

FROM OUR READERS

What PJ Library Means to Me

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PROUD PJ LIBRARY GRANDPARENT

When my grandson, Wiley, was born nearly eight months ago, I couldn't wait to sign him up for PJ Library. It meant the world to me that a baby with the improbably Jewish name of Wiley Roger could be part of PJ Library, no questions asked.

These days, Wiley prefers to chew *One, Two, Three, Purim* rather than to have me read him the story. No matter. For this Bubbe, having books magically arrive for Wiley because he is Jewish makes my heart sing. Each book prompts me to reflect on my own Jewish upbringing and evolution and to think more clearly about what I want to pass on to Wiley and why it is so important.

My earliest memories of being Jewish are of the deli on Sunday mornings with my father. There we waited amid a sea of Jewish men and their children for our lox and bagels. Ours was a predominantly Jewish New Jersey suburb, where there was only one non-Jew in my elementary school. I went away to a summer camp which, while not identified as "a Jewish camp," was a Jewish camp. It was not until high school when I ventured off to a program at Northwestern University that I



faced the prospect of meeting and interacting with non-Jewish peers.

I attended Simmons College, which, while not a Jewish school, surely looked that way in the hall where I lived freshman year. I suppose I could have gone through college unshaken by the familiar experience of being surrounded by Jews were it not for Professor Lawrence Langer's courses on Holocaust literature. There, in the '60s when few were talking about the Holocaust, we read Elie Wiesel and other Holocaust writers.

I left Simmons with a profound awareness that for me, being Jewish meant a vast amount more than just fond memories of mornings at the

deli with my Dad. For all my warm memories of childhood in a Jewish cocoon, it was Professor Langer's course that formed the core of my adult Jewish self. It became very important to me – crucial, in fact – to raise Jewish children who wanted to raise Jewish children.

Fast forward fifty years. I have two adult daughters. They each became a *bat mitzvah* and continued through confirmation and beyond. We traveled to Israel, lit Shabbat candles, celebrated the holidays with family and close friends. Two Jewish upbringings in a home with Jewish feelings and values. Now, one of my four grandchildren is being raised Jewish.

And so, I am especially grateful to PJ Library. Call it a second chance. Call it a birthright. Call it what Jews do for each other. I call it a gift. Each book is a gift that keeps on giving. Since Wiley was a tiny baby I have been singing *l'dor vador* to him. PJ Library helps me believe that this little Jewish boy will "get it." Each book offers hope that my little Wiley Roger will grow up to raise Jewish children who want to raise Jewish children.

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