The Shop’s mission is to provide a wide range of items that help individuals and families strengthen their Jewish practice at home, whether for Shabbat, holidays, or life cycle events. They also

feature an extensive collection of Jewish art from well-known area makers.

“We are proud to showcase a diverse collection of art and items from talented Jewish artists,” said shop manager Nancy Shainberg Kline. “Many of the artists we feature can only be found here, and we are always looking for new artists.”

A glance around the store reveals work by renowned artists such as Gary Rosenthal, Joy Stember, Blackthorne Forge, Seeka, Yaeli, Emanuel, and Dinstuhl’s – each contributing unique and meaningful works that enrich the shop’s collection.

None of this happens by accident. The shop is staffed by a small army of dedicated Temple Israel Sisterhood volunteers who work as buyers and sales associates, assist with merchandising, and help with special events.

“We couldn’t do what we do without our volunteers,” Nancy said. “And there’s always room for more!”

The Judaica Shop is open year-round, offering a welcoming environment for all those who wish to strengthen their Jewish practice, support their community, and find meaningful items that enhance their spiritual lives. Whether through shopping or volunteering, everyone has a role to play in supporting the Shop’s mission and making the Memphis Jewish community more robust and more vibrant than ever.

The Temple Israel Judaica Shop is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 4 p.m., Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Sundays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. when Religious School is in progress. The Shop is also open by appointment. [HW](#)

Swastikas, Slurs Graffitied on Home of Jewish Family in North Carolina



An air-conditioning unit at a Jewish home in Charlotte, N.C., is vandalized with swastikas, Dec. 5, 2024. Source: “WCNC Charlotte” screenshot.

(JNS) – A Jewish family’s home in Charlotte, N.C., was recently graffitied with swastikas as well as racist and homophobic slurs.

“It’s crazy because you just don’t think that people do these kinds of things anymore,” said Deborah McCullough, one of the residents of the vandalized home.

“You hear about things, but something changes when it becomes personal, and it’s in your living space,” she told WCNC Charlotte. “All of a sudden, you don’t feel safe where you live. I’ve always felt safe here.”

The family contacted the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police about the incident and said that the FBI is also investigating.

“Some people spray-painted a swastika, that seems very targeted since my family is Jewish,” McCullough’s daughter said. “Honestly, I think it was just hateful kids, but I’m not totally sure.”

McCullough said her internet was down at the time of the incident, so the home’s security system did not record the vandals. [HW](#)

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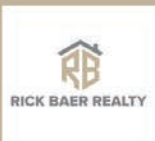
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Hangman Who Executed Nazi War Criminal Adolf Eichmann Dies



Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann at his trial in Jerusalem, 1961. Credit: Israel Government Press Office.

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – The Israeli prison guard who was selected to hang Final Solution architect Adolf Eichmann more than six decades ago died last Tuesday. He was 88.

Shalom Nagar, who served at Ayalon Prison in Ramla, where Eichmann was incarcerated, did not volunteer for the task.

Nagar was 26 years old at the time of the June 1, 1962, execution, which was carried out after the notorious Nazi war criminal lost his appeal against his death sentence.

His identity was kept secret for three decades for fear of reprisal until it was revealed by Israeli journalists in 1992.

The hanging was the only judicial execution ever held in the State of Israel, which does not have capital punishment except for murder committed by the Nazis and their aides, and for treason. This latter provision was invoked once—against IDF officer Meir Tobianski, who was sentenced by a field court and executed by firing squad in June 1948.

Nagar was born in Yemen in 1936 and arrived in Israel aged 12 as an orphan. He served in the IDF’s Paratroopers Brigade and later joined the Israel Prison Service.

Eichmann was taken into custody by Mossad and Shin Bet agents from Argentina in 1960 and convicted and sentenced to death a year later after a landmark public trial in Jerusalem.

He lived in Germany after World War II under an assumed name. In 1948, Eichmann obtained an entry permit for Argentina and false identification under the name Ricardo Klement through an organization directed by Austrian cleric Bishop Alois Hudal.

Eichmann traveled across Europe, staying in a series of monasteries that had been set up as safe houses, and then fled to Argentina, where he lived for a decade until he was brought to Israel to stand trial.

