

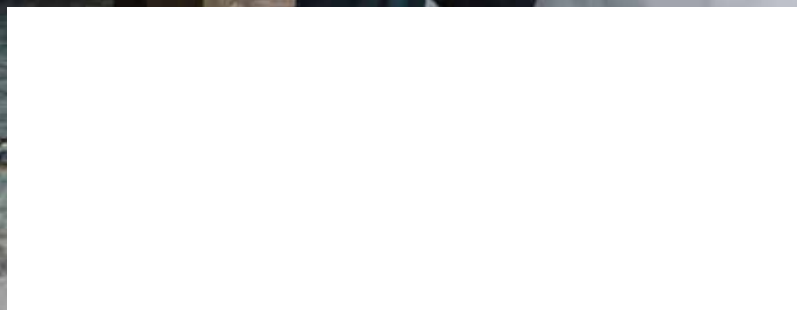
Jewish Scene

Volume 20 | Number 3 | 2026

CONNECTING JEWISH COMMUNITIES

*Simply
Sensational
Simchas*

**MAGICAL
MILESTONES**



From over an acre...



To an itty-bitty, low maintenance lot

I sell them all...in East Memphis and all over. So, if you or someone you know is thinking of selling, talk to 2-3 real estate Brokers but make sure that I am one of them. Ask if they have a Strategic Marketing Program like I have or are they affiliated with a large Referral/Relocation Network like I am. Remember...

When you want the job DONE, call Shel-DONE!



Sheldon Rosengarten
Broker

REALTOR Emeritus*

*Awarded by the National Association of Realtors
for 40 Years of Service.



Leading
REAL ESTATE
COMPANIES
OF THE WORLD

Marx-Bensdorf
REALTORS®

Life Member, Multi-Million Dollar Club
Memphis Area Association of Realtors

Cell 901.483.0546 • Office 901.682.1868
shelrose@memphisrelocate.com



TC Clifton

GALLERY & FRAMING

Ring of Light
By Fay Miller (retired)
\$1700



Fine Judaica Art, Jewish Artists, and more

Thursday / Friday 11-5 • Sat 11-4

Appointments Welcome

2571 Broad Avenue | Memphis | 901.323.2787 | TCCliftonArt.com



Memphis Jewish
**HOME &
REHAB**

feel strong
feel confident
feel your best.

All your rehab needs
in one place: **Home.**



Inpatient | Outpatient | Physical | Speech | Occupational | Aquatic



**Ronna K.
Newburger**
Adult Day Center

Where adult minds
come together to:



Connect



Socialize



Create



Learn



Find out more: www.memphisjewishhome.org



Advisors

Honored to be recognized

Mike Stein

2026 Award Recipient Forbes Best in State*

2026 Wells Fargo Advisors Platinum Council

Committed to helping build and preserve wealth for clients

Mike Stein
Managing Director - Investments
6075 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38119
michael.stein@wellsfargoadvisors.com
<https://home.wellsfargoadvisors.com/michael.stein>

2026 Forbes Best-In-State Wealth Advisors: Awarded April 2026; Data compiled by SHOOK Research LLC based on the time period from 6/30/24 - 6/30/25 (Source: Forbes.com) .

Investment and Insurance Products:

• NOT FDIC Insured • NO Bank Guarantee • MAY Lose Value

Wells Fargo Advisors is a trade name used by Wells Fargo Clearing Services, LLC, Member SIPC, a registered broker-dealer and non-bank affiliate of Wells Fargo & Company.
© 2025 Wells Fargo Clearing Services, LLC. PM-10022026-7814657.1

Scan to view
award disclosures



Contents

05 Contributors

06 From the Editor

Memory-Making Moments

08 Simcha

Faith & Nathan: A Bashert Memphis Love Story

This perfectly extraordinary and beautiful union was definitely meant to be.

14 Simcha

From Torah to Tutus: Sophie Efron's Joyous Bat Mitzvah Blends Faith, Dance & Community

Surrounded by family and friends who traveled near and far, Sophie had the best weekend ever.



16 Simcha

Our Milestone Birthday Celebration

After celebrating a family get-together for their 60/80 birthdays, dad and daughter had been planning this party for a decade.

18 Chosen Journeys: Finding Home in Judaism Through Conversion

Audrey May's Family Connection

Although her father was born Jewish and her mother protestant, Audrey's family had never been brought up religiously.



20 Inspiring People

A Lifetime of Courage & Justice: Jocelyn Wurzburg Honored for Transformative Civil Rights Leadership

Since the late 60s, Jocelyn has been an outspoken activist having difficult conversations throughout the South about race, justice, equality and community.

22 A Life Well Lived

Barbara Mansberg - An Educator's Journey

From art school to majoring in Spanish, from New Orleans back to Memphis and finally to Temple Israel, Barbara has made an impact on numerous children's lives.

25 Hollywood Pet Star

Jasper a Gentle and Playful Pup

After losing their precious almost-16-year-old fur-baby, Memphis, this past fall, mom Shoshana surprised her kiddos with a trip to the Memphis Animal Services on Thanksgiving weekend.



On The Cover

Faith and Nathan Evans
- Photos by Mary Kate Steele



Contributors



Shoshana Y. Cenker is a word & grammar nerd with nearly 25 years in creative services. She's the founder of Wonderful Word Nerd, her freelance communications consultancy, and co-founder of Two Chicks in a Coop, a creative services agency. She brings brands to life through content strategy, writing, editing, editorial leadership and marketing communications across industries. Known for capturing a client's true voice and making complex ideas feel clear and compelling, she's built a career at the intersection of precision and storytelling. She and her three kiddos – twin boys Aiden and Kivi, and daughter Lyla – along with their pup, Jasper, and cat, Felix, happily live in her hometown of Memphis. ShoshanaAY@gmail.com



Melinda Lejman is a lifelong Memphian and Jew by choice. She and her husband are the proud parents of three children and maintain a lively household of beloved four-legged companions.

With a professional background spanning the nonprofit and education sectors, Melinda now brings her experience and compassion to her work as a massage therapist and coach, supporting individuals and groups in cultivating balance, wellness and personal growth.

Deeply committed to animal welfare, she volunteers for local organizations and is the founder of a charitable dog treat company that reflects her passion for giving back to the community.



**Buying or Selling?
Don't sweat it-
I'll do the heavy
lifting!**

BRIAN LURIE

Broker, CRS, GRI, REALTOR®, RENE,
Vice-President, e-PRO

Cell: 901.315.2298
Office: 901.260.4780
Blurie2003@gmail.com
BestRealEstateAgentinMemphis.com
www.BluffCityBuilders.com

CRYE-LEIKE®
REALTORS®



Letter From the Editor

Making Magical Memories

Dear JSM Readers,

What a wonderful year for simchas. As you can see in this issue, we've featured several decades of celebrations, from our youngest feature about Sophie Efron's bat mitzvah (page 12), to the spectacular wedding of Faith and Nathan Evans on page 8, to the fabulous long, weekend birthday celebration of me and my dad on page 14.

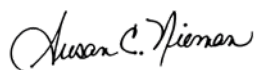
I have to remind myself sometimes that 70 doesn't look like 40, or 55, or even 65! When I look in the mirror, I don't expect to see the face I see every morning. When I look at recent pictures of me, I wonder when I changed so much. I guess what people say about "age is just a number that's all in your mind" is real. Inside I don't feel like I'm 70. When I get out in the garden and work in the yard or have my 3-year-old granddaughter for the day, swinging and playing ball and hide-and-seek, I start out feeling like 40 or 50. By the time I come inside and take a shower, my body always tells me I'm not.

I think it also comes down to attitude. My dad, at 90, is always a glass full. I'm more of the glass half-full kind-of-girl. I need to take a little inspiration from my dad, so we can begin planning our 75/95!

