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Eagles Fans Bleed Green, Even During Special Events



◀ A hooded sweatshirt with a logo from Dillon Frankel's Bar Mitzvah was given out as a party favor.

PHOTO PROVIDED

MARISSA STERN | JE STAFF

"You want Philly Philly?"

"Hungry dogs run faster."

"We all we got, we all we need!"

These are well-known phrases in any Eagles fan's lexicon, but they are also the names of some of the drink specials that were on tap for Josh Markowitz's Sept. 29 Bar Mitzvah. (If you wanted water, you had to ask for Patriots' Tears.)

The celebration for his big day, which followed a service at Main Line Reform Temple, was Eagles-themed — a fitting decision for a big-time fan who goes to every home game with his dad, David, and older brothers, Justin, 18, and Jared, 16.

The whole family also headed to Minnesota for the Super Bowl. "We are huge Eagles fans," said his mom, Lecia Markowitz. "What better theme than this for Josh's Bar Mitzvah?"

It was the week leading up to the big day, and Markowitz had finished the final fitting for her dress, a black number she was still searching for appropriate green jewelry to accessorize with.

She was excited for the celebration, which was the culmination of planning and plotting special surprises for her youngest son.

One such surprise included David Markowitz making a costume change during the reception and donning a Mummies outfit

See Eagles, Page 8

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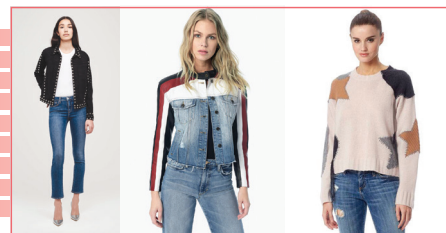
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▲ A couple of blown up pictures of Dillon Frankel that were displayed during his Bar Mitzvah

PHOTOS PROVIDED

Eagles

Continued from Page 7

like Jason Kelce during the Super Bowl parade.

Josh did not know about this beforehand, Lecia Markowitz noted.

And the Eagles certainly influenced the rest of the party — even starting with the invitations, which were Eagles green and black with an outline of the now-famous “Philly Special” play.

The family built an 18-foot tailgate truck to serve as the bar inside where bartenders served the aforementioned Eagles-themed concoctions. The Eagles pep band made an appearance to lead the 265-guest crowd in the Eagles chant as a surprise and the green, vinyl dance floor was made to resemble a football field.

The theme was decided before the Eagles made it to Minneapolis, so the outcome of the game, whatever it was, would not have been a deterrent.

The Birds flying out victorious, however, certainly did not hurt.

“We decided before they won the Super Bowl, probably since last fall, we were doing an Eagles theme,” Markowitz recalled, “and then when they won we were like, this couldn’t have turned out any better.”

But while there was plenty of Eagles spirit in the room, with photos of Josh superimposed on various *Sports Illustrated* covers alongside blown-up versions of those featuring Eagles players, plus photos interspersed of him and his family from various games and, of course, the Super Bowl, Markowitz noted the party — as fun as it was — was not the most important part of the day.

It was an especially emotional day, as it was the Bar Mitzvah for their youngest son, she said.

“Having all our friends and family together — how many times in your life is everyone you love in the same room together?” she said.

The Markowitzes were not the only ones to bleed green during a special occasion.

In fact, fans taking their enthusiasm for the team all the way to their Bar Mitzvah or even a wedding is part of a larger trend.

“Absolutely,” confirmed Stephanie Fitzpatrick, director of talent and emcee at EBE Entertainment. “It’s been a huge trend as of late.”

She recalled Jennifer Metts and Craig Adams’ recent wedding, which, while not Eagles-themed, featured themed drinks and an Eagles ice sculpture, and the crowd joining together for the Eagles chant.

The chant and the team’s fight song along with other notable songs like Meek Mill’s “Dreams and Nightmares,” which the Eagles came out to during the Super Bowl, have definitely been played more at events, she said. Their bands have all learned the songs and the DJs have them at the ready.

“It really wakes the entire room up and gets everybody in the spirit, which is really nice,” she said. “If people weren’t ready to party before, they’ll definitely be ready after this. It’s a huge crowd participation moment.”

The timing of the Super Bowl and Dillon Frankel’s Bar Mitzvah was pretty significant, noted his mother, Stacy.

Dillon was born six days after the Eagles’ unsuccessful attempt at taking home the Vince Lombardi Trophy in 2005. His Bar Mitzvah was six days after they finally succeeded in 2018.

And Dillon was in Minnesota to see it all happen.

“It was a busy week,” Stacy Frankel said with a laugh.

See Eagles, Page 10

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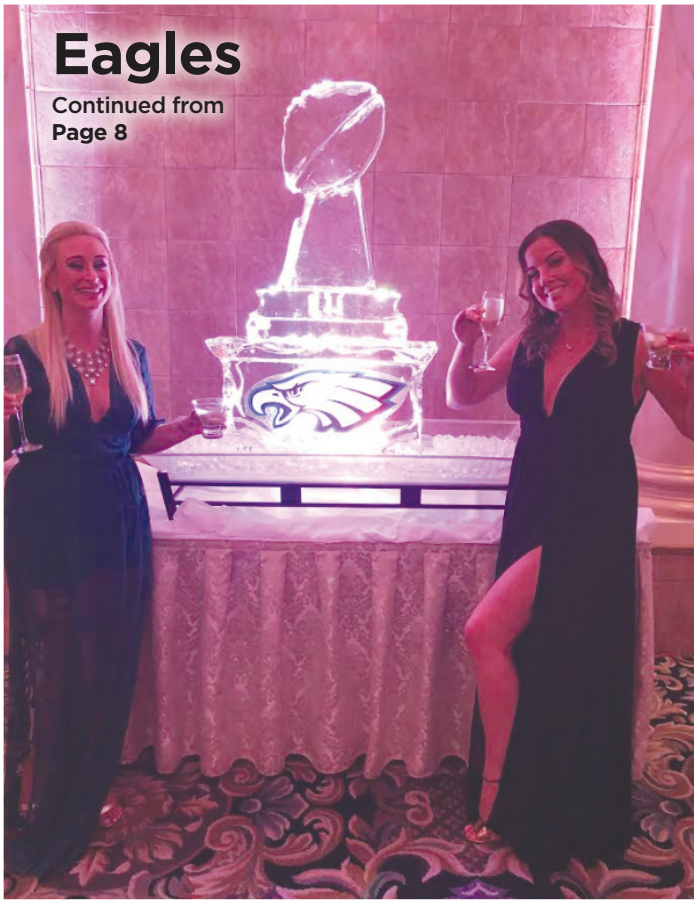
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Eagles