Nagar was one of 22 non-Ashkenazi prison staff selected to watch over the Nazi at the prison, who became known as the “Eichmann guards.” They were tasked with ensuring that he did not commit suicide or was poisoned.

After Eichmann’s conviction, Nagar was chosen at random to carry out the hanging even though he was on fur-

lough at the time and did not want to take part in the execution.

He was convinced to accept the task after being shown pictures of Holocaust atrocities against children.

“It so appalled me that I agreed to do what needed to be done,” he told the “Mispacha” magazine in 2005.

Eichmann’s ashes were later scattered in the Mediterranean Sea, beyond Israel’s territorial waters.

In the years that followed, Nagar was hunted by nightmares about Eichmann.

A documentary called “Hatalyan,” Hebrew for “The Hangman,” was made about him in 2010. [HW](#)

Melbourne, Australia, Synagogue Set Ablaze in Suspected Arson Attack

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – A synagogue in suburban Melbourne, Australia, was set ablaze last Friday, causing congregants to flee and injuring at least one person.

The fire broke out before dawn last Friday at Adass Israel, a haredi Orthodox synagogue in the town of Ripponlea, sent congregants gathered for morning prayers into the streets at 4:10 a.m. Those who fled the fire reported assailants breaking windows and throwing firebombs into the building.

The damage from the fire appeared to be extensive and was brought under control by 5 a.m. by a team of 60 firefighters and 17 trucks, according to “The Age,” an Australian publication.

“I unequivocally condemn the attack on a Melbourne synagogue early this morning,” Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in a statement. “I have zero tolerance for antisemitism. It has absolutely no place in Australia.”

He added, “The people involved must be caught and face the full force of the law.”

Benjamin Klein, a board member of the synagogue, told the “Sydney Morning Herald” that congregants reported that in addition to the firebombs and broken windows, assailants tossed in a flammable liquid and set it afire. One person’s hand was burned, he said.

“They heard banging on the door and the window, and some liquids came

through, which were lit,” he said. “The whole thing took off pretty quickly and was on fire.”

The alleged attack occurred as the Australian Jewish community reported a fourfold increase in antisemitic incidents since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. Physical attacks on Jews spiked from 11 the previous year to 65.

“This morning’s fire has devastated Melbourne’s Jewish community and caused deep angst,” said David Southwick, a Jewish lawmaker. “Amidst the worst levels of antisemitism in living memory, the community needs clear answers as soon as possible.”

Adass Israel had about 200 member families as of 2016, according to “The Age.” It is affiliated with a school of the same name that was formerly led by Malka Leifer, who was convicted in 2023 of sexually abusing students when she served as its principal.

The police arson squad is investigating the incident, which it believes was a “targeted incident,” according to “The New York Times.” That would make this the second time the synagogue has been purposefully set on fire, following a 1995 attack of the same nature.

“My grandfather was the president at the time,” Klein told “The Age.” “He was a Holocaust survivor, and I will never forget him standing among the smoke and ash and just crying.” [HW](#)



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Netanyahu Praises Trump for Stressing Hamas’s Culpability for Hostages

(JNS) – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked U.S. President-elect Donald Trump last Tuesday for the latter’s “strong statement” calling on Hamas to release the 101 hostages it has held in Gaza for 424 days.

“It is a forceful statement, which makes it clear that there is only one responsible for this situation, and that is Hamas,” the Israeli premier said.

Netanyahu addressed the president-elect’s remarks ahead of an Israeli government meeting in Nahariya, a northern city that has often been the target of cross-border attacks by Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon over the past 14 months.

“Hamas needs to release the hostages,” Netanyahu said. “President Trump put the emphasis in the correct place, on Hamas, and not on the Israeli government, as is customary in some places.”

Since shortly after Oct. 7, there have been global calls for Jerusalem to give in to Hamas’s terms for a hostages-for-ceasefire agreement.

In his [last] Monday statement, Trump vowed that there will be consequences for Hamas if the terror group does not release the hostages before his Jan. 20 inauguration.

