Celebrating 73 Years
Up Close:

David & Rose Schecter

Rose and David Schecter have been married for 53 years. Rose is an El Paso native, and David moved to El Paso during high school while he met Rose. They have spent most of their lives together, having been high school sweethearts at El Paso High School. David attended Tulane University as an undergraduate, while Rose studied at Texas Western College, earning her BS in Secondary Education. She always wanted to teach and had a love for high school students. Shortly after their marriage they relocated to Memphis, TN so that David could attend medical school at the University of Tennessee Memphis campus.

Rose taught sixth grade for two years in Memphis, but stopped after becoming pregnant with her daughter, Elizabeth. She said they were lucky that hospital where David was working fed the on-call doctors and their families.

After he graduated, David went into the Air Force as a flight surgeon and was stationed in Thailand. His commander allowed him to bring over his family, so Rose and their daughter, Elizabeth, went. When David was off duty or on leave, they were able to travel extensively within Thailand. Rose says this experience started their “lust for travel”.

After leaving the Air Force David did his residency in ophthalmology at Baylor University. While there they had their son, Marc. They had originally planned to stay in Houston, but life had other plans, and they returned to El Paso. David was an ophthalmologist with his own practice for 44 years in El Paso, while they raised their family.

The Schecter’s have been active in the El Paso Jewish community for over 40 years. Throughout that time Rose has been a volunteer of the El Paso Holocaust Museum, as well as serving as president of the board. She was also an active member and president for the National Council of Jewish Women. Currently she is treasurer of the Jewish Community Foundation of El Paso and has remained an active member of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso where she has served as chair on the community campaign. David chaired the Maimonides division.

Rose and David have visited Israel three times. Their first trip to Israel was with Elizabeth and Marc, they admitted they had no idea what they were in store for. They had been involved with the Jewish Federation before that trip, and the federation helped set things up for them. They saw the Jewish Federation in a different light after that. Their trip with Temple Mt. Sinai and Rabbi Zeidman was inspired by a desire to return, but also by the passing of a friend who had wanted to visit Israel but hadn’t been able to. Rose said the trip with Rabbi Zeidman was a different experience spiritually than their first.

While they have been lucky to travel all around the world throughout their married lives, Israel is the one place that has always drawn them back in. Their Zeidman was a different experience spiritually than their first.

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Recently, I participated in a webinar presented by renowned Holocaust scholar, Prof. Peter Hayes titled “Why? Explaining the Holocaust”. This evocative lecture offered many new insights into how we consider familiar established facts. The follow up discussion related today’s white supremacist ideology to that of the Nazi era. Professor Hayes stated that there were indeed several similarities and caution against Jewish complacency.

What struck me most, however, was the fact that Jews, in addition to being “too alone” were also “too divided”. “Too alone”, because their numbers were relatively small, and their neighbors for the most part did not come to their aid. As Prof. Hayes noted, “There seemed to have always been something more important than to help the Jews”. “Too divided”, because there was no unified voice representing secular or cultural Jews, and certainly no unity among the religious denominations within Judaism.

After the webinar, I headed to our lap pool for my daily exercise. While it’s nothing to brag about, much of my best thinking takes place while swimming laps. A good friend calls it my “watery sanctuary”, because my thoughts are often related to spirituality, to life’s pressing questions, asking G-d for guidance and advice, as well as sometimes quarreling with the Divine. The wet monologue is always accompanied by much gratitude while I’m looking up at our beautiful blue skies during my backstroke laps with a smile filled “Todah Rabah” for it all.

During today’s swim, I was unable to free my mind of the insights shared in the webinar. What struck me was how the anti-Semitic, white supremacist developments of the recent past share common threads with the times surrounding the Holocaust. Therefore, I think it behooves us to stand together, regardless whether we pray or not, how we pray, or to which particular Jewish denomination we profess.

That is where the Jewish Federations of North America and our own chapter are contributing an immeasurable service. Both work hard to do just that, - bring us together. The Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso serves all Jews in the area regardless of personal preferences and tries to demonstrate the benefits of being a part of the community. To achieve this noble goal however, we need your help to spread the word. I am told that some of our fellow Jews are unaware of the JFED’s existence and of the positive impacts we are having on the community.

While once we were strangers in a strange land, let us not be strangers in this land.

