

Dovetail

A Journal by and for Jewish/Christian Families



Looking Back, Moving Forward: Dovetail's First Ten Years

From Joan C. Hawxhurst,
Dovetail's founding editor:

Ten years ago this month, I mailed the first issue of *Dovetail* to about 200 charter subscribers. It was thinner and less pleasing to the eye than the issue you hold in your hand today, but just as full of spirit and conviction. As I stuck on that original set of mailing labels and breathed in the distinctive smell of printers' ink for the first time, I felt like a midwife helping a new life be born.

This baby has grown and developed along with my two biological children, now 8 and 4, and like them has been nurtured by many wonderful and committed souls along the way. Like my kids, it is much less dependent on me than it was in its infancy, and I am grateful for the village—editorial board members, subscribers, donors, and behind-the-scenes supporters—that is raising this child.

Dovetail was conceived during my first year of marriage. Steve had been raised in a Conservative Jewish home, and I came from a long line of professional Protestants (missionaries, pastors, and deacons). As we planned our wedding and talked about children, I searched in vain for open-minded resources and networks of other families, and began to believe that there was a gaping hole in the literature. I found a handful of books, some helpful and some didactic, and a few isolated local interfaith groups. After talking it over with my husband and with other interfaith couples, I decided to do a fact-finding mission to see what people in the field thought about the need for a new kind of publication.

I remember having tea in a fancy midtown restaurant with Lee Gruzen, author of *Raising Your Jewish/Christian Child** (which had a profound influence on me), and being struck by her passion and the playful sparkle in her eye. I remember sitting nervously in Egon Mayer's office at the Jewish Outreach Institute, being very aware of the weighty importance of his sociological studies, until I realized that he was respectful of my idea, and could see with me the gap in services for unaffiliated interfaith couples.

I spent a night with Susan Gertz, author of *Hanukkah and Christmas at My House,** the first independently published children's book for interfaith kids. Her children, for whom she wrote the story, were confident and articulate, modeling for me the possibility of secure and well-adjusted interfaith kids. I visited with Leslie Goodman-Malamuth, coauthor of *Between Two Worlds*, and was deeply moved by her stories of growing up in an interfaith family and eventually founding a national organization for "parevehs" (those neither milk nor meat): adult children of interfaith families.

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I met with the authors of *Happily Intermarried*: Rabbi Roy Rosenberg, Father Peter Meehan, and Reverend John Payne (NY: MacMillan, 1989), and enjoyed their sparring banter as they recounted their experiences in the intermarriage debate. I was welcomed by two interfaith communities in Connecticut, one independent and one synagogue-based, and saw firsthand the strength that couples felt when they were buoyed by the support of others.

The idea for an independent and non-judgmental periodical that would include a wide range of experiences and opinions about interfaith family life was born of my own experience in a synagogue interfaith couples' group, where all participants were steered firmly, if surreptitiously, toward the decision to create a Jewish home and raise Jewish children. Every time I tried to ask about other options, or to talk about a resource with a different perspective (such as Lee Gruzen's book), the facilitator changed the subject. As the Christian partner, I felt excluded and faintly disrespected.

A beautiful irony of my journey with Dovetail is that, a decade later, my

husband and I are in fact raising Jewish children in a Jewish home. Within the supportive Dovetail community, we were able to explore the possibilities, talk about the tough issues, and come to our own mutually acceptable solution. To me, that is the essence of Dovetail: Our mission is not to decide right or wrong, not to steer couples toward any particular decision, but to provide couples with the tools and information they need to make their own best choice. The absence of an across-the-board, clear-cut right choice makes for a messy, emotional process, but when couples take the time to ask themselves the hard questions and struggle through the challenging emotions, they emerge confident in their decision and ready to help their children develop healthy spiritual lives.

As I reflect on the roots of **Dovetail**, I realize that many of the people who inspired and supported our organization in its early years have moved on, turning their attention and their passion in other directions now that their own interfaith choices have been made. That's how it is with Dovetail—our network ebbs and

flows with the changing tide of each couple's life cycle. Our services are needed desperately at times, then less urgently as couples set their own course and navigate through waters that have been charted but not fully explored. Sometimes a couple needs a life raft, sometimes a compass or a tugboat, sometimes a wave of the hand when they reach the shore—Dovetail has been all of these things for thousands of interfaith couples over the years.

Now, it is with a midwife's mixture of pride and humility that I watch an exuberant, confident **Dovetail** enter adolescence under its competent and energetic current editor, Mary Rosenbaum, who is fond of saying (with regard to burgeoning support for the Dovetail Institute), "A rising tide lifts all boats." So, as we prepare (as I write) to gather on the shore of Lake Michigan, I envision our third national conference as one final water metaphor, that of an effervescent spring from which we can all drink for refreshment and fill our vessels for the journey ahead. May Dovetail help you on the way for at least another decade! 

*Titles available through Dovetail at 800-530-1596 or www.dovetailinstitute.org.

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Dovetail's mission is to provide a channel of communication for interfaith couples, their parents, and their children. No matter what their specific choices regarding faith for their home and children, the more interfaith families can share their ideas, experiences, resources, and support, the more they can make peace in their homes and communities. Jewish and Christian perspectives can dovetail.

Believing that there are no definitive answers to the questions facing interfaith families, **Dovetail** strives to be open to all ideas and opinions. Editorial content attempts to balance and respect the perspectives of both Jewish and Christian partners in interfaith marriages, as well as the diverse perspectives of parents and children of interfaith couples. Inclusion in **Dovetail** does not imply endorsement. **Dovetail** accepts a thoughtful and constructive discussion of all related issues in the Letters to the Editor section, and reserves the right to reply.

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Jewish Outreach: A New Agenda

by Egon Mayer

More than fifty years ago, there were two pieces of conventional wisdom about interfaith marriage: one applied to American society in general, the other to the Jewish community within it. The broadly applied view was that intermarriage was the flame under the melting pot. It produced the dynamic force that would make real the motto imprinted on our coinage: *e pluribus unum* ["from many, one"]. That view, when applied to the American Jewish community, saw in intermarriage—as one rabbi put it—"the last nail in the coffin of Jewish assimilation." Common to both views was a tendency to see interfaith marriages in what we sociologists call the macro-social perspective. In that perspective, interfaith marriage is seen not for itself, but for what it represents to some larger entity.

To be sure, all personal behavior, especially behavior that results in the formation of enduring couples and families, has consequences for the shape, character, and values of the larger society. But such consequences are only probabilistic. They are possibilities, potentialities, shaped by a wide variety of often unforeseen circumstances. Yet, when the behavior of individuals is seen largely—not to say exclusively—for what its consequences might be, such behavior and the individuals engaged in it become miscast, misunderstood, and often mistreated beyond reason. That has certainly been the case of interfaith marriage, when viewed either as the harbinger of the fulfillment of the American dream or the materialization of the American-Jewish nightmare.

