

**SDJA PAST PRESIDENT, LEO SPIEGEL'S REMARKS AT THE *EVERY CHILD*  
CAMPAIGN PRESIDENTS' DINNER HONORING LARRY ACHEATEL**

**DECEMBER 6, 2009**

**This is really a celebration the amazing 30 year journey of our school. From a small grammar school in Del Cero with 94 students to the K thru 12 programs that over 650 students experience at our state of the art Jaffe Campus – we have come a long way.**

**This evening we want to pay special recognition to some of the individuals who have lead SDJA thru these 30 years, the past presidents and Larry Acheatel.**

**SDJA's first President ever, Charles Wax remembers his sense of miracle when they opened the school with 94 students, no Principal, no money in the bank and no facility!**

**Allen Jay – the second President remembers his tenure as a time of expansion and buying six computers for the school – one which they got free!**

**John Adler was next and recalled restructuring the Board to strengthen the school.**

**Michael Silverman was president during 1982 - 1983 when SDJA first achieved accreditation – Michael recalled how that process impacted the school's direction and management - particularly staff evaluations.**

**Natan Bakcht, remembers how the support and enthusiasm of his fellow parents really strengthened the academy.**

**Michael Schwartz served as president from 1984 – 1985.**

**Ruben Rosenthal was next. Ruben's most vivid memory was the difficult decision to double tuition, which the parents supported, to enable the Junior High School to stay open.**

**Julian Josephson, remembers interviewing and hiring Bob Sherman as a new Head of School.**

**Norman Lurie, recalls watching the trailers move up the hill to the Beth El campus – when the Junior High relocated from it's 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue site. He also remembers assembling all the lockers and picnic tables – which is evidence that Jewish men can be handy!**

**Sharon Davidson, remembers bringing the Junior High to the SDJA campus, building the Board and barely surviving her presidency**

**Avrille Copans, remembers celebrating the 10 year anniversary of the school and balancing the budget during her second year –a major feat!**

**Mark Berger was next and remembers strategizing and executing on the merger of the SDJA and the Jewish Community Junior High school.**

**Claire Ellman, remembers the decision to combine campuses which led to the start of our long term plan to find a new home for the SDJA.**

Harold Krasner, remembers creating Sports Day modeled after a similar practice in South Africa which initially was played on the UCSD athletic track. Many folks told Harold he was crazy but Sports Day was great and brought all the cultures of the school together, athletes or not, to compete and have fun.

Rhona Fink, remembers after much discussion the Board decision to build the first Jewish High School in San Diego. Its mission was to develop the next generation of Jewish leaders – look how far we have come!

Ann Jaffe was next – Ann’s fondest memories include visiting the Mexico City Jewish community, the time she spent “gathering tributes” to the past Presidents at the *Chai* lighting event and building the new campus. She alleges her best memory was hiring Larry!

Daniel Shinoff, was President during the tumultuous time when Larry came on board. Dan was contacted by a nationally-respected County Superintendent who indicated that Larry may be willing to take on the position of Executive Director of SDJA. Having worked with Larry in the past at South Bay Union School District, Dan knew of Larry’s outstanding capabilities and qualities as an educational leader. The Superintendent that contacted Dan struggled with his recommendation, not because Larry wasn’t the very best, but because the State Public School system would be losing its very brightest.

Alan Viterbi was next. He recognized the need to increase the annual campaign to make SDJA accessible for every child. Alan began the tradition of annual dinners and presenting the *Kol HaKavod* award to worthy recipients - as we are doing tonight by presenting the award to Larry.

Renee Sherman , had so many favorite memories and enjoyed her presidency even when making very stressful decisions. But the excitement of the first

graduating class of high school seniors in 2003 and the sense of accomplishment she felt building a tool shed for Levana's garden topped her list.

I was the next President and was proud to work with Larry and the Boards of SDJA and the KEN to create a partnership that brought the KEN to our campus, enabled the school to build a Gymnasium and significantly reduce SDJA's long term debt. I also remember the honor and frankly pain – just kidding - of negotiating a long extension to Larry's contract.

Beverly Pamensky , remembers the SDJA Board receiving USD's Kaleidoscope Award that recognizes excellence in governance for non-profit organizations and undertaking the Legacy Sefer Torah project when SDJA commissioned the writing of a new Sefer Torah with the participation of every student and many family and community members.

Roberto Jinich – our current president will share his favorite memory with all of us in a few minutes. Though it is our pleasure to recognize and acclaim SDJA's past Presidents we all know that this close knit community was built and grows because of the dedication of countless board members, volunteers, administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students – we should all feel an overwhelming sense of accomplishment and joy!

Brandeis University, Sociology Professor Morrie Schwartz, *Alav ha-shalom*, wrote "Devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.....Be compassionate, and take responsibility for each other. If we only learned those lessons, this world would be so much better a place."

Well I think we all agree that the world is a much better place because of Larry Achaetel.

Larry is an effective leader who raises those around him to a higher standard which causes us to reach our own potential. As I prepared for tonight I was astounded by the number of people who had so many heartfelt compliments about him. It is really remarkable how much respect, admiration and love Larry's family, friends, past colleagues and the entire SDJA community share for him.

Larry is a visionary who believes all things are possible. He is an individual of the highest integrity who ALWAYS does the right thing! He appreciates the uniqueness of all the families at SDJA and works tirelessly to make each of them feel special and connected. If you read through the tributes you will also see what an influential leader - Larry is in the broader Jewish Community and in particular the impressive impact he has had in nurturing the San Diego / Sha'ar Ha Negev partnership.

Larry is an inspired educator, who has spent his career not only teaching kids Math, Science and English, but more importantly, teaching them to take responsibility for their actions and inspiring them to make the world a better place. Staff and community members of the Mother Lode Union school District in Northern California where Larry's worked wrote a long tribute to Larry. I will share a small part. "You not only role-modeled mentorship daily, you formalized it by implementing the Mentor Program. You not only encouraged leadership, you led by starting the Substance Abuse Task Force. You not only supported career training, you acted by sending your staff to Las Vegas for TESA training ... and there are worse places for training seminars!"

**Larry is a loyal and trustworthy friend. Many people in this room know exactly what I am talking about. For me, Larry was a rock and sage advisor as I navigated the most challenges days of my life. He was available at all hours to listen, encourage and coach – words can't describe the appreciation and love I share for Larry.**

**Larry's greatest blessing and accomplishment by far is his family. He shares a wonderful life with his soul mate, Janet, and their incredible children and grandchildren. He is very close to his brothers and his dad Cliff.**

**Larry makes things happen. He always roles up his sleeves and enthusiastically gets his hands dirty. Deena Libman told me a great story recently about when Larry had just joined the academy at the Beth El campus, how he often could be found plunging the over-flowing toilets – truly demonstrating how to get your hands dirty! Many of us also remember the countless Sundays he spent helping to build and tend to Levana's Garden. We also remember Larry in boots and a hard hat lovingly managing the construction of our school's home.**

**I know if we each close our eyes now, we can picture Larry involved in the many remarkable activities he accomplishes for our school. That is what is so great about Larry. He does so much! Larry has the respect, admiration and love of every person that knows him. Simply stated, Larry is mensch! He is not just the Executive Director of San Diego Jewish Academy - he is our friend!**