

The Star

SPY ROCK D'VAR

By Shlomo Honig '18



Sunrise from Spy Rock — Photo by Shlomo Honig '18

Last weekend, I was at the top of Spy Rock watching the sunrise with a group of friends. I was struck by the incredible beauty of the nature surrounding me—the sun rising over the distant mountains, the sound of birds singing, the incredible palette of fall colors in the leaves, and the nearby pond full of swimming tadpoles. All of the harmonious sounds and breathtaking sights fit together, reflecting the perfection of G-d's design. Then there was us. I couldn't help but think to myself: Why would G-d introduce such flawed, sometimes destructive, creatures such as ourselves into an otherwise pristine world?

Fast forward a week. It's Yom Kippur and we only have a few more hours to put in a good word with G-d. On Yom Kippur, we pray for our fates: for strength and bravery, for guidance and success, for friendship and family. But before we pray for any of these things, step one is to pray for life, which, for me, is by far the scariest part of Yom Kippur. There is no secret formula for us to definitively seal our own fates. We are at the whim of G-d, and the only power we flawed

creatures have comes in the form of Tefillah, Tzedakah, and Teshuvah. That's a lot of pressure, I know.

On Yom Kippur, we are forced to retrieve all of our mistakes and shortcomings from the past year, stand before G-d with this bundle of flaws in our arms, and somehow muster the courage to ask G-d to inscribe us in the book of life. If we think about the weight of this bundle, we inevitably feel unworthy of another year. But feeling bad about ourselves and our past actions should absolutely not be our focus today. Yom Kippur is a time for reflection above all else. On Yom Kippur, we get to lay down our bundle of flaws before G-d and go through each item, one by one. We reflect on how we plan to improve. We realize the things we could have done better, and we hopefully use this reflection to not make the same mistake again. Making mistakes is as natural a part of life as eating, breathing or sleeping—we can't live without them. Instead of simply apologizing for our mistakes, on Yom Kippur, we must strive to reflect on how we can do better. And when our mindful decisions inform

meaningful actions, we make the world a better place. In today's world, leaders who reflect on their mistakes and correct their actions accordingly have never been more needed.

As for the question I asked myself when I was standing on the top of that mountain, "why would G-d introduce such flawed, sometimes destructive, creatures such as ourselves into an otherwise pristine world?" To be honest, I don't think I'll ever have that answer, but my best guess is that G-d sees our capacity for improvement, not the mistakes we have made.

Yom Kippur reminds us that each day and each year are opportunities to right the wrongs we see in our homes, in our communities, and in the world. I challenge each of us to consider our bundles of flaws as opportunities, not burdens, because at the end of the day we're not really asking for another year of life—we're asking for another year of opportunity.

Shabbat Shalom, Shanah Tovah, and G'mar Chatima Tovah

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Tachlis and Torah

This past July, I spent a week at Hillel International's New Professionals Institute. Held in St. Louis on the campus of Washington University, Institute was a fully immersive crash course in the Hillel movement, and an opportunity to meet colleagues from around the world. From that week of networking, inspiration, text study, skill building and worship services of all kinds, two simple words stand out – tachlis and torah.

“What kind of Hillel director didn't know the word ‘torah’ ?!” you're asking. “And why isn't she capitalizing it?” you grammar sticklers are now demanding. I'll explain! But first, tachlis.

Tachlis

Every morning, all of the new Hillel directors gathered in a conference room, where one of the Institute organizers invariably said something along the lines of, “You all have a great day ahead of you, but first we need to take care of some tachlis.” We then heard a rundown of schedule changes, room reassignments, and last-minute reminders before heading off for a day of learning. I'd never heard that excellent Yiddish word before, but the meaning was immediately evident—tachlis means details, logistics, the nitty-gritty, or even “brass tacks.”

The life of a Hillel director is full of tachlis, and mine is no different. On any given day I'm doing things like reconciling the credit card statement, working with caterers to plan events, or trying to persuade the scanner to put all of my images in one PDF. I take a singular satisfaction in knowing that I've handily dispatched a day's worth of tachlis, but I think I'm in the minority for actually enjoying such tasks.

