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DAVID GROVERMAN

Helps Athletes Find Jewish Identities, But First Had to Discover His Own

Jarrad Saffren | Staff Writer



From left: Jake Kornblatt and Dave Groverman organized The Peace Tournament in Israel together.

Courtesy of Jake Kornblatt

David Groverman lettered in soccer, lacrosse and wrestling at The Haverford School and helped lead its wrestling team to three consecutive Inter-Academic League championships from 1968-'70. So, as he put it, you can imagine how he felt about Judaism when his religious parents told him he couldn't play in a Haverford soccer game on Yom Kippur during his senior year.

Groverman was the team's captain.

A few years later, though, he decided to try out for the U.S. wrestling team for the 1973 Maccabiah Games in Israel. Groverman, who also wrestled at the University of Pennsylvania, made the team and wanted to go. It was a free trip to Israel for being a good wrestler, he explained.

But the trip helped him understand why his parents hadn't allowed him to play that day.

Groverman met survivors of the Munich massacre at the Summer Olympics in Germany the year before. He met Holocaust survivors and visited Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial to Shoah victims, for the first time. The wrestler won the gold medal in his 125-pound weight class at

that competition. But decades later, Groverman doesn't remember the wrestling as well as the awakening.

"Judaism became real to me," he said.

Ever since, the Blue Bell resident has worked to help other Jewish athletes make the same connection.

In the 1981 Maccabiah Games, Groverman coached the U.S. team that included four Jews who hadn't had bar mitzvahs. The team threw bar mitzvahs for them at the Wailing Wall. It became a tradition.

Three years later, he organized the first "Philadelphia Youth Maccabiah team to participate in the first North American Maccabiah Games," according to his bio on the Philadelphia Jewish Sports Hall of Fame's website. Philadelphia sent 50 to 60 athletes to Detroit for the games that year and sends hundreds today.

And this year, the 50th anniversary of the Munich massacre, Groverman helped organize "The Peace Tournament" in Israel. Sanctioned by United World Wrestling, the tournament wel-

comed athletes from North America, Europe and Asia. It included a team from Morocco, the first time that an Arab country participated in an athletic competition on Israeli soil.

"The success is measured by the fact that the national team of Morocco came to the tournament," Groverman said.

As an athlete, Groverman understands what's expected of them. Athletes a lot of times, especially successful ones, are recognized as leaders in the community, he explained. This is true for Jewish athletes, too, and the expectation from a young age often motivates young people to work as hard in life as they do in sports.

The 70-year-old credited his commitment to wrestling for shaping him into a successful businessman. As a commercial real estate developer, the Blue Bell resident builds shopping centers in North Philadelphia, West Philadelphia and the suburbs, among other places.

This is why Groverman works so hard to build the connection between sports and Judaism. A successful athlete is likely to become a success-



Dave Groverman, back right, red shirt, posing with the U.S. wrestling teams for the 2022 Maccabiah Games in Israel

Photo by Larry Slater



A successful athlete is likely to become a successful man or woman. A successful Jewish athlete is likely to become a productive member of the Jewish community.

Dave Groverman, left, red shirt, celebrates a win for a U.S. wrestler.



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ful man or woman. A successful Jewish athlete is likely to become a productive member of the Jewish community.

He also believes that wrestling, in particular, can mold a kid. It's a test of character in which the strongest person does not always win. It's the kid who, as the former Haverford standout puts it, "knows things."

"It's a very coachable sport where you can develop a kid and challenge him and they can become a very good wrestler," Groverman said.

In a sense, Groverman has become his parents. Judaism is important to him outside of the sports arena, too. He's been a member of Congregation Beth Or in Ambler for almost 40 years. All three of his children, son Peter and daughters Leslie and Jennifer, had b'nai mitzvahs there.

But while Groverman and his wife Linda kept a Jewish home, they did not keep a kosher home. Nor did



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Photo by sandy Slater

they pressure their kids to marry Jews. One of their daughters married someone who isn't Jewish, but the couple is raising their kids Jewish. Groverman said he's fine with that, and that he would also accept whatever religious path his children choose.

"They knew that Judaism was important," he said of his kids.

Groverman has devoted much of his adult life to helping young people find their Jewish identities, and he wants to continue to do that.

The coach and his fellow Peace Tournament organizers, co-chairmen Jake Kornblatt and Aviram Shmuely, are already planning the next tournament. Groverman said it may be annual or semi-annual. He also wants to bring in more Arab countries.