“If the hostages are not released prior to Jan. 20, 2025, the date that I proudly assume office as president of the United States, there will be all hell to pay in the Middle East, and for those in charge who perpetrated these atrocities against humanity,” Trump stated.

“Those responsible will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied history of the United States of America,” he added. “Release the hostages now.”

Netanyahu said his government would continue to do everything in its power to release the 101 captives from Gaza, warning Hamas terrorists that “whoever harms them, their blood is on their own heads.” (The latter is a biblical expression.)

“President Trump also said this yesterday, and this adds validity to this

whole adage,” he said. “We have already proven that we are fulfilling this edict, and we will not relent. We will return all of our hostages.”

Netanyahu also commented on the news that Israel Defense Forces Cpt. Omer Maxim Neutra – previously believed to be among the living captives – was killed during the Oct. 7, 2023, attack, and his body was taken to Gaza.

Israel will bring back “both the dead and the living,” Netanyahu said. “On behalf of the government and citizens of Israel, I send my deepest condolences to the family and share in their heavy grief.”

Neutra moved to the Jewish state from the United States in 2020.

“He immigrated to Israel to enlist in the IDF, chose a combat path and was chosen to command and lead, and that is exactly what he did at the outbreak of the war on Oct. 7,” Netanyahu said. “He led his soldiers to defend the Envelope towns. He fought until he fell.” (The premier referred to the Gaza Envelope.)

Neutra, 21, was a tank platoon com-

mander in the 77th Battalion of the IDF’s 7th Brigade. His death was pronounced by the Military Rabbinate based on new intelligence information. His family was notified.

Jerusalem believes that 97 of the 251 hostages taken during the Oct. 7 assault remain in Gaza after 423 days. Hamas is also holding two Israeli civilians who entered Gaza in 2014 and 2015, and the bodies of two Israeli soldiers killed during “Operation Protective Edge” in 2014.

The official figure includes 84 men, 13 women and two children under the age of five, among them 87 Israeli citizens and 10 foreign nationals – eight from Thailand, one from Nepal and one from Tanzania.

A total of 105 hostages were released in a November 2023 truce deal between Israel and Hamas, and four were returned prior to the deal. Eight hostages have been rescued alive by troops. The bodies of 37 have been recovered, including three mistakenly killed by Israeli forces. **HW**

Omer Neutra, American-Israeli Hostage Held in Gaza, Confirmed Killed on Oct. 7



Ronen and Orna Neutra, parents of Israeli-American hostage Omer Neutra. Credit: Luke Tress

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – Omer Neutra, an American-Israeli held hostage in Gaza, was killed by Hamas during its attack on Oct. 7, 2023, the Israeli military announced last Monday.

The announcement of Neutra’s death means that of the seven Americans thought to be held by Hamas, at least four are presumed dead. It comes shortly after Hamas released a proof-of-life video of Edan Alexander, another of the American hostages it is holding captive.

Neutra, who was 21 on Oct. 7, is the son of Israeli parents who grew up on Long Island, where he attended Jewish day school and camp. Following graduation, he moved to Israel and enlisted in the military. He was serving as a tank commander when he was killed.

In the more than a year since his abduction, his parents Orna and Ronen, became prominent faces of the movement to free the hostages. They spoke at the Republican National Convention

this past summer as well as at a gathering of the Republican Jewish Coalition and numerous other forums. They have also spoken directly with President Joe Biden and President-elect Donald Trump in an effort to free their son and the other hostages.

The Neutra parents spoke at a weekly rally on behalf of the hostages in Central Park last Sunday. They also spoke over the summer at Ramah Day Camp in Nyack, where Omer worked as a swim instructor.

“We just learned that this prayer couldn’t be answered for the family of Omer Neutra,” New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said in a statement. “Omer was barbarically murdered by Hamas in the October 7 attacks. We pray that his body can be returned to his family, who have been speaking out for him & all hostages since that horrific day.”

Neutra’s parents had repeatedly pushed for a deal to free the captives, but said they felt political will was lacking. “It seems like it’s only urgent for the hostage families and of course all of the Israeli families and the Jewish world. Not for the politicians,” Ronen Neutra said in a September interview days after the body of another high-profile American hostage, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, was dis-

covered along with five others in Gaza.

