

Dovetail

A Journal by and for Jewish/Christian Families



Interfaith Weddings: Looking Forward and Looking Back

For some people, weddings are the first time they are introduced to *Dovetail Journal* and all it's varied and wonderful resources, and that alone makes this topic worth revisiting regularly. Immediate access to the *Dovetail* website and newly published resources by *Dovetail* are enough to make me cry with jealousy!

It was by chance and good fortune that I found *Dovetail* in the early years of its publication, although by then I had weathered the wedding dilemmas in isolation from other interfaith couples. Joan Hawxhurst and, later, Mary Rosenbaum have become long-standing heroes in my house. Today, *Dovetail* has support for all people in interfaith relationships. This is the place to go where we all agree to respect and appreciate each other's differences. Because of the hard work of Joan and Mary, we now have lots of heroes and their real-life stories to look to for wisdom and support. If you haven't got a wedding in the works, it can still be a wonderful chance to look back and see how far you and your spouse and families have come.

Piecing together a family celebration of any kind can be a trying affair, but interfaith couples clearly shoulder an extra burden when they try to bring together two religious traditions on such an emotionally charged day—a wedding! I have heard many wonderful, amazing, soul-stretching and sometimes painful stories from interfaith couples who worked hard to make their wedding day special. Some felt extremely proud and successful. Others felt the experience did not meet their expectations. Sometimes one partner chose to give up their "dream of a lifetime" in order to share a lifetime with their chosen and sometimes no one had

to sacrifice anything. Sometimes family support was available and sometimes the couple stood alone.

What I have heard most from married interfaith couples is that the journey of making these delicate decisions was the model for much of their life journey together. Whether they searched for answers from the pulpit or the bima, from in the pew or from under the huppah, from the Torah or from the New Testament, they were striving to find ways to honor God, honor themselves, and honor their families. Most reported that what they learned in the short run was less important than how they used their lessons in the long run.

Wedding days, by definition, are so very public. The decisions a couple makes and their intentions are on display and will be questioned and re-questioned. The poem by Hillel Schwartz, "Make not much of us", truly captures the feeling of the winds blowing so many directions at once and the couple standing together in their choices.

The choices you make for your wedding day can be simple and

In This Issue

Turning Differences into Opportunities	3
Planning an Interfaith Marriage Ceremony - A Search for Balance	5
357 Miles to Graceland	7
Humor	9
Poem: Make Not Much of Us	10
I Moved My Ice Cream Bowls To Massachusetts	11
Bulletin Board	15

direct, which might avoid a lot of deep, traditional, or controversial issues with your family. They can also be elaborate and intertwined, and even deliberately be used to sort through the depth of two traditions representing two families. My guess is that most couples try to approach their decisions from both angles with a careful balance. Nancy Nutting Cohen, in her homily "Turning Differences into Opportunities" describes her life as an active Catholic who finds herself facing marriage to a Jewish man. She shares her search for her own values and beliefs and how she was able to share them in her wedding ceremony with her husband, Harry.

An interesting angle from which to view your wedding planning can be found in Ned Rosenbaum's story of his trip to Graceland—well, almost! He shares the point of view of a possible officiant of an interfaith wedding for a young couple. Ned listens carefully to what the future bride and groom don't even know they are saying, and interprets for us. This was the first of many lessons I learned in my own interfaith marriage: take the time to Listen, Listen, Listen! The challenge of listening doesn't stop after the wedding or even at ten or twenty years—it's there for the long haul.

One thing I requested for our wedding was reading three Bible verses that meant a lot to me: the Shema, First Corinthians Chapter 13, and finally a verse from the chapter of Ruth. In the story, Naomi, a Jewish mom, gives her son in marriage to a non-Jew, Ruth. When the son dies, Ruth pledges her life and friendship to her mother-in-law. The story showed that friendship and love can grow out of struggles and pain and even great loss. It confirmed for me that there is great strength and wisdom in womanhood, and that love can be bigger than any one tradition. In my favorite quote, Ruth pledges to Naomi, "For where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." (Ruth 1:16)

My husband of 21 years, Steve, was comfortable with all these verses and it made our day more meaningful and comfortable that we chose from our own hearts. Yet the advice he shares in "Planning an Interfaith Marriage Ceremony" reminds me of how difficult it can be to find a balance in an interfaith relationship.

Already married? Looking back on a wedding passed can be a valuable way to check in on your relationship now, compared to where and how

you started off. Have you stayed true to your original intent? Have you grown from lessons learned and become a better person or stronger couple? Unlike the top of the cake, no relationship is frozen the day of the wedding. The journey continues. Remembering that a sense of humor is the best gift of all, I included a lighthearted joke circulating on the Internet and a piece by Julie Potter which I hope will bring smiles to anyone reading them.