Continued from
Page 8



▲ The ice sculpture at Jennifer Metts and Craig Adams' wedding

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But it was all worth it, as Dillon became a Bar Mitzvah the morning of Feb. 10 at Congregation Beth Or and celebrated later on the club level of Lincoln Financial Field itself.

An appearance by Swoop and tours of the locker rooms and press conference area for the kids added to the experience.

A special video surprise for the Bar Mitzvah boy featured a cartoon version of Merrill Reese talking about Dillon's big day with a fellow animated Carson Wentz and other players.

With the help of an event planner whose son also had his party at the Linc, Frankel tried to incorporate as many creative details as she could within the space. Even the invitations had brown trim that resembled that of a football.

The food was themed around the idea of a tailgate, including a French fry station.

Like at football games, hawkers went around as guests left, hoisting trays of cotton candy, popcorn and Cracker Jacks.

Drinks, too, were on theme with a "Dilly Dilly" special, a nod to the Bud Light commercials that aired leading up to game day as well as to Dillon himself.

"It just couldn't have been better," she said.

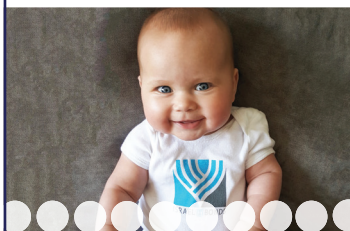
The Bar Mitzvah boy sported a jersey during the party, which read "Frankel, #13" on the back. (Josh Markowitz did something similar, his mom noted, and all the men there wore green ties.)

"The best part about it, really, was the people," Frankel said, noting relatives even came in from Israel. "When you have everybody in your life in one place — everybody was there — it was amazing. It was just a big milestone.

"It was worth every penny," she added. "I would do it again in a minute." ♥

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MY TWIN BROTHER AND I: THE STORY OF OUR B'NAI MITZVAH



JOSHUA NEEDELMAN | JE STAFF

I have a picture of my twin brother on my desk. It's from a school photo day. Sitting in front of a navy blue backdrop, Scott is wearing a navy New York Yankees T-shirt and a calm, easy smile.

To the untrained eye, it's an unremarkable photo, one bound for family members' wallets and walls. It stands on the ledge above my desktop computer, next to a photo of Scott and my parents.

In that image, Scott is squeezed between my parents, his gaze fixed down and to the right, looking equal parts disturbed and annoyed. And there is my mom and dad, smiling straight ahead, smiling through the daily heartbreak of raising an autistic child.

Living with Scott is hard. It's a reality familiar to friends and extended family but only authentically grasped by me, my mother

See Brother, Page 12

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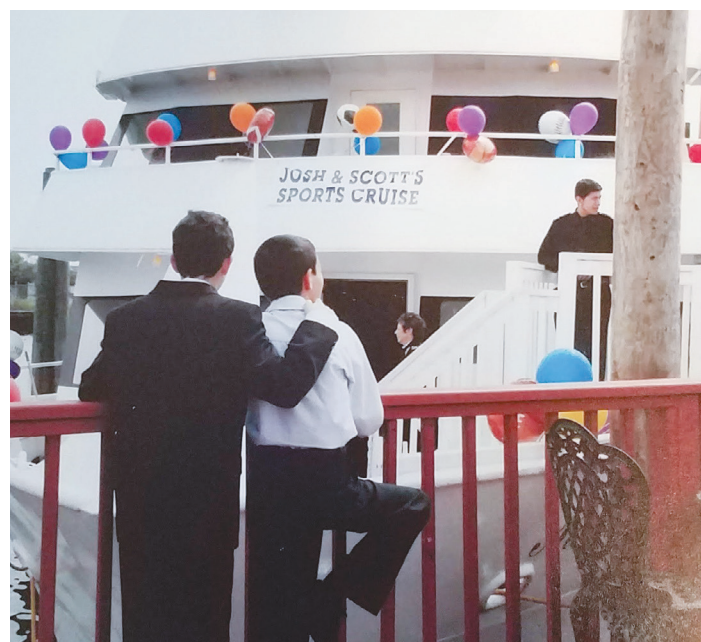
From Generation to Generation A Family Tradition For All Occasions



Jordan Cassway Photography

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Anniversary



▲ The Needelman brothers prepare to board their B'nai Mitzvah party.

PHOTOS PROVIDED

Brother

Continued from Page 11

and my father. (I have no other siblings). Scott often spends hours yelling and screaming. He pees his pants and watches old *Barney* clips on a loop. He is nonverbal. He exists in his own universe, governed by a set of rules known only by him. That photo day shot is a miracle; prompting Scott to follow directions and smile on command is almost as rare as a day without a fear-inducing presidential tweet. Bigly.

