



Congregation Beth Torah

President's Column

April 2010

Richard Tello

I think my brother would have really liked Beth Torah. For those of you who've heard me read Torah, or lead services, you are well aware of my ability to sing. Richard sang worse than I do. A joke in my family is that at the temple where he belonged, the cantor and a few others actually asked him not to sing. I just can't imagine that happening here. His Yahrzeit was on the 27th of Adar, (March 12/13) and, fittingly enough, this coincided with the Beth Torah Mark A. Siegel Scholar-in-Residence weekend. He was a committed "lifelong learner" and (yes, I'm bragging now) had two Bachelors of Science and a Masters degree from MIT, an MD from Stanford and a PhD from the University of Melbourne.

Each year on his Yahrzeit I try to do two things, one is to say Kaddish and the other is to give tzedakah. Surprisingly, the first is a little harder than the second. While this year it was a Friday and Saturday so finding a minyan was very easy; other years it is a little more difficult. To make up for the times I've not been able to say Kaddish on the actual date, I wake up on the Monday and Wednesday weekday mornings Beth Torah offers a minyan and more often than not motivate myself out of bed by asking myself, "What if someone needs to say Kaddish?"

Tzedakah is very easy. Each year, in his memory, I either make a donation to an MIT fund in his name or make a donation to Beth Torah. This year I'm doing both, the Beth Torah donation will be an Etz Hayim. While not a trivial expense it is something I can easily afford and that I know he would appreciate. I'm thinking that next year the more appropriate donation would be to sponsor a kiddush and ensure that cheese blintzes are served. My motivations being first to honor his memory as he loved cheese blintzes and had been under medical orders to consume a high calorie diet for the last few years of his life and second being to offset some of the costs that Beth Torah incurs with each week's kiddush luncheon.

I deeply appreciate all the families who have sponsored kiddushes in the past and all of us should thank our Sisterhood for funding them on the weeks when nobody else does. Since we expanded the range of food offered we have seen a wonderful uptick in the ruach and sense of community after our morning services. The mixed blessing being that the expected uptick in donations to cover the costs of the luncheons did not occur.

The Talmud teaches that even the recipient of tzedakah should also give tzedakah, and some do come to the weekly luncheon because their household needs to save every

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penny possible. I'll hope and encourage them to make a small donation in recognition of that. Those of us who continue to be blessed may not even consider the costs associated with the Kiddush luncheon. Please take a few minutes to think about a donation to support what you enjoy. It's very easy, even on Shabbat, Just take an envelope from one of the wall holders in the oneg room by the restrooms or near the exit to the entry way and send it back after shabbat.

Want to know more about my brother? Just ask me. I think he would have approved of this message.