Shmuely, a national wrestling champion in Israel and the chairman of New York Athletic Club Wrestling, came up with the idea for the tournament by reminding Groverman of the 50th anniversary of Munich that was approaching. But Shmuely said it was Groverman who drove the effort to organize the competition. The Philadelphian was "involved in every little detail from accommodation to venue to politics to safety," he said.

"He's a very intense guy," Shmuely added.

Groverman was especially keen on making sure Morocco participated. He pushed to take care of whatever the team couldn't afford. The organizer felt that hosting an Arab country would be a great way to remember the victims of the massacre and to show that "we move on with peace," Shmuely said.

When the Moroccan athletes arrived at the Israeli airport, they were nervous, according to Shmuely. The Israeli said he could see it on their faces. But then people approached them, talked to them and took pictures with them. Shmuely credited Groverman.

"It was a tremendous success," he said. "The next peace tournament is already in the works because of him." **JE**

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Calligraphy Artist

PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE ABCS OF JUDAISM

Sasha Rogelberg | Staff Writer



Photos by Sasha Rogelberg



Top: Mordechai Rosenstein with one of his more recent pieces, which contains recycled carved blocks of Hebrew letters

Bottom: Mordechai Rosenstein began scribing a Purim Megillah during his time at Akiba Hebrew Academy in the 1940s.

While studying at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art, Mordechai Rosenstein learned figure drawing and color theory, which he calls the “ABCs” of fine art, the fundamental skills needed to be an artist.

But Rosenstein had a fascination with his own ABCs, which served as his fundamentals before he even stepped into an art studio. For almost 80 years, Rosenstein has created calligraphy art, transforming the Hebrew alphabet, stretching characters and bending them into trees or musical notes and breathing new life and color into brachot.

In his 88 years, Rosenstein has created more than 700 pieces, and he has no plans of stopping soon. He most recently spent the weekend of Dec. 1-3 at Ohev Shalom of Bucks County, where he led community workshops and classes and created an art piece with the help of congregants and visitors.

“I sit there and people come and we let them fill in an area,” Rosenstein said. “They sign the list of artists, and then when a copy [of the painting] goes back to the synagogue to memorialize our visit, they also get a list of the artists.”

At a recent visit to Lombard, Illinois, Rosenstein created a calligraphy piece of Etz Chaim, the Tree of Life, with the Hebrew letters of “Etz Chaim” bending, twisting and elongating to form a tree’s trunk and branches. Community participants added additional designs, letters and leaves to the tree.

Though formally trained as an artist, Rosenstein’s manner of teaching his calligraphy is much more proletarian. He grabs a piece of printer paper and clicks a pen that was resting in his shirt pocket and starts drawing swoops of letters to create an uneven, curved rhombus. It’s a *yud*, he says, the foundational shape of all Hebrew letters.

He draws *yuds* of all shapes and sizes, which begin to interlock and form *alephs* and *lameds*. In the negative space within the letters, he draws symbols and shapes, transforming letters into musical notes on a staff and basketballs and soccer

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balls sitting above goals.

He cited the philosophy of abstract expressionist Franz Kline, also a professor at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art in the 1950s: “He said, ‘I don’t paint black on white; I paint black and white.’”

Rosenstein’s inspirations come from Jewish thinkers across millennia, beyond the mid-century artists of Philadelphia.

“In Kabbalah, they say that the space between letters are letters,” Rosenstein said, shading a *shin* with his pen. “This space, if you alter it, you affect the letters; you change them.”

Rosenstein’s art has always been woven into his Judaism. Attending Akiba Hebrew Academy — and graduating as part of the school’s first class in 1951 — Rosenstein fell in love with Hebrew letters but had an absence of materials from which to learn.

“As far as I knew, there was no scribe in Philadelphia, no sofer,” he said. “And there were no books from Israel showing all the typefaces.”

Rosenstein instead began to act as an amateur scribe, creating a Purim Megillah with intricate lettering and vibrant patches of color.

Born in 1934 in Strawberry Mansion, Rosenstein grew up with an American-born mother and Russian immigrant father, who would tell him stories of sipping tea from glasses — including empty yahrzeit candle holders — in his mother country.

Sticking to his immigrant sensibilities,



Mordechai Rosenstein recently visited a Jewish community in Lombard, Illinois, with whom he created a piece depicting the Tree of Life.