But Scott also brings us simple joys. He's exceptionally affectionate, capable of dissipating the headache he gave you with an unprompted hug or kiss. He has an uncanny sense of direction. He likes running and is unapologetic in his love of spaghetti. He has a contagious smile and an even more contagious laugh. He drops into our day and gifts us precious moments, moments that become memories, memories that become earnest stories: "*Hey, remember that time Scott did that thing?*"

He gave my family one of those experiences on Sept. 8, 2007, the day of our B'nai Mitzvah. I wasn't super stoked for my "big day." Battling social anxiety, among other pubescent delights, I was nervous about how many of my friends would show up. And if they did show up, would they have fun? (Spoiler: They did. Of course they did. The party was on a *cruise ship*.) For my parents, though, the B'nai Mitzvah was a crowning moment. A pair of Jews from Brooklyn, this was the day their boys would shine, in front of grandparents and cousins, aunts and uncles, friends and co-workers. The spotlight was on.

"Two beautiful boychiks," my father joyously shouted to a hospital waiting room full of family on July 28, 1994. That was the day we were born, but on Sept. 8, 2007, we would become men.

I had been preparing for this day, whether I liked it or not, the past four years at Hebrew school. I could read Hebrew, write Hebrew and speak Hebrew. On the bimah I would have to sing my Torah portion, and that prospect gave me even more jitters. (Remember: social anxiety!)

Scott, of course, didn't have that same dread. Some people with autism learn to speak later in life, even if it's just a handful of words



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▲ From left: Scott and Joshua Needelman

or phrases. Scott is not one of those people. My parents felt strongly that Scott should participate in the service, though, so a plan was hatched.

Back then, Scott carried around a DynaVox, a communication device with a grid of pictures corresponding to recorded phrases. In theory, Scott could tell us ‘I am hungry’ or ‘I am sleepy’ with the push of a button.

So, on the day of our B’nai Mitzvah, after I read my Torah portion, Scott was called to the bimah. He pressed a button on the DynaVox and again my voice filled the synagogue, reciting *his* portion. But it was Scott who pressed the button, who completed the action to generate the audio. This was Scott’s moment, too.

I called my mother recently to ask what she remembers about Scott pressing that button.

“Everyone heard you and started crying,” she told me.

“Everyone?” I asked.

“Everyone. Just picture it. I have tears in my eyes just thinking about it,” she replied. “It’s very emotional to see a disabled child, and you see his disability and you see we wanted to include him in that old coming-of-age routine: a Bar Mitzvah.”

And then our lives went on. Scott grew taller and his voice got deeper, not manifesting in words but in random, unsynchronized verbal mumblings. His mannerisms and moods and behaviors stayed the same. He is the epitome of the saying, ‘Ignorance is bliss.’ It has always been my thinking that he is wholly unaware of his condition, and as such he lives in an alternate dimension, unknown to all but him.

So it’s hard to say what the B’nai Mitzvah meant to him. He had to wake up early and put an unfamiliar cap on his head. Later, at our party, he kept fiddling with his tie and putting it in his mouth. *What is this funny piece of cloth?* In pictures, he looks mostly unamused, bored or indifferent.

In flipping through the album, one photo sticks out. It’s of me and Scott, standing in front of our cake with the candles lit. I’m looking down, wearing an awkward half-smile, with my right arm around Scott’s shoulder. He’s blowing out the candles, wholly in control of the moment, tie out of his mouth. He is a man. ❤️

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Reunited and it Feels So Good

HILARY DANAILOVA | JE FEATURE



▲ Kay Taub's family gathered in 2017 at the Pearlstone Center, a Jewish retreat in the countryside outside Baltimore. PHOTOS PROVIDED

When Valori Zaslow was growing up in Philadelphia, most of her family lived nearby. Now aunts and cousins are scattered from L.A. to Detroit to Florida.

"We're all over the place, and we don't have an opportunity to see each other as much as we'd like," reflected Zaslow, who lives in Penn Wynne. "So we look for reasons for reunions."

One came last March, when Zaslow's nephew, Shalom Henesch, was Bar Mitzvahed in Israel; Zaslow joined 26 other relatives for a weeklong family vacation, chartering a bus to explore the Western Wall tunnels and ogle the Dead Sea scrolls. They even packed food together to distribute to needy families for Shalom's mitzvah project.

"If we weren't close as a family before, we certainly are now, after climbing Masada together," laughed Zaslow, who has planned dozens of B'nai Mitzvahs through her firm, ReEvent in Bala Cynwyd. "It's wonderful to be in Israel for Shabbos, coming together as a Jewish family in the Jewish homeland."

There are no hard statistics on the topic, but anecdotal evidence suggests that Jewish clans are more likely to gather around an event, holiday or milestone. Stories abound of 40-relative entourages to Israel, Passover getaways with dozens of cousins, and three- or four-generation cruises for 50th anniversaries or 90th birthdays.

"Everyone's busy, but when something big takes place, that brings everyone together," Zaslow observed.

Bree Tomar, an executive planner at Philadelphia-based All About Events, handles a lot of requests for multiday reunions built around an occasion.

"I definitely notice people planning three or four days of pre-wedding events, so the family members can get a chance to spend more time together," she said. "For a lot of families nowadays, milestone events like a wedding or a Bar Mitzvah is the only time they'll get to see each other."

Outside of a formal occasion, however, most families plan their own get-togethers, designating one or two organizers to coordinate place, date and activities. (Experts advise starting a year in advance). Sometimes the organizer also sponsors the event — typically a grandparent — but parties commonly pay their own way, especially at larger gatherings.

Tomar's father always dreamed of taking his extended, blended family on a Caribbean cruise, and this year, he finally did it.