As I dash from my watery sanctuary through the chilling air, I look up once more, smile and feel more blessed than I deserve.

On Saturday, August 3, 2019, clearly the worst day in the history of my beloved hometown, I received a call requesting that I immediately author a statement for and on behalf of our Jewish community regarding that day’s massacre. While I protested I was not yet the JCRC’s (Jewish Community Relations Council) Chair, and was a neophyte at best, I was Chair-elect and did my best to express the incredible pain and sorrow of our community and pledge our solidarity with all El Passos.

For several years, I had been our Holocaust Museum’s representative on the JCRC and appeared to be the likely candidate to step in when serious issues arose in the Council. Since that day, I have become more comfortable with my responsibilities and have received insight from two very important sources: the Jewish Communities Day at the State legislature JCRC statewide planning committee; and the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), JCRC working group for small and intermediate Federations. The meetings and training have reassured me of two things, that the political issues facing the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso (JFED) are pervasive in all of the nation’s federations, and that, with the love, common beliefs and cooperation we have for and with each other as Jews we can resolve and live with the differences.

First, my view. I was raised in a family where political polarization was generally characterized by gender. The women were of one political persuasion. The men, many who had served in the military (WWII, Korea, state-side), were adamantly believers in the other. One of my few, but very fond memories of my oldest brother, Stuart, (who we lost in an auto accident on Thanksgiving Day his freshman year of college), was a bumper sticker on his 1950’s something or other car (ask Brian if the make and model is important to you) which read, simply, “Goldwater.” For those of you who, like me, are chemistry challenged, it means “Goldwater,” the then Republican presidential candidate who, incidentally, was Jewish. During high school, I spent a summer with my Aunt Naomi, a physician, in Washington D.C., who was a friend of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black and Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson (JFK’s first choice as a running mate). She took me to the National Mall, where I learned the Holocaust, and on behalf of our Jewish community regarding that day’s massacre.

While that task has always had its challenges in the past, it is now one of the most daunting tasks facing Federation professionals and volunteers. The Jewish concept of Tikkum Olam, in these times, is widely interpreted as the mandate to “repair the world,” and Jewish organizations seek to relieve the suffering of all people in need, regardless of religion, ethnicity or nationality.”

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What I have learned from the State and national committees I serve, is that Federations all over the country are struggling with and being adversely impacted by national politics. Everything, from the governors the State committees chose to present to the Texas legislature on behalf of the Texas Jewish Federations to the decisions the JCRC’s make on issues to support and publicize locally, has to be run through the prism of politics. The universal, but mostly unspoken fear of losing the confidence of our most dedicated members and volunteers of our community. While some opine the fear of that loss is financial, it is not.

Jewish Federations in general are faced with reflecting, benefiting and acting for and on behalf of all Jews. In the Jewish Community they serve – regardless of the synagogue attended, and in respect to those Jews who are secular, or unaffiliated, but identify in respect to those Jews who are Jewish, who believe such an act would adversely affect the success of small businesses.

The trend among many JCRC members is for individual JCRC’s to commit their resources to Tikkum Olam; to action. This does not mean JCRC’s should remain totally silent, especially in light of local tragedies like El Paso’s. It does mean that making statements on large political related matters are better left to umbrella organizations of which JFED is a member.

On January 7, 2021, the day after the assault on our nation’s Capital, a statement was issued from Mark Wilf, Chair of the Board of Trustees, and Eric Fingerhut, President & CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America. This stirring and cohesive statement is devoid of political position.

In part, the statement reads: As Jews, we know personally and painfully the dangers of unchecked hatred. We also know that with great determination and conviction to our core values, our country can heal and grow stronger. We affirm our belief in the stability of our government, its institutions and the peaceful transition of power. We are committed to devoting our communal energy to working with people of all faiths and creeds to heal and move forward.

Discourse of differences should be welcome; as they nourish our lives and understanding of each other and the world around us. But such discourse requires honest, active listening and an attempt to comprehend the underlying reasons why our fellow Jews believe and feel differently. No group has suffered more discrimination and retribution than the Jewish people. The rise of antisemitism is alarming and one of the main reasons I became actively involved. When we speak publicly, we must speak in one voice reflecting our beautiful mission to repair the world.

