

REMEMBERING

Bert Spiegel



A Life of Promise—the young Bert Spiegel

Remembering Bert Spiegel

A collection of memories and stories
celebrating a life well lived



David, Sarina, Judith, Michael

Bert, Lois



Bert Spiegel Remembered

Heartfelt thanks to Jathan Janove for pursuing the idea for a Bert Remembered book and his gentle persuasion to make it happen. This project only was completed because of you, Jathan.

Our deep appreciation to Ann Bernstein who patiently guided us through the printing process.

Thank you, too, Sandi Raines for adding her special artistic touch to the completed work.

And to all those who shared their genuine feelings about Bernard Albert Spiegel (Bert) our beloved husband, father, grandfather - teacher, mentor and friend....We are deeply moved by your remembrances of his life...a life well lived.

Lois Spiegel David Spiegel Judith Markson Sarina Furer



1982



Bert Spiegel Remembered

Introduction:

Not long before his passing, I spoke with Bert about doing a “Tuesdays With Morrie” project with him. A sharp downturn in his condition precluded this project. In his final days, I told him I had a “Plan B”—a compilation of memories of his life and impact on others.

As stories have come in from those whose lives Bert touched, I wish I could have read them to him while he was still alive. He’d have disclaimed credit and insisted he was the greater beneficiary of each relationship. Yet deep down, I think he knew he had made a positive difference in this world and left a lasting imprint.

Following a short biography of Bert, including some of his own words, you’ll hear from 62 people whose lives he touched.

Bert: here’s to you. Your memory truly is a blessing.

Jathan Janove



Bert Spiegel Remembered

Biography

Contributed by Lois Spiegel

Bert was born November 18, 1928 in the Bronx, New York.

His parents came from Austro-Hungary after World War I. His mother, Sadie Reiss, was born August 25, 1901 in Lubotyn, which later became part of Czechoslovakia. His father, Harry Spiegel, was born in Klucharka, Hungary. He was apprenticed to a printer as a young man. During World War I he was inducted into the Austrian Army.

Bert's parents met in New York City and were married on October 31, 1926.

When Bert was an infant his parents moved to Hastings-on-Hudson, New York where his Uncle Al Spiegel had opened a small grocery store. Bert grew up in Hastings-on-Hudson attending school from first grade through high school.

Bert's parents opened a delicatessen store on Main Street in Hastings and Bert learned to stock shelves, bag and deliver groceries on his bicycle. It was here that he became an expert packer!

His mother Sadie was well known for preparing huge quantities of coleslaw, potato salad and ham in the store for employees of Anaconda which had a large plant nearby.

Bert's father worked six plus days a week to provide for his wife, Bert and Bert's sister, Loretta, as well as for Sadie's parents. Ethel and Morris Reiss had arrived from Europe in the 1930s and lived with them.

In 1945, Bert's entire graduating class from Hastings High went together to Chambers Street in Manhattan to enlist in the Army. However, Bert didn't get in — he was classified 4F because of his flat feet! However, he did serve for a short time in the New York National Guard.

Like Bert's family, many of the merchants in Hastings in the 1930s and 40s were Jewish. High Holy Day services were held in the VFW Hall. A student tutor came up from NYC to prepare the boys for their bar mitzvahs.

The Spiegels kept a kosher home, which meant that the traveling High



Bert Spiegel Remembered

Holidays rabbi always stayed with them.

In the 1950s, Harry and his brother Al were instrumental in beginning the (Conservative) Greenburg Hebrew Center in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., the next village to Hastings-on-Hudson. The bylaws stated that baked goods from Sadie Spiegel's kitchen were permitted to be served in its kosher kitchen.

In addition to working in his father's store, Bert commuted to White Plains for college courses. Since this didn't seem like "going to college," Bert applied to Oklahoma A & M and spent his freshman year there. He made lifelong friends in Stillwater, OK.

Returning to Hastings, Bert enrolled in New York University Washington Square College of Arts and Science. He lived and worked uptown in Harlem at a juvenile detention center.

After Bert's graduation from NYU in 1951, he drove across country to California in search for a job. While standing in a line to apply for work, Bert heard that the U.S. State Department was looking for college graduate applicants. He applied and was accepted. The next seven years marked the beginning of his international travel adventures. Bert served in the United States Foreign Service with assignments in Korea, Japan, Salzburg, Austria and the Dominican Republic as well as Washington, D.C.

In 1960-61 Bert became a full time student at Columbia University Teacher's College, N.Y.C. to earn a Master of Arts degree. After classes, a group of students would go out together for Chinese food; one of these students was the lovely Lois Joan Finke! The couple was married on September 3, 1961 at Temple Beth-El in Great Neck, New York.

Since Bert had a N.Y. state teaching license, he began substituting in Westchester County at residential adolescent institutions. That led to a placement at Geller House on Staten Island. Bert very much enjoyed the five years teaching "problem" youth. After five years of a daily three hour commute from the Ardsley area to Staten Island, Bert thought the family should move closer to his work.

During this same period Bert and Lois went on a Catholic Marriage Encounter Weekend. This experience became a pivotal event in their lives. They became active in monthly Jewish and interfaith meetings. During one meeting a writing prompt was given asking *what do you*



Bert Spiegel Remembered

want to do with the rest of your life? The timing of this question was pertinent as Bert was approaching his 50th birthday. One of his lifelong wishes was to become a school psychologist. Family discussions were held to decide whether to move closer to Staten Island or move West. The family had spent frequent summers camping in the National Parks. They were drawn to a simpler, quieter lifestyle.

In 1979 the family settled in Salt Lake City. Bert became a teacher at LDS Hospital with inpatient adolescents in a psychiatric ward.

After completing his Master of Science degree in Educational Psychology, Bert worked for Granite and Jordan School Districts as a School Psychologist.

Bert found satisfaction in volunteering for Jewish Family Service. He helped the Russian refugees who were being resettled in SLC. It gave him great pleasure to enlist volunteers to physically move donated furniture into newly acquired apartments for newcomers to the Jewish community.

For a year and a half, Bert was the interim head of Jewish Family Service.

He always spoke of the joy he felt interacting with the children at the Foothill J.C.C. Many of the children would talk informally with Bert while they waited for their parents in the late afternoon.

Bert loved being with children of all ages. Occasionally he would say that youngsters were more intuitive than adults, and that was why he preferred their company.

Bert also volunteered his time at Congregation Kol Ami, first substitute teaching at religious school before he earned his own junior high class. Inviting his students for Shabbat dinner at their house - without the youth's parents - gave both Bert and Lois much pleasure.

Bert and Lois continued their involvement in Marriage Encounter in SLC. They became part of a newly formed Jewish encounter group, which met monthly for 5-7 years, as well as the Jewish representatives to a monthly interfaith group. These groups made their transition to SLC very pleasurable as they expanded their social network.

Bert and Lois' lives were full of activity. They were busy with events in



Bert Spiegel Remembered

the Jewish community, camping, and enjoying nature. Inspired by his lifelong friend, Max Rolland, a talented gardener influenced by Japanese landscape and the beauty of Utah, Bert began developing a home garden. Choosing and planting trees, suspending driftwood carefully collected from travels, and tending numerous bird feeders gave Bert extraordinary pleasure and satisfaction. Once their three children left home Bert and Lois began traveling extensively. They made trips to northern and southern Europe, Turkey, China, Japan, and in 2014-2015, an ambitious trip (Bert planned himself) around the world. Bert and Lois also made annual trips to Israel and were present for the births of all four of their Israeli grandchildren. The busy grandparents were also present for the births of their three Boston grandchildren.

In 2000 Bert and his friend, Jathan Janove, created the outline for the first Neshama Group. Bert often related that the two most significant life-changing forces in his life were Marriage Encounter and the Neshama Groups.

Lois Spiegel





Bert Remembered by Family

Family

A brother can fulfill many roles. Mine was extraordinary, one I loved, admired, and looked up to. I miss him beyond words. At times my heart aches knowing I can no longer have those precious telephone conversations with him. He was my friend, my confidant and my mentor. He was the most altruistic person I have ever known. I could call him at any time and he would always listen intensely, sharing my happiness and consoling me if I had a problem. He guided me through many phases of my life.

Growing up, I was told that when two-year-old Bert learned about my existence, he said, "I don't want a baby sister, I want a brother!" From then on I was called "Sis." For 85 years I've treasured being Bert's "Sis."

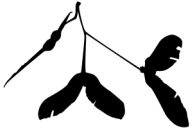
Loretta Shames

I often feel your presence with me on my daily walks, circling Chandler Pond, walking the streets of Brighton, MA or hiking the Wasatch hills above your house.

I, like you, am always intensely aware of my surroundings. Eager to greet passersby, we would stop and chat a bit.

Dad, we are observers. You and I enjoy sharing our perspective with others. How we smell the damp earth after a rain, feel the warm sunshine on our face, see a woodpecker climbing up an oak tree searching for insects; or, even hearing a baby crying.