"I hadn't seen my stepbrothers in about five years; our kids had never met their kids," the planner recalled. "Suddenly, we're all shackled up on a boat for five days together."

Amid families in matching T-shirts, the clan soon found out why cruises are so popular for reunions — a prepaid cocoon of entertainment, ready-made meals and just the right balance of privacy and proximity. "It just seemed like a very natural way for us to all hang out together," Tomar said. Her 8-year-old nephews became best friends, holding sleepovers in each other's bunks; their parents took turns fussing over Tomar's toddler.

Everybody had such a good time that the clan is now planning a follow-up reunion next summer, renting a beach house on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The biggest proof of success? "Next year, we're all paying for it ourselves," Tomar said.



▲ Kay Taub's relatives



▲ Kids make a family tree inside a bottle cap.

Many families turn to Jewish resorts for kosher catering and prayer infrastructure. At the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, Conn., “you could have an Orthodox rabbi in your family and somebody who might not be Jewish, and they’d all feel comfortable on our site,” said Simone Stallman, who coordinates family reunions at the wooded campus an hour north of New York City.


The Freedman Center is run by Hazon, a pluralistic organization that promotes sustainable Jewish communities; among its draws are an organic farm, synagogue and central Berkshires location. Stallman said the typical family reunion involves 30 to 65 relatives from around the Northeast who pay an affordable \$155 per night, double occupancy, for lodging and three kosher meals (the center provides ceremonial wine, but has no liquor license; pool use requires a \$25-per-hour lifeguard).

Family gatherings at the Bushkill Inn, a Poconos resort with a kosher kitchen, “are usually around a holiday or milestone,” said Ron Vogel, director of sales. “We’ll have 30 relatives reserve one part of the sukkah for Sukkot.” Observant families appreciate that the spa has separate facilities for male and female massage, as well as activities everybody can enjoy — archery, lake fishing, paintball — and glatt kosher food supervised by an on-site mashgiach.

When Kay Taub of Silver Spring, Md., began organizing a reunion of her newly acquainted grandfather’s relatives, she knew it would involve a concert.

“I’d reach out, and they’d all tell me about their musical kids,”

See Reunions, Page 16




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Reunions

Continued from Page 15

said Taub, 64, who turned up Hollywood music producers, a Metropolitan Opera singer, a blues fiddler and numerous pianists.

In June 2017, 85 members of Taub's paternal Weisberg clan gathered for Shabbat dinner at the Pearlstone Center, a Jewish retreat in the countryside outside Baltimore. They were greeted by a printed-out family tree that stretched 36 feet long, "like a Torah," Taub laughed. "People had fun pointing out where they were on the tree."

Over the weekend that followed, the Weisbergs held an oral history workshop, played three-generation softball, bonded over yoga and art, and celebrated Havdalah on the lawn. On Saturday evening, 20 musical relatives took turns entertaining each other in a family musicale.

"It was a magical weekend," recalled Taub, an entomologist who led an insect workshop for the kids. To her relief, everyone loved the itinerary. "It was just like camp, you know? Just wholesome fun."

By foregoing pool costs and a venue with alcohol, the clan kept weekend costs under \$300 per person. More importantly, Taub noted, a stand-alone reunion allowed the kind of flexibility impossible at more formal occasions. "When you do a Bar Mitzvah or a wedding, you have to cut the guest list off somewhere, and it's painful," she explained. "You do all the first cousins, or no first cousins, and then once they all have children, it gets too big."

In contrast, anyone could join the pay-your-way reunion.

"It didn't matter if you were six months old or 90. A reunion is everybody," Taub said. "That's the beauty of it." ♥



▲ The Weisberg family makes music at the reunion.

Hilary Danailova is a freelancer writer.



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Longtime Couples Reflect on Married Life

MARISSA STERN | JE STAFF



▲ Bernard and Ruth Spekter (center) with their children, Barbara (far left) and Michael (far right)

PHOTOS PROVIDED

A lot can happen in 70 years. Seventy years ago, Israel declared independence, the World Health Organization was formed by the United Nations, Mahatma Gandhi was murdered and, closer to home, the Philadelphia Eagles won their first-ever NFL championship.

But also 70 years ago, some Philadelphia couples were beginning their lives together.

And now — all these years later — they reflect on the secrets to a long, healthy marriage and the lives they've built since then.

Mildred “Micky” and Marshall Kline celebrated their 70th anniversary in June.

They met when they were 19 and 25, respectively, on a double date — each paired with other people.

“One of my girlfriends made it a double date for me,” Micky Kline, 89, recalled. “She was with Marshall and I was with a friend of his, and that next Monday night after we went out that Sunday, he called me. That’s how we met.”

They started dating after that, and “that was it,” she laughed.

They married in 1948 and are now proud parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

After their kids were off to college, Micky Kline worked for Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel for 18 years as well as the Philadelphia office of Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem.

Marshall Kline, 95, who served as a technical sergeant in the Army attached to the Marines and earned three bronze stars, worked in business. He noted they’ve had their ups and downs as

any married couple does, but they’ve come out smiling.

“We traveled to many parts of the U.S. and the world,” he wrote in a letter. “Our children are married over 40 years and we are blessed with four grandchildren, married and with six great-grandchildren. Intelligent and beautiful, all are intelligent and beautiful children. We are so lucky to have children we can praise.”

“You just have to give and take,” Micky Kline echoed. “We’re very proud of the way our children turned out and grandchildren, they’re just wonderful. We did something right.”

She offered some key advice to those who hope to reach their own 70 years of wedded bliss: Never go to sleep angry.

“You have to work at a marriage,” she added. “You have to keep being close with each other. That’s the story, honey.”

Nowadays, many couples meet via dating apps on their phones, which allow the users to send messages to each other before they even meet.

