



The JSC Newsletter

Newsletter of the Cleveland Jewish Secular Community

www.jewishsecularcommunity.org

March 2020/5781

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Upcoming Events

Fri., Mar. 6 – Steve Cagan, “Colombia After The Peace Treaty.”, p1

Sun., Mar. 8 — Board Meeting

2019-2020 Fri. Shabbat Programs

Apr. 3, Emma Renfrew, “Foundation Beyond Belief.”

May 1, Hannah Servedio, “The Fight for Reproductive Rights in Ohio.”

Shabbat Dinner and Purim Program Friday, Mar. 6, 2020

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cleveland,
formerly First Unitarian Church (Fellowship Hall),
21600 Shaker Blvd (east), Shaker Hts.

Topic: “Colombia After The Peace Treaty”

Speaker: Steve Cagan

Meet and mingle at **6:15 pm**

Shabbat/Purim program at **6:30 pm**

Potluck dinner at **7:00 pm**

Speaker **8:00 - 9:00 pm**

RSVP by Wed., Mar. 4, to Peg Fishman at (440)
349-1330 or pegfishman@gmail.com.

Last names **A-S** bring a side dish or salad for 6 (couples please bring enough for 12); **T-Z** bring a dessert for 10 (couples please bring enough for 20). Please bring a list of ingredients and pre-cut if possible. The community will provide chicken, challah, wine, drinks, and all serving utensils.

Lois Gross would like to encourage members to come in costume to the Purim celebration.

If possible, bring your own plates and silverware to help us reduce trash and keep our environment "green."

Hillcrest Art Club: A Brief Description

The Hillcrest Art Club was established in 1960 to encourage the development and enjoyment of art. With approximately 30 members, the club maintains an active schedule of demonstrations and educational meetings as well as workshops. Exhibits of members' art are held yearly. Visitors interested in joining are welcome to attend monthly meetings for a \$3.00 fee. The club meets at 1:30 on the second Monday of the month September through June. Contact Suzette Cohen, suzettecohen@yahoo.com for more information.

—Suzette Cohen

Spinoza: The First Secular Jew?

Much has been written about Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza and how his beliefs launched the Secular age.

Spinoza paid mightily for the courage it took to express his thoughts considered heretical in the 17th century Holland of his birth, forcing him to abandon his Judaism and embrace the philosophy of pantheism.

An intellectual rebel, Spinoza rejected ideas that were handed down from the past and were expected to be received unquestioned by those who considered themselves in authority. To quote from Bennett Muraskin's essay (see below): "The function of religion is to inspire moral conduct. Man's highest calling is to treat others with justice and charity as they would wish to be treated themselves. Within this framework, people should be free to profess their beliefs and to practice any religion or no religion."

To learn more about Spinoza and the history of the Secular movement, see "Spinoza: The First Secular Jew?" by Bennett Muraskin.

Meet Angela Brown New JSC Member

I am the daughter of a birth mother from Canton, Ohio, and a birth father from Helena, Montana. They met somewhere in Southern California, and I am a rare native of Los Angeles. I was privately adopted by my Jewish parents, and had the good fortune to attend the Beverly Hills school system, class of 1970. I will be attending my 50th class reunion this year! I also attended Temple Emanuel and was confirmed when I was 16.

I was one of those kids who danced before I could walk, and realized I sang my nightly lullabies better than mom did! At 6 years old I was enrolled in ballet classes, and was on pointe by 8. However, Mother Nature had different plans for me, and gave me a more womanly body, so ballet was out. Jazz, tap, and whatever else I could do, were in!

During this time, my wonderful, athletic father taught me to bike, surf, water and snow ski, roller and ice skate, high dive, and design houses!

Football was our favorite sport to watch on TV, but season tickets to L.A. Dodgers baseball was the best time of all! We taught ourselves to sail during our summers in San Diego. We were unbeatable on our racquet ball court (the former incinerator), and ex-boy friends tell me they still have nightmares about having to play 2-on-1 games if they wanted to date me.

I was accepted into the UCLA Theatre Arts department, even though it was closed to freshmen, and while there I discovered that there were other aspects of the theatre that I enjoyed, besides performing. I graduated in 3 years, and while I did become a professional dancer in a local company, I was also very practical and pragmatic. I became a financial manager! After a few years, I applied and was accepted into the MBA program at Pepperdine University – the only college who would take a dancing/singing bean counter!!

The favorite among the professional careers I had was as the first financial manager for The Planetary Society, an international non-profit begun by Dr. Carl Sagan (Cornell Cosmos) and Dr. Bruce Murray (director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory). The organization promotes planetary science education, while actually participating in NASA missions. My proudest project was directing a five-day event in Pasadena for the Voyager II flyby of Neptune in 1989.