With age comes experience, leadership and lessons we learn that we hopefully pass on to the next generation. Take a look at these amazing women who have done so much for our community. Learn about the remarkable Jocelyn Wurzburg, on page 20, who was recently honored at the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change 30th Anniversary Gala for her decades of leadership in civil rights. On page 20, read how self-proclaimed "nerd," Barbara Mansberg has impacted the lives of children in secular and religious education. And how Audrey Mays decided to learn more about and formally embrace her Judaism in our ongoing series of Chosen Journeys, page 18.

We capture these magical milestones with lots of photographs displaying laughter, love, family and friendship. They capture the essence of the moments and bring us joy when we look back at them over the years and over the decades.

Shalom,



Susan C. Nieman - Publisher/Editor



Publisher/Editor

Susan C. Nieman

Art Director

Dustin Green

Web and Social Media

Rebecca Schudel

Editorial Contributors

Shoshana Cenker

Toni Nieman

Rebecca Schudel

Photography Contributors

Hannah Joyce Photography

Mary Kate Steele

Advertising Sales Director

Larry Nieman

Chief Financial Officer

Donald Heitner

Administrative Assistant/Subscriptions

Toni Nieman

Volume 20 Number 3

April/May 2026

Iyar/Sivan 5786

Jewish Scene magazine must give permission for any material contained herein to be copied or reproduced in any manner. Manuscripts and photographs submitted for publication are welcome by *Jewish Scene*, but no responsibility can be taken for them while in transit or in the office of the publication. Editorial content does not necessarily reflect the publisher's opinion, nor can the publisher be held responsible for errors. The publication of any advertisement in this issue does not constitute an endorsement of the advertiser's product or services by this publication.

Jewish Scene is published by Jewish Living of the South, Inc. Subscription rates for the U.S.: single issues \$10, annual \$25.

Susan Nieman

901.827.7244

susan@jewishscenemagazine.com

jewishscenemagazine.com



HARKAVY MCDANIEL
KAPLAN & SALOMON P.C.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

ROOTED IN LEGACY. LEADING THE FUTURE.

At Harkavy McDaniel Kaplan & Salomon P.C., we take immense pride in cultivating robust relationships with esteemed business, civic, and professional leaders, complemented by the unwavering commitment of our attorneys to serve our diverse clientele with excellence.

HARKAVYMCDANIEL.COM

901-761-1263

6060 Poplar Ave, Suite 140 • Memphis, TN 38119

With the breathtaking renovation of Temple Israel's sanctuary, and the couple's connection to Rabbi Micah Greenstein, there was nowhere else they could have envisioned their wedding.



Faith & Nathan:

A Bashert Memphis Love Story

By Melinda Lejman :: Photos by Mary Kate Steele

When Faith first heard Nathan Evan's name, it was almost in passing. She knew his cousins. She worked with his mom, Susan, at Temple Israel. Years earlier, her friend, Laura Woods, (Nathan's cousin), casually mentioned, "You and Nathan should really meet." But right after that, he moved out of state, and the idea drifted away.

Then, in the summer of 2023, Nathan moved back home to Memphis. His mom mentioned again that she thought the two might hit it off. A few weeks later, Faith was scrolling JSwipe when a familiar name and face appeared.

"I remembered Laura saying we should meet, and now I had Nathan's mom saying the same thing," Faith recalls. "So when I saw him on JSwipe, I swiped right."

They matched immediately. Their first date was at Rocky's, a beloved East Memphis dive bar, over a couple of beers in August 2023. "We've been together ever since," Faith says.

By Thanksgiving and winter break, Nathan was spending holidays with Faith's family. "I think we knew, and our families knew, we'd end up married after that first holiday season," she says. "It just felt right."

A Proposal with Paws, Poetry and Zoomed-In Family

On March 8, 2025, after a day spent celebrating a friend's birthday and watching the Alabama vs. Auburn basketball game, Faith and Nathan headed home. Faith immediately started cooking a meal for a tennis friend whose child had just undergone major surgery – a classic Faith gesture of care.

She left to deliver the meal. When she came back, she opened the door to find their



Faith found her stunning gown at Maggie Louise Bridal.

dogs waiting for her, each wearing a bandana. One read, “Will you marry my Dad?” The other, “Mommy, will you marry Daddy?”

“I didn’t quite put two and two together at first,” Faith laughs. “I walked in further, and there was Nathan, getting down on one knee and reciting a poem he had written.”

She didn’t let him finish.

“I just kept saying ‘Yes’ over and over again like a crazy person – laughing and crying at the same time,” she says. In all the emotion, she didn’t even notice that his parents were in the house and that they were on Zoom with the rest of their immediate family.

“Family is such a core value for both of us,” Nathan explains.

“Having everyone there, even virtually, meant the world.”

Their very first call as an engaged couple was to Rabbi Micah Greenstein to ask him to officiate – and to Sheril Greenstein to plan the wedding. “That was the most important part of the ceremony for us,” Faith says. “Having Rabbi Micah there for our simcha.” Within 24 hours, they had their date, their rabbi and their wedding planner.

Celebrated in Every Season

From the moment they got engaged, the couple was embraced by a community that celebrated them from spring through fall.

In the spring, Faith’s close friends – her longtime “Jewish besties” and bridesmaids – hosted a chic poolside “stock the bar” cocktail party at their neighborhood clubhouse. Summer brought an “around-the-clock” shower at Nathan’s parents’ home, hosted by his aunts and family friends, with gifts and themes for every hour of the day.

In the fall, Faith’s aunt and uncle opened their home for a cocktail party, so her Memphis side of the family could mix and mingle with Nathan’s local relatives.

As a devoted tennis player, Faith was also thrown not one but two tennis-themed bridal events at the University Club. One – an everything-pink round robin luncheon hosted by her tennis teammates, and the other a “The Perfect Match” themed bridal luncheon the day before the wedding, hosted by Faith’s mother and sister at the University Club. Together, they dreamed up custom floral arrangements in vases packed to the brim with pink tennis balls printed with the couple’s names and wedding date – a playful, perfectly “Faith” touch.

“We felt so loved,” Faith says. “It was truly an engagement in every season of our lives.”

A Temple Israel Wedding Rooted in Tradition

For Faith and Nathan, there was never any question about where they would marry.

“Temple Israel is our home,” Faith says simply. “With the breathtaking renovation of the sanctuary, and our connection to Rabbi Micah, there was nowhere else we wanted to be.”

They embraced Jewish tradition fully. The ketubah signing was held in the intimate Danziger Chapel, and unlike many couples, they opened it up to all of their family and closest friends. “We wanted them to witness that sacred moment,” Nathan shares.

The chuppah was the centerpiece of Faith’s floral vision. “It was the most important part of the floral planning for me,” she says. Working with florist Ethan Thomas, she dreamed of a structure that would feel lush, sacred and deeply personal. “He literally brought my vision to life. It took my breath away. I loved it so much I asked to move all our wedding party portraits in front of it.”

The ceremony included the circling and the Sheva Brachot (Seven Blessings), chanted by Faith’s close friend and colleague, Temple’s cantorial soloist, Eleanor Tallie Steinberg. “Having Eleanor sing our blessings as both friend and spiritual leader made it incredibly personal,” Faith says.

At the reception, they danced the Hora with unrestrained joy. “The Hora was my favorite part of the night,” Faith says. “I’ve never felt so much joy in my life.” They also incorporated a mezinka, celebrating both sets of parents as they married off their last children – a moment of pure nachas for the families.



After spending the winter holidays together with family, everyone knew that Nathan and Faith would be married.



Nathan’s tuxedo, with its emerald velvet jacket, was custom made by Lansky Bros. at the Peabody, with a secret surprise hidden inside: the lining of the jacket and the back of the vest were printed with a collage of favorite photos from their dating years. Faith only discovered the detail at their first look. “It was so Nathan – sentimental and extra, I loved it.”



