

Chesed

HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION

Volume 8/No. 3

June 1998 / Sivan 5758

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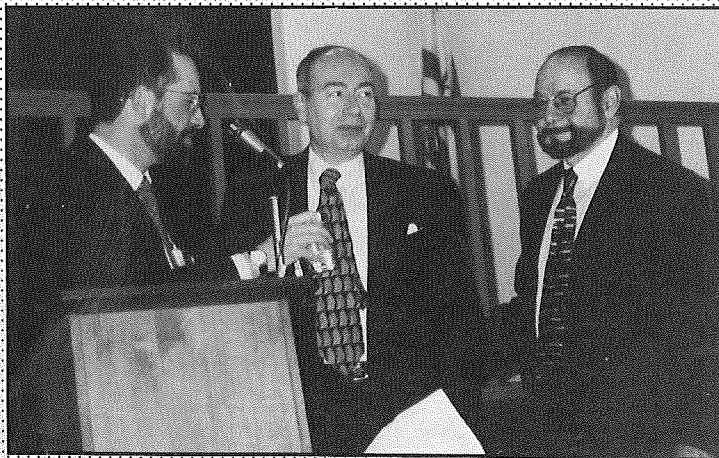
Chesed is published by the Hebrew Free Burial Association,
363 Seventh Avenue,
New York, NY 10001.
Telephone 212 239-1662
HFBA is a beneficiary of
UJA/Federation.

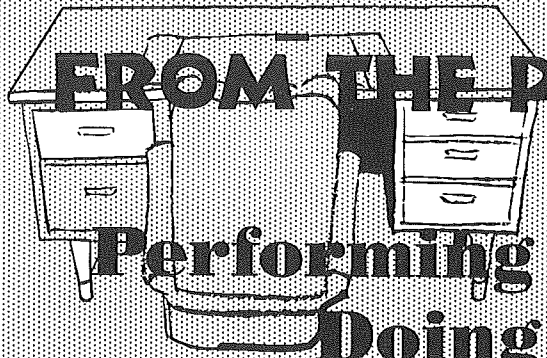
A Gift in Our Mailbox: A Grateful Relative Says "Thank You"

We are always happy when the relative or friend of someone we bury calls or writes to express gratitude, since it reiterates that the service we perform benefits the living as well as the dead.

This letter, however, was special. As the writer described her experience, we realized she was telling our story better than we could ever tell it ourselves. We have reprinted M.R.'s letter on page 6 in hopes that it will touch your hearts the way it has touched ours.

Rabbi Jonathan Rosenblatt of the Riverdale Jewish Center presents the *Anshei Chesed* award to Howard W. Millendorf as president Gerald E. Feldhamer watches with pride. Read the complete story on page 3.





FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Performing a Mitzvah While Doing A Mitzvah

Everyone loves to receive big gifts, the kind that come in large, wrapped boxes with a beautiful bow, or accompanied by a dozen long-stemmed roses. Yet when we look back on all the gifts we have received, it is often the smaller ones that are the most touching.

So it is with gifts to the Hebrew Free Burial Association. We are extremely grateful for the large grants we have received from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, UJA/Federation and others, but every so often we are reminded that it is the smaller checks which often are the most dear.

We received the enclosed note from Mrs. Gitel Bekelnitzky, widow of Dr. Simcha G. Bekelnitzky, z"l. Dr. Bekelnitzky, who was known for his deep compassion for the poor, found a way to remind his friends and relatives about the impact their *zedaka* could have when contributed to HFBA. He took it upon himself to send friends, relatives and colleagues the reprint of a newspaper article describing our work along with the following letter:

Dear :

I would like to recommend a practice that I have recently undertaken.

Whenever I leave the cemetery I make a donation to the Hebrew Free Burial Association (HFBA) which is some amount multiplied by the number of graves I have visited at that time.

I am enclosing, herewith, some literature about the HFBA which should be self-explanatory of the reason for this practice, which is, essentially, that we, whose loved ones have us to remember them, should see to it that those who are not survived by anyone who can remember them should not be forgotten.

There is no way of knowing how many of those who received Dr. Bekelnitzky's plea responded with their own gifts to the HFBA. I am certain, however, that the Hebrew Free Burial Association has been forever enriched by his *chesed* and his tangible concern for those whom he felt "should not be forgotten."

May Mrs. Bekelnitzky and her family be comforted among the mourners of Zion. And may we all inherit Simcha Bekelnitzky's spirit of *zedaka* and *ahavas yisrael*, love for our fellow Jews.

