



CSJO NEWSLETTER

Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Fall 2005

CSJO in Toronto - 35th anniversary marked

How wonderful it was to celebrate our 35th Anniversary conference in Toronto, May 27-30, 2005. So many came from so many places...Vancouver, Victoria, Winnipeg and Toronto...from California to New York, including Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. And this year, we had 17 new attendees to the Teen Young Adult Conference. Yes, our future is growing.

Our theme this year was Voices of Our Past, Visions of the Future. This year's Keynote speakers reflected our theme. First, we had Dr. Jerry Bain, our first Chairperson, speak about the past. He reflected on CSJO and the larger secular community. Next, we had Judy Seid talking about the present, where we are today, and some of the issues we are facing, both as individual affiliates and as a larger community. Finally, we had Denora Knecht, the Young Adult Rep to the Executive Committee, talking about the future and where we need to go. The three speakers had one thing in common: their passion for Secular Jewishness and CSJO.

We talked and sang...we talked and ate...we talked and planned for our future...we talked and laughed. We had multigenerational workshops where conversations between the generations abounded. One of the pleasures was the attendance of Gerry Revzin, our first Executive Director and leading force of CSJO for a very long time. She presented her Jewish Humor workshop. It

was good to have her back. The adult workshops were varied, interesting and creative. Some of the ideas garnered from these workshops will be implemented in CSJO communities. Our young people, teens, young adults and older young adults presented thought-provoking workshops.

Roberta "Rifke" Feinstein was honored for her 35 years as an active CSJO member and for her eleven years as CSJO's Executive Director at a tribute dinner. She was very touched by the many surprises, music and words that were offered that evening. Her devotion to CSJO was acknowledged and praised by a number of speakers. Her greatest surprise, however, was the surprise arrival of her family (sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren). This, along with the program, made for a wonderful tribute and an emotionally filled evening for Roberta.

Our conference culminated with the annual Multigenerational Talent Show. For over two hours we were entertained with dancing, singing, recitations, improv, and the list goes on and on.

Once again, the CSJO Conference was a huge success. This year our main organizers were two of our young people — Jodi Goldfinger, who was our Site Coordinator, and Lisa Rothman, who acted as our registrar. With the energy felt at the conference, and the fact that our young people are starting to take the lead, CSJO's future is assured.

Keynote address to conference - Denora Knecht celebrates many years of conferences

We were fortunate to have 3 Keynote speakers for our CSJO Conference 2005. The theme was Voices of the Past, Visions of the Future, and we asked Jerry Bain to speak about the past, Judy Seid to speak about the present, and Denora Knecht Carpenter to speak about the future. Here is the keynote that was delivered by Denora.

Good morning! As you are no doubt aware, this weekend's theme is "Voices of Our Past, Visions of the Future." I'm going to try to give you a little of both, but from a slightly less experienced perspective than our previous two speakers. Truthfully, I don't think you can have a perfect "vision" of the future. You can set goals, have hopes and dreams, and make plans, but in my experience, you can't ever be sure of what will happen. You can only make estimations based on what's happened in the past.

In 1992 I went to my very first CSJO conference, held in Windsor, and my roommate was Miss Jodi Goldfinger. Now most, if not all of you have met Jodi, and if you haven't, you should make that one of your goals this weekend. She's outgoing, bubbly, and absolutely the most optimistic and happy person you'll ever meet.

I couldn't stand her.

She and I were polar opposites. She was fun, and upbeat, and made friends instantly. I was quiet and shy, and made almost no friends at all. I tried my best to avoid her. That year I also experienced doing a workshop for the first time. And by experienced, I mean I passed out the handout and Jamie and Kevin Zwick did all the talking. I'm pretty sure it was the only workshop I went to that year. The rest of the time I slept, or watched the older kids play the Name Game. I went home from the conference that year telling my mom that I never wanted to go back, never wanted to see Jodi Goldfinger again, and never EVER wanted to do another workshop.

