

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

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Editorials

Farewell To A Friend

This summer a very good friend is leaving Charlotte. Rabbi Harold I. Krantzler, the dedicated spiritual leader of Temple Beth El for the past 10 years, and his wife Helen, will be making their new home in California. His retirement marks not only a great loss to the Charlotte Jewish community but to the city of Charlotte. We are not only losing a scholar, a man of wisdom, a wit, but a man of great compassion.

Rabbi Krantzler has been an active member of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, spearheading their annual Holocaust services, an esteemed member of the Charlotte Area Clergy Association, the Oratorio and numerous Jewish and community boards.

We will miss seeing him and it is truly Charlotte's loss that he has decided to leave. We wish him and his family well and hope that he and Helen will be happy in their new home.

A New Beginning

The months ahead will be busy ones for Temple Beth El as they finalize the merger of Temple Beth Shalom with their congregation. There will no longer be two reform temples vying for membership, but one larger, stronger, unified congregation to fulfill the needs of all those of that persuasion. Rabbi Robert Seigel, who has been the spiritual leader of Beth Shalom, will now be the rabbi of the merged temples. The temple will continue to be called Temple Beth El and they are looking forward to their new home at Shalom Park, hopefully within the next three years.

We wish Rabbi Seigel and the members of Beth El/Beth Shalom much happiness and success.

— R.M.

**The Jewish Calendar
Candlelighting**

- June 12 - 8:20 p.m. (Erev Shavuoth)
- June 13 - 8:21 p.m. (First Day Shavuoth)
- June 20 - 8:23 p.m.
- June 27 - 8:24 p.m.
- July 4 - 8:24 p.m.
- July 11 - 8:22 p.m.
- July 18 - 8:19 p.m.
- July 25 - 8:14 p.m.
- Aug. 1 - 8:09 p.m.
- Aug. 8 - 8:02 p.m.



A Presumption of Innocence

By Rabbi Marc H. Wilson

We pride ourselves on being a society in which one is presumed innocent until proven guilty. It is lamentable that the presumption we are prepared to make about suspected rapists and mass murderers is one we so often deny our everyday peers and acquaintances.

I guess there was once a time when people truly assumed the best of each other, a time when people didn't beat the bush looking for sinister motives and double entendres in the seemingly innocent behavior of those around them. Even if it weren't always the case, it was clearly a Jewish ideal to which we paid at least lipservice allegiance. "Give every person the benefit of the doubt," is at the bedrock of Jewish ethics.

Then cynicism began to creep in. As self-interest and "looking out for number one" came to replace the values of working for the common good, trust was replaced with distrust. The presumption of innocence gave way to a presumption that others had dark, hidden motives that re-

quired our constant vigilance. Occasionally, we will still honor the rare individuals who doggedly assume the best of others, the Mother Therasas and so on. More often, however, we will look at them as naive, out of touch, a doormat waiting to be trampled.

The distrust takes a grievous toll. Communications break down. Isolation sets in. Goodness comes to be regarded with skepticism. Ungoodness becomes a tolerated norm. Our ears are always cocked, listening for the con. We spend inordinate time trying to figure out what the other guy's angle is. Sincere words and intentions get twisted. We become cynical. We walk around sour and "farbissen."

I doubt if anyone comes away happy when we stop extending each other the benefit of the doubt and the prerogative of making an occasional mistake.

So many examples come to mind. One of particular relevance is the strides our community is making in working together with a new sense of cooperation and common

purpose. We dare not let those aspirations get polluted by unnecessary distrust and cynicism over the next guy's secret motives. That's not to say that it's always going to be easy or that we should jump into whatever the situation, without thought of scrutiny. It is to say that if everyone would make a new commitment to giving others the benefit of the doubt and not reading sinister innuendos into every bump and squeek, it could make the difference between communal harmony and failure.

That's just one example. Teachers, secretaries, business people, synagogue presidents, rabbis, principals, volunteers, committee chairpeople, spend more than their share of time answering to the accusatorial tones of others and apologizing for honest oversights, sometimes not even of their own doing, blown way out of proportion by people who get more mileage out of bluster and indignation than from offering the benefit of the doubt.

Don't misunderstand. The presumption of innocence does not mean not bringing mistakes to the attention of their makers. People should know that they have erred or been misunderstood. The presumption of innocence does mean knowing the difference between discussing a problem with composure and goodwill and being "called on the carpet." It means assuming the best, not the worst, of others. It means ignoring an occasional oversight. It means accepting the humanness of others the same way we want it accepted of us when we say, "Hey, I'm only human!" Real anger should be saved for truly bad people, not for basically good people who occasionally foul up.

I cannot emphasize enough that the presumption of innocence is not the same thing as naively walking through life with rose-colored glasses on. We must keep our eyes open and not allow ourselves to be trampled by those who would abuse our friendship and goodwill. But, it is equally important that we go out of our way to assume that our peers and acquaintances have basically good intentions, that they most often intend us no deliberate malice or ill. It is critical that we not let our terminal cynicism deny the possibility that others will meet our good faith with good faith of their own.

Maybe we'll find that we really can't trust each other. That would be tragic. But, maybe if each of us tried a little harder to face the next guy with the presumption of innocence, bit by bit it could become a beautiful self-fulfilling prophecy: I look a little more favorably upon you. You look a little more favorably on me. We start building bridges, not barriers. You know how it works. And if we can't afford to try it with the Arafats and Assads, we should at least be willing to try it with each other. Gevalt, Yidden, let's start thinking better of each other!

The stakes being as high as they are, I say it's worth at least one more try.



Letters to the Editor

A Strong Foundation

(Editor's note: The writer presented the cornerstone of the JECC at Shalom Park on May 18, 1986.)

This is like the children's fable we all know, only it has a happy ending! The first sign I made was of WOOD, three years ago. It read, Shalom Woods, but went up in smoke in the conflagration perpetrated by vandals at the old JCC on Sharon Amity Road.

The next one I made of METAL, two years ago. It was a street sign, Shalom, at the corner of Jefferson and Armstrong, demolished by other vandals.

A year ago, this quotation "from generation to generation" from the Book of Isaiah was sandblasted into Tennessee marble STONE, which should be impervious to destruction. Hallelujah! I hope

a century from now the JECC cornerstone will be as strong a foundation and relevant to our progeny as it is for us today!

— Anne Yudell

A Correction

The following is a correction on a wrong date in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah column.

Lee Shapiro's Bar Mitzvah date is June 6, 1987, at Temple Israel. This was entirely my mistake and I will be more careful in the future.

— Edith Cole
Temple Israel

(Editor's note: All is forgiven! The Shapiro family apologizes that all who thought they were deleted from the guest list, will have to wait until next year for their invitation.)

We apologize that the paper is a little late this month due to technical and mechanical difficulties at the printer.

Next Issue:
August
Deadline — July 10