

**MONTHLY SISTERHOOD ARTICLES,**

**SCROLL DOWN**

**TO READ EACH CONTRIBUTION**

# This is my story, Irene Hirshman Reidich

This is my story, Irene Hirshman Reidich, as well as that of our Temple. My father, Morris Hirshman, had a brother living in Pompano who owned a dry goods store called the Bonton Store on First street.. He said Pompano was a nice place to live, so my family moved to Pompano in 1934 from Middle Village, Queens, New York when I was 4 years old. In 1935 the population of Pompano was 2300 people.

My father bought a drug store on First Street in Pompano. A man named Mr. Kester had built several small houses called "Kester Houses" around the city and the Hirshmans rented one of them in 1935.

Growing up in Pompano, I attended Pompano Elementary School. There were no Jewish girls in the school so I attended the Pompano Baptist Church after school program for storytelling. I had more contact with the Baptist Church than I had with my own religion during my early years.

From 1948 until 1959 I was too busy going to college, getting married, going to Argentina with my husband and having children, to become involved in anything else.

Over the years a few more Jewish people moved to Pompano and the Pompano Jewish Circle was formed in 1945. This group met in each other's homes for services. We had High Holiday services in the old sanctuary of the First Methodist Church. They were very welcoming to us and even covered the Cross during our services.

Doc Towbin & his wife, Lena, moved to Pompano from Cripple Creek, Colorado for the winter, bought a house in Cresthaven and joined the Pompano Jewish Circle. Shortly after moving here, he told the group they had to get off their tails and buy a piece of property where they could build a Temple. He motivated us to buy the land where the Temple sits now.

In 1959, they started filling in the property with loads of dirt. Some of the women went to the property to count the loads of dirt delivered. They took their small children with them and threw the diapers in the pile of dirt. To this day, parents and children proudly recall this story. Three of those women were Ruth Zimmerman, Lorraine Harris and me.

The Temple was beautiful. It was built in the shape of a Jewish Star and has amazing stained glass windows facing East that were designed by Howard Silverstein. The Temple was finished by 1961 and my father, Morris Hirshman, was the first President. The young Jewish people were very active in the Temple and made it a place for more people to come and celebrate their Jewish faith.

One of the ways the Temple raised money was, each year, they had a Cadillac raffle. They sold 100 tickets for \$100 each. One year my husband had a contest with two other people to see who could sell the most tickets. . Lindy Hardy was a Baptist and Johnny was a Catholic. The three wanted to see which religion could sell the most tickets.

In 1977 I was elected as the first female president of Temple Sholom. I wanted to do it so my picture would hang on the Wall of Presidents along with my father.

No matter where I am or what my address is, Temple Sholom will always be my home.

# GROWING UP JEWISH IN THE SOUTH

By: Joan Kahn

I was born in Lakeland, Florida in 1950. My parents were from New York and Boston but met in Lakeland where my dad lived and my mom was visiting. As many of you know, the state changes drastically north of Palm Beach. The first thing everyone asks me when I say I'm from Lakeland is: "Were you the only Jew"? When I was very young, I thought everyone was Jewish. We had Jewish neighbors, two doors down from our house was the Rabbi's house and within walking distance to Temple Emanuel, a conservative synagogue that sits elegantly on Lake Hollingsworth, directly across the lake from Florida Southern College which was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Of course, the neighborhood was not all Jewish. On the lake also sat the Lakeland Yacht Club which at that time was restricted. We had a lot of wealth in our community from citrus groves, cattle, and produce. You may recognize the name Nathan Wishnatzki (now Wish Farms) from strawberry crates. The Wishnatzki family was very active in establishing our temple. Of course, there were many Jewish business owners and professionals. My dad had a shoe store in Plant City, his brother had a bar and liquor store and my dad's sister's husband had a pharmacy. There came a time when the Jewish community wanted to build a new synagogue on property on the lake that it already owned and on which we had been using the old house at the top of the hill as our synagogue. The town was not happy and tried to prevent us from building citing zoning laws despite the fact on that very road sat a very large Methodist Church. Fortunately, we had a friend in Pastor Newton from the First Presbyterian Church, as well as someone on the City Council. After a legal battle, we succeeded in building our magnificent synagogue. The Jewish Community was so proud of its new facility.