People too touch us. All the precious people you and I have welcomed into our lives. My ability to be honest, open and present with family and friends stems from you and Mom. You both have always created a loving, safe and welcoming community. A gift you modeled and shared.



Bert Remembered by Family

As the Japanese maple trees in your garden shake out their tiny, delicate and fragile leaves, a new season begins.

You leave us, Dad, in the Springtime. The season of potential. Time to turn over the earth and prepare it for new seedlings, new life.

Soon your granddaughter, my darling Aviva will give birth. And so the cycle of life and death moves onward.

Your memory, Dad, will carry on through this new life. Your Neshama will rejoice.

...

On May 10th, 2017, Aviva and Tzvika had a son.

Eight days later, at his bris, they named him Dov Ber for you, Dad.



They gave him your Hebrew name. They are calling him affectionately, Dovy.

I was present at his birth. I was overwhelmed with joy when he emerged into this world and I realized Aviva had a son. I instantly felt the connection with your Neshama. I felt blessed. I have noticed that Dovy is a calm soul. He cries when he has a need. When it is fulfilled he smiles and gurgles at me. Kicking his legs, moving his arms he interacts with everyone around him.

We are blessed that Dovy will carry your name, Dad, into another generation.

Calm, observant, engaging, Dovy already embodies signs of your Neshama.

I feel the circle of life is spiraling forward.

Judith Markson



Bert Remembered by Family

My Father: Teacher. Role Model. Mentor.

When I was 19 I was unhappy at college and wanted to transfer. During winter break I flew to Boston to look at several colleges but was unsuccessful. None of the schools sparked in me any interest. Discouraged and homesick I wearily boarded a non-stop flight from Boston to Seattle. As the plane carried us westward I began to yearn for home. I longed to sit at my parent's dining room table, across from my father, and talk into the night. To be listened to and supported in a way that only my father knew how. I pressed my face against the plastic window and could begin to make out the lights of Salt Lake City. Suddenly we heard the pilot's voice. To this day I can still remember his voice: Midwestern, mature, and practiced calm. He announced that a wing was on fire and not be alarmed — fire trucks were awaiting us on the tarmac- we were making an emergency landing! Passengers shouted angrily and banged on their windows. I whooped out loud, joyous and triumphant!

My father always told me that I could do anything - even land airplanes! This is how great his confidence and belief in me was. He believed in my ability to create miracles and live a miraculous life - and I do.

How I miss him. How I wish I could sit across from him at the dining room table or in his enchanted garden and talk - deep into the fading light of the day.

Sarina Furer



Bert Remembered by Family

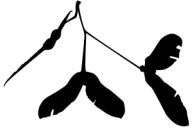
After my dad and I skied together at Brighton, we drove down the canyon into the Salt Lake Valley. At a certain point, the valley opened up before us. We saw a wall of clouds hiding the city and valley. The setting sun hung at a perfect point on the horizon, coloring the clouds with brilliant reds and purples. The clouds seemed alive.

It was an absolutely perfect end to a day of skiing, a favorite memory of my dad and me enjoying the spectacular mountains and snow together.

Dave Spiegel



Sarina, Bert, David



Bert Remembered by Family

My Grandpa Bert was one in a million.

Today when you talk to most people they nod their head, say “uh huh,” and move on to what they want to talk about. Not Grandpa Bert. He would make eye contact with you the entire time you were speaking. He wouldn’t talk until you were done. And most importantly, he actually listened to you. Grandpa made me feel truly valued and important because he really listened to me and cared about my opinion. He always made me feel free to do things my way even if he would have done it differently.

Grandpa Bert was fascinated by different kinds of people and societies. He traveled the world fueled by this interest and his sense of adventure. Grandpa took us on adventures too. Camping under a canopy of stars, canoeing down a river, hiking up mountain trails, Grandpa always loved to spend time in the Great Outdoors and he shared that love with us. Grandpa enjoyed the simple things in life. He had no need for amusement parks, or thrillers; a walk through the woods, or taking a grandchild to Target—that was what gave him pleasure.

Grandpa knew how to do everything. He built shelves in my room, stained my bookcases a beautiful light shade of brown, and he probably would have painted my room as well if I had asked him to.

Grandpa was generous with his wisdom both in practical matters as well as in the more sensitive areas of life. Grandpa Bert lived deeply and fully and he really understood people and situations. Grandpa was very close to his family. He loved us all fiercely and we knew it.

I feel so privileged to have been Grandpa’s granddaughter. I will hold forever dear the memories of time spent together with him.

Aviva Friedman

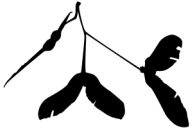


Bert Remembered by Family



Judith, David, Lois and Aviva





Bert Remembered by Family

Recently, I played a game of scrabble with my parents. I placed a seven-letter word on the board, “noticers.” My parents were quite impressed with the word. My mother commented that it reminded her of Grandpa Bert. She was right. He was truly a noticer; he left no action unobserved, no emotion ignored, and never held back needed advice or praise. Whether it was the Israeli salad I diced up for him, or the potato kugel I baked for him, or the garden work that he helped me complete; he always complimented me profusely and at the same time criticized and instructed me how to improve my craft.

Another facet of Grandpa’s noticing was his conservation. He would see the good in a piece of junk and save it to reap its benefits. In his yard there is a massive collection of hanging driftwood mobiles. Why do you have to buy fancy yard decorations if you can find natural ones and get the fun of making it yourself! Recently I was in his basement and saw his “workshop.” It was full of odds and ends, some of which must have been there for years.

Grandpa loved to learn. He was always interested to know what I was learning in school. Even when I was younger and the material was very basic, my projects interested him. When I went to Yeshivah, I mostly learned Jewish studies, which intrigued him as well. In 9th grade I delivered a short discourse on a certain Talmudic topic and Grandpa happened to be there. I spoke partially in Yiddish and Hebrew, neither of which he understood. However, he insisted that I repeat the discourse to him fully in English. I was amazed how a man who had never studied Talmud before could be so interested. It never mattered to Grandpa who was teaching him; friend or stranger, young or old, wise or unintelligent; he always paid close attention. His unquenched thirst for knowledge and its bearers taught me how valuable knowledge is.

We all know how much Grandpa loved the outdoors and I was lucky enough to share that love with him. I remember going camping, hiking, boating, and biking with Grandpa. It was always a fun and educational experience. This year in summer camp I went on a hike up a mountain. At the top there were a bunch of ledges with stunning views of the Catskill Mountains. I imagined Grandpa



Bert Remembered by Family

standing there with his camera shooting pictures of the panorama. He always shared with us stunning photography, made extra special because I knew my grandfather had been there and taken the pictures.

One thing I noticed whenever I went somewhere with Grandpa was how much he cared for others. Many a time he would start a conversation with complete strangers and listen to them intently. He did not discriminate; whether it was the children next door who needed their ball returned or the dog in the park that needed a good patting, he was always there for others. His actions left a lasting impression on me and have guided me in my day-to-day interactions with others.

As I write, I realize how little of his huge personality I am able to bring to paper. I learnt so much from him despite the geographic distance that separated us. Surely he will be remembered for good for many years to come.

תהא נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים

May his soul be guarded amongst the living souls.

Eliezer Markson



Eli, Bert and Dovid



Bert Remembered by Family

In February 2016, my parents and I joined Grandma and Grandpa in Florida. We stayed in Boynton Beach. One day we drove to the bay to go for a walk. I wanted to do something I hadn't done for a while - to bike. Grandpa kindly rented a bike for me. He also took it a step farther. It was amazing to watch Grandpa working to keep up with me, walking with his ski sticks even though his body wasn't too well then.

He also took me to a safari. When we got there it was pouring rain. Nonetheless, we stayed and had a lot of fun taking pictures. The character trait of Grandpa was he didn't waste anything. May we all learn from Grandpa's ways!

Dovid Markson



Bert and Dovid, Florida 2016



Bert Remembered by Family

Grandpa Bert was a wise, caring and giving person.

He gave me a necklace from Japan and I still have it to this day. I like to wear it when I go out and I feel that it gives me good energy. After my Grandpa passed away Grandma Lois gave me the watch that he used to wear. I wear it almost every day as a memory of him. I use it for my work in the Magen David ambulance to check patients heartbeats.

Yehuda Furer



Yehuda and Michael



Bert Remembered by Family

Memories of my Grandfather...

Don't you know?

Bushy eyebrows

Watery blue eyes

They were painted brown

No one knew.

I've asked calculated questions-

You were the one to impress

Snippets of newspaper articles

Scrabble

When will I understand that your depths are impossible to reach?

Your gaze drew all hopes

Silent prayer

A bargain with life is not enough,

learn to do it right.

A stubborn need to live righteously.

How can I describe true greatness?

Your favorite book is the Bible.

You live for traveling and helping others.

In my mind you are not dead.

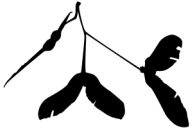
Just simply existing in a higher place than the rest of us.

But that's not new.

The roots have grown blossoms

You've left us all the fruit.

What am I to do without you?