Keep the faith!

Debi Tenner 

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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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Turning Differences into Opportunities

by Nancy Nutting Cohen

In my case, interfaith involves a Jewish and Catholic partner in marriage. But I'd also like to suggest that every marriage is an interfaith marriage, every relationship is an interfaith relationship, even if it's between two people of the same faith. Two Catholics, for example, can have vastly different understandings of what it means to be Catholic or Christian and how one relates to God and to other people. Indeed, every marriage is a mixed marriage. All marriages unite a mixture of difference, histories, views of life, values, and goals for the future; the challenge is to find ways to turn those differences into opportunities to move forward instead of obstacles that hold us back. So I hope with that perspective in mind, you'll be able to relate some of my experiences to your own.

Our Differences

I am Catholic. I was born Catholic and raised Catholic. I got my BA in theology and a Masters in Religious Education, both from Catholic universities. By the time I met Harry, I had been working for Catholic institutions for seven years. You couldn't get much more Catholic than I was, which is why I assumed that whoever I married would have to be, not only Christian, not only Catholic, but just as involved in Church work as I was. So how did I end up marrying a Jew?

I met Harry in January of 1980 on a blind date. My friend Cindy had a friend who needed a date for a company party. Six months earlier, I had broken up with a man who left me licking my wounds and uninterested in any kind of dating. Cindy

told me that Harry was Jewish, and I think, in the back of my mind, this big difference of religion was what assured me that we wouldn't "get involved."

Despite my resistance, Harry and I did have at least one thing in common: we both liked to explore the Twin Cities. As time went on, we gradually started talking about religion. We discussed our beliefs about God, values, and how life should be lived and people should be treated. I came to realize that I had more in common with Harry than I do even with many Catholics. I came to see him as a really good person, and with that the seed of love was planted and grew. By summer we were talking about the possibility of a future together, and by September we decided to get married. I say "decided" because I was agreeing that we should get married, but I was still very scared. After all, this was not what I had planned. In my fear, I set out on this search to figure out "what is love." I read everything from Rollo May to Dear Abby. In all my research, there were two things that seemed to touch home.

First, from Kahil Gibran's book *The Prophet*, there was a quote I would later use on our wedding invitation:

When you love, you should not say, "God is in my heart but rather I am in the heart of God. And think not that you can direct the course of love. For love, if it finds you worthy, directs your course."

This notion of having one's course directed prompted me to look at the course my life had taken.

Nancy Nutting Cohen has a B.A. in Theology and MEd. in Religious Education, is trained in the art of spiritual direction, and is a Licensed Associate Marriage and Family Therapist. She has spent over twenty-five years working for various Catholic institutions (parishes, schools, hospitals) in everything from youth ministry and curriculum development to pastoral care and spiritual direction. Presently working as a therapist and spiritual director in private practice, she is especially interested in melding the best of psychology and spirituality as she works with individuals, couples, and families toward healing and the evolution of consciousness. She and Harry have two daughters, Kate, 21, and Micahla, 18.

The course of my life had led me to a profound respect for other traditions and those who practiced them, but was I supposed to marry one as well?

My mentor, who was an undergraduate professor, was forever saying, "If you want to understand who Jesus was and what the Scriptures meant and what the early Church was all about, you have to understand what it meant to be Jewish in the first century." From him, I learned to have a deep love and respect for Judaism as the roots from which my own Catholic tradition sprang. So indeed, the course of my life had led me to a profound respect for other traditions and those who practiced them, but was I supposed to marry one as well?

The second insight came from a philosophy course in which I studied a Jesuit priest, Teilhard de Chardin. Briefly, Teilhard felt that the human race was evolving toward greater unity, complexity, and cooperation, and would someday come together at the Omega point, which he called God. He asked, "What is the unifying force that was drawing it together?" and concluded that it was love. As I reflected on that notion of love as the unifying force, I began to think that maybe that's the way God was going to bring peace and unity into the world. Individuals of different nations, races, and religions would come to know and love each other and, in that love, reach out over that gap that separates and try to build a common life together.

We married in May of 1981. Theologian John Dunne talks of "passing over and coming back" as the experience one has when one passes over and views the world through someone else's eyes, and then comes back to one's original standpoint with an even broader vision. Over the years we have been married, I have had the chance to "pass over"

and see some very beautiful things in the Jewish tradition, and "come back" all the more enriched for my own tradition.