The ketubah signing was held in the intimate Danziger Chapel, and unlike many couples, they opened it up to their family and closest friends.



Hidden in the skirt of her gown was a scrap of lace from her mother's wedding dress – a quiet, tactile link to her parents' big day years earlier. Her "something new" was a diamond tennis bracelet from Nathan.



Nathan's monogrammed cufflinks belonged to his great-grandfather, Nate Evans, for whom he is named. A diamond in Faith's engagement ring once belonged to his grandmother, Myra Lou.



Rabbis, Music and a Hidden Family Song

Rabbi Micah walked beside them throughout their engagement, offering pre-marital spiritual counseling and officiating the ceremony. "He grounded us in what marriage means Jewishly," Nathan says. "He helped us frame our relationship as something larger than just the two of us."

One of Faith and Nathan's favorite reception photos shows Rabbi Micah and Rabbi Ross Levy hoisting them – and their parents – up in chairs during the Hora, faces lit by equal parts exertion and sheer simcha.

Music also played a starring role. Eleanor not only chanted the blessings; she joined Faith on stage for a surprise duet dedicated to Nathan. And then came a moment neither of them saw coming.

Nathan's grandfather, Irving Evans, was a pianist and composer. For Nathan's parents, Susan and Raymond, he had written an original song as a wedding gift decades earlier. Secretly, Raymond arranged for his nephew, Alex Evans, backed by Eleanor on piano, to perform that same song as a surprise for Faith and Nathan.

At the reception, Raymond presented the couple with a framed copy of the original sheet music and lyrics. "It was such a touching and unexpected moment," Faith says. "We will always cherish it."

Sinatra, Tallits and Four Grandparents Remembered

Though all four of their grandparents had passed away before Faith and Nathan met, the couple found many meaningful ways to bring them into the day.

Two tallits adorned their sacred spaces. Nathan's grandfather Irving's tallit was draped over the chuppah, enveloping the ceremony in his memory. Nathan's grandfather Leon's tallit was used to wrap the couple during a blessing from their parents, physically weaving their families – and generations – together.

They also chose three Frank Sinatra favorites – beloved by their grandparents – for the ceremony music. A string quartet played "Always" as Nathan and the wedding party entered, "The Way You Look Tonight" for Faith's walk down the aisle, and "Fly Me to the Moon" as the recessional. "It felt like our grandparents were walking with us," Faith says.

Faith wore several cherished heirlooms: pearls passed down from her great-grandmother, Queenie Peet, whom she remembers as "the classiest woman" she has ever known; pearl and diamond earrings from her grandmother, "GrandCarol," gifted by her parents on the wedding day; and a sixpence in her shoe that had been worn by both her mother and sister on their wedding days in 1980 and 2018.

Hidden in the skirt of her gown was a scrap of lace from her mother's wedding dress – a quiet, tactile link to her parents' big day years earlier. Her "something new" was a diamond tennis bracelet from Nathan, a nod to the sport that has become central to their relationship; they now play mixed doubles together.

Nathan's heirlooms included monogrammed cufflinks that belonged to his great-grandfather, Nate Evans, for whom he is named, and a diamond in Faith's engagement ring that once belonged to his grandmother, Myra Lou – one of a pair from her earrings. Nathan's sister, Kimberly, wears the matching stone.

Perhaps the most poetic heirloom was hidden inside Nathan's wedding band. The inscription, in Hebrew, reads: "Wherever you go, I will go." It is one of Faith's favorite verses, centering home and people as the heart of Judaism. Unbeknownst to Nathan when he chose it, it is also the exact verse that Faith's mother had inscribed – this time in English – inside of Faith's father's wedding band in 1980.

"It's bashert," Faith says. "Some things are just meant to be."

A Southern, Soulful Simcha with Memphis Horns

If the ceremony was deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, the celebration that followed was joyfully, unmistakably Memphis.

The couple envisioned a reception that felt like "a 1930s/40s Miami supper club meets New Orleans jazz lounge – with Memphis soul." For Faith, that meant one non-negotiable: horns. "I LOVE Memphis horns – if you know, you know," she says. "The band choice pretty much came down to how big their horn section was."

They ultimately found a band that could glide from jazz standards and crooner classics to soul, funk, and even Missy Elliott. "When we heard they could do all of that and rap Missy too, we were sold," Nathan laughs.

Friday night's rehearsal dinner was an "I Do BBQ" at Memphis landmark Charlie Vergos' Rendezvous. Personalized placemats featuring their engagement photos greeted guests, along with an F&N-shaped challah (with an "E" challah for the wedding night) and napkins and glasses embossed with the couple's two dogs and cat under the phrase "We do too!"

Their groom's cake was a love letter to their shared passions: a tennis court design featuring the Alabama Crimson Tide vs. the Memphis Grizzlies, honoring Nathan's love of Bama football, their joint love of tennis, and their status as Grizzlies season ticket holders.

Lush green tropical foliage and white orchids throughout the décor paid tribute to the Caribbean Island of Nevis, where Faith's parents own a home. Over time, the island has become a special, shared place for Faith and Nathan. "Bringing Nevis into our Memphis wedding felt like bringing a piece of our future into our present," Faith notes.

And then there was Nathan's tuxedo. His emerald velvet jacket was custom made by Lansky Bros. at the Peabody, with a secret surprise hidden inside: the lining of the jacket and the back of the vest were printed with a collage of favorite photos from their dating

years. Faith only discovered the detail at their first look. "It was so Nathan – sentimental and extra," she smiles. "I loved it."

Welcoming Every Guest into Jewish Joy

With guests attending from different religious backgrounds and varying levels of Jewish knowledge, the couple wanted their ceremony to feel both authentically Jewish and warmly accessible.

"Rabbi Micah does an amazing job explaining the rituals in real time," Nathan says. "He makes everyone feel like they're part of the story." In addition, they created printed programs with the order of the service and short explanations of each tradition, from the ketubah and circling to the blessing over wine and the breaking of the glass.

The response was powerful. "Non-Jewish guests gushed for weeks that it was the most beautiful, meaningful, personal service of any faith they'd ever attended," Faith says. "They were really moved by the meaning behind our rituals."

One teaching in particular stayed with the couple: the explanation of the breaking of the glass. "The way it was framed – that the world is broken and it's our job as a couple to help heal that brokenness; that life is full of shattering moments, but we hope this is the first and last shattering in our life together – that really touched us," Faith says.

Harry's Blessing

Among the many details of their engagement and wedding, one small moment remains especially tender.

Nathan's 12½-year-old dog, Harry, had been in declining health by March 2023. Nathan had rescued Harry as an eight-week-old puppy and raised him through

The chuppah was the centerpiece and most important part of the floral planning for Faith. Working with florist Ethan Thomas, she dreamed of a structure that would feel lush, sacred and deeply personal.



Nathan and Faith with their parents, Susan and Raymond Evans and Mary Jane and Trey Ruch.





The couple envisioned a reception that felt like "a 1930s/40s Miami supper club meets New Orleans jazz lounge – with Memphis soul."

every chapter of his adult life – multiple moves, past relationships, and, finally, the beginning of this new one with Faith.

Including Harry in the proposal, with his "Will you marry my Dad?" bandana, turned out to be a final gift. He passed away just a couple of weeks later.

"We truly believe Harry stuck around long enough to make sure Nathan had found his person," Faith says quietly, tearing up even in memory. "That we were going to be happy and loved."

If They Could Do It Again

When asked which moment they would most want to relive from the wedding weekend, both Faith and Nathan come back to the same experience: the Hora.

"It was the one time everyone was on the dance floor at once," Faith says. "Friends and family from every part of our lives – all together, circling us, celebrating us."