Growing Sensitivity

Since the publication of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS 1990), the Jewish community has become far more attuned and sensitive to the realities of interfaith family life. This greater sensitivity has resulted from a number of developments. First, the bare facts of NJPS 1990 drove home the point that among the youngest marriage cohort the incidence of intermarriage is no longer a minority phenomenon. The majority of young Jews were (and are) marrying someone who is not Jewish. Second, NJPS 1990 drove home the point that lamenting this fact or excoriating the families who are producing this fact will do nothing to lessen it.

The statistical findings of NJPS and the realities of modern American Jewish family life they illuminated triggered an outpouring of new initiatives within the Jewish community to deal with interfaith families in an entirely new way. Rather than seeing in them merely the specter of a much feared future, the new initiatives (broadly described as "outreach") began to view and treat individuals, couples, and families as entities in their own right, on their own terms.

New Possibilities

Over the past decade, the organized Jewish community and a broad array of independent Jewish philanthropic family foundations have poured millions of dollars into programs, planned events, and experiences that would convey to interfaith couples the new collective agenda: to build bridges rather than walls, to find new ways of inclusion rather than repeat

*Egon Mayer, Ph.D., is currently Professor of Sociology at Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, N.Y. Dr. Mayer, who was a plenary speaker at the Dovetail Institute's second national conference in 2000, is the author of a number of studies and books on intermarriage, including **Intermarriage and the Jewish Future, Children of Intermarriage, Conversion of the Intermarried, Rabbinic Officiation and Intermarriage**, and the widely acclaimed book, **Love & Tradition: Marriage between Jews & Christians**. Dr. Mayer's first article for **Dovetail**, "More than Just a Number: Statistics on Intermarriage," appeared in its very first issue, Volume 1 #1, August/September 1992, and was continued in the next two issues.*

... to build bridges rather than walls, to find new ways of inclusion... on terms that make the most sense to themselves.

old formulae of exclusion, and in general to provide interfaith couples no less than any other family with opportunities to participate in the life of the Jewish community on terms that make the most sense to themselves.

How this new approach to interfaith marriages and the individuals engaged in them will affect either American society or the Jewish community remains to be seen.

For now, we can only say that the new approach has certainly lessened the anger and the pain that have so often accompanied the interfaith marriage experience in Jewish life in the past. One can only hope and believe that the lessening of anger and pain in the lives of individual families will surely have nothing but a beneficial effect on the life of the community as a whole. 

**Prayers From the Deeper Wound
For the Anniversary of September 11
by Donna Schaper**

For time to think

Sabbath us, O God, and bring us solitude sufficient to our security. Clarify our thoughts and our feelings: let us make sense to us again. Let us know what it is that will never be the same again. And grant us thy peace, anyway. Amen.

For those worse off than we

We pray for compassion, for empathy, and for hearts that stay open to those in worse need than we are. For all those whose lives were ripped away. For all those who have faced rubble with courage. For all who remain afraid. Grant them and us your peace. Amen

For spiritual cartilage

Our hearts are scabbed; our knees have lost their cartilage, we're not sure we can take much more and yet we know more may come. Give us enough healing to go on—and encourage us in small, simple ways. Amen.

Benefits now, cost later

Send me up stream, O God. Keep me from wanting all my benefits now, all my costs later. Let me stay active and keep me from reactivity. Let me do what I can about what I can today. Let me worry about what I can control and not worry about what I can't control. Stick with me and help me stick with my life, as a person and a patriot. Amen

For people who hate

Grant that we learn to love our enemies and that they learn to love us. Heal the hatred that is heart deep for so many. And grant us true peace, the kind that comes when fear is overcome. Amen.

Wounds heal slow

For patience we pray, O God. Where our hearts are black and blue for the hurt of fallen buildings and downed innocent people, heal us. Where our knees are dirty from praying long and hard and still not understanding, raise us up and heal us. Where our confession has edged out our clarity, our doubt played havoc with our faith and our

hope yielded to our despair, heal us. Turn us around. Turn us towards you. And let our turning predict the end to war and beginning of peace. Amen.

For steadiness

Our hands shake and we feel the rush of adrenaline in our veins. We don't know when the shaking will stop or when it will start up again. Words don't come, thoughts are fuzzy. We want yesterday back, and it won't come. Steady us, God. Steady us. Amen.

*Rev. Donna Schaper is an intermarried United Church of Christ minister in Coral Gables, Florida. Her most recent book is **Raising Interfaith Children: Spiritual Orphans or Spiritual Heirs?** (NY: Crossroad, 1999).*

From Surviving Day to Day to Planning for the Future

by Daniel Josephs

As of this November, my wife Abbe and I will have been married nineteen years. We are two of the founders of the Chicago Jewish Catholic Couples' Dialogue Group, which is in its fifteenth year. Over the past twenty years as a Jewish/Catholic couple, and through our involvement in the Chicago group and with Dovetail, Abbe and I have seen an evolution in the life experience of interfaith couples.

I was the first non-Jew to marry into my wife's extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on), not just the first in her immediate family. I was the first of four sons to get married in my family. We were breaking down some tough barriers, and it was not easy to do. We felt we were all alone.

When we were engaged, we had only seen one Jewish/Catholic wedding ceremony, from which we only learned what not to do. After much conflict between the families, this couple's wedding ceremony lasted only three minutes. We learned that we, not our families, should prepare our wedding ceremony. Since we had no idea how to do this, we searched books for information.

Finding Support

After the wedding, we helped found the Chicago Jewish Catholic Couples' Dialogue Group. At the first meeting there were ten couples. We were just very happy to find each other and to realize that there were others like us facing some of the same issues. For the first two years of our meetings, there were no specific topics. We talked mainly about surviving as Jewish/Catholic couples. Most

discussions were about dealing with families. We were truly a support group, just exchanging experiences and horror stories.

As more couples joined the group, we heard new horror stories. It was not uncommon to hear about a Jewish family sitting *shiva* (going into mourning) for a child who was marrying somebody not Jewish. Less drastically, we were often told of family members' threats not to come to the wedding in protest. Thankfully, most of these threats were not fulfilled. (On the other hand, there was once an incident when a parent not only did not come to the wedding but actually called in a bomb threat to the reception hall.)

Ten years ago, with much trepidation, we scheduled a meeting for parents of interfaith couples. Luckily for us, only a couple of parents showed up, and they were supportive of their children. But those parents who most needed to be there did not come. In recent years we have had parents attending regular meetings, not to complain about the interfaith relationship, but because they're interested in learning about what their children are doing.

As the years have passed, we have heard fewer horror stories from couples in the group. I don't remember hearing a story about a Jewish family sitting *shiva* during the last five years. Family problems are rare as compared to ten or fifteen years ago.

Moderating Trends

There are several reasons for the decrease of family opposition to interfaith marriage. The number of

In addition to his work with the Chicago Catholic Jewish Couples Group—the largest in the country—and with Dovetail, Daniel Josephs, Esq., is currently assistant director of development of Franciscan Outreach Association, which operates a homeless shelter and a soup kitchen every evening of the year. He and his wife, Abbe Josephs, who are members of the DI-IFR advisory board, co-authored the article, "Chicago's Jewish-Catholic Couples Dialogue Group," in Dovetail's Volume 1 #6, June/July 1993, issue with David and Patty Kovacs.