Our Opportunities

Many people ask or expect to see from us a conversion to one faith or the other; but quite simply, we're trying to share the best of both traditions. The prophet Micah said, beautifully and simply:

"This is what God asks of you, only this: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Many times we are stretched to figure out what exactly we do believe, and then challenged to create rituals and family life that expresses those beliefs with both integrity and a respect for differences. Our first challenge was our wedding ceremony: from there, we have worked together on things as simple as a grace before meals, to Passover Seders, Friday night Shabbat services, and even our tenth anniversary renewal of vows. We just try to keep God and an ethical way of life as our main focus and draw on the things from our two religions that help us move in that direction.

This approach isn't easy and it's not for everyone. We've made some mistakes and had some setbacks.

We don't have all the answers; we just try to handle each situation as it comes up. We continually learn and grow ourselves. We feel we're in uncharted territory, but we know we are not alone: we have each other, a common God, lots of loving and supportive friends and others we have met who are also searching for a common way. As John Dunne says, "It's a great spiritual adventure."

I've noticed that each generation seems to go one step further in the adventure than the previous generation. It wasn't too long ago that a Catholic-Lutheran marriage was a major crisis, and it may still be that way in some places. Harry and I have been able to take this step, but I don't even know what the next step is, much less how to take it. I think, I hope, my children will know. I believe God will help us do this in spite of us, if not because of us.

I'll leave you with this final thought. It's in the form of a prayer, a part of the prayer we composed for our wedding ceremony:

Loving and gentle God

Guide us as we strive to hear you speaking to us through our religious traditions.

Keep us faithful to Yourself, as well as to each other.

May our life together be a sign to others

that people can live together in peace in spite of differences.

Amen. Alleluia! 

Planning an Interfaith Marriage Ceremony: A Search for Balance

by Steve Tenner

When my uncle married in 1967, there were very few options for interfaith marriage ceremonies. In 1982, fifteen years later, the same few options were available to me. The popular approach was to get married by a justice of the peace in a rented hall or restaurant. Support from a rabbi or minister was usually not available. Unhappy with the spiritual meaning of the popular wedding option, we, like many couples, began a process of looking for alternatives. Family members got involved and brought along the guilt of "marrying out," so questions of ceremony and tradition became even more difficult. They wanted to know where we were going to get married, who would perform the ceremony, and would we choose a Saturday or Sunday. These and so many other questions all put pressure on us. It left us feeling as if we could never meet all the expectations of everyone involved.

Finding the Balance Point

We were quite young when we married, and that made it harder to put the pressure and guilt into perspective. Some of your friends and family will tell you that it is your wedding and you should plan it the way you want. Your family and your fiancé's family may have many different points of view. Your intended spouse will also have feelings about the event that may not match his or her family's ideas. Whatever the outside pressures, it is extremely important to take an appropriate amount of time for you and your intended to make the decision together. Designate time to discuss as thoroughly as possible the choices and both of your opinions. Don't just say "I must have a

ketubah" (a traditional Jewish marriage contract). Find out why this is important to you and how your future spouse feels about it. The decision to discuss everything privately before you approach your family is the first of many times that you will be challenged to create and maintain a successful harmonious interfaith marriage.

As you plan the wedding ceremony, don't get caught up in trying to keep everything completely equitable. Rather, focus on making your ceremony meaningful to both partners. Reciting the Shema in a Jewish ceremony could be a completely sacred event for a Jewish partner, while it is just one of many important Bible quotes for a Christian. Skipping the smashing of the glass may be a huge emotional bummer for the Jewish partner, even if your spouse perceives it as having nothing to do with anything religious. Every time you can identify a detail or a special meaning and communicate it to your partner, you avoid pitfalls. If you find you are in a pitfall, then the opposite is probably true: look deeper for the meanings behind the ritual, tradition, or preference and you will find a way out of the struggle.

Don't be tempted to completely throw away your heritage and personal faith just to please a few people. As you consider each decision, the date, food, flowers, ceremony officiant, and vows, put each into the larger context of your entire ceremony. Ask yourself, "Is this personal preference one that I must have included in the day I wed? Am I including enough of my partner's heritage to make this ceremony a reflection of him/her as well?"

Steve Tenner is Director of Information Technology for a disability reinsurance company. He has been married to his wife, Debi for 21 years and is father to two teenagers: Joshua, age 15, and Sharon, age 13. Steve and his wife have raised their children from birth with both Judaism and Christianity in their household. His son Joshua became a Bar Mitzvah at age 13 and his daughter Sharon prefers to be considered interfaith at this time.

Don't be tempted to completely throw away your heritage and personal faith just to please a few people.

