FJC Brotherhood

BONDINGS

WEBSITE: fjcbrotherhood.org
EMAIL: fjcbrotherhood@gmail.com

May 2026

BROTHERHOOD OFFICERS:
President: *Jim Linsky*
1st Vice President: *Andy Zetlin*
2nd Vice President: *Lanny Eder*
Treasurer: *Harvey Albert*
Recording Secretary: *Andy Jablon*
Corresponding Secretary: *Barry Lew*

RECENT PAST PRESIDENTS:
Alan Bernstein
Joel Lubin
Arthur Brecher

BONDINGS Contributors:
Bob Mendes
Bob Zibbell
Andy Jablon

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Major Events

June 6 – Annual Wine Tasting Event and Auction
June 24 – Annual Brotherhood Membership Meeting / Luncheon
July 14 – BBQ! Food & Music - Joint Event with FJC Sisterhood
July 23 – JFK Library & Museum – Boston – Field Trip

Breakfasts

May 31 – Speaker: Andy Zetlan - *The U.S. Electricity Grid: What Does the Future Have In-Store for Us and Will We Be Able to Afford it?*
July 26 - Speaker TBD

Bowling at Noon at the Lanes, Mashpee Commons

May 20
June 3
June 17

Editor's Corner

A Recent Visit to Montreal with a Focus on Jewish Humor

During a recent trip to Montreal by five brotherhood members (Dror Seri, Lanny Eder, Elliot Greene, Jody Yudien and myself), we had a meal with **Adam Kegel**, the son of Holocaust survivors and the Administrator of the popular Facebook community "Jewish Humor". Kegel believes Jewish humor remains powerful because *it creates connection*. His online group has become what he calls a "virtual shtetl" — a gathering place where people share laughter, memories, and cultural identity.

So why does Jewish Humor endure?

Jewish humor has long been more than entertainment. It is a way of coping with hardship, preserving identity, and finding resilience through laughter. Across centuries of exile, persecution, immigration, and cultural change, humor became a distinctly Jewish survival tool — transforming anxiety, contradiction, and even suffering into wit.

What distinguishes Jewish humor from other comedic traditions is not simply the subject matter, but its *tone and perspective*. Much of Jewish humor is deeply self-deprecating. Instead of mocking outsiders, it often turns inward — poking fun at the neurotic son, the overprotective mother, the anxious businessman, or the rabbi trying to answer impossible questions. Jewish humor is also rooted in argument and irony. Influenced by centuries of Jewish intellectual and religious tradition, particularly the culture of debate found in Talmudic study, Jewish jokes often revolve around clever reversals, endless questioning, and finding humor in contradiction. In many cases, the joke is not just the punchline, but the winding logic used to reach it.

Much classic Jewish humor emerged from Yiddish-speaking communities in Eastern Europe. Yiddish added its own rhythm, emotional nuance, and expressive vocabulary to Jewish comedy. When Jewish immigrants arrived in America, they brought that comedic sensibility with them. It flourished in vaudeville, the Catskills "Borscht Belt," radio, television, and Hollywood. Generations of comedians — from Jack Benny and Mel Brooks to Joan Rivers and Rodney Dangerfield — helped shape modern American comedy with humor that was sharp, self-aware, and often tinged with anxiety.

Adam recently expanded that effort into a book, *The Best Of Jewish Humor*. Available on and published by Amazon (of course). We returned from our Montreal trip with copies signed by Adam to enjoy for the future.

In a time when public discourse often feels divisive and tense, Jewish humor continues to resonate because it *balances honesty with resilience*. It acknowledges life's difficulties without surrendering to despair. The settings may have changed — from Eastern European villages to social media feeds — but the core spirit remains the same: finding humanity, wisdom, and survival through laughter.

More thoughts about Jewish Humor!

What Happened to Jewish comedy?

By …. ***Bob Zibbell***, Bourne, Brotherhood Member.

In the 1970's, *Time Magazine* noted that, while Jews comprised only about 3% of Americans, they made up *80% of comedians*, male and female. These comedians had a particular brand of comedy, honed initially in the Borscht Belt of upstate New York, then in nightclub venues like Second City in Chicago, the Improv, and The Gaslight in New York City.

Jewish comedy arose out of the need to cope with the anxieties over antisemitism, money, family pressures, or assimilation, as well as historic oppression.

From the wonderful storyteller, Myron Cohen, to Mel Brooks/Sid Cesar/Carl Reiner, to Alan King, Joan Rivers, Jerry Seinfeld and Adam Sandler, and too many others to name, Jewish humor thrived on TV, in clubs, on records, and even Carnegie Hall (e.g. Jackie Mason, Billy Crystal). And who will ever forget the talented Lenny Bruce?

Slowly, that brand of comedy has faded from public view. There are still Jewish comedians (e.g., Susan Silverman and Jon Stewart), but the nature of the comedy deals more with contemporary cultural issues than with Jewish culture and the familiar "neuroses," so to speak, that came with being Jewish in the middle of the 20th century. No one performed neurotic better than Woody Allen in his heyday. Those old favorites from Ed Sullivan or the Sid Cesar / Imogene Coca, "Show of Shows," can still be found on *You Tube*. There was even a recent Amazon Prime series that relived those formative years of Jewish Comedy, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maizel.*

To me, the essence of classical Jewish humor was the 1960 Mel Brooks-Carl Reiner album, 2000-*Year-Old Man* and its sequels (find a clip at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEjKlkXbFnE). In particular, the main character, in a semi-Yiddish accent, laments the fact that, he has had hundreds of wives and 42,000 children … and yet *not one comes to visit*! Like my formative years in the late 40's to early 60's, it was a unique time to be Jewish in America, as well as it was, it seems, for Jewish humor.

And … from our own resident comedian!

NON COMPOS MENDES

By Bob Mendes, FJC member

This being my first column for BONDINGS, I suppose a little introduction is called for. On the chance that your Latin is a little rusty, let me explain the title. NON COMPOS *MENTIS* translates to an 'unsound mind' or less literally, nonsense.' When I wrote a column with the same title for my college newspaper I debated between "Tree Mendes" which seemed kind of ego-driven and "Non Compos Mendes" which no one understood. So, then and now, incomprehensible wins out over egotistical!

Hope you enjoy!

Life FAQs

- Do you love me?
- Isn't it time you threw that T-shirt away?
- What if the midterms *don't* change the make-up of congress?
- Have you been vaccinated?
- Do you love me?
- What's for dinner?
- Alexa, what's the weather for tomorrow?
- Which blouse do you like better?
- Why do we need a new _____ ? (pick an appliance)
- Do you love me?
- But what if I get pregnant?
- Why do telemarketers call at mealtime?
- Why do telemarketers call at all?
- Do you like my hair this way?
- Why does my computer always do this?
- Where's my phone?
- Did you fix that faucet yet?
- Who cares?
- Is there anything worthwhile on TV tonight?
- Did you work out today?
- What do you feel like doing tonight?
- White or red?
- License and registration please. Do you know how fast you were going?
- Do I look like I've put on weight?
- Where do you get your hair done?
- Can you believe the price of _____ ? (pick an item)
- Do you remember asking for, "Two dollars regular?"
- Who, what, when, where, why?