

May 2019

UNITY News



First Unity Lodge Installation – Sunday, 24 March 2019 *Update By Our Installing Officer – Eve Swabe*

Thank you for asking me to be your Installing Officer and giving me the opportunity to speak on various BB issues.

First the situation regarding BBE; as you know we took the decision to withdraw in 2015 and since then we have been trying to carry out the will of the membership. As you can imagine, it's not been easy. BBI do not want us to leave, so we proposed being associated with, but not actually being a member of BBE. This was rejected, so we proposed paying a much-reduced capitation fee in order to fulfil BBI's request to keep us in BBE. This too was rejected. However, a proposal was verbally agreed on 29 January with BBE. The BBUK Executive formally agreed it on 4 February. Alan Miller wrote on 6 February asking for a formal agreement, in writing, signed by President, Secretary and Treasurer of BBE. Despite our chasing them up, we have had NO RESPONSE so far. We will let everyone know how things are following the response from BBE.



*Quartet Presidents 2019/2020
With (centre) Eve Swabe Installing Officer.*

And this, ladies and gentlemen is where we are today!

Jean Etherton left a most generous legacy of £10,000 to BBUK. In consultation with Tony Etherton, the Executive would like it used to reflect Jean's interests. Some excellent suggestions have been put forward, so the one most favoured is an essay writing competition in Jean's name for first year sixth-formers in Jewish schools throughout the country. This would reach not only the young people, but their parents to make them all aware of BB. The prize would be £500 - £200 in book tokens, £200 for the school. £50 to the runner-up and £50 to their school. The subject matter has yet to be decided and we will be putting the idea to a couple of schools to see what they think about this essay writing competition.

Last November, for the very first time, members of B'nai B'rith participated in the AJEX Ceremony and Parade, marching under the banner of B'nai B'rith UK. We were proud to be part of this show of respect and remembrance for the fallen, made in solidarity with representatives of the whole Anglo Jewish community. We hope to participate again this year. BB continues to support the annual Jewish Armed Forces weekend in Amport. Alan and Edna Miller attended again in January.

(Continued on page 2)

News and Comment from First Unity Lodge

(Continued from Page1)

The London Bureau is very active and you will have seen Jeremy's recent report. A breakfast meeting is planned for 8 May when the Polish Ambassador will be our guest speaker.

I know your September meeting is to be publicised in our Jewish Heritage Days booklet, as part of the European Days of Jewish Culture and Heritage. Do please spread the word to your Jewish and non-Jewish friends about the programme. Last year we were delighted that the National Trust had an event at a number of properties with a Jewish connection and they will do so again this year. We have just been told that the Victoria and Albert Museum will also be taking part, but I don't have precise information about this yet.

The Young Professionals are getting people to form a committee to assist Valerie in the planning of events. You may have seen a flyer for the visit she's organising to Athens this May.

Tony Sinclair is now our link person with BBYO. Alan is keen to have a closer relationship with them and invited their Director to the recent BB Executive Committee meeting. It's encouraging that she is happy to include information about BB in their newsletters.

Lastly, I thought you would like to know that a donation is being sent out to Qiryat Gat by BBUK to help with the provision of food for Pesach.

I hope this report on BBUK's activities reinforces for you all the excellent work that goes on within our organisation and that there will soon be a resolution to our very own Brexit problem.

For the benefit of members we list below contact details which we hope you will find of use.

Login for our emails - firstunity@mail.com

We have been asked to draw members' attention to these websites:

For BBUK go to: bnaibrithuk.org

For BB Europe go to: bnaibrithurope.org

For BB International go to: bnaibrith.org

Many of the events/reports are on the relevant BB websites

You can access the Board Of Deputies Community briefings on this site:

<http://www.bod.org.uk/live/index.php>

Please note this email address - Eve Swabe - office@bnaibrith.org

Eve Swabe is the Office Administrator and first line of contact.

