



## SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

Friends for Preservation of Middlesex County Jewish Cemeteries was formed for two purposes. Columns in prior newsletters have tried to impress upon you the need for us to raise funds in order to preserve the cemeteries in which our ancestors – and part of our histories – are buried. Fundraising is the first and most obvious purpose of this organization.

But there is a second reason, in many ways as important, which is usually unstated. And the two work hand-in-hand.

One of the unintended consequences of the formation of Friends is the extent to which it has brought together acquaintances of a common background, who once formed a community and who are discovering again – but as if for the first time – how much they share, how much they need each other and – yes – how much they like each other.

This commonality goes a lot deeper than Rose Brody's English classes, USY at Beth Mordecai, Upsilon Lambda Phi and the agonies of Hebrew school. It comes from living together in a particular place at a particular time and, many years later, discovering that there are only a limited number of people who shared those experiences and even they are beginning to disappear. This shared upbringing creates a space which can not be replicated and which is closed to those who didn't grow up in it.

Last year, I was asked to talk at a Chevra Kadisha conference. Roni Goss Berkowitz, whom I had not seen since my undergraduate years, was part of the program. I was pleasantly shaken when she recognized me immediately. More importantly, our conversation seemed to me to pick up where it left off all those years ago. That sort of thing is possible only with people with whom one shares a deep and lasting bond. I have heard stories about – and have participated in – tours of the cemetery which have brought families together and had them collide with old friends who they did not know would be there. These tours have led to a renewal of long-dormant friendships.

Of course, while my generation was busy finding friends through playmates and schoolmates, there was a generation of people who were making those friendships possible and facilitating them – our parents. My parents were very active participants in the friendships of my youth. They gave us the equivalent of a clubhouse, provided rides to and from various events, and encouraged us in what we wanted to do. So did the parents of everyone else in my circle.

My parents aren't here any more and neither are the parents of my childhood friends. However, just as our parents (and grandparents) thought they had an obligation to us, we must acknowledge that we have a corresponding obligation to them. That obligation takes many forms, one of which obliges us to make a serious effort to maintain their final resting places so that we can make our children and our children's children aware of their past and the building blocks of their character. Need I mention that most of us would like our children to do the same for us? Well, Friends presents a way to do that. All it takes is commitment... and money.

This is not just metaphysical prattling. There is something about physical presence that concretizes experience. I am named after my grandfather Charles Bardin, who is buried in Perth Amboy next to my grandmother Sarah Bardin (whom many of you knew). My children have always known for whom I am named. However, one recent Rosh Hashanah I grabbed my son, Rafi, and said "Let's go visit my grandmother." When we got to the place in the cemetery which holds my grandparents, Rafi looked at the stone for Charles Bardin, then looked at the living Bardin Charles, and told me that the physical proximity of the two caused him to make a connection that he had never been able to make any other way. This ability to make the connection with his eyes managed to bring a new and vital life to something he always had known, but only as a cold fact.

One of the things that made it easy was that the engravings on the graves of my grandparents are still fully legible. Otherwise, Rafi might not have been able to make the connection and both he and I would have lost touch with an important part of our joint family history.

I believe that it is important that this kind of connection continue to be made. And the only way that others – now and in the future – can participate in that kind of cross-generational experience is if money is provided to maintain the cemetery.

There is much to be done and only a limited time left in which to do it.

So open your checkbooks.

Let's hear from you!

*Bardy Levavy*



Top - Hebrew Fraternity Cemetery in Hopelawn, NJ

Bottom - Congregation Shaarey Tefilah Cemetery in Perth Amboy, NJ

## DONATIONS

We remain very grateful for your continued support, especially as we all face challenges in the current economic crisis. While we hope and trust that our own current financial struggles will be temporary and relatively brief, these difficulties serve as a strong reminder that our ancestors faced economic challenges that were neither temporary nor brief. Their courageous decision to leave their Eastern European homes and establish the Perth Amboy Jewish Community enabled all of us to enjoy better lives. We owe it to them to honor their memory and maintain their final resting place with dignity. We hope we can count on your continued generosity --- so that we can achieve both our immediate goal of maintaining these cemeteries now and our long-term goal of maintaining them forever.

Because we are a federally tax-exempt organization as determined by the IRS under Section 501(c)(13), all contributions are tax-deductible as provided by law.

## NEW PROJECTS: HISTORY BOOK AND CEMETERY REGISTRY

Our cemetery represents both an important part of the history of the Perth Amboy Jewish Community and the final resting place for the ancestors of many Jews now living worldwide. With this in mind, we are happy to announce two important projects that will benefit both:

### PERTH AMBOY JEWISH COMMUNITY HISTORY BOOK

Friends of Perth Amboy Jewish History, a new nonprofit organization, is publishing a book about the history of the Perth Amboy Jewish Community --- written by Perth Amboy's own Robert Spector --- to collect the story and memories as a lasting tribute to those who built the community and all those who lived there and in surrounding communities. Many of you have already sent stories and photos, and all of you will want to reserve your copies in advance --- probably more than one! The book organizers plan to launch their special book promotional opportunities in the near future --- including the chance to sponsor "Family Tribute Pages" and other honors. You can expect to receive more information about the book, including sponsorship and advance orders, very soon.