We all know that mastering the tachlis is the foundation of success in whatever we do. What I didn't know—and perhaps what you don't, either—is that involvement with Hillel offers students a wealth of opportunities to work on mastering tachlis. It isn't glamorous, but there is a quiet confidence that I can see growing in our student leaders this year as they return again and again to tachlis. You can see a new confidence and calm in our Shabbat chair, Isaac Rosenthal, after a semester of doggedly planning Shabbat dinner, week in and week out. He's learned just how much advanced planning various events require (and how to forestall my “I'm not worrying, but...” texts!) Then there's Alex Meilech, our executive board vice president, who more or less single-handedly planned and executed every aspect of our first ever Shabbaton (Shabbat retreat). Her work included finding the perfect AirBnB farm, crafting just the right logo and slogan for the event t-shirt, and recruiting friends to help fill the trip with fun, meaningful content. As much as students like Alex and Isaac will benefit from knowing how to plan and execute events, we know that mastering the process—the tachlis—is what will truly be of use in their lives beyond W&L Hillel. It is a joy to watch students grow in this way every day.

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Torah

President and CEO of Hillel International Eric Fingerhut spoke to our cohort of new directors a handful of times during Institute, and each time he did, he used the word torah in a way I'd never heard it used before. Introducing our plenary speaker, Yavilah McCoy, Eric said we were in for a treat as we were about to hear "the torah of Yavilah." To motivate discussion after a session on Israel, he said, "C'mon, give us some of your torah," and he thanked the presenter for sharing, "her torah" with us. We all know the Torah, but torah, used as Eric uses the term, means something closer to truth, wisdom or learning. Creating opportunities for our students to discover and develop their own torah is the very heart of W&L Hillel.

Our campus has been chosen as one of eight in the Southeast to work with an Israel Education Director to grow our educational programming about Israel over the next year and a half. I've met with many student leaders as we prepare to begin that work, and it is exciting to see many of them brought to the bleeding edge of their comfort zones and knowledge bases concerning Israel. Growth is happening, and as I see them engage and deeply think about Israel, their torah grows. Just like every other Jewish community, we hold a plurality of opinions and complex relationships with Israel — and a wide range of knowledge, too — and I am excited that W&L Hillel will be offering many opportunities this spring for students to explore and develop their own Israel torah.

Early in the year, our Student Executive Board president, Shlomo Honig, rose to a challenge I put before him—offer a d'var torah at one of the High Holiday services. You'll find Shlomo's moving

words elsewhere in this issue, and I trust you'll agree that they demonstrate his strength as both an inspirational leader and a gentle-hearted spiritual seeker. Virginia Military Institute Cadet Aaron Kubat accepted a different sort of challenge when he participated in the Jewish Warriors Weekend, and his words reflect his incredibly strong commitment to his faith and a life of service. Hailey



Maggie Shapiro Haskett poses for her official picture on the Colonnade.

Glick, one of the most dedicated and energetic people I've ever met, chose yet another sort of challenge when she got involved with Hillel and found herself motivated to expand and deepen her Jewish practice. As you read their articles, I hope you'll be as enriched and inspired by their wisdom—their words of torah—as I have been.

One final story: As I'm sure you all know, Washington and Lee has begun a rigorous, thoughtful and inclusive examination of our institution's history and legacy. Conversations are happening at every level and in all corners of the community, and we can all be proud

of the role Hillel student leaders are playing. Both Shlomo and Alex have answered a call to student leaders to lead conversations with their peers. Their immediate willingness to not only join, but lead, this important effort is testament to their torah. Both are deeply committed to W&L, and also to their Judaism as expressed in values like tikkun olam (repair of the world) and gimilut chessed (loving kindness). Time and again, I am impressed by the careful, balanced thinking each of them brings to the table, and the generosity of spirit and time that they demonstrate by leading these critical conversations on top of all their other many commitments. You can read Alex's reflections on her work on this important project, and I hope you will appreciate learning a little bit of her torah, no matter how you might feel about the weighty questions facing our university community.

As the semester winds down and I finally have a chance to reflect on my new role in this community, the moments that stand out are those in which our students learned, stretched and triumphed. Though it takes many forms, at the core of our success at W&L Hillel are tachlis and torah. I hope you'll join me in celebrating our students' accomplishments and opening your hearts to the torah shared in these pages. There is so much to be proud of.

Please feel welcome to visit the Hillel House anytime you are on campus, and know that I'm always happy to hear from you. Come, share your torah with us!

B'vracha, With Blessings,
Maggie

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Shlomo Honig '18

The 2017-2018 academic year has gotten off to a great start thanks to our student board, community members and, of course, Maggie! While the first semester has definitely flown by, we've had some great times at Hillel and created lasting memories. Some of our highlights include Roanoke Shabbat, community Shabbats, High Holidays with Rabbi Evan, and s'mores and stargazing in the sukkah. I'm especially excited to see what 2018 will bring—keep on the lookout for announcements and newsletters, as there will be some incredible speakers and events that you certainly won't want to miss!