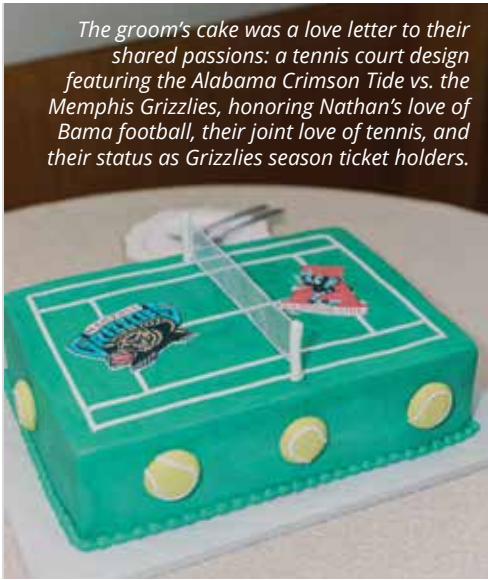
Nathan agrees. "Being lifted up in those chairs, seeing Rabbi Micah and Rabbi Ross holding on for dear life, our parents laughing and crying – it was pure joy."

There's a photograph from just after the ceremony, as they exit the sanctuary. Nathan is beaming, Faith is laughing "with my whole face," as she describes it. "It says it all," she adds.

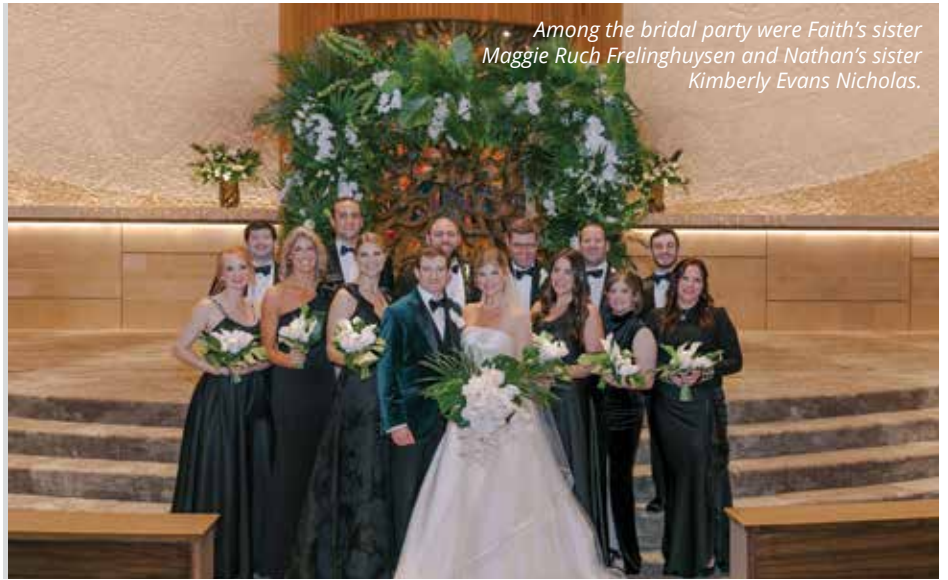
A Memphis love story brought together by community, rooted in Jewish tradition, scored by Sinatra and Memphis horns, and blessed by parents, rabbis and one very loyal dog – Faith and Nathan's wedding is a reminder of what happens when something is truly bashert: it feels, in every season and every detail, like coming home.



At the reception, they danced the Hora with unrestrained joy.



The groom's cake was a love letter to their shared passions: a tennis court design featuring the Alabama Crimson Tide vs. the Memphis Grizzlies, honoring Nathan's love of Bama football, their joint love of tennis, and their status as Grizzlies season ticket holders.



Among the bridal party were Faith's sister Maggie Ruch Frelinghuysen and Nathan's sister Kimberly Evans Nicholas.



Not a cake person, when Faith tasted this creation by Cakes by Mom and Me, she was quite impressed.



Partnership is what we offer.

Providing Insurance & Risk Management Solutions for over 56 Years.



Clay & Land
Insurance Since 1968

Clay & Land Insurance
(901) 767-3600
www.clayandland.com



Sophie Efron with Rabbi Ross Levy reading her Torah portion.

From Torah to Tutus: Sophie Efron's Joyous Bat Mitzvah Blends Faith, Dance & Community

— By Shoshana Cenker :: Photos by Hannah Joyce Photography

When Sophie Efron stepped onto the bimah (elevated platform) at Temple Israel on January 17 for her bat mitzvah, she wasn't just marking a milestone – she was sharing our beautiful faith with family and friends, many of whom had traveled from across the country.

"Guests came Washington, D.C., Boston, Indianapolis, Atlanta, Cleveland, Austin, Houston, Dallas and even Mississippi," Sophie noted. "I felt loved and excited that people came to celebrate me."

The Efron family's weekend celebration began Friday night with Shabbat dinner. Having lived in Houston, they embraced a playful theme: "Texas meets Memphis." The rustic barbecue dinner was at the Harvest Moon Pavilion at Bobby Lanier Park, catered by the Germantown Commissary. "We're a big Jacobs Camp family, so we wanted something camp-like and fun," explained Sophie's mom, Edie. "We had challah from Ricki's Cookie Corner, and camp friends helped lead the blessings. It was like a mini reunion and so nice to reconnect with people we hadn't seen in forever."

Leading Temple's Shabbat morning service was a bit "scary," but Sophie rose to the occasion with poise and support from Rabbi Ross Levy and music by Emily Groff Heilborn. Sophie's camp friends joined her on the bimah to help lead the blessings at the end of the service. "It was really special," Sophie said, "and an honor that they traveled to be there."

Preparing for the day took months of study and practice. Sophie worked on her Torah parsha (portion), Va'era, and D'var Torah with Rabbi Ross, Emily and volunteer D'var Torah mentor Sharon Tabachnick. Va'era recounts Pharaoh's hardened heart during the story of the plagues in Egypt.

"There's a famous Jewish saying that goes 'Mitzvah Goreret Mitzvah, Ve'avera Goreret Avera,' meaning one good deed leads to another good deed, and one evil deed leads to another evil deed," reminding the crowd that even small choices can ripple outward.

"I tried not to look at the audience," Sophie laughed, "but when I did, it was really special seeing everyone from different parts of my life." That included Richland Elementary and St.

Mary's Episcopal School (SMS) teachers, dance instructors, family and friends – all of whom were impressed with Sophie's confidence.

"So many people wanted to celebrate Sophie and learn about our faith," Edie noted. "At St. Mary's, they sing 'Lechi Lach,' so we sang that during our



service. It allowed all the SMS students, teachers and my coworkers to sing along. With so many non-Jews, we wanted to be as inclusive as possible. And Rabbi Ross did an amazing job explaining each part of the service. In such an antisemitic world, the fact that so many people wanted to be part of this day, sharing the love and joy, gives me hope. It's refreshing that they wanted not just to support us but also learn about Judaism."

When Sophie's parents, Edie and Eric, spoke, Sophie got a bit emotional from the beautiful words they shared.

"Your heart, sweet girl, is made of gold," they said. "Life may hand you lemons, but you have always gracefully made lemonade, with a smile on your face and love in your heart. ... You're an exceptional human being. ... You're so easy to love, and we are so proud of you – not just today, but every day!"

After Shabbat services, guests enjoyed Bogies to-go boxed lunches. That night, it was time to party!

Sophie's vision came to life in a teal, pink, lilac "Ballet and Bows" theme at the Temple's Scheidt Family Center. There were balloon arches, a packed dance floor, and DJ Dingo kept the energy high. Sophie's name appeared in large balloon letters, and guests enjoyed a playful signature mocktail called "Sophie's Sugar Plum Spritz," inspired by her love of "The Nutcracker."

