

**Those Were the Days
NVHC
Memories from “Back Then”**





1995 BOND DRIVE

Ken Gubin

In 1995, the synagogue had a mortgage with a balloon note shortly coming due. Unfortunately, the synagogue's finances were weak, such that we were told we would not qualify to roll over the mortgage. But neither did we have funds to pay the note.

The Board decided to address the problem by establishing a Fair Share Dues Committee, to oversee and stabilize the collection of member dues. At the same time, the Board directed that we seek to eliminate the bank debt by selling bonds to our members. Our members would hold bonds that matured over a 15-year period, and the synagogue would repay them on a level and quarterly basis instead of paying a bank.

Over a six-month period, the complex mechanisms of private bond issuance were worked out, and congregants were educated on the benefits of investing in NVHC. Contrary to some expectations, the entire bond issue of \$1.4 million sold out. The mortgage was retired early. NVHC paid on the bonds held by our members as they came due until a number of years later, when in connection with the building expansion, the Board chose to re-mortgage the building. By that time, the work of the Fair Share Committee and attention to the balance sheet had restored financial health. We were able to pay off all bondholders and obtain a new mortgage that allowed the expansion of the building to its current state.

The successful bond drive was a large vote of confidence by our congregants in the importance of the synagogue in their lives, and was an important bridge to the thriving synagogue we have today.



The Circus – In More Ways than One Carla Heymsfeld

I remember the circus, the one that was supposed to be our big fundraiser. We arranged for a small circus to come to Reston. We would sell tickets to everyone in Reston and have a wonderful time and make a lot of money.

The circus provided us with the tickets. We would give them the money we got for sold tickets, keeping a percentage for our NVHC. They would know exactly how much we sold because we would return all unsold tickets.

We gave our kids tickets to peddle to their friends and classmates -- and surprise, surprise – somehow many tickets that weren't sold weren't there for us to turn back in.

Circus Day we had a small turnout. The soccer field the circus performed on was eight inches of mud. The elephant and camel (the two big animals the circus brought along) stomped around in this mud and permanently ruined the soccer field.

But that wasn't our biggest problem. Our biggest problem was the missing tickets. A delegation went into the circus' office to work something out. The rest of us nervously waited outside. When our team emerged we asked, "What happened?"

Ted Smith replied, "We just bought a circus."

Fortunately, the truth was, Ted negotiated a much better deal than that!!

Intimate, Hands-On B'nai Mitzvahs Evelyn Katz

Warren and I and Ian age 7, Cheryl 4, and Mark 1, moved from East Northport, N.Y. to Reston in 1971. Michael would be born in Fairfax Hospital in 1973. Soon after we moved to Reston we joined NVHC. At that time there were about 60 or 70 families in the congregation. They met in various schools and churches. The prevailing thought was not to be encumbered by a permanent structure that would have been very costly for such a small congregation.

Ian was in the Bar Mitzvah class of 1976. The service and oneg were held in the Catholic Church. The Bar Mitzvah receptions were very modest, not like the ones in New York or those of today. (We were impressed by anyone using a caterer.) The mothers of the Bar Mitzvah students "catered" the kiddish and oneg. We set up and cleaned up for each other. I remember running a vacuum over the Church carpet. Because of our involvement, we all shared each other's mitzvah.

All four of our children and four of our grandchildren had Bnai Mitzvots at NVHC.

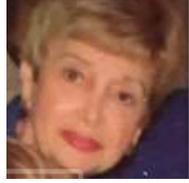


Baby Naming Memory By Ruth Ruttenberg

Back in the years from 1973 to 1975, I attended a variety of classes in Rabbi's Siegel's basement. One July night in 1975, our class was there when Rabbi Siegel did a Baby Naming for Shirley and Robert Finkelstein's daughter.

We all attended the Baby Naming. Then everyone was invited to the Finkelstein's home for refreshments. What a nice evening!

The Schlepping Years By Shirley Finkelstein



It was the Spring of 1970 when we moved to Reston. One of the first things we did after moving was to make contact with the Jewish Congregation. A Reform Congregation was different from congregations we had experienced. Having a Jewish community where we lived was important to us, so we joined this small group of fellow Jews. We were told that services were held at the Methodist Church on North Shore Drive. We were told that the congregation moved to the church when the room over one of the congregant's store became too small.