So, completely respecting my decision not to go back, my mom dragged me to the 1993 conference in Philadelphia. I hate to admit it, but I'm glad she did. That conference was one of the best experiences of my life. Now, some of you will want to know why it was one of the best. Honestly, I don't know. To this day, I can't really pinpoint what exactly hooked me. I remember South Street and some badass Philly cheese steak sandwiches, some LA kid who got his nose pierced, the ongoing "You have an accent." "No, YOU have an accent" conversations. And of course, the ever pop-

Continued on p. 2

Keynote address by Denora Knecht (cont.)

ular debates on which is better, Canada or the United States? But something about that conference grabbed me, and I was sad to go back home, and already excited about coming back the next year.

“What exactly does Jewish feel like?”

So, I came back, again and again. And in 1996, in Toronto, I attended what I consider the best workshop I’ve ever attended at any conference, bar none. The funny part is, if you go back and look at the programming schedule, you won’t find that workshop on it. In fact, it wasn’t anything official. A bunch of teens and young adults ended up sitting around an outdoor table talking about why we were Jewish. Because our parents were Jewish? Because we “felt” Jewish? And what exactly does Jewish feel like? Am I really Jewish if I only participate because my parents make me? It felt like someone finally had put into words, what I had been questioning for a long time. We never came to a conclusion that day, and I suspect we never will. Everyone is going to answer that question differently for their own situation. But, at least we knew that there were other people feeling the same way as we did.

At some point in my CSJO experience, and for the life of me, I can’t remember when, I started getting interested in being a representative to the Executive Board. It was probably 8 or 9 years ago that I ran for Teen Alternate Rep to the Board and won! I was so excited. I’d never been to a board meeting before, and oh goody, wouldn’t that be fun. Yeah, not so much. See, the Board Meeting, B-O-A-R-D meeting, could certainly have been changed to the Bored Meeting, B-O-R-E-D meeting. Now, let me give you a little history as to why.

“Kids” and others

Before I had even started coming to conferences, the adult’s attitude toward the “kids” was not a positive one. Now when I say “kids” I’m referring to conference participants ages 13-25, that composed the Teen and Young Adult groups. It was very much a “Aren’t they cute when they’re quiet, and far away from me” type attitude. Relations between the adults and kids got so bad that the Teen/Young Adult Liaison position was created to act as a referee between the two groups. Back then the kids had only two seats on the Executive Board: one delegate for the Teens and one for the Young Adults. As such, the kids weren’t really paid attention to. We’d make suggestions, and be ignored. We’d ask questions, and get patronized. So, it wasn’t a whole lot of fun.

The worst part, for me at least, was the comments about nepotism. Several years in a row the Teens and Young Adults that were

selected for board positions happened to have parents that were also on the board. So the word nepotism was widely used, which absolutely made me crazy. Nepotism insinuates that we got our positions because of who our parents were. Sorry, but that’s not true. We were elected by our peers, not our parents. I consider that continuity. We’re continuing what our parents taught us.

14 consecutive conferences

Now, flash forward to 2005, Toronto and my 14th consecutive conference. Jodi has not only been my roommate for the past five years, she’s one of my best friends, and is even flying all the way to California in three weeks for my wedding. If you’d asked me 14 years ago what my visions of the future were, they undoubtedly would not have included Jodi Goldfinger.

Today, the attitude toward the kids has also drastically changed. We’re now looked at as CSJO’s future. We’re accepted as equals, despite the fact that we do find entertainment in playing Frisbee at 3 in the morning. Comments are made to the effect of “Won’t she be a great Executive Director?” or “He’s going to make a fabulous CSJO chairperson.” Today we have seven seats on the Executive Board. A delegate and alternate for the Teens, Young Adults, and our newest group, the Older Young Adults, as well as a representative on the Executive Committee. We’re paid attention to in board meetings. We are treated fairly and equally to other groups. We have our own set of bylaws that govern our elections and our membership.

We have made so much progress in the short amount of time that I’ve been coming to conferences, it’s hard to imagine what we can do by the time my children are involved. I had little difficulty coming up with my hopes for our future:

I hope we can stop waging a war with our own people and instead create a partnership with other similarly minded organizations.

I hope we can construct a united front for Secular Humanistic Judaism, for our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to enjoy.

