

## *The Saga of the Four Chaplains by Rabbi Gary Atkins*

*This year will mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of the Army Troop ship *Dorchester* on February 3, 1943, with the loss of several hundred men. The sinking led to the moving saga of the "Four Chaplains," who gave up their life vests to save four soldiers and then joined together in prayer as the troop ship sank in the frigid waters of the North Atlantic. We honor their memory each year. I share their story by providing excerpts of a longer article by Command Sergeant Major James H. Clifford, USA-Retired*

In the early morning hours of 3 February 1943, First Sergeant Michael Warish nearly gave up hope as he floated helplessly in the freezing waters of the North Atlantic. Just minutes earlier, he and the almost 900 others aboard the USAT *Dorchester* were near safe waters when a German torpedo slammed into the engine room. Soon, the *Dorchester* began to slip under the waves. Warish accepted his fate, fully aware that life expectancy in these cold waters was about twenty minutes. Surrounded by hundreds of his equally doomed shipmates, the blinking red lights of their life preservers reminded him of Christmas lights. Resigned to losing consciousness and freezing to death shortly thereafter, his thoughts turned to the courageous and selfless acts of the four Army chaplains he witnessed just before abandoning ship. These four chaplains, according to Warish and other eyewitnesses, remained calm during the panic following the attack, first distributing life preservers and assisting others to abandon ship, then giving up their own life preservers and coming together in prayer as the ship disappeared beneath the surface. The story of these four chaplains, a Catholic, a Jew, and two Protestants, stands out among the countless stories of commitment and bravery that make up the pantheon of the U.S. Army, as one of the finest examples of courage to God, man, and country. Each, John P. Washington, Alexander D. Goode, George L. Fox, and Clarke V. Poling, was drawn by the tragedy at Pearl Harbor to the armed forces.

On 29 January 1943, the *Dorchester* departed St. John's, Newfoundland, for its fifth north Atlantic voyage, hitting bad weather almost as soon as it entered open water. Despite heavy security, there were few secrets in St. John's. German authorities had become aware that convoy SG-19 was bound for Greenland, so four U-Boats took up stations along its route. All the ships of SG-19 knew that a U-boat was in the area. The evening before Captain Danielsen of the *Dorchester* announced over the ship's public address system, "Now here this: This concerns every soldier. Now here this: Every soldier is ordered to sleep in his clothes and life jacket. Repeat, this is an order! We have a submarine following us...If we make it through the night, in the morning we will have air protection from Blue

West One, which is the code name for the air base in Greenland, and of course, we will have protection until we reach port."

As the clock ticked past midnight, many began to breathe easier with the knowledge that they were near safe waters and would soon be under an umbrella of protection from Greenland-based planes. Warish had just looked at his watch when, at approximately 0055 hours, one of the torpedoes ripped into the *Dorchester's* starboard side. The ensuing explosion rent a hole near the engine room from below the waterline to the top deck. The lights went out, steam pipes split, and bunks collapsed like cards one on top of another. The sounds of screaming and the smell of gunpowder and ammonia filled the air. The initial explosion killed dozens outright, and a wave of cold water entering the ship quickly drowned dozens more. Nearly one-third those aboard died in the first moments of the disaster. Elsewhere on the top deck, Father Washington gave absolution to soldiers as they went over the side. Private First Class Charles Macli, a former professional boxer, unsuccessfully urged Washington to go over the side with the men. Instead, Chaplain Washington remained aboard as Macli slid into the cold water. Over the din, he heard a terror-filled plaintive voice repeating, "I can't find my life jacket." Turning toward that voice, Miller clearly heard Chaplain Fox say, "Here's one, soldier." Then Miller witnessed Fox remove his life jacket and put it on the soldier. At the same time, Navy Lieutenant John Mahoney cursed himself for leaving his gloves in his quarters. Chaplain Goode stopped him from returning for the gloves, saying, "Don't bother Mahoney. I have another pair. You can have these." Goode then removed the gloves from his hands and gave them to Mahoney. Mahoney later realized that a man preparing to abandon ship probably would not carry a second pair of gloves.

Many of the survivors reported similar encounters with one or more of the chaplains. They seemed to be everywhere on the deck until the very end. Many survivors reported that the four chaplains locked arms and prayed in unison as the ship sank. Whether this part is accurate is unimportant, for the truth is that these four Army chaplains sacrificed themselves for the soldiers and the God that they served. After some confusion, the Coast Guard began rescue operations, saving 230 of the nearly 900 aboard and losing one Coast Guardsman in the process.

