

Bat Mitzvah Projects Connects Holocaust Survivors to Their Descendants

My name is Elyse Bodenheimer and I am twelve years old. My bat mitzvah is on January 24, 2009, and for my bat mitzvah project I have created a website for the grandchildren and children of holocaust survivors to share their grandparents' stories on their journeys and survival during the holocaust.



Elyse with her grandfather.

The website name is www.jewishlegacy.com, and I decided to do this website because I wanted kids to have a place to document the journeys and experiences their family had to go through. I hope to inspire others who read these courageous stories. I was taught how my family fought to survive because they were proud of their Jewish identity, and hearing about my own family's history has made me feel proud to be a Jew. I am hoping that this website will keep those memories alive.

I have been blessed with wonderful grandparents. Two of them, my dad's parents, escaped Germany during the rise of Hitler and the Nazis. I never knew my grandmother, Ellen Schleicher Bodenheimer, because she died before I was born. My grandfather, Bert Arno Bodenheimer, passed away on March 8. He truly inspired me to be proud of my Jewish heritage.

I once spent an afternoon interviewing my Grandpa Bert and re-living his travels from the age of ten. I learned what it was like to live as a Jewish child under the rule of the Nazis. There came a

time when he could no longer go to school in Germany. His family lived on the Swiss border, and they were able to arrange for him and his sister to go to school there. He would ride his bike to school in Switzerland, hiding documents and money (also the deed to the house in Germany) and sneaking them across the border, to give to a teacher in Switzerland to hold for his family. Every day the police would flag him over the border into Switzerland, but on the ride home, they would stop him, search his belongings, and even take the tire off of his bicycle to make sure he wasn't smuggling items into Germany. They never thought he would smuggle items out of Germany. It was very dangerous to do this for his family, but my grandfather was a very determined, smart, and brave person. His Jewish identity very important to him.

Once I get and read the stories, I will post them on the website and comment on them. It is important to share these stories with generations to come. If it were not for

their bravery, a lot of us would not be here today. Hopefully everyone will check back on the website and read the stories of other families, and get some inspiration.

What I hope to get out of my bat mitzvah project is that I can encourage others to learn more about the holocaust and their own family's history. I will also be researching more about my grandparents and we can share information with each other on ways to find more about the different journeys to the United States.

A little bit about me: I am a confident and studious kid who enjoys all sports, and especially likes to spend time with my friends. I am kind hearted and like to volunteer my time. This past Hanukkah, instead of receiving a gift each of the eight nights, my brother and I donated to a different charity or person each night. Some of the nights we would go up to random people and hand them a home made holiday card and a gift card for them to enjoy. I am named for my grandmother, Ellen. From the stories of her childhood and as an adult, she lived a life that made me want to be just like her - kind, generous, smart, and a good person. She was one of the first women to go to Yale Law School and my dream is to follow in her footsteps and attend Yale.

I live in Charlotte with my parents and my younger brother Ian where I am a rising seventh grader at South Charlotte Middle School. ☆

Bowl-a-Thon and Bake Sale to Raise Money for Familial Dysautonomia

Imagine what it would be like to cry without tears, to take lots of medication every day, to not be able to fully taste the food you are eating or to even be fed through a tube in your stomach. These are things that a person with Familial Dysautonomia (FD) experiences every single day. Thirteen years ago at the age of four months, Frannie Cohen was diagnosed with FD. Since then, her family and friends have worked hard to raise awareness and funding for FD.



Best friends Madison Madrazo and Frannie Cohen.

In honor of the upcoming B'not Mitzvah of Frannie Cohen and her best friend Madison Madrazo, the two of them have decided to share their mitzvah project and they are holding a Bowl-a-Thon and Bake Sale to raise money for the FD foundation. The foundation funds research for treatment and medications that help people with FD, and now everyone in the Ashkenazi Jewish population can be tested to see if they are carriers of the FD genes.

The girls' goal is to raise \$1,800. Participants in the Bowl-a-Thon will need to get sponsors. Each sponsorship should be a minimum of \$18. The person who brings in the most sponsorship dollars wins a grand prize. One hundred percent of our profits will go to the Dysautonomia Foundation, Inc.

The Bowl-a-Thon will be held Thursday, September 18, from 6-8 PM at the Carolina Lanes in Matthews. There will be snacks, pizza for dinner, and a raffle with cool prizes. All bowlers must register by September 4 in order to reserve a spot in Bowl-a-Thon. Please send an email to Jeffreycohen@bellsouth.net with each bowler's name, address, email, phone number, and the names of the people you want to share a lane with (maximum five bowlers per lane). If you don't care whom you will be bowling with, they will be happy to group you.

Pledges can be paid by credit card on the Foundation's website, www.famdys.org/Frannie. Please bring any pledge money not submitted online to the Bowl-a-Thon on September 18. Checks should be made payable to The Dysautonomia Foundation, Inc. ☆

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