Now, the Israel Defense Forces announced based on intelligence that Neutra was killed on Oct. 7 with two other soldiers serving in the tank he commanded. His body is still being held by Hamas, along with dozens of others presumed to be dead. Hamas is holding approximately 100 hostages in total.

“Our hearts are with the Neutra family this morning, who, after more than a year of a determined, traumatic, and worldwide struggle, received the devastating news confirming the death of their beloved son,” Israeli President Isaac Herzog said in a statement. “Omer was born and raised in the United States and chose to make Aliyah to Israel and enlist in the IDF to stand in the defense of our people.”

The news of Neutra’s death came days after Hamas released a video of Alexander, in which he asks Trump to reach a deal to free the hostages. For more than a year, Biden’s administration has worked to reach such an agreement without success, though the recent ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah has resurfaced prospects for a deal in Gaza.

The other two American hostages thought to still be alive are Keith Siegel and Sagui Dekel-Chen. **HW**

Chuck Schumer Reelected Head of Senate Democrats - But this Time as Minority Leader



Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer speaks during a press conference on legislation to address gas prices, in the Capitol, April 28, 2022. Credit: Nathan Posner/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Schumer, the New York Democrat, is ready to relinquish his title as Senate majority leader, but the most

senior Jewish elected official in U.S. history will get to remain the leader of what will be a minority caucus in the next Congress.

Senate Democrats reelected Schumer as their leader last Tuesday, a validation after a tough election for the party, which lost control of the White House and the Senate and failed to regain the U.S. House of Representatives. Schumer was unopposed and the vote was unanimous.

As of Jan. 3, Schumer will lead a minority in a chamber split 47 Democrats to 53 Republicans, as opposed to the 51-49 Democratic majority he has led since January 2023.

Democrats lost seats in West Virginia, Montana, Pennsylvania and Ohio, but

Schumer got credit for helping to keep four other states Democratic in close elections: Arizona, Wisconsin, Nevada and Michigan. The 2024 map was much tougher for Democrats than Republicans, with Democrats having to defend 24 seats and Republicans having to defend just 10.

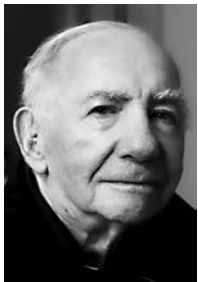
In remarks after the vote, Schumer alluded to the fact that Republicans are still seven shy of a filibuster-busting 60 votes and would need Democrats to get legislation passed.

“Our preference is to secure bipartisan solutions wherever possible and look for ways to collaborate with our Republican colleagues to help working families,” Schumer said. “However, our Republican colleagues should make no

mistake about it, we will always stand up for our values.”

In the few weeks he remains majority leader, Schumer has much on his plate, including getting approved a slate of federal judges nominated by President Joe Biden. He has also vowed to push through a version of the Antisemitism Awareness Act, which would enshrine into law the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. The IHRA definition is controversial and opposed by a number of Democrats who see its definitions of antisemitism relating to Israel criticism as over broad. A few Republicans in Congress oppose the definition because they believe it prohibits elements of Christian belief. **HW**

CHANUKAH



*Editor's note:
This story is being
reprinted in memory
of Ted Roberts in
appreciation of his
longtime service
as a newspaper
columnist.*

By Ted Roberts

I've gotta start saving up for Chaunk-ah. The older you get the heavier the fiscal load. Let me explain for some of my math deficient readers. A) You're three years old – your financial resources equal those of Stockton, California, – bubkes, zip, garisht. Nobody expects a present. B) You're eight years old. Gotta give Mom and Pop something – total expenditure five bucks. C) You're 80 years old – swarms of grandkids, great-grandkids, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews. If you were _____ Bernake, you'd press the red button to print hundred-dollar bills or sell stacks of treasuries. But since you're not a

treasury big wig, you got to raid your bank account. That's what Chanukah has come to for me. I think some rare Christian anti-Semite in the 20s started the whole business. If we're gonna be broke due to Christmas giving, they may as well declare bankruptcy, too!