Bert Remembered by Family

The pillars are crashing down.
Crumbling dust
And I don't recognize my hands.

The fear of memories deteriorating
patience.

I wish you were here to give me strength, an understanding ear and advice.

Why is it that we only appreciate what is no longer there?

You were so full of love.

I'm trying to mirror back and string together pieces of history

Trying to uncover what was taken from me.

My senses can't rationalize your absence.

Ma'ayan Furer



Annaelle, Michael, Sarina, Yehuda, Ma'ayan
Neve Daniel, Israel



Bert Remembered by Family

The last time I saw my Grandfather was during a visit to SLC in the summer of 2016. One special day, Grandpa took Racheli, Ma'ayan, my Dad, and me on an outing. It began at Costco and then onto the Museum of Natural History. Even though it was toward the end of a long day, and I'm certain that Grandpa was already tired, he offered to drive us to the Great Salt Lake! It was a very special day and I saw how Grandpa was trying to make our vacation special for us. He did everything we asked. He was patient and open to explain and teach us things about Utah.

One morning I sat outside in Grandpa's garden while he was drinking coffee. We spoke about his past as a teacher for troubled kids. I remember how relaxed and peaceful he was. He was open and interested in talking to me. For me, these two experiences stand out as the most important memories I have of our two-month adventure in the USA and of my Grandfather.

Annaelle Furer



Annaelle, Sarina, Lois, Judith, Dovid, Michael,
Bert, Yehuda, Aviva, Ma'ayan, and Eli

Camping in Utah for Judith's 40th Birthday



Bert Remembered by Family

I have many memories of Grandpa, but one that especially stands out is at breakfast. I remember the smell of his English muffins toasting, his cup of orange juice, the bowl of Kellogg's Corn Flakes with bananas sliced on top, patiently and carefully. I remember the way he would read the newspaper in his garden. Whenever I asked him to do something, like take me



to Walmart, or take something down from a shelf I couldn't reach, he never hesitated and right away said "Yes!" The biggest things I miss about him are the sound of his voice, the sound of his laugh, and the way he told jokes that nobody understood.

This is a poem I wrote for Grandpa's 88th birthday:

The sun shines on your face while you and I are going down the river in a boat

The canyon hills are in the distance

The sun is shining

There is a rainbow in the sky

Nothing to worry about, just you and me

I smile at you and you smile back

What more could two people need when I have you and you have me?

Racheli Furer



Bert Remembered by Friends

Bert's Love for Lois

My wife Pam and I had Shabbat dinner at Bert and Lois'. Bert read Eyshet Chayil (A Woman of Valor) for Lois. He read it in English, as hearing and understanding the words was so important to Bert. This started a discussion about the meaning and value of that prayer. Bert looked at me with that intense gaze he had, completely present in the moment, and said, "The important thing about Eyshet Chayil is that you have to say it every week. It's no good to do it once in a while. It has to be every Shabbat."

It was an interesting, beautiful sentiment, but I'm not sure I really appreciated why it was so important to be every week.

A couple years later my mom died. For Shloshim, I decided to do a Torah study on Eyshet Chayil in memory of my mom. I rewrote the traditional English translation to reflect some of my mom's best attributes. It was really wonderful, and it reminded me of what Bert had said about how important it was to read it to your wife every single Shabbat.

I spent a lot of time reflecting on Bert's statement, and how he was one of the most mindful, fully present people I'd ever met. And then what he'd told me made sense. Beautiful, enduring relationships like Bert and Lois' don't just happen. They require a focus that can only be sustained with intention. Insisting on saying Eyshet Chayil every Shabbat, without missing a single week, is one manifestation of that intention. Bert was the best at that kind of undistracted focus, the ability to make whoever he was speaking to feel that they were important to him and all his attention was riveted on them. I always found that inspirational.

I re-wrote a version of Eyshet Chayil for my wife. I read it to her every Shabbat. I never miss a week.



Bert Remembered by Friends

*A good wife, I have found!
Her worth is far above rubies.
The heart of her husband yearns for her
And nothing does he lack.
She brings him joy, insight and loyalty
All the days of their lives.
She opens her ears and her heart to those who are troubled,
And offers empathy to those in pain.
She is clothed in strength and understanding
And faces daily challenges with humor and courage.
She opens her mouth with understanding,
her tongue is blessed with sweetness.
She tends to the concerns of her family
And brings patience and perspective to them all.
Her children come to her with love,
Her husband, too, and he thanks her:
“Many women are to be admired,
But you complete my soul.”
Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,
But a kind, God-revering woman is much to be praised.
Place before her the fruit of her caring;
Wherever people gather, her deeds speak her praise.*

David Anisman



Bert Remembered by Friends

I met Bert and Lois some 20 years ago. From the beginning, I was impressed with his eagerness to learn about people and their lives. I found him so charming as he combined sophistication with a boyishness that was appealing. The other thing that stood out was his love for Lois, holding her in such high regard. The man was a romantic, what can I say?

Lanelle McCollum



Lois and Bert, 1961



Bert Remembered by Friends

An Angel Among Us

“Who was that man with the beautiful blue eyes and long white eyebrows?” my brother asked me when he called the day after my son’s bar mitzvah. “He was what I will remember forever about Avery’s special day.”

Bert had had a long conversation with my brother that was deep and personal and a tribute to my son and our little family.

The last conversation I had with my own father, a few days before he died, carried more healing words from Bert, I have held Bert’s comfort in my heart and will be forever grateful.

When I visited Bert at Highland Care, when his leg pain was a mystery, I thanked Bert for those conversations. I told him that whether he was aware of it or not, I had “pretended” that Bert was my own father so many times. When I needed a pat on my back, or guidance, or someone to share a beautiful bird with, Bert was always there for me.

When Rabbi Wenger told me I could invite someone to be present with me on the bima while I accepted Judaism as my own, I immediately thought of Bert and Lois.

Whenever I talk about love, acceptance, patience, thoughtfulness, true service work, and mitzvot, the names Lois and Bert are in the same sentence. I am so grateful to have met Lois through the Rosh Chodesh group and so grateful that Bert invited my husband Art to Neshama. I know I am a better wife, mother, and human being because of Bert and Lois’ influence. My heart/soul is healthier, happier, and my life is so much richer having known them. I will carry this with me forever and I have told this story to my children many times. Thank you, thank you, thank you again.

D’vorah Deneb Sandack



Bert Remembered by Friends

26 years ago we arrived in SLC, a young family from Israel, Yotam, 3 ½, Guy, six months, my husband Yarden and me. We came to the synagogue on our first Friday for services, only a day after arriving at our new home away from home, hoping to find and connect to the Jewish community.

After services, as we walked out of the building, an older man stopped us. (We were quite young, and anything over 40 looked "older".) He started to ask us questions, lots of questions, penetrating questions. Yarden and I gave each other a look that said, "Who is this man?!"

That was our first encounter with Bert Spiegel. Over the years we were very fortunate to count Bert and Lois as friends. Whenever we came to visit them—when the boys were young, later when I went through a divorce, every year, when I visited from Israel each year, and when the boys grew up and had to deal with life—we would sit with Bert and Lois. Bert would look me or my children Yotam, Guy and Golan right in the eyes, see distress, and kindly yet directly, ask us about it. And then he'd give kind and wise words—*every time*.

I believe God has put some of his helpers — angels — on earth, to help us with kindness and love. Bert — and Lois — belong to those angels. Thank you God, and thank you Bert.

Yeela Raanan



Bert Remembered by Friends

Bert believed in angels on earth.

Many years ago, my daughter Leah and Bert had a conversation in which Leah described a childhood illness. Bert's son David happened to be sick at the time with symptoms that sounded familiar. Bert called David and asked questions based on Leah's story. As a result, he recommended that David go to the doctor. David did and received treatment that resulted in his speedy recovery. After that experience, Bert told me how he believed Leah was his angel on earth. He said there are many angels all around us and they help people if people are willing to listen. Bert certainly convinced me. He had a way of making life wonderful and magical.

Barb Schallheim

Bert's love of humanity oozed out of his every pore. It spilled into his voice and out of his heart like a soft warm breeze.

Bert once told me that Jews believe in angels. Not the kind we envision with wings and halos but ones among us on Earth.

He said, "Our angels convey messages. We do not know who is giving a message or who is receiving a message. Even the angels do not know."

Since our conversation I have had many experiences with angels that have given me comfort, appreciation, direction and friendship.

It is because of this, I am convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that Bert Spiegel was such an angel who walked among us. He was the ultimate mensch and doer of good deeds.

Suzanne Tornquist and Michael Fletcher



Bert Remembered by Friends

I knew Bert since my first days on the planet. He was a family friend and one of the first people I encountered that lived a life of joy and magic. I have fond recollections of visiting the Spiegel Family in White Plains. Sarina, Judith and I would catch fireflies with Bert at night in between him giving us wheelbarrow rides. He also was my first art benefactor. He gathered my many paintings and drawings and displayed them in his basement workshop. I always remember going in to see my artwork all over his walls. His belief in my ability was mirrored back to me and helped to develop my self-concept as an artist.