On the Jewish holidays in school, **we** became Show and Tell. We would bring our menorahs and candles and matzah to show the class. Every day was started with the Pledge of Allegiance and The Lord's Prayer. Since no one really believed there were people who didn't celebrate Christmas, we were taught and sang all of the carols. At the same time, I was going to Hebrew School and Sunday School and I was attending Junior Congregation on Saturday mornings. I was eventually confirmed. My family's social life was completely temple-related. So no, I wasn't the "only Jew" but I was by far in the minority. It was seldom that I had a class with other Jewish kids. But despite our size in the "Citrus Capital of the World", I grew up with a love of Judaism and a love of Israel. My siblings and I actually received more Jewish education than my cousins in New York. As a family, we usually vacationed in Miami Beach where my parents could get Chinese food and corned beef sandwiches. Of course, breakfast was at Wolfies or the Rascal House.

The few people in town who kept Kosher had to travel to Miami just to purchase meat and other foods. That was about a 5 hour's drive.

I was probably about 10 years of age when Rabbi Herman Schwartz joined our temple. His wife, Freyda Schwartz had a tremendous impact on the children. She created fun family events. The first of which I recall was a Chanukah house decorating contest. I think we won a prize. Prior to that, Chanukah was just candle lighting and latkes. We got gifts and my dad would give us silver dollars (I still have a few).

My first knowledge of antisemitism was from statements made by my parents that I overheard. My father believed that all gentiles deep down really hated Jews. He experienced a lot of antisemitism growing up in Boston and in the Army during WW2. Then newsreels of the concentration camps began appearing on television. This was in the early 1950's. I can remember my parents sending me out of the room. I have friends who have told me their parents insisted that they watched. Of course, being sent out of the room only served to deepen my curiosity and I read everything I could about the horrors of the Holocaust and have since visited Yad Vashem and other memorials.

I left Lakeland to attend college in Jacksonville and then moved to Providence, RI. I returned to Lakeland in 1971 when my father unexpectedly passed away. I am so happy that I later made the move to South Florida in my early 20's. My mom and younger brother made the move first, followed by my sister and then me, the last holdout. It is awesome to be surrounded by so much Jewish culture. So, although I would never move back to Lakeland, a part of me will always be there. My family is also buried there in the Temple's cemetery. Oh, and Publix's headquarters is still there. I think we shopped in the first Publix. But there were always rumors that the Jewish boys in town couldn't get hired as bag boys.

There was a lot of prejudice against the African American Community, segregated schools, churches, movie theaters, water fountains, bathrooms and even separate waiting rooms in the doctors' offices. I never really understood why the black people sat in the back of the bus. As I got older, I realized why. This was in the late 60's when Martin Luther King, Jr. and John and Robert Kennedy enlightened me.

If you are wondering how my family ended up in Lakeland it's because my father's sister married a man originally from Boston whose family moved to Central Florida and were peddlers in the late 1920's. Uncle Nat never had a Bar Mitzvah because there were no synagogues or rabbis. When my dad was discharged from the army he moved to Lakeland to be close to his sister. The rest of his family followed. Lakeland must have been one heck of a shock to my mom who grew up in the Bronx.



# IT CAN BE FIXED

## By Doreen Christopher

Technology, I love technology! Crazy right? How can you love something so cold and impersonal? Easy, it's always changing, yet in many ways always the same. It is like our relationships, the same yet different, especially as we age.

We retire, we're excited, and we're looking forward to sleeping late, traveling, and just having fun. After a while, that's all fine and dandy, but for me, there's not a lot of satisfaction or meaning in just hanging out. Unlike most people, I feel more fulfilled if I'm being creative, finding solutions, and learning new things - things related to computers and similar devices.

When I retired and moved to Florida in 1999 to be with Joni who was still working, I wondered to myself what will I do, what can I do for fun that does not include snow. I loved skiing and racquetball and I enjoyed the pace and the competition. Since I was now living in Florida, I felt doing something outdoors would be the thing to do. Initially, it was WOW, I'm retired! I realized pretty quickly that not doing something productive was just not my thing. I needed more stimulation. I took up rollerblading, ouch - nope, beach - nope, way too much sand! After my first 6 months here, I became bored with going to lunch, the beach, and pretty much doing nothing.