What I dislike about this expensive spurt of generosity is that it takes the spotlight off our huge superbowl win over those Syrians, who haven't changed from that day to this; except aided by Persians they've expanded their blood lust from just Jews to anybody hanging around the street corners, including Syrians. As some Greek philosopher who was probably deluged with obligations for Chanukah gifts said, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

But it was a famous victory and the first since the Canaanite victors of the previous millennia. Of course, as usual there were more than swords and shields involved. Two powerful philosophies, Grecian and Jewish clashed. And the Greeks, for all their civilized reputa-

tion, were as pagan as a mud-sculptured idol. But oddly enough, our war with the Syrian Greek armies was not a black and white divide between us and them. Many Jews more cultural than spiritual sympathized with our enemy – hard to understand their religious regression to Stone Age gods – multiple gods who fought and lusted like humans. A truce of the old lure of idolatry, which we succumbed to throughout our first two millennia in the land of milk and honey and idols. Amazing that it was so hard to extinguish while in the background the Creator constantly thunders about His unique and solitary role as creator. And how often does he promulgate: "I am a jealous God?"


Anyhow, this is a long way from my four dozen youngsters who will line up for gifts in front of my bank, my Visa card, my car loan, my Uncle Harry who hasn't worked – through good times and bad – since 2006.

It's hard to be Jewish. It would have been nice if our rebellion against Rome, a century or two later, had been success-

The Scribbler On the Roof

By Ted Roberts

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ful. There, too, was a split within the Jewish community. Juno and Jupiter unbelievably attracted some of our fickle ancestors. And the Roman victors rubbed the Temple. Did He not tell us He was a jealous G-d?

The syndicated humor of Ted, the Scribbler on the roof, has appeared in newspapers around the U.S., on National Public Radio, and numerous websites. HW

Four Face Terror Charges after Flare Launch at PM's Residence



Four men, including Rear Adm. (res.) Ofer Doron (left), accused of firing flares at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's private residence in Caesarea, arrive for a hearing at the Haifa District Court on Dec. 2, 2024. Credit: Flash90.

(JNS) – Prosecutors filed terrorism charges last Monday against four suspects over the launching of maritime flares at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's private residence in Caesarea on the night of Nov. 16.

Rear Adm. (res.) Ofer Doron, 63, his son, Gal Doron, 27, Amir Sadeh, 62, and

Itay Yafeh, 62, were charged in the Haifa District Court with terrorism-related reckless behavior, attempted arson, and obstruction of justice.

The decision to launch the flares during a demonstration outside Netanyahu's residence was driven by ideological and political motives, according to a

Channel 12 summary of the indictment.

The anti-government activists allegedly wanted to send a message to Netanyahu that the demonstrations near his Caesarea home were still ongoing, with the goal of increasing the pressure on him to advance the demands of the protesters.

The indictment also underscores that the defendants anticipated their actions would likely incite fear and panic, especially among those near the prime minister's home, including Netanyahu and his family.

Furthermore, the indictment accuses Ofer of trying to protect his son, Gal, by misleading investigators about his involvement. The indictment also describes how Gal Doron and Yafeh put on gloves for the launch, which Ofer Doron recorded with the intention of uploading to social media.

The prosecution emphasized that the

defendants were aware that the firing of the flares could spark a fire in a populated area.

During a hearing at the Rishon Letzion Magistrate's Court, Ofer Doron did not apologize to Netanyahu or his family, but to his security detail affected by the incident, saying that the act was intended as a nonviolent public protest.

"We never intended to harm a symbol of governance. That's not the nature of our protest. We've always said violence is unacceptable," he said.

The prosecution requested that the defendants be held in detention until the end of the legal proceedings.

Netanyahu and his family were not home at the time of the attack.

Video of the incident posted to social media shows two flares launched into the sky. They fell in the yard of the home. HW

ISRAEL INSIGHTS Dilemmas Aplenty

By Howard Weisband

With Israel having been embroiled in its longest war, now well over 400 days, there is hope that perhaps we are closer to a conclusion. The current ceasefire in Lebanon seems to be holding, albeit with a number of violations on the part of Hezbollah to which Israel has responded. In Gaza, Hamas, or what's left of it, seems more willing themselves to find a conclusion.

