

In Tribute to Nat Taubenfeld

Years ago, the Drill family visited another synagogue for a Shabbat Bar Mitzvah. Their 4 young children quickly identified "the rabbi" and "the cantor" in the shul. But they were puzzled. "Where is the Nat?" they asked. Out of the mouth of babes a profound truth was revealed! CAI uniquely has been blessed with a gift from God, a powerful neshamah whose presence pervades and blesses our sanctuary each week. Nat Taubenfeld is not only our Gabbai par excellence for more than half a century; he truly is a Patriarch to the piety, menshlichkeit, Jewish values, as well as devotion to God, Torah and Israel for multiple generations within the CAI family.

Along with Bea, Nat's truly amazing wife and partner-in-mitzvah, the Taubenfelds have role modeled for us all – the building of a loving, engaged, multi-generational Jewish family. Each of Nat and Bea's children and grandchildren possesses a spark of their grandparents' "gutskeit." Thus, the name Taubenfeld is beloved far beyond Caldwell and into Sharon [MA], the Upper West Side of Manhattan, West Orange and Cherry Hill and Closter [NJ], in addition to multi-fold institutions of Conservative Judaism, of American Zionism, and of Jewish communal life in general.

As Gabbai, Nat has given lollipops, words of blessing, kisses and inspiration to thousands of youngsters ascending our Bimah for Bar and Bat Mitzvah, for an Aufruf, for a Baby naming or a Pidyon Haben, for birthdays and for other joyous milestones. Nat's traditional davening on Shabbat and on the Holy Days has resonated deep into the souls of countless folks. My son, an Orthodox rabbi, tells me that every Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the very fiber of his being resounds with memories of the "nusach" of Nat representing all of us as we stand before God's Judgment.

How blessed we feel to be privileged to name our Chapel as "The Taubenfeld Chapel." This sacred space in which Nat has presided for decades, offers us a permanent reminder of the authenticity and genuine message of deep Yiddishkeit embodied by Nat and Bea on behalf of our entire community. In Nat's younger years, he would literally dance in the footsteps of God, on Simhat Torah and at Simchas. Today, after 2 knee replacements, he is no longer so nimble on foot. However, Nat's spiritual beauty continues to generate music for our souls. Music that brings God powerfully into our lives... Music that binds all Jews of all ages to one another... Music that brings us to be the best sacred community that we possibly can be.

Nat, on behalf of the many generations of the CAI mishpocha, I salute you and affirm my love and affection and my prayer that you and your beloved Bea be blessed with many more years of good health, profound joy and fulfillment. Yashar Koach for all that you do – in your incomparable manner!

**With love and gratitude,
Rabbi Alan Silverstein, PhD**