In the aftermath of the disaster, the story of the Four Chaplains garnered popular notice. Many thought that they should be awarded the Medal of Honor. Instead, on 19 December 1944, they were each awarded the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Service Cross. In 1948, the U.S. Post

Service issued a commemorative stamp in their honor, and Congress designated 3 February as "Four Chaplains Day." Twelve years later, Congress created the Four Chaplains' Medal, which was presented to their survivors by Secretary of the Army Wilber M. Brucker on 18 January 1961 at Fort Myer, Virginia. Today, one can find memorials to the Four Chaplains all across the nation. Several organizations exist to further their memory, including the Chapel of the Four Chaplains in Philadelphia and the Immortal Chaplains Foundation in Minnesota. Chapels, bridges, memorials, and plaques honoring the Four

Chaplains are found in so many locations, including a stained glass window in the Pentagon.

***May their memory be for an eternal blessing.***

#### **Special Mentions**

**Thank you to Rick Notkin for conducting training on the use of our new AED machine and general CPR on Sunday, Jan 22.**

**Thank to Steve Saulten for arranging for CMC to conduct Stop the Bleed training on Sunday, Jan 22.**



## **Remembering Gary Singer**

We were saddened by the loss of long-term Temple member and past president Gary Singer passed away on November 15, 2022, at the age of 67, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Gary was a beloved son and brother, doting husband, and loving father and grandfather). He was

devoted to his parents and enjoyed enriching his mother's life with regular meal delivery and organizing excursions around New England for his mother and her many friends.

Gary was proud of his Jewish heritage and committed to his faith, which brought him solace during the difficult times he faced. Since his bar mitzvah, Gary prayed three times daily, even while receiving his crippling cancer treatments. He devoted his time and expertise to several Jewish organizations, such as the Jewish Federation of Greater New Hampshire, Hadassah, Chabad of New Hampshire and his lifelong synagogue, Temple Israel, of which he was a past president. He was also an active volunteer for the Salvation Army, where he served on the Board of Directors, volunteered at the Kids' Café, rang the bells each year for the holidays, and participated in their annual warm clothing drive. Gary's charitable efforts led to him being awarded the highest civilian honor the Salvation Army can bestow, the William Booth award, an award that was also bestowed on his late father. Gary and Irving were the only father-son recipients of this prestigious award.

Anyone who knew Gary heard about his athletic prowess, some of which was true. Gary excelled as an all-star pitcher in Little League, a quarterback in Pop Warner football, and eventually as the star basketball player at MTA high school in Manhattan, New York. His competitive streak, combined with his athletic talents led him to be a founding member of "Singer Ball" – a weekly basketball game played among friends and family members, first in the driveway of his parents' house, and eventually the basketball court of the local colleges.

Gary's dynamic personality and outsized presence will be missed by all.

*From **Ruth Chevion**:*

*Gary always sat in the back row center. This was back when the daily morning minyan was in the small chapel at Temple Israel. He was the life of the party. He gave a warm greeting to any and all who entered and then entertained us with his great stories, lively conversation and hearty laugh all while keeping track of the minyan count. He usually sat near his brothers, most frequently Jeff. At 7:00 am precisely, he boomed out "page 6 please rise." I'll always remember his kindness, moral support, his beautiful deep voice, and that warm smile. Just the thought of Gary is a blessing.*

*From **Ken Cohn**:*

I remember fondly:

- Being invited to go with some of his other friends to a daytime New England Patriots Game and the same evening a Boston Red Sox game.
- Playing pickup basketball at his parents' house 37 years ago: Gary was a great competitor and had a great outside shot.
- Going with Gary to his mom's house to have cereal (so he could spend time with his mom, after early morning minyan).
- Attending Gary's 4:30pm Friday night minyans at his parent's house and enjoying the warm hors d'oeuvres, with Gary ask us questions from the "Jewish Book of Why" while we waited for the evening service to be started.
- Gary and Cindi inviting my wife Maureen and me to some of their parties.
- Gary holding court and leading services in the large Sukkah in his parent's backyard.
- Gary inviting me to join the guys get away to Las Vegas ( I'm sorry I never went).
- Gary's dedication and leadership to the 7am morning minyan.
- Gary and Cindi's Harley motorcycles.
- Gary always welcoming regulars and newcomers to Temple Israel.