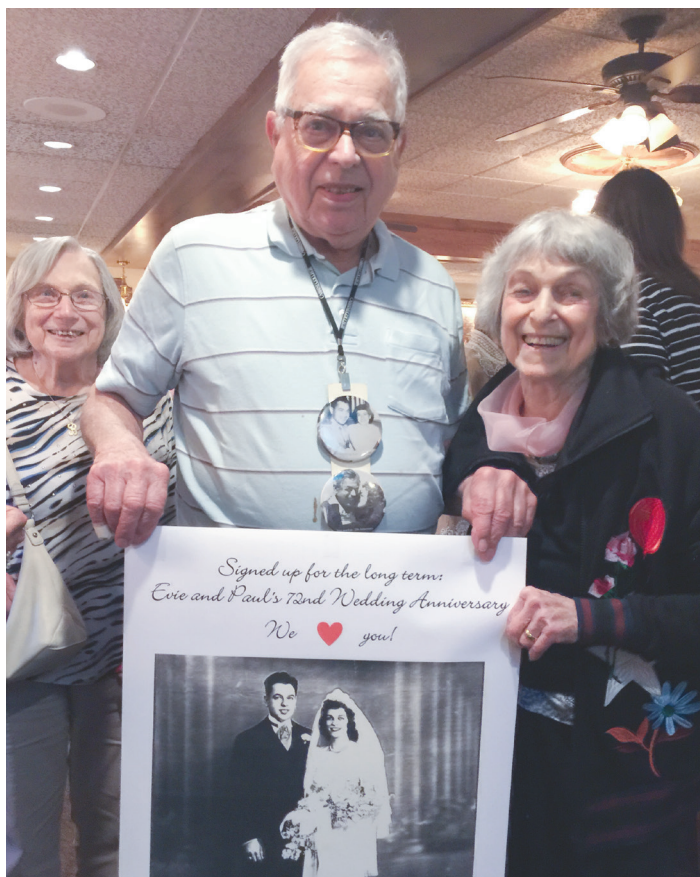
But long before there were apps, Paul and Evelyn Becker struck up conversation the classic way: handwritten letters.

Evelyn’s brother was married to Paul’s sister, which was how the pair, who just celebrated their 72nd anniversary, first met.

It didn’t quite work out.

“We just went out a couple times, once or twice, and we didn’t hit it off,” Paul Becker, 97, recalled, noting they still saw each other at family events but “we stopped seeing each other as a couple.”

See Longtime, Page 18



▲ Paul and Evelyn Becker

Longtime

Continued from Page 17

But then Paul Becker went to serve in the Army and wanted to receive mail while he was away. He began writing letters to those he knew and sent one addressed to his future wife's family, as it was his family, too, via his sister.

Evelyn Becker, 94, answered the letter.

"And then I wrote another, and she answered that one," he said, "so then I started writing Evelyn, and we wrote maybe for a year."

He'd gotten a furlough from the Army and returned home and they gave it another shot and began dating again.

After he was discharged in 1945, they continued seeing each other. They married in 1946 and raised three daughters.

"We're just compatible," he said. "We help each other. We respect each other's space."

They weren't "mushy letters" he was writing, he noted. But they were enough that they created a relationship and led her to accept his offer of marriage.

They married at Beth Am when it was at 58th and Warrington — it later moved to its current suburban location — and the reception was held at Paul Becker's parents' house. He remembered cooking turkey and briskets with his mother.

When they were younger, they liked to travel together. They spent two months across Asia, in countries such as Japan, China and what is now Thailand. They spent a month in France where they just rented a car and traveled around.

Enjoying time together is not just what Paul said is the "secret" to their marriage, but should be a tenet in any marriage or relationship.

"Do things together," he advised. "We never felt the need for a separate vacation."



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UNDER THE KEYSTONE K HASHGACHA 





▲ Paul and Evelyn Becker

Bernard and Ruth Spekter had a meet-cute that sounds like it came right out of a romantic comedy.

Bernard Spekter, a World War II veteran who served in the Air Force and earned a Bronze Star, started a commercial office supply company in Philadelphia, of which he served as president and owner for many years. Ruth Spekter worked as a secretary at the time for a company he visited to solicit business.

"I just saw Ruth casually and then I met her again in Atlantic City," Bernard Spekter, soon turning 99, recalled, "and we struck up an acquaintance."

From there, their relationship progressed. They got engaged and were married in a rabbi's study in 1947. They recently celebrated their 71st anniversary.

In that time, he said — as the other couples mentioned — it was hard to find an apartment. So when one became available in West Philadelphia, they seized the opportunity.

"We were supposed to be married in June, but because this apartment became available, we took it and her mother thought that because we got this apartment and married so soon that perhaps Ruth was pregnant, which was not the case," Spekter laughed.

They lived in the one-bedroom, Murphy bed apartment for many years before moving to a larger space.

The two, who've belonged to Main Line Reform Temple for more than 65 years, are proud parents of two children, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

In their lives together, they've traveled all over, met popes and fostered an appreciation for art — especially Ruth Spekter, who has long been active with the Barnes Foundation, as they lived in Lower Merion; conducted art tours throughout the U.S., Europe and Canada; and carried a suitcase of books about Albert Barnes with her when they traveled.

"I've been dragged through more museums that I can count, but that was my wife," he said with an affectionate laugh.

To him, there are many pillars of a strong, lasting relationship — even in the midst of hard times.

"First of all," he said, "the woman I married is one of the most loving caring [people]. I could never have gotten where I am without her understanding, and bringing up children that I'm proud of today. Just love each other and respect each other and try to help each other.