Bert's magical existence has left an indelible mark on my life — as an artist, parent and teacher — all things that he was.

Beth Krensky

Warming your heart, feeding your body and soul and always enriching your life, that was Bert.

Bert, with his cute smile, encouraging you to pursue life further. Bert is only gone from my sight, not the joys he brought to my life. The openness, friendship, love, and caring that Bert gave me lives forever in my heart.

Hindy Friedman



Bert Remembered by Friends

Nature

I met Bert within the first month of arriving in SLC. He was clearly special. He shone with genuine interest and compassion. I knew immediately that I had found a friend. Over the years we got to know Bert and Lois through Friday night dinners and all kinds of gatherings. But here is what I remember most: I always make sure that the ivy doesn't creep up too far around the trees in our backyard; Bert gave me quite a talking-to when he saw how out-of-hand things had become in our garden.

I will always carry inside me Bert's loving concern for and certainty in life even when things were cloudy and troubled. When my beloved father died, I knew that Bert would help me through. When our son was going through a difficult passage, Bert's sturdy wisdom helped me stay strong. May we all learn from his intuitive spirit, his appreciation for the beauty of driftwood and great gift for living with a full heart ...

Maeera Shreiber





Bert Remembered by Friends

When we lived in Salt Lake many years ago, we enjoyed going over to visit Bert and Lois with our daughter Shara, who was 4 years old. Bert and Lois were always so welcoming and loved children. I remember Bert taking Shara into his backyard, something he was very proud of. It was like a fantasyland for children. He walked around with her, telling stories. He gave her a box and told her she could take some things home. Excitedly, she chose some painted rocks and beautiful shells. It was a wonderful visit that Shara, at age 26, remembers today!

Beth Fishman

I have many memories over 35-40 years. The most recent that comes to mind is about dried fruit: pears, apricots, and sometimes, peaches. Our dear friends would visit and upon arrival or just before departure, Bert would gift us with bags of his dried fruit. He labelled the bags according to year, "Pears 2011" and somehow, it was just fine even though it was 2013. These petrified fruit slices were unlikely to find any takers except for those of us wanting to consume a loving gift from Bert.

So, with total disregard for the year, I would snack on them. Especially in the winter months, I could enjoy the fruit a bit more by reconstituting it in hot water. My kids even began doing this, calling it apricot or peach tea. The "tea" had an additional benefit because it made the fruit easier to chew, avoiding jaw fatigue that often went along with Bert's dried fruit.



Bert Remembered by Friends

I look in the cabinet now and see bags labeled 2012 and 2013.
I smile. Bert and his dried fruit will always be with me.

Ben Youdelman



Bert in his element



Bert Remembered by Friends

Welcoming the Newcomer

When I met Bert the first time, I was new to Salt Lake City and Congregation Kol Ami. At the Kiddush following services, I must have looked uncomfortable since I knew no one. Bert apparently sensed this. He honed in, introducing himself, asking me about myself, and then introduced me to others he thought had similar interests.

A little later, he invited me to join Neshama Two. Soon thereafter, my wife Marty joined Lois's book club, sort of a female version of Neshama.

That was a long time ago. Yet we still remember Bert as the person who helped integrate us into our new community.

Mort Pellatt

Bert welcomed me into the community from our first meeting. He knew of my interest in international health and human rights and introduced me to others with the same interest. As always, Bert was a connector of many within the community - and with Bert, community was all-inclusive.

We helped celebrate Bert and Lois's anniversary at our house with a hundred of his closest friends - again a testament to the numbers of people he touched.

Fred Gottlieb



Bert Remembered by Friends

Bert Spiegel was a mensch. Bert always had a kind word for his friends, neighbors and strangers, many of whom later became his new friends. Every life he touched was a blessing not only for him, but for the person he touched.

My earliest encounter was when he put together a retreat for marriage encounter right after he moved here. Fran and I attended and never forgot what a wonderful engaging weekend it was for us. Soon after, he was involved with getting us into a Havarah, which has been together for over 20 years. Next up for Bert was being one of the founding members of Neshama, again a great success of men sharing and caring about each other. A trademark of Bert's character, seeing a need and making sure it was met.

Our families have shared many Simchas together, including Bert and Lois making a trip to NY to attend my granddaughter's Bat Mitzvah and Fran and I attending his granddaughter's wedding. Sitting next to Bert at his granddaughter's wedding and seeing how his face lit up was amazing.

We were very fortunate to be a part of his great and wonderful life.

Gary Lapin



Bert, Gary and Fran Lapin, Lois in Hawaii 2015



Bert Remembered by Friends

I met Bert through a colleague at work. Both were involved with Servas, an organization that links travelers worldwide and provides free lodging. I went to a local Servas picnic and met Bert and Lois.

While talking with them, I learned that like myself, they had moved to SLC from NYC, loved to travel the globe and to garden. Our friendship grew since we both belonged to Congregation Kol Ami and Lois to the National Council of Jewish Women.

Bert and Lois loved coming to my home at Rosh Hashanah, between services, to nosh on the goodies from Russ and Daughters on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Bert especially loved the herring in cream sauce and the whitefish salad.

We always talked gardening. I cherished visiting the Spiegel home, with its artwork, often Jewish-themed, and the magical garden, with a huge assortment of Japanese maples and the clinking and clacking of the mobiles Bert made from objects and wood he found on travels.

In the fall, we swapped produce; he gave me pears and I gave him cucumbers, grapes and tomatoes. Bert, ever the practical and frugal one although still a dreamer, would call my husband Art excitedly to tell him which Home Depot had a sale on unusual, lacy, gorgeous Japanese maple trees. And Art, like-minded, would follow up.

Bert never lost his joy in living, in helping people, in laughing (and what a great laugh!), in his love of family, and in his even keel.

Rochelle Kaplan



Bert Remembered by Friends

I remember Bert and Servas. He was devoted to the monthly potlucks for the organization for years. I loved hearing about his amazing travels and how Bert and Lois enjoyed their interesting hosts and traveled to unusual out of the way destinations!

Bert gave me a pear tree that he had gotten at Lowe's on sale. I love that tree!

Bert was a warm shining light. I miss him very much!

Pam and Willy Littig





Bert Remembered by Friends

I first met Lois and Bert at our Melton classes. I was uncomfortable and embarrassed, not certain that I belonged. Bert promptly came to me and quickly got down to business. "I see you in services. You sit by yourself. You shouldn't sit by yourself."

Bert's announcement — command — is what I think of when I imagine and dream of a community. I want my kids, my friends, my patients- to all find a place where we should not sit alone.

Thank you Bert for bringing this to me.

Kris Campbell

We have known Bert for at least 30 years. Bert was always ready to welcome new persons that attended services at Kol Ami. We have always enjoyed our interactions with Bert and Lois. Bert was always willing to discuss ideas. We really learned to appreciate Bert when Lois and Bert visited us in New Zealand for two days. We miss him greatly.

Ray and Laya Kesner

I met first Bert at Alta ski resort where we enjoyed the view of Devil's Castle. Bert would have been about 70 at the time. Quite a good skier. Here we are standing mountainside having literally just met and I'm being quizzed, Bert style. What do you do? Where you from? Why did you move to Utah? And then the proverbial: I know someone you should meet! Bert's uncanny knack for connecting people was legendary. Why was he so good at it? Because he cared. A more kind and selfless person you will not find. We are so blessed to have had Bert in our lives.

David Dowsett



Bert Remembered by Friends

Thrift

Whenever I was around Bert I always felt at home. Marsha and I spent many quiet Shabbat evenings with Lois and Bert, drinking wine and enjoying each other's company. We went to movies together and enjoyed each other's comments about the shows. Running wine from Las Vegas and dehydrating fruit with Bert also stands out.

I especially remember buying and planting trees. Bert would tell me of a "Big Sale." We'd both go and pick out trees. One year I was out of town. Bert called me about Orangeolas on sale. I had him buy one for me. However, they didn't turn orange as they were supposed to. Next year, mine started to look sick. Bert had me dig it up and bring it over. He planted it and nursed it with great care. Yet it still showed stress and wasting. We went another summer and he kept working on it. Eventually it shriveled to nothing. We said a shiva-like prayer and had some wine.

Bert and I went on a number of backpacking trips in Southern Utah and Arizona. I remember taking him to the Bears Ears area where we found many Anasazi ruins. Transfixed like a kid in a toy store, Bert tried to get a glimpse of everything while looking for artifacts. We had to climb out of a canyon as a huge storm approached, climbing a huge tree, then up a wall to get on the mesa just as the storm arrived. In a biting hailstorm and wind we set up our tent and waited out the storm's ferocity. We had a wonderful time together!

When traveling with Bert and Lois, Bert would research an area and take us to unique places. In Marble, Colorado he suggested that I explore the Marble Mines area. I climbed up to the mines and saw fascinating heaps of marble chips; an amazing sight I would have missed without Bert's research.

Our lives were very intermeshed. I will miss him for the rest of my life.