Egypt recently hosted meetings in Cairo with Hamas and Fatah representatives of the Palestinian Authority (PA), where some preliminary agreement was reached on a PA sponsored committee to govern Gaza in synch or coordination with the West Bank. PA leaders in Ramallah must now agree. And Israel has yet to weigh in, wherein the stated priority is that Hamas cannot rebuild, neither as a military entity nor as a unilateral governing body.

As always, however, optimism must be tempered with extreme caution.

On December 4, Herb Keinson in "The Jerusalem Post" addressed "Israel's challenges beyond the Gaza conflict." An opening paragraph stated: "Yet the war still rages on. IDF forces are still fighting in Gaza, where Hamas continues to cruelly hold 101 hostages. Despite the ceasefire signed with Lebanon

this week, the situation in the North remains tenuous, and 60,000 Israelis are still unable to return home."

During the coming days, weeks, and months, Israel will face many dilemmas, as decisions will be required on the ground militarily and otherwise, in the geopolitics of the Middle East, in Jerusalem, and in Washington within the incoming U.S. Administration.

The Oxford Dictionary defines dilemma as "a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially equally undesirable ones." The following in brief form are a number of dilemmas to be confronted by Israel that easily fall into the fullness of that definition.

"Bring Them Home Now." If only it were a decision of Israel alone. The cruel and tragic abduction and treatment of the hostages which began on October 7, 2023, continues. Will Hamas release those that have survived, and at what cost as Israel must draw lines wherein its citizenry is to be protected?

The most recent additional factor is Donald Trump's widely reported public statement that if the hostages held in Gaza are not freed by his January 20 inauguration, there will be "all hell to pay

in the Middle East."

What does that mean? Ron Ben-Yishai in ynetnews.com reports that the "fiery statement is seen as a move to accelerate negotiations for a hostage deal behind closed doors." Let's hope that's the case.

Israel's next dilemma is how to bring the people who were evacuated from both the south and the north back to their homes. But first their many homes in the kibbutzim, communities, and cities will have to be rebuilt, with their security assured.

The West Bank remains a hot spot, with an ineffective and corrupt PA, Hamas influence and armed cells throughout Arab cities and refugee camps, and pockets of settler vigilante violence. It's a complex dilemma presenting daily challenges to the IDF, police, and other Israeli security services.

Israel faces even less control above its northern border, in Lebanon, to date a failed sovereignty given the ruination of the country by Hezbollah and ultimately Iran. Syria represents a similar dilemma, wherein rebels may now be on the verge of seizing power. The ceasefire in Lebanon is merely that, a lessening of military actions for 60 days. Is that enough time for the Lebanese govern-

ment and army to be rebuilt, in order for there to be sufficient security for Israel's citizens to return to the north?

Can actions be taken and by whom in Yemen to eliminate Houthi missiles fired toward Israel, as well as their attacks upon international shipping in the Red Sea?

The ultimate challenge remains in Iran. Can we put an end to their sinister use of terrorist proxies?

Who will eliminate their nuclear threat to eradicate Israel, and then likewise the free world?

Overarching these geopolitical situations are our own internal political and economic decisions.

These and others are difficult dilemmas, all of which seem to involve, as stated, undesirable choices.

Howard Weisband served as Assistant Executive Director (1975-77) and Executive Director (1977-84) of the Memphis Jewish Federation. Following Aliyah with his family in 1986, he served as Secretary General of the Jewish Agency for Israel through 1997, and then in other senior professional positions in Israel. Now retired, he and Kayla live in Jerusalem. He can be reached at hweisband@gmail.com HW

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Ida Eleazer, Second Generation Holocaust Survivor, Speaks to Crowd of 500 at White Station High School



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Second-generation Holocaust Survivor Ida Eleazer speaks to student.

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Celebrating 40 Years of Artistry, Craftsmanship, and Judaica at T. Clifton Gallery & Framing



Tom Clifton (with Mylo) opened the anniversary celebration with “Milestone,” an exhibit spotlighting his 17th-century-inspired but contemporary mezzo-fresco paintings.