### CEMETERY REGISTRY

Several genealogists have encouraged us to create a registry of all those interred at our cemeteries to assist people in locating the graves of their ancestors. We initiated this project recently and have already begun to record the information. Our hope is to include data on all monuments both on our own Web site and as part of the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR). Carol Roberts is coordinating this project. Anyone willing to help with this project should contact us through our Web site:

[www.friendsofjewishcemeteries.org](http://www.friendsofjewishcemeteries.org)

by e-mail: [friends@friendsofjewishcemeteries.org](mailto:friends@friendsofjewishcemeteries.org)

or by phone: 856-222-1418

# 2008

## ANNUAL HONOR ROLL

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the following donors, each of whom contributed at least \$1,000.00 to our organization during calendar year 2008:

**\$5,000 +**

**Norma Jacobson Messing  
Gary Shangold  
Mona Shangold**

**\$2,000 +**

**Bardin Levavy  
Barry Rosengarten**

**\$1,000 +**

**Martin Clawans and  
Fran Clawans Anderson  
Norma Wilentz Hess  
Michael and Rissa Spivack Ratner  
Burton Sher  
Myron P. Shevell**



## CEMETERY TOURS

Our Cemetery Tours have remained very popular and have provided wonderful opportunities for families to plan Family Reunions --- enabling them to visit family graves together and meet cousins they either haven't seen for a long time or haven't met before. Last year the Belafsky and Davidson Families planned Family Reunions at our Cemetery Tours, in each case attracting cousins from all over the US. We hope more families will schedule such reunions, and we encourage you to let us help you in planning these. In scheduling tours, we have tried to select dates that are both attractive and convenient for as many people as possible, including some when we know many of you will be in the area for high school reunions.

Our 2009 Cemetery Tours have been scheduled on the following dates:

April 26

May 10 (Mother's Day)

June 21 (Father's Day)

July 12

August 16

September 13

October 11

All tours will begin at 12:00 noon at the Hebrew Fraternity Cemetery entry gate on New Brunswick Avenue in Hopelawn.

After a 1-hour tour of the Hebrew Fraternity Cemetery, we will drive to the Congregation Shaarey Tefilah Cemetery on Florida Grove Road and Bingle Street for a 1-hour tour of that cemetery.

**WEAR VERY COMFORTABLE CLOTHES AND SHOES**, appropriate for standing and walking outdoors for 2 hours. All tours will be followed by an optional visit to a local, casual restaurant for continued socializing with old friends.

Although all tours are free, advance registration is recommended so that we can notify you of any weather-related cancellations and can locate any family graves of special interest to you.

*Please register though*

*our Web site:*

[www.friendsofjewishcemeteries.org](http://www.friendsofjewishcemeteries.org)

*by phone: 856-222-1418*

*or by e-mail:*

[friends@friendsofjewishcemeteries.org](mailto:friends@friendsofjewishcemeteries.org)



# THANKING OUR DONORS

The following list includes all donations received and processed between August 1, 2008 and February 1, 2009. All donations received prior to August 1, 2008 were listed in previous issues of THE ETERNAL VINE. All donations received after February 1, 2009 will be listed in the next issue of THE ETERNAL VINE. We gratefully acknowledge generous donations from the following individuals:

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**Friends for Preservation of  
Middlesex County Jewish Cemeteries, Inc.**

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2. Andrew Davidson, Jack Davidson (front), Iris Davidson Schwartz, Sy Schwartz, Riki Greenspan, Phyllis Davidson Lavitt, Bill Davidson, Jane Davidson, Carolyn Davidson (holding child), Sheldon Cheuse (front), Charles Levy, Margaret Davidson, Phil Davidson, Linda Levy Hamelsky (front), Mel Hamelsky, Cindi Greenspan Goldman (front), Ezra Greenspan, Ruth Frankel, Sid Frankel, Yoni Greenspan
3. Sandra Wymore, Marcia Robinson, Eileen Newmier, Tom Newmier
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5. Lois Fox Corrado, Isabel Blum Kalfaian, Rita Kimmelman Pessirilo, Judy Meistrich Buchband

**LANDSCAPING AND REPAIRS**

If you have visited the cemeteries recently, you have undoubtedly noticed the beautiful and dignified landscaping your donations have accomplished. However, you have probably also noticed several fallen monuments, structural deterioration in the Bingle Street wall, and several other areas needing repairs. Indeed, we have learned that we must prepare and budget for the unexpected --- despite the added costs of doing so. We hope to undertake some of these repairs as soon as we can afford to do so, possibly with some special fundraising projects for this purpose. Any early or additional donations for these special needs will be greatly appreciated.

**BOCA BREAKFASTS**

We enjoyed socializing and reminiscing with former Perth Amboy residents at our recent "Perth Amboy Breakfasts in Boca," and we hope to make this an annual tradition. Be sure to let us know if you plan to be in South Florida next winter, so that we can invite you.



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