I hope we can be more accepting of our differences, encouraging of our youth, and open with our ideas.

I hope the youth will have patience with the experienced, and the experienced will have patience with the youth.

I hope the new people will learn from the veterans, and the veterans will learn from the new people.

I hope that Jodi Goldfinger, Rob Kurtz, Sam Ruben, Jen Knecht, and all the close friends I made will still be here with me in another 10 years.

I hope that Roberta Feinstein, Gerry Revzin, Hershl Hartman, Karen Knecht, and all the people I’ve come to respect and look up to will still be here with me in another 10 years.

I hope CSJO will be as addicting to my kids as it has been to me.

I hope every one of you has visions for CSJO’s future. Because without all of us, CSJO has no future.

CONGRESS OF SECULAR JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

A non-profit organization

An affiliate of the North American Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews, a Constituent Organization of the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews

Home page: <http://www.csjo.org>

EDITOR: Larry Schofer (lawrence.schofer@verizon.net)

CHAIR: Karen Knecht (knechtfour@aol.com)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Rifke Feinstein (rifke@adelphia.net)

Newsletter items should be sent to CSJO Newsletter, 419 W. Mt. Pleasant Ave., Philadelphia PA 19119.

E-mail: lawrence.schofer@verizon.net

Other correspondence (including book orders) should be sent to Rifke Feinstein, Executive Director, 320 Claymore Blvd., Richmond Heights, OH 44143. E-mail: csjo@csjo.org

All material copyright ©2005 Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations except where otherwise indicated.

DONATIONS

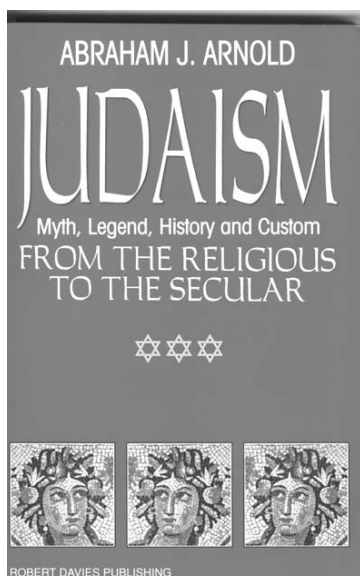
General Fund

Abe Arnold, Winnipeg Canada

CORRECTION

Bennett Muraskin’s review of *Nothing Sacred*, which appeared in the May issue of this newsletter, was previously published in the January/February 2005 issue of *Outlook: Canada’s Progressive Jewish Magazine*.”

Chanukah - History and Practice



This material about the Maccabees was edited by Abraham Arnold of Winnipeg, author of *JUDAISM: Myth, Legend, History and Custom From the Religious to the Secular*. Copies of the book are available from CSJO). The first part presents historical material; the second part is a suggestion for readings at the time of lighting the Chanukah candles.

Lighting the Chanukah candles - suggested readings

1. We light the first candle for Mattathias the Hasmonean, who started the rebellion of the Jews against Syrian Greek repression in the second century B.C.E.

2. We light the second candle for Judah Maccabee and his brothers, who led the Jews to victory over the Syrian Greeks and established Judea as an independent country.

3. We light the third candle for the Maccabean Queen Shlomzion Hamalke, also known as Salome Alexandra, who brought peace to the land and was the last independent ruler of Judea before the Romans took over the country.

4. We light the fourth candle for Hillel the Elder, the Talmudic rabbi who proclaimed the Golden Rule: Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you.

5. We light the fifth candle for Moses Maimonides, the 12th century Jewish philosopher who said the only immortality is in one's children and grandchildren and in other creative works that last beyond death.

6. We light the sixth candle for Baruch Spinoza, the 17th century philosopher who set out to demonstrate that the Bible was incompatible with natural science.

7. We light the seventh candle for Simon Dubnow, the early 20th century Jewish historian who said that Judaism is an all-embracing world view which encompasses religious, ethical, social, messianic, political and philosophical elements .

