

Community Voices: Letters To The Editor

[Opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Lansing Community News.]

Dear Editor,

Ida and I have been enjoying the Lansing Community News. We have read and studied each edition from front to back. We did not realize how much we missed contact with our many Lansing friends. The paper's news and articles were near equal to a visit to the area. After nearly 50 years of our lives having been spent in Lansing, we do miss the place and we feel a kinship to it.

Ida and I are comfortable and happy at Phoenix. Three of our children live in Arizona or California. Oh yes, and especially four of our grandchildren.

I continue to keep busy on family genealogy, a collection of family stories and fooling around on my computer. Both Ida and I are involved in Senior Citizen trips and other activities. We miss not being able to travel but are thankful we have been able to visit over 75 countries during our lives.

Our television stations in Phoenix regularly show the snow and winter conditions of other parts of the country, including upper New York State. We miss the beauty of winter but can no longer cope with the snow and cold.

We extend our regards to all our old friends.

Best wishes,
Russ and Ida Lane

Dear Editor,

I want to extend my thanks to the Cayuga Rotary Club which invited me to speak to them earlier this week about the work of AIDS WORK of Tompkins County. Though this is a season when most peoples' thoughts focus on the joys of family, the spread of HIV will not be taking a holiday and our work continues.

AIDS WORK has several missions. We carry out HIV prevention education programs to alert all the residents of Tompkins County about the high-risk behavior that can lead to HIV infection. We also provide outreach and support services not only to people with HIV, but also to their families which must cope with this challenging epidemic.

Though researchers are pursuing many promising leads, preventive vaccines and a cure for those infected with the virus remain a distant hope.

In this spirit, AIDS WORK has launched a year-end fund-raising effort to meet its overall campaign goal of \$61,500. As of December 1, we are \$4,000 short of our local community contributions.

Local financial support is crucial to help us stem the spread of AIDS -- whether to newborn babies, adolescents or adults. Contributions in any amount are appreciated and will be applied right here in Tompkins County.

As you prepare your holiday season, please consider a gift to AIDS WORK of Tompkins County and address your response to 215 North Cayuga Street, Ithaca, NY 14850.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 272-4098.

George Ferrari



ROTARY PHILANTHROPIST
Brian R. How (r) receives the Paul Harris Fellow Award for his lifetime contributions to the Rotary Foundation from Cayuga Rotary Club President Kevin M. Kauffman. The Foundation sponsors a wide range of international activities including international exchanges, undergraduate and graduate fellowships and immunization activities to protect children in developing nations.

Pastoral Column:

☆ Chanukah: The Festival of Lights

By Rabbi Eli Silberstein

During the period after the death of Alexander the Great, Antiochus of Syria ruled over the land of Israel. He set out to Hellenize the Jews by forbidding Jewish religious observances and forcing them to adopt the idolatrous practices of ancient pagan Greece. Antiochus was backed up in his efforts by a force of thousands of soldiers.

But the Jews staunchly resisted. They flocked together under the banner of a faithful family, the Hasmoneans, to fight Antiochus' oppression. Brave Jewish fighters, called Maccabees, waged an incessant three-year battle to drive the enemy from the land.

Against overwhelming odds they succeeded. The Syrians fled and Jerusalem was freed. The Temple that had been defiled and desecrated by Antiochus' troops was rededicated.

The Menorah, the candelabra, which symbolized the spiritual light of the Jewish faith was rekindled with the small amount of undefiled olive oil that had been discovered in the Temple. Miraculously, the one day supply of oil burned for eight days until new pure oil could be produced.



According to the Hebrew prayer book *The Siddur*, Chanukah celebrates, "The deliverance of the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few and the wicked into the hands of the righteous."

The Declaration of Independence and the eighteenth century struggle that produced America's Bill of Rights may be seen as manifestations of the righteousness of the weak prevailing over the injustice of the powerful.

The lessons of the Chanukah story relate to universal issues and to people beyond the exclusive bounds of the Jewish faith. History, ancient and modern, is full of examples of "the mighty" and "the many" oppressing "the weak" and "the few."

The message of freedom that the lights of the Menorah conveys is that the physical oppression of one people by another can only exist on a temporary basis because an oppressed people's mind and spirit are immune even to the most powerful physical pressures. It is, thus, just a matter of time before the mental resistance of the people will prevail over the harsh evil conditions which confine them.

In our century, we have seen huge numbers of captive peoples free themselves after years, or even decades, of oppression from the evils of fascism and communism.

Additionally, the celebration of Chanukah is also meant to celebrate the value of knowledge and wisdom over material power and success. Olive oil, used in the Temple's Menorah, symbolizes wisdom in Jewish tradition. The light emanating from it represents the inner spiritual light embodied in the wisdom of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible).

The Hellenistic philosophy adopted by Antiochus rejected the Jewish approach to knowledge being a means to spiritual refinement. Rather, Hellenists insisted on the engagement of any science, including the Torah, as mere academic exercise.

This was the essence of the struggle between the Jews and their Syrian/Greek oppressors 2,100 years ago. The defilement of the Temple's oil therefore represented the Hellenistic attempt to strip the exercise of knowledge of any religious experience. In the end though, the light of the Menorah triumphs.

Chanukah celebrates the victory of light over darkness, of spirit over matter and, above all, the freedom of the individual to follow one's own beliefs.

On Thursday, December 12, Chanukah's eight day Festival of Lights will conclude with a final kindling of lights at 209 No. Meadow Street in Ithaca (next to Byrne Dairy). Following the brief ceremony, traditional refreshments of *latkes* (potato pancakes) and beverages will be served.

Rabbi Eli Silberstein is the director of the Chabad Jewish Educational Organization in Ithaca and is a resident of Cayuga Heights.

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