

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews:

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

(925) 485-1049

Tri-ValleyCulturalJews.org

CulturalJews@aol.com

<http://trivalleyculturaljews.wordpress.com/>



Affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Our mission statement: "A Secular Humanistic community serving those who identify with the Jewish People through family, culture and history, rather than through religion."

Upcoming Events for July and August 2014

July 8, 7:45 pm: TVCJ Planning Meeting. 1817 Sinclair Drive in Pleasanton. All members welcome.

August 12, 7:45 pm: TVCJ Planning Meeting. 1817 Sinclair Drive in Pleasanton. All members welcome.

Saturday, July 26, 5:00 -7:00 pm (or 10 pm): General Havdalah and Theater Night, everyone welcome. A little ceremony, pizza, and for all interested, a trip to see The Music Man performance by The Brentwood Theater Company with our very own Corens as cast members. Havdalah is \$7.00 for adults. Please respond to the invite or call 510-888-1404. An additional \$5 donation is requested from non-member adults. The play is \$24 for adults 19-54, Seniors \$22, teens 13-18 \$16, and kids 5-12 \$8.00. You can either send a check to Marisa Castaldini 720 Willow Creek Ter., Brentwood, CA 94513 by July 5 and we'll buy tickets, or purchase them on your own at brentwoodtheater.org, if you're undecided. If we get a group of 20 ordered together we can get a couple of dollars off the price; we would reimburse you in that case. The show starts at 7:30.

Tuesday, August 19: The A's are hosting Jewish Heritage Night as they play the New York Metropolitans! Join us for a fun game with gimmicky music and cheers! We'll be sitting in a section not reserved for observers of the Night, but we'll get greatly discounted seats. Best of all, the normal \$20 parking fee is waived (Chevy's sponsors free parking EVERY Tuesday game).

Please respond to Solomon at 510-888-1404 by July 1st with the number of adults (\$10/each) or the number of children (include senior ticket requests as children, since both types of tickets are \$2/each).

The game starts at 7:05. See you there!

Jewish Culture School

We wrapped up our JCS year with reviews in both classes. The younger class did a "Jew-perdy" style review and the kids were very excited to be able to answer questions about history, language, and holidays as well as our study of Sephardic Jews this past year. The class also made biscochos their last day as a treat for the annual meeting that followed class.

This coming year promises to be another fun one. We will be using a curriculum on Israel that Jamie created for her Madrikha (Secular Jewish Leader) program class. As usual there will be a lot of cooking, arts and learning about history, geography and culture.

Our first couple dates are September 14 and 28th.

Message from the President

My parents knew all the answers; they were sure of themselves; they made decisions with authority; they never made mistakes.

Why am I not like that?

I guess they never were like that, but it seemed like they were.

My parents don't know all the answers anymore; they are not sure of themselves; they question their decisions; and it's hard to say whether they are making mistakes or not.

This has become strikingly clear to me as my father has recently gotten very sick.

We have many families; groups of people we share some sort of a bond with. I share this with you as my TVCJ family.

Thank you for listening.

Who We Are

President	Kevin Coren 925-240-5612
Board Members	Judith Seid 925-485-1049 Jamie Ireland 510-888-1404 Noah King Amy Greenberg
Newsletter	Marisa Castaldini 925-240-5612
Webmaster	Noah King 925-371-8585
JCS Teachers	Judith Seid, Jamie Ireland
Phone Chair	open
Family Shabbat/Havdalah Coordinator –	Amy Greenberg
Publicity	open

Annual Meeting

The budget was reviewed, dues and fees slightly increased, and the pros and cons of being on the board were reviewed (we decided we all have busy lives but TVCJ is important to us so it's important to make that time). Acknowledgements were made to Noah for being the "King" of the website, Amy for her Publicity ideas for our group, Marisa for putting the Newsletter together, Carol for the evites and our wonderful JCS teachers Judy and Jamie, as well as all families who have opened their homes for Havdalahs and Shabbats over the past year. Without you, we have no TVCJ, so Thank You!

Mishpokha (Family)

Yortseits:

In July and August we remember:

July 31, 2012 Bunny Simmel, grandmother of Solomon Ireland, great grandmother of Rebecca and Sophia,
August 2005 John Gates, father of David Gates,
August 31, 2010 Lou Garcia, husband of Wendy Berenson,

Happy July Birthdays to Solomon Ireland and Noah King and in August to Jamie Ireland

2014 CSJO Conference
Jews in the Arts: How Art Informs Our Social Conscience
By Leslie Zwick

This year's conference was held in Cleveland at the beautiful campus of Ursuline College. The warm and sunny weather added to a delightful weekend. The many trees and lovely lake made us want to sit outside, watch the birds and visit with each other. Also, the chef was trained at the Culinary Institute and fed us very well. (Food = how Jews judge an event!)