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Thank you for your support.

While you do want to make sure the ceremony has personal meaning, you don't want it to offend anyone who attends. Once you have your ideas in basic form, and a good understanding of why you chose these ideas, go to your friends and family and tell them your plans. Listen to their responses and their concerns. What kind of support are they willing to give you for your ideas? What ideas do they have that they can present calmly and appropriately? Are they able to help you find officiants to help you plan for your special day?

Ceremonies in a faith with strong roots and rituals such as Catholicism, Christian Orthodox and some denominations of Judaism, will be less flexible regarding your own personal choices. These (denominationally required) choices are not bad ones if you and your intended agree, but they may not be a true representation of your interfaith relationship either. Often, convincing a priest or rabbi to perform the ceremony will come with denominationally required prerequisites. Regardless of whether you take the prerequisites seriously, the officiant will probably take them very seriously, so be sure to discuss the full meanings and details with your future spouse. Again, the more details you can discuss in advance, the easier the process will be for you.

Keeping Your Balance

Whatever decisions you make regarding your marriage ceremony, keep these few simple rules at hand:

- Make the ceremony meaningful to both of you.
- Take time to plan your ceremony before involving too many other

family members or friends.

- Keep family traditions in mind and include them whenever possible.
- Avoid "you must" and "you should" thinking in the decision-making process. If you hear yourself saying "I should," turn it into a question: "Why exactly should I?"
- Every choice does not have to be equitable to both, but the final plan should make you both happy.

Finally, not everyone will agree with your choices. You may not be able to meet everyone's needs while also meeting your own. Your decisions may be hard for others to accept, so you need to let them know that their feelings were considered. You may want to consider having two ceremonies if you want to honor too many things in too many ways to incorporate into one.

People who disagree with you need to understand that your ceremony was created from both of your hearts and that it is intended to be the day you both have always wanted it to be. Work patiently with them to help them understand this, if possible. In return, they may come to understand that the ceremony is significant for you as an interfaith couple; together, you created a ceremony that reflects the beliefs of both husband and wife. Let them know that despite their differences and concerns, you want everyone to be able to celebrate the day. Even up to the last minute before our wedding, we tried to find compromises and ways to include all family members. The extra and patient effort on our parts was well worth it, and left us feeling that we had done our best when the big day arrived. 

357 Miles to Graceland

by Stanley Ned Rosenbaum

In thirty years I've probably participated in about two dozen intermarriage services with Christian clergy and performed one by myself. I don't do these services willingly, not because I'm opposed to intermarriage, but because I like to cry at weddings and you cannot do that when you're leading. The one I did by myself, at Hershey Park in Pennsylvania, was a near thing, too, as first the groom and then the bride broke down. (So did their marriage, three years later, but that's another story.)

I'm usually acquainted with one member of the marrying couple; sometimes, for years. Even so, I used to insist that they come for a consulting session and that I see their ceremony in advance before agreeing to participate. Since I've been intermarried for almost forty years, I think I'm better able to explain both the problems and the positive potentials of intermarriage than clergy can. And I'm free of any establishment taint.

The one time I didn't do this (performing on three weeks notice) turned out to be a bloodless, soulless affair at a motel. The couple, or at least the Jewish partner, simply wanted a warm body to do some of what I call "Jewish local color," no doubt to placate that side of the hall. And that was it. I left the place with a check in my pocket, a bad taste in my mouth and the silent promise not to do anything like that again. So far I've kept that promise, but recently I came close to falling off my wagon - or high horse.

But let me digress a moment. At Dovetail's last national conference I heard Father John Cusick explain

that he considers himself "a representative of God" and invoke the New Testament parable of the sower of seed. No matter what the motive or commitment of the couple, he will perform when asked and hope that in the fullness of time his seed will take root. I appreciate John's position, but even rabbis are not representatives of God - their ordination is not a sacrament; how much less those of us who take their place before a wedding congregation. We are representatives of the Jewish people who stand bravely but trepidatiously in front of a couple whose life choices may very well lead to a diminution of our community. It is not a very comfortable position.

Going to Graceland

Well, recently I got a call from a man I didn't know. He wanted a warm body on short notice to do the Jewish bit, and I was tempted. The wedding would be at Graceland. I could one-up my Dovetail colleague, Allen Secher, by becoming the first Jew to participate in an intermarriage ceremony at Elvis's place. I suggested to the groom that I might do "You Ain't Nothing But a Hound-dog" in a Yiddish accent. He laughed and said "No thanks."