8. We light the eighth candle in memory of Frances Arnold who was a founder of the Sholem Aleichem community in Winnipeg and always searched for new ways of achieving physical and mental health and well-being. (*The name of another departed friend or relative or CSJO leader may be substituted here.*)

9. We dedicate the ninth candle, the Shamash, or guardian candle to the memory of Hanna Senesh, the woman who flew from Palestine and parachuted into Yugoslavia during World War II to work with Tito's partisans. She was caught and executed by the Nazis in November 1944 at the age of 23. (*The shamash may be dedicated to one of the Ghetto fighters, e.g. Mordecai Anilewicz or Simon Ringelblum.*)

What you may not know about the Maccabees

The traditional story of Chanukah, ending with the re-conquest of the Jerusalem Temple in 164 BCE, is not the end of the story of the Maccabees.

The Maccabees were driven out the Temple again and fought for three more years until 161 BCE when they captured Jerusalem for the second time.

Judah Maccabee died in battle and was succeeded by his brother, Jonathan, who made peace with the Greeks and became the High Priest in 152 BCE.

Jonathan was murdered in 143 BCE and was succeeded by Simon, the last of the Maccabees brothers.

Simon achieved independence for Judea in 141 BCE and then began conquering new territory.

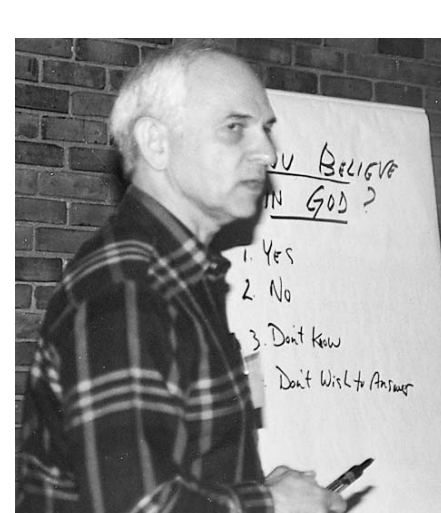
Simon was also murdered and was succeeded by his son John Hyrcanus, who had himself proclaimed King of Judea and also served as High Priest.

John Hyrcanus conquered more territory, ruled Judea until 104 BCE, when he was succeeded by his sons, first, Judah Aristobulus, who died after one year, then by Alexander Jannai, who ruled Judea for 25 years and continued making war on neighbours.

Alexander Jannai named his wife, Salome Alexandra, as his successor. Her Hebrew name was Shlom-tzion and she brought peace to the land for the nine years of her reign.

When Queen Shlom-tzion died in 67 BCE, her sons, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, began a civil war over who should be king. The Romans came in and put an end to the rule of the Maccabees

There is a street in Jerusalem named *Rechov Shlom-tzion Hamalke* (Shlom-Tzion teh Queen St.) — the story of the Maccabean Queen deserves retelling.



Jerry Bain of Toronto was one of the three keynote speakers at the CSJO conference. Jerry is past chair of CSJO and has many times discussed philosophical questions at CSJO conferences. This picture illustrates him leading a discussion at an earlier conference

In Memoriam – Sue Feder

Sue Feder of the Baltimore Cultural Chavurah passed away this year, a victim of cancer. Not long before her death, she sent this message to a number of people.

I wanted to give you an update on this year's campaign of fund-raising for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Folks are coming through like champs!

At this point I have collected \$900, a very good chunk along the path of my goal of \$3000 goal! To those who have donated already, thank you from the bottom of my heart. To those who plan to donate, please know that as soon as I fill one collection envelope (22 sponsors), I bring the checks to The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, so that they have the use of the funds that much sooner. It may also interest you to know that each time I hand in a collection envelope, I "round it up" to the nearest \$100 with a check of my own, so that you know I'm putting my own money where my mouth (and feet) are!

For anyone who has apologized for the "small amount," just remember this – I can't get to \$3000 without first getting to \$1!