Gerald E. Feldhamer

HFBA "Anshei Chesed" Honored at Riverdale and Kew Gardens Hills Breakfasts

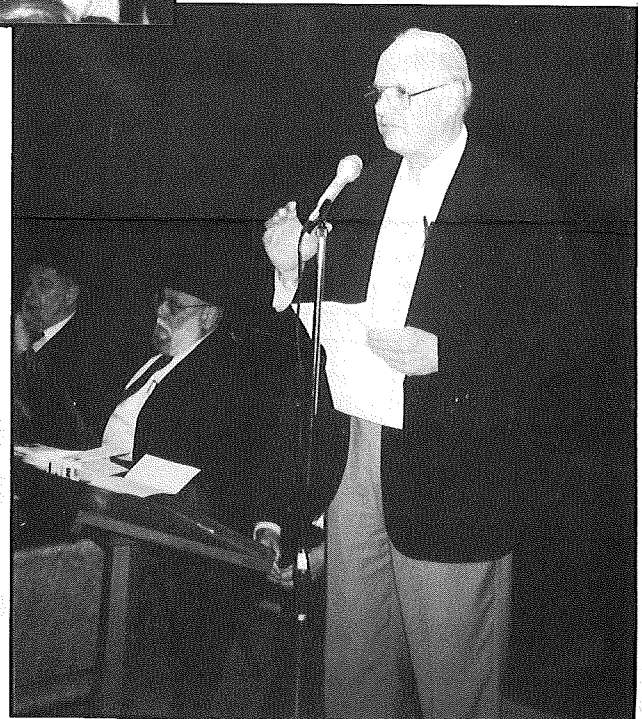


Howard W. Millendorf, a long-time resident of Riverdale and supporter of the Hebrew Free Burial Association, and three *gabbaim* of the Young Israel of Queens Valley's *chevra kadisha* are the newest recipients of the HFBA's coveted *Anshei Chesed* awards. The four were honored at breakfasts on behalf of the Association this winter.

Mr. Millendorf's honor was accorded him at the Third Annual

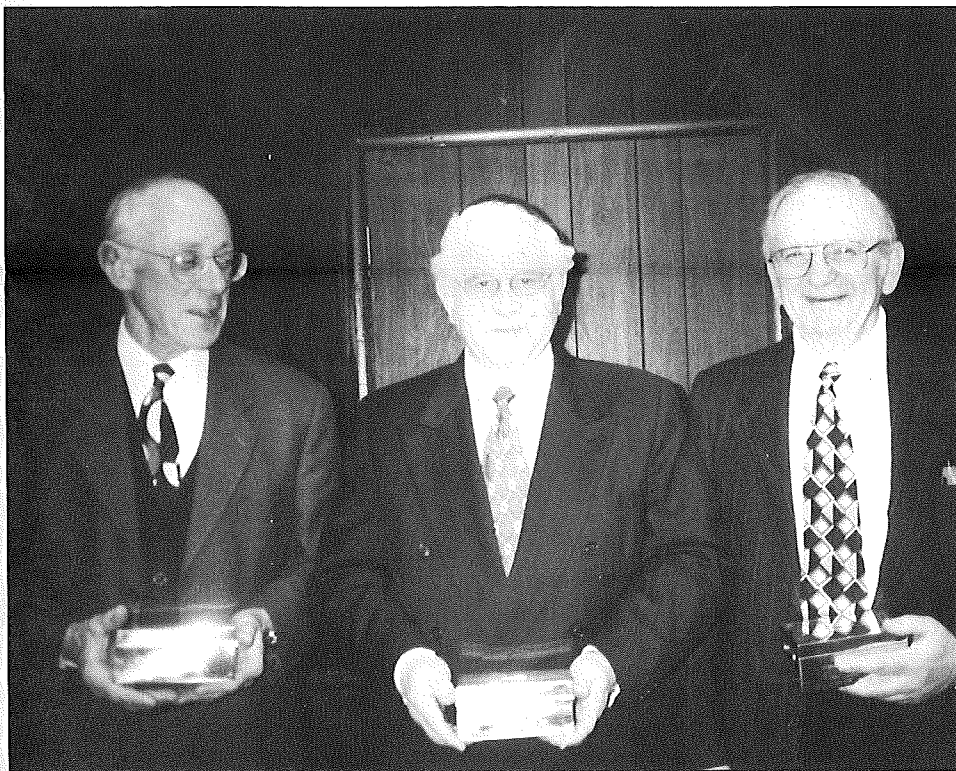
Above:
Rabbi Harvey Crupar (left) proudly displays his award at the Riverdale breakfast. With him are (left to right) Rabbi Rosenblatt, Gerald E. Feldhamer and keynote speaker Rabbi Bertram Leff (seated.)

Right:
Kew Gardens Hills Breakfast co-chair Jack Rapp introduced the keynote speaker of the event, Rabbi Fabian Schoenfeld of the Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills.



Riverdale Community Breakfast on February 8 at the Riverdale Jewish Center. Well known and highly regarded in his community, Mr. Millendorf was cited for his generous commitments of time, energy and personal resources that have enhanced Riverdale and its many Jewish organizations. Howard used this opportunity to inspire his friends and neighbors, imploring them to make the HFBA their own "cause" and to continue their support for the agency beyond this one event.

cont. on page 6



Top: Rabbi Peretz Steinberg (left), spiritual leader of the Young Israel of Queens Valley, and Gerald E. Feldhamer, HFBA president (right), congratulate Phil Halbfinger at the HFBA tribute to the leaders of the congregation's *Chevr Kadisha*.