I'm probably one of the few people who loved their job and the people they worked with. I guess most people would call me a computer geek, and I will have to admit that is pretty much on target. What is it about the tech field that I like? It's never static, there is always something new and exciting to learn which to me is wonderful.

After I had my kids and was ready to go back to work, I was really lucky to have found a job I loved. When I was hired I had no idea that I'd love technology or that it would end up being the place from which I would eventually retire. I was hired by a company in downtown Boston, which was at the forefront of the newest and greatest platforms (computer/application interfaces). State Street Intl. was at the time considered one of the top 100 technology companies in the country, even though it is a financial holding company. The Company operates through two lines of business: Investment Servicing and Investment Management. The Company, through its subsidiary, State Street Bank and Trust Company (State Street Bank), provides a range of financial products and services to institutional investors across the world. I had no clue what they did but I needed a job, was young, and loved learning.

Remember this was considered a new, innovative, and high-tech industry at the time. Not yet knowing that I had an aptitude for this kind of work, I was a bit apprehensive but excited. The job was in the computer operations department and I found that I loved the technical stuff and I had an aptitude for technology. Wow, talk about beshert (meant to

be). I attribute my success in this field to my first boss, Jack Whitehouse. When I was training one of the first things he said to me was: 'No matter what you break we can always fix it!' His advice made the difference between, oh my God I'm going to lose my job, and holy crap I screwed up - but they can fix it. Knowing they could fix it allowed me the confidence to just do it. I was still a bit shy about performing certain tasks, but when I was in doubt I did not hesitate to try to resolve the issue without running to the boss, again remembering if I broke it, they could fix it. Thankfully, I never really messed anything up that badly. Another fact in this new technology field was that it was mostly an all-male environment and I loved working with the guys. I was one of the very few women in this field, and still today it is a predominantly male-dominated setting. I always wonder why there are still not a lot of women entering the field. It is too bad because it is still one of the fastest-growing industries and you're almost always assured of a good job and a good income.

What I've realized is that the hardest part for most people when they're using a computer, an iPhone, or an iPad is that they're afraid to try something new fearing they will mess up and destroy the device, the device content, or just break the thing. I can tell you don't stress, for the most part, it can be fixed. So enjoy your electronic toys because they are really fun.

# **The Four Daughters**

**Esther S. Cohen**

In the Haggadah it talks about the four children. The first daughter is the wise one. She is up on all the latest news and information, with social media at her fingertips. She sees her family preparing for Passover and she asks, "What are the decrees and ordinances which G-d has commanded you?" The Haggadah continues to answer that we are to explain to her all of the laws of Passover, taking care to explain why we are doing all the cleaning, cooking, and preparing for the Seder night.

The second daughter is listed as the wicked one. She is more interested in her views and likes on her social media, wanting to become a social media influencer. She asks, "Of what purpose is this work for you?" By this question, she is excluding herself from the obligations. The Haggadah explains that we should say G-d took me out of Egypt (not you).

The third daughter is the simple one. She may be a special needs child who has a limited understanding of what is going on around her. She sees all the prepping, cleaning, and cooking. She asks "What is this?" We are told to explain to her that G-d took us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

The fourth daughter is too young to ask. The Haggadah says "You must initiate the subject for her." It also specifically uses feminine language in its answer to the child, as the more feminine member of the household should be the one doing the explaining.

## **Reference**

Quotes are taken from The Family Haggadah with Translation and Instructions (2014) page 29.

Artscroll publishers. Brooklyn, NY



# Do You Remember When

**By Grace Weinstein**

Do you remember when masks were reserved for Halloween, superheroes, and Mardi  
Gras?

And buying toilet paper was not like winning the lottery.

Do you remember when getting a shot meant drinking a shot of bourbon or  
rye?

And it wasn't controversial because everyone got them.

Do you remember when planning a wedding was a time of joy?

And now it's one postponement after another.

Do you remember shopping for groceries?

And everything was available for buying.