On a more serious note, he didn't have a ceremony in mind yet, just to do whatever the Protestants usually do there, and asked me for help. Two weeks before the wedding he was still wondering if they should have a ketubah? A huppah? It was as though they were buying a new car and he was wondering what options he wanted on it. Over my wife's objections about copyright infringement, I faxed him one of the librettos from Joan Hawxhurst's

Stanley Ned Rosenbaum, Ph.D., is a Brandeis-trained Judaic Studies professor, presently semi-retired and teaching part-time at the University of Kentucky. A founding member of the Dovetail Institute board of directors, he is co-author of Celebrating Our Differences: Living Two Faiths in One Marriage. In addition to published books and articles on biblical studies, he is currently working with Rabbi Allen Secher on Strange Wives: The Paradox of Biblical Intermarriage.

**Please remember us in
your will and trusts.**

Dovetail's website:

www.dovetailinstitute.org

**Online discussion group:
[groups.yahoo.com/group/
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Dovetail Structural Change

At our annual meeting January 10-11, the Dovetail board decided to restructure our confusing dual subscription/membership tracks. Starting July 1, there will be a single inclusive price of \$65. This total amount will be tax-deductible.

Once the new system is fully in place, every subscriber will also be a member with the full privileges of membership, including 10% discounts on conference registrations, tapes, and transcripts. Also, everyone's fee will fall due at the same time, the end of our fiscal year (June 30).

If you are about to become a subscriber, you may get a subscription and/or membership separately under the current structure until July 1. If you are a current subscriber, you need do nothing now; you will be sent a notice in June that will reflect the new system and prorate the remainder of your current subscription (and membership dues, if you're a member as well).

"Interfaith Wedding Ceremonies". I knew he couldn't just use it unedited because in it both officiants spoke to and about the blending of families and I knew this wedding would be just the two of them. So why bother doing anything Jewish?

He just wanted his side represented. But when push came to shove, he decided that my modest fee and transportation expenses were not within their means. He was right, too, but for the wrong reason. Why have someone he'd never met say some Hebrew phrases he probably doesn't understand to an audience in which the groom is the only other Jewish person? Franz Kafka might have loved it, but for my part I repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:6) that I even considered doing it. The daily demands of intermarriage are tough enough. To help begin one in which Judaism, my religion, could be so cavalierly treated is an unworthy endeavor. So here I am, still 357 miles from Graceland. I suppose now I shall never get there. 

**It was as though they
were buying a new car
and he was wondering
what options he wanted
on it.**

Search For A Minister (Joke from the Internet)

Pastoral Search Committee Report: We do not have a happy report to give. We have not been able to find a suitable candidate for this church although we still have one promising prospect. The committee appreciates all of the suggestions from the church members, and we have followed up each and every one with interviews or calls to three references.

The following is our confidential report on the present candidates:

Adam: Good man but problems with his wife. Also, one reference reported that Adam and his wife enjoy nude walking in the woods.

Noah: Former pastorate of 120 years with no converts. Prone to unrealistic building projects.

Abraham: Though the references reported wife-swapping, the facts seem to show he never slept with another man's wife, but he did offer to share his wife with another man.

Joseph: A big thinker, but a braggart. Believes in dream interpreting and has a prison record.

Moses: A modest and meek man, but a poor communicator, even stuttering at times. Sometimes blows his stack and acts rashly. Some say that he left an earlier church over a murder charge.

David: The most promising leader of all the candidates, until we discovered the affair he had with his neighbor's wife.

Solomon: Great preacher but our parsonage would never hold all of his wives.

Elijah: Prone to depression and collapses under pressure.

Elisha: Reported to have lived with a widow while at his former church.

Hosea: A tender and loving pastor, but our people could never handle his wife's occupation.

Deborah: Female.

Jeremiah: Emotionally unstable, alarmist, and negative. He is always lamenting things, and is reported to have taken a long trip to bury his underwear on the bank of some foreign river.

Isaiah: On the fringe. Claims to have seen angels in church and has trouble with his language.

Jonah: Refused God's call into the ministry until he was forced to obey by getting swallowed by a great fish. He told us that the fish later spat him out on the shore near here. We ended the interview with him at that point.

Amos: Too backward and unpolished. With some seminary training he might show promise, but he has a hang-up with wealthy people. He might fit in better with a poor congregation.

John: Says he is a Baptist, but definitely does not dress like one. Has slept in the outdoors for months on end, has a weird diet, and provokes denominational leaders.

Peter: Your pure blue-collar. Has a bad temper and even has been known to curse. Had a big run-in with Paul in Antioch. Aggressive but a real loose cannon.