Rosenstein’s father was skeptical of his son’s artistic passion.

“He felt that it would be really difficult and chancy to make a living,” Rosenstein said.

But Rosenstein’s mother supported him, buying

him a big art set one year for Chanukah, containing crayons, clay and colored pencils, which Rosenstein fiddled with as a child. Rosenstein’s two uncles in the framing business helped guide the young artist, who decided to attend art school.

“I bought a pack of Camel cigarettes, a pair of what we call dungarees; I took off the kippah, and I went to the Philadelphia Museum School of Art,” Rosenstein said. “I wasn’t studying chumash anymore.”

In art school, Rosenstein was studying “to become the next Matisse,” doing figure drawings, paintings, weaving and silkscreen printing. But by the time he graduated, Rosenstein was a far cry from the famous French impressionist.

He instead joined the Army for two years, stationed in Columbia, South Carolina, drawing training aids for weapons and equipment. He then moved to New York City to get a job in the textile industry, working at 40th and Broadway as an assistant stylist, mostly doing administrative work and continuing his calligraphy art at home after hours.

It was there he met his wife and created the ketubah for their wedding. Rosenstein began to find his footing as an artist once more, creating ketubot for the several other Jewish couples getting married around the same time; he did the silver work for an exhibit for The Jewish Museum in Manhattan.

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In 1967, Rosenstein got a letter from his uncle that his son died, so Rosenstein and his young family moved back to Philadelphia; Rosenstein became the foreman of his uncle's factory until his uncle's death about a decade later, at which point his cousin had sold the business. Rosenstein ran a frame shop in Northeast Philadelphia for a couple of years but found it difficult to make a living.

Around that time, Rita Poley, director and curator at the Temple Judea Museum at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, was the art education consultant for the Division of Community Services at Gratz College and was looking for Jewish artists to display their works. She stumbled across Rosenstein.

"I just took one look at his work, and I said, 'I have to exhibit it,'" Poley said.

In 1979, Rosenstein was able to make his art his career and had one of his first art shows at La Salle College, now La Salle University, where he displayed only three pieces. He now displays about 40 pieces per show.

Since 2003, he's worked with business partner Barry Magen, who was drawn to Rosenstein's unique style.

"It has a modern way of looking at the Torah and a modern way of looking at the Hebrew alphabet because his pieces are not black and white people praying at the wall," Magen said. "It's very bright and creative, full of color and full of life, and, really, the big thing is that they're happy."

Though his subjects for more than 50 years, Hebrew calligraphy is still exciting to Rosenstein. His pieces vary in color and size and recently, he's taken old wood blocks with Hebrew words carved into them, sent to him by a friend, to give his pieces a three-dimensional quality.

He was incredulous when asked if he ever got bored of creating the style of art.

"The letters? Are you kidding?!" he said. "They're my companions." **JE**

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Restroom Visits Lead to a Book

Jon Marks | Special To The JE

Toilet humor.

That's what Larry Glanz is focused on these days. Not funny stuff with the kind of four-letter words that can't be used in print or, for the most part, said on TV or radio. But laugh-producing observations about what takes place — or doesn't take place — when you go to the bathroom.

No, he's not here to tell you the best pot to — as his Russian-born grandmother who spoke Yiddish in the house would say — “pish” in. Or where you can feel most comfortable taking a load off.

Rather, this longtime traveling salesman, who frequented hundreds, if not thousands, of restrooms throughout his 40-year career, is more concerned about what you do once you've taken care of business. And he's written a book about it: “The Ultimate Book of Bathroom Etiquette,” spelling out all the do's and don'ts of something we can all relate to.

“My book is about a universal subject that will enlighten people about what they need to know about bathroom etiquette,” said Glanz, who grew up near Oxford Circle in the Northeast, was a bar mitzvah at the since-closed Temple Sholom and graduated from Northeast High School and Temple University before moving to Cherry Hill, New Jersey, nearly 20 years ago. “I cover every issue. If you don't always flush the toilet ... leave the light on ... spray before you leave ... or not lock the door when you go in. It's very disarming.”

Glanz presents those and other issues in a unique way, ranging from disastrous personal experiences to nursery rhymes to song parodies to an imaginative historical perspective. His “Commandments of Bathroom Etiquette” go well beyond 10. And there's a whole chapter devoted to what he calls “yingles.”