With guests dressed in sparkles and sneakers, the celebration included games like Coke and Pepsi, limbo, musical hula hoop, the Knights, Cavaliers, and Horses game, airbrushed hats, a photo booth, glam and glitter facepainting and temporary tattoos, a video slideshow, glowsticks, the Hora, and a late-night snack of Chick-fil-A chicken minis. There was also Kahoot trivia all about Sophie.

"It was fun seeing how well my friends knew me," she said. "The feeling in the room was all about fun." Younger siblings, Blake and Lucy, also lovingly joined in.

Amid the dancing and laughter, the deeper meaning of the weekend was never lost. Sophie's Hebrew name is Lyla Simcha, which perfectly captures her spirit. "Sophie's Hebrew name means 'you are our joy,'" Edie explained. "The whole weekend, from start to finish, was about how proud we are of her and how much she means to all of us."

Sophie's bat mitzvah was more than a celebration. It reflected a community coming together to lift up an incredible young lady and spark meaningful dialogue.

"People left saying how much fun they had at the party and how much they learned from the service," added Eric, Sophie's dad. "And that opened the door for more conversations about Judaism."

For her mitzvah project, Sophie combined her love of dance – "ballet is my favorite" – with community service. Through Tennessee Ballet Theater's nonprofit, the Frayser Dance Project, she helped support children who can't afford dance instruction. Sophie raised nearly \$1,600 in donations and collected ballet supplies including leotards, tights and shoes. She's also donated her time, assisting the teachers during classes. "Going back to 'Mitzvah Goreret Mitzvah,' donating to the Frayser Dance Project isn't just helping the students," Sophie shared, "it's helping the whole company."

"My favorite part of the service was when my camp friends came up to say blessings with me and carrying the Torah was special. I loved the dancing at the party!" recalled Sophie of her simcha. "Seeing so many people from different parts of my life was awesome and seeing them smiling throughout the weekend was the best." Mazel Tov!

Vendors:

- Photographer: Hannah Joyce Photography
- Hotel: Embassy Suites
- Invitations/Napkins/Cups: Curated by Katie Alpert
- Planner: Sophie! Laura Woods, Events by Loo, managed weekend logistics
- Friday night dinner caterer: Germantown Commissary
- Shabbat catering: Bogie's Delicatessen

Party:

- Catering: Across the Board Catering
- DJ: Dingo Entertainment
- Photo Booth: Marcy Millman Productions
- Glitter Bar: Fairies and Frogs
- Balloons: Petals and Pops Memphis
- Flowers: Lauren Cooper
- Airbrush: Studio Weaver
- Chick -Fil-A Summer Ave.
- Cake: Sweet LaLa's Bakery

To donate to the Frayser Dance Project:
childrensballettheater.com/contribute



Sophie with the girls from Frasier Dance Project.



Sophie's friends join her on the Bima to say blessings.



Sophie with her parents, Edie and Eric, and siblings Lucy and Blake.



Susan and her dad, Joel, with her brothers, Donnie, Robert and Steven Heitner.



Our Milestone Birthday Celebration

— By Susan C. Nieman

It was a birthday celebration in the plans for a decade – my father’s 90th and my 70th.

My dad, Joel, and I had been talking about this milestone since our 80/60 celebration in 2016. There were several similar things about both weekends – they were held in Florida, family and friends gathered from near and far and the weather was unseasonably cold.

Obviously, the weather in January in Florida is totally unpredictable. But dad’s birthday being in December and mine in February, we settled for in between each, and took advantage of the long, Martin Luther King weekend.

In 2016, when we arrived in Florida the week before the party, the days were in the high 70s. That weekend the daytime highs were 45°. Instead of bathing suits and cute sundresses, our afternoon pool party and dinner ended up with guests bundled in coats, scarves and gloves huddled beneath patio heaters. No one hung around after cake to chit chat.

My dad and I learned our lesson. Dad spent months researching restaurants with a private space large enough to hold our

growing family and our close friends.

“Susan and I shared a beautiful party with all of our immediate family and friends,” said Joel. “This was the first time that all our children, brothers, sister, grandchildren and 3-year-old great-grandchild were all together in one place. The food was good and plentiful and the gifts that were received were awesome.

“My children spent a bunch of time and money thinking of their special treat for me,” Joel continued. “I received a huge, framed newspaper clipping from the day that I was born 90 years ago. A beautiful clock with an inscription engraved into the glass that brings tears to my eyes when I read it. Restaurant gift cards and many other things. All in all, it was a great memorable day. We will plan a 75–95 party in the next few years.”

The weekend was amazing – fun, sentimental and unforgettable. My three brothers, Donnie, Robert and Steven, and I, were surrounded by our spouses, significant others and our kids,

some who have not seen each other for about 20 years, some for the first time. My Uncle Mickie (my dad's brother) and his wife, Dena, drove from Phoenix.

Our 58 guests enjoyed an Italian feast at Maggiano's Little Italy with the best cheesecake I've ever tasted. Three hours of food, laughter, hugs and great conversation.

After the party all of us 'kids' gathered at dad's for a light dinner, a variety of cocktails (some shots) and a night of reminiscing. We asked dad lots of questions about things that happened during our childhoods – Donnie and I living in New York before my parents' divorce in 1964. Asking about places we'd been after my dad married Shirley and had Robert (11 years younger than me and Steven 16 years younger.)

Dad opened lots of fun gifts we'd gathered fit for a 90-year-old who has everything and only needs his kids near him.

Can't wait for our 75/95.

Joel with 3-year-old great-grandchild, Miriam.



Joel's brother, Mickey and wife Dena.



Four generations and spouses.



Audrey May's Family Connection

— By Shoshana Cener

Writer's note: Take a gander at another article in our ongoing series, "Chosen Journeys," where we explore the path of conversion from several converts to Judaism. According to halacha (Jewish law), once someone has completed a conversion — including acceptance of mitzvot, immersion in a mikveh, and, for men, circumcision — they are as fully Jewish as someone born Jewish.

....
Audrey May's discovery of her family's connection to Judaism began as a teen, leading her on a fulfilling path of identity and belonging.

Growing up with a brother and sister in Memphis, their mom was a Scandinavian protestant, their dad a German Jew. At the age of 14, he and his family came to New York City in the 1940s. There wasn't much ancestral background passed down, and a rift in the family from Audrey's parent's mixed-faith marriage caused even more of a disconnect. "There was lots of family history we just didn't know, and we didn't know all our family," explained Audrey. "Because of all that, we had very little religious upbringing. Our parents found their own way and supported us kids in doing the same."

Through junior high and into high school, Audrey didn't identify as Jewish, she didn't visit the Jewish Community Center (JCC) or participate in Jewish life. She attended churches because she wanted to belong to something.

But with many Jewish school friends, she became interested in Judaism, feeling a connection to the faith. Audrey eventually asked her dad to light a menorah on Chanukah. Her curiosity had been sparked.

At Brown College, she explored Judaism more in-depth, working at Hillel, which felt like an "immersion course in Jewish culture. It was a great experience," she remembered. "I also spent time with and got close with my dad's family in New York. I had my first Sedar at Aunt Erica's in Washington Heights in upper Manhattan. The area is called Frankfurt on the Hudson — a play on Frankfurt on the Rhine — because so many German Jews had settled there as refugees during and after WWII."

After transferring and graduating from the University of Memphis, she then moved back to New York. Audrey attended a small Reform congregation in Washington Heights led by Rabbi Maggie Waining. "I moved in and out of being more or less Jewishly identified, but without much real instruction or understanding of that history, culture or rituals," she explained, "other than what you get through osmosis from hanging out in New York."