Do you remember having the family over and the more the merrier?

Now you count your guests carefully and have under ten.

Do you remember when you ate out all the time?

And seldom now ... but always outdoors.

Do you remember when we kissed and hugged while greeting?

And now fist bumps and elbow bumps when meeting.

Do you remember planning and going on a trip?

And now a trip is going to gas up the car.

When will we be free to do as we please?

When can we not worry about a sneeze?

No one knows what the future may bring.

So let us savor and remember this thing.

Stay safe, you're precious to your friends and family.

And hope that COVID soon shall end.

# **Title: Pessimist or Eternal Optimist**

**By Beth Gincher**

They told me to cheer up; things could be worse! So I cheered up, and sure enough—things got worse.

The cheery outlook of the persistent optimist makes her an easy target for jokes. But some psychological research suggests that women who find something about which to be happy, in even the most difficult circumstances, may be on to something,

Optimism, in psychological terms, is defined as a feeling of certainty that things are bound to get better.

It's not clear why some women seem to have an unshakable faith in a better future. Some women say they just feel lucky, while others attribute their positive mental attitudes to confidence in the support of friends and family. Some researchers have suggested that women feel more optimistic if they believe they have some control over their own lives.

Many studies have found a link between optimism and good health, although it's not clear what the connection is that is linking the two. Certainly, women who generally feel well are more likely to be optimistic. But some studies say that a bright outlook may be healthful on its own.

Optimism may lead a woman to take better care of herself, because she believes that good nutrition, frequent exercise and regular medical exams will really pay off in better health...and when they do have medical problems, optimists have a better chance for recovery.

Studies suggest a positive outlook seems to help women deal with anger in a healthy fashion. That makes optimistic women less likely to suffer headaches and other ailments associated with repressed anger.

If a woman finds it difficult to look on the bright side, she shouldn't feel inadequate. A pessimistic attitude could well be the appropriate response to a particular problem...BUT women who ALWAYS expect the worst should consider seeking professional help in handling their life stress and improving their outlooks.

P.S. I've been called Little Mary Sunshine all of my life...and now I use and enjoy the saying as a lovely, soft 'wrapping'...it always makes me smile!!

# **Who Will Say Kaddish?**

**By Gail Eisen**

Kaddish is the mourners' prayer which is recited in honor of deceased relatives, namely, parents, siblings, and children. According to Orthodox tradition, Kaddish should be recited in the presence of a minyan consisting of ten men over the age of thirteen. Women, according to the Orthodox may do a specific mitzvah to honor the memory of a loved one however, they do not approve of women saying Kaddish.

On October 28, 1993, my father, David Oblegorski, of blessed memory, passed away. I, as his only child, took on the responsibility to say Kaddish in his honor during the eleven month mourning period. My mother was very proud of this decision.

During the week of Shiva for my Dad, we had many visitors pay their respects to my family. One of the people who visited was a colleague of my husband, Stan. "Dave" came dressed in a black suit and black hat according to Orthodox tradition. He sat down next to me, gave his condolences, and then asked me, "Do you have any brothers?" "No", I replied, "I am an only child." "Does your father have any surviving brothers?" Again, I answered no. The next question was "Who will say Kaddish?" "I will," I answered. Dave's jaw dropped at my reply. He offered to say Kaddish for my Dad instead of me. I respectfully declined his offer. I felt disrespected and put down by this conversation.

After the visit from Dave, I thought about my decision. I felt that if G-d wanted my father to have a "Kadishel," who was a male, I would have been born a boy. I felt, in my heart, that G-d knew that I would be diligent about attending minyan to recite Kaddish on a regular basis. During my period of mourning, I was joined at our minyan by other women from our congregation who had also lost parents during that year. Unfortunately, it took several years before our Rabbi would allow women to be counted in the minyan or to have an aliyah. But it did eventually happen. A year after my father passed, my beloved mother passed.

Again, I went to minyan regularly to say Kaddish for her. I believe that both my parents were proud to have me recite the Kaddish for them. Women have an important place in our Jewish tradition. We should all value this and have women participate in all rituals and prayers whenever they wish.

