

Someone You Should Know

Gail Schneiderman

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The Schneiderman File

- Gail (Yael) *nee* Wind Schneiderman was born in Tel Aviv, Israel and moved to the Chicago area as a youngster with her parents.
- She and her husband, Irwin, first joined Beth Hillel Congregation in 1978.
- Her fascination with publicity began more than 30 years ago as a volunteer for Wilmette area schools. Gail has been the synagogue's publicist since the mid 1980s. For many years, she handled decorations for Sisterhood events.
- Gail & Irwin's two children and their two granddaughters have been schooled at the Beth Hillel/BHCBE Academy.

Nineteen years ago this month — (November 4, 1995) – World Jewry mourned the untimely passing of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who was struck down by an assassin at an open-air rally in support of the Oslo Accords at the Kings of Israel Square in Tel Aviv. The shooter an Israeli ultranationalist terrorist opposed Prime Minister Rabin's peace initiative and specifically the signing of the Oslo Accords.

In the days following this unspeakable tragedy, public memorials were held throughout Israel and the United States to honor Yitzhak Rabin's legacy. One such memorial tribute produced a standing room only turnout at Beth Hillel Congregation. On the 10 pm newscasts that evening, three Chicago area TV stations began their broadcasts with reporters positioned outside the Wilmette synagogue.

Master Synagogue Publicist: Gail Schneiderman

Quietly monitoring these live news accounts was Gail Schneiderman who has functioned superbly as Beth Hillel/BHCBE's master publicist for nearly 30 years. Granted not all synagogue happenings have rivaled the Rabin tribute for media coverage. In some instances, Gail has generated press releases, furnished photos and developed personal working relationships with suburban editors and Chicago's Jewish press for less dramatic stories, many of which have received front cover placements.

Such news pitches have included BHCBE's annual holiday observances, speaker series, youth and adult education programming, Men's Club & Sisterhood events and even rummage/book sales. She has also publicized all clergy appointments through the years and arranged for personal media interviews with five synagogue rabbis.

She credits her foray on the Sullivan High School newspaper in Chicago's east Rogers Park neighborhood as the touchstone for her interest with publicity. Early in her career, she interviewed the late *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Irv Kupcinec and comic Shelley Berman.

An education major at Bradley University and later Roosevelt University, Gail initially did PR work for the Sisterhood and later broadened her volunteer involvement to include all of Beth Hillel.

"It's important that our community knows and understands what Beth Hillel and now BHCBE is doing and how it can benefit them on all levels," she explains. But perhaps it's her own upbringing in Israel and strong commitment to Judaism that puts Gail in touch and keeps her connected to all things Jewish.

Gail's Upbringing Closely Tied to Israel

Her parents fled from Nazi Germany in the late 1930s and settled originally in Palestine and later Israel. Gail's late father, Willie Wind, was a renowned graphic artist and postage stamp designer. In 1948, he won a competition for the new State of Israel's coat of arms. Israel's Knesset eventually adopted a modified version of Wind's design.

Gail's father also worked on various artistic and creative projects both commercial and religious in Israel and the United States. Her mother, Paula, now in her 90s, enjoys and remains in contact with her extended growing family in the Chicago area. It includes grandchildren, Steven (Nicole) and Laura (Ben) + eight great grandchildren.

As she considers how her role as the synagogue's publicist has evolved over the years, Gail would be the first to tell you the Internet has dramatically changed the way stories are pitched and submitted to the media. She adds, "Years ago, there was more phone contact and relying on snail mail to send information and photos ... "Today, we've come to rely on varied online applications and social media for spreading the word and communicating with others."

The greatest challenge Gail faces in working with BHCBE's volunteer committee chairs and office staff is the importance of lead times on key story placements while adhering to deadlines. As a rule, four to six weeks advance notice is not uncommon to ensure maximum online and print exposure for BHCBE events in community calendars.

Next time, you're reading about the synagogue online or in your newspaper, say "thank you" to Gail for helping spread the word. She takes her work seriously and is one of BHCBE's best go to people. Gail is definitely someone you should know and thank. ■