As you know, I am a survivor of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, one of the blood cancers. I was diagnosed and treated in 1998, relapsed in 1999, and underwent a stem cell transplant on Valentine's Day 2000. As a result of the stem cell transplant treatment, in 2003 I was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome, a sort of pre-leukemia for which there is no cure except possibly a bone marrow transplant, but as yet no donor has been located for me. I've been on clinical trial and supportive care. I am also currently awaiting the results of a biopsy on some newly discovered enlarged lymph nodes to see if these represent the recurrence of the original lymphoma.

Sue remained an active vital member of the Baltimore Chavurah and of CSJO to the very end. She recently earned her certificate as matrika from the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, but never made it to a certification ceremony. She will be sorely missed.

Reactions to the CSJO Conference

Difficulties in Organizing

Tammy Neuman, Vancouver Peretz Institute

I attended the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations Conference 2005 in Toronto. I had attended two previous CSJO Conferences eighteen and nineteen years ago, and was a little apprehensive about going again after such a long hiatus. For the last couple of years, since my children had completed the B'nai Mitzvah program, I was finding myself feeling more and more detached from our local organization in Vancouver. This feeling of hopelessness was as a result of knowing of our on-going membership and financial difficulties, as well as feeling "used up" as a volunteer in our group. I also realized that the issues that were on my mind almost two decades ago were still in the forefront today, except now we have the additional concern of a very expensive building to maintain.

Much to my surprise, after learning of others dealing with similar issues, I found I felt a sense of relief that we are not alone. I also felt free to discuss my concerns with other conference attendees who could relate.

I attended a Keynote address entitled "Voices of our Past, Visions of our Future." The presenters were Dr. Jerry Bain, Judith Seid and Denora Knecht. It was during this address that I first realized that the challenges facing us in Vancouver, are also the same issues concerning Secular Jewish Organizations all over North America. I discovered that our weakness (small memberships and funds) is also our strength. Our community, by reason of our size, is welcoming and inclusive. Our philosophy makes sense. We are a knowledgeable group of "thinkers," and all of this makes us attractive.

During the Keynote speech several important points were brought up that related directly to our organization.

1. We were reminded that having money is indeed important (surprise! surprise!) and we should be creative in our methods of raising large amounts. It was even suggested that we should look seriously at raising our fees.

2. It was strongly advised that we bring in enough cash to hire a (preferably full-time) community coordinator for three years to find and pull in new families. Toronto has done this, and is enjoying some success.

3. It was suggested that, without changing our philosophical approach, we look at all models (i.e. community centre, congregation) to attract new members.

4. We were reminded that word of mouth is the most cost-efficient, easiest way to attract new members and we should not hesitate to "toot our own horn." I do not believe that we do a good enough job telling even our own members what we do well.

I came away from the Conference with a mixed set of emotions. I feel somewhat relieved that we are not alone in the difficulties we face. I still feel concern for the future of our community, but I also feel rejuvenated and more prepared to work together with others to take on this challenge.

Israel and Palestine Today

Cecil Feldman, Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism.

At this year's Conference, I attended the presentation "Israel and Palestine – Today." It was not given as an analysis of the overall current political status. It was given as a report of a CSJO tour of Israel. While it purported to be an even handed presentation of both points of view, it was full of the standard Palestinian hype, the Israeli point of view not being presented, only references to their acts of oppression against the Palestinian people.

When the source of the information was questioned, David Abramowitz, the presenter answered, "Well, that's what we were told." This is similar to what was said by that elitist institution, the BBC. The BBC reported as most of the media did, that Israeli troops had massacred over 5000 people in the Jenin refugee camp. The actual count in clearing out the terrorist gangs there was 50. When asked how they could have presented such a distorted report, the answer was, "Well, we prefaced the report with it had

come from Palestinian sources.” That may suffice for the professionalism of the BBC, but I would expect a higher standard for CSJO.

The position on the outrageous treatment of Palestinians by Israelis having been given at the conference, presumably representing CSJO’s position, let me fill in some of the Israeli position.

Taking Material Out of Context

Not given at the presentation was any background information, nor context for the “oppression.” Taking things out of context is, of course, a method of misleading. The briefest background information would include: the first attack by 5 Arab armies took place in May, 1948 when the State of Israel was established, before the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem, not as a result of it. There are approximately 25 Muslim countries in the Middle East. Of these, two have relations with Israel. The rest have a stated policy that Israel has no right to exist. They support the military operations of 5 major “freedom fighter” groups amongst others, whose purpose is to destroy Israel.