“Yingles are Jewish bathroom etiquette jingles,” explained Glanz, who wrote three prior books, including the original “Ultimate Book of Bathroom Etiquette” in 1999. “Some people are uncomfortable with them because they don't know them. But they're all rhyming and, hopefully, smile-producing. And they definitely keep you in touch with your Jewish background.”

For example, there's “When You ‘Pish’ Upon a Star,” “Too Many Knishes,” sung to the tune of “My



Favorite Things” from “The Sound of Music” or “Don’t Get Paper on my Shoes,” sung like “Blue Suede Shoes.”

Each parody has at least one Yiddish word, while the rest of the lyrics go into graphic detail about bathroom issues. And in case you don’t know the meanings, there’s a Yiddish translation guide at the end of the chapter.

So why does a man who once made two appearances on “Oprah,” following the 1994 publication of his first book, “How to Start a Romantic Encounter” and later wrote “Guy Gets Girl, Girl Gets Guy,” get fixated on bathrooms?

It sort of came with the territory.

Each parody has at least one Yiddish word, while the rest of the lyrics go into graphic detail about bathroom issues.

“Back in the day, I drank a ton of coffee and water, so I’m pishing every time I get to a store,” said Glanz, who sold vitamins for a health food company for years and still has his own business. “While I’m using everyone’s bathrooms, I start noticing signs everywhere.

“Please jiggle the handle... Please spray the air ... Please flush ... Don’t leave a mess. It was mainly in health food stores.

“Eventually, I started taking pictures of those signs to document it. ‘Do not throw towels in the toilet.’ ‘Don’t sleep.’ Eventually, we get one that says, ‘If you sprinkle when you tinkle please be neat and wipe the seat’ at Haars Health Food in Vineland, New Jersey. You could not believe how many people were obsessed with this issue.”

And there’s a good chance you won’t believe some of what’s in this book. It’s certainly funny in places. When you start singing the words to “Will You Please Wash Your Hands,” a take off on a Beatles



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Larry Glanz

Photo by Jon Marks

classic or TV favorites like “The Beverly Spillbillies” or Gilligan’s “Tale of a Bathroom Slip,” you might well laugh out loud.

But it’s also crude and raunchy, detailing what can happen when someone leaves the facility in a disgusting way. While trying to be funny, Glanz can paint a pretty unpleasant picture.

Not that he’s separating himself from the matter. He’s got a chapter confessing to his personal bathroom-related disasters — one on a date, another at a family gathering. He’s got one listing “Fartlett’s Unfamiliar Quotes” that might cause Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Vince Lombardi and others he takes liberty with to cringe.

There’s even a section on “petiquette,” with song parodies about curbing your dog like Sinatra takeoff “It Had to be Poop” and “This Tragic Moment,” based on the Jay and the

Americans song.

As for historians wondering about the origin of all this, Glanz said it dates to two Chinese philosophers. “The character Confuse-us is based on a fifth century B.C. philosopher who moralized over proper behavior in the bathroom,” revealed Glanz, who said his plan down the road is to tell Confuse-us’ backstory in greater detail. “Scholars have said he and Confucius were best buds until one terrible day Confuse-us accused his host of not stocking enough spray. Legend has it Confucius threw Confuse-us out of his house.”

That kind of vivid imagination comes in handy when you’re on the road as much as Glanz has been. But since the pandemic hit, forcing him to stay close to home, he’s had more time to put together all the ideas that would come to him amid his travels, where he’d often pull over to jot them down.

The result is a book that is more complete than the original, which he rushed to get out, fearing that his company was about to clean house and he'd be out of work.