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such marriages has increased in both Jewish and Christian communities. Often, one of a couple's siblings or cousins has already married outside of his/her faith. Therefore, the new couples who come to the group have not had to break down the barriers that we faced twenty years ago. In fact, some of the younger couples have parents who grew up in an interfaith home themselves.

The primary concern of the parents is no longer the continuation of the Jewish people or the Christian faith, but the stability and happiness of the family relationship. Whereas Abbe and I had to keep our wedding ceremony a secret, parents of the engaged couples in our group want to learn about the wedding ceremony and their child's spouse's religion. Most parents are willing to accept their child's spouse and their grandchildren, no matter what religion is practiced in the home.

As a result, the focus of our meetings has changed over the years. As a group, we now target specific rites of passage of interfaith family life, such as the engagement, the wedding, the baptism/baby naming of the child, and the religious education of the child. We also explore the holidays of both traditions and the origin and meaning of the symbols behind the holidays. As a couple and as a group we constantly explore what it means to be a Jew and to be a Catholic, and what day-to-day life as an interfaith couple looks like. We also have social events for the group. As a community, we celebrate Passover each year. We also celebrate our one common major holiday, Thanksgiving.

I have seen similar trends in Dovetail, especially through the frame-

work of the national conferences. My wife and I have presented programs at each of the Dovetail conferences. The first conference, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, was similar to the first two years of our Chicago group in that people were just very happy to meet other interfaith couples and realize they were not alone. Family issues dominated many of the informal discussions going on at the conference. Because of the conference, people gained the realization that it was possible to be a Jewish/Christian family and to do it well.

At the next conference, in Louisville, Kentucky, the participants tried to tackle the tough issues of interfaith life, such as the rites of passage and the religious identities of their children. Parents of children in interfaith marriages also came to the conference seeking knowledge and assistance. I remember talking to one such couple; they seemed to be more at peace with their child's raising of their grandchildren.

Since the first Dovetail conference, more independent (in the sense that they are not associated with a religious institution) interfaith couples' groups have come into existence. Several years ago, when Walter Cronkite came to Chicago to do a story about religious trends, one of his associates called me. His associate told me that Mr. Cronkite was impressed with the Chicago group but doubted that such a group could exist in New York City in the religious and political environment of the time. Currently there are two independent interfaith groups and one group sponsored by the Temple of Universal Judaism existing in the New York City area.

The Road Ahead

These trends we have experienced as an interfaith family, within the Chicago group, and as part of Dovetail have been very supportive. We must, however, still remember that we are pioneers. I have been to several interfaith conferences of clergy, scholars, and religious leaders where there has been fruitful dialogue about interfaith issues. At these conferences I noticed the dialogue broke down when it came to being a Jewish/Christian couple. Living the interfaith life is a lot messier than having an interesting dialogue about theoretical interfaith issues.

I attended one such session about interfaith weddings at which a priest began by saying he performed Catholic/Jewish wedding ceremonies in order to save his job. According to Roman Catholic canon law, as long as both partners go through the dispensation procedures, a priest cannot refuse to marry the couple. This priest knew his duty under Roman Catholic canon law, but I had expected him to be more pastoral in his approach. Through helping couples get married in different dioceses across the country, I have realized that many priests and dioceses probably need to be reminded about what the Roman Catholic canon law says about Jewish/Catholic weddings.

The majority of Jewish religious movements (even the Reform movement) still disapprove of interfaith marriages. Thank goodness there are rabbis courageous enough to be pastoral to Jewish/Christian couples, such as Rabbi Allen Secher of Dovetail. One of the biggest fears

of the rabbis who don't want to deal with interfaith couples is that the community will lose the Jew and the children will not be Jewish. Through their rejection of interfaith couples, they make their fear a reality. The rabbis who support interfaith couples save more Jews for Judaism than those who don't.

We also have to deal with the perception of religious leaders of both faiths that we are creating a new religion. At the most recent leadership meeting of the Chicago group, we wrestled with this perception. We don't believe we are creating another religion. As a group, our philosophy has always been to be as faithful as possible to authentic Catholicism and Judaism. We tell new members that our group tries to help people remain Jewish or Catholic but gain an understanding of each other's faith. When people come to us for religious services, we refer them to certain Catholic churches and Jewish temples that will be accepting to interfaith couples. This is why, outside of the Passover seder, we do not have interfaith services, except occasionally to celebrate the American civil holiday of Thanksgiving.

It has been an interesting journey, being interfaith pioneers involved in the Chicago couples' group and in Dovetail. The climate, at least with respect to our families and friends, has become more accepting and even nurturing at times. We have just begun dealing with the outside world, especially the established religions. This will most likely be the job for our children's generation but we hope we have laid a foundation on which they can build. ▀

The primary concern of the parents is no longer the continuation of the Jewish people or the Christian faith, but the stability and happiness of the family relationship.

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opinions expressed herein.

Thoughts from Downstream by Evelyn Maxwell

It has been nine years since my column appeared in one of the early issues. Since then both our Jewish grandchildren have given us much pride in completing their Bar and Bat Mitzvah studies. It concerns me that, just as in our home Christian confirmation, children seem to think that they don't need to continue in study after passing this teen rite.

Perhaps that should be the topic of a table conversation sometime, or maybe not, since youth often resent direct instruction. Perhaps some more general comments on the value we find personally in continuing daily study of the scriptures and weekly meetings with a group of Bible students would be more useful. They are both in college now, and my prayer is that they will align themselves with some interfaith study and social group. They have much to contribute to such a group.

Their father and mother continue to be good examples, both active in their congregations, he in the conservative Jewish one where the children were raised and she in a Catholic one, which seems to her the most like Judaism of all the flavors of Christianity she has tasted. In December of 2001 our youngest daughter, with Episcopal leanings, added to our interfaith family by marrying her beloved, who is Catholic. We expect our third grandchild in the late fall and are interested in seeing how the parents decide to adjust their beliefs and practices.

I continue with my duties in the local United Methodist congregation, mainly as health ministries coordinator, and as a lay speaker

providing services for a local nursing home once a month and urging the seven local U.M. churches to work together more than we have in the past. (I need to do some creative thinking in this area! Creative thinking—another way of saying, “Be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”)

I also serve as a member of the local Parish Nurse Alliance and the Salina Area Human Resources Association, with the aim of creating greater cooperation between churches and agencies in our community. In late 1993 I was elected to a four-year term as city commissioner, of which one was served as mayor of the City of Salina, Kansas. In 1997, my 250-page paperback book, *At Eden's Gate: Whole Health and Well-Being*, was published by a local publisher. It deals with the basics of mental, physical, and spiritual health and do-it-yourself treatment opportunities in a holistic manner. I know your efforts in interfaith relations will add to the health of the nation!