The trend, however, is to recognize that the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) and other national organizations adequately fulfill that role. Even then, some JCRA positions are contrary to some Jews’ positions. For example, JCPA advocates against voter ID requirements, the inference being that those ideals are “Jewish” in nature and represent not just the sentiment of Jews, but of Judaism itself. However, many Jewish support voter ID requirements. While JCPA “strongly support(s) raising the minimum wage,” which few would argue against, we need only look to the opposition to such matters among nationally elected officials, again, some who are Jewish, who believe such an act would adversely affect the success of small businesses.

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Last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the global community was permanently changed, Israel was no exception. As nations around the world grappled with new challenges and complex realities, some of Israel’s most vulnerable — the elderly, people with disabilities, youth and families at risk, and underserved populations — were heavily impacted.

To mitigate this crisis, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the global Jewish humanitarian organization, leveraged its ongoing partnership with the Government of Israel to quickly adapt, developing innovative programs to provide solutions for those who needed it most. The Jewish Federations, JDC’s historic partner, supported JDC in these efforts. With that help, JDC reached tens of thousands of people across Israel in just the first few months of the pandemic alone, delivering humanitarian aid and services, distributing vital health and safety information to isolated citizens, and deploying professionals and volunteers, in person and remotely, to aid their neighbors.

As the public health crisis raged on, innovative solutions helped the organization address the new reality and the future. “Long-term investments in digital literacy and widespread access to technology will allow us to emerge from this crisis better positioned for the future and prepared to share our learnings with the Jewish world and beyond.”

For people like Shaul Chen, these solutions come in the form of remote rehabilitation. Prior to the pandemic, 77-year-old Shaul attended a special geriatric rehabilitation center for elderly facing functional decline. However, when coronavirus broke out and his in-person sessions were halted, JDC, in partnership with Israel’s Ministry of Health, quickly adjusted, training professionals and equipping clients with the tools necessary to continue to work together virtually through virtual rehabilitation.

Remote rehab was a success, with Shaul attesting, “I made progress quickly. I can already stand today, even half a minute if not more. Before, I could not stand at all.” Today, this new virtual model for remote rehab is being integrated into geriatric rehabilitation centers nationwide, with hundreds of remote treatments taking place monthly. In other parts of Israel, to aid those lacking digital literacy and technological infrastructure, like Haredim, Israeli-Arabs, and people with disabilities, JDC helped develop virtual learning platforms including easily accessible videos, tutorials, and podcasts, all with plans to be utilized beyond the pandemic.

“The State of Israel was best positioned to transform this crisis into manifold opportunities. The innovations we’ve deployed were once a distant dream, but social distancing made them a reality overnight,” says Dr. Sigal Shelach, Executive Director of JDC-Israel. “Long-term investments in digital literacy and widespread access to technology will allow us to emerge from this crisis better positioned for the future and prepared to share our learnings with the Jewish world and beyond.”

For the last 106 years, through wars, natural and manmade disasters, JDC has worked tirelessly on behalf of those who can’t always fight for themselves. Today, in Israel and around the world, with a post-pandemic world on the horizon, JDC continues to create durable solutions during difficult times for those who need it most.

Rebecca Zisholtz

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*All loans are subject to credit qualification and approval. The property must be located in the United States, within a 130-mile radius of El Paso County, to include Hudspeth County. Certain fees and conditions apply. Learn how to become a member at gecu.com.
The children at The J are always ready for a birthday party - especially when it’s Israel’s “birthday!” Yom Haatzmaut may be difficult for some of them to say, but what’s easy to see is the joy they have on this special day. We learn Israeli dances, eat hummus and falafel, parade in the courtyard, and sing favorite songs. The food, the values, having a Jewish homeland, and more, are celebrated here with true jubilation!

Yom Haatzmaut - Jewish Jubilation at The J

Graduating in 2021?
Preschool, Grammar School, High School, College
We want to feature you.

