

# Jewish Social Services

## Bobbi Bernstein Honored By JSS



Bobbi Bernstein holding caricature of herself.

On March 9, the members of the Social Services Committees met at the Marriott on Tyvola for a delicious lunch, good fellowship and to honor one of their own, Bobbi Bernstein.

Bobbi retired as Chairperson of the Social Services Committee after spending 4½ years in that position. During her tenure, the Committee became known for its forward-going programs, with emphasis on the needs of the elderly, and for helping those people displaced from jobs to sharpen up their job-seeking skills. The Committee's work has made a definite difference in the community.

Bobbi was honored with letters of commendation, song and poetry, and presented with a caricature of herself. The caricature is the work of Gene Payne, Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist with *The Charlotte Observer*. It is an excellent likeness, showing Bobbi's success at raising money, her hobbies and, most of all, her smile that warms the hearts of those who see it.

Bobbi was congratulated on her expertise as Chairperson by all present, and she, in turn, thanked those on the Committee who worked with her during the past 4½ years.

It was a heart-warming afternoon and, obviously, the honoree was delighted with the proceedings.

## Thoughts From Adrienne

By Adrienne Rosenberg  
JSS Director

Although it was not my place of birth, the majority of my childhood and college years was spent in a South Georgia community where segregation of races was still intact. Being Jewish and a member of the Conservative synagogue in town, meant living as a minority. The congregation consisted of approximately 125 families, some from outlying communities.

There were three of us the same age: Harold Landey, Martin Miller and myself. We were in Hebrew School, public school, and Young Judea together. When I was in high school, there were never more than six Jewish students in the entire school.

Each day began with the pledge of allegiance and a prayer over the public address system. When I was in high school (1957-61), students took turns giving the daily devotional; on Fridays there were assemblies where clergy (never the Rabbi) would lead us in prayer. And it was not uncommon when a revival was in town that the visiting minister would be invited to preach to the student body. Yes, I can tell you first hand what it meant to grow up in the Bible Belt of the "old" South.

The isolation of being Jewish in a non-Jewish environment was ever present. It is not that I experienced direct or overt anti-Semitism. On the contrary, although there were sometimes questions by my

peers, there were more anti-Catholic feelings than anti-Jewish ones.

But, I would always be aware of growing up as a minority where my heritage and beliefs were essentially ignored. I especially sensed this when I visited my relatives in New York City or attended Jewish conventions or camps. Then I realized there were environments which encouraged and accepted openly that Jewishness was vital. It wasn't that the community I grew up in purposely downplayed Judaism; it was rather they put blinders on that another way of thinking existed.

I am reminded of these experiences when I think of a segment of our Jewish community, mainly the 13 Jewish persons residing in 6 non-Jewish nursing homes in Charlotte. Their average age is 77; only 2 of them can be classified as confused or senile. Only one is on the waiting list of the Blumenthal Jewish Home. The others will remain here because they and their families are not comfortable with the Blumenthal Home being 90 miles away.

If these patients lived at the Blumenthal home, their Jewishness would be accepted and acknowledged. The older one gets, the more one's background sometimes has meaning for him, although he would say he is not religious. Therefore, because they are a minority where they reside, they need to rely on the Charlotte Jewish community to acknowledge who they are culturally.

Unfortunately, we have a problem when it comes to these 13 persons and our Jewish community. Many of these persons were active in Jewish organizations when well; now, they are not a



popular group for most people to visit and are further isolated because they can not leave where they reside to come to the Jewish community.

It is true they have family visits, and HaLailah gives them baskets at key Jewish holiday times; but on a regular basis, they are often forgotten. Because they are here and not at the Blumenthal Home, they are exposed to daily church programming and songs and a lack of understanding on the part of staff of their heritage and background. They are truly a minority where they are.

We now have friendly visitors for many of the homebound; Rabbis and their volunteers visit the sick and grieving. Rabbi Wilson goes to the Blumenthal Home each week to see our community members who are there. But I wish there were those who would regularly visit those in the nursing homes here.

Many of you who read this may say to yourselves, "but it is so depressing," ignoring the fact they may be in the same position someday. Many of you will say to yourselves how busy you are, so I can't mean YOU should volunteer time for this group. But, I AM appealing to all of you to let these older persons and their families know they count as Jewish persons in our community despite the fact they are isolated from the broader community and its activities because of the aging process.

We all need human contact and to know "who we are" counts. Otherwise, there is independence and segregation. Call me at 364-6594 or 366-5007 to volunteer some time.

## NOTE THIS —

When Jewish Social Services moves into the new facility in mid-May, we will lose our 364-6594 phone number. There will be a main switchboard which will answer the Jewish Center at the phone number of 366-5007, currently the Federation number. I hope this causes little confusion for anyone. To ensure confidentiality, I ask you to please ask directly for the person you want to speak to; in that way the Social Services or Federation secretaries can take your message if Elaine and I are busy.

— Adrienne Rosenberg

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