Ed Bronsky



Bert Remembered by Friends



Bert, Judith, Sarina

The Wenatchee National Forest, Summer 1988.

The Spiegel's dream campsite . . . Alone in the woods for 4 days



Bert Remembered by Friends

Virtuoso Listener

Since our first discussion about Neshama, I learned that any meeting or even a short discussion with Bert was meaningful and memorable. Bert always left me feeling listened to, connected, and empowered to make life and community better.

When the company I worked for was sold, and I was out of work, Bert empathized, "I never like to hear about anyone searching for a job." He listened intensely and with true concern as I leaned against the stage during the Shabbat Oneg. Then Bert described a second group of men he was assembling - to discuss Jewish issues, share our stories, and build friendships - Neshama, Hebrew for Soul. Bert and a few other men envisioned building a community of Jewish men, where we essentially practiced listening and connecting in a way that I imagine Bert acted throughout his life. He encouraged all Neshama men to reach out and become more involved in the Jewish community - essentially Tikkun Olam on a personal, local level. What an amazing legacy, and it continues to grow.

I feel honored, blessed, and mentored to have had a friendship with Bert. Watching him light up when he described something about Lois, his children, and grandchildren in Boston and Israel, modeled what a loving family man was like. Whether it was finding pure joy in sharing or drying homegrown fruit, dropping me a line on a beautiful tree for sale at Home Depot, meeting someone new and hearing their story, or finding a new Neshama candidate, Bert inspired me to be a better person. His memory is a blessing and I miss him greatly.

Matt Davidson



Bert Remembered by Friends

Bert was visiting my parents, Max and Bette Rolland, when I was trying to convince them that I should study Latin as my high school language requirement. My mother told me after I graduated from high school that it was the conversation with Bert after I left the room that paved the way for my parents to agree. Suffice it to say, I translated anything I could on a 10-day high school trip to Italy, studied Latin on into college, studied other foreign languages, traveled, loved etymology, hunted for Latin word clues in the NYT crossword puzzle, and have felt all the richer for it. Bert always had a way of listening and hearing what I was trying to say, and helping me feel that I should trust myself when I needed to make a decision. I've tried to be that kind of friend to my children.

Karen Larsen

Bert Spiegel was attentive and curious about me and what I was up to. He often told me about someone who just moved to town and was certain my husband Les or I would enjoy connecting with them.

When he heard about my interest in starting a Rosh Chodesh group in 1991 he asked if he could be included. He thought the group would provide him something he needed. When I told him it was just for women, he was sad but understood. He later would tell me of women whom he thought could benefit from our group.

When Bert started the first Neshama, I was delighted because



Bert Remembered by Friends

he now fulfilled his desire to have a group of his own. The men's Neshama groups started later and were modeled after the Rosh Chodesh group.

Bert was supportive of me and my family, and we shared many moving conversations in the 30 years I knew him. He remains dear to my heart and I miss him and his kind and inquisitive spirit.

Joyce Kelen

Bert was always very kind, especially to my kids. However, a few years ago, shortly after Shabbat services, Bert and I had an animated disagreement. I don't remember the subject but I do remember how Bert stood his ground. We expressed our strongly held opinions, glared at each other momentarily, and then agreed to disagree. Bert was willing to resolve the issue without trying to "win the argument", and I appreciated that.

Susan Schulman



Bert Remembered by Friends

Bert became interested in gardening and pursued this hobby the rest of his life. His garden became his passion and joy. It was tranquil and productive, displaying many specimen trees, ground covers and unusual perennials.

The Spiegels and Bronskys took many happy weekend and road trips together and became very close friends. Truly memorable was a trip to Marble, Colorado where Bert and I took a harrowing one and a half hour jeep trip straight up a mountain to a small community. We were welcomed into their homes for a visit. Of course, Bert was interested in everyone there.

I remember when our Stein went away to school and left his car (a 1984 Mitsubishi Champ, originally purchased by my mother) with us. Bert's car was failing and I gave him Stein's car. Bert drove that car until he was hospitalized. He kept it parked in his driveway. His neighbors referred to it fondly as the "Rust Bucket."

More than anything, I remember Bert for his warmth and willingness to listen. He was always eager to share a newspaper article or book he had just read and always seemed amazed when he discovered something new. Ed and I always felt his love and I'll never forget that whenever I called to ask a favor, his immediate response was always, "Whatever you want, Marsha."

Marsha Bronsky



Bert Remembered by Friends

When you talked to Bert, he focused on you. Many of our talks were in his backyard in the aftermath of personal challenges I faced. I'd bring over a few beers and he'd perhaps be drying apricots while we talked. He was not judgmental, yet at the same time he would be clear about what he thought I should do. He could express an opinion in a direct and caring way without making you feel talked-down to. So many times he'd say something like, "I understand..." or, "You have to do what's right for you..."

Some people have qualities when they are alive which can't be adequately described or captured in language. Bert was one of those people. My memories of him will continue, centering on his eagerness to listen, to connect, to support, combined with an outstretched hand, a sparkle in his eye, and a sincere, "How are you doing?"

I miss him and am thankful for the deep and lasting impression he made upon me.

Perry Hull

Bert celebrating his
85th birthday at the
Bronsky's home





Bert Remembered by Friends

Travel

I've witnessed firsthand — and been the beneficiary of — the huge positive impact Bert had (and still has) on my father. But Bert also significantly affected my life's trajectory. At Shabbat dinners growing up, Bert would share his experiences abroad in his early career at the State Department. Bert and Lois would regale us with one of their recent adventures and tell us where they were plotting to go to next. Because of those dinners, I've developed a strong travel bug, lived abroad, and chose a career that will provide me with travel opportunities. I hope to be traveling with my wife across the globe for the rest of my life, just like Bert and Lois.

Rafi Janove

Bert Spiegel was my next-door neighbor and friend for 25 years. Our friendship began when Bert asked for help on a project: trimming trees, fixing sprinklers or the swamp cooler. I was usually able to contribute tools, a few minutes, and maybe some know-how.

Bert had a calm and deliberate approach that contrasted with my haste to solve a problem. Conversations with Bert helped me to raise my two boys—one of whom was a real challenge. Bert always seemed to emphasize the long-term objectives over the day-to-day problems: a perspective that I needed to appreciate.

As my son Mike got older, and his computer skills surpassed mine, Bert would call him with his computer questions. Mike remembers fondly the time that he got to spend with Bert, and the friendship that developed between them.



Bert Remembered by Friends

A year after my first wife, Linda, passed away, Lois introduced me to Jan, one of her coworkers. Jan was a bit shy, and may not have agreed to date me without Lois' introduction. Jan and I were married in 2009, and she moved into my house, next-door to Lois and Bert. Since Lois was already Jan's dear friend, it further cemented the bond between our two families. If I helped Bert with a project, Jan would "tag along" and talk with Lois. It also gave both wives a chance to make sure that we were being careful, particularly where ladders were involved! Jan told Bert she was concerned about ladders because she'd seen one collapse under me. Bert famously observed, "Don't you know you're not supposed to let your wife see that?!"

As Bert faced the health challenges of his last year, Jan and I visited him, both in the care-facility and at his home. Jan got to know Bert better as she read the New York Times and Wall Street Journal to him, and they would talk about the political and social issues.

Jan and I enjoyed talking with Bert about his experiences traveling around the world, discussing places we had each visited. It was fun to hear about his favorite places, and add them to our list of future destinations. Bert was a constant source of wonderful insights, as well as amazing travel stories—from his experiences as a young man, to his "round-the-world" trip with Lois. Clearly, Bert loved life, traveling, and connecting with people all over the world. We were blessed to count Bert and Lois as friends.

Bob and Jan Wiggins



Bert Remembered by Friends

I was a Servas traveler in 2003-2004 and returned to Utah for a while before heading out again. While in the U.S., I became active in our local Servas group, which led to many conversations with Bert about our lives, and our shared passion for travel and people. I remember how excited he was about a trip to Japan. I was able to persuade him to share slides and stories from that adventure at one of our Servas gatherings. Many of us stayed late that night to hear about the places he and Lois visited and the Servas members they met while there.

I have fond memories of several long, in-person discussions that occurred during these times which resulted in his encouraging me to get more involved with Servas as a local organizer/interviewer and also as a participant at several national leadership meetings. When I left the U.S. again for an extended time, I took a closer look at how Servas was organized in other countries, and had more amazing experiences with Servas hosts.

I rejoiced with him as he planned a multi-month, multi-country adventure. Lois had not been well, but he felt confident that they could manage it. I'll never forget how radiant they both were after they returned.

I am so grateful that our paths crossed. To me, he was a gentle, giant mentor – both in Servas and in life. I miss him.

Sara Jordan



Bert Remembered by Friends

When I retired from the Foreign Service in 1991, I was invited to join a group of retired colleagues for lunch once a month. Bert and Lois were among the first to welcome me into their group. They were always engaging with something important to say about what was going on in the world. Although Bert did not have a career in foreign affairs, his interest in the time he and Lois spent abroad was always apparent in our conversations.