Left: Eric Levor, Phil Halbfinger and Haskell Yadlovker, (left to right) display their *Anshei Chesed* awards at the breakfast.

When Tragedy Strikes, A Poor Child Receives a Jewish Burial

It is always easier to believe that Jews are immune to the ills of society, but the facts belie the myth. The four hundred burials we are called upon to pre-emptively tell a chilling story about Jewish poverty. The tragedy of Jacob's life and death makes it clear that Jews fall prey to drugs as well.

Jacob was four years old when he died of congenital lung disease. He was a severely disabled child who had spent almost all of his short life in the New York Foundling hospital. The news of his death was sad, but unfortunately, too familiar for us. The other part of the tragedy became clear when we met his parents.

Jacob's mother was born in the Ukraine. She came to the United States at the age of 10, filled with dreams of a new life and hope for the future. Unfortunately, she fell in with the wrong crowd and her dreams became the nightmare of a drug-addicted life. Jacob's father was addicted to illicit drugs as well.

Throughout his life, his parents had been unable to cope with their son's illness and his need for round-the-clock care. Poor Jacob's life had been one of despair, the only love he felt was from the caretakers at the hospital. On the day of his funeral, his parents got high to dull the pain of their loss; they were too strung out to attend his funeral. The only person there to say goodbye was the social worker from the New York Foundling Hospital and Rabbi Shmuel Plafker, whose prayers accompanied the child's casket as it was lowered into the ground.

We might have been comforted knowing that we had done our job well, providing a dignified funeral and burial for a child who had known so little in life. But a few short months later, we received another call. Jacob's mother had died of AIDS at the young age of 27. She was laid to rest not far from her son. Only Rabbi Plafker was there to mourn.

Jacob's name and other details of the case have been changed to protect his privacy.

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE
THAT THE FOLLOWING PLAQUES
HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE LEAVE
YOUR MARK DONOR BOARD AT
MT. RICHMOND CEMETERY:

- ♦ Young Israel Sisterhood of Jackson Heights
- ♦ Mr. and Mrs. Manfred Davis, in memory of Sol and Dorothy Davis, Leo Davis, and Isidore and Sara Silverberg
- ♦ Eileen and Bernard Gellman

Contributors of four or more grave markers are eligible for inclusion on our Donor Board. For more information, contact our office at 212 239-1662.

A Gift In Our Mailbox: A Grateful Relative Says "Thank You"

cont. from page 1

Dear Mr. Feldhamer:

Last Sunday my indigent ninety year old aunt died. In calling to arrange for burial, two parties told me about your organization, but neither knew the details of your service. On obtaining the association's phone number, I called, and from there on I felt as if there were people who really cared, not about the big bucks coming from a regulation Jewish funeral, but about the people involved and their loss. What a revelation in this cold, cruel world!

Angela, the operator from the service that took my call, had a voice and demeanor that were genuinely kind and caring. Mrs. Ann Leist immediately called me back even though it was Sunday afternoon, and professionally, sympathetically and reassuringly told me what to do and how to go about doing it. Meeting her in person the next day with others of the office staff was a pleasure. The air of competence was palpable.

Rabbi Shmuel Plafker, who conducted my aunt's funeral the next day, acted not only as a teacher who explained with great care all of the nuances of the funeral service, but impressed us with his genuine caring and concern about the poor souls buried at the Mt. Richmond Cemetery, and especially those without mourners. He is surely a holy man.

The setting of the cemetery itself was quite beautiful, well kept and a true place of peace. My husband's parents are buried in a cemetery where perpetual care, whether paid or not, is virtually nil, and the setting is between a garbage dump and superhighway. We know a nice resting place when we see one!

The Hebrew Free Burial Association does work few others will do and does it in an exemplary manner. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

Sincerely,

M.R.

BREAKFASTS, CONT.

cont. from page 3

Also honored at the Riverdale breakfast was Rabbi Harvey Crupar of the Kingsbridge Center of Israel. Rabbi Crupar has been actively involved in the annual *Chayei Sarah* campaign, holding an annual open appeal in his congregation on the Shabbat when the death of our matriarch Sarah is related in the Torah. His continued and vociferous support has created a body of dedicated supporters within his congregation.

Over 150 members of the Kew Gardens Hills community paid tribute to the three *gabbaim* who direct the *Chevra Kadisha* of the Young Israel of Queens Valley at breakfast on behalf of the Hebrew Free Burial Association held March 15. Haskell Yadlovker, Phil Halbfinger and Eric Levor were honored for their years of devotion to the *mitzvah* of burying the dead according to our traditions.