Evelyn Maxwell, M.N., R.N., wrote a Forum column, "When Your Grandchild Celebrates a Different Faith," in Volume 1 #5, April/May 1993, of Dovetail. She is a Certified Lay Speaker, Whole Health Education and Consultation, 414 East Wayne Avenue, Salina, Kansas, 67401, emmx1@juno.com.

Personal Milestones: Children Come of Age

by Debi Tenner

Last year my son and daughter both decided to be Jewish. This was a bit of a surprise for us! Even though both my children were converted at birth, and Josh had a bris, there was no set decision made for him to become a Bar Mitzvah. We have raised them with both Judaism and Christianity in our house, and frankly, we kept expecting them to turn out “confused.” Or even worse, people kept telling me they would turn out to be “nothing.” As a teacher and parent, I thought that sounded pretty scary. But instead of wishy-washy, uninterested, and uncommitted kids, we got two pretty serious decisions.

I immediately knew that this was no fickle decision from a 9- or 11-year-old child. They both approached me (the Christian partner in the marriage) first, each totally unaware that the other sibling was doing the same thing. My husband and I agree that they probably felt obligated to check with me first. My instincts told me that they had both already made up their minds, but that my comments could swing their decisions, so I tried to say as little as possible, and tease out the reasons that each felt this way.

Josh's Choice

With my son, I made him spend a couple weeks talking about what it meant to him to be Jewish, what it would mean if he made this choice, and of course, what it would mean if he chose to have a Bar Mitzvah. Lots of details came out, convincing details that made me sure he knew what he was talking about (at 11?!! OY!!) At this time, he had no idea that there was any sort of party attached to this event, and he had

never attended a Bar Mitzvah. We talked about the commitment to getting educated in Hebrew and in the history of Israel (possibly needing a tutor to catch up), to attending services on a regular basis, and to making *tsedakah* (charitable giving) a part of his teenage life, and about what the Ten Commandments meant to him. We talked about how he still likes Christianity and respects it. He still wants to celebrate the Christian holidays with me. “But,” he said, “I feel Jewish in my soul, Mommy.”

Across the last thirteen years, I have often made reference to the children about their souls, and suddenly I was glad I had. Believe me, they were too young and very uninterested in the subject of souls for a long time, but it must have finally clicked for Josh. He made comments about “knowing for sure,” “suddenly understanding what Judaism meant” to him, and feeling “comfortable in [his] soul.” I was so pleased to hear him finally able to speak of all these things, but surprised that he was understanding it so young.

As it turns out, the tradition of becoming a Bar Mitzvah has a wisdom of its own, and as he progressed in his studies during the next eighteen months, we could see him progress spiritually, educationally, and socially as a result of the studies and the choice he made. In short, the Bar Mitzvah was a perfect fit for his 13-year-old thinking and learning—in truth, for his 13-year-old soul.

And so it began. In late October of his 6th-grade year, Josh joined a Hebrew School class and began the journey to his February 2002 Bar

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Since I had been a rabid supporter (and teacher) of interfaith education, the questions were quite strong: Was this really OK with me? Are you happy for Josh? It was like they were looking for me to be either insincere or outright lying.

Mitzvah. He soon discovered that his Torah portion was the one right before the Torah portion his dad did almost thirty years before. We found a tutor to help him after the December holidays because he had never studied Hebrew before. A note came home over winter break that Josh was doing so well he had already caught up with the rest of the class and the teacher "wished every student was as enthusiastic." My husband and Josh spent a lot of time together getting the Hebrew homework done, and I could see a blossoming going on between the two of them.

It was at this point that people started looking at me and asking me questions. Since I had been a rabid supporter (and teacher) of interfaith education, the questions were quite strong: Was this really OK with me? Are you happy for Josh? It was like they were looking for me to be either insincere or outright lying. No one was saying the usual "Mazel tov" and "Where's the reception?" as I heard when other moms talked about their upcoming Bar Mitzvah plans.

There were questions about how things would run in our house now that Josh was going to be officially Jewish, and I responded that they would run the same as always: showing respect for both religions in our house, and for both my children's heritages—and now we even get to celebrate the enhanced religious choices that Joshua brings to our family. (Josh has brought us a wonderful sense of the Sabbath, and he insists that we do things on Friday night just a little more carefully, deliberately, relaxedly, or just plain happily, than we ever did before. At the same time, Josh says that he will

always want to celebrate Christmas, not because of the presents, but because he knows it makes his mom smile for an entire month.)

Finally one person said, "Are you really sure you are okay with this?" and I know my response was sharp and a bit angry: "Of course it's okay! It's wonderful! My son has chosen an amazing path, and I fully intend to support him." Shortly after this we joined a different synagogue, which counts me as a full member. It felt great to say to my son that I not only support his Jewish education and learning, but that I am a member, too. And on the first day there, someone found out I was a teacher and asked me to join the education committee. I said, "Well, umm, I am the Christian partner, perhaps you could ask my husband?" She rolled her eyes and said she wanted *me*, and I knew I had made the right choice.

Among many other benefits for Josh, I think the actual memorization and chanting of his Torah portion every night exercised his brain muscle and opened a few doors to good study habits, too. The confidence gained in all this—with kudos to the rabbi and the cantillation teacher—is something I know he will carry with him for his whole life. The children he invited from school to share the day with us were absolutely awed by his hard work and enthusiasm, and he was able to throw off a couple of bullies at school this year with strength based on his new self-respect and the new respect of his friends.

Of course, a good party helped impress his friends, too. He surrounded himself with his favorite chums from school, Bar Mitzvah

class, and our neighborhood, not to mention cousins, and I offer no apologies for the size of the event. My shy son will never forget the rousing turnout, the dancing, the first girlfriend, and being lifted up high on the chair. ("Yes," the rabbi told me, and smiled a bit sadly, "it is a wedding tradition," but the symbolic gesture—and fun—was so awesome we couldn't resist taking it over.)

Our trade-off for the size of the party (100 relatives and friends, mostly my husband's family) was that we redoubled our efforts to turn the celebration into something that also represented the meaning of the day. Josh and I attempted to do thirteen mini-charity projects in thirteen months, one dedicated to each one of his special relatives, both Christian and Jewish. The idea was that he would learn with (or from) each of his family members what charities they supported and why. Some of the projects he did were collecting and donating books, food, clothing, and money. For his twelfth birthday he asked his friends to bring a can of food instead of a present, and he collected three bags of groceries for the Food Bank. We also joined in three walkathons; in each one he collected about \$20 or \$30 in his own money or donations from others. He went with his grandfather to the soup kitchen, toured the local food bank, visited a Ronald MacDonald House, and toured a Habitat for Humanity work site and a homeless shelter. We tried to take pictures at every single event; he was responsible for writing about each project and getting a scrapbook together, which he displayed in the lobby at the Bar Mitzvah reception. Also, we made a donation to Mazon, in lieu of buying

flowers, which led to our having a basket of food as a centerpiece on the bima. At the reception, we had balloons and donated new books instead of flowers. We made sure Joshua understood that the gifts of food and books in his life were abundant, and he would now be required to share those things.