We were welcomed Friday night with an Oneg Shabbat led by Philly youth Chiel Shdaimah and Madi Burns. They did a good job of putting "A Modern Twist on the Traditional Oneg" including candle lighting, challah and songs. That was followed by Bennett Muraskin and Art Miron paying tribute to Pete Seeger.

The Keynote speakers on Saturday were Young Adult Adam Beardsley and Madrikh and Rabbinic candidate Ed Klein.

I attended a workshop entitled "Fiddler on the Roof – a Cultural or Universal Musical?" It was led by Roy Berko, an actor and theater critic. He was funny and dynamic as he proposed his theory that Fiddler has universal characteristics, but is a culture-specific tale. There was good discussion on the topic.

Jerry went to a workshop about Negotiating Effectively with Iran, led by Norm Robbins. Jerry said it was very informative, but "oy, are we in trouble!"

Since this is in Cleveland, Bennett Muraskin presented "Jews in Rock 'n' Roll." It is always interesting to hear about singers that you may not have realized were Jewish.

I always like to attend a teen or young adult workshop during the weekend. This time I listened to teens led by Katy Burns and teacher Julie Dancis. Their discussion was about Youth Empowerment in our movement and their own Folkshul.

The Sunday banquet and traditional talent show rounded out the weekend. And, of course, there is always the late night singing. This is a highlight for us. Thanks to Art Miron for leading, and encouraging us.

It was great to see friends and enjoy the feeling of community. Here's to next year!

My Promised Land

By
Ari Shavit

This is the story of Israel as seen through the eyes of an influential Sabra journalist. It is a personal account of the major transformations of Israel from an agricultural based economy to a high tech economy. It includes the backgrounds of the major players in Israel's current history, many of whom the author is personally familiar with. In fact, his families' history parallels the history of Israel. The author deals with the questions of how and why Israel came to be, as well as its current issues and threats.

This book is extremely well written and reads more like a novel than a historical account. I found it quite even-handed and very informative. After reading this book, I am more aware of Israel's struggles and its hope for the future.

I highly recommend this book.

Jerry Zwick

The FIRST ANNUAL SHAVUOT BOOK REVIEW!

Shavuot traditionally celebrates the Torah being given to the Jews, so our version this year was to pass on book reviews of our favorite reads from the year. Whether read on Kindle or “analog” paper books, we got some great recommendations from adults and kids alike. We decided to continue this tradition next year, so get reading!

KIDS

Sofia shared the book *I Love Baby Animals*, by Camilla de la Bedoyere. It not only has the cutest pictures EVER, of course, of baby animals (and often their moms), it also teaches interesting facts about what they eat, how they live, etc. So far, Sofia’s favorites are the polar bears, raccoons and swans.

Adam shared *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the 4th in the series by J.K. Rowling. An underage Harry is mysteriously entered into the tri-wizard tournament (so it’s now a quad-wizard tournament) and has to complete three difficult and dangerous tasks. Adam lets his mom read these books with him – they are wonderful read alouds, especially if you’re willing to try the accents.

Michelle shared *Starters*, first in a trilogy by Lissa Price. It is “another dystopian future” book, about the Starters (young), Middles (adult), and Enders (elder) in a future society. More enticing non-spoilers: genocide spores that kill off the Middles, Enders renting out Starters’ bodies, and a murder that must be stopped.

Emma shared the highly acclaimed *Wonder*, by R.J. Palacio. This is a story about a boy born with a facial difference and his struggle for acceptance. Emma liked how the narrative switched perspectives among the characters.

Ella shared *The Fault in our Stars*, by John Green, about a girl and boy struggling with cancer and how their deaths will affect their loved ones. Ella likes the main characters’ complicated minds and thoughts about complex and unusual things.

ADULTS

David shared *Trespassing on Einstein’s Lawn* by Amanda Gefter. This is a father-daughter story about unraveling questions of quantum mechanics, and eventually a breaking shift in the understanding of the Big Bang Theory. David says it is an easy read, but at the same time very thoughtful. (Non-fiction)

Marisa is currently enjoying an abridged *Count of Monte Cristo*, until she had the huge unabridged version pushed on her by Solomon – she may be in this one for a while. She shared the trilogy *Rashi’s Daughters*, by Maggie Anton. They are set in 11th century France, and fictionalize the real story of Rashi, who was criticized for teaching the Talmud to his daughters. Marisa says the books are rich in history and incredibly well-researched. Fun fact: Judy went to high school with the author!