In furtherance of this objective, any act may be done, any agreement may be given. It is understood that in furtherance of this objective, no agreement is required to be honored. To be clear, no act or agreement with an Arab country or freedom fighter group is an assurance that the intifada will not resume as soon as they have reorganized, and are prepared to continue the holly objective.

Under siege by 25 countries supporting any number of military groups demanding its destruction, Israel must defend itself, and the lives of its citizens.

Where a house, orchard, or any such location is used to fire upon Israelis, it is destroyed.

Where a location presents an immediate threat to Israelis, as a bomb factory, it is destroyed. Where Arab houses are illegally built they are destroyed. Where Arab land must be expropriated to provide protection for Israelis, that land is expropriated.

Restrictions on Travel

While people of goodwill sympathize with the brutal treatment of the Palestinians by Israelis, it was found that Palestinian freedom fighters were able to move freely to acquire material for their bombs and to plant them. To reduce this freedom of movement, restrictions on road travel and checkpoints were instituted. A “border fence” limits access to Israel. All of this under the watch full eyes of the Israeli Supreme Court, and the Israeli High Court of Justice. Israeli Arabs have more legal protection than Arabs in any other country in the

Middle East.

So-called Humanitarian Considerations

Let’s take some of the most egregious cases. Under humanitarian considerations, medical travel and treatment for Palestinians was given priority status. Palestinians then used Red Crescent ambulances as car bombs, and to transport munitions, etc. A pregnant woman lying on a gurney could be concealing bombs, or munitions beneath her. If such an ambulance approaches a check point, and raises concerns about its legitimacy, some young soldier has to decide whether it is a bomb threat that must be stopped before it reaches the checkpoint, a legitimate terrorist target. If the ambulance stops, a bomb squad has to clear the vehicle before it can be allowed to proceed. Imagine having the job of searching underneath the vehicle, under the hood, in the driver’s cab, through all of the medical cabinets and equipment, with the threat of a booby trap going off at the slightest mistake. How long would it take to determine the ambulance is not a threat? And all the while the Israeli soldiers have to keep the other Palestinians back, while they are torturing that poor pregnant woman by not letting her get to the hospital.

A young woman suffering severe burns by the explosion of a propane tank in her home is rushed to hospital, where she is found to be wearing an explosive belt, having been recruited to be a “suicide bomber”.

A Hamas cell firing rockets from an orchard on the Gaza border into Israel is caught and destroyed. The next day the newspapers are full of the death of two school boys playing in an orchard, at the hands of the Israelis.

There are innumerable examples.

The current pullout of Israel from Gaza, and presumably from the West Bank, will give militants complete freedom to maneuver, with the so far partially built security fence as the main deterrent to carrying out bombings in Israel. Between the responsibility to protect Israeli lives, and the responsibly to the social/economic concerns of the Palestinians, the first must govern. Yet, recall that the Israeli supreme court has required the fence to be moved several times to ensure a just balance between the two.

There are justifiable positions on both sides of the Middle East struggle. The presentation was, apparently, to present the limited information gathered at the CSJO tour. Much better would have been a presentation of the full positions of “Israel and Palestine – Today.”

What I did on my summer vacation

Rifke Feinstein, executive director, reports

Okay, okay...once a teacher always a teacher. But I did do exciting things during the summer- even though I wasn’t on vacation.

In June, I was thrilled to officiate the wedding of our own Denora Knecht to Jason Carpenter. “The Denora”, Jason and I had worked via phone and email to create a lovely and meaningful ceremony for them. The bride was beautiful, the groom handsome and the wedding was joyous! Denora’s parents, Karen and Bob Knecht, “kvelled” with pride over their wonderful Denora...as did grandmother Shirley Klipper. Grandpa Ken Klipper was, unfortunately, not well enough to attend the wedding, but I’m happy to say that he’s well today!