Sharon's Choice

My daughter Sharon has been down much the same path, only with a few twists along the way. In late October of her 4th-grade year, she opted to continue attending Sunday School with her 3rd-grade cousin to "get her feet wet." She had visited with him a few times in the past, and liked her cousin and the teacher very much, plus she was a brand new Hebrew student, so it seemed logical that she would start a year behind. Later this got more complicated because she seemed to be having some (undiagnosed) reading disability in school, and her progress in Hebrew became frustratingly slow. She felt the peer pressure more than Josh did, and wondered if she would be "good enough" to be Jewish, or even if she would ever be able to read Hebrew. When we changed to the new synagogue, she had a new set of doubts, which she shared with me on a regular basis. But it also gave her a new friend: another 5th-grader who could easily be mistaken for her twin—two red heads, two big smiles, two friends.

All of a sudden Sharon was understanding that she already *was* Jewish, and she started to feel a part of the community, too. The community opened its arms to us. I can't emphasize enough how important that was: The degree of acceptance

We made sure Joshua understood that the gifts of food and books in his life were abundant, and he would now be required to share those things.

I don't want to imply that I have been such a great role model, just that somehow my honest stumbling around as a Christian parent has helped both my children and myself feel good about what is happening.

of me as the Christian partner meant that, with no doubts in my mind, I was able to get them through any of their own doubts, not to mention the occasional doubts from some of Sharon's Sunday School class. She has made great strides in the last few months, and will likely become Bat Mitzvah at age 13 or soon after.

Despite all the struggles with reading, she has also shown a depth of determination to be a Bat Mitzvah and to be Jewish that I would never have thought possible from a 9-year-old. Of course, this does raise questions for me. How can I fit in here, as a mother, as role model for my daughter from a different religion? How will I teach her to grow up to be a Jewish woman and raise her family the way she wants to?

The Gift for Me

But I guess the most important answers are the same ones I have given my children all along. I tell them that, in my eyes, they have two heritages, and that they are much loved by both heritages. The purpose of both heritages is to teach charity, teach the laws that make for a good life, support the family, and show a path to spirituality for every person.

Sharon did have one big concern: "Is Santa still going to bring me presents? If he doesn't bring them to me maybe he can bring them to some really poor children, but I still want him to bring some to me." I told Sharon that as long as I was alive, I would celebrate Christmas, and that she could always join me, sing with me, share presents with me, or whatever. As long as she wanted to, she could celebrate her Christian heritage with me.

Also, I realize they have both been learning more by what I've been doing than by what I've been saying. By my devoting time to planning the charity projects with Josh, reading and getting educated myself, encouraging Sharon through her struggles with Hebrew, meeting with the rabbi and cantor, and bringing more Jewish traditions into our home life, they have been learning just what they needed to learn. I don't want to imply that I have been such a great role model, just that somehow my honest stumbling around as a Christian parent has helped both my children and myself feel good about what is happening. Let's not forget how cool it is to be able to teach your mother a thing or two, something most 13-year-olds are more than willing to do. And did I learn!

There is great joy now in looking back over the last two years and seeing what Josh's Dad and I have accomplished. We really did model the things we wanted Josh to know and understand: God, charity, prayer, and respecting other people; Joshua's choice to become a Bar Mitzvah is just the frosting on that cake.

After the Bar Mitzvah, I received thank-you notes from some of our guests: Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, everyone agreed that the enthusiastic and committed young man who led the service was amazing. My husband's speech to the congregation revolved around his own personal reconnection to Judaism. This whole experience is the strongest evidence I can find to show that we haven't been confused all these years. Doubly committed and busy, perhaps, but never confused. 

The Tides of Change

by Sheila Gordon

As I write this reflection, it is Gay Pride Week, and my city, including my synagogue, is aflutter with the celebration of gay identity. Ten years ago, intermarriage—like sexual identity—generated a sense of great angst. Today, there is a comfort, a sense of the normal, even a pride in supporting dual religious traditions in one's household or in oneself. For many the angst is still a factor, but overall the environment evidences a tectonic shift in attitudes and reality.

Ten years ago, my own organization (then known as the Trinity Interfaith Community) was in its fifth year of existence, beginning to experience burnout and about to enter into a period of quiescence. Having moved in 2000 to re-energize and reconfigure our organization, I am particularly aware of the changes which have marked this decade. These changes are reflected in public discourse about interfaith families, in organizations, both national and at the grassroots level, and in the realities of family life.

Shift in Discourse

In *The Half-Jewish Book: A Celebration* (NY: Random House, 2000), Daniel Klein and Freke Vuijst trumpet the possibilities of balancing multiple identities, especially that of being "half-Jewish." Half-Jewishness is a cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic mix that is, in a variety of ways, greater than the sum of its parts.

In *Generation J* (SF: HarperSF, 2001), Lisa Schiffman, a 20-something Jew who has married a non-Jew, argues that a new generation of pluralistic Jews can adapt Judaism to their postmodern life style. "I'm not alone.

I'm part of a generation of fragmented Jews. We're in a kind of limbo. We're suspended between young adulthood and middle age, between Judaism and atheism, between a desire to believe in religion and a personal history of skepticism. Call us a bunch of searchers. Call us post-Holocaust Jews. Call us Generation J."

Alan Dershowitz, the First Amendment legal scholar and contentious lawyer, is both committed to his Jewish heritage and the father of a child who has intermarried. In *The Vanishing American Jew* (NY: Little, Brown, 1997), he writes: "We must reject the current all-or-nothing approach to Judaism.... In America, and in other nations that separate church from state, one's Jewishness is a matter of self-definition, and anyone who wants to be considered a Jew, or a half-Jew, or a partial Jew, or a person of Jewish heritage, has a right to be so considered."

Organizational Change

Dovetail was a pioneer on the national scene. At the same time, the Reform Jewish movement stepped up its formal outreach programming and worked to make Jewish institutions more sensitive and welcoming to interfaith couples.

InterfaithFamily.com, on line since the late 1990s, is an ambitious web-based effort reflecting a sensibility similar to the Reform programs. Jewish community centers all over the country now offer interfaith couples workshops to help people clarify and address the issues involved in being an interfaith family.

Meanwhile, the interfaith map took shape. Dovetail became both the

Sheila C. Gordon, Ph.D., is director of The Interfaith Community in New York; see Bulletin Board on page 16 for contact information. Her first article for Dovetail, "The Trinity Interfaith Education Program: Implementation ... and Beyond," appeared in the Volume 2 #2, October/November 1993, issue. She is a member of the DI-IFR advisory board.

In some ways, however, the higher level of tolerance can make our task all the more challenging. The obstacles are less clear, and often are moving targets

Looking for Interfaith Wedding Ceremony Scripts

Dovetail Publishing will release a second edition of the popular *Interfaith Wedding Ceremonies: Samples and Sources* within the coming year. We are looking for new ceremonies to include in our expanded edition. Please submit any combination of the following: your wedding ceremony, your wedding program, wedding photographs (black & white or color, clearly labeled with a name and address, so we can return them to you), and/or a description of your special day written by you or by your officiant. Please feel free to contact us with any questions. Thank you very much for your help.

