

Caring Committee Corner

Driving Miss Ruth

About six months ago a member of Temple Sinai asked me if I would help someone move from their apartment. I had known the woman from temple for many years so I agreed to help. Little did I know that this would lead to a new career.

The woman is Ruth Ockman. You don't know her? She's the short perky blond who always sits on the aisle in the second row at Friday night services. Which aisle? The one on your left as you face the ark. Yes, the one who is always smiling. You can always count on her if you're looking for a minyan.

So what's my new career? Well, I got used to sitting next to Ruth at Friday night services. Whenever I would come to services Ruth would signal to me with a wave of her arms to sit next to her. "Bruce, I saved one for you!" Soon after she moved, she had trouble driving at night and since I needed someone to sit next to, I offered to drive her to services. Rain or shine, clergy or lay led, we sit in the same seats. Actually we sit in the middle of the first row for summer services so she can have her walker in front of her. Each Friday night when I pick her up at Juniper Village I feel like Hoke Colburn (Morgan Freeman), from "Driving Miss Daisy". As I get out of my car and open the door for her I have to stop myself from breaking into a Southern accent. "How ya doin' Miss Ruthie? Unusually hot fo' this time o'year ". But I control myself and just say hello. I'm getting pretty good at my new career of southern Jewish chauffeur.

Well it's been six months since I've been chauffeuring Miss Ruthie and it's been interesting. As she breaks into a 1940's song I try to remember who sang it. Was that in a Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers movie? Judy Garland? Ruth, remember when Lauren Bacall said that line about whistling? Well we get along real well. She never forgets to remind me where to turn which is good because trying to remember Bacall's line ("If you want anything, just whistle. You know how to whistle, don't you Steve? Just put your lips together and blow.") and to make a left turn on DeForest is becoming harder for me to do.

You ask what's my point. I'm not so sure but it's something like this. Sometimes you start out by doing someone a favor or doing a mitzvah, if we're talking Jewish talk. The mitzvah turns into a ritual and the ritual turns into a pleasure. As a child, I remember parents and teachers were always telling you it was better to give than receive. I always thought "Right, sure!". But in a way it's true. The giving turns into receiving something satisfying. By giving "Miss Ruth" a ride I am gaining an appreciative friend and a feeling of worth.

On the subject of "rides" I'd like to thank Caring Committee members Niamh Cahill, Vanessa Levin, and Sharyn Model for giving another Temple Sinai congregant a ride to High Holy Day services.

As our congregation gets older the need for rides increases. If you can be a Hoke Colburn for some Miss Daisy or Mr. David please email me. You don't have to have a southern drawl but a car would be helpful. My email address is bru53a@aol.com or phone 908-898-1858. Lookin' fo' wood to hearin' from y'all. Heh heh heh.

Bruce Stein