

President's Column
Chaverim—May 2023

Two milestones are drawing to a close as I write this column—my presidency and Sheloshim, the 30 days of mourning for my mother, who passed away at the age of 92 on April 3rd. Community has been a theme running through all of my columns and my letters, and, during the past month, I have felt personally the warmth, the comfort, and the support offered by you, our Bolton Street Synagogue community, as I spent an intense week sitting by mother's bedside and then a week navigating her burial in New Jersey, sitting shiva and celebrating Passover. Thank you for all you did for me and for my family; we are most appreciative. It was extraordinary to return from New Jersey and have so many of you at our house an hour later for our shiva service.

I dedicate this column to my mother's memory. Never one to proclaim herself particularly observant, she nonetheless maintained an intense loyalty to her Reform synagogue in New Jersey, volunteering in the office, studying Torah with her Rabbi, and, in the days before the internet, serving as the synagogue's "Tree Lady," coordinating all the Jewish National Fund tree orders from those who wanted to plant trees in Israel in honor or memory of someone. Once she moved to Baltimore, my mother spent many a High Holiday, Passover Seder, and annual event at Bolton Street, attending events and services with our family until her failing hearing and increasing fragility made it too difficult. For the first few months of my presidency, I read my Chaverim columns to her, and she took great pride in my presidency, though ever my mother, she constantly chided me for working too hard.

Over the course of this past month, I have thought more about why I agreed to take on the presidency of Bolton Street Synagogue after vowing that I would never do so. While I think I was influenced to a great extent by Russ, who took, and still takes, very seriously the responsibility to serve when asked, I think I was also, without realizing it, influenced by my mother, whose commitment to Judaism, to her synagogue, and to social causes remained so strong. Only after her death have I learned how many organizations she quietly supported, including the very progressive National Council of Jewish Women, among others.

Our Bolton Street community has accomplished much during the past two years. You will hear about our accomplishments at the Annual Meeting in June. In the meantime, I want to offer my gratitude to all of you for giving me the privilege of being your president for the past two years. I also want to thank our small but amazing staff--Rabbi Gordon, Monica, Cory, and Johnny--as well as our exceptional Board and Executive Committee, our dedicated committee chairs, and all of our other volunteers who enable Bolton Street Synagogue to operate, to thrive, and to make Baltimore and the world a better place. You have made it easy to be president, and I offer you my profound thanks for all you have done and all you continue to do.