Send us a 5X7 picture and a two-line biography to be featured in a future Issue of The Jewish Voice.

https://jewishelpaso.digitalpigeon.com/rcv/Graduation-Pictures

El Paso Holocaust Museum & Study Center is pleased to present its annual Yom HaShoah Commemoration. Our 2021 theme: “Journeys to New Beginnings” will focus on Holocaust survivors’ journeys back from darkness to light and the legacies of they passed on to their children and grandchildren. A virtual film screening of EPHM’s 2021 Yom HaShoah Commemoration Film will begin April 8 and be available for viewing through April 11. This film includes interviews with Holocaust survivors and 2nd and 3rd generation survivors from El Paso. On April 11, the commemoration will continue with a virtual panel webinar- Journeys to New Beginnings- with 2nd and 3rd generation survivors, featured in the film, for a continuation of their families’ stories and messages they have for future generations. Zoom login information will be sent upon RSVP. For more information on these events, to access the Commemoration Film, and to RSVP for the Panel Webinar: www.elpasoholocaustmuseum.org/events. EPHM’s Yom HaShoah Commemoration is generously underwritten by the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso.

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Demanding is impolite. That’s why some were puzzled when the Lubavitcher Rebbe launched a massive campaign to demand Moshiach’s arrival. “We Want Moshiach Now!” became the motto of the international Jewish Kids Club (Tzivos Hashem) the Rebbe established in 1980 and the Rebbe emphasized the motto’s importance often.

Is it appropriate to demand things from G-d?

On Monday, April 26 we will celebrate Pesach Sheini - the Second Passover. One year after the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were instructed to offer the Passover Sacrifice in the newly inaugurated Tabernacle on the 14th of Nissan and eat the meat that evening, as they had done one year earlier on the eve of redemption. From then on, this Passover Sacrifice represented the birth of the Jewish nation and the eternal freedom granted to us 3,333 years ago.

Since the sacrifice was offered in the Tabernacle or Holy Temple one needed to be ritually pure. If one were to participate in a funeral and have contact with the dead body, for example, a seven-day purification process was necessary to participate in the Passover Sacrifice and seder tradition. (It is important to note that ritual impurity can happen as a result of doing a mitzvah, such as burying the dead, and is no indication of wrongdoing at all.)

The coffin of Joseph, the famed Jewish viceroy of Egypt, accompanied the Israelites to the Land of Israel and his pallbearers were unable to be ritually purified in time for Passover that year. Although they understood why they were barred from participating and appreciated the fact that they were charged with an important mission, nevertheless they approached Moses and demanded “Why should we lose out from the opportunity to offer the Passover Sacrifice?” Responding to their demand, G-d decreed that thirty days later, the 14th of Iyar, would be make-up time for anyone that was unable to offer the Passover Sacrifice on time. They demanded it and they got it.

Moshiach will usher in an era of global prosperity, peace, and tranquility for all, and it behooves us to demand this transformation happen immediately.

So, the next time you say “We Want Moshiach Now” don’t feel self-conscious. The more strongly and incessantly we demand it the faster we will get it and usher in the era our world so desperately needs - NOW!
The Cataract and Glaucoma Center (Drs. Alpern & Tafoya) is now part of the Southwest Eye Institute!

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Mental Health and the Pandemic

As of June 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says 40% of adults in the United States now struggle with mental health or drug issues. COVID-related stress is taxing the coping mechanisms of people who have never before dealt with anxiety and depression. People who live with ongoing mental health issues are even more vulnerable and are having a harder time. They are more susceptible to what is being called ‘COVID fatigue’—emotional exhaustion caused by the unrelenting stress of the continuing pandemic—and are finding it difficult to obtain needed resources, such as medications, therapy, and support groups. The following suggestions may help:

