

Rosh Hoshanah 2009
Building Legacy Speech by David Froman

Shana Tova!

What a beautiful day. And what a beautiful setting to spend it in meditation.

Having been somewhat involved in the creation of this sacred space, I get special naches at High Holy days when I see it so very well occupied. With many familiar faces as well as many new ones. But getting here wasn't easy. Many of you remember it and were a part of it.

More than half of you however, weren't here at that time. And for you I have been asked this morning to briefly recount the story of the creation of our synagogue.

It officially started back in '94 if I'm not mistaken, when the congregation was polled on among other things, their desire to have a synagogue here in the foothills.

Up until that time we were a small group of mountain Jews, meeting in living rooms and during the high holidays at the Methodist Church who over the years were very gracious in sharing their space with us.

It certainly was a gemitlich group. But I think most of us realized something was missing. With a church on every corner up here, what did it say about us that we had no real home of our own? No center for our Jewish life, no place for our Jewish community to study and pray together and to celebrate life cycle events –the weddings, and the bar and bat mitzvahs of our children, no home that we could call our own.

The building survey got the thumbs up from our small group (of less than 100 families) and so we began the journey.

For the next several years we talked about it...a lot. Because if there's one thing we're good at, it's that. But we really couldn't get off Ground 0 – having never undertaken a project of this magnitude before. We frankly didn't know where or how to begin. It wasn't until Paul Rothman stood up at our annual meeting in June of 1997 that anyone really took heart in the idea. He made an initial contribution at that meeting that was meant to be taken seriously.

So with that the search began in earnest for a location. After dismissing many cliff-hangers (all the level land in Evergreen was long gone we discovered) Harris Reiter came across this property. It had a house on it occupied by a vet who for many years practiced in the building next door. It looked like a museum of shag carpet from the early 70's each room a different color. And one multi-colored room for good measure.

But in all its glory, it was much more than our building fund could afford at that point by \$200,000.

Yom Kippur 1998 (don't worry, I'm not going to make you sit through 11 more years of this)

I was president at the time and was daydreaming during the sermon about how to raise the additional \$200k that would allow us to purchase the property and kick-start the financial effort to move our dream forward. Despite the initial contribution, skepticism abounded regarding our ability to make it happen. I hatched a plan....

Looking around our make-shift sanctuary in the United Methodist Church, I identified the ten dedicated congregants most likely to say "yes". I quietly approached each of them and told them that I would like to update them on our search for a synagogue property after the service.

As the service concluded, we gathered in the conference room. I sensed some nervousness, as though they knew that they may have inadvertently stepped into an ambush. I laid out my case....we had identified a great piece of property....a terrific location....plenty of room to meet our needs now and into the foreseeable future. However....we needed to immediately raise \$200,000 if we were ever going to see our dream of a Jewish home in the foothills come true. It was time to put our money where our mouths had been for the past four years. If we are truly serious about this, then the only way it was going to happen was if everyone in the room wrote a check for \$20,000.

The room fell silent. Then, there were questions. What was the risk? How would we structure the deal? And in a very short time, the deal was done. The Minyan was created – a group of 10 dedicated congregants willing to step up to the plate. The group wrote the additional checks needed to purchase this property outright.

The Building Committee, meeting in the evenings in the Evergreen library, got to work developing a building program, studying synagogue architecture (it turns out there aren't a lot of mountain synagogues to learn from) and hired an architect. Andy Ades, a congregant and local contractor volunteered his services to get the job done. So far, so good. All that was left was to somehow raise the money needed to build the gorgeous building that together we designed.

The estimate for this home of ours - \$2.3mil. A **huge** sum for our little congregation whose budget up until recently consisted primarily of the cost of sending out our monthly newsletter. Was it chutzpah to think we could do it?!

Over the next five years a capital campaign was undertaken under the capable guidance of Cheri Rubin. It happened with congregants meeting each other in the evenings - talking about the importance of having a spiritual home for this Jewish community, a place to gather to support one another and to carry on our traditions. Talking about our commitment to our heritage and to our children. Talking about what was important to us. Talking... and writing checks.

By the time the building was completed in the summer of 2003, we had raised over \$1.7mil
With contributions from 129 families - over 85% participation from our members
Average gift per family: \$13,465

We financed the balance – approximately \$600k and servicing our loan became the big challenge of the day.

Fast forward to today....

Today as we sit here, as our kids attend religious school downstairs, as we adults enjoy the classes, the services and numerous other activities taking place here on a daily bases, we have truly realized the dream dreamed fifteen years ago of a Jewish home in the foothills.

We are all now, and will for many years to come, reaping the benefits of the dedication and financial commitment, the collective vision and determination demonstrated at that time in our congregation's history.