- Liz and Larry Eckman for our kitchen and bathroom supplies
- Our Temple Board for meaningful service options and activities
- Jeff Klein for taking care of the myriad building issues
- Stephen Singer and Jeff Klein for organizing Wednesday morning minyans
- David Winthrop for being our Gabbai
- Michael Sydney for overseeing the Hebrew Cemetery and our Hebrew School building upgrade plans
- John Weber for his financial acumen and continued support
- Leigh Musicof for his work on our security grant
- Carol Sternberg Chairperson of the Kitchen Krew, Lunches and Gift Shop
- Kiddush Krew – Renee Brenner, Monique Shaffer, Merle Paltrow, Carol Pressman, Carol Sternberg & David Winthrop
- Ruth Chevion for her wonderful stories about her family's escape from the Holocaust to America
- Temple Israel Book Club Leaders - Ken Cohn, Aida Koocher and Benay Birch
- Marc Stober for his school leadership and collaboration on musical services

## Tzedaka

Iris & Rabbi Gary Atkins in memory of Bess Koach  
 Sandra Hoexter in memory of Herbert Hoexter  
 Karen Jacobs in memory of Eric Jacobs  
 Phyllis Levine in memory of Ida Cavall  
 Rochelle & Gary Lindner in memory of Philip Haller  
 Steven Riffkin in memory of Leon Riffkin

Hinda Groom in memory of Sadie Falk  
 Kim Hooper Pratt in memory of Won Bai Barbour  
 William Kavesch in memory of Miriam Kavesch  
 Carol Krensky in memory of Carl Krensky  
 Nancy & Morris Steinbock in memory of Ida Postar  
 Irving Taube in memory of Louis Taube

## Other Donations

Al Shamash in honor of Rabbi Gary Atkins  
 Arlene Fishbein & Leon Cornell  
 Rachel & Mel Spierer in honor of the TI congregation

Ruth Chevion for Kol Nidre  
 Carol Pressman & Bob Hutter in memory of Gary Singer

*We are grateful to Marion & Seth Eisen  
 for their generous sponsorship of the  
 Abraham & Lillian Heifetz Gruber Family Fund*

*Thank you to the Sydney/Singer Family  
 for their very generous support of Temple Israel  
 and the Hebrew School*

## **Dr. Jeffrey Salloway honored at Shabbat Morning Service by Rabbi Gary Atkins**

Dr. Salloway, member of Temple Israel, recently completed his four-year term as President of the New England region of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. The USCJ honored Jeff by giving to him a unique tallit with an atara (decorative border) embroidered with his Hebrew name.

Jeff asked Rabbi Gary Atkins to formally deliver the tallit at services on January 7, which he was more than happy to do. After wrapping himself in his new tallit, Jeff shared a few words about the honor and his satisfaction at serving the Conservative community for the past four years.



Thank you to everyone  
 who donated to  
 Families in Transition  
 and  
 The Pad Project!





## The Old Man and the Blessing by Ruth Chevion

My mother would say she was never really hungry in the war. She attributed this luck to a blessing she received from an old man in the ghetto.

Here is the background:

Lvov had two ghettos for Jews, a large urban ghetto, and a smaller rural ghetto. My mother's family was in the smaller ghetto. What my mother remembered most about life in this ghetto, was the starvation. People were starving and laying down in the street to die.

But my Grandmother Susha had work papers. With these work papers she was released from the ghetto every day to go to work in a factory sewing Nazi uniforms. She was essentially slave labor, but she made the best of it. Because outside the ghetto she was able to steal food.

I don't know if she did it coming or going. I have no details. But she would regularly bring back a few beets or potatoes, some noodles, some salt. These provisions she handed over to my mother, who having no work papers, took charge of making some sort of meals for the family.

Before long, people in the ghetto found out that my mother had food, and they started coming to the door. Mom would give out some soup. More people came. She didn't turn anyone away. Even if the soup was thin, she didn't turn people away.

When my mother talked about this, she would tear up and say that her mother never objected to what she was doing. I did not need an explanation. I understood. After all, her mother risked her life to get these meager provisions for her family. Obviously, the more my mother gave away, the less there was for the family to eat. It is easy to see why she was proud of her mother, and grateful to her, for letting her be generous and feed other people.

After a while, there were daily regulars, like a little soup kitchen, and my mother gave out a bowl of soup with something floating in it. When there was nothing to put in the soup, she picked some grass outside. This was the big benefit, my mother said, of having been in the rural ghetto rather than in the big city ghetto. "You could always pick some grass outside and eat that."

In addition to the soup, she gave everyone a cup of ersatz coffee. The coffee was mostly brownish water, Mom said, but sometimes she had some sugar to put in it. "It probably wasn't the food that saved them," my mother said. "I think just having something hot and being together, could make them last another day."

That's the background, so now I'm getting to my story:

There was one old man who came every day. He was Mom's favorite. She would reach her ladle down to the bottom of the pot for something solid to put in his soup. She always gave him something extra.

One day, the old man gave her a blessing. In Yiddish he said to her, "*Mahn kint di zolst nisht vissen fon keyn hinger.*" "My child may you never know hunger." I don't know exactly how he did it. Did he put his hands on the shoulders? I don't know. But she said it just like that, "he blessed me."

There came a day when the old man did not come any more.