"You have to be able to say you're sorry when you do something wrong," he continued, adding, "and fortunately, my wife is so forgiving." ♥

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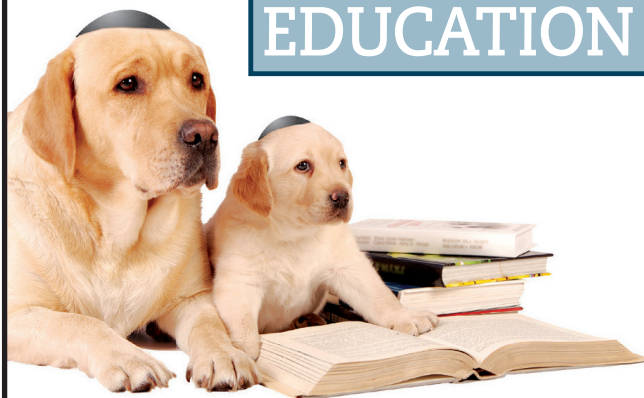
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Throwback: Three Generations of Weddings

SELAH MAYA ZIGHELBOIM | JE STAFF

While her mother and daughter shared stories in her well-lit kitchen, Lisa Berkowitz, 60, came to the kitchen table with two photo albums stacked on top of each other.

She rifled through the pages of the smaller album. There's the photo of her family from just two years ago, with her daughter Emily Fridberg, 33, in a wedding dress. There's the photo of Fridberg surrounded by her bridesmaids. Fridberg's dress was "funky," with a comfortable fit and a top with a snakeskin-like pattern, while her bridesmaids wore green dresses of different shades, lengths and styles.

That's something all three women had in common. They didn't make their bridesmaids wear identical gowns.

"We think a little bit out of the box," said Berkowitz's mother, Barbara Boroff, 83.



▲ Top: Emily Fridberg.
Bottom from left: Barbara
Boroff and Lisa Berkowitz

PHOTOS BY
SELAH MAYA ZIGHELBOIM



▲ Above, Lisa Berkowitz at her wedding



► Right, Emily Fridberg with her
bridesmaids

Boroff got married when she was 21 years old in 1955, the same year that Rosa Parks was arrested, *Lady and the Tramp* premiered and the first McDonald's opened. Twenty-eight years later, her daughter Berkowitz got married at 25 years old in a large synagogue affair. Then, 33 years after that, her granddaughter Fridberg married at 31 years old at a Chester County venue.

Berkowitz opened the second album, the one from her own wedding 35 years ago. They did a photo shoot in her parents' bedroom, with their green floral wallpaper behind them. She wore a white dress with a lace top and simple bottom.

When it comes to the dress Boroff wore at her wedding 63 years ago, it's something she could see on a bride today: A lace dress with little sleeves.

"[My wedding] was much less sophisticated in the planning [than my daughter's and granddaughter's]," Boroff said. "Nobody even had planners."

One difference between the weddings of different generations is the price tag. Putting a wedding together has become more expensive and, Boroff noted, more complicated. She doesn't remember the cost of her own, but Berkowitz's wedding cost about \$35,000, or close to \$90,000 in today's dollars. Fridberg's wedding, meanwhile, cost \$100,000 and had about 100 fewer guests.

Boroff met her husband Alan, who died two years ago, when she was a senior in high school and he was a sophomore at the

University of Pennsylvania. She met him through one of his fraternity brothers, whom she also dated.

"In those days, high school girls ... dated the college boys," Berkowitz said, "or so she tells us."

They dated for several years.

Then, at Alan Boroff's graduation, his father handed him his draft letter.

At the time, the Korean War was coming to an end, so Alan Boroff spent the next two years away, first at various military bases, then in Japan. The two wrote each other every day. Boroff kept every letter, she said, and after he died two years ago, she read them all again.

"One of the special comments was, 'I love you very much, but I'm leaving a page blank so I can just think about you,'" Boroff said.

When he returned, the two got married at Temple Sinai.

They moved to Cambridge, Mass., after getting married, so Alan Boroff could attend Harvard Law School.

Then they moved back to the Philadelphia area, where they settled down and grew their family. They were married for more than 60 years.

"We really did a lot of growing up together," Boroff said.

Years later, Boroff played matchmaker for her own daughter, Berkowitz. During Rosh Hashanah one year, Berkowitz's future

See Weddings, Page 22

One difference between the weddings of different generations is the price tag. Putting a wedding together has become more expensive and ... more complicated.



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Weddings

Continued from Page 21

mother-in-law asked Boroff if she could set Berkowitz up with one of her three sons.

They ended up setting her up with her son, Arthur.

"In those days, we all did a lot of blind dating," Berkowitz said. "He didn't call for six months, and we went on our first date in January."

The two grew up in the Har Zion Temple community, though they didn't know each other. The whole synagogue knew about their relationship while they were dating and, when Boroff and Berkowitz's mother-in-law passed each other in the community, they would just shrug their shoulders. The two were dating, but there was no commitment.

After about two years, Berkowitz told Arthur that she didn't want to just keep dating. She wanted to get married or break up. He told her he would make a decision in January, on the anniversary of when they first started going out.

The day of their anniversary, Berkowitz, who worked as a teacher, received a dozen red roses at school. The flowers came with a note that had a simple message: Lisa, yes, Arthur.

Later that day, he bought her a skirt, as she wanted to pick out her own ring.

They got married that October at Har Zion.

Their wedding was the largest of the three, with about 350 in attendance. The assemblage was so large they had to get creative with the bar, going with one that had a circular shape, so that a lot of people could get to it at one time. Rabbi Gerald I. Wolpe, Har Zion's popular rabbi at the time, officiated.

"I do remember what this child of mine said after the wedding,"

Boroff said. "She said, 'It's perfect. It's exactly what I wanted.'"

