



The Alumn-Eye Newsletter



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Vol.1, No. 1

**Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Alumni newsletter
of the JWC and Gray Academy of Jewish Education.
A forum for keeping you informed and
connected to Jewish day school education in Winnipeg.**

WBJE ANNOUNCES DYNAMIC COMMITTEE

The Alumni Committee is a standing committee of the Winnipeg Board of Jewish Education (WBJE). Al Benarroch, Chair, Alumni Committee, states "that as graduates, we can all feel proud of the deep rooted foundations to Jewish life and values that the school has provided us. The committee's goal is to organize and coordinate efforts on behalf of our proud and successful alumni body in assisting the school's continued commitment to educating and graduating informed and educated Jewish men and women."

There are four subcommittees that form the foundation of this dedicated group: Special Events, Fundraising, Newsletter/Communication and Membership Directory.

The database currently consists of individuals who graduated from JWC up to 2004, and from Gray Academy of Jewish Education since 2005. However, there needs to be a concerted effort to reach out to all Alumni from the four schools that now constitute Gray Academy (Talmud Torah Hebrew School, I.L. Peretz Folk School, Ramah Hebrew School and Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate), in particular those who live outside the Province in other city centres in Canada, the U.S. and Israel. The intent of the Alumni committee is to work closely with the Advancement Office of Gray Academy in sharing resources and to form a link to the untapped potential support that exists with the Alumni population.

To add your name to our database or to find out more about the Alumni Committee, please contact Al Benarroch at abenarroch@aspercampus.mb.ca or call (204) 477-7433.

Visit the Alumni page at www.grayacademy.ca



EYE ON:

**AL BENARROCH
CHAIR, ALUMNI COMMITTEE**

Al Benarroch ('82) is a Talmud Torah and Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate (JWC) graduate who received a



BA (Hons.) in Psychology from the University of Winnipeg, and Masters in Clinical Psychology from Lakehead University. Al has been Clinical Director of Jewish Child and Family Service since 1999 where he continues to serve the Winnipeg Jewish community. "I have a strong commitment to Jewish values, tradition and education, through my ac-

active synagogue participation, continued Jewish learning and lay leadership as a High Holidays services leader. I hope to bring my professional and personal expertise to the Board of Jewish Education to assist Gray Academy in maintaining its pursuit of both General and Judaic academic excellence."

Al is married to Brenlee Sucharov ('83) and they have 2 children, Amber and Simone, both attending the school. On behalf of the Alumni Committee, Al wishes to thank the WBJE for its support of alumni efforts.



HISTORY OF JEWISH DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN WINNIPEG

Over 100 years ago in 1902, the community Jewish Day School system began when King Edward School opened its doors for the children of Jewish immigrants who had come to the new frontier of Winnipeg. Teaching a curriculum of Hebrew language, Talmud, Jewish literature and history, it was the first Talmud Torah School.

In 1907, Rabbi Israel I. Kahanovitch formed the Winnipeg Hebrew Free School – Talmud Torah, which was located at the corner of Dufferin and Aikins. The education system continued to grow in strength. In 1912, Talmud Torah located to a larger building at the corner of Flora and Charles. It became a hub in Western Canada for Hebrew learning and culture. Over the next 20 years more branches of the school would continue to open throughout the city.

The I. L. Peretz Folk School began in 1914 and was originally called the Jewish Radical School. The name was changed in 1915 to honour the Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz. It was a secular program, stressing Yiddish language and Jewish history. The Yiddisher Yugend Farein, a cultural organization founded by new immigrants, began the school. The program introduced a number of innovations to Jewish education in Winnipeg, including kindergarten and day school.

An English day school also opened in 1944 and grew with the arrival of Rabbi Avraham Kravetz as the new principal of Talmud Torah in 1946. Talmud Torah Parent Teachers Association was formed in 1947. Three years later, Maimonides College was created to provide advanced Hebrew education. A new building opened in 1952 at the corner of Matheson and Powers. All branches of the school merged in the North End location. During the next few years, the Talmud Torah would continue to expand. By 1959, the school continued to grade eight and Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate opened for high school day students, combining regular studies with Jewish post-elementary studies.

In 1949, the Shaarey Zedek Religious School opened to meet the growing need of Jewish people living in the South End of the city. By 1959, a larger school was needed and Ramah Hebrew School opened. The school curriculum included Hebrew language and Talmud and went to the sixth grade.



For the next three decades the schools educated thousands of Jewish children in Winnipeg. In 1981, the Winnipeg Jewish Board of Education was formed to coordinate the operation of Talmud Torah,

Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate and Ramah Hebrew School. I.L. Peretz Folk School and Talmud Torah combined in 1983. The school's new name was Talmud Torah - I. L. Peretz Folk School.

Gray Academy of Jewish Education opened in 1997 at the Asper Jewish Community Campus in the south end of Winnipeg. It amalgamated Talmud Torah – I. L. Peretz School, Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate and Ramah Hebrew School. The school was comprised of three divisions: Shore Early Years School, Simkin Middle School, and Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate. In 2004, Gray Academy of Jewish Education became a single school unto itself amalgamating Shore Elementary School and Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate.

Two New Scholarships to Honour Past Teachers

The Rabbi Witty Jewish Education Fund at the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba was established in the 2005/06 school year. Rabbi Witty believed that every Jewish child in the city who wants a Jewish day school education will be able to receive one. The income from the fund will be used to subsidize tuition fees for students at the Gray Academy who otherwise could not afford to attend the school.