National Secretary is Wendy Fireman,

QUARTET PRESIDENTS 2019/2020

Doreen Natoff for April, May, June
 Geraldine Auerbach for July, August, September
 Marion Summerfield for October, November, December
 Hilary Sinclair for January, February and March 2020

Jo Bieber and George Summerfield - Monitors

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Ron Shelley - Treasurer
 Ruth Gordon - Secretary
 Henny Levin - Programme
 Gabby Kessler - Membership
 Vivien Nathan - Welfare
 Hilary Sinclair
 Sylvia Lewin



Walter Sinclair (Pictured left with Quartet President Doreen Natoff) retired following many years serving as Treasurer and Auditor of the Lodge.

He was presented with a small gift in recognition of the immense contribution he has made in keeping our finances in order.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Isaac and I would like to thank you for all the support and kindness shown to us on the loss of our dear brother Joseph.

Your visits, cards, letters and message of condolence during this period were of tremendous comfort to us and for which we are most grateful.

Our best wishes to you all.

Mavis and Isaac Hallegua

FAMILY NEWS.....

Mazel tov to Margaret Arenias on the marriage of a grandson in Israel.

Mazel tov to Hilary and Tony Sinclair on the birth of a great grandson - Ayal Tzvi.

Mazel tov to Ron Shelley on the marriage of his grandson.

Condolences to Mavis Hallegua on the loss of her brother Joseph in Belgium.

We wish Mazel tov to all our members who have recently celebrated special birthdays and anniversaries.



B'nai B'rith UK's Bureau of International Affairs Newsletter 2019 (1)

Singapore High Commission 9th Jan

Members of the Bureau met the Singaporean High Commissioner H.E. Ms Foo Chi Asia for a lengthy, positive and productive meeting at the High Commission in London. They discussed the ongoing special relationship between her country and Israel as well as the complex web of geopolitical issues in South Asia. It was a useful and informative meeting.



Iceland Embassy 23rd Jan

Bureau members discussed Iceland's decision to recognise a Palestinian state unilaterally and its pro Palestinian advocacy, as well as its current ban on shechita and proposed ban on circumcision. Issues affecting the local Jewish community were raised.



Costa Rica embassy 29th Jan

Bureau members discussed regional politics in Central and South America, especially concerns about the ongoing crisis in Venezuela, Costa Rica's recent voting record at the UN and its warm relations with the local Jewish community.



Hungarian Embassy 6th Feb

Representatives from BBUK, led by National President Alan Miller, met H.E. Vince Szalay-Bobrovniczky, Secretary of State in the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, for a discussion on antisemitism in the country as well as the political situation in both Europe and the Middle East. BBUK welcomed Hungary's diplomatic support for Israel, especially at the UN and within the EU, and also government funding for restoring religious buildings. It expressed concern at the resurgence of antisemitism and bigotry in official discourse.



FCO Roundtable 19th January

Tony Swabe represented B'nai B'rith UK at the Jewish Community Roundtable meeting with the FCO. He met Martin Longden, Head of the Near East Department and the Israel desk officer. There was a discussion about the situation on Israel's northern border with Syria and Lebanon, events in Gaza, the new International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace and the Palestinian school curriculum as a source of incitement.

Whose Land? 17th February

At least 160 people attended a 90 minute screening of the documentary *Whose Land?* in Pinner Synagogue. The film explores the legal and historical legitimacy of the State of Israel and features interviews with many scholars and academics. It was produced by filmmaker Hugh Kitson, with the help of Robin Benson. After the screening, Hugh and Robin answered questions and sold some copies of the DVD.

A Tiny Spot On The Map

So what do the last 36 hours feel like from a tiny spot on the map, called Kfar Aza, my home. We are only 2km from Gaza, a semi-state governed by Hamas, whose ideology is similar to the Moslem Brotherhood, Isis, Hezbollah, Jihad Islam and El Kaida. To the best of my knowledge there is no other place on earth where a radical Islamic entity borders on a Western Judeo democracy.

Over the last 36 hours almost 700 missiles have been fired into CIVILIAN communities in our area. About 90% have been shot down by the Iron Dome system. But those that were not, have caused death, destruction and fear. Schools are closed, shops closed, services shut down. Thankfully my son Alon and family left the kibbutz, to be out of range for the time being.