"I wanted to get married," Berkowitz added. "So I was just happy to have a party. I was just happy to be getting married."

In what might be a family tradition, Berkowitz also played a role in her daughter's matchmaking as well, but with a 21st century twist. While Fridberg was a graduate student in St. Louis, Berkowitz encouraged her to try JDate.

That's how Fridberg met her husband Jonathan. He was only the second person she met through the dating site. After graduation, the two moved to Chicago, then to the Philadelphia area a year ago.

Fridberg knew he was going to propose — they had gone ring shopping together — but she didn't know when. After about two years of dating and during a weekend away together, he popped the question.

They were engaged for about a year and a half. Though they were living in Chicago then, they wanted to get married in Philadelphia, closer to where both of their families lived. Berkowitz ended up doing much of the planning with the help of a wedding planner. She hadn't used a planner for her own wedding, but was glad to have the help for planning her daughter's.

They chose the Phoenixville Foundry as their venue, and a Reconstructionist rabbi officiated.

"We knew we didn't want to get married in a synagogue," Fridberg said. "We wanted to get married in the place where the party would be kind of rustic-themed."

Fridberg and her husband wanted the wedding to feel like it was just the two of them there. They also wanted the wedding to just be fun, with lots of dancing.

"A wedding is a happy occasion, a joyous occasion," Fridberg said. "We don't want to stress about little things." ❤️

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Families Plan B'nai Mitzvahs in Israel



▲ From left: Sara Jennings, Levon, Elijah, Harper and Robert Ames
PHOTO PROVIDED

SELAH MAYA ZIGHELBOIM | JE STAFF

From her side of the mechitza at the Kotel, Shaindy Lindenberg was able to get a good view of her son reading from the Torah.

In late July, her son Ilan had his Bar Mitzvah in Israel. They had about 60 guests, mostly family and some friends. Their ceremony took place early in the morning at the Kotel, then was followed by a special breakfast and a Shabbat event the next day. The family spent about a week in Israel in all, taking in the sights and history.

Planning a Bar or Bat Mitzvah in Israel can come with difficulties planning one locally might not have. There's the added need and cost of flights to a foreign country, the challenge of finding housing and picking venues, caterers and other vendors from abroad.

But Lindenberg felt the experience was worth it.

"Everything really just fell into place," she said. "I am so happy, and my husband and I are so thrilled that it all worked out, that we were able to do the event in Israel. No regrets. We've been telling everyone how great it was. There's always little things here and there, but overall, when you look at the whole picture, that was the perfect event. I wouldn't have changed anything."

One element that can ease planning a Bar or Bat Mitzvah in Israel is having on-the-ground help. Lindenberg had family in Israel who could help with logistics. Isabelle Tahar Miller, whose son Uriel had his Bar Mitzvah in Israel in August, and Robert Ames, whose son Elijah also had his Bar Mitzvah in August, had help in Israel as well.

"It's much more significant to do it in Israel," Miller said. "Also, because we have a lot of family in Israel, we don't have much people here in the United States that could have been attending. These are the main reasons [we decided to have the Bar Mitzvah in

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Abroad

Continued from Page 23

Israel.] It was my dream or commitment to have his Bar Mitzvah there since he was a baby.”

Ames had the help of a rabbi in Israel, Peretz Rodman, who has experience helping Americans plan for this ceremony in Israel. Rodman organized the ceremony for them, so the Ames family basically just had to show up.

All three boys had their Bar Mitzvah ceremonies at the Kotel. Rodman led the ceremony for the Ames family, while cousins in the Lindenberg and Miller families who work as cantors or singers led their respective ceremonies.

Elijah Ames had his ceremony at Robinson's Arch, the southern excavation site of the Kotel, where they could have an egalitarian service. Both Uriel Miller and Ilan Lindenberg had theirs in the men's section.

Lindenberg did a lot of research going into this Bar Mitzvah, so she knew that they needed to get there early, at about 7 a.m., to reserve a table, which are on the men's side for placing the Torahs. The Kotel gets especially crowded on the days when Bar Mitzvahs can occur there — Mondays, Thursdays, the first day of the Hebrew month and the intermediary days of Sukkot and Passover. Having an early service also helps avoid Israel's heat. By 8:30 a.m., they had finished the service.

Between the warm weather and making sure her guests found the right spot, Miller thought planning the ceremony at the Kotel was the most difficult part of the Bar Mitzvah. She was prepared for that, though, which was key to making sure it ran smoothly.

Lindenberg and Ames both went out to eat at a restaurant after the ceremony with their families.

Lindenberg's family also held a Shabbat event that Friday evening. Again, figuring out the logistics for that from the Philadelphia area was difficult, but having family in Israel helped. Her family arranged for a space to hold the event at a local hotel, even though they weren't staying at the hotel. (Lindenberg and her family stayed in apartments through sites like Airbnb.com and Homeaway.com, a cheaper alternative to hotel rooms that also gave them the option of having a kitchen and saving on meals.)

For Ames, planning a Bar Mitzvah in Israel was easier than anticipated. Part of that ease came from the relative smallness of the celebration. They only had their close relatives at the Bar Mitzvah, for a total of 11 people.

“There are certainly a lot of ways to celebrate a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, but it just seemed that that would be something that [Elijah] and the rest of the family would remember forever,” Ames said. “It would just be a great experience for all of us.”

After Uriel Miller's Bar Mitzvah ceremony, Isabelle Tahar Miller arranged transportation to Olmaya, an event space “with an absolutely mesmerizing view,” she said, where they held the celebration. She visits Israel about once a year, so she had picked out the Olmaya on a previous trip there. About 120 people attended the Bar Mitzvah.

Olmaya helped put Miller in touch with a photographer, DJ and decorator for the celebration.