This year's Hillel student board is, to my knowledge, our largest ever, and it has been a joy getting to know each and every person: Becca Telese '20 (holidays chair), Isaac Rosenthal '19 (Shabbat chair); Allie



Hillel Student Executive Board President Shlomo Honig '18 (center), greets students at the Student Activities Fair. Vice President Alex Meilech (right) looks on.

Lefkowitz '20 (The Star chair), Hailey Glick '19 (social action chair), Lee Bernstein '20 (communications chair), Stephen Reibach '18 (VMI chair), Jeremy Abcug '19 (Israel chair); Genna Feirson '20 (engagement chair), Balen Essak '20

(speakers chair), Rachel Reibach '18 (treasurer), and Alex Meilech '18 (vice president). Additionally, we recently welcomed two first-year liaisons to the student board: Jenna Marvet '21 and Hannah Reed '21. The students on the board have been beyond incredible, stepping up to the plate time and time again, and exceeding any and all expectations. They find meaning and enjoyment in the "work" they do for their positions, and they serve as outstanding representatives of what Hillel embodies, both on campus and in the community. I am humbled to be a part of Hillel, and I look forward to continuing to facilitate an inclusive, welcoming environment for students of all faiths who want to learn more about and actively engage with Jewish culture.

TIKKUN OLAM

By Jeremy Abcug '19

There are few better feelings in the world than the warm fuzzies you get after being there for someone in need of help. Whether it be as little as holding the door or something a bit grander, it's truly amazing how a simple act of kindness can brighten the day of both the person in need and even yourself! It seems as if kindness, good moods and a simple smile sometimes can be more contagious than the flu.

Every few weeks this fall, Washington and Lee Hillel students were lucky enough to get to experience and share in the happiness of doing tikkun olam (the Jewish value of "repairing the world") by helping local schoolchildren in need. Thanks to the incredible generosity of members of the Lexington/Rockbridge County Jewish community, we've been able to purchase gifts for at least one child at every elementary school in the county, including cute clothes, winter necessities and educational books (don't worry, we throw in some fun stuff, too!).

Working closely with local schools, Washington and Lee Hillel receives profiles of those students in need of some extra

help, including clothes sizes, color preferences, and even the occasional favorite TV show. Then we get to do the rest!

After a very late-night Walmart run, Hailey Glick '19 (Hillel Social Action Chair and fantastic human being) and I brought our goodies to Hillel House and sorted them into gift bags specific to each child. We tucked little notes into each bag to make sure each kid knows just how much we care and enjoy

shopping for them. The bags were then dropped off at each school, and the school principals made deliveries to the children.

I could go on and on about how wonderful this program is for both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities in Lexington and Rockbridge County. More than anything, I'm incredibly proud that Washington and Lee Hillel

is able to give back in such a way. I'm beyond grateful that I get to be involved in the process. The joy that these children have brought me has left a lasting impact that will stay with me forever, and I can't wait to continue helping any way I can for the last couple years I have at W&L.

REPAIRING THE WORLD

A VERY IMPORTANT PROFESSOR DINNER

By Balen Essak '20

October 25, 2017 was a normal night at Washington and Lee University— or so you thought. So why was this night different from all other nights, you ask? The answer is simple. On this night, Hillel took Professor Wesley O'Dell and his wife, Natalie, out to dinner at TAPS, a local restaurant. The two guests of honor were joined by 10 individuals, all eager to garner wisdom from the esteemed professor.



Students listen intently as Professor O'Dell tells a story over dinner at TAPS.

Professor O'Dell graduated from W&L in 2009 as a triple major in politics, classics and history. I am confident that he would have quadruple majored if W&L offered a Jewish studies major, but I can't say for certain. Professor O'Dell is now a visiting professor in the Politics Department. Natalie O'Dell also graduated from W&L and met her husband while they were students. I guess true love does exist. Anyways, back to the dinner.

Balen, our incredibly talented speakers chair, made a 5:45 p.m. reservation for 12 people at TAPS. That means that people should have shown up at 5:45 p.m. Did they? No, no they did not. Only five people, including the O'Dells, were on time. It wasn't even a minyan. Luckily for the laggards, TAPS was nowhere near ready for our "massive" group. Finally, at around 5:55 p.m., our lovely server led us into the back room to be seated.

ROANOKE SHABBAT

By Alex Meilech '18

We had the pleasure of going to Temple Beth Israel for their annual Hillel Shabbat again this October. Every year, Temple Beth Israel, a Conservative congregation in Roanoke, hosts colleges from throughout Southwest Virginia: W&L, VMI, Virginia Tech, Radford, Roanoke College and Sweet Briar. It's a great chance to meet Jewish students in the area. There was a beautiful Kabbalat Shabbat service. I enjoyed singing "Shalom Aleichem" before we ate - my family does as well during Friday night dinners, and it brought back good memories. The food was delicious. I'm impressed that the Beth Israel community signs on to feed a



W&L and VMI Students gather for a picture with Hillel directors Sue Kurtz (VaTech) and Maggie Shapiro Haskett (W&L) at Beth Israel synagogue.