Fast-forward back to Memphis in 2018, where working in a Jewish setting served as the springboard for Audrey's eventual

commitment to Judaism. Working at the Memphis JCC, she attended services at Temple Israel. "I became more and more interested in how I personally identified and how this related to me more than just as a family or historical connection. I found that I was very moved emotionally by the rituals in ways that I had not been before," she said. "Part of it was facing life changes and life losses. There's a point in life when you ask, 'Who's my tribe?' I had certainly made some connections with tribes as a feminist, as a lesbian, as a Southerner, but I was feeling the need for something deeper on a spiritual level."

Audrey bought a siddur (prayer book) and machzorim (holiday prayer books), took classes at the MJCC and Temple, and finally decided, "If not now, when?"

She explored her Jewish father's German and Austrian history, even taking German language classes. "I'd long wanted to go to my father's home. ... It was meaningful to see where my father's mother's family had been for many generations in the cemetery," Audrey shared with sincere emotion. "Visting Judengasse — the ruins of the 16th-century Frankfurt Jewish ghetto — was an amazing, interesting place historically. Most extraordinary for me was walking down the steps into the mikvah and another area with an exhibit of daily life and music from back then.

The only Jewish song I remember my father singing or trying to teach us was Ma'oz Tzur for Chanukah – in English, not German or Hebrew. At the Frankfurt exhibit, there were recordings of different songs that go back centuries, one was Ma'oz Tzur. I just broke down – because of the connection to my father, to centuries of my father's family, an overwhelming sense of connection to centuries of Jewish life. Then I came back to Memphis for my first conversion class."

Audrey's background as a librarian, bookstore owner, social worker and Jewish Family Service volunteer, coupled with her love of reading and research, enhanced her studies. While taking "very structured" weekly classes at Temple Israel, she was already "living more consciously Jewish," including some rituals like hosting Passover seders.

"Sally Rosenberg and Judy Bearman were wonderful teachers. They said, 'You're not converting to Reform Judaism, you're converting to Judaism,'" Audrey explained. "You need to know the range of experiences, cultural expectations and practices."

Encouraged to engage in a variety of activities throughout Jewish Memphis, Audrey's class attended Orthodox services at Baron Hirsch Congregation. They also had cooking classes, homework and other assignments, as well as an assigned rabbinical sponsor who offered support and served as a spiritual guide.

"Rabbi Micah Greenstein was my sponsor and gave me very helpful books," remembers Audrey. "We had some very interesting discussions, including things I was uncomfortable with, disagreed with and had questions about."

After nine months, Audrey finalized the conversion process through a local beis din (rabbinical court) of Rabbi Micah Greenstein, Judy Bearman, and longtime friend Kathie Fox, and then stepped into the mikvah. "I expected it to be like a dissertation defense, but it was more like a conversation," she said. "Going to the mikvah was extraordinarily beautiful. After, I immediately put on a chai necklace that one of my non-Jewish colleagues had given me."

When folks ask Audrey if she feels different since converting, she shares a moving response. "I don't feel different, but deeper, more. When I formally welcomed taking on mitzvahs through Kabbalah al-Hashem Mitzvah (mystical



Audrey (second from right) with Beit Din for conversion with Judy Bearman, Kathie Fox and Rabbi Micah Greenstein at Temple Israel, April 2025.

concept of sanctifying G-d's Name) and standing on the bema in the sanctuary holding the Torah, it was just a beautiful experience. Temple's Rabbi Jeff Dreifus invited me to light the Shabbat candles for services that evening," she said with tears of joy. "I had so many friends and family who came to my simcha. I'm so happy in the pictures. It was an extraordinary day. Then I got up the next day and said Modeh Ani."

While there's much beauty throughout Judaism, Audrey especially loves the healthy debates. "We are a people who are encouraged to wrestle. We are a people who question. We have many divergent opinions, and we can voice them loudly," she notes. "Tikkun olam (repairing the world), tzedakah (charitable giving), B'tzelem Elohim (in the image of G-d) – all those values and the value of what you do and how you live is more important than what you say you believe."

Audrey acknowledges that Judaism continues to challenge her. "It's not an easy identity. It's complex, contradictory and certainly meaningful. I've felt welcomed by my Jewish friends, some of whom said, 'I thought you were already Jewish,' and others who said, 'Welcome to the tribe,'" she added. "It's a very profound experience. This was built on decades of Jewish experience in

my life. But there was a point where I wanted more and deeper, and I had to make that decision."

To those interested in Judaism, Audrey advises reading. A lot. Works by Anita Diamant or Noah Feldman's "To Be a Jew Today" are a good start. The poem, "To be a Jew in the Twentieth Century," from "Letter to the Front," by Jewish-American poet Muriel Rukeyser, especially resonates with her. "Experience the community in whatever ways you can. Ask questions. Judaism is a religion and culture that encourages questioning – that's something that I find profoundly important," she said. "You'll know if you feel that you have a Jewish soul. There's no one way to be a Jew, there are many, many ways. So you have to find the path. If it's your path, you'll find it."

**A Stolperstein, in English stumbling block, is a 4-inch concrete cube bearing a brass plate inscribed with the name and life dates of victims of Nazi extermination or persecution. The Stolpersteine project, initiated by the German artist Gunter Demnig in 1992 commemorates persons at the last place that they chose freely to reside, work or study.*



Jocelyn Wurzburg accepts her award alongside Johnnie Turner.

A LIFETIME OF COURAGE & JUSTICE:

Jocelyn Wurzburg Honored for Transformative Civil Rights Leadership *By Shoshana Cenker*

For more than half a century, Jocelyn Wurzburg has been helping the South have difficult but necessary conversations – about race, justice, equality and community.

In April, her lifetime of trailblazing work was recognized as a 2026 “Pillars of Progress” at the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change 30th Anniversary Gala. The event at the University of Memphis’ Rudi E. Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center included a cocktail reception with hors d’oeuvres, followed by the awards presentation program and live music celebrating individuals and institutions whose work has helped shape the Bluff City.

“It’s definitely a ‘we honor’ and not a ‘me honor,’” Jocelyn said humbly of the recognition that represents more than a personal accolade. “There were about 50 women involved, and the panel launched so many of us into the work we went on to do. We became friends, and learning about others’ religions and races was so broadening.”

The “panel” she’s referring to is the Panel of American Women, a groundbreaking initiative formed in Memphis in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination in 1968. The program brought together women from different racial and religious backgrounds who traveled across the Mid-South sharing personal stories about prejudice, discrimination and their lived experiences.

That pioneering idea came from civil rights activist Esther Brown of Kansas City. Yes, that Brown. Esther helped organize a lawsuit that ended segregation in the South Park school district in Kansas, which became part of the broader movement that eventually culminated in the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, ruling school segregation unconstitutional.

When Esther’s program came to Memphis, Jocelyn unexpectedly found herself placed in charge. And of course, she stepped right into that important role. As coordinator, Jocelyn recruited speakers, organized schedules, and helped shape the conversations that followed. Over the next decade, the group of strong, intelligent, well-spoken women addressed crowds throughout Memphis, West Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi.

“We spoke to tens of thousands of people,” she said. “It was effective and non-threatening.”

The discussions addressed three types of prejudice: attitudinal, symbolic and institutional discrimination. It didn’t take long for the smart panel of women to determine where lasting change would need to occur. “We all realized it’s the institutions we have to address,” said Jocelyn, a powerful force and quite hilarious, too.

For Jocelyn specifically, that realization became a turning point. Her activism soon led her into civil rights work, public policy and a law career. Working alongside organizations including the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Lawyers’ Committee Against Discrimination, Jocelyn authored the legislation that became the Tennessee Human Rights Act of 1978, transforming Tennessee’s civil rights law into an enforceable statute addressing discrimination in employment and public accommodations.

