

# Local

## Happy Tears

By Lauren Sachs

*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 of the Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo. 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.*



I first began writing in earnest almost immediately after my husband Brad died suddenly in August of 2020. My writing at that time was akin to journaling as it was not intended for anyone but myself. When sleep seemed an impossibility during the earliest days, I found myself with pen in hand in the middle of the night, pouring out my feelings while also expressing my love and admiration for my late husband. Even then, I knew that my exposition served a few simple purposes. Writing down my thoughts helped me give voice

to some of the intense pain I was feeling but it also allowed me to avoid one of my greatest fears: forgetting. Brad had the most remarkable memory of anyone I had ever met, almost a photographic memory in fact. I knew that my own memory was highly fallible and I was afraid that I would forget our shared history, the essence of what made him who he was, and the incredible stories he used to tell anyone who was willing to listen.

I wrote for myself but I also felt compelled to put pen to paper for the sake of our daughters whose memory of their father would be frozen in time and always seen through the lens of their childhood. I also used this early writing to form the basis of my eulogy for Brad, wanting to honor him with words that truly reflected who he was as he was laid to rest. Words flowed readily onto the page and took very little forethought, like a conversation I was having with an audience of one.

After a few months of writing, I began to realize that examining Brad's remarkable approach to life not only bolstered me through this heart wrenching time but could also offer lessons for others facing loss and hardship. While writing alone could not ease the tragedy of my loss or fully heal me as I struggled to cope with my grief, I began to marvel at the power of the pen and how much it helped me to express my innermost feelings and assuage my pain. As I shifted from scratching out my thoughts on paper to typing out my thoughts on a computer, I also started to learn more about myself and the myriad ways that Brad had impacted my life both during the time he was alive and even after his untimely death. It now made sense that so many who sought to provide support after my loss gifted my daughters and I with journals.

From the darkness of my loss, my writing emerged as a new source of light and a means of artistic expression. Given my experience, I understand that this gift can be an important tool for all those who are facing grief or grappling with life's myriad challenges. While I hope to help others and share the lessons I have learned, I believe that anyone can find strength by writing down their story, even when that story is shared with no one else. As for me, I feel honored to be able to tell Brad's story as I embrace my life and continue to write my own story, too.

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## Rolf Hess: A Survivor's Story

Rolf Hess, one of only two known Holocaust survivors in the Toledo area, told his story at a small private gathering last night that included several members of his extended family, Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo staff, and community members. Born in Germany, he was deported to Vichy France and was later rescued by Quakers. He was brought to the United States as an 8-year-old orphan in 1942 to live with relatives in Cleveland.

Rolf discussed the terror he experienced as a young boy, beginning at 4 years old when he and his family were taken from their home and soon separated. The trauma stayed with him in America, despite being well fed and cared for (hiding in his own backyard when a plane flew overhead, stealing tomatoes from a neighbor's Freedom Garden).

In a powerful recollection of resilience and hope, he shared many of the personal experiences that brought him to America, to his wife, Marcia, and to the joyful life he has today.

When asked if he calls himself a "Holocaust survivor" today, he responded, "No, I say I am an American Jew."



## Join us for a Hanukkah lighting

DISPEL THE DARKNESS

SHINE A LIGHT  
on Antisemitism



Antisemitism is a darkness that threatens not only the Jewish people, but all of us, no matter identity or background. Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo is hosting a rally inspired by the powerful story of Hanukkah to shine a light on antisemitism.

SAVE THE DATE  
6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14

The film screening of **Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life** will be part of our 2023 Shine a Light on Antisemitism program and includes a full Kosher dinner and candle lighting for the last night of Hanukkah.