The conversation was immediately lively, and only improved once our valiant leader, Maggie, showed up after Torah study. (Sorry about scheduling the dinner at the same time, that one's on me!) The O'Dells enlightened us about the good old days of W&L with cockroaches in a place called Gilliam? No one at the table knew what those old shmucks were talking about.

The conversation transitioned to a different topic: Natalie's involvement with Hillel. As servers brought the appetizers out, Natalie explained how she became involved in Hillel as a non-Jewish student, something in which Maggie took great interest. Natalie was brought to Hillel by some Jewish friends early in her W&L career and consistently went to Shabbat (or as Professor O'Dell calls it, "Shab-bit") for the rest of her time.

The appetizers and entrees came and went, and, even though they were out of fish and chips (by 6 p.m., mind you!) the food was quite good. TAPS offered a fun atmosphere that allowed for extensive conversation between our students and guests of honor.

In all seriousness, Hillel thanks Professor and Mrs. O'Dell from the bottom of our hearts. We greatly appreciate them taking the time to spend an entire night with us, and we hope to see them around the eCafé in the near future!

homecooked meal to an invasion of college students, and we really appreciate it (especially the noodle kugel! My table agreed that nothing beats a noodle kugel). At dinner, I ended up sitting with a group of freshmen and sophomores from Virginia Tech, and we talked about our Halloween plans, studies and our hometowns. It's a fun change of pace to take a trip off campus, connect with students from other schools, and spend time with the Beth Israel congregation. There isn't a large Jewish community in this part of Virginia, but, as we like to say about our own Hillel, it's small yet mighty. I always enjoy Roanoke Shabbat and feel like they welcome us with open arms.



HENRIETTA'S LATKES

By Jenna Marvet '20

My great-great-grandmother, Henrietta, immigrated to the United States from Frankfurt am Main, Germany, in 1907. She moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with her three kids: August, Alma and Rose, my great-grandmother.

My grandma, Corinne, grew up with Rose and Henrietta. Henrietta only spoke German, and instructed my grandma to only speak in English to her, in hopes that she could learn English, too. Henrietta, always the cook in the house, brought German Jewish recipes with her to the United States. One of her recipes, her delicious, crispy potato latkes,

has been passed down from generation to generation and is still the highlight of our family's Hanukkah dinners.

I have many memories of cooking these latkes with my mother. We have spent hours frying tray after tray together. After we finish cooking our first potato pancake, my mother and I split the hot latke, fresh out of the bubbling oil. After we light the Hanukkah and enjoy the delicious latkes, the house smells like potatoes for a week, but it is worth it. I have had many latkes in my life, but I can assure you these are the best.



GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMA HENRIETTA'S LATKES

Note: Due to how old this recipe is, the directions are somewhat vague and leave some room for interpretation.

Makes 10 Latkes

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 raw baking potatoes, peeled and grated*
- 2 eggs
- 1 onion, grated*
- 1 heaping tablespoon of flour
- Dash of salt
- Dash of pepper
- Canola Oil

*We use a food processor

DIRECTIONS:

1. Beat eggs and add to grated potatoes in large mixing bowl. Mix together.
2. Add onions, salt, pepper and flour to the potato mixture. Mix together.
3. Fill a frying pan with 1-1 ¼ inch canola oil, and heat the oil on high until it sizzles when water drops hit it.
4. Fill a slotted spoon with the potato mixture. Press down on the mixture to drain the water from the potatoes.
5. Place the pancake-sized potato mixture into the hot frying oil.
6. Flip latke with spatula when golden brown.
7. When golden brown on both sides, set the latkes down on paper towel to let them drain and cool.
8. Enjoy!



Jenna Marvet '21 is proud to be the fourth generation to carry on the tradition of making Henrietta's latkes.



Edwin Castellanos Campos '20 introduces Hillel students to the traditional Latino dishes he and other members of the Latino Student Association prepared for our collaborative Shabbat meal in October.

SHABBAS

By Isaac Rosenthal '19

Shabbat has always been an event. Since I can remember, my family would go to my Bubbie's house most Friday nights for dinner, and there are so many funny and interesting tales: the time plastic kitchenware melted into a puddle, when my mom's sweater caught on fire from the Shabbos candles, the general hilarity that would inevitably happen (and when the majority of guests are well into their seventies or older, a lot can happen!). I look back fondly on these memories, but as I do so I also reflect on what I have learned. First, family has been very important to me and always will be. Therefore, I love any time spent with family and friends, as they often make some of my best memories. However, Shabbas also gives me comfort and a sense of home. There is nothing quite like schmoozing for a good three hours, interspersed with some great nosh and eventually dishes in between.