Over the years we were colleagues, Bert often invited me to attend services at the synagogue where he and Lois worshipped, and whenever I could, I did. I always found the spirit of community and friendship among the worshippers rewarding. In the 1990s my niece converted to Judaism and was married at the Jewish Cultural Center. I represented her deceased father in the ceremonies and the festivities, and Bert was kind enough to orient me, a gentile, on what to expect in the three-day celebration.

And so I say with John Donne regarding the death of a friend, "Therefore, send not to know / For whom the bell tolls / It tolls for thee." Indeed, we are poorer for Bert's passing, but richer for having known him.

Vance Pace



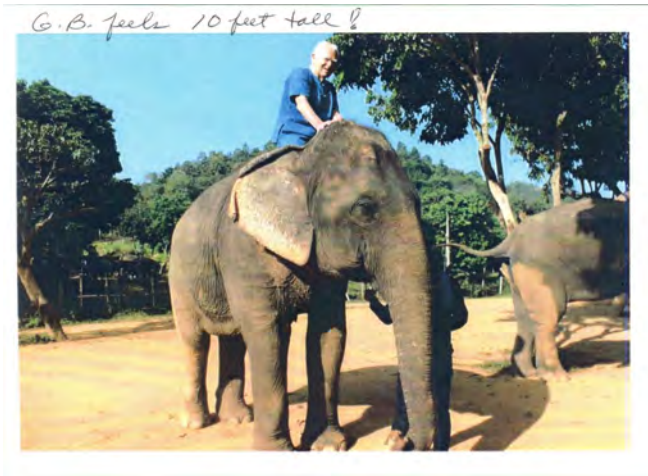
Bert Remembered by Friends

I met Bert and Lois at an Interfaith Marriage Encounter event. They later came to be good friends. I called Bert my husband Alan's "Godfather." It seemed any time Alan was struggling, amazingly Bert would show up at our doorstep! Tragically, Alan was killed in an auto accident.

Bert was instrumental in getting my second husband, Doug Ingraham, and me to join SERVAS. Following our first wonderful experience in Finland, we have had many other fine experiences and hosted numerous guests in our home. The people we have hosted and stayed with have been very important in our lives.

Bert was a great listener and I will always remember and appreciate what he has done for me, my family and the world!

Margret Boes-Ingraham





Bert Remembered by Friends



Bert, Lois, Judith with their pet Hugo at Crater Lake,
Oregon 1976



Bert Remembered by Friends

Neshama



When I purchased my KIA Soul in December of 2010, it didn't take long to realize I found a way to honor my dear friend Bert. As those Jews who follow the laws of kashrut cannot eat a meal without being reminded that they are Jewish, every time I take a drive, I am reminded of Bert, and how my life was forever enriched the evening he pulled me aside, and introduced me to the world of his and Jathan's brainchild. Neshama II began soon thereafter, setting the stage for Neshama's III & IV to follow in the years to come. Tikkun Olam took on an entirely new significance. Bert taught me that acts of kindness involved surrounding myself with a diverse group of men, seeking to repair the world by taking stock of our world first. I always knew that Bert didn't just talk the talk, but walked the walk. From the very first Neshama II meeting at his home, and every meeting subsequently, his actions showed me what's possible if I walk the walk on the path he started.

David Asman



Bert Remembered by Friends

We met Bert and Lois Spiegel at Kol Ami shortly after moving to Salt Lake City. Bert had a nose for newcomers and it didn't take him long to engage us in a dialogue. Bert and Lois became part of our 'Salt Lake' family, always ready to provide support and assistance. In the absence of relatives living nearby, Bert and Lois became immediate surrogate grandparents. When my parents were delayed in arriving to SLC to take care of our kids while we moved my mother-in-law from California, Bert and Lois stepped in. They moved to our house for several days to take charge until my parents arrived. I'm sure that Bert wasn't expecting to have to change diapers in his retirement (actually, I think he delegated that to Lois). Our kids adored and bonded with Bert and Lois and were always happy to see them.

When Bert and Jathan Janove started the first Neshama group to foster more interaction and bonding among Jewish men in the community, Bert decided that I was a prime candidate. Although I wasn't sure that I fit the Jewish-enough criteria, Bert convinced me otherwise. He wanted to get a group of men together that he thought would be compatible but diverse enough to be interesting. So he put some pressure on early members, but he always respected the decision of every individual. And he wasn't offended or upset if Neshama didn't meet the needs of everyone and some people left the group. That typically brought the opportunity for Bert to recruit a new member who could potentially make new and different contributions to the group. The Neshama model flourished and more groups were created to meet the needs of the men in the Salt Lake community. Bert remained an active member until his death, and he was upset when he became ill and couldn't attend meetings. During our visits when he was sick, he always wanted to know what was going on and how the Neshama group was doing. His commitment to community is a legacy that has made an enduring impact and will continue to inspire.

Jim Gebhardt



Bert Remembered by Friends

Some people collect stamps or art. Bert collected people. Bert looked at you with a twinkle in his eyes and a connoisseur's feel for quality. To be judged worthy by Bert meant that you had some intrinsic value as a person. He could see past the dings, dents, and scratches on a person's exterior and appreciate the inner beauty. Like any good collector, once he set his sights on me, he pursued me until I was part of his collection.

I never wanted to be part of Neshama. I am actively opposed to joining groups. I was busy at work and raising two daughters. When Bert approached me, I was wary and inclined to refuse. I barely knew Bert at the time. We had met a few times at Kol Ami and chatted briefly. When I asked him why he thought I would fit in he told me that he had talked with my wife and children and that I must be okay since they liked me! I've now been a member of Neshama for several years.

That was Bert. He was all about creating community. He loved people, he loved life, and he shared his love with others. He listened more than he talked although he was wiser than most. His spirit and his example live on in the people he brought together. I am a better person for having known him. I am fortunate that he liked my wife and children and chose to include me in his community.

Ed Ganellen



Bert Remembered by Friends

In March 2001, a group of guys biked the White Rim trail in Canyonlands. Bert assumed the role of “chuck wagon” driver and played it very well – driving my Chevy Blazer for 100 miles of sometimes tough 4-wheeling road. At the end, Bert mentioned he had forgotten how much fun it was to be among a group of men. He told me about his idea of a men’s club – the future Neshama group.

I recall attending the meeting to discuss the formation of a men’s group at Jathan Janove’s home. Jathan talked about the idea of a men’s group along the lines of a Junto (Benjamin Franklin’s Junto was a club whose purpose was to debate questions of morals, politics, and natural philosophy.). Bert was interested in the “Neshama” approach – “the bearing of the soul.” As Neshama got off the ground, I think we embraced both concepts. Our sessions were often discussions of ethics, politics and social issues, with a Jewish bent. But sometimes we discussed more personal issues of a “Neshama” nature.

Bert leaves behind wonderful legacies to family and friends. It is a tremendous tribute to Bert that the Neshama groups continue and prosper.

Jim Schallheim



Bert Remembered by Friends

Being a member of Neshama here in Portland, Oregon has been a great experience for me, particularly in my personal life. I have made good friends with most everyone who has been or continues to be in this group of bright, thoughtful, and caring men. Although I never knew Bert and have only learned of him through Jathan, I believe he would have been a good friend of mine, too. That is a testament to the power of the social and Jewish connections that Neshama has provided me. With little formal organization, it operates on trust, kinship, and the strength of relationships created spending time together. For that reason I can say that a member of Neshama, whether in Portland, Salt Lake, or Israel, shares a common bond with me. So Bert, as a fellow “Neshamite,” I salute you. Rest in peace.

Michael Volk

Malcom Gladwell in his book “ The Tipping Point” recognized the power of connectors. People who by their personality and choices in life move people and ideas. Bert Spiegel was and will always be a connector. By his demeanor and purpose, he connected with everyone in our community. He did not need a role or title to bolster his presence, or ability to connect with people and move them to new places.

Before our arrival to this town, he and others had formed the Neshama group. Those meetings had become a force to connect the present to the soul we often miss. Bert would let the men talk at will, moving things along to keep it lively, often questioning, never judging.

In these meetings, the memories of our past experiences were brought to the forefront. We experienced community and connectiveness through the shared interpretations of our past and future. Bert’s presence will continue through the lively discussion of Neshama groups 1-4. Bert is still with us, sitting in a chair or resting on a couch. Bert’s legacy of listening and purpose will always be connected for me with the Soul or Neshama and of our SLC Jewish community.

Bert you are missed but are never far.

Ron Zamir



Bert Remembered by Friends

I think of Bert as a man of few words but immense thoughts. I could see the wheels in his head humming briskly while he listened intently and contemplated just what needed to be said and then quietly, finally said it.

He invited me to join the newly founded Neshama in March, 2001. I have been a member ever since. It was just what I needed. I had never been much of a joiner yet Neshama provided stimulating group discussions which were informative, thought-provoking, and touching, as well as Jewish learning and hearing new perspectives, ironically from a group of guys who have much in common.

