

Melissa:

You're listening to *Pull Up A Chair*. Stories from 100 years of creating community in Jewish Baltimore, a podcast created by The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore.

Michael:

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Melissa:

Welcome back to *Pull Up A Chair*. Each month, The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore shines a light on your neighbors and friends illustrating what it means to build and be a part of a strong Jewish community. I'm your host, Melissa Gerr. In this episode, is it possible to teach empathy? The Klein family believes so. The Ralph and Shirley Klein Foundation has been supporting a special Holocaust program at the John Carroll College Preparatory Catholic school in Bel Air, Maryland for nearly three decades. The Kleins were one of just a handful of Jewish families who made their home in Harford county in the 1960s. Michael Klein, the middle of three sons, has fond memories of his childhood there.

Michael:

I grew up in Harford County, Maryland. The town was called Forest Hill, which is about 40 minutes from Pikesville, maybe a little bit longer. Growing up it seemed to many to be near the end of the earth, but my father and grandparents had a business there and my mother moved out there when they got married. And I had brothers, my oldest brother being Andy and my younger brother, Howard...unfortunately both are deceased.

Melissa:

Michael and Andy attended The John Carroll Catholic school. Michael remembers what it was like.

Michael:

The community we lived in was not filled with many Jewish people, except when we went to see family in Baltimore. So going to John Carroll school was not in that sense, a difficult transition. It represented exactly where we lived. We found in many ways that the teachers were welcoming. The clergy that taught at the school were compassionate. I don't think we were treated any differently. We participated in all forms of academics and extracurriculars and athletics. As any other student would, it was a good experience.

Melissa:

The Klein family was deeply involved in the Harford County community and foundational in the development of its Jewish community. Ralph and Shirley were founding members of the Harford Jewish Center. Now Temple Adas Shalom located in Havre de Grace.

Michael:

Andy, Howard and I all went to religious school there and for preparation in bar mitzvah we had private tutors. Mine was a gentleman by the name of Adolf Nord. And Mr. Nord was a Holocaust survivor. So, Mr. Nord was tattooed as all Holocaust detainees were. And he wanted people in Harford County, young people in Harford County to be prepared for bar mitzvah. And he would come to our home on Saturdays

and he would tutor us in Hebrew, in recitation and preparation of our bar mitzvah. You know, he was a very kind individual and he cared deeply that kids growing up in more or less a diaspora, more or less in an area that was not...we were really minorities. And perhaps being, if you want to say victims of not having a real community, to be able to know who we were and, and what it meant to be Jewish.

Melissa:

Later Andy had served for three years as the business manager at the John Carroll school, updating its accounting systems. It was his admiration for and ongoing connection to the school that created a pathway for him to teach young people compassion. Andy was deeply concerned with world politics and in 1994, as the heinous genocide played out in Rwanda, in east central Africa, he saw it as parallel to the horrors of the Holocaust. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum had recently opened in Washington DC. So, Andy seized an opportunity to help ensure such atrocities wouldn't happen again. Here's Michael.

Michael:

So, you know, this has to be addressed through education and most people, especially in Harford County, they really had no idea, of what the Holocaust meant, how many people were affected by it. And, they needed education. So, 28 years ago, he initiated this program at John Carroll's school and we dedicated, an amount of money to take students at John Carroll school to the Holocaust Memorial in Washington, DC, so that they could see first-hand what happened and to be educated and to see how that genocide continued to this day. And the only way to address it is to understand it and to learn about it.

Melissa:

The program has grown exponentially since then. Today, the Baltimore Jewish Council helps secure Holocaust survivor speakers and keynote presenters works with the school to plan workshops and helps with other logistics, hundreds of students from public private and independent schools, as well as John Carroll have participated.

Michael:

They have to be aware that these types of travesties happen and be educated when they're in their formative years, when they're teenagers, when they're young people and they can comprehend it.

Melissa:

Michael is proud of his brother Andy's vision and the family's continued involvement. He talks about his hopes for the future of The John Carroll School Holocaust program.

Michael:

As the number of survivors continuously decrease at a very high rate that their memories and their stories continue to live, that they remind as a tool for education, that this did happen. It is a true account of history and that they have to understand it and they have to remember it and make it a living story. Least they will make the same mistakes in the future. And unless people care, unless people understand and have empathy for their fellow human beings, then these types of things can happen again. This program hopefully awakens that understanding. And I think these are lessons that these kids will never forget.

Melissa:

The Klein family is dedicated to continuing its support. And Michael understands the strength of collaboration too.

Michael:

Having the greater Baltimore community affiliated with this, I think adds a depth of resources and they're able to bring in the speaker's bureau and give that first-hand account and I know my folks would be proud that they continue in their memory to support this program and that it is a very, very important element of who we are, where we're from and what it means. And I think that, you know, Andy initiated this program, you know, without his vision and foresight, it would've never happened.

Melissa:

Thanks for listening to The Associated podcast, *Pull Up A Chair*. I'm your host, Melissa Gerr. Each month, we bring you stories from Baltimore's vibrant Jewish community. *Pull Up A Chair* is available on iTunes, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts. You can also find us on The Associated's website. Look for [associated.org/pull up a chair](http://associated.org/pull-up-a-chair).

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