I do miss my family and the celebrations we have for the holidays. Without much thought, I decided to join Hillel to try and get that same feeling from our Jewish community. My current goal is to try and bring my memories to life at our weekly Shabbats. It is a great and easy method to gather up everybody, and eat! We often get catering from a restaurant in town to pair with some homemade desserts and such thrown in, so I even get to learn how to cook! (A huge thanks to Alex and Allie, who more than make up for my extreme lack of cooking background with their help.) Preparing Shabbas meals is an adventure, and it truly offers me a way to express my upbringing.

We also host community Shabbats, which are monthly events to which everyone from the Lexington community is invited. All the other Shabbats have a very quick service with blessings on the candles, wine and bread, but for these monthly community Shabbats we do a full hour-long Kabbalat Shabbat service. I grew up going to shul for the holidays. Our services are a

bit different here, but the community's investment is what makes them great. We will also usually do a potluck after the service, which adds an additional twist as we get to have a very eclectic mix of contributions from the community, all of which are fantastic!

I also plan themed Shabbats. In general, we try to work with the other cultural organizations on campus. During themed Shabbats, we cook and prepare recipes requested by the partner organization. We then host members from both organizations and whoever else is interested in joining us for dinner. The food is delicious, and we get to mingle and meet other awesome people on campus. It is both a convenient and insightful opportunity to get to learn about a wide array of cultures, and experience them in a tasty way.

A last important thing about Shabbas is our attendees themselves. Of course, you can't have a meal without the participants! Every so often, we have a few new faces swing by, and it is great to be able to welcome others to our culture and have them participate in it. However, our regulars are equally important. It wouldn't be the same if we didn't have those wonderful faces come and add a little more character to our Friday nights. The food is great, but it is the people who really make the event fantastic. Also, knowing you can start your weekend and end your crazy week with those lovely people at dinner is a nice, wholesome way to take a break. Personally, the gratification of being able to provide everyone with an experience they enjoy is always a great feeling to end my week. I sincerely hope the community gets as much out of our Shabbats as I do. Shabbat Shalom!

It might not be Shabbat when you read this, but as my Bubbie says, "You can wish someone a happy New Year any day of the year." So I wish you a Shabbat Shalom, no matter what day it is!

A SEAT AT THE TABLE

By Alex Meilech '18

When the 2017-18 school year started, the Charlottesville rally was just a few weeks in the past. The event, which prompted racist and extremist groups to descend on the city and resulted in three deaths, hit close to home. When the student body arrived back on campus, Shlomo and I, as president and vice-president of Hillel, were invited by the administration and the student government leaders to participate in discussions about the aftermath of these events. Along with student leaders representing black, Latino, LGBTQ, multicultural groups and Greek organizations, we spent time discussing how we can find ways to improve unity, respect, diversity and inclusion on campus.

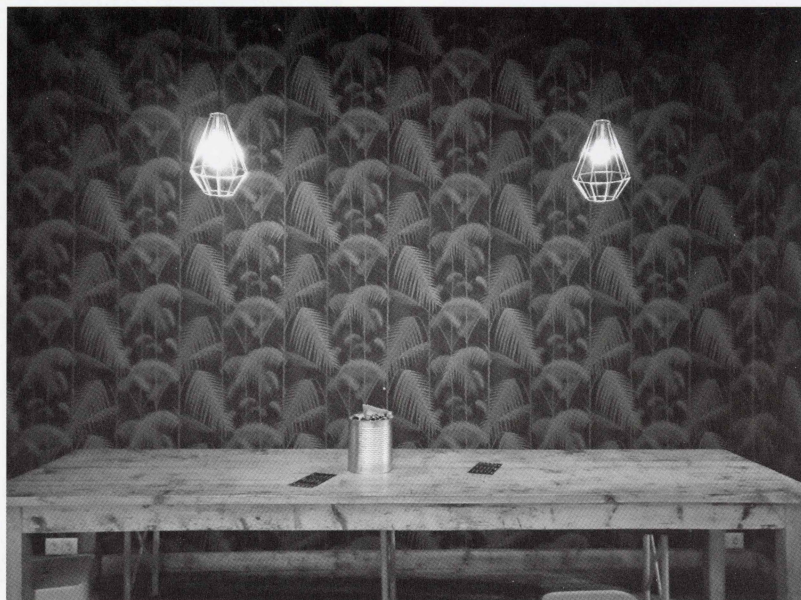
These are lofty goals, especially given a national climate of rising racism, white supremacy and anti-Semitism, and at a university with a history that is intertwined with Robert E. Lee and slavery, and which has some of the lowest rates of student diversity in the country. The even bigger question was how to enact meaningful change across the W&L campus to achieve this goal.