Dovetail Publishing, Inc.
ATTN: Joan C. Hawxhurst
8400 Stadium Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
hawxhurst@aol.com

national journal and the independent resource center. Two major local interfaith organizations began: the Inter Faith Families Project in the Washington, D.C., area and the Chicago Jewish Catholic Couples Group. A number of smaller groups formed around the country, in the Bay Area, in New Haven, in Memphis, and in Minneapolis.

Given the population density of Jews in the Greater New York area, the need for an independent organization serving interfaith families is powerful. Nevertheless, the small "Trinity" Interfaith Community remained for years the only local interfaith program. A decision was made in late 1999 to re-energize and expand it. As of July, 2002, the Interfaith Community has its own office space, an active website, a growing number of formal members, and programs for the full spectrum of needs (workshops for interfaith couples, holiday religious services, programs for children, and a learning series for adults).

The Landscape Today

A decade or more ago, we were flatly rejected by most synagogues and organized Jewish institutions. Today, while we are still not widely embraced, we have relationships to synagogues that refer couples to us, or at least respect the work we are doing. Then, we were welcome in some churches, but somewhat as a curiosity. Today, the son of our original Episcopalian clergy advisor has married a Jewish woman and belongs to our community. We also now have a close relationship to a Presbyterian church, which sees our community as part of its outreach, and whose pastor is himself married

to a Jewish woman. Then, we had connections to families where the non-Jewish partner's tradition was marginalized and often painfully denied. Today, an Interfaith Community member whose son chose to be Bar Mitzvah welcomes her Catholic parents on the bima; an Episcopalian woman and her new Jewish husband baptize her Episcopalian son and Bar Mitzvah his Jewish son. Everyone's extended family is now a kaleidoscope of second marriages, religious intermarriages, ethnic and racial intermarriages, and other, always changing combinations.

The norm today—in New York and across the country, among thoughtful writers, and within established religious institutions—is far more tolerant than in 1992. Increasingly, people recognize that children will not necessarily be confused and that families will not fracture if they acknowledge dual religious identities. In some ways, however, the higher level of tolerance can make our task all the more challenging. The obstacles are less clear, and often are moving targets. Yet we know that, in the face of abundant choice and tantalizing diversity, people still want tradition, spirituality, and community. Our mission, which we share with Dovetail, is to continue the work of creating an environment and institutions to support the myriad journeys of Jewish-Christian families. 

Fruits of the Journey

by Jack Kovacs

Note from Patty Kovacs: Ten years ago, we wrote that part of our journey with other interfaith couples and families was to continue to search for answers together. Over that time, we have been finding answers to the many questions of raising kids in an interfaith home through the growth of the Family School of Chicago, a parent-taught interfaith religious education program that teaches both Judaism and Catholicism. It has been a truly remarkable journey, and as Dovetail marks its tenth year, we are about to begin our tenth year as a school. Mazel tov to all!

We are very proud of how much our kids, Jack (14) and Kelly (11), have learned and are continuing to learn, and how much we as parents are learning from them. Jack was a member of the first graduating class of the Family School this past May. This is from the statement he wrote for the graduation ceremony:

Family School: a school to which families go to learn religion. It is not just an option for interfaith people looking for a balanced Catholic-Jewish religious school. No! It is a school in which families learn together. Instead of learning religion with complete strangers, we learn it with our friends, our parents, and our friends' parents. Everyone might be in separate classrooms, but they are still with other parents, and they know that their parents are nearby.

What we have learned is that we do not have a set product. Personally, I can't say that I am a label. I can't say that I am either Jewish or Catholic alone. Both religions wonder about the existence of God and nature. "What's God like? Why are we here?"

How did it all get started? How do we make the world a better place?"

There is no single set of answers to these questions. Both religions try to find explanations. Both believe in the same God and that God is active and present in the world in many ways.

The Family School is a community. It is a group of people in union. The etymology of the word is "com"—with, "union"—one. It's like Communion. We come together to take in something special. Think back to the beginnings of the school: perhaps you were afraid of what the future would hold: "Will my child be confused?" "How do I teach this stuff?" "Oh, my God, my child won't know my religion!" Well, we are here to say to you that learning solves fear. We have learned over these nine years that it is okay to be different. Sure, it was confusing at first. We'd ask, "Why couldn't the two religions that have so much in common not get along?" As we went through the years, we learned some of the reasons why, because we learned the histories of both religions in the Family School.

In some ways, life can be confusing, especially in your teenage years. Some unexplainable questions will never be answered: "Why are we here? What is the meaning of life?" Still, religion can sometimes help answer everyday moral questions. We, the graduates, have spent the past several years learning that there are at least two ways to seek the truth. Not in a confusing way, for the two religions see the same ultimate truth through different words. We have discovered some of the words that are the central teachings of both faiths: there is only one God, love

that God, love thy neighbor, and teach your children to do the same.

Remember the words of the Sh'ma: "Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your heart. Teach them faithfully to your children." Jesus was a good Jew, and he, too, taught that this prayer, the Sh'ma, was the highest of all prayers. Each religion has many different symbols, but two, the cross and the mezuzah, remind us to keep God in mind—every day and in all we do. How important is it to teach your children? Well, the Sh'ma, in Deuteronomy VI, comes right after Deuteronomy V. What happens there? The Ten Commandments are given to Moses at Mount Sinai! Pretty important, I would say. On behalf of the graduates of the Family School—just do it: teach them and help them. It's your job as parents and as children of God. That is what the Family School is all about. 📖

Jack's parents, David and Patty Kovacs, co-authored the article, "Chicago's Jewish-Catholic Couples Dialogue Group," in Dovetail's Volume 1 #6, June/July 1993, issue with Dan and Abbe Josephs. Jack and Kelly (along with Kate and Micahla Cohen) shared their insights on growing up in an interfaith family with the 2002 Dovetail Conference.

Bulletin Board

Interfaith Support Around the Nation

To be listed as a contact person for a group, or if you are seeking to join or form a group, please send information to:

Dan Josephs
1175 S. Euclid Avenue, Oak Park IL 60304
Tel: (708) 660-9503; Fax: (630) 574-8089
Email: JosephsDA@aol.com

Dan is one of the founders and coordinators of the Chicago Jewish Catholic Couples Group. We look forward to hearing from you.