We did not even have a rabbi every week.

Robert and I soon got involved with congregational activities. I volunteered to assist with the Temple Newsletter. It was at that time that we met Barbara and Ted Smith. Barbara was the editor of the Newsletter. At that time, editor meant gathering information, typing the information (no computers then) on mimeograph paper, running the mimeograph machine, collating the papers, stapling, stamping, and bringing the finished product to the post office for mailing. We did the collating at congregant's homes. This was a fun process because it gave us time to be together and share thoughts.



When Barbara and Ted went overseas for Ted's work, I took over the job of editor. This was the beginning of my schlepping years. The Methodist Church let us use their mimeograph machine as long as I played church secretary on the day I used the machine. So I schlepped the mimeograph papers up the large set of stairs, ran off our Newsletter, answered the phone, and took messages. When finished with the job, I carried all the copies down the stairs. Not having an official place for Temple papers, the

Newsletters were kept in our home awaiting time for me to collate and get to the post office. Glad it was a monthly newsletter, and not weekly.

The schlepping continued when I, along with many other members taught at our Religious School. Since we didn't have a building, we needed to rent space at public schools or company buildings. We were wanderers never knowing where we would be setting up our school. We did this for many years since we had a division within our community about having a permanent building.

When I completed my years as editor, I took on the office of Sisterhood President. Again, there was much schlepping of meeting materials, paper goods, bridge tables and chairs and of course, food. We met in members' homes all over Fairfax County. Although we did not have a permanent home, we were a very active and social group of women.

At the end of my term as Sisterhood President, I took on the job of the Judaica Shop. Certainly a challenge without a building to show our wares. We were able to set up our materials on occasion when religious school was in session. Most of the time our products were stored in my home or in the trunk of my car.

I do remember selling Haggadahs out of the trunk of my car one late afternoon before the first night of Passover. I'm sure if my townhouse neighbors looked out their windows that afternoon, they would have wondered if I had an undercover business going on.



The schlepping years ended when we finally got our own building. Finally, a home to keep our materials and a place we could come together in our own space.

We've grown and expanded our building over the years. This growth has made us so happy and proud to have contributed to making our Congregation a well-respected member of our overall community. The schlepping was worth it.

A Few Memories of My Years at NVHC Rabbi Rosalind A. Gold



Don't Eats Here

For some time before I arrived, the congregation had been discussing changing our name to Congregation Etz Chayim. Some people argued that we should have a Hebrew name, but that we were not "Hebrews." The other side argued that we had established ourselves and had a good reputation as NVHC, and it would be an insult to our founders to change the name they chose.

A few months after I came to Reston, there was a meeting to vote on the proposed name change. Lots of people showed up and there was much heated debate. Finally, one long-time member who was no longer very active (I had never seen him in the four months or so I had been there), stood up and without any introductory remarks said: "My mother always told me never to eat at a restaurant with the word 'Eats' in it's name."

There was surprised silence, and shortly thereafter a vote was taken. Etz Chayim went down to defeat; we remained the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation!

Seders

We held a community seder on the second night of Pesach – I can't remember whether that was something I instituted or it had been done before. I have two particular memories from those seders. The first was from a year mid-way through my tenure at NVHC, after we had already expanded the building. One of the more 'challenging' boys in our religious school followed me into the women's bathroom after the meal saying that he wanted to be the one to find the afikomen and suggested that I might have gone in to hide it there. After that, I always hid the matzah before anyone came.



But my fondest memory was of one year much earlier in my tenure. Back then we had pot luck seders, where people would be assigned (by me) what to bring – chicken, parsley, wine, whatever. I had asked an older woman to bring 2 doz. hard boiled eggs. She called me and said that she didn't think she could come to the seder because she couldn't make the eggs.



I responded carefully, trying to ascertain whether she couldn't afford the 2 doz. eggs or didn't want to make them or what. She said to me: "Oh I want to come, and I don't mind making the eggs, but I don't have a pot big enough to boil 2 doz. eggs." I paused, and gently suggested that she could make them in two batches. "Oh, that's a great idea," she said with relief.

I learned something important at that moment: that sometimes being a rabbi isn't just about Torah and Talmud, but that there was a lot of plain old common sense involved with the job.