We have spent many hours in our bomb shelter, but today I had to take Barbara for emergency dental treatment to Ashdod. Ten minutes after leaving Ashdod, rockets were fired on the city, more dead and wounded. We drove home on back roads to avoid passing Ashkelon, where several people were killed today.

When we were close to the kibbutz, the sky lit up with a barrage of six incoming missiles on the left side of the road, then the explosions of the Iron Dome missiles that shot them down. Ten seconds later, another barrage of ten missiles on the right side of the road. It is impossible to judge where they will hit. Do we stop the car and lay flat on the ground or not. It's simply Russian roulette.

The road to the kibbutz is closed by the army. We had to take back roads from another direction, through a neighbouring kibbutz to bypass the access road, because that road was targeted today by Hamas. They fired a Russian made anti-tank missile, called a Kornet at a civilian vehicle on the road, killing the driver. The short distance I had to drive on an exposed road, I drove in the dark without lights, making it more difficult for the laser guided weapon to aim at our car.

How do I explain all this to my panic stricken Golden Labrador who will not leave my side?

Life here is 95% paradise and 5% hell. We are in the 5% right now.

Ralph Lewinsohn,
Brother of our member Peter Lewinsohn

I Was The Shabbos Goy Of Sterling Place and Utica Avenue

by Joe Velarde

*Marion Summerfield received this story from a friend by email.
She thought that it was 'so cute' that she wanted to share it with us.*

***Please excuse the American spelling.
If taken out, it would have lost some of its New World charm.***

Snow came early in the winter of 1933 when our extended Cuban family moved into the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. I was ten years old. We were the first Spanish speakers to arrive, yet we fit more or less easily into that crowded, multicultural neighborhood. Soon we began learning a little Italian, a few Greek and Polish words, lots of Yiddish and some heavily accented English.

I first heard the expression 'Shabbos is falling' when Mr. Rosenthal refused to open the door of his dry goods store on Bedford Avenue. My mother had sent me with a dime to buy a pair of black socks for my father. In those days, men wore mostly black and Navy blue. Brown and gray were somehow special and cost more. Mr. Rosenthal stood inside the locked door, arms folded, glaring at me through the thick glass while a heavy snow and darkness began to fall on a Friday evening. "We're closed, already", Mr. Rosenthal had said, shaking his head, "can't you see that Shabbos is falling? Don't be a nudnik! Go home." I could feel the cold wetness covering my head and thought that Shabbos was the Jewish word for snow.

My misperception of Shabbos didn't last long as the area's dominant culture soon became apparent; Gentiles were the minority. From then on, as Shabbos fell with its immutable regularity and Jewish lore took over the life of the neighborhood, I came to realize that so many human activities, ordinarily mundane at any other time, ceased, and a palpable silence, a pleasant tranquility, fell over all of us. It was then that a family with an urgent need would dispatch a youngster to "get the Spanish boy, and hurry."

That was me. In time, I stopped being nameless and became Yussel, sometimes Yuss or Yusseleh. And so began my life as a Shabbos Goy, voluntarily doing chores for my neighbors on Friday nights and Saturdays: Lighting stoves, running errands, getting a prescription for an old tante, stoking coal furnaces, putting lights on or out, clearing snow and ice from slippery sidewalks and stoops. Doing just about anything that was forbidden to the devout by their religious code.

Friday afternoons were special. I'd walk home from school assailed by the rich aroma emanating from Jewish kitchens preparing that evening's special menu. By now, I had developed a list of steady "clients," Jewish families who depended on me. Furnaces, in particular, demanded frequent tending during Brooklyn's many freezing winters. I shudder, remembering brutally cold winds blowing off the East River. Anticipation ran high as I thought of the warm home-baked treats I'd bring home that night after my Shabbos rounds were over. Thanks to me, my entire family had become Jewish pastry junkies. Moi? I'm still addicted to checkerboard cake, halvah and egg creams (made only with Fox's Ubet chocolate syrup).