That work led to her appointment to the Tennessee Human Rights Commission by Governor Winfield Dunn and later to the National Commission for the Observance of International Women’s Year by President Gerald Ford and the Minority Resource Center of the Federal Railroad Administration by U.S.

Secretary of Transportation William Coleman.

After earning her law degree from then-Memphis State University, Jocelyn practiced law before becoming one of Memphis' first professional mediators and a leader in the growing field of alternative dispute resolution. Over the course of her truly impressive career, she also served on numerous boards and commissions dedicated to civil rights, women's equality and community development. "I've had a very exciting life," said Jocelyn, a member of Temple Israel.



Jocelyn Wurzburg

Her civic engagement extended across Memphis and beyond, from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' Social Action Commission to organizations addressing human rights, mediation and community dialogue. It's quite clear that Jocelyn's contributions have left a lasting imprint.

"Ms. Wurzburg worked with women from diverse backgrounds and races to better understand – and implement – tactics to eradicate misunderstanding and racism in Memphis," said Daphne R. McFerren, executive director of the Hooks Institute. "Her experiences demonstrate that, in addition to her community work, Ms. Wurzburg has been influential in shaping laws and policies that have impacted Memphis and the nation. Today, Ms. Wurzburg continues to advocate for an inclusive society, sharing her wisdom and experiences throughout the community. She is a living legend who remains deeply committed to the rights and well-being of all people."

The gala honored Jocelyn alongside other Memphis institutions and leaders whose work has shaped the city's civic life: the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, the "Tri-State Defender," and the Honorable Johnnie Turner. Each honoree's story and the impact of their work were shared through video presentations the Hooks Institute created.

The evening also celebrated the legacy of civil rights leader Benjamin L. Hooks and the institute that bears his name, including a retrospective with archival footage. For three decades, the Hooks Institute has worked to advance social change through research, community engagement and education, continuing the work of civil rights leaders who helped transform Memphis and the nation.

For Jocelyn, whose life has been devoted to building understanding across communities, this recognition carries both gratitude and reflection. The lessons from that time – inclusivity, collaboration, dialogue – are still deeply relevant today, echoing the principles of Dr. King and the activities that shaped Jocelyn's life.

"First and foremost, speak out. When you hear a racist or antisemitic remark, speak out. Dr. King did more than speak out. He marched, and he showed us that nonviolence isn't passive. Actively practicing nonviolence is an interesting concept," she reminds us. "Don't seclude yourself to a small group. Meet people and learn – only through knowing people's hurt buttons can you know how to help fix the hurt."

Here in Memphis, honoring Jocelyn Wurzburg is more than recognition of a remarkable career. It's a reminder that meaningful change often begins with ordinary people willing to listen, speak up, and build bridges across differences. And sometimes, as Jocelyn's life has demonstrated, it begins with a conversation.

COMFORT AND CARE THROUGH ALL SEASONS OF LIFE.

**RAPID RESPONSE
TRUSTWORTHY
COMPASSIONATE CARE**

Free In-Home Consultation
901-563-2142
or visit [comfortkeepers.com](https://www.comfortkeepers.com) learn more and schedule your free consultation.

BELLANO DENTAL HEALTH

Multiple Locations, One Caring Team

Whether you visit our East Memphis, Germantown, or Bartlett locations, our team is committed to helping you reach your smile goals and optimal oral health. Experience the difference with our understanding and supportive care. Schedule an appointment today!

901-681-0408

East Memphis • Germantown • Bartlett
BELLANODENTAL.COM

Barbara and Roy Mansberg/Rosenberg family dinner with daughter Sally and her husband, Jeff, and kids Kayla and Sam; and son Danny with his wife, Leigh, and kids Ramie and Emma.

Barbara Mansberg – An Educator’s Journey

— By Melinda Lejman

If you know Barbara Mansberg – and in all likelihood, you do – it may be surprising to learn she considered herself to be quite the nerd as a child. “Nebbish.” Even “goody-goody.” But read on, and it will all make sense.

Born and raised in Memphis, in the old Jewish area of East Drive off Jackson Avenue, Barbara had a lovely childhood. She lived with her parents and two siblings – a brother three years her junior and a sister six years younger. Her grandmother, widowed very early in her marriage, lived with the family as well and was Barbara’s “angel.” In fact, her grandmother built the house they lived in on East Drive.

It was a fabulous neighborhood of Jewish families with young children. “We played blackjack,” she shares, a little embarrassed at the admission. “Eight years old, nine, 10. We had secret boxes with jewels – rhinestones,” she admits. “They were fake, but we knew the value of every single one. If you lost, you had to hand over your stones. If you won, you collected. Oh, we thought we were big-time gamblers.”

At the age of 11, the family moved into a house her father built on St. Andrews Fairway. “That was really East Memphis then,” shares Barbara. “I moved from Snowden to East High for eighth grade. I was the only Jew in the whole grade. It was a terrible year. I can’t tell you how worthless I felt.”

Barbara celebrates another birthday.

"I was shy," she says. "No one believes me now, but I was very, very shy." She was so shy that the only person she befriended was another girl in the same grade – one she let copy off her paper during math tests. Barbara considers it an accomplishment that she helped her pass the eighth grade, but wasn't sure we should include the anecdote in her story.

After begging her parents to allow her to take the bus and return to Snowden for ninth grade, she had the best year. She remarks that "all the Jews were there." By the time she entered 10th grade, there were more Jewish kids at East, so she returned for the remainder of high school. "Suddenly, there were Jewish kids everywhere," she shrugs. "So, I stopped being so nervous."

But let's back up for a moment. Before there was Snowden or East High, she attended kindergarten at a little school on Peabody, just close enough for little Barbara to walk to her cousin's house near McLean, between Poplar and Madison. And one day during recess, that's just what she did. Crossing a street and even an intersection, Barbara knocked on her aunt's door looking for her younger cousin, Nancy. "My mother came to get me. That was my big rebellion," she shares. "After that, I never broke the rules again."

"Well," she concedes, "except for geometry. I got a C and refused to take any more math."

After high school, Barbara applied to both Washington University and Newcomb at Tulane. During her visit at Washington, she knew it was not the school for her. "I was so intimidated by the way they spoke. They spoke Yankee! It spooked me, you know, I'm nebbish." Later, she took the train on the City of New Orleans. When she got off the train and people spoke almost like she did, she liked it. So Newcomb won.

She thought she would be an artist, so she took art classes. "I thought I was good. Then my advisor calls me in after my first year. 'Bring your portfolio,' he says. So I bring it. He opens it, looks through it, and he says, 'What do you make A's in?' I say, 'Spanish.' He closes the portfolio and says, 'Major in Spanish.'" She taps the table. "Just like that. I went to the dorm and cried. The next day, I was a Spanish major."

According to Barbara, it was the best thing that could have happened. She built her life around teaching Spanish. Art and

art history became her hobby instead of a profession, so she could love them without worrying about her grades.

She met her husband, Roy, at Tulane. In the first few months of the school year, they attended the same event at the Sigma Alpha Mu house. Their first date was not the most fortuitous. After attending the movies, Roy parked the car and came around to Barbara's side to open the door for her – and shut it on her finger. "Car doors were heavy in those days. He walked on, and there I was, stuck!" She holds up her finger, as if we can still see the bruise.

Was that the end of the date? Maybe they went to a ZBT party together, or maybe that was another day. Memories sometimes meld. But the important detail is that she and Roy eventually became an item and married in September of their senior year with more faith than money. Her parents gave Barbara a thousand dollars as a wedding present, and she used every penny to plan her wedding. They married in her Memphis home with about 60 guests, and then it was on to a honeymoon in the Ozarks.

"We thought we might go to Cuba," she says, ruefully. "It was the same price as Lake Taney Como, but more glamorous. Then Fidel Castro showed up on the scene, and that was that." So they drove to Lake Taney Como, with every wedding present wrapped in boxes in the back of Roy's two-door Ford. "Can you imagine that now? Driving around with your whole married life in the backseat?"