My adoptive mother owned a popular day spa in Los Angeles, and she asked me to write, edit, and produce a 13-episode TV show which promoted her skin care products. Finally using my theatre degree! After producing and syndicating the show, I remained working with my adoptive mother as CFO and spa representative to the various professional spa and fitness organizations, until she sold the business in 2002.

I filled my time trying to find my birth family, volunteering at the Junior Blind of America, and becoming a certified dog trainer. I cruised and traveled quite a lot, sometimes giving lectures and line-dancing classes during the days at sea. I really miss the smell of the salt air – my personal catnip!

So, it's been an adjustment living in Cleveland!

I did 23andMe 6 years ago. I had given up ever finding my birth family, and just wanted the health reports to guide me. Well, 5 years ago my youngest half-sister on my birth mother's side contacted me, and opened up a new world. Evidently, my existence answered questions she and my 2nd half-sister had about our mother, who led a very troubled life. Suddenly I had a huge family tree, maintained on Ancestry. Then, lo and behold, 4 years ago I was contacted by my half-brother on my birth father's side. While that side has not been very welcoming to me, my birth mother's family opened their arms to me, (my limited Yiddish expressions crack them up!), and for my youngest half-sister and me, the decision to move to Ohio was a no-brainer.

Last year at this time, I was planning my first trip to Cleveland to find and buy a house. I noticed that I'd be here during Passover, and wanted to find a Seder I could join. I have never believed in a deity of any kind, and when I found the JSC, I was so happy. For the first time in my life, the message of freedom touched me profoundly. You also welcomed me with open arms, and I am grateful to call Cleveland "home!"

— **Angela Brown**

Jottings

Roni Berenson will be doing a PowerPoint presentation entitled "My Trip to Berlin or Is Going to Germany OK Now?" on Monday, March 2nd, at 11 am for the JCC Men's Club. It'll be in the JCC auditorium. There's no fee, so feel free to come. Sign in at the desk and tell them you're coming to my presentation. Here is a link for more information: <https://mandeljcc.org/men-s-club-at-the-j/adult-programs/>.

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If the Shaker Heights schools are closed due to the weather, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation will also be closed and the JSC Shabbat held in the church will be cancelled.

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Ed Schwartz, beloved brother of JSC member Harvey Schwartz, passed away on February 20 in Medina, Ohio, after a lengthy illness. He leaves behind wife, Jeanne, and children Shaina and Steven. Family will receive visitors, Waite & Son, Medina, Feb. 29-March 1. JSC has made a donation in Ed's name to the Ronald McDonald House. Our condolences to Harvey, Ellen and the Schwartz family.

Community Service

The Kosher Food Bank has asked JSC for a helping hand, so we're planning to donate kosher food items for Passover to this worthy organization. Bring what you can to the April 6 Passover celebration at the Solon Community Center. (Details to follow.) The Bank has requested kosher-for-Passover matzah, matzah meal, plus protein foods like canned tuna and salmon, fresh produce, and other jar and canned goods. Heinen's in University Heights has a large kosher food section, but you can find kosher foods at other Heinen's locations as well as at Marc's and Costco. Our past food drives have been very successful, so we know come through on April 6.

Calling All Writers

The editorial policy of the newsletter will be nonpartisan, balanced, and receptive to opposing points of view. Items of opinion do not represent the "official" position of the JSC or its Board of Trustees. We welcome attributed letters with comments, rebuttals, or new information. Subject only to space, time, interest to fellow members, and editorial constraints, your article, told in your own words, will be gratefully accepted.

Please fill out the following food identification label and bring it along with your dish. This will allow members to:

- determine whether or not they can or want to eat the food that you brought, due to allergies, sensitivities, or general likes/dislikes
- talk to you about the dish you brought
- thank you if they love the dish you brought
- ask you for the recipe

<p>Food Identification</p> <hr/> <p>Name of Food</p> <hr/> <p>Brought by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free (contains NO wheat, barley, rye, oats) <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian (contains NO animal products)</p> <p>Contains other allergens, including: <input type="checkbox"/> Eggs <input type="checkbox"/> Fish <input type="checkbox"/> Soy <input type="checkbox"/> Shellfish <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Nuts <input type="checkbox"/> Peanuts <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p><i>Please list carefully as those with allergies can have severe and harmful reactions.</i></p>

– Lori Berenson

The JSC Mission

The Jewish Secular Community, affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations, is a non-profit cultural and educational organization whose purpose is to:

- ✧ *Encourage Jewish identification in a non-theistic setting that draws inspiration from the traditional Jewish sources and values*
- ✧ *Educate adults in the history, culture, and tenets of Judaism*
- ✧ *Celebrate and observe Jewish holidays and life cycle events*
- ✧ *Contribute to the betterment of our society through social action and volunteerism*
- ✧ *Provide a link to a world-wide community of secular Jews*

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