Still, the blessing worked, and the memory of the old man is a blessing in itself.

I'm so proud of them. The way they held themselves uplifts my spirit.

In the next issue I'll tell you how the six remaining members of this family including my mother, escaped from this ghetto, and started the next stage of survival - passing on the Aryan side.



Here is a photo of my mother at age 93 standing at the stove in my kitchen in Hopkinton, making a soup.

P.S. My mother never stopped worrying about old people having enough food. Her favorite charity was Meals on Wheels.



Jews, never about living ones. In these essays, Horn reflects on subjects as far-flung as the international veneration of Anne Frank, the mythology that Jewish family names were changed at Ellis Island, the blockbuster traveling exhibition Auschwitz, the marketing of the Jewish history of Harbin, China, and the little-known life of the "righteous Gentile" Varian Fry. Throughout, she challenges us to confront the reasons why there might be so much fascination with Jewish deaths, and so little respect for Jewish lives unfolding in the present. Horn draws upon her travels, her research, and also her own family life - trying to explain Shakespeare's Shylock to a curious 10-year-old, her anger when swastikas are drawn on desks in her children's school, the profound perspective offered by traditional religious practice and study - to assert the vitality, complexity, and depth of Jewish life against an anti-Semitism that, far from being disarmed by the mantra of "Never forget", is on the rise. As Horn explores the (not so) shocking attacks on the American Jewish community in recent years, she reveals the subtler dehumanization built into the public piety that surrounds the Jewish past - making the radical argument that the benign reverence we give to past horrors is itself a profound affront to human dignity.

## Thank you to our Rabbi Search Committee!

Rabbi Marc Philippe's visit was a great success, offering four opportunities for temple members to meet Rabbi and his wife Valerie in person. Couldn't attend? No problem, watch the videos at <https://www.youtube.com/@templeisrael4688/streams>. Stay tuned for more quality candidates.

### Aida Koocher (Chair)

Debbie DePasse  
Norri Oberlander  
Rachel Spierer

Sedra Michaelson  
Steve Saulten  
Joy Sydney

Josh Nathan  
Liz Sommers  
Mitchell Weinberg



February 17-18-19  
Rabbinic Candidate  
Jacob Benaroch & Rebbetzin Rivka



## Special thanks to our Braerman Chanukah Party Volunteers



Morgan Hallock  
Josh Nathan  
Norri Oberlander  
Rachel Russell  
Steve Saulten  
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The Guttman Gang





# February 2023 – Shevat 10 to Adar 7, 5783



Feb 1 - Tim Russell  
Feb 3 - Barbara Shepler  
Feb 8 - Elizabeth Sommers  
Feb 14 - Ian Felder  
Feb 19 - Greg DePasse  
Feb 19 - Elizabeth Gaby

Feb 20 - Alan Gaby  
Feb 21 - Linda Kropp Sinkow  
Feb 21 - Joan Vick  
Feb 25 - Ethan Felder  
Feb 27 - Hannah Verbun  
Feb 28 - Isaac Paul Bannerman Lew

Pam & Steve Saulten  
February 11 - 45th anniversary

Iris & Rabbi Gary Atkins  
February 16 - 26th anniversary

## February CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- 3 Light Candles at 4:42pm
- 4 Havdallah Service/dinner – 5:15pm. Parshas Beshalach
- 5 Sunday Funday - 9:30am. For info contact Liz Sommers [familyeducator@outlook.com](mailto:familyeducator@outlook.com)

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- 6 Tu B'Shevat
  - 10 Light Candles at 4:52pm
  - 11 PJ Library Tot Shabbat Hop at Temple Israel 10:00am
  - 11 Parshas Yisro

- 
- 17 Light Candles at 5:01pm  
Family Shabbat and dinner with Rabbinic Candidate Jacob Benaroch at 6:00pm. RSVP by noon Feb 10.
  - 18 Shabbat Service @ 10:00am led by Rabbinic Candidate Jacob Benaroch followed by catered Kiddush.  
RSVP by noon Feb 10. Parshas Mishpatim
  - 19 Schmooze & Schmear with Rabbi Jacob at 9:30am.. No rsvp needed.

- 
- 24 Light Candles at 5:10pm
  - 25 Parshas Tenuman
- 

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- Yom Tov Challah Board - \$25
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- Candelsticks - \$25.
- Hamsa - \$25
- Blue Enameled Mezuzahs - \$30

Contact Carol at 603.623.7752 or [carolsnh@myfairpoint.net](mailto:carolsnh@myfairpoint.net)

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Our Hevra Kaddisha is ready to help you in your hour of need to perform the ritual preparation of a deceased for burial in accordance with Jewish tradition. Do not hesitate to call us when needed. We are here for you!

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