California, San Francisco Bay Area*
Alicia Torre (415) 591-9434

California, San Francisco Bay Area*
Interfaith Connection Groups. Rosanne Levitt, Director (415) 292-1252

California, San Diego Area AND Colorado*
Seven Blessings Seminars: Connecting Soul Mates. R. Shelly Moss (970) 532-3396

Colorado, Denver*
Karen McCarthy and Dan Kowal (303) 439-7750

Colorado, Denver
Stepping Stones: Jewish identification.
Stacey Delcau (303) 554-5854

Connecticut, Hamden
Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me.
R. Sonya Starr (203) 288-3877

Connecticut, New Haven*
Christina Giebisch-Mohrer (203) 287-9110

District of Columbia, Greater Washington *
Interfaith Families Project.
Laura Steinberg (301) 589-9280

District of Columbia, Greater Washington
Bethesda Jewish Congregation welcomes interfaith families.
Maran Beth Gluckstein (301) 469-8636

Illinois, Chicago metropolitan area*
Jewish-Catholic Couples' Dialogue Group.
Abbe & Dan Josephs, (708) 660-9503, or
Patty & David Kovacs (773) 275-5689

Louisiana, New Orleans
Courtney Nathan, Jewish Family Service
(504) 831-8475

Maryland, Baltimore
Jewish Outreach Network Programs.
Beth Land Hecht, Dir. (410) 466-9200, x 381

Maryland, Rockville
JCC of Greater Washington, DC. Tracey Dorfman, Director (301) 881-0100, x 6782

Massachusetts, Amherst*
Janet Lehan Bloom (413) 253-3685

Massachusetts, Boston*
Adina Davidson & Joel Nitzberg (617) 776-3235

Minnesota, Minneapolis*
Joan Cleary and Jerry Helfand (651) 698-7987

Minnesota, Minneapolis
Jewish FCS of Minneapolis. Barbara Rudnick
(612) 542-4825 brudnick@jfcsmpls.org

Missouri, St. Louis area*
Joanne and Larry Eisenman (314) 918-7992

New Jersey, Northern New Jersey area
Phyllis Gippetti (201) 337-2275 or
Dale Kopel (201) 568-9230

New Jersey, Bergen Co.
Lani Martin (201) 891-1818

New Jersey, Hasbrouck Heights
Temple Beth Elohim: Welcomes non-Jews.
R. Fredric S. Dworkin (201) 744-3304

New Jersey, Whippany
United Jewish Federation.
Lynne Wolfe (973) 884-4800, x 192

New Mexico, Albuquerque
Archdiocese of Santa Fe Ecumenical Office.
Father Ernest Falardeau or Heddy Long,
Family Life Office.

New York, Long Island
Long Island Havurah for Humanistic Judaism
Leonard Cherlin (516) 889-8337

New York, Long Island/Suffolk County*
Eileen Horowitz, 516-345-0095.

New York, New York City
Temple of Universal Judaism.
www.tuj.org (212) 535-0187

New York, New York City*
Interfaith Community.
Sheila Gordon (212) 870-2544
www.crosscurrents.org/interfaith.htm

New York, Rochester
Interfaith Connection, JFS. Michele Ruda
Leve, C.S.W.(716) 461-2000, x 825

New York, Rockland County*
Eric and Elizabeth Kohlmeier (914) 639-9380

Ohio, Cincinnati*
Christine M. Segal (513) 793-2866

Ohio, Columbus
Gateways: The Jewish Interfaith Connection
Barbara Mazer Gross (614) 231-2731

Please note: Dovetail does not interview or investigate groups listed here.

Ohio, Dayton

Jewish Interfaith Network: Interfaith group.
Tonda Learner (937) 439-4313

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
Michelle Carson (215) 473-4086 or
Kimberly Shore (215) 646-3363

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Area
Jewish Converts & Interfaith Network.
Lena Romanoff, Dir. (610) 664-8112

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
Faithways, JFCS of Greater Philadelphia.
R. Rayzel Raphael (215) 540-3737.

Tennessee, Memphis*
Jan and David Kaplan (901) 767-4267

Virginia, Northern Virginia area
Cong. Beth Emeth. Judi Cloutier, Outreach
Coordinator (703) 860-4515, x 142

Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Interfaith Connection, JCC of Milwaukee:
Joyce Gutzke, IF Coord. (414) 967-8218

Israel*
Call 800-530-1596 for contact info.

United Kingdom*
Rosalind Birtwistle (44) 01234 261 775

Interfaith couples in the following cities would like to talk with or meet other interfaith couples:

- Orlando, FL**
- Des Moines, IA**
- Indianapolis, IN**
- Lincoln, NE**
- New York, NY (various boroughs)**
- Cleveland, OH**
- Oklahoma City, OK**
- Elkins Park, PA**
- Madison, WI**

To network, please contact Dan by E-mail or telephone.

* Group not sponsored by a religious institution.

God's Greater Unity

by Robert Brashear

As I write this, I have just finished conducting the wedding of Jesse and Michelle. Like all weddings, this has been a social work of art. I always am intrigued and moved by meeting the extended circles of families and friends, coming together like two streams from different places. Sometimes, an entirely new creation will come about, like this one. Jesse, Jewish, and Michelle, a Korean-American Christian, will begin a new family, in more than one way.

The work that they did in preparation for the wedding will serve them well. They discussed the meaning of the event for themselves, their families, what the "bottom-line issues" were for each. While originally, it was thought that a rabbi might share in the service, in the end it was Jesse's father who and friends who said the *b'ruchot*, gave the blessings. Michelle's father gave the English translations. In the end, it was truly beautiful.

One of the joys of living in New York City is the amazing coming together of people from all over the world. As the world we live in grows increasingly smaller (or is it actually larger?), what happens here is a foretaste of what will be for other cities, other towns. When my (Jewish) wife Andrea and I were planning to be married, I asked a Roman Catholic priest colleague of mine his opinion. He told me that our coming together was a sign of "God's greater unity." Certainly what I see around us feels like that. We count among our friends Jewish-Muslim, Christian-Muslim, Jewish-Buddhist, couples of many kinds. In a world where people come together from so many different places,

interfaith marriage will be an inevitable result, regardless of family or community pressures against it.

As a minister who has performed easily 100 or more interfaith marriages, and as a Christian man married to a Jewish woman, what have I learned? Here are a few thoughts:

There is no rule book, no manual; each couple's situation is unique and must find its own way. It is impossible to answer every question before you get married: even when you think you have, once you are married, something will come up you hadn't thought of. Decide on what the three bottom-line issues are for you and negotiate them out. Then, move ahead. Marriage is not having all the answers, it's making a commitment to find the answers together.

Even when one partner has converted, new life experiences, such as the birth of a child, will bring unexpected feelings, yearnings from deep inside. There will always be surprises. Interfaith marriage forces both partners to become clearer as to where they stand with regards to their own faith. The more secure one is in one's own faith, the less threatening the practices of the other are. When daily and weekly patterns are established, when the faith "rhythm" of the home is established, the seemingly difficult holiday issues take care of themselves.

When problems arise, it's important to be able to separate out the different strands and know which are truly religious in nature, which are cultural, which come from our respective family dynamics and which have to do with our indi-

vidual personalities. Don't hesitate to ask a clergy person or counselor to help sort that out.

Finally, **there's no limit.** By that I mean this. After Andrea and I had been together for ten years or so of truly sharing life together, I asked a counselor if I had become 50% Jewish and 50% Christian. "No", he said, "you're still 100% Christian and 50% Jewish. It's not a fixed quantity you're dealing with here, something more's been added." Whatever decisions a particular couple make, the resulting family will indeed be a new creation.

