

President's Report – 2010-11

When your present Executive took office at this time last year, I'm not sure that any of us was fully aware of the responsibilities we had accepted. However, we quickly came together as a team and have had a busy twelve months.

We knew that this would be a special year, since it was the 90th anniversary of the founding of the shul. When Arie Nerman volunteered to chair a committee to plan and execute celebratory events, I was delighted. He and his committee, Dianna James and Alec Myers, did a terrific job: two lectures in the winter, a Founding Family Shabbat service and a spectacular Variety Concert in April to bring the celebrations to a close. All events were well attended, informative and enjoyable. The publicity engendered by Connie Demb's efforts was remarkable: I don't remember the shul's activities getting so much ink and air time ever before.

A concerted effort has been made to pull the synagogue's affairs into the 21st century: we are able to communicate with all but a handful of you via e-mail which has made communication easier and cheaper and thus we've been able to circulate more Little Shpiels and Notices of upcoming events. The website is kept up-to-date: you can find candle-lighting times, schedule information and lots of other stuff on www.beachhebrewinstitute.ca. We have started a Memoir section and I would urge long-time members to consider contributing to it.

Jack Kohl has upgraded the accounting system onto a computer programme which has made for simplified record-keeping. I am pleased to inform you that we have a contract with Moshe Saadon to the end of 2012.

The synagogue really runs on volunteer power and I want to use this opportunity to thank the people who quietly make everything happen: those who assist Moshe at services every Shabbat – Arie Nerman, Alan Demb, Mel Kastner, Ivan Zilman, Tom Klein and our corps of Haftorah readers – Jerry Teitel, Shelley Zelunka, Jack Kohl, Morty Fine, Barry Hoffman, Danny Henry – whose schedule is meticulously arranged by Connie Demb. This past year Susan Litchen, Alanna Mandel, Dena Taylor and Alec Myers all undertook at least one Haftorah portion, so participation is growing. Dena Taylor's lovely voice enhances High Holiday services and other special services during the year. Jeanna MacDougall continues to provide gourmet kiddushim. I'm pleased to be able to report that we've had a record number of sponsored kiddushim this year.

We hosted a most successful Holocaust Remembrance programme with Semmy Stahlhammer back in September last year. Members helped to build the Sukkah. We had minyans for reading the Book of Lamentations, for Succot, for the Reading of the Book of Esther at Purim and for Simchat Torah and the usual good turnout for lighting the Hannukiah and latkefest with followed. A word of warning: the Holidays are all late this year – Yom Kippur falls on Saturday, October 8th and the middle Saturday of Hannukah coincides with Christmas Eve.

We owe a special vote of thanks to the dedicated group which plans, prepares and serves lunch at the Wednesday drop-in: Arie Nerman, Sandy Winch, Sharon Hershenhorn, Stephen Drooker, Seymour Wolfson. This is an enormous commitment of time and energy and a very high-profile undertaking for the shul.

Kim van Rooy and Margaret Dore keep the garden blooming and the plants in the sanctuary fresh. Veronica Beckford donated new flowers for the vases above the Bimah to replace the rather tired ones which had been there for longer than I care to recall.

Moshe and Phyllis Saadon donated new mezuzah covers, Holly Levinter and Mel Kastner donated new parchments. Moshe conducted the appropriate ceremony to ensure that we have the correct mezuzot in the correct places and all is now b'seder.

Susan Litchen is our Sunday School teacher. It was a small class which benefitted from her judicious mix of aleph-bet, Jewish holidays and history, davening, etc. I knew all was well when Susan told me that she had taught the children to sing Happy Birthday in Hebrew! The parents gave rave assessments and I hope we'll see more children sign up in October, when Susan has agreed to continue teaching.

Dianna James continues to look after the yahrzeit notices, the Remembrance Boards, the Etz Chaim leaves and more other necessary things than I can enumerate here. Mel Kastner and Chris Berry help with a lot of small repairs in the building and Mel acts as liaison with the Rabbi who repairs our Torahs when needed. Connie Demb is our telephone answering voice. Mark Kreger provides legal advice pro bono when asked.

Morty Fine has maintained responsibility for the Foundation. Mel Winch remains Chair of the Cemetery Committee (in fact, he is the committee) and has been since its inception.

To end this litany of thank you's, my final one goes to Sharon Hershenhorn. Without her cooperation, commitment, good sense and hard work my job would have been impossible. Her friendship is invaluable and my gratitude immeasurable.

Going into the second year of my presidency, I've learned a lot. I feel that the synagogue is headed in a positive direction, we have been fortunate in attracting some new younger members and I hope to welcome more. Shabbat services are a joy – the congregation has turned itself into a choir which supports Moshe beautifully. Our D'vrai Torah, very often given by a member of the congregation, can be inspiring and meaningful. I urge more of you to join us on Shabbat; as it is meant to, it gives us time for quiet contemplation and renewal of energy for the week ahead.

I look forward to hearing from you throughout the coming year. I take suggestions seriously and even welcome criticisms. We do have a Ritual Committee which seeks ways to make services more responsive to the wishes of the congregation while, at the same time, holding to our cherished traditions.

Thank you for your attention. I'll try to be worthy of your confidence in me. It is an honour to be your President.

Signed: Rosalee Monk