Paul: Powerful CEO type leader and fascinating preacher. However, he is short on tact, unforgiving with younger ministers, harsh, and has BEEN KNOWN TO PREACH ALL NIGHT!!

Timothy: Too young.

Jesus: Has been popular at times, but once his church grew to 500 he managed to offend them all and the church dwindled to only 12 members. Seldom stays in one place very long. And, of course, he is single.

Judas: His references are solid. A steady plodder, conservative and possesses good connections. He knows how to handle money. We have invited him to preach next Sunday. Real possibilities here. 🍷

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opinions expressed herein.

Poem: Make Not Much of Us
by Hillel Schwartz

Make not much of us.
We live on five words
as our measure, our cubit:
neither more than the other.
All there is to it,
no less and no overplus.

Here on this fasting ledge
of Yom Kippur, a day
for me of Buddha breath
and grief before the play
of autumn light, green wreaths
encircle you, spin toward edge
of winter birth. Our calendars
rarely coincide, but no matter:
we count our own times
far less apart than together,
running through our many tandems
ear to heart to ear.

These rhymes are only intimations.
Religion's public; our faiths weave
in private through each other
like bird and bulrush, give
us song and good shelter
but no excuses for impatience.

And so, make not much of us.
Everywhere are couples
four-handed leaning into the wind
and making ways, not hopeless
though always of two minds,
and keeping ever in touch. 

*Hillel Schwartz, historian and poet, lives
in Encinitas, California. Himself Jewish,
throughout his life his long-term partners
have all been of other faiths. His poems
have appeared most recently in *Fiddlehead*
and *Prairie Schooner*. He is currently
working on a cultural history of noise, to
be published by Zone Press.*

I Moved My Ice Cream Bowls To Massachusetts

by Julie Potter

Armadillo Ashtray
Bronze Baby Booties
Cage with Parakeet
Dude the Dog
Earplugs
Fish Bowl (no fish)
Hood Ornament
Ice Cream Bowls

"I think I have it all," I yelled to mom. I figured this time, it must be love. At the mature age of 30 I don't throw all my worldly into my burgundy Monte Carlo and drive 1,598 miles for just anyone.

My mother's words echoed in my head as I slammed the trunk closed. "Julie, you said you would never live with anyone again." I had explained to her that my living with someone years ago ended because we didn't have a kitchen table. I was 20 going on 15 and thought all apartments came with kitchen tables and could be featured in Apartment Beautiful. Instead our love nest turned out to be a running advertisement for Rodents Are Us. The arrangement lasted six months. I got tired of eating on the floor.

I kissed mom good-bye and assured her, "Don't worry, it will work. I'm older and wiser, and Mike has a kitchen table."

The first time I saw Mike I thought he was Italian. Beautiful black curly hair and the biggest eyes I've ever seen. I met him on a tour in Spain. Are you Italian? I whispered to him as the tour director droned on. I knew I was taking a chance inquiring. Some people find questions like that offensive. I've had many people-people I don't know at all-ask "Are you Swedish?" I guess Swedish people are supposed to be

blonde. I'm blonde. I'm not Swedish.

"Jewish," Mike responded. Relieved he was not upset at my curiosity, I plugged Jewish into my brain computer and instructed it to search and find. File not found was the result.

Finally, I mumbled, "Oh." Mike smiled, and as I looked at that black curly hair and those beautiful eyes something was added to my brain disc on this subject. "Jewish, I can definitely work with Jewish." I was in love.

I unloaded my car into his apartment. It was official. We were living together. From that day on we said "our".

Everyone accepted our living together. His parents, my parents, family and friends. Everyone except the lady at the video store. She was having a tough time. Mike asked if I could check out videos with his membership card. She lowered her glasses and gave me a look that reminded me of my fifth grade teacher, who I'm sure was a closet librarian. "Are you married?"

"No, but we live together," Mike cheerfully responded. "Only spouses can use the card." She snapped. That hurt. I kiss this guy every morning before he brushes his teeth but I can't check out a video in his name. I went back a couple of weeks later with a fake marriage license. She put it aside and said, "I'll need to see the wedding album and receipts from the honeymoon. If those aren't available you can bring in the frozen cake layer you saved for your first anniversary."

Julie Potter lives half the year in southern Florida and summers in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. She is a writer with 25 writing credits including Woman's World Magazine. She is also an avid crafter, especially of Belgian lace. This story is her personal experience in an interfaith relationship.