I've recently gotten to know a new couple. The man was from the Jewish community in Bombay, India, the roots of which spring partly from Syria. His sister once worked with my wife in a peace project in an Arab village in Israel. The wife was of Anglican background from Canada. The world does grow smaller. And larger. God's greater unity more visible, every day. ▀

*Rev. Bob Brashear is the pastor of the West-Park Presbyterian Church in New York City. He is married to Andrea and is father of Micah, Nathaniel, and Daniel. His first article for **Dovetail**, "Interfaith Dialogue at a Personal Level," appeared in the Volume 1 #6 issue, June/July 1993.*

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expressed herein.*

A New Direction by Jennifer Krakower Cafferty

As a Dovetail member, I did not realize until recently that the Dovetail Institute:

- Provides support to members in all 50 states
- Provides support to members from 36 countries
- Publishes books, journals, and a brochure series
- Presents conferences for interfaith families and religious leaders
- Provides consultation, referrals and on-line discussion moderating
- Has been featured in *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, and *Good Housekeeping*
- Has been interviewed by National Public Radio, and the television shows *The God Squad*, *CBS This Morning*, and NBC's *Today Show*
- Has been consulted by CNN and the *New York Times* regarding interfaith holiday celebrations

This impressive list of accomplishments is even greater when you realize that the Dovetail executive board has managed to accomplish these tasks on a shoestring budget with minimal public relations efforts.

My husband and I have been supporting Dovetail for the past two years. We became familiar with Dovetail at the 2000 conference in Louisville. After attending the conference, we knew that we needed to help support Dovetail so that others might benefit from its services. We truly felt, and still feel, that Dovetail was one of the only groups that had been able to help us with our interfaith issues.

After attending this year's conference in Chicago, I feel even more strongly about supporting Dovetail. Living in Chicago, I often take for granted the amount of interfaith support

available to my family. The Dovetail conference reconfirmed my belief that Dovetail needs to be strong for those interfaith families living in areas around the country that have no other support.

Beginning this fall, I will be leading Dovetail in an ongoing fundraising campaign. As a professional fundraiser, I will be combining my fundraising skills with my passion for Dovetail's mission to explain Dovetail's needs to donors throughout the country and to hear what you, as a **Dovetail** journal subscriber, want to support. (If you're not a dues-paying member as well as a subscriber, please add the \$25 dues to your next subscription renewal.)

The fundraising plan will be comprehensive and will include areas such as a major gifts campaign, a phone-a-thon, and a grants program. If you are willing to help Dovetail by making phone calls to other members or if you know of someone who sits on the board of a foundation interested in helping Dovetail, please let me know. I can be reached at jkcafferty@ameritech.net or (708) 358-1801.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that all interfaith families and those that serve them have access to Dovetail's unique and important services.

Warmly,

Jen Cafferty

Moving Forward

by Mary Heléne Rosenbaum

Well, we did it—we brought off Dovetail's third national conference. And what a conference it was! Images are still dancing through my head: Rabbi Secher and Father Cusick trading good-natured barbs and serious insights on the stage in the Crystal Room; Joan Hawxhurst and husband Steve Bertman navigating painful and difficult issues on that same stage, with the passionate involvement of the conference attendees; the filled-to-bursting room in which the children of interfaith couples David and Patty Kovacs and Nancy and Harry Cohen elicited laughter and deep attention; the many workshop rooms with a dozen or so people around a table exploring some aspect of the interfaith experience in depth and honesty; Joan Hawxhurst's astonishment and emotion at being presented the third Father Dan Montalbano Award for Promoting Interfaith Understanding, in recognition of her pioneering work in founding and nurturing Dovetail; the buzz and energy of the post-conference crowd still talking, networking, sharing insights, unable to tear themselves away.

Some comments pulled at random from evaluation sheets:

- The work being done by every single soul is clearly so meaningful—each individual's challenge to form and frame an honorable relationship with G-d and tradition is truly uplifting....
- Listening and sharing ideas with people ahead and behind us in our journey.
- The honesty, openness, and vulnerability of everybody—participants and facilitators alike—sharing from the heart about the lessons, challenges, and rewards

of being an interfaith couple.

- It's amazing how many good ideas I came away with....
- I'm so glad I came! Thank you to all who have made this conference a reality!

I'd like to add my thanks to those who made the conference a reality, particularly Dan and Abbe Josephs, Mike and Bonnie Farnon, Jen Cafferty, Bob Dahlke, Sr. of Vis-O-Graphic Printing, Peter Eisendrath of Signs Now, and those who made cash contributions large and small, most of whom wished to remain anonymous. Finally, thanks to the Dovetail executive board—Joan, Allen Secher, and my husband, Ned (among whose contributions was bringing me breakfast at my desk for weeks on end)—the DI-IFR advisory board, whose members spent hours of conference calls brainstorming and planning, and the **Dovetail** journal advisory board, past and present.

The support of all sorts not only keeps us going in the here and now, it gives us hope and inspiration for the future. In the next ten years, we'd like to expand the journal and publish it monthly, begin to have conferences every year, establish weekend seminars for half a dozen couples at a time, publish more books filled with a variety of perspectives on interfaith marriage, and reach out to the hundreds of thousands of Jewish/Christian families out there who don't know yet that an independent organization with resources for them exists.

Your insights, expertise, donations, and energy will make all that, and much more we can't even imagine till it happens, come to pass. I'm already looking forward to reading the 20th Anniversary issue! 🍀

Benjamin Blutstein 1977-2002



Ben at Dovetail's 2998 Conference

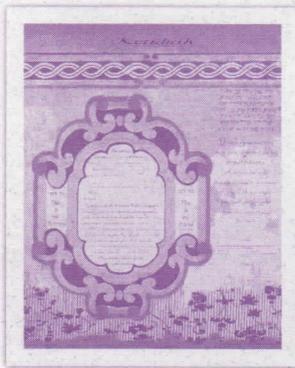
Ben was a graduate of the Rabbi David L. Silver Yeshiva Academy and of Dickinson College, where he received the Dr. Stanley Ned Rosenbaum Award for Judaic Studies and where he volunteered for the 1998 Dovetail conference and led its Havdalah service. He was studying at Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem when he was murdered by a terrorist bomb.

In a letter to his Christian grandmother before last Thanksgiving, Ben wondered what most of the relatives sitting at her holiday dinner—and his deceased Methodist minister grandfather—would think of his studying at a yeshiva in Israel.

"Perhaps they think I'm kind of crazy for being in a 'dangerous' part of the world," he wrote. "Perhaps they are right. But I feel that I'm doing something very important. I am growing and changing. I don't know where this learning is taking me, but I think it's where I should be going. Gran, you always asked me to make a blessing at Thanksgiving dinner, so let me make this blessing: I want to bless ... all of us that we should have strength to continue doing the things we know are right even when others might think we're crazy or be concerned for us. And that all of us should continue to strive and grow. May it be God's will that we all ultimately reach wherever it is that we are going. May it be His will."

Amen

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