Stormy Weather Roberta Sherman

When NVHC was still using St Thomas A Becket for our High Holiday services we had a stormy evening. All of a sudden the electricity went out and we were in total darkness. People went out to their cars and turned on their headlights for light. Cell phones were not available so we could not use a phone flashlight, but we did find candles. Although scary and eerie at first, the service continued and there was a calm and closeness that embraced the congregation. I can hear Deena Sortland's voice soar as it brought us all together.



New In Town By Ellen Rugel

It was 1975 and we had just moved to Reston with our two young sons. I was outside our townhouse watching the boys on their Big Wheels when Jim Caplan got off the commuter bus, introduced himself, and offered to help us get oriented. Somehow he knew we would be interested (was it written on my forehead??) and invited us to join them at a pot-luck supper for NVHC families. There was no building then, and the group met in the Glade Room next to the pool. We were introduced to people that night who have turned out to be lifelong friends.

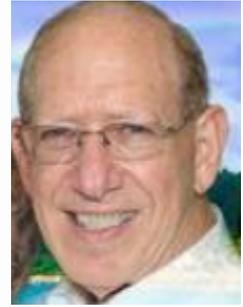


Fund-Raising Fun By Karen Singer



Former NVHC President Flo Frey had a knack for serving as a catalyst to bring diverse elements together for the common good. One “experiment” was assembling a group of couples, none of whom knew each other I believe, to be the fund raising committee.

Many ideas were generated as a result ... some actually did raise money!!! In particular, I remember our hard work hauling and selling Betty’s azaleas, and organizing a major garage sale. Now, there are many more efficient ways of bringing in cash, but Flo’s idea ended up creating life-long friendships and enhancing our devotion to the NVHC community.



Helping Dad Adjust By Marvin Singer

Back when High Holiday services were held at St. Thomas A Becket church, my in-laws attended High Holiday services with us. I remember my father-in-law, who had been a yeshiva boy, and very accustomed to a male-dominated religious experience, being somewhat shocked by both the venue and the way services were unfolding.

NVHC had a female rabbi, female president, a female soloist and on that particular occasion, it seemed that only women were reading from the Torah. My father-in-law inquired of me, in slightly louder than a whisper, “don’t men do anything in your temple?” At that very moment, a male congregant walked up to the bimah and closed the ark!!!





NVHC's FIRST BUILDING

By, Eric Forman

In the late 1970s, NVHC was about ten years old. We had perhaps 120 families, a full-time rabbi, Rabbi Arnold Siegel, a part-time office person and Ruth Hershkowitz was our underpaid part-time religious school principal. Everybody else was an unpaid volunteer. Our worship services were held at St. Thomas a Beckett Church. Our school met in Herndon Intermediate School and later in an office complex near Dulles International Airport. We knew that if NVHC was to survive and there was to be a Jewish presence in this part of Northern Virginia, we had to have our own spiritual home, our own building.

In 1977, we hired an architect who promised that his plans would give us our building within our budget. We had previously purchased land from Thomas a Becket Church for the even then low price of \$25,000. With high hopes we went out for construction bids. It was a disaster. The lowest bid was double the amount that we had budgeted. What were we to do? But then there was a glimmer of hope. The low bidder offered to build us a building that would meet our needs and stay within our budget, but it would be a very different building. It would not be nearly as handsome. Some might even consider it homely. But what choice did we have?

We proceeded to seek approval from the Reston Architectural Review Board. It did not go well. Not surprisingly, they found much to complain about and offered a number of suggestions, any one of which would increase costs beyond our reach. I was President then, and asked to meet with the Review Board's chairwoman.

This was going to be a make or break meeting. Would we be able to build the only building we could afford, or would NVHC fade away along with our hopes of establishing a Jewish presence in Western Fairfax and Loudon counties? The very nice lady who chaired Reston's Architectural Review Board politely explained the Board's concerns and asked could we not make some of the changes that they wanted? It was at this point that fate intervened -- or was it providence?

The TV mini-series "Holocaust" was being shown at this time. That series had an enormous impact. In Germany, it was a cultural watershed between generations. In the United States it was, for many, a traumatic eye opener. In my meeting, the "Holocaust" was the unseen third party in the room. I explained that I was not there to defend our proposed design or argue about the Board's suggestions. I was there to explain our situation. We were at the absolute limit of our financial resources. We could afford no more. If there is to be a Jewish community in Reston, it had to be in this building. The Review Board's chairwoman and I looked at each other. She softly nodded.

