

Accusations of Cantor's Wife Called False by Jack Tell

TELL TALES

(Continued from Page 4)

these detracting individuals. Don't they know their green-eyed envy towards me, personally, is of insignificant consequence to the tremendous harm they may be causing against a publication dedicated to the growth and welfare of Judaism? Aren't they aware that each sneaky act perpetrated in a whispering campaign, or behind my back slyly attempting to induce advertisers to withdraw, puts them in the same category as the vandals who burn swastikas in the dead of the night on the lawn of a Temple? Those who are discrediting the Israelite understand, of course, that their actions are a discredit to themselves and a shame on our Faith in the eyes of the entire community. But their personal animosity has so blurred their reasoning power, these so-called "Jews" are far less concerned with the general welfare of the Jewish community than they are with their own blind rage to douse professional reporting and honest commentary on news of the day.

Despite the knockers, the Israelite has consistently forged ahead in subscribers and world-wide readership and has proven its value to supporting advertisers. Based on a foundation of truth and decency, the Israelite is proud of the contribution it has made and continuing to make, for the betterment and growth of the Jewish community. During the first year of publication, this writer, Jack Tell, in making his rounds on behalf of the paper, had induced and encouraged more Jews to attend Friday Services and become members of our Temple, than all the results attained theretofore by the membership committee of the congregation. Since the election of the current president of Temple Beth Shalom, Jack Entratter, the first and foremost supporter of the Israelite, his column, which appears each week on Page 1, Column 1, has done more to enlighten the Jewish community on what is happening than any other factor since the very commencement of organized Services in Las Vegas back in the early 1930's. Under Entratter's able and dedicated guidance, the membership of our Temple has soared to well over 500, a figure never before attained. Due to his weekly commentary, attendance has swelled to almost capacity at most Friday evening Services and our Hebrew, pre-school, Adult Education Classes, etc., are flourishing. All this is made possible by an ardent devotion to Judaism by Entratter, plus a vehicle like the Israelite to bring his views to the attention of the Jewish community.

(I tell all this as a prelude to answering Mrs. Kohn's letter, because even if her insidious accusations were true, AND THEY CERTAINLY ARE NOT, discrediting of the Israelite would not be as beneficial to the Jewish community as say, a direct protest to this publisher to correct the practice she alleges.)

The remarks you refer to, Mrs. Kohn, in the opening paragraph of your letter, were made, I was told, before a group of women attending a Hadassah Board of Director's meeting months ago. You accused me of telling advertisers the money they were spending to purchase space was going to the Temple. You prefaced your accusation, I was also informed, by asking that your remarks be kept secret and not go beyond the four walls of the room. But alas, Mrs. Kohn, you subsequently found that the walls have ears, Israelite ears.

Rather than lend dignity to your infamous alleged, spoken remarks, which had absolutely no basis of truth, in the interest of not bringing a matter of Jewish controversy to the attention of the general readership, I decided to ignore the accusation. But apparently you, Mrs.

Kohn, interpreted silence on my part and respect for your husband's high position of employment by our congregation, as a sign of weakness and possible authenticity to your erroneous statement, repeated the accusation in the form of tangeable, written words. This, of course, left no alternative but to publicly prove that you are wrong.

As a general defence of my ethical conduct, I have in my background more than ten years of experience with the New York Times, where newspapermen who employed tactics you attribute to me would not last a month. That training, which supplemented the initial upbringing I was given by my parents, who taught me to be honest, forthright and a good Jew, has instilled in me a sense of responsibility which has no peer in anyone, anywhere. Perhaps that is the answer why I have forsaken many opportunities in my lifetime, which could very well have raised the living standard of my family to one of luxury and financial security. I turned down these offers, Mrs. Kohn, because somewhere, in a minute sense they fell short of the high code of morals under which I had been raised and trained.

I am fairly new in this business of English-Jewish reporting, but a lifetime as a newspaperman had taught me to evaluate circumstances. I am fully aware of the sensitivity of my present occupation, and from the outset I took extra precaution to be certain, doubly and triply certain, that no conduct on my part would or could tend to have a finger pointed at the Israelite or the Jewish Faith in our community. You cannot realize the extent to which I went to keep the record clean. Let me give some concrete examples.

Everyone knows that Vegas Village is an important business in Southern Nevada and a valued account for advertising in any medium.

When I solicited Mr. Johnston, who handles the regular advertising for the V.V. stores, he referred me to another department, run by Mr. Bunker, who handles the store's participation in charitable and religious activities. When Mr. Bunker advised the space he was about to purchase was deemed a contribution -- NOT TO THE TEMPLE -- but to the Israelite, I refused to take the ad. There is not another medium in all of Nevada, secular or otherwise, that would have turned down Mr. Bunker's offer. On a holiday occasion, when I solicited an ad to send greetings to the Jewish community, an executive of an advertising firm who offered to pay for a large space in the Israelite asked that his name be omitted and substituted by "A Friend." I refused because the Israelite does not take handouts.

