

# Presidential Matters

by Steve Aronowitz



September, for as long as I can remember, has meant “new”. As a kid, it meant new stuff for school and new friends. As a teacher, it meant new classes and new students. It was an opportunity to instruct with new approaches and new ideas. 75 years of a synagogue’s history? Each with a new and exciting start? Little Neck Jewish Center, Oakland Jewish Center, two synagogues, less than five miles apart, came together to become Congregation L’Dor V’Dor—Oakland Little Neck Jewish Center. Separately, each had its own rich history. Together, in a model consolidation, we took the traditions of each synagogue and discovered that two could do better than one!

Of course, September always meant Rosh Hashanah – a New Year with new enthusiasm and an opportunity for a clean slate. So, there is no surprise that I would like to suggest we each make a new commitment to our synagogue. I get it: “you’re the co-president; what else are you going to say!” Hold on, though. We really are a terrific place. Take a look at the calendar of upcoming events, highlighted by the gala 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Extravaganza, honoring three individuals, Alan Fein, Mark Hoffer and Marc Figelman who continue to stand out in their dedication and service.

“In spite of the challenging demographics,” Rabbi Yaffe pointed out, “we continue to be a vibrant heimishe congregation in which our members are able to nourish their Jewish souls on a regular basis.” Rabbi Yaffe, entrusted with the role of taking on the clergy leadership, has been a driving force to help the members of our synagogue family continue the spiritual and heimeshe vibrancy of Jewish life that has always been a significant part of our glorious 75 year history.

75 years, starting in a store front, The Oakland Jewish Center became home to over 800 families. The Little Neck Jewish center with its beginning over a Movie Theater on Northern Blvd. became the home a synagogue family celebrating countless B’nai Mitzvah and weddings, supporting bereaved families in their time of loss and getting together for great social events. Long-time president Robert Stern, who holds the distinction of being president at both OJC and LNJC, agreed that the demographics spelled a decline in membership. “Under the leadership of Rabbi Isaacson and Rabbi Ehrlich, who was first principal of the Hebrew school before becoming its rabbi, employed dedicated and caring teachers, graduated hundreds of students over the years.

At Little Neck, Cantor Julian Raber provided beautiful melodies and instruction to children who became B’nai Mitzvah at Little Neck. The Cantor brought great music to the synagogue each Shabbat.

Rabbi Abraham Eckstein, celebrated 26 years at Little Neck. He was instrumental in women becoming equal participants in what is now a fully egalitarian synagogue. Under Rabbi Eckstein’s leadership many adult women enthusiastically celebrated becoming B’not Mitzvah, something that they were not allowed to do when they were children. His sense of humor made for an overflow crowd to hear his sermons.

What can L’Dor V’Dor bring to you? I can answer that by explaining what it has done for me:

- Giving me the opportunity to celebrate joyous occasions with friends. Our relatively small size fosters an intimacy not found in larger synagogues.
- The gift of expressing our support for the State of Israel through a roster of activities focusing on Israeli history, language, and culture.
- The joy of engaging in acts of *tikkun olam* through advocacy and a commitment to improving the lives of people around the world.

The purpose of membership is different for everyone, and each view has legitimacy. We may join together for prayer, study, life cycle events, meals (of course!), social action or other programming, or simply to hang out with friends.

All of us want Congregation L’Dor V’Dor– Oakland Little Neck Jewish Center to be a place where you want to be.

Julie and I together with Diane and Mitchell look forward to seeing you during the High Holiday services and throughout the rest of the year, and we wish you a healthy and happy New Year.

What is in store as we head to year 76? A joyful holiday and a celebratory Dinner Dance Extravaganza on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The rest, as they say, is history.