First Contact

His family invited me for my first Passover. I wanted to fit in. I was introduced to all the relatives and we sat down to eat. I looked around the long dining room table and realized I was the only blonde with short nails. They had the ceremony written in Hebrew and then a special one for me in English. If I had only had time to prepare

I could have studied. I vowed to go to my local library and check out "Hooked on Hebrew." It was like sitting through a foreign film with no subtitles. They were drinking wine and performing different types of Passover rituals—breaking bread, dunking it and reading all at once. I couldn't help but think of a triathlon I entered in college. I was knocked out in the first event. I froze when they asked me to read. I was three steps behind and had to pass. I stalled for time. I excused myself and went to the kitchen for a peanut butter sandwich.

I wasn't sure who the older lady was sitting across from me. The snap had broken on my dress and halfway through the meal I realized I was exposing what little cleavage I do have. I don't know if she was staring at that or thought I was lost and should be at the Easter celebration next door.

Mother's Day will hold a special place in my heart forever. I discovered the older lady who sat across from me at Passover was Mike's 90-year old Aunt Rose. Aunt Rose said two things to me during the party: "Make him marry you. You have beautiful teeth." Sometimes she said it the other way around. "You have

beautiful teeth. Make him marry you." To this day I associate nuptials with a good teeth cleaning.

I also got to watch movies of Mike as a fetus. All afternoon Mike's relatives kept jabbing me and saying, "See Judy! She was pregnant with Mike then." More than four hours of Mike at minus four months.

Mike and I have been living together for three years. The other day we bought a new kitchen table. I feel quite at home with his family. They have been warm and friendly ever since I moved my ice cream bowls to Massachusetts.

There's only one problem. I keep having this recurring dream. It's our wedding day. I walk down the aisle. Mike and I join hands, gaze into each other's eyes and just as we're about to say our vows the person performing the ceremony turns around. It's not a minister. It's not a rabbi. It's the video store lady. 

If I only had time to prepare I could have studied. I vowed to go to my local library and check out *Hooked on Hebrew*.

Rejoice in Your Choice: Finding Common Ground in Interfaith Marriage

Dovetail Institute Fourth National
Conference, August 6-8, 2004

Location: Pacific School of Religion (Graduate Theological Union)
Berkeley, California

A list of nearby lodging and restaurant options will be made available.

The program is shaping up to include some exciting new activities, including a special three-part session for couples who would like guidance in communicating and setting priorities for the interfaith issues in their relationships.

We'll also cover the basic topics: weddings, baby-welcoming and coming-of-age ceremonies, end-of-life questions, choosing children's religion, resources, education, family celebrations, spirituality, understanding each other's religion, finding like-minded people, adult children, daily life, grandparenting, extended family.

Above all, there will be opportunities to exchange ideas and feelings with people in situations similar to your own, whether you're engaged, raising a young family, living with older children, dealing with the empty nest, or finding your way as grandparents in an interfaith family.

If you're involved with interfaith families as a religious or secular counselor, you will find others to network with and draw inspiration from. And, as always, there will be books and tapes for sale, free handouts of ceremonies and other resources, and networking lists to keep you in touch. If you're not already a member, send your dues along with your donation to ensure a 10% discount on conference registration fees and all tapes and transcripts.

Register now at this special Early Bird rate (good till 3/1/04; cancellation deadline 7/15/04). Please include your tax-deductible donation and membership dues.

We rely on your support!

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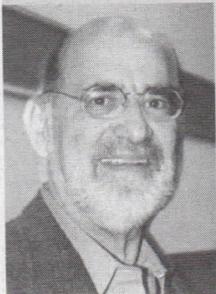
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Clergy Counseling

Rabbi Allen Secher, a founding board member of Dovetail Institute, is available for counseling interfaith couples and their families in person, on line, or by telephone.

Rabbi Secher is a longtime adviser to the largest interfaith group in the country, and has been an officiant or co-officiant of interfaith life cycle ceremonies for the past 40+ years. His breadth of knowledge, warmth, sympathy, and commitment to exploring the needs of both Christian and Jewish partners make him an indispensable support to couples throughout the country and abroad. For details, call (312) 913-9193 or e-mail sech1@aol.com.

Rabbi Secher's counseling services are independent of the Dovetail Institute and do not necessarily reflect its policies.

A New Dovetail Member!

We welcome Andrew Bond, 6 pounds, 3 ounces, 18.5 inches, born December 25, 2003. Congratulations to his parents, Mitchell and Stephanie Fluhrer

In Memoriam

Dr. Egon Mayer, a pioneer in the sociology of intermarriage who was a friend of Dovetail from the inception of the journal and who spoke at our 2002 conference, has passed away at the age of 59. His many books, studies, and interviews helped untold numbers of interfaith couples make informed decisions; his gentle but forthright manner lent encouragement and enlightenment to everyone he met. He will be sorely missed. "Blessed are you, Eternal our God, ruler of the universe, who has given of your wisdom to mortals." Donations in Dr. Mayer's memory may be made to DI-IFR online at www.dovetailinstitute.org, by phone at 800-530-1596, or by mail at 775 Simon Greenwell Ln., Boston KY 40107.