I believe Neshama was an outgrowth of Rosh Chodesh to which Lois and my wife Debbie belonged. Women naturally come together often in groups and men need to as well. Bert knew that and made it happen. So many men are thankful. Our endeavor was “an unmasking of souls” as he called it. It brought me in touch with other members’ lives, successes and challenges, forming lifelong friendships in the Jewish community. Neshama has given me the place to describe my love of art and thoughts on mortality, a subject which Bert and I shared in common. Bert kept returning to the topic of ethical wills- a particularly Jewish practice, Tzav’ah.

We are all Bert’s beneficiaries.

Art Sandack



Bert Remembered by Friends

Incredible almost limitless curiosity.

A careful, attentive listener who valued each person and his story.

A watchful eye for the newcomer and a warm, welcoming hand extended in greeting.

An ever present, attentive caller on those in distress or need.

A humble man, quick to praise the talents and accomplishments of others.

A friend in deed who added new friends wherever he went and cultivated them like the fruit bearing trees he kept adding to his beautiful and fertile garden.

The man who helped conceive and who nurtured Neshama, a fraternal cohort of Jewish men that gather regularly to share, support, learn, discuss, and belong. An idea that self replicated with three groups springing up in SLC, one in Portland, and one in Israel. A fitting legacy.

An exemplary real and virtual father, brother, husband, friend and mentor.

A righteous man.

Jay Jacobson



Bert Remembered by Friends

I miss Bert dearly, and yet I'm at peace with his passing because the Bert I knew was always at peace. Bert was interested in my kids, Aaron and Abby. He was interested in my work, both professionally and within the Jewish community. He was interested in Robyn along with many other Neshama wives, as he long believed that the best litmus test for potential members was whether one's wife thought he would value it.

A memory I cherish is Bert using me as his "Neshama consultant." He would invite me to "business" lunches when he wanted to start a new Neshama group. "What do you think of so and so? How might these two people get along? Should we start a younger group?"

It wasn't unusual for him to call me, not say "hi", but jump right in to say "What do you think about 'John Doe' for Neshama? I just met him at synagogue today, he's new in town, which group do you think would be best for him?"

Even while he was in rehab, his daughter Sarina called saying that Bert wanted me to visit. When I walked in that evening the first words out of his mouth were, "I have someone you need to call for Neshama."

Jim Isaacson



Bert Remembered by Friends

Zest for Life

Bert and Lois were among the first people we got to know in Salt Lake, and they have been a part of our lives ever since.

Bert always loved travel stories whether they were his or others', especially when it involved human interaction such as our Servas experiences. There were not many places that he did not know or was unable to offer advice on.

Talking among my family members, we realized how much influence Bert had on each one of us and on our family as a whole. We all valued his advice and wisdom on everything from gardening, planting trees, kids' activities, travel, finding handymen, building shelves and pretty much anything else that we were thinking of.

Bert took our kids fishing, talked to them about their Bar Mitzvahs, hobbies, and school. He basically stepped in for grandparenting when the biological grandparents were far away. One memory that they remember fondly is how he asked the kids to cut the lawn at his house. He gave Noga and Yotam a pair of scissors, and for quite some time, they were busy mowing the lawn with precision scissoring. They think about it now and think that it was a hilarious and perfect way to keep them busy and out of trouble.

Maya had a special connection to Bert, and we will always remember how she chose to play her guitar for him while we celebrated his birthday at the rehab facility last November.

Other memories bring smiles and tears to our eyes. Like the special connection that Bert had to my late father, Itamar. While visiting my parents in Raanana, my father gave Bert a special pillow for preventing back strain while working on the computer. Bert often brought this story up, with his eyes shining in excitement when he spoke of this amazing ergonomic invention.



Bert Remembered by Friends

We now have a special Japanese maple tree that is growing in our yard that was given to us by Bert. Last spring we were at Costco, surrounded by a beautiful shipment of trees. We ended up buying some per Bert's advice, and later Bert came to buy more. A total stranger saw him in the parking lot trying to load those trees into his ancient automobile, and offered to take them to Bert's home in his truck. My husband Ehud helped him plant the trees, and we were blessed with another tree, compliments of Bert.

Bert treated people like tree saplings, making sure that they are well-rooted and nourished, helping them take their first steps, wherever these were taken, then enjoying watching them grow and develop. Without criticism, and always with loving input, he made so much difference in our lives. He is deeply missed, but his wisdom and nourishment will continue to be with us wherever we may be.

Orly Ardon

It was always those distinctive brows that beckoned us. But it was the kind, clear blue eyes, warm smile, and gentle voice that engaged us. Bert was like a magnet. Friends gravitated toward him. He was at ease with himself and put others around him at ease. He was an unusually good listener, expressing interest in the feelings, thoughts, and ideas of others. Probably without realizing it, he improved our listening skills! Whenever he spoke his very presence encouraged attention. We knew we were going to be hearing something enlightening. Bert was a joy. A great man.

Freida & Harvey Sweitzer



Bert Remembered by Friends

We were very excited to meet David's parents last summer when they came to Seattle to visit him as part of a planned trip. Bert had a twinkle in his eye as we discussed gardening and was enjoying the trip and precious time with his son. The day was beautiful and we enjoyed many fine conversations over iced tea and lunch on our patio. We feel blessed and honored to have met this man who was part of the team that brought up such an intelligent and caring son. You could really see where David gets his humanity and curiosity and we admired Bert's zest for life. We are sorry about his passing but so gratified that we got to spend quality time with him while he was still healthy and raring to go.

Bonnie and Louis Grant



Clockwise from Center: Bert, Lois, Sarina, Judith,
Annaelle, Ma'ayan, and Kathy

Aviva and Tzvika's wedding, June 21, 2016



Bert Remembered by Friends

Doer

Bert was a connector, someone completely committed to bringing people together. Particularly inspiring and infectious was his passion for the continuance and propagation of Judaism and our Jewish community. Material things did not matter to him, he was a spiritual man, connected to his faith and the larger forces that make the world turn. He deeply and sincerely cared for all people, trying to help them in whatever way he could. He opened his home to anyone who needed a meal and a place to stay. He truly was an inspiration, someone that I will always remember prodding me to reach out and help others. If we all gave to each other the way Bert did, the world would clearly be a better place.

Ira Field



Bert Remembered by Friends

Bert's quiet dignity and decency, coupled with his fellowship to many Jewish men in our community, had a profound influence on my life. In particular, his role in creating and nurturing our Neshama groups benefited me greatly. In his gentle way, he got me to care and to contribute more to Neshama than I had planned. Two examples come to mind.

After I had been a member of Neshama for some time, he sought me out and suggested that I take a turn to be a facilitator of our group. This was something I was reluctant to do, but no one could say 'no' to Bert! While I served in the facilitator role, he and I would constantly talk about what would make our group stronger and more meaningful.

There was another time, after Rabbi Swartzman presented to our group, that we decided we would try to raise money from our Neshama groups to enhance educational programs for our religious school. Once again, it was Bert inviting the Rabbi and other Neshama facilitators to work together to achieve this important objective. I helped coordinate our Neshama contributions, and we made a sizable donation to the religious school.

These examples are typical of Bert. You know he had the purest motives and that he cared about you. It was so easy to follow him. I am very grateful that I had him in my life.

Mike Zuhl



Bert Remembered by Friends

We enjoyed over 20 years of a close relationship with Bert and Lois. It brings me joy just to picture his smiling face at our Shabbos dinner table.

They weren't happy when we told them that we decided to move from Salt Lake City to Portland and had put our house on the market. Nevertheless, Bert quickly went into helping mode. He surveyed our house and yard and determined that our yard lacked curbside appeal. So he spent a day with our son Nathaniel, shopping and planting a variety of colorful flowers to attract prospective buyers. In both word and deed, Bert was the essence of kindness.

Marjorie Janove

I first met Bert at Kol Ami in late 1979 or early 1980. I remember a smiling figure, with massive eyebrows and curious, mischievous eyes, wanting to know who I was and what was I up to. In 1982, after the birth of our first child, we met again at Kol Ami. Bert asked about my current activities. I said I was starting a statewide oral history and photo-documentary project, focused on senior citizens in ethnic and minority communities.

Four years later, to celebrate the Centennial of the Statue of Liberty, Utah's Governor invited us to present project photos in the Capitol rotunda. After Bert visited the display, he placed a letter in the *Salt Lake Tribune's* Public Forum titled, "Dream Fulfilled." It said: "All of us have dreams, but not all of us are fortunate enough in having our dreams realized. Leslie Kelen, director of the Oral History Institute, is one of those lucky people."

In the letter, Bert celebrated the work of our team. He paid attention and responded. Bert was remarkably attentive, engaged, and curious. His attention to me provided a source of strength and support. Dear friend, dear brother, I didn't thank you enough for this gift!

Leslie Kelen



Bert Remembered by Friends

When I think of Bert, I think of vibrancy, generosity, empathy, curiosity and engagement. He made the most he could out of every waking minute. He got to the heart of things; he dismissed nothing. He could find something valuable and appealing in almost anything.

