



Gratz Insider, April 2014 - Story Continuation

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Terry L. Katz: Honoring the Past and Empowering the Future

The notion of a homeland for the Jewish People has been part of Terry Katz's life since before the birth of the modern State of Israel. She remembers hearing, as a child, the serious-sounding tones of the adults as they gathered for Shabbat dinner at her grandparents' table. Years later, she learned that two of these dinner guests were actually David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir.

As a young girl, Katz also demonstrated her own support for the Zionist cause. For hours, she carted around a wagon loaded with wrapping paper and greeting cards, which she sold to neighbors to raise money for planting trees in the fledgling State of Israel.

Katz's childhood fundraising efforts on behalf of Israel foreshadowed her life's work. She has now spent 35 years serving on local and national boards of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), and has assumed various leadership roles within the organization. She is, for example, a proud past president and founding member of The Sapphire Society, JNF's major gift division for women. But for Katz, her involvement is more about tangible results than titles. She is absolutely ebullient as she rattles off the improvements that JNF has funded in Israel, such as the planting of trees and the development of reservoirs, parks and housing communities.

Because of her commitment to Israel and to Judaism, JNF has not been the only beneficiary of Katz's energy and drive. Fortunately, she has also had a long association with Gratz, which included working in a professional capacity for the College, as well as volunteering as a member of the Board of Governors.

In 1990, while working at Gratz, Katz decided to formally dedicate the chapel on the new Mandell Campus to her parents: in memory of her father and in honor of her mother's 75th birthday. She commissioned a member of the Mandell Family, the artist Jonathan Mandell, to design the ark. And for the last 15 to 20 years, students from

the Gratz Jewish Community High School (JCHS) have conducted services in the Katz Chapel every Sunday morning.

The story could have ended there - but it didn't. After her mother's death in 2013, Katz returned to Gratz with plans of rededicating the chapel in memory of both her parents. To honor her mother's enduring love for children, she also wanted to do something that would directly benefit the students at JCHS.

In meetings with JCHS director Ruth Schapira, Katz learned that the students were very dissatisfied with their outdated prayer book, so she funded its replacement. As Schapira explains, "The new siddur, *Eit Ratzon*, is current, thought-provoking, gender-neutral, and it prompts the type of thoughtful engagement during services that teens appreciate." To make their service even more joyful, the students also requested musical instruments, like those used in the Ancient Temple, including shofars, drums and tambourines. Again, Katz gladly acquiesced.

"Terry's gifts have greatly enhanced the experience of our students who begin their Sunday morning with a prayer service," says Schapira.

In addition to "enhancing the experience" for existing students, Katz wanted to expand access to JCHS for others. Therefore, as part of the rededication of the chapel, she also established, in her parents' memory, the Selma and Lawrence Katz Scholarship Fund to enable more students to further their Jewish studies at JCHS.

"Life is an education," says Katz. "Some of it you have to learn by yourself, and sometimes, you are fortunate to have pointers. JCHS gives kids these pointers, as well as the opportunity to learn more. And, hopefully, these kids will be the future leaders of the Jewish community."