Many of you will remember long-time CSJO member Marsha Meckler, who now lives in Hawaii with her also member husband, Michael Weinstein. Marsha’s daughter Laura, who was my Sunday School student at the Jewish Secular Community in Cleveland, Ohio, asked me to officiate at her marriage to Paul Brodsky in Bethesda, Maryland, on July 4th!!! Again...another beautiful bride and a hand-

some and off-beat, humorous groom, and another wonderful ceremony.

And on September 18, 2005, I had the honor of officiating the wedding ceremony of our own Lisa Rothman and her now-husband Gary Roy in Toronto. Lisa is the communications director at the Winchevsky Center and was the incredibly efficient registrar for the 2005 CSJO conference in Toronto.

Lisa, Gary and I had worked hard to create a meaningful ceremony, and the wedding was lovely. Lisa, with her flaming red hair, was as beautiful a bride as could be, and Gary, another groom with an off-beat sense of humor, was so happy! The setting, ceremony and music were all part of an outstanding day!

On the morning of Lisa and Gary’s wedding, I went to the opening of the Winchevsky School at the invitation of Maxine Hermolin, the director of the school. It was such an enjoyable morning. Ester Reiter spoke eloquently about the history of Secular Jewishness. David Lipovitch, the new education director of Winchevsky, spoke about the ideas he had for educating the children, and I brought greetings from CSJO and gave a brief history of our organization.

Maxine then asked the ‘old’ parents to share their reasons for

continued on p. 6

PRINCIPLES OF SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

compiled by Bennett Muraskin

An earlier, unedited version of these principles was printed in the June issue of this Newsletter. The article is presented here as the author intended.

“Secular”—concerned with this world, not the supernatural

“Humanistic”—belief that human beings, through use of their reason and sense of compassion, are solely responsible for their future

We believe that Judaism is more than a religion. Jews are a world people with a rich history. Judaism has many *cultural and ethical* features that all Jews can embrace.

For example:

its commitment to human dignity and social justice, as derived from our history

its music and songs; poetry and literature

Yiddish, Hebrew and Ladino, in the original or in translation

Many Jews express their Jewishness in ways that are primarily secular

Participating in Jewish charitable, humanitarian or advocacy organizations

Jewish scholarship and education, as researchers, teachers and students

Holocaust remembrance

Zionist and related activities connected with the Israel/Palestine conflict

Famous secular Jews include: Spinoza, Einstein, Freud, Brandeis, Herzl, Ahad Ha’am Peretz, Sholom Aleichem, Emma Goldman, Lillian Wald, Primo Levi, Arthur Miller

Secular Humanistic Jews **do** celebrate Jewish holidays and life-cycle events care about Israel and the freedom and security of Jews everywhere

consider Torah as the founding legends of the Jewish people perform and adapt Jewish rituals we find meaningful and create new ones

Secular Humanistic Jews **do not** pray, bless or worship God as part of our celebrations and observances

treat the Torah as a sacred text or a valid historical record consider themselves bound by “Jewish law”

Furthermore, Secular Humanistic Jews tend to be focused on social action/universal human rights

the survival of Yiddish culture, especially its literature and songs

the Jewish experience in the US/Canada and our Eastern European roots

In short, we take to heart Hillel’s saying. “What is hateful to you, do not do to others” and the principle of tikkun olam—our duty to work toward the healing of the world.

Our movement consists of the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations (CSJO), the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) and the Workman’s Circle/Arbeter Ring, members of the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews (www.ifshj.org.)

Executive Director’s report (cont.)

returning to the school and the new to tell why they chose Winchevsky for their child’s education. The exchange was a most enthusiastic praise of what Winchevsky offers...a curriculum filled with the Secular Jewish culture the families craved and the Secular Jewish community they were looking for! After the dis-

cussion, the children joined us to sing, dance and eat. It was a joyous morning and I was very happy to be part of it!

What a wonderful summer. I look forward to a fall of visiting other communities and I will be writing about that, too.

To all of you, I wish a year of good health and sweetness in a world of Sholem!



CSJO NEWSLETTER
419 W. Mt. Pleasant Ave.
Philadelphia Pa 19119 USA