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

I remember as if it were yesterday how I discovered that Jews were the smartest people in the world. You see, in our Cuban household we all loved the ends of bread loaves and, to keep peace, my father always decided who would get them. One harsh winter night I was rewarded for my Shabbos ministrations with a loaf of warm challah (we pronounced it "holly") and I knew I was witnessing genius! Who else could have invented a bread that had wonderfully crusted ends all over it -- enough for everyone in a large family?

There was an "International" aspect to my teen years in Williamsburg. The Sternberg family had two sons who had fought with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain. Whenever we kids could get their attention, they'd spellbind us with tales, also introduced us to a novel way of thinking, one that embraced such humane ideas as 'From each according to his means and to each according to his needs'. In retrospect, this innocent exposure to a different philosophy was the starting point of a journey that would also incorporate the concept of Tzedakah in my personal guide to the world.

In what historians would later call The Great Depression, a nickel was a lot of mazuma and its economic power could buy a brand new Spaldeen, our local name for the pink-colored rubber ball then produced by the Spalding Company. The famous Spaldeen was central to our endless street games: stickball and punchball or the simpler stoop ball. One balmy summer evening our youthful fantasies converted South Tenth Street into Ebbets Field with the Dodgers' Dolph Camilli swinging a broom handle at a viciously curving Spaldeen thrown by the Giants' great lefty, Carl Hubbell. We really thought it curved, I swear.

Our neighbors, magically transformed into spectators kibitzing from their brownstone stoops and windows, were treated to a unique version of major league baseball. My tenure as the resident Shabbos Goy came to an abrupt end after Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941. I withdrew from Brooklyn College the following day and joined the U.S. Army. In June of 1944, the Army Air Corps shipped me home after flying sixty combat missions over Italy and the Balkans. I was overwhelmed to find that several of my Jewish friends and neighbors had set a place for me at their supper tables every Shabbos throughout my absence, including me in their prayers. What mitzvot! My homecoming was highlighted by wonderful invitations to dinner. Can you imagine the effect after twenty-two months of Army field rations?

As my post-World War II life developed, the nature of the association I'd had with Jewish families during my formative years became clearer. I had learned the meaning of friendship, of loyalty, and of honor and respect. I discovered obedience without subservience. And caring about all living things had become as natural as breathing. The worth of a strong work ethic and of purposeful dedication was manifest. Love of learning blossomed, and I began to set higher standards for my developing skills, and loftier goals for future activities and dreams. Mind, none of this was the result of any sort of formal instruction; my yeshiva had been the neighborhood. I learned these things, absorbed them says it better, by association and role modeling, by pursuing curious inquiry, and by what educators called "incidental learning" in the crucible that was pre-World War II Williamsburg. It seems many of life's most elemental lessons are learned this way.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

While my parents' Cuban home sheltered me with warm, intimate affection and provided for my well-being and self-esteem, the group of Jewish families I came to know and help in the Williamsburg of the 1930s was a surrogate tribe that abetted my teenage rite of passage to adulthood. One might even say we had experienced a special kind of Bar Mitzvah.

I couldn't explain then the concept of Tikkun Olam, but I realized as I matured how well I had been oriented by the Jewish experience to live it and to apply it. What a truly uplifting outlook on life it is to be genuinely motivated "to repair the world".

In these twilight years when my good wife is occasionally told, "Your husband is a funny man", I'm aware that my humor has its roots in the shticks of Second Avenue Yiddish Theater, entertainers at Catskill summer resorts, and their many imitators. And, when I argue issues of human or civil rights and am cautioned about showing too much zeal, I recall howchutzpah first flourished on Williamsburg sidewalks, competing for filberts (hazelnuts) with tough kids wearing payess and yarmulkes. Along the way I played chess and one-wall handball, learned to fence, listened to Rimsky-Korsakov, ate roasted chestnuts and read Maimonides.

I am ever grateful for having had the opportunity to be a Shabbos Goy.

Aleichem Sholom

PS. Mario Cuomo, Colin Powell and Pete Hamill were also shabbos goyim.