The Tom Blair Memorial Scholarship Fund was established by the Blair Family at The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba as a means of remembering and honouring Mr. Blair for his years of service to the school, teaching science, chemistry and coordinating the Reach for the Top team. The annual income from the fund will be used by Gray Academy for a scholarship that honours Mr. Blair's memory.

Contributions can be made to either fund through The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba at (204) 477-7525 or www.jewishfoundation.org

TRIBUTE TO MR. TOM BLAIR

Written by Cindy (Rosenberg) Yusim ('81)

In the late fall of 2002, I attended a Unit professional development day. I remember feeling very nervous for it was the first time that I was joining my co-workers as a group. The topic of the morning session was along the lines of why students drop out of school and who or what made our experiences in school successful. I was one of the last clinicians to share. Many clinicians shed tears, great stories, not so great times in their school life...everyone had a different tale to tell.



When it came to my turn, my palms were sweaty, my throat dry and my voice quivery. I felt somewhat vulnerable for I had not known this group of people well at all. I was very confident in what I wanted to share for my school success was crystal clear to me, but nonetheless very nervous.

What made a difference in my life was a teacher named Mr. Tom Blair. He began teaching in 1975, my first year in junior high school. I was young and very shy. Mr. Blair taught me science and math, however, he was more than my science and math teacher. He taught me the correct formula for life. Mr. Blair was my teacher, friend and mentor. He was always there to lend an ear and provide constant support. He was a dedicated teacher who only gave his best. Mr. Blair had a big heart and cared about his students like no other. Teachers like Mr. Blair come along once in a lifetime. When I was very ill in 1981, Mr. Blair did a home visit to me; when I traveled Israel in 1985, Mr. Blair insisted on meeting up for a day of touring and eating; when things were tough at home, Mr. Blair was always there to listen and guide. He also had a keen sense of humour. He was very witty and loved nicknames. Mine was Rosie Cindenberg (my maiden name is Rosenberg) and he was known to me as Blomie Tair.

At our workshop back in fall of 2002, I believe I shone when it was my turn to speak of Mr. Blair. Today, I mourn the loss of my beloved teacher, friend and mentor who passed away following a brave struggle with stomach cancer on June 10, 2005. I feel truly blessed to have had the chance to visit Mr. Blair on one occasion when he was only requesting certain visitors. We talked, reminisced, I allowed him to be angry, we shared, and he promised me a cup of coffee when he was well again. Mr. Blair was the kindest, funniest, rarest and most wonderful teacher.

So, when we ask ourselves what makes us successful at school and beyond, it is teachers that act as mentors to guide and support young students who have many questions about life and concerns about their futures. It is teachers like Mr. Blair!

IN MEMORY OF MRS. MONA APTER

Mrs. Apter or Madame Apter, as she was known to so many students, taught at Talmud Torah and Joseph Wolinsky from about 1957 until her retirement in 1985. Prior to teaching at Joseph Wolinsky, Mrs. Apter taught rurally in Trehern, Killarney, and in the Winnipeg School Division. Mrs. Apter was recruited by the late Rabbi Kravetz to teach at Joseph Wolinsky and help set up the high school's French and English Departments.

In the school's early stages, Mrs. Apter taught both senior high English and French. She later chose to teach French only. Many times during her career at J.W.C., Mrs. Apter was called upon to head the English Department, take over English classes or to stand in as acting Principal when necessary.

In later years, when she met former students, they often thanked her for giving them a good foundation in French, particularly when they had to take refresher courses for career opportunities. It seems that all they had learned from Mrs. Apter made these courses quite easy. The French vocabulary returned with ease.

Mrs. Apter was asked to direct several school productions. Her most well-known piece was the school production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, starring Steven Merkal, Miriam Cohen-Bronstein, Shelley Faintuch and Gerry Koffman. Mrs. Apter was a firm but fair teacher. Her knowledgeable and well thought out advice was appreciated by both students and colleagues.

Mrs. Apter was active in the Ladies Auxiliary of the Brandeis Lodge, which helped build kindergartens in Israel through many fundraising activities. She was awarded "Woman of the Year" for her work and efforts by the Brandeis Lodge. During her retirement, Mrs. Apter enjoyed having her family come to Shabbat and Yom Tov dinners. Mrs. Apter believed in family and was very proud of her 6 grandchildren, whom she adored and babysat often.

Calling All Grads 2nd Annual JWC/Gray Academy

Alumni Shabbat Service

Saturday, March 31, 2007

Shabbat Ha-Gadol

9:00 a.m.

Spiritual Space Room 232 (Gray Academy)

Asper Jewish Community Campus

123 Doncaster Street

Families Welcome!! Childcare Available!!

Kiddush Following the Service

Kiddush Fund Donations gratefully accepted

Contact Cindy Yusim ('81) cindy.yusim@7oaks.org

Please R.S.V.P. to:

Steven Hyman ('97) stevencyman18@hotmail.com

Alumni Committee Special Events Co-Chairs

If you would like to participate in this egalitarian service

Please e-mail or contact Steven Hyman at 204-589-9007

Class of 1977 Reunion

Current WBJE President Michael Benarroch ('77) recently presented a fundraising idea to the Alumni Committee whereby his graduating class would organize a reunion in May 2007 that would take place all weekend with planned activities such as a Shabbat dinner. Each graduate would be asked to contribute funds to establish the "Class of '77 portion" of the school's Endowment Fund which would be managed by The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba. The intent is to begin the process of asking each graduating class, dating back to the genesis of Joseph Wolinsky in 1959, to plan the same type of reunions and to establish, for their respective graduating year, a subsequent portion of a greater endowment fund, as a legacy for ongoing support for the school.

For more information on the Class of 1977 Reunion, contact Joel Katz ('77) at joelkatz@shaw.ca