For generosity, few compare. When I arrived in Utah, he was the head of the synagogue's Mitzvah Committee, extraordinarily eager to do as much as he could for anyone with whom he came into contact. He lived to be helpful.

His empathy – even for people it was not always easy to love – was legendary. I have known him on many occasions to go wildly out of his way for people who were suffering.

Bert was perpetually curious and engaged, paying close and careful attention to whatever came his way. Whenever I gave a D'var Torah at the synagogue, almost invariably, Bert would come up to me after services, text in hand, with a burning question.

Bert took my "Bible as Literature" course at the university *twice*. One afternoon, he approached me after class, hands clasping the Bible he used, with all kinds of scribbles in the margins. "I have my notes from the last time you taught this part of the Bible," he told me. "You said completely different things."

As a teacher, I spectacularly benefited from Bert's extraordinary combination of qualities: the wherewithal, in the first place, to keep track — at four or so years' remove — of what had gone on in my classroom and the great kindness to let me know about it: that rare conjunction of vibrancy, generosity, empathy, curiosity and engagement.

Jackie Osherow



Bert Remembered by Friends

Whenever I think of Bert Spiegel, I picture this diminutive, gentle, always smiling, always positive Jewish role model. Bert was always trying to find that activity that would bring Jews together for both a spiritual and a social experience.

The “Canyon Shabbat” experience was conceived by a small group of Jews in Salt Lake, but Bert was the one that brought focus to this activity and left everyone feeling good about themselves while creating a large extended Jewish family. Bert insisted on having everyone bring Shabbat in with the traditional blessings that he provided in Hebrew, transliteration and translation. He helped all of us with the proper way to do the Friday night blessings over candles, wine, challah as well as those for our spouses and children. We blessed each other but it was Bert that blessed us all with his vision and Chesed, his loving kindness, regardless of background, class or social standing. Bert, you will be missed but never forgotten. May your memory be for a blessing.

Rabbi Scott Kramer



Reading with Aviva



Jewish Identity

Being Jewish for me is like having skin. It is in my blood, my heart, my mind. It is part of who I am.

I remember meeting my father's father, Itzik Moshe Spiegel, when I was eight, around 1936. My father and his brothers brought him to the United States. However, he became upset with his sons for not living a traditional Jewish life. We didn't have a synagogue in Hastings. My father, in order to make a living, kept the store open on Saturdays. Neither he nor his brothers prayed three times a day or observed Shabbat.

So my grandfather left and returned to Czechoslovakia. He died before the outbreak of WWII but many members of the Spiegel family perished in concentration camps.

My mother's parents came to live with us soon after my grandfather left and continued to live a Jewish life as much as possible. My maternal grandfather prayed a lot and only spoke Yiddish.

Our Jewish community was small. We rented a room in the local firehouse for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. A student from the seminary came twice a week to teach at our religious school. My parents had me go to Yonkers, the next village, to attend the Jewish Community Center.

My Bar Mitzvah took place at a Thursday morning minyan at a synagogue in Yonkers.

My Jewish education was very limited. I remember long Passover Seders and using Maxwell House Coffee haggadot.

Our home was the only kosher home. When the rabbi would come for the High Holidays, he stayed in our apartment.

When WWII was over, more Jews moved to Hastings from New York. They helped start a conservative synagogue in the next



Bert's Words

village, Dobbs Ferry. My parents and uncle were founding members.

Two of our relatives, a brother and a sister, came to our town from Czechoslovakia as Holocaust survivors. The brother, Arnold, lived with us and shared a bedroom with me. We became close friends. Although he created a new life for himself, the loss of his parents and his lost life in Europe never left him.

When our daughter said she wanted to live in Israel, it felt like a circle was closing.

I grew up thinking that one of the great gifts my parents bestowed on me was coming to the U.S. and my having been born here. And now my daughter Sarina wanted to go back to where we came from. She said her life would be more meaningful living in Israel. And now I have four Israeli Jewish grandchildren.

Our other daughter Judith is also living an Orthodox Jewish life in Massachusetts. Her sons wear black hats and go to Yeshiva.

I guess you can say we have an interfaith family. Lois and I are Reform Jews. Judith and her husband are strict Orthodox. Sarina and her husband liberal Orthodox. And our son David is an agnostic Jew.

Lois and I attended the bat mitzvah of our friends the Lapin's granddaughter at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale New York. It was a women's Sunday service led by a female Orthodox rabbi — the only one so far in the Orthodox movement. The service was accompanied by a klezmer musical group. It was one of the most exciting, unique, lively and wonderful bar or bat mitzvahs I have ever been part of.

Being a Jew keeps on changing for me. I am proud to have Israeli grandchildren and to be part of their lives. My Boston grandchildren fill me with pride as well. I feel that in some small way I have contributed to their being where they are today. I also feel that I am a small part of the history of all Jews everywhere and that maybe I have made a small contribution there as well.



Bert's Words

I came across Dad's Ethical Will dated 8/4/13, written for a Neshama 3 meeting.

Ethical Will for my children: Judith, Sarina, David

As I write this, I am sitting in our garden, looking at the oak and maple leaves moving in the wind, watching the finches, sparrows and hummingbirds eating at the feeders. The sky is blue, the air warm and a cool breeze is blowing. This is my sanctuary, a place of peace and quiet. Part of the pleasure I feel sitting here is knowing that I dug every hole, selected each tree and plant, and planted each one myself. I didn't realize it at the time, but in creating this living garden I expressed myself in each plant. It gives me great pleasure to share it with my friends. Children seem to enjoy it the most. The first thing they notice are the hanging pieces of driftwood and they touch them and watch them move. Whenever and wherever we travel, I always bring home a new piece to add to help remind me where we were.

I hope that I have passed on to all of you my love of nature and the pleasure I receive when I place my hands in the warm earth. The peace I feel when we have hiked and camped in the mountains and forests when you were young. And the memories that return when we do the same with your children. Putting up a tent and hiking with them is reliving the same memories I have of when we did it with each of you so many years ago.

Moving to Utah 34 years ago was one of the best things mom and I ever did, both for us and for you. It was like adding a new and exciting chapter to our lives in a book that is not yet complete.

My parents encouraged me to follow my own path in life and I have been eternally grateful for that. I have



Bert's Words

encouraged and supported each of you to do the same. Each of you is unique and your lives and paths you have selected are very different. I respect your differences and understand your choices and support them. Two of you have become Orthodox Jews and I am proud of you and your families. You are outstanding examples of loving and caring mothers. I sometimes wonder if I could have been a better father as you were growing up. Actually, I know I could have been. Working and raising a family at the same time is a great challenge. I am not making excuses, but I can honestly say that I did the best I could. When I watch both of you with your children, I know also that you are doing your very best and it makes me extremely proud.

I accept David's choice as well to be a spiritual person if not in an organized religion and respect him for it. I had no choice in having a Bar Mitzvah and decided that David would make his own decision and he chose not to.

You will always be my children and I will always be your father. I never anticipated what the word "father" entailed and was surprised how each of your births changed me. Mom would keep you up late so that when I came home from work I could play with you. I wanted to have 12 children but after the birth of David, Mom said, "Enough already!"

Being a father is a role I have enjoyed. Being a grandfather is even better, but in a different way. Doing things with your kids brings back all the memories of doing the same things with you. It's like reliving the past. I guess one of the blessings of life is the unexpected. Every day, every sunrise, every sunset is an adventure. One Life, well lived, is enough. Thank you for helping me realize this.

My wish for the three of you is to continue being friends as well as sisters and brother. Because each of you live far apart it may be difficult to stay connected, but that doesn't



Bert's Words

mean you shouldn't find a way to overcome this. One way to make this happen is for your children to spend time with your sister's children. While Aviva is in Israel would be a great opportunity for her to spend time with Ma'ayan, Annaelle, and Racheli. You should make your best effort to accomplish this.

I am very happy that all have continued to visit us in Salt Lake. It is very important for us to spend time together at this stage in our lives when we realize our time is limited. That's why writing an ethical will is such an important idea. It gives me a chance to reflect on what is most meaningful to me and let you know how much you mean to me and how much I love you.

This is not the last sentence. I will continue to add to this again.





Bert 's Words

Life Lessons

In September 1997, Bert and Lois joined kids and grandkids for a weeklong family reunion. Bert was so inspired by the event that he wrote a long description. It closes as follows:

One last thought.

After 36 years of marriage and 68 years of living, these are a few of the things I've learned.

- Live in the present, don't dwell on the past or worry about the future.
- Savor each pleasure – slowly, before you swallow.
- Follow your own bliss – no one else's.
- You don't have to be perfect – no one else is.
- Do the best you can – that's all anyone expects.
- Clean up your own mess.
- Trust your wife – she's always right.
- Do what you're told – it will save time.
- You have only one life – you're not practicing.
- Spend some time alone each day and listen to the silence.



Bert's Joy



Bert and Jathan

“Bert never enjoyed my company more than when he put me to work”



Bert's two loves—Lois and his Austin Healey