• Move. Exercise helps you feel better, both physically and mentally. Walking every day, even for 15 minutes, can make a big difference.
• Eat a healthy diet. Sugar worsens depression. Cutting down on sugar makes you feel more energetic and clear-headed.
• Alcohol is a depressant and impairs your mental health. Cut back or avoid completely.
• Sleep is critical to mental health and physical wellbeing. Get at least seven hours a night in a dark room. Stop using smart phones, computers, and TVs 30 minutes before bedtime.
• Get out of the house. - Sun and fresh air are mood enhancers. Enjoy the outside. Go for a walk (without your phone). Soil contains ‘serotonin,’ and is in anti-depressant meds; so, garden or re-pot a plant.
• Fight isolation.
• Limit News and Social Media. - Most news is negative; so, stay COVID-informed but don’t overdo it.
• Facebook makes it easy to believe that your life is not as fantastic as it should be, especially when you are depressed. Perhaps timeout is in order.
• Accept that most of what goes on in the world is beyond our control. So:
- Try to live in the present moment.
- Set reasonable expectations.
- Be willing to be surprised.
- Be open to new opportunities.
- Be Patient. Positive change takes time, especially when dealing with mental health challenges.
- Take baby steps. Congratulate yourself for any constructive action you take.
- If you cannot ignore the negative voices in your head, use meditation and deep breathing techniques to quiet them.
- Take advantage of free guided meditation apps on smartphones.
- Embrace Gratitude.
- It is human tendency to focus on the negative. Focus on the positive aspects of your life—even the small ones.
  - Make a daily gratitude list to remember what’s good in your life.
  - Spiritual or Religious practice is important. The Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso offers many opportunities to remain connected through virtual activities.
  - A special note to frontline health care and essential workers:
    - Avoid burnout by going back to small ones.
    - Make a daily gratitude list to remember what’s good in your life.
    - Spiritual or Religious practice is important. The Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso offers many opportunities to remain connected through virtual activities.
  - The New Mexico Crisis and Access Line (1-855-NMCRISIS) provides 24-hour support and resources. The Suicide Hotline (1-800-273-8255) provides help for those challenged by mental health problems.
  - Mental health professionals have quickly migrated to virtual therapy sessions, so connecting with a therapist should not be difficult during COVID.
  - Revisit your motivation for why you do this important work.
  - Talk to your family about what you need (and ask them what they need).
  - Seek help.
- The El Paso Crises Hotline (915-779-1800 or 1-877-562-6467) offers 24-hour support and resources.

Applications are now being accepted for the Bea Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Applications must be received on or before May 17, 2021 for distribution by August 6, 2021

In July 2001 the Beatrice L. Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund was established so that proceeds from the fund would be given to a needy and worthy Jewish college student(s) in El Paso to enable him or her to pursue his or her studies.

Applications are available at www.jewishelpaso.org/bea-weisz-scholarship-2021/scholarships-2021

Bea Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund

Join us Wednesday, April 28, 6:30-7:30 pm
Socially Distanced Earth Day Garden Party at One Grub Community

$5 registration fee will benefit The Nature Conservancy

*Earth Day is 4/22/21

www.jewishelpaso.org/elpasoconnect

ElPasoConnect is funded by a grant from The Jewish Community Foundation of El Paso

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ElPasoConnect
(for those of us in our 20s and 30s)

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The Nature Conservancy

Bea Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund
MEET THE CAST OF NETFLIX SENSATION FAUDA

TUESDAY APRIL 13, 2021 @ 3:30 PM MT

Since its 2015 premiere, millions across the globe have closely followed the fictional story of the Israeli unit commander Doron Kavilio as he fights terrorists threatening the security of the Jewish State in the award-winning Israeli Netflix series Fauda.

Fauda, which is an Arab word meaning chaos and Hebrew slang for a mission gone wrong, aims to depict the two-sided story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Filmed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, this series portrays its characters as both human and deeply flawed, thus garnering an audience across the political spectrum.

Zoom in with us and meet the cast, actor Yaakov Zada Daniel, who plays one of the members of the elite IDF anti-terror unit in the show, and Boaz Konforty who plays Aviha, a member of the counter-terrorist unit who is always ready to jump into action. The stars will share their experiences on the show and answer questions from the host, Jewish Federation of New Bedford Executive Director Amir Cohen.

YAACKOV ZADA DANIEL

An Israeli actor best known for his roles in Fauda (2015-), Hostages (2013-2016), Metemtemet (2016-2019) and Next to Her (2014). Daniel has become known for his rare talent to take on a range of intriguing roles. He served in the Shayetet 13, an elite unit of Israel’s navy, and later transferred to the undercover Duvedvan Unit, an elite counter-terrorism unit, which became particularly relevant for his notable role as “Eli” in Fauda. Concerned with humanitarian efforts, Daniel also serves as a Goodwill Ambassador for the SOS Children’s Villages, and is collaborating with various NPOs supporting soldiers suffering from PTSD.

BOAZ KONFORTY

Born in Beersheva, Konforty served as a tank commander in the 401 brigade. After his military service, he joined the “Beit Tzvi” school of theatre and graduated in 1999. Since then, Boaz took part in over 25 television and cinema projects, including Fauda, Prisoners of War, The Spy (Eli), and many others.