The group decided first to send a strong message to the public in response to the recent events: a Student Body Resolution condemning extremism and promoting inclusivity. Shlomo and I were the main authors of the resolution that was adopted by the student leaders, released to all students, and signed by over a quarter of the student body. I think this resolution is an admirable reaffirmation of our values as a student body, which align with many core Jewish values: respect, community and kindness.

We also decided to have a series of open discussions called "A Seat at the Table," with the goal of getting as many people in the student body as possible talking about how the university should look and how we should present our school. I volunteered

to be a facilitator and prepared to lead this conversation. I had some concerns beforehand: Would people talk? Would it get heated and devolve into a screaming match? Would we end without accomplishing anything? I prepared topics and

questions and went in to the first discussion with what were honestly low expectations, but I was so impressed by the caliber of this discussion. People were well-informed on what was happening on college campuses across the country - we're not the only university facing tough issues regarding the legacy of slavery and racism on campus, so discussing what other universities were doing in terms of their own symbols and



reparations was a good starting point. My discussion group included both law and undergraduate students, and they talked about what they liked about this school, what they disliked, and how their expectations coming here were different from what they think now. Most of all, they had a lot of really profound and well-thought-out ideas for changes they want to see on campus.

I think it was important, as a Jewish person, to be involved in this work - we have a history of oppression and we experience a modern climate of rising anti-Semitism that makes us more attuned to the struggles of marginalized groups, yet the majority of us have the privilege of whiteness. I believe this gives us the unique position of having both the impetus and influence to do good. On a more personal level, I was inspired by being able to work closely with these student leaders, and I felt more confident in my ability as a leader. I'm thankful that I get to be involved at Hillel, and therefore get to be involved across campus. This has been a valuable opportunity for me to promote civil discourse around controversial topics and positive change on campus. I'm excited to see the direction this takes over the course of the upcoming academic year, and to see where it goes after I graduate.

PEACE IN THE SUKKAH

By Hailey Glick '19

“Spread over us your sukkah of peace.” It is with this phrase that we end Yom Kippur, one of the holiest holidays in the Jewish religion, and move into the celebratory holiday of Sukkot. Traditionally, Sukkot commemorates the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, and serves as a reminder of the 40 years the Jewish people spent wandering the desert in search of a new permanent home. It is with this idea in mind that we construct our sukkah, a temporary hut-like structure of wood with a thatched roof of tree branches. This building, with its wide-open front arch, is meant to serve as a welcoming place for all those who wander—both physically and metaphorically—as well as a reminder that all things in life are temporary.

Although I was raised Jewish, I grew up in a very non-Jewish area of the country. There was no synagogue where I lived, and I was the only Jewish kid in my school until the eighth grade, when I moved to the capital city in a different state. As you might guess, I never celebrated Sukkot. I didn't even know the holiday existed until I came to W&L and got involved with Hillel. Even then, my first two years' experience with Sukkot consisted of the one Wednesday night during the week-long holiday in which my camp counselor fire-building skills were utilized so we could all come together and make s'mores. Now in my third year at Washington and Lee and my third year of celebrating Sukkot, the holiday has taken on a much greater meaning.

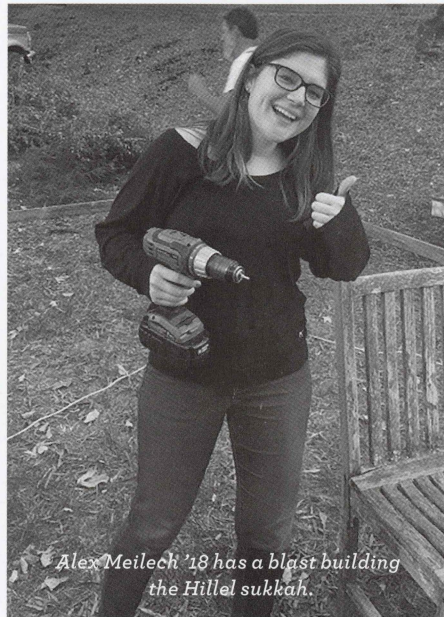
During Sukkot, Jewish and non-Jewish students alike gathered on a brisk Wednesday evening to spend time in the

sukkah. Music poured out of the sukkah's walls as students clustered around a campfire to enjoy pizza and our annual tradition of roasting s'mores. In a time of year that is loaded with responsibilities—when students are constantly moving through the day looking towards the next meeting or the next assignment—it was nice to be able to take a few hours away from the hustle and bustle of it all and just enjoy the company of others. It was a very poignant reminder that the day-to-day business of college life is simple fodder when we broaden our scope to look at the grand scheme of things. Life is so much more than stats, quizzes and 10 a.m. meetings.