And, of course, while they were in Israel, all three families spent some time traveling through the Jewish state.

“The experience and the memories are totally worth it,” Lindenberg said. “I wouldn't change it for a thing. You got to do your research. Everyone, especially with networking and social media and everything, you can always post questions. There is always advice out there.” ♥

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Couple Trades Registry for Honeymoon Fund



▲ Asya Zlatina and Sam Nemirovsky celebrated their marriage at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront.

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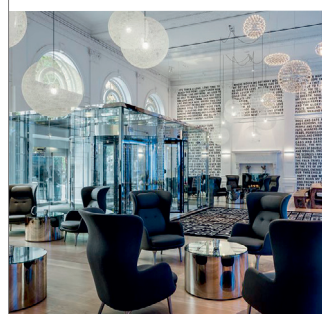
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There's one problem: Honeymoons are expensive. Very expensive. There are travel expenses and lodging costs. And those delicious meals and sunny beaches? Not free.

Asya Zlatina and Sam Nemirovsky will soon leave behind the Philadelphia area for their Caribbean honeymoon. The recently married couple didn't have much trouble planning their trip — not after ditching the idea of a wedding registry for a honeymoon fund.

See Registry, Page 26



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▲ Asya Zlatina and Sam Nemirovsky

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Registry

Continued from Page 25

Zlatina, who is 31, and her husband have each been living by themselves for quite some time. They are fully functioning adults, with jobs and responsibilities and bills to pay. They also have appliances and furniture and enough stuff to fill two living spaces — enough stuff to make a traditional registry unnecessary.

“We’re not 18. We’re not 20. We’ve been living on our own. I’ve been living on my own for at least the last 10 years. I already have a lot of things,” Zlatina said. “He’s also a mature male adult. He also has beautiful things, he has his own house. Practically speaking, a lot of household items we don’t need.

“And aside from that, think about how annoying it is for guests to have to schlep gifts.”

Zlatina got the idea from her cousin, who got married about three years ago, then vacationed with her husband in Argentina and Chile thanks in part to their honeymoon fund. She suggested the idea to Nemirovsky, citing the convenience for guests.

“I’m pretty open minded. I probably erred for a couple moments, then said it was a novel idea,” Nemirovsky said.

The couple set up an online link asking for donations to their honeymoon fund. Nemirovsky harbored some nerves, hoping people wouldn’t think they needed to donate and bring a gift.

That didn’t happen.

“I was a little pleasantly surprised with how it worked,” Nemirovsky said.

Zlatina is a professional dancer, but also works on the side for

Chevra, a group that organizes social and educational events for Jewish professionals and graduate students. Part of her job responsibilities include reaching out to people to attend the events and, one day several years ago, she called a stranger named Sam.

Nemirovsky started attending Chevra events and developed a friendship with Zlatina. Soon they were dating, and this past summer they got married at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront, overlooking the picturesque Inner Harbor.

“The wedding was probably the most fun day of my life,” Zlatina said.

The ceremony preceded the High Holidays, so the couple was too busy to think much about their honeymoon. Zlatina then immediately left for Europe with her dance team.

She frequently travels across the world for work, so she suggested they don’t go too far for their honeymoon. Nemirovsky nixed a trip to Miami, citing his desire to check out Iceland. They compromised and agreed on the Caribbean.

Zlatina and Nemirovsky said friends and family complimented them on the idea to start a honeymoon fund. They haven’t yet heard from others interested in doing the same thing, but neither said they’d be surprised to see some of their more mature peers follow the same path.

And they’re enjoying married life.

“It’s wonderful. It’s so fun and so nice to grow and learn about one human being and share with them your world,” Zlatina said. “I learn a lot from him. He pushed me to be a better person and not to be afraid of change or growth or trying new things.” ♥

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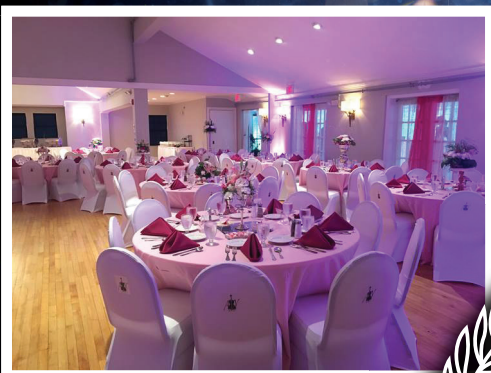
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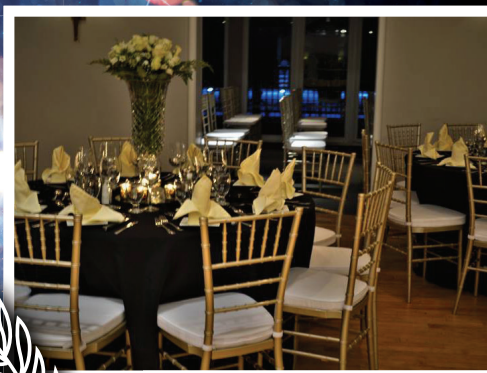
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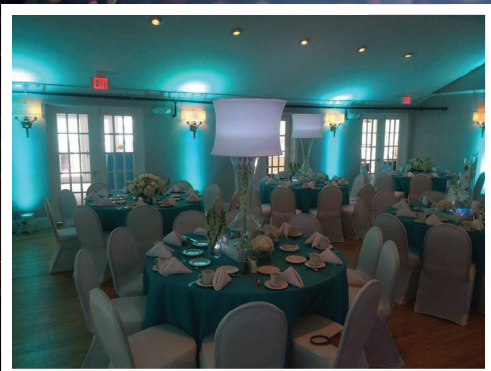
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