We got our building.

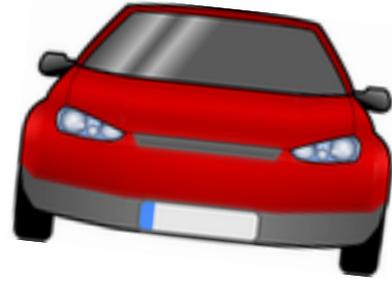


Here is the Forman family, Karen, Eric, Daniel and Alyson in May 1979. They are wearing NVHC t-shirts that have the old NVHC logo and were designed to wear at the NVHC ground breaking for our new building.



Phyllis Stein

Road Rally



In the late 70's or early 80's the temple had a road rally, which was basically a scavenger hunt in automobiles. Sy Sherman was the mastermind of the rally. The Levins and the Formans were partners with Burgess driving us. We were given a clue, and then had to decipher the proper location. One location was the Trailways bus station in Fairfax. Karen was familiar with the location because her mother would visit using the bus from New York. Another location was Fair Oaks Mall. In order to keep our mileage low, we backed out of Fair Oaks Mall. Needless to say we laughed a lot. We did win, and the prize was brunch for 4 at the Dulles Marriot.



Jodi's Wedding by Carol and Mike Flicker



When our daughter Jodi was getting married, her future father-in-law used a walker. The congregation built a ramp so he could walk his son down the aisle and stand on the bima. We have never forgotten how happy we were that he could be part of the ceremony. We are grateful to be part of such a supportive community.

Early Memories of NVHC by Francine Beifeld

David & I moved to Reston in 1974. After first relocating to Alexandria we decided to move to Western Fairfax and immediately fell in love with Reston and all it had to offer. This included a small Jewish congregation known as NVHC. There was no building but the members did offer a warm and welcoming home to us. Rabbi Siegel and his wife, Frances, were very gracious and we immediately felt comfortable.

We were such a small congregation that everyone knew everyone else. We were all very young, raising families, and most had no relatives in this area. While we could not always travel to be with our own families we had NVHC peers with whom to share Seders, High Holy Days and other important events. In those early, pre-building days, I taught Sunday school, belonged to the Sisterhood, served on the membership committee and took part in fund raisers.

One of my fondest memories is of the musical performances we put on to raise money for the congregation. A group of us, led by Flo Fry, got together to write words to show tunes in order to parody life at NVHC and the Jewish community in general. We'd rehearse for weeks to be ready for this one time performance. It was great fun.

Today we are a much larger, more diverse congregation of which I am very proud to belong. Happy 50th Anniversary!



Francine and David
Beifeld



Flo Fry, Susan Rosenbluth (now Goldstein), Francine,
Judy Amdur, Robin Feldman, Marilyn Michaels
and Rabbi Siegel.



Our Street Fair By David Heymsfeld

All afternoon a P.A. system in our parking lot blared the voice of Frank Sinatra:

“Start spreading the news, I'm leaving today
I want to be a part of it, New York, New York
These vagabond shoes, are longing to stray
Right through the very heart of it, New York, New York

Welcome to the New York Street Fair: one of the more successful fundraising events in NVHC's early years. A group of New Yorkers in the congregation thought it would be great fun to recreate the culture of their childhood and that it would attract many non-congregants. I was a skeptic. There weren't that many New Yorkers in Reston at the time, and why would they be interested?



I can only say, in three words President Trump has never uttered, “I was wrong.” The Street Fair attracted a lot of buzz in Reston, and was well attended. Events at the fair included Nathan's hot dogs, games using what we all “Spaldeens” (for non-New Yorkers or those born after 1980, that's a pink rubber ball about the size of a tennis ball, used for street games such as stickball and punch ball) and jacks.



Another fund raising idea which never got off the ground, but was fun to discuss, was to recruit Elizabeth Taylor, the most glamorous, and presumably wealthy, movie star of her day. Ms. Taylor had converted to Judaism in her marriage to movie producer Michael Todd, who died in a plane crash. During the 70s she was married to Senator John Warner and lived in Loudon County. I think we may have gone so far as to try to contact her, but we never even got her to attend a service.