And what a timely reminder indeed. These days, it seems we awake to horrid news with each and every sunrise. Another hurricane. Another mass shooting. Another crisis spawning in a nation far away. So there is something about being able to step into a sukkah

of peace and sit among friends—or even among strangers, sometimes defined as friends we've yet to meet—that makes us take pause. That gives us the time and space to reflect. That makes us think that a true peace is possible, if only we remain willing to open our doors and welcome all those who wander.

To me, Sukkot is no longer just a fall holiday for campfires and s'mores. It is a celebration which serves as a reminder of the truly important things in life—one of those being quality time spent with other people. It is a holiday during which we allow ourselves to feel at ease, and pray and hope that the sukkah of peace will one day spread over us all.



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THE JEWISH WARRIORS WEEKEND

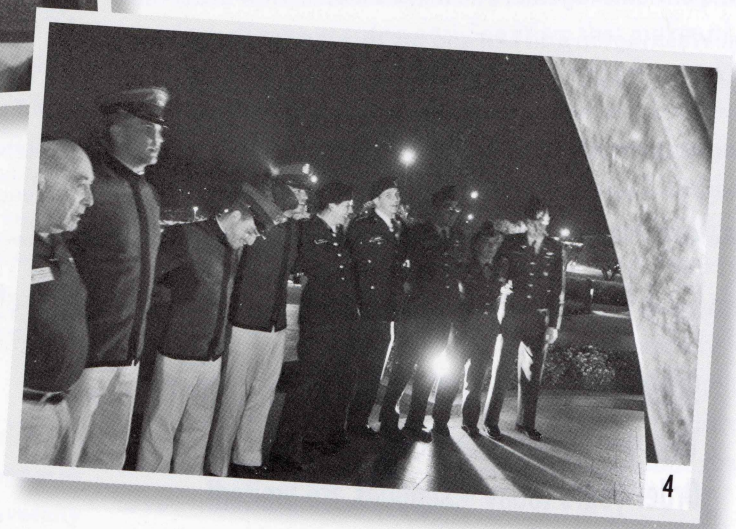
By 3/C (Cadet Third Class) Aaron Kubat



1. The cadets and guests attending the Jewish Warriors' Weekend pose with General Norton Schwartz, the former Chief of Staff of the Air Force



2. VMI cadets pose with General Schwartz
3. Cadets from the various schools show off their class rings. Getting a class ring signifies accomplishment and pride for the cadets who wear them
4. Cadets from various schools sing prayers together



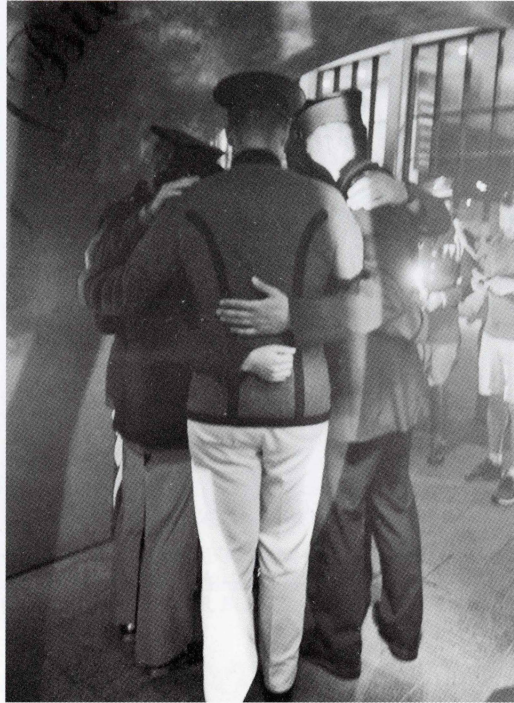
I have always been a Jew. Whether or not I have been a practicing Jew, however, is up for debate. Of course, my family and I celebrated the big two holidays—Hanukkah and Passover—but the other big two, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, were completely unknown to me until last year. I haven't had a Bar Mitzvah (gasp!). I don't have an in-depth knowledge of Torah or the Talmud. My understanding of Hebrew consists solely of "Shalom," "Matzos" and various guttural sounds. And yet, my love of, and dedication to, Judaism has never been so strong. This isn't because God came to me in a dream or because I witnessed a miracle; it's because of the military.