They eventually made their way back to New Orleans, where Barbara graduated early. Both practical and industrious, she had taken summer courses at the University of Memphis (formerly Memphis State). After graduation, she got a job teaching at Behrman High School, across the river from New Orleans, near the army base.

"Rough place," she says. "One day, I walked into my classroom and on the blackboard, in big letters, it said, 'Dirty redhead Jew.'" She says the words evenly, but I can see the younger version of her: earnest, newly married, standing alone in front of that sentence. She told the principal, a Mr. Polsi. He shrugged, "You have to expect that."

She remained at Behrman a bit longer, but eventually found herself in a private school in the Garden District where she



taught Spanish and art. "Those were my people. I became confident there. Still a nerd," she interjects, "but not shy anymore." It was during this time she gave birth to her daughter, Sally. Two years later, when the family left for Memphis in 1964, the school held a Barbara Mansberg Day. "Imagine that – a whole day for me," she says. But it isn't hard to imagine at all.

In Memphis, they bought a house, and she began teaching Spanish as a substitute at St. Mary's Episcopal School, where her tenure ultimately spanned 18 years. Both of her children attended the school for girls – Sally started in kindergarten, and Danny attended as a four- and five-year-old during the last years they allowed boys.

"She won every single award for teachers that St. Mary's gives," shares Sally. "They created an award for her – the Creative Teacher Award." Another award, the Gold Cross, came with a gold cross necklace. For Barbara, they gifted her a pendant with her initials she still wears today.

According to Sally, her mom always had a trick for learning something new, finding patterns, and making learning fun. "You were my best language teacher!" she tells her mom. "Why, thank you...thank you very much," Barbara quips in her best Elvis accent.

Now it's Danny's turn to prod his mother to speak about herself. She'd rather tell stories, but he wants to know what opened her eyes to being Jewish.

Continued on page 24 ➔

EMBASSY APARTMENTS

Luxury and Location








In the Heart of East Memphis

Offering one, two, and three bedrooms
Utilities Included

See our floorplans at embassyaptsmemphis.com

505 South Perkins Rd. 901.685.8020

www.embassyaptsmemphis.com



Barbara attends one of many educational conferences.

Raised in a classical Reform Jewish family, Barbara felt as though Rabbi Richard Burnholz and Cantor Tom Schwartz were the “winning combination” that opened her eyes to the breadth and depth of ways to be Jewish.

It was during this era that Sally became bat mitzvah – the fourth bat mitzvah at Temple Israel, she shares. Roy experienced his first Havdalah, and it became his favorite service to attend. Danny had a bar mitzvah at the “new” Temple Israel in East Memphis, and Barbara began her career in Jewish education.

While working full-time at St. Mary’s, Barbara became the Jewish educator at Temple Israel, taught herself Hebrew, and created a comprehensive curriculum that was later adapted and adopted by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) and other synagogues.

As if this remarkable accomplishment weren’t enough, she was later approached about another challenge. Mildred Schwartz, of blessed memory, asked her to expand the Mother’s Day Out program into a preschool, which has now grown into the Barbara K. Lipman Early Learning Center.

But the most fun she ever had was teaching Spanish at the Goldie Margolin Yeshiva for Girls. “Here I was teaching Spanish to Jewish girls!” she exclaims, her eyes sparkling even more than usual.

Today, at the age of 87, Barbara teaches Hebrew both online and in person. Danny was chair of Jacob’s Camp and involved in its capital campaign and has served on the board of almost every Jewish organization in the city. Sally – also known as the “Mikvah Lady” – teaches Embracing Judaism and has for 15 years. Barbara’s husband, Roy, taught Sunday School for 20 years.

Through it all, this shy “nebbish” girl became a gifted teacher, a Jewish educator, a builder of institutions, and the matriarch of a family now woven into nearly every corner of Memphis Jewish life. From East Drive blackjack games to Newcomb Spanish classes, from facing antisemitism in a “rough place” to finding “her people” in beloved schools, and from crafting curricula to growing a preschool, she has spent a lifetime turning learning into love and community.

The details span decades and cities, students and synagogues, but woven together they reveal a woman whose modest “goody-goody” beginnings blossomed into a legacy of education, Jewish engagement, and family devotion that will echo far beyond the scope of any single story.



OPUS

ELEGANT SENIOR LIVING




A Fresh, New Approach to Senior Living

Experience the art of senior living.
Call today to schedule your visit.

Opus is located only 10 minutes from Highland and Germantown.

901-763-6371 | OpusEastMemphis.com/Watchman

Jasper a Gentle and Playful Pup

By Shoshana Cenker

The Cenker fam now has a wonderful new fur baby: Jasper.

Our amazing black lab mix shelter pup, Memphis, passed away this past Simchas Torah, two weeks shy of her 16th birthday. After taking time to grieve our tremendous loss, I surprised the kids the day before Thanksgiving with a trip to a local shelter to adopt a new furry friend to hang out with our awesome cat, Felix.

We went to Memphis Animal Services, a kill shelter, to rescue a pup. We looked at a few other dogs before Jasper, and while they were great, my kiddos and I all felt drawn to Jasper. We intended not to get another dog who looked like Memphis, alas, Jasper chose us just as much as we chose him, immediately sitting in Lyla's lap when we were outside meeting him. He was just over one year old when he came home with us. Though shy and timid at first, he quickly warmed up to our family and all the love we shower him with.

We chose his name through a "controlled democracy." I had a list of several names to choose from, and my kiddos voted. We definitely were not keeping his previous name, Ram. Hard pass. He learned his new name within a few days. Jasper desperately wants to play with Felix, who's finally coming around to him. We could tell that Felix was depressed after losing his BFF, Memphis.

"I love Jasper, but he nips sometimes when he plays," said Aiden of a pet peeve about Jasper. "He can get a bit wild," added Lyla. And Kivi says "Jasper can get in the way when he hangs out in the kitchen when we're cooking."

Still, Lyla loves that Jasper is "energetic"; Kivi loves that he's "playful"; and Aiden enjoys Jasper because "he's fun and friendly." He's a super-sweet, wonderful addition to our family.

Do you travel with your pet? How?

Yep! He does well in the car on road trips and especially loves short rides, hanging his head out the window.

Do you board your pet? If so where?

We haven't boarded him because we didn't want him caged, having come from a shelter and a previous abusive house. He does feel safe in his crate at our home, where he often takes naps with blankets and chew toys.

What veterinarian do you use?

McGehee Clinic for Animals — they take terrific care of all our pets!

Do you make or purchase special gifts/treats for your pet?

We give Jasper treats on Shabbos, and he plays with lots of dog toys. And he LOVES going to the off-leash Sea Isle Dog Park and Shelby Farms Dog Park.

Does your pet go to work with you?

I work from home, so Jasper is my "business partner," usually hanging out in my office when he's not chillin' on our back deck.

Any interesting stories you'd like to share with Jewish Scene readers?

Jasper is SUPER smart! He quickly realized that if we put on a coat or jacket, it means it's time for a walk, and races to the front door in gleeful anticipation! And when I grab my purse, he bolts to the garage door, hoping to join for a car ride.



Jasper feels at home.



Kivi, Aiden and Lyla with Jasper.



Aiden and Lyla the day we brought Jasper home.





Karlie
Oncept
Vilagallo
Enewton
Jellycat
Desigual
Varley
Vuori
Zacket & Plover
Think Royln
Aire Sunglasses
Spanx
Karlie
THML
ON Running
Sam Edelman
Sorel

Located in the
Lobby of
The Peabody Hotel

www.lanskybros.com

Lansky

AT *The* PEABODY
A MEMPHIS TRADITION *Since* 1946