

President Board Report: November 17, 2016

I want to open my report by thanking God for believing in me and allowing me to live this wonderful life that I have. Forty years ago today, November 17, I almost lost my life. I woke up to my Albany, New York, apartment being engulfed in smoke. My throat was burning and there were flames on the other side of my bedroom door. I was very disoriented and ran to my third story window to see what my options were. There was a fireman on a ladder below the window telling me to climb out of the window and to try to come down to where he was, but his ladder wasn't high enough and he couldn't catch me. I ended up falling and hitting a metal railing, almost being impaled on a metal spike. As I fell from that 3rd story window, I saw my life unfolding before me. After hitting the railing, I bounced to the concrete and found myself in a puddle of water with a severely broken femur and pelvis. They didn't think I would survive, and I spent a week in the intensive care unit hooked up to machines. The next few months of recovery from traction to surgery with a metal plate being installed in my leg, found me in a hospital bed coming to terms with my feeble physicality but praising God for saving me and protecting me through this horrific accident. I thank God every day for being alive and allowing me to embrace my humanity in all its forms throughout these many years. This event was a watershed moment in my life and one that reminds me of the fine line between life and death. Thank you for letting me share my story.

Since we last met, the following events occurred: 1) many wonderful Shabbat services; 2) the Matzo Ball Open Golf Tournament at Red Hawk, which was a fun and engaging event (my husband and I even helped collect money for an activity at one of the holes and I learned a few things about golf); 3) the Renaissance Faire Pastrami Booth, where TBE got to resurrect our much loved food booth at one of Las Cruces' special events of the year; 4) two meetings of the ad hoc Leadership Committee headed up by Jim Rosenthal; 5) our Grant presentation to the Jewish Federation of El Paso's grant committee; and 6) our Special Congregational Meeting on Nov 10. In addition, the Adult Education Committee is hosting the Interfaith Discussion on Humility on Sunday, November 20, which was a program that the Rabbi and I developed last year, in which leaders of various religious organizations in Las Cruces participate in a very thoughtful panel discussion on the topic. And of course, with Thanksgiving arriving next week, I wish all of you and your families a wonderful, joyous holiday.

I want to thank all of you for your participation and support at the Congregational Meeting. I thought that it gave members of the congregation an opportunity to discuss the issues and to clarify some points. 57 votes were cast, with the Rabbi receiving 72% of the vote, reelecting him as our Rabbi. When the vote was announced, people seemed genuinely pleased and gave the results, and the Rabbi, a round of applause. I again want to thank Gil and Becca Krebs and Margo Leverett for volunteering to provide a delicious bounty of refreshments that everyone thoroughly enjoyed.

The ad hoc Leadership Committee, comprised of Jim Rosenthal, Rabbi Karol, Renee Frank, Diane Fleishman, Dee Cook, Sue Brown, Terri Sugarman, and myself, have met twice and will hold a third meeting on Sunday, December 4 at 1:00 pm. Pearie Bruder has indicated that she would like to join us as well. We have read an article and are spending time fleshing out what we feel should be done in regard to improving our leadership skills and how we are going to do it. We have written paragraphs in response to an article we read, and we have discussed our thoughts about our goals. We have also talked about how to utilize resources offered by Mike Batkin's anonymous donor to create a leadership program here. We have discussed the importance of unifying our leadership in order to unify the congregation. An important topic is how we as a board, as leaders, and as a congregation can become more welcoming. We are working on clarifying our expectation of leadership and determining our commitment level. What do we do that reflects our culture and values? We will share our progress and let you know how it goes.

Finally, Dee, Ann, and I are meeting at my house on Sunday, November 27 at 11:00 am to discuss and plan the Festivus event. Anyone is welcome to join us. We appreciate you bringing your \$50 contribution to help make this Board-sponsored event a fun, welcoming, congregational celebration, to be held on Saturday evening, January 21. Please plan on being there and put it on your calendar. We will all have a part in it and need to be there.

As always, I want to thank you for your thoughtfulness, your dedication, and your support of Temple Beth-El.