The Ratline helped teach me this. It taught me just how deep Judaism and the military lifestyle go, and how much they intertwine. As a rat, I used to send long emails to friends and family about the philosophical and historical connections between life at VMI, which is the closest to military life that I have ever experienced, and Judaism. What jumped out at me most was the inherent bond that people in the military have with each other, without really knowing each other, and the similar bond between Jews. It is a bond that comes from a shared identity that, in turn, comes from generations of adversity. The lessons in adversity that I learn from the stories of Moses leading the Jewish people out of Egypt and all the hardships that they had to go through before, and even after, they made it to Israel, are the same lessons that the military environment of VMI teaches me. Jews, like rats, persevere, regardless of the situation.

Now this isn't to say that the experiences of Jews, members of the armed forces, and VMI cadets, rats and alumni are all the same. There are major differences that block this analogy. Many Jews don't form the type of friendships that come out of the Ratline. Many cadets don't form the relationships that come from serving together (although many do). Many veterans don't know what it's like to have a bond based on their religion. But even with all these differences, there is still that baseline connection, the one based on adversity and unity.

And there's one more major connection between these three groups: the idea behind mitzvot. As I understand it, a mitzvah is an act of true altruism. One doesn't engage in mitzvot to feel better or to get anything out of it; one does so because it is simply a good thing to do. That is a mainstay of Judaism, and one of the reasons my love of Judaism has only increased as I have gotten older. People who serve in the military and are taught the values of the military have the ideas of mitzvot ingrained in them since the beginning of their training. One

might join the military for myriad reasons but if you ask any service member, they will tell you that at least one of those reasons was to serve their country and do their part. One especially hears this from the combat veterans and from the service members who spent a considerable time in the military. No matter what other reasons exist—financial, educational, familial, etc.—it always comes down to the big one: service. Service is the mitzvah of the military.



Cadets embrace each other under the Texas A&M Ring during a prayer.

So naturally, going into an event for Jews who are going into the military and live the military lifestyle (to the best of their ability in radically different college atmospheres), the bonds formed could be the strongest, and most pleasing, that anyone could make.

The Jewish Warrior's Weekend was such an event. Hosted by the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M, the event allowed the Jews of VMI to meet other aspiring Jewish officers from Amherst, Princeton, Colorado State University and the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs. Immediately, a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect could be felt as the A&M cadets picked us up from the airport, and it only got better. Throughout the events that followed—the meetings with the various officers, the tours, the nights

on the town, and the prayers—we got closer and closer. That was the most important part of the trip. The cadets of Texas A&M did a fantastic job at organizing and filling our days with wonderful events, but if there had been hiccups in the planning, the weekend would still have been a resounding success. The Cadets of Texas A&M brought Jews from all over the country to celebrate our freedom; freedom from the Egyptians, from the Nazis, and from dozens of other groups throughout history. That weekend was a celebration of the love and bonds that come from the military and its lifestyle, and from Judaism. It was a celebration of mitzvot.

We are Jews. We are people who are going to choose (and some already have) a life of service. To us, the Holocaust is more than just something to study for a history class, as are the fights against the totalitarianism that have always been the greatest threats to our existence as Jews. To us, our duty, our moral obligation, is to defend the freedom and liberal ideas that this country, and the Western world as a whole, have held so dear ever since the European Enlightenment. The mitzvah of the Jews of the Jewish Warriors Weekend is service to the United States.



Jenna Marvet '21, Isaac Rosenthal '19, Alex Meilech '18 and Becca Telese '20 relax between Rosh Hashanah morning services at the Hillel House and tashlich along the banks of Woods Creek.



Young alums and W&L Law Students enjoy lunch on the Hillel House deck after Rosh Hashannah services.



The Hillel Student Executive Board shakes the lulav and etrog before their October board meeting. L-R: Director of Jewish Life Maggie Shapiro Haskett, Jeremy Abcug '19, Isaac Rosenthal '19, Alex Meilech '18, Shlomo Honig '18, Rachel Reibach '18, Becca Telese '20, Hannah Reid '21, and Jenna Marvet '21.



*Director of Jewish Life Maggie Shapiro Haskett, Dean Tammy Futrell and Dean Treyna Mason pose with the cast of *The Defamation Experience* after a presentation for the Washington and Lee Community, cosponsored by Hillel, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and the Law School.*

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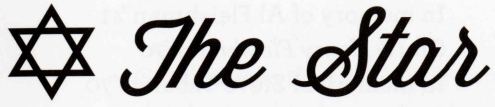
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☆ = Deceased

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