

Legacy Profile

Lillian and Irving Bienstock



Irving and Lillian Bienstock are among the 155 individuals and families in our community who have created legacy gifts to support its future. Please take the time to read their story and thank them for their generosity. It is our hope that you will be inspired and encouraged to think about how you can create your own Jewish legacy.

By Irving Bienstock

The decision to create a Jewish legacy was an easy one for Lil and me. We have a lifelong connection to Judaism, synagogue life, and the world Jewish community. My earliest memories of Dortmund, Germany, are sitting next to my father (OBM) at Shul each Shabbat. On a Thursday in September 1938, my life changed dramatically as my father, fearing imminent arrest by the Gestapo, fled to Belgium. Two days later, when I did not dress for Shul, my mother (OBM) asked me why. I explained that I couldn't go without Papa. "Where would I sit?" She eased my concerns suggesting I sit where we always did or with my uncle. I attended that first Shabbat without my father, and I continued to until the 9th of November, 1938, Kristal Night, when there was no longer a Synagogue to attend.

On January 15, 1939, at the age of 12, I fled alone to Holland. I was taken in by an orphanage in Amsterdam where there were other Jewish children. The orphanage's Director, who was not Jewish, allowed me to attend Shabbat services. I became a Bar Mitzvah on June 24, 1939, with my younger sister, Sylvia (OBM) who was the

only family member in attendance. It was the Jewish community that took care of me. I was fortunate to receive a visa to the US and was reunited with my parents and sister on April 17, 1940. My father and I resumed our synagogue attendance, and I did my best to celebrate Shabbat while serving in the army.

Lil and I met in 1947. She was born in the US to immigrant parents and like me was raised in a traditional Jewish home attending Synagogue on Shabbat and holidays with her Mother. We were married in 1949. In 1975, we moved to Charlotte and joined Temple Israel.

Throughout our 60 plus years of marriage, we have been blessed to live in a free country and have lived the American dream. As a holocaust survivor, I strongly believe that the continuing survival of the Jewish community will depend on educating future generations about the beauty of our Jewish heritage. I experienced firsthand the generosity of others reaching out to help. Throughout our lifetimes, we have volunteered to reach out to others. It is our hope that by creating endowments to support both Temple Israel and Jewish Family Services, we will continue to support Jews and Judaism in perpetuity. ✨



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Operation Understanding

(Continued from previous page)

High School in Silver Spring, MD explained, "I thought it was a good opportunity to step up in the community and get a bigger picture of the whole civil rights movement."

"I really didn't understand what it was all about at first," admits Sierra Armstrong a 16-year-old from Bishop McNamara High School in Forestville, MD. "But my dad explained to me that there was a strong historical connection between Jews and blacks during the fight for civil rights."

"The experience has been amazing," she continues. "I've been exposed to a wide range of people and diverse perspectives. I want to keep this dialogue open and bring it to my school community."

Traveling with a group of student he had never met before, and visiting places he never dreamed of has given Zach a new perspective as well. "This will really help me grow as a leader. And I can



The students enjoyed lunch in the activity center before meeting with Susan Jacobs and J. Charles Jones.

help others grow as leaders, too. ... Some of the problems in some communities is the lack of leadership." He appreciates the once in a lifetime opportunity this has afforded him to meet some of the giants of the Civil Rights movement. "They did it for the future," he says, "they did it for the bigger picture. They had nothing but blind faith."

Sierra sums up the feeling of the group nicely: "This teaches young people to stand up and speak. We're the ones who will bring energy to the movement." ✨

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Milton Goldstein, CLTC
Certified Long Term Care Specialist
Charlotte, NC: (704) 442-5618
Cell: (205) 907-0670
E-mail: miltgold@bellsouth.net
Visit my Web Site
www.goldsteinltc.com
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