## Here we go Again! How to Handle COVID Stress 2.0.

By Ilana Dixon

Over the summer we were visiting our children and grandchildren and stopped at one of the Turnpike rest stops. At one of the kiosks, I bought an FAU Owl mask. Originally, we were told that if you have your shots you don't need to wear masks. I am vaccinated, and the COVID statistics were low. I remember thinking this is probably a waste of money, but the mask was really cool and I could not resist. Well here we go again, it is now recommended for us to wear masks, even if we have been vaccinated. I have come up with some ways to navigate the COVID roller coaster that helped me. Perhaps they will help you.

**Get out of the box:** I have to confess that I got used to going to shul in my pajamas, as I watched Shabbat services on the website. However, when I went to the actual shul it was such a different experience, and truly wonderful. Thanks to Rabbi and Cantor, my neshamah felt at home, and I was davening with true kavanah. My husband said it was nice to see old friends. We were both thrilled, and we plan to make more of an effort in the future.

Another way to get out of the box is to go to a movie theatre or drive-in movie. We enjoy Netflix as much as the next person, but when we went to visit our son Daniel in Gainesville, we saw Black Widow. (A Marvel superhero action-adventure). Frankly, I had no clue what was happening in the movie, but the whole experience was amazing! I highly recommend a true movie experience with any movie of your choice.

**Read, read, read:** Whether it is fiction, Torah study, or any genre for that matter, reading is a great way to get out of your head! The Sisterhood Book Club always has great recommendations for books as well.

Lastly, go outside and get in touch with nature. My idea of nature is going to my community pool and schmoozing with the neighbors. Whether it is a nighttime romantic walk with your other half, the beach, or going on a nature trail, going out is a great escape.

I hope you found my suggestions helpful. In the words of Dr. Joyce Brothers, “Cherish everything in your day that contributes to happiness: Spending a special moment with your child, drinking a cup of your favorite coffee, joking with a coworker, saving a rosebush from destruction. Happiness hides in life’s small details. If you’re not looking, it becomes invisible.”

# Thanksgiving Meets Sukkot and Chanukah

**By Anbeth Mark**

The Hebrew Calendar can be strange to Americans. Jewish holidays appear to slide back-and-forth, never falling on the same English date from year to year. This year, for example, Thanksgiving and Chanukah fall within the same few days.

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays, but, until I compared it to Chanukah, I didn't realize how alike they are. Growing up, Thanksgiving was mainly a family meal. My father was a chef who worked in Manhattan restaurants his entire career. Because he adored cooking, our Thanksgiving became full-blown family gatherings. Watching the Macy's Day Parade was always a wonderful family activity. Our children look forward to it every year, even now that they are adults.

As a child, Chanukah was, by far, the most fun: candles burning, latkes frying, and gift-giving were the best. It might seem unusual to find commonalities between Thanksgiving and Chanukah, but they are there if we look. Chanukah is a holiday of religious freedom, and the Pilgrims, regardless of how we look at them today, were also seeking that same freedom. The Maccabees fought the Greeks to preserve religious freedom in their homeland, and the Pilgrims, unable to find it in their homeland, sailed to far-off America searching for it.

It is significant that the "miraculous oil story" appears only in the Talmud, written years after the Chanukah military campaign. Scholars stress that the Maccabees, hiding in the hills and mountains from the Greeks, were unable to celebrate the Sukkot holiday. They delayed its observance until the war was won, counting seven days of Sukkot and one day for Simchat Torah. That is another reason why Chanukah lasts for eight days.

Sukkot was the model for the Pilgrims' Thanksgiving. The Pilgrims, who considered themselves "Old-Testament Christians," identified with the Israelites in the Bible. Their first Thanksgiving thanked God for their crops, as did our ancestors on Sukkot. Early on,

they lived in huts that resembled Sukkot. Even their Thanksgiving meal was a harvest festival.

We may assume that the first Chanukah celebration included a festive meal, even if it didn't include latkes or sufganiyah (The potato originated in South America, and donuts are Dutch.).

Let us remember that we could not celebrate last Thanksgiving with family, because of quarantining due to COVID. We hope and pray that this year, we can gather safely. Wishing you all a happy and safe Holiday Season!