Purim Shpiels By David Goldberger

From 2000 through 2016, with a few years off in between for good (or bad?) behavior, I wrote the NVHC Purim Shpiel. I started off in 2000 with a Star Wars parody: “Grogger Wars: Parsha 1” and ended (so far) in 2016 with another Star Wars parody that I nicknamed “Grogger Wars: Who Woke Up the Schwartz?”

With much help from NVHC clergy, Religious School, and various other members of the congregation, we put on parodies of popular movies and TV shows. I was pleased to recruit two of my sons to perform in a few of these productions.



In “Shushan Idol” Daniel is the Guitarist in the white shirt playing in the band, “Persian Rugs”



and my son Zak is the coffee barista in the green apron.



In “Grogger Wars: Parsha 1” Daniel is a palace servant in the green cape.



Here is Zak as the Jon Stewart- inspired Mordechai Liebowitz in “The Shushan Daily Report.”

Purim Shpiels by David Goldberger

Grogger Wars: Parsha 1 (2000)
The Megillah According to the X-Files (2001)
Harresther Purim and the Yiddisher Kop (2002)
Shushan Idol (2005)
Sponge Gal Esther (2006)
Shushan Royale (2007)
Decision 5768 - Shushan Votes! (2008)

Batman Begins Again One More Time (2009)
Dancing with Shushan’s Stars (2010)
The Shushan Daily Report (2011)
Modern Shushan Family (2012)
The Mad Men of Shushan (2013)
Grogger Wars: Who Woke Up the Schwartz? (2016)

Once Upon a Time the Ark Fell on Me

By Carl Zelman



Back when we met at the church next door for the Holidays, we had moved the ark to the church and were setting it up for services. The cabinet was in two pieces. The cabinet on top contained the scrolls.

I was on my knees in the front when a member, trying to be helpful, gave the top cabinet a shove and it toppled onto my back and my head. I was soon on my way to the hospital!

The result? Two inches shorter and two slipped discs.



Helping Vietnamese Families By Hank Chadwick



Hank & Sheila Chadwick in 1978

In 1978 the news was filled with the Vietnamese “boat people”. During the High Holidays Rabbi Siegel gave a sermon about why NVHC should join in helping these people. Sheila responded to his call, along with two other women from NVHC, Judy Rosenbaum and Barbara Averch. Together, they became co-chairs of the Vietnamese Resettlement Committee.

They contacted the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), which was one of the organizations authorized to provide resettlement aid, under the resettlement program administered by the State Department. HIAS said that they had a family with eight children and wanted to know if NVHC could help them. The size of the family was a problem, because adequate housing was hard to find, but a solution was provided by the Fram family, who donated a rental townhouse that they owned. However, the county had to approve, and a three-bedroom townhouse was not normally considered big enough for two adults and eight children. Sheila and the other women, however, used their considerable powers of persuasion and the county came through. The Do family soon came to live in Reston.

Shortly thereafter, HIAS asked whether NVHC could support a second family. The committee said yes and there soon arrived Kim Quiy and her son. The rest of her family, her husband and two daughters, had been captured while they were escaping. Kim was found an apartment at Laurel Glade in Reston.

Before long, the Dos had moved to a detached house in Herndon. Mr. Do had found a full-time job. Kim Quiy worked as a house cleaner, which soon turned into a business.

The committee raised funds from the congregation to support the

two families. Many volunteers came forward to help them. The adults were given training, both from the committee members and from county resources and gradually learned to speak English and, before long, to support themselves. They were hard workers and made sure that their children did well in school. They maintained contact with the committee members, although Judy and Barbara eventually moved away. Sheila and I attended the weddings of numerous children, usually in Chinese restaurants such as the Fortune, which was in the North Point Village Center. The most memorable wedding to me was for one of the Do children. They had a reception at their house in Herndon, before the wedding ceremony took place, that featured a roasted pig on a spit that was carried from the groom's house to the bride's (It may have been the other way around. I don't remember.) by many chanting young men.