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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.

Interfaith Discussion Group

Dale Kasler & Twila Morris (916) 492-2815

California, San Francisco Bay Area*

Alicia Torre (650) 474-0644

California, San Francisco Bay Area

Interfaith Connection, Groups.
Roseanne Levitt, Director (415) 292-1252

Colorado, Denver

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

Connecticut, Hamden

Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me.
(203) 288-3877

District of Columbia, Greater Washington*

Interfaith Families Project
Susan Ryder (301) 270-6337

District of Columbia, Greater Washington *

Jewish Catholic Family Network.
Eye Edwards (703) 893-4447
Brenda Benesch (703) 528-2016
Patrice Thomas (301) 299-6821
Jcfamilynetwork@comcast.net
<http://mywebpages.comcast.net/jcfamilynetwork/>

Illinois, Chicago Metropolitan area*

Jewish Catholic Couples' Dialogue Group
Abbe & Dan Josephs (708) 660-9503
Patty & David Kovacs (773) 275-5689

Indiana, Bloomington*

Multifaith couples' group.
Eye Edwards (703) 893-4447,
Brenda Benesch (202) 256-4644,
Patrice Thomas (301) 299-6821;
<http://mywebpages.comcast.net/jcfamilynetwork/>
email: jcfamilynetwork@comcast.net

Louisiana, New Orleans

Courtney Nathan, Jewish Family Services
(504) 831-8475

Maryland, Baltimore

Jacqui Ashkin, Jewish Family Services
6 Park Center Court, Suite 203
Owings, Mills, MD 21117
(410) 356-8383 ext. 351

Maryland, Rockville

JCC of Greater Washington, DC
Tracey Dorfman, Director
(301) 881-0100, ext. 6762

Massachusetts, Boston*

Adina Davidson & Joel Nitzberg
(617) 776-3235

Michigan, Ann Arbor

Jewbilation: Jewish Roots with Interfaith
Wings, Lauren Zinn (734) 996-3524
<http://www.jewbilation.org>

Minnesota, Minneapolis*

Joan Cleary and Jerry Helfand (651) 698-7987

Minnesota, Minneapolis

Jewish FCS of Minneapolis, Barbara Rudnick

Missouri, St. Louis area*

Joanne & Larry Eisenman (314) 918-7992

New Jersey, West Orange

Jewish Community Center
Lynne Wolfe (973) 736-3200 ext. 233

New Mexico, Albuquerque

Archdiocese of Santa Fe Ecumenical Office
Fr. Michael Damkovich or Heddy Long
Family Life Office

New York, Albany Area

Marie or Rob Dropkin (518) 439-3732

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
<http://www.tuj.org>, (212) 535-0187

New York, NY Greater Metropolitan area*

Interfaith Community, Inc.
Manhattan, Westchester, and Orange/
Rockland Counties
Sheila Gordon (212) 870-2544
<http://www.interfaithcommunity.org>

New York, Rochester

Interfaith Connection, JCC
Michele Ruda Leve, C.S.W.
(585) 461-2000 ext. 232

Ohio, Columbus

Gateways: The Jewish Interfaith Connection
Carol Folkerth (614) 231-2731

Ohio, Dayton

Jewish Interfaith Network: Interfaith group
David Knapp (937) 853-0372

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 ext. 142

Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Interfaith Connection, JCC of Milwaukee
Prina Goldfarb (414) 964-4444

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 meet or talk with other interfaith couples:

Orlando, FL
Des Moines, IA
Indianapolis, IN
W. Bloomfield area, MI
Lincoln, NE
Cleveland, OH
Oklahoma City, OK
Elkins Park, PA
Madison, WI

To network, please contact us at DI-IFR@Bardstown.com or 800-530-1596.

* Group not sponsored by a religious institution.

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

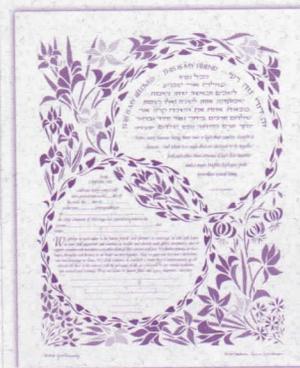
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