By Matt Timberlake

At a celebration in his shop on Broad Avenue, T. Clifton Gallery & Framing, Tom Clifton greeted beloved clients and customers at a 40th anniversary celebration in mid-November. The event also featured the opening of *Milestone*, an exhibit spotlighting his 17th-century-inspired but contemporary mezzo-fresco paintings. Like the other art in his shop, his work explodes with colorful texture. “Art feeds the soul. It reminds us that not everything has to be dark, factual, and linear,” said Tom. “Art is vast. There’s something out there for anyone looking for beauty.”

And many come to T. Clifton to find that beauty, including Jewish customers who come to browse his ever-changing collection of high-end Judaica. “I’m always interested in art galleries. When Tom started promoting Judaica, it caught my attention,” said Susan Adler Thorp, who has been Tom’s customer since the 1980s. “He’s carved a niche with contemporary Judaica, mostly made of glass.”

“These items have cultural and celebratory significance to them,” said Susan. “Judaica is utilitarian in its use, reflecting Jewish thought or the Jewish way of life. But you go into T. Clifton Gallery, and you see pieces of Judaica that were made by passionate artists. Judaica can be art, created for a utilitarian purpose by artists who put their creative spirit into it. The pieces in Tom’s shop can be extraordinarily beautiful.”

T. Clifton Gallery & Framing also

teams with secular art, made by a roster of more than 60 artists, local and global. “Pat is the main way we find new artists,” said Tom, referring to Pat Brown, his best friend since college and the reason he moved to Memphis. After a career in Human Resources at First Tennessee Bank, Pat became Tom’s business partner at T. Clifton. “She does her homework. We also attend juried art festivals around the country and find artists that way. We’re not looking with anything in mind, but we know it when we see it, what fits in our shop.” “I’ve bought art from him since we met, glass pieces and things I don’t even remember. I mean, over 40 years, right?” said Shelley Robbins, who’s been a friend of Tom’s since they lived in the same Midtown apartment building in the early 1980s, front doors facing each other. “I even have quite a bit of his own work as an artist. He does really cool stuff.” When asked how he views himself as an artist, a single word popped from Tom’s mouth. “Innovative,” he said. “That’s the first word that came to mind, because I don’t know anybody else that does what I do. A lot of it is improvisation and experimentation.” The other side of the shop’s business is its custom framing studio. Offering the largest selection of moldings in Memphis, Tom’s expertise brings his clients’ art collections to vibrant life through his trained eye and instinct for understanding each customer’s distinctive style. “When my daughter, Harper, was a



Pat Brown, Jeannine Paul, Tom and Mylo celebrate at the 40-Year Anniversary.



Tom with Lynn and Samuel Susser.



Reed Landau, Tom and Shelley Robbins.

textiles major at Savannah College of Art and Design, she did a piece in which she wrapped colored yarn around sticks, creating this beautiful abstract piece,” said Shelley. “She knew I loved it and gave it to me, but I couldn’t figure out how to display it the way it deserved. I took it to Tommy and said, ‘We gotta do something with this.’ With fishing line, he sewed them into a backing, which he framed gorgeously. It took him forever to do but, wow, the outcome. It’s so meaningful to me.” While many clients patronize the shop to fill their own homes and offices with art, T. Clifton Gallery also collaborates with scores of professional designers. Respected for his aesthetic instinct, he’s also known as a joy to work with. “Framing can enhance the beauty of art or detract from it. Tom’s work is always in the first category because he considers the client’s taste and the era, style, and look of the piece, then relies on his eye for materials and methods,” said Carolyn Hays Jones, an interior de-

signer who has worked with hundreds of clients since the 1970s, using Tom exclusively for framing since he opened T. Clifton Gallery & Framing. “He’s also such a nice person, and fun to work with,” said Carolyn. “He’s affable, and he’ll go out of his way to help us get things exactly right for clients.” Standing in his shop and taking in the dozen-plus colorful mezzo-frescos on display in *Milestone*, Tom was philosophical. “Reflecting on these 40 years, my gratitude centers around the clients that have stuck with me,” he said. “My relationships with them are so personal, and now unfolding in second and third generations of their families. I will have no regrets at the end of this, hopefully many years from now, and I love that fact.” **HW**



Pat, Tom and Mylo.