

Community News

A Legacy of Giving: Bill Gorelick

"I've always had a love for Charlotte and for the Jewish community," shares Bill Gorelick, one of Shalom Park's founders, a businessman and a devoted philanthropist. "I often say, the best thing that ever happened to me was that my parents moved to Charlotte before I was born."

His parents, Annie and Israel Gorelick, were childhood sweethearts in their shtetl in Russia during the pogroms. Bill's parents emigrated separately, and were married in Guatemala, where his father supplied people working in the silver mines. After moving to New York City, and then to Gaffney, SC, his parents settled in Charlotte, where they ran a shoe store on E. Trade Street (where Time Warner Arena stands today.)

"It takes an adventurous and entrepreneurial spirit to go to a country where you don't know the language," says Bill. There were 75 Jewish families and one synagogue in Charlotte in 1933 when Bill's parents arrived with their son, Shelton. Bill, born a year later, would attend Elizabeth (Traditional) Elementary, Alexander Graham Junior High (where the Dowd YMCA now stands), and Central High. There were only two Jews in his high school graduating class of 400. Bill studied at Chapel Hill, and then transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated with a degree from Wharton Business School. Bill maintains that the values his parents passed on were family first, then education, and a strong work ethic.

Bill met his b'shert, his destiny, Patty, through mutual friends. Six years his junior and studying at Women's College in Greensboro, Patty tried to get Bill to date her older friends, but Bill demurred. He finally convinced her to go out with him.

Bill suggests that b'shert also describes the confluence of events that brought about Shalom Park. In the early 1980s, Temple Israel was seeking to move to the suburbs, Temple Beth El needed new facilities, the Hebrew Day School needed a permanent home, and the Amity Club (the predecessor to the JCC) had just suffered a



Patty and Bill Gorelick

calamitous fire.

Morris Speizman from Temple Israel and Mark Bernstein from Temple Beth El had a vision that, as Bill puts it, "the Jewish community should be together." By chance, Sam Lerner, in the apartment business, identified land adjacent to undeveloped land on Providence Road that Temple Beth El already owned. On June 11, 1979, twenty-two Shalom Park founders met at Leon Levine's offices to unify support for Shalom Park.

Herman Blumenthal, one of the first major donors to Shalom Park, asked Bill Gorelick to serve as the Phase I Shalom Park Building Chair. Bill, already active in civic and religious life, was helping to grow CMC Finance Group, a family business offering consumer credit when credit cards were in their infancy. With dozens of brick and mortar offices, Bill understood finance and construction.

"There were a lot of political obstacles to founding Shalom Park," says Bill. "Organizations were afraid of giving up their independence. Some individuals said we were trying to form a ghetto. It took the strength of a good team, pulling for the same purpose, with the talent and financial wherewithal to get it done," explains Bill. "Don Dixon, a retired executive from Arthur Anderson, is an 'unsung hero' who, along with Mark Bernstein,

played a large part in building consensus."

Bill stayed engaged through Phase II, when an additional 150,000 square feet was added in the mid-1990s. Butch Rosen, former Executive Director of the Foundation of Shalom Park, remarks, "Bill's legacy to Shalom Park will be his passionate input about the look and feel of the place." Todd Gorelick, Bill's eldest son, concurs. "Dad feels a deep sense of pride in what the founders created, and wants to see Shalom Park always shine."

"Bill has been absolutely unselfish with his time and energy," adds Harry Lerner, fellow Temple Israel congregant and Shalom Park founder. "He never suggests anything that he will not back 100%. He has set a beautiful example for his own family and for the Jewish community."

"Bill is incredibly generous financially, but also with his time and creativity. We all benefited greatly from his devotion to Shalom Park," reflects Hal Levinson, Building Co-Chair of Phase II.

Today, the work of the Foundation of Shalom Park continues. The Foundation maintains the facilities (excluding the temples) and the grounds and provides security for the entire Park. Through their legacy giving, Bill and Patty Gorelick are investing in the long-term success of Shalom Park and



of other organizations integral to our community. "To go from here to there, you need to put gas in the tank," quips Bill. On a more serious note, he adds, "Across all generations, we need to come together to sustain the future of Shalom Park."

We hope that, like Bill and

Patty Gorelick, your commitment to Shalom Park remains strong. For more information about how to make a legacy gift that will not impact your current finances, please contact H. Kevin Levine, Executive Director, Foundation of Shalom Park, 704-944-6840 or hklevine@shalomcharlotte.org.

"One should accept the truth from whatever source it proceeds."

—Maimonides



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Karen Yanofsky, an attorney from Washington, DC, came to Park Road Books in Charlotte to promote her new collection of essays, "Good Luck with That Thing You're Doing." She read a selection about summers on the beach in North Carolina. The book is available at Park Road Books or on Amazon.

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