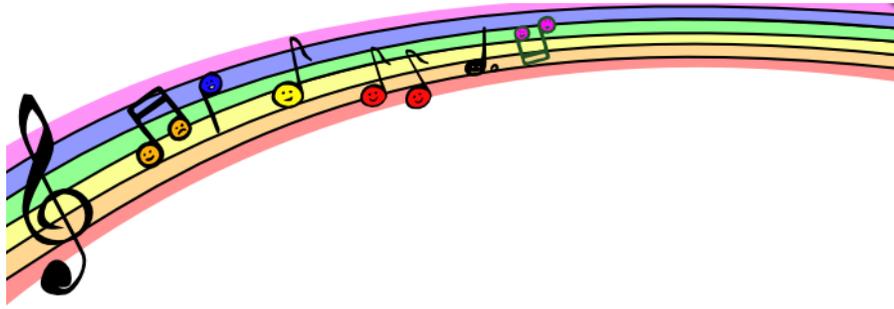
Every year, at Hanukah (or Christmas. The Vietnamese never seemed to get them straight.) we were treated to a basket of spring rolls from each family. They were homemade and delicious. My sons say that the Do's spring rolls were better, but they were all the same to me.

A few years later, when Vietnam loosened its policies, the two daughters of Kim Quiy came to Reston to live with their mother. They were named Khanh Pham and Bach Pham. Today they are both living in California and keep in touch with my son, Benjamin.



Khanh Pham

We will never forget the feeling that we got from helping these families in need.



Back in the '70s By Sharon Rosendhal



I taught at Herndon Intermediate (now Middle) School on Sundays. That's when the school became NVHC. I taught the 5th grade.

Once I was supposed to lead the students in song. But I can't carry a tune! The students didn't know the difference. They just followed me, singing along very seriously.

It was so hard not to laugh.

Herndon Intermediate School



School Days

By Mary Kornreich



I remember being a 4th grade Sunday School teacher at NVHC in the mid 1970's. Classes were held at Herndon Intermediate School. The school was being run by Ed Jacobs. Other teachers at the time were Ruth Ruttenberg, Francine Beifeld, Sherry Olstein, Tova Sagie, and Esther Berg. We were all volunteers. Sherry originally taught kindergarten, but she, along with her autoharp was so talented that she was recruited to teach music for the whole school.

I remember Hebrew classes in Rabbi Arnold Siegel's basement. This must have also been in the mid 70's. About the time he and Frances had their first baby. In the class with me were Ruth Ruttenberg, and two founders of the congregation, Ruth Sulkie, and Sylvia Hollander.

I remember being in the 1997 adult Bat Mitzvah class along with Nell Hirsch. Hannah Newcomb, Linda Gordon, Marsha Sheinman, Kate Sternberg. We were all very grateful to Sara Branscome for offering to teach us the Hebrew and Betsy Giller for offering to teach us the Jewish studies. They were inspiring teachers. We all developed the warm feeling of working together towards a goal. We each had to complete a project to present at the ceremony. I did research on how archaeology illuminates the Bible.

Surprise Guests By Stuart Williger



One Shabbat morning I arrived a few minutes late and as I came around the corner of the driveway I saw two police cars in the parking lot. As I got further into the lot I noticed more police cars and a large limo.

When I walked into the sanctuary I saw a gentleman sitting right next to the door. He had an earpiece with a cord tucked into his coat. Obviously Secret Service.

As I sat down I looked toward the front of the sanctuary and there was Vice President Gore sitting with Tipper Gore and their children.

Gail Romansky was a cousin of Tipper Gore and they were attending the Romansky Bar Mitzvah.





Burgess Levin's Visual Memories Of Doug and Rebecca's B'nai Mitzvahs



Burgess remembered that Doug's was Rabbi Gold's first
Bar Mitzvah at NVHC



And here she is with Rebecca.

A Special Rabbi

By David Goldberger

I first heard of NVHC years before I moved to Reston. I was living in Silver Spring, Maryland anxiously awaiting my June 1981 marriage to Ruth. I remember reading around the time of our wedding an article in *The Washington Post* about the woman Rabbi leading a congregation in Northern Virginia. I didn't realize at the time that she was the first female Rabbi ever, in the world, to lead a congregation. But the article made an impression that I remember to this day!

When we moved to Reston in 1986, we joined NVHC and got to meet Roz gold in person. Indeed, we were not only pleased to meet her and be among her congregants, but also to count her as a family friend -- especially as she "photo-bombed" a family photo.

Roz was the first person outside our family to meet our youngest son. She came to see Zak when he was barely an hour old.

