

News

Happy Tears

By Lauren Sachs

I began to trace the trajectory of my tears on August 24, 2020, the day my husband, Dr. Bradley Alan Sachs z"l, suffered a sudden and massive heart attack at the age of only 49. Widowed without forewarning so suddenly in my mid-forties during a frightening global pandemic, I was thrust into a world of heartache and sadness. The shock, confusion, and - yes - tears were unavoidable and unrelenting in those early months. At first, grief hung over me like a Midwestern winter: gray, cold, and seemingly endless. My daughters and I did our best to keep moving forward day to day and found some solace and support amongst friends and family, in the Jewish community, and from the extended medical community. Still, at that time, given the limited options for social connection, the outside world felt far away and almost surreal while melancholy and isolation blanketed us and kept us company daily. Tears were a daily companion. It was only after Brad's first yahrzeit had come and gone that I realized I had been crying every day for an entire year.

I did not closely track my personal timeline of tears after the first yahrzeit but I know that things shifted for me as the first year of lost anniversaries, birthdays, and time together turned into the second. Slowly, I became aware that laughter and music had crept back into my life. Through journaling and therapy in particular, I began to examine my loss, think about how my late husband had lived his life, and realize that I could learn from his example as I worked through my grief and on my continued healing. When I needed to cry, I also noticed something different about the nature of my tears. Instead of my tears being infused solely with melancholy, they were increasingly tinged with memories. As my daughters and I spoke about their father and recollected stories of our family life, we were able to smile and find comfort. The tears came far less often but when they did fall, they felt lighter and happier. I started to find personal meaning in the phrase "may his memory be a blessing" as the recollections felt like windows into another time which bolstered me and gave me a sense of gratitude and joy.

Living through loss has taught me so much about myself and changed the way I see the world. I have learned to maintain perspective on the challenges of everyday living and embrace the idea of living fully. With all this personal growth, I wanted to share some of my newfound insights with the Jewish community that has given so much to me during this time of recovery and transformation. While everyone's grief journey is unique, I will be sharing some of my thoughts and observations on grief and personal growth in this monthly *Toledo Jewish News* column, "Happy Tears." I hope you will return and continue reading, and perhaps even crying and smiling, along with me.

Lauren holds a bachelor's degree in English and Psychology, and a Master's Degree in Social Work, from the University of Michigan. After completing advanced clinical training at Yale University, Lauren worked as a therapist and consultant in a variety of settings. During her time in Jewish Toledo, Lauren has received the Harry Levison Young Leadership Award and the Shining Light Award, and is currently a board member for the Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo and Temple Shomer Emunim. Lauren is also the author of a forthcoming book about her late husband, his joyful approach to life and work as an oncologist, and how examining his life helped her better cope with her grief.

Yom HaShoah program features remembrance of Cantor's father



Congregants and guests commemorated Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) last month at Congregation B'nai Israel. Featured speaker, Cantor Ivor Lichterman discussed "The Last Cantor of Warsaw: Jacob Lichterman," a remembrance of his father. The event also included a memorial plaque installation video by Bruce and Sheila Post, a memorial service, a yellow candle lighting by religious school students (representing the yellow stars Jews were forced to wear), and a memorial candle lighting for the 6 million by descendants of Holocaust survivors.

The event was sponsored by the Ruth Fajerman Markowitz Holocaust Resource Center.



Yom HaZikaron commemoration

Jewish Toledo commemorated Yom HaZikaron, Israel's Memorial Day, with a discussion featuring three local community members who served in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and three IDF Officers from our Partnership region of the Western Galilee.



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