Amy shared *Beautiful Ruins* by Jeff Swalter, a book about the early relationship of Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, beginning on the Italian coast and juxtaposing old and new Hollywood. The beautiful writing has made Amy decide she needs to go to Italy, and some of us may have to go with her.

Levi shared *The Mistborn Trilogy* (there is now a 4th book), by Brandon Sanderson. A dark lord sets himself up as a god, and after all hope is lost, someone discovers himself with new metallic magical powers. It is a story about revolution against the corrupt government, and Levi was especially interested in the third book’s religious discussions, as the main character attempts to determine the “true” religion among hundreds, discovering that none of them have the answers he is looking for.

The FIRST ANNUAL SHAVUOT BOOK REVIEW!

(Continued)

Carol shared *The Goldfinch*, by Donna Tartt. After a terrible accident that kills his mother, a teenage boy steals a rare painting (The Goldfinch) in his post-trauma confusion. He grows up in various homes, with dubious relationships and varying degrees of adult supervision, all the while consumed with guilt over his survival and his theft. Watch for all the references to light in this amazingly well-written book.

Noah shared *The Night Circus*, by Erin Morgenstern. Two competing magicians (with real magic, not just tricks), each choose a child to raise, apprentice, and eventually duel to determine the better magician. The venue is, as you may guess, an incredible circus, whose patrons have no knowledge of the real magic it contains.

Noah also shared *Ready Player One*, by Ernest Cline. A Bill Gates-type character creates a virtual world that everyone is plugged into. When he dies, his will details a contest with 3 keys hidden in puzzles based on 1980s entertainment. The winner will inherit the company. The puzzles and references are fun for anyone who grew up with the totally tubular 80s pop culture.

Judy shared (and passed on to eager readers) 3 books. First was *Blessed are the Cheesemakers* by Sarah-Kate Lynch. Judy says it “claims to be a love story” about two older cheesemakers in Ireland, but the book’s theme deals with what you choose to do with your life.

Second, *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell. “It’s a quick read, and tells you something you don’t know” about the real story of successful people. (Non-fiction)

Finally, *The Royal Box* by Frances Parkinson Keyes is an amusing murder mystery set in the 50s, with the charming writing style of that period.

Jamie also shared 3 books (loaned out, but give them back, please). First was *Stiff*, by Mary Roach. Jamie said she liked telling people she was reading this book, and seeing their reactions. It’s about the use of cadavers for all sorts of interesting purposes, and how your end-of-life decision to donate your body to science might turn out differently than you expect. (Non-fiction)

Second, *Middlesex*, by Jeffrey Eugenides. Jamie loved it, said it was a great book, but no explanations – look it up on goodreads.com!

Third, *Cinnamon and Gunpowder*, by Eli Brown is a very fun read about a chef kidnapped by a female pirate and forced to get creative enough to please his captain and not get killed. The fun of all the pirate stuff, mixed with creative cooking.

Solomon the English teacher kept picking books off shelves and putting them back, but eventually settled down and shared *An Object of Beauty*, by Steve Martin (yes, the actor, comedian, musician, and art collector). The main character is attracted to a woman in the art world, his object of beauty. This is a book of “intrigue and not-quite espionage” with some “almost” art criticism. Solomon also read Steve Martin’s first book and enjoyed this one even more.

BOOK REVIEW I REMEMBER ME By Carl Reiner

This is a memoir of one of the funniest people in show business, Carl Reiner. His humor, wisdom and Jewishness permeate this book. It begins with a terrific forward by Billy Crystal.

He delights us with his memories of his family, his friends and his innumerable show business colleagues, including of course, my favorite, Mel Brooks, who remains his closest friend. Also included is some serious kvelling about his famous and multi-talented son Rob Reiner, as well as humorous stories of his other children and grandchildren. Unfortunately, he also tells us about the tragic death of his wife, Estelle.

(I will forgive him for neglecting to mention the many kibitzing sessions he had with my father, who did plumbing work for him. My dad called him a true mensch, and very down to earth.)

He starts with his growing up in the Bronx and takes us through his journey to the top of the show business world.

He writes as he speaks: with humor, humility, and great insight.

I would highly recommend this memoir of one our most beloved personalities.

Jerry Zwick

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews
1817 Sinclair Drive
Pleasanton, CA 94588