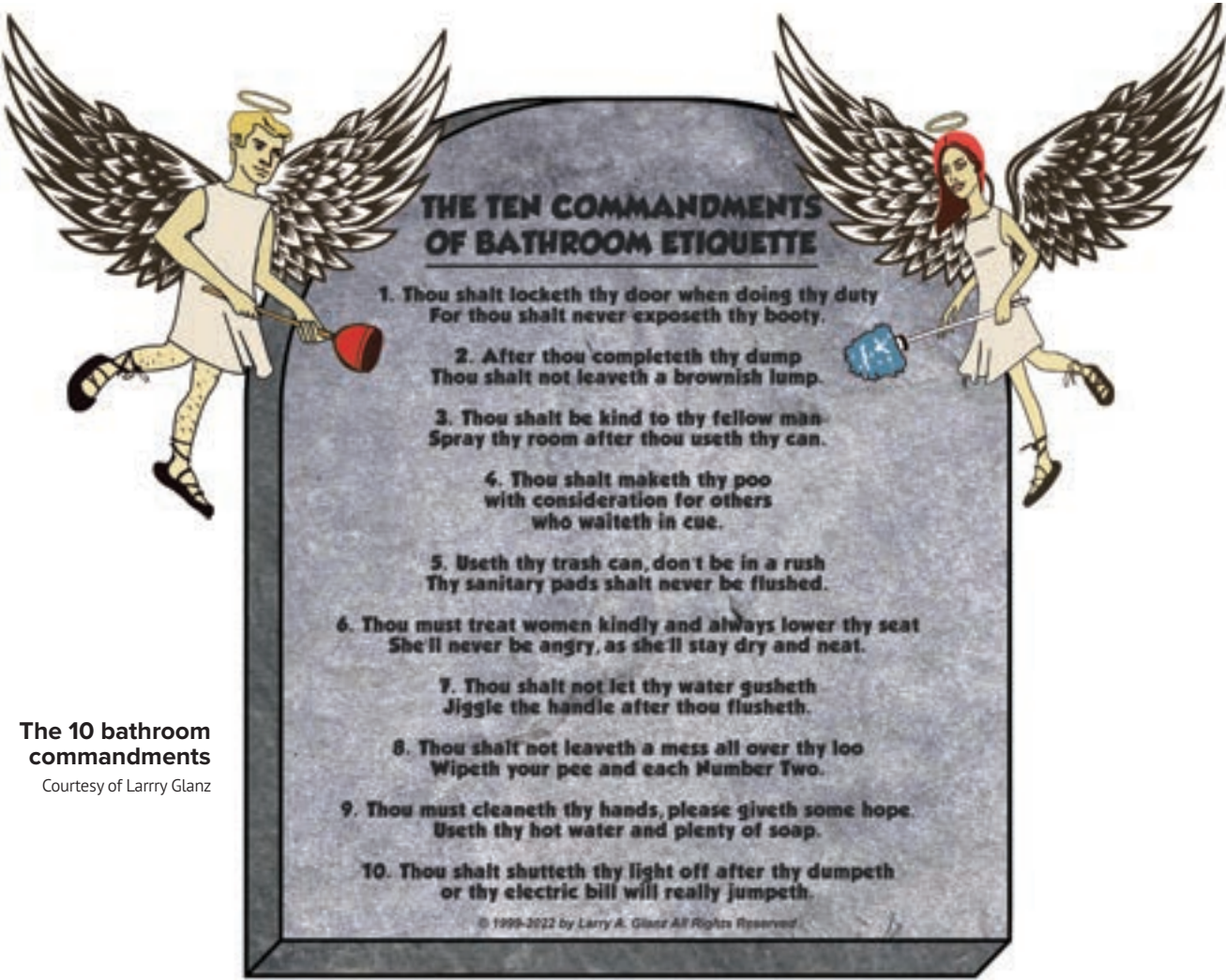
"I really regretted it and felt if I had time I'd like to have a do-over," Glanz said. "So I called the original publisher and said, 'Let me do this again.'

"I knew what people liked about it and what I hated. The songs are a hoot. They'll be amazing for karaoke parties. And the end of the book has a quiz — a 'plop' quiz — to see how much you know from reading it."

But according to Glanz, you don't have to know all the Beatles or Stones songs to appreciate the parodies or know the words to the Mickey Mouse Club song to get a kick out of what he calls his masterpiece.

"There's going to be things they don't know," he said. "Sayings they don't know. Nursery rhymes they don't know. I want them to discover the original artists and fall in love with them like I did." **JE**

Jon Marks is a freelance writer.



The 10 bathroom commandments
Courtesy of Larry Glanz

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PAULA MANDEL

URNS DISCARDED ITEMS INTO ART

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Photos by Jon Marks

No, Paula Mandel doesn't go from house to house sifting through trash cans, looking for items she can incorporate into her unique form of art.

But if you happen to have an old appliance, busted musical instrument, watch, sewing machine or some other piece of equipment you're ready to throw out, she'd be happy to take it off your hands.

"I love things people don't have a purpose for anymore," explained Mandel, who just completed a three-month show, "The Threads that Bind Us," at the Temple Judea Museum at Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park as part of its Artists Collaborative. "I can use them in my art."