This is an honest newspaper whose revenue is derived from subscriptions and advertising. Any money spent in the Israelite is for value received. While income is necessary to pay the expenses of publishing the Israelite, money is not the sole objective. It is the only publication, to our knowledge, that does not compete with other Jewish publications. We encourage and aid other papers of our Faith to come into our area and solicit ads. Ask Herb Brin, who called us "incredible." The initial purpose of the Israelite is to benefit Judaism, not to make money. And we do not propose to further Judaism in our own way to the exclusion of all others who may be concerned with our Faith.

Let me inform you, Mrs. Kohn, and our readers, of a recent conversation with your husband, who was hosting a Cantor's Convention in Las Vegas. Your husband approached me with stories and photos of the event, and offered to pay money for good coverage. I was at first amazed at his attempt to bribe me, but after deliberating

a moment I believed his act was made in good faith. I carefully explained newspaper ethics, my style, to him. I pointed out the difference between editorial content and advertising. I told him that all the money in the world could not get a story, I deemed improper, into the news pages of the paper. I told him he did not have to pay to publicize his convention. That was the purpose of the paper, I explained, and I would do everything possible to make the convention a success. Afterwards, he thanked me, privately of course, for delivering all and more than he had expected.

Your husband did thank others publicly for the success of the convention. That is his prerogative. The Israelite does not desire or demand credit for its performance. That is why I have written on many occasions after pleading the articles in the Israelite be picked out and reprinted in other publications for wider dissemination of a point at issue, no credit from the source is necessary.

Are these the acts, Mrs. Kohn, of a person who resorts, as you have witten, to "dishonest practice, especially out of charitable funds"? Now let us analyze your letter.

You say you expressed an honest opinion. Let us see how honest that opinion is.

I do not recall, Mrs. Kohn, ever having spoken to you, except perhaps a "Good Shabbath" on a Friday evening. I certainly never solicited you, directly, for an ad. The only personal contact, to my knowledge and recollection, with you Mrs. Kohn, have been in the usual form letters that are sent to all persons who receive the Israelite. Therefore, the acts you attribute to me must have come to you from someone else. This would be heresy on your part. If the statements I am making now are true, then you must admit forming an "honest opinion" on what you do not know for a fact. How can you form an opinion on a matter such as this? Moreover, is it proper for you to voice this "honest opinion" to others, without first making some effort to determine the truth or falsity of the claim? On whom did I foist this "dishonest practice" and how much money did I pocket out of charitable funds? It certainly was not you, Mrs. Kohn, and you certainly were not present when these alleged, reprehensible acts took place. You could not have had enough information on which to form an opinion, other than what someone else told you.

When I explained all this to your husband, Mrs. Kohn, who should have known his attempts would be futile for me to divulge the source of my information, which no decent newspaperman would disclose, I carefully explained to him I was not concerned with knowing who had given you the misinformation. I was concerned only with his investigation revealing to you, Mrs. Kohn, that your "honest opinion" was based on dishonest information.

Think it over, Mrs. Kohn, and determine for yourself who your friends may be. Is it the Israelite, which is serving the same cause I believe you are serving, Judaism, or is it any one of the few who would go to extremes to put the Israelite out of business? The known enemies of the Israelite would not dare to make such accusation public, nor would they put it in writing. They use the sly tactic of innuendo and sneaky whispers, much as they are using you as their spokesman, their patsy. Think it over.

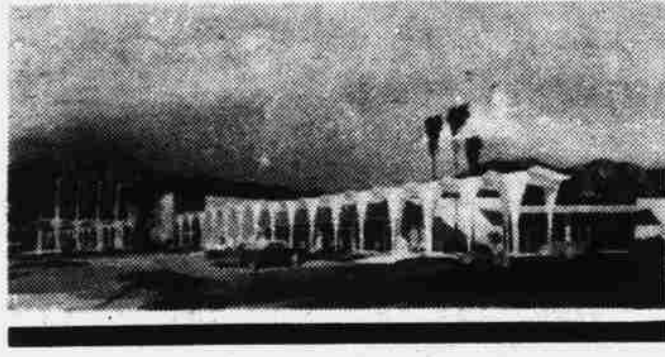
Respectfully,
Jack Tell

(P.S. This space is and always will be available to Mrs. Kohn or anyone who desires to pursue the subject further, subject to space limitation and the amenities of proper journalism. J.T.)

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