(New Jersey) Community College to study glass for two years," said Mandel, who began her professional career as a play therapist at St. Christopher's Hospital. She moved to Florida for a couple of years while her husband Rich was completing his residency, before returning home to work at the Art Forms Gallery in Manayunk painting personal stories for customers.

"It was hard to learn," she continued. "But I learned to create characters out of rods with glass. To make a hand out of wax cast in glass."

"The way I work is I make a lot of parts — hands, eyeballs, characters — and then I'll go into my storage room, take things out and start playing with them like I used to play with

"I love things people don't have a purpose for anymore ... I can use them in my art."

"A bunch of pieces I did recently I don't consciously know what their stories are going to tell until after I've finished them — and I love that. To me, it's about the journey."

Mandel grew up in Mount Airy, then attended Girls High School and Temple University, where she was a combined art and psychology major, then painted professionally over the next few decades while raising a family. She said her art began to change once she went back to school to study the intricacies of glass.

"I went back to school at Salem

my dolls. The time I spend thinking about it usually takes as long as the creation, and glass takes a long time."

But the result is pretty spectacular. Sculptures from the exhibit, which drew as large a turnout to KI as anyone could remember, now reside in her Conshohocken home.

That includes a number with deep, personal meaning.

"I loved my Bubbe Sarah," she smiled while explaining the intricacies of a piece dedicated to her. "My grandmother was a seamstress."

"She sewed for 50 years. This is



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HE'S CALLED SIMPSON HOUSE HOME SINCE 2021

Blair is a Dillsburg, Pennsylvania native turned globe-trotting photojournalist who spent a decade in Africa and Asia. He has published images in *National Geographic Traveler*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and the *Pennsylvania's Cultural and Natural Heritage* books.

Having lived around the world and having spent the last several years as part of a multicultural alliance in Reading, he loves the diversity at Simpson and the friendliness of the staff and residents. "We're a family here," Blair says.

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her garment worker's card, which I scanned into the piece, covered with glass and painted with fabric. A lot of pieces have to do with sewing because my grandmother and the ladies she worked with were always sewing men's suits."

Mandel believes such strong family connections not only resonate with her but everyone.

"The show was about my growing up as a Jewish woman with Jewish values and putting that into my artwork," she said. "People I knew and who knew of me said it was a really valuable experience for them because they could see into my soul. People who knew me got to know me even more personally, but also people who didn't know me could use the exhibit and explore their own families and ancestry."

As much as she enjoys displaying her work and selling some of it, Mandel is engaged in a few ventures she considers her tikkun olam.

"I have this after-school program, the Stained Glass Project, where we

teach high school kids how to do stained glass work," said Mandel, who partners with Joan Myerson Shrager on the program now in its 18th year. "For any child in high school who wants to come to the program every week for a year, we give them carfare, snacks and teach them how to do stained glass.

"They design and execute windows for a designated place. Some are in South Africa. Some in Ojibwe, Minnesota, and New Orleans. All are places that need inspiration. Our kids have done over 125 windows all over the world. This year we're making windows for a place in Detroit."

She's also been engaged in "Souls Shot," a program that makes portraits of people lost to gun violence for their families.

"It's been a really powerful program for me personally and for the community," she said. "The portraits are exhibited, and sometimes we get to meet the families. There's such a heart behind it that it really

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feels like a mitzvah to be able to do them.”

Heartwarming as that is, it’s her ability to make art out of everyday items like toasters, heaters, rocking chairs and dolls that makes the mundane unique.

She turned her grandfather’s old newspaper rack, where she remembers him reading *The Forward* in Yiddish, into a conversation piece. A butter churner turned into a kaleidoscope of colors.

And during the pandemic, she even found a way to express both her frustration and her hope.

“Lifeboat” was a broken clay boat: “I put it back together as my response to the pandemic. And ‘Point the Way’ is fascinating because sort of a subliminal message comes out in my work. It’s looking for a way to get out of where we are.

“My art has a very important psychological component to it. I use things evocative of our parents’ and grandparents’ generations. I’ll use the same image over and over but in different ways, different orientation, different colors, which gives them different meanings.”

That resonates with her family.

“What I have learned over the years is artists need to create,” said her husband, Rich, a hand surgeon who played guitar while she played piano in a four-couple band they used to perform in known as the Hip Replacements. “Her work is very meaningful. It evokes emotion. Even now, when I look at this painting she did of my Dad who passed away when I was 30, it’s nostalgic. It reminds me of my father and our relationship.” **JE**

Jon Marks is a freelance writer.



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