Rabbi Benjamin Rodwogin

Rabbi Benjamin Rodwogin received his undergraduate degree at Yeshiva College of Yeshiva University and was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1945. In 1946, he went to Chelsea, Massachusetts to serve as the rabbi of Temple Emmanuel, where he served until 1996.

Rabbi Rodwogin married his first wife, Lea Rodwodin, in the 1940s, during the early part of his lengthy rabbinic career. Lea passed away in 1992. Shortly afterward, Rabbi married Saundra Haley. He was active in community life in Chelsea and served as the chaplain for the Boston area Fraternal Order of Masons starting in 1975.

The Benjamin Rodwogin Papers consist of writings, correspondence, a scrapbook, and clippings documenting Rodwogin's career. The writings include speeches, bulletin messages, eulogies, and sermons covering the years 1950 through 1989. The correspondence is letters, primarily thank-you notes that Rabbi Rodwogin received between 1931 and 1989.

Rodwogin's correspondence includes Jewish Theological Seminary faculty members Moshe Davis, Saul Lieberman, and Alexander Marx and public figures such as Henry Cabot Lodge, John F. Kennedy, and Henry

Morganthau, Jr. The correspondence also documents Rodwogin's involvement in community affairs in the City of Chelsea, Massachusetts.

The following newspaper story shows Rabbi Rodwogin's kindness, generosity of spirit, and sense of humor.

Couple renews vows after 50 years, with same rabbi

Ruth Baron spoiled the surprise that her husband, Abe, planned for their 50th wedding anniversary by proposing the same idea: going to the synagogue where they were married and renewing their wedding vows.

And they invited a special friend, the rabbi who had married them 50 years before. Rabbi Benjamin Rodwogin was fresh out of the Jewish Theological Seminary and had come to Temple Emmanuel in Chelsea, outside Boston, a few weeks before marrying the Barons on September 17, 1946. It was the first wedding he performed as a rabbi.

"They were nice, cordial young people," Rodwogin says. "They were gracious and nice."

Fifty years later, Rodwogin, now 85, is still on the job for about half the year, from shortly before Passover through the High Holy Days. He spends the rest of his time in West Palm Beach, Fla. The Barons also live in West Palm Beach and see their former rabbi periodically.

So it was only natural that when the Barons decided to renew their vows to celebrate their 50th anniversary earlier this fall, they called on the man who had done such a good job the first time.

The couple and the rabbi who married them have formed a mutual admiration society. "It was very unusual to find the same rabbi at the same temple," Ruth Baron says. “In our modern culture, that's an achievement," Rodwogin says of the Barons' 50th anniversary. "Most people are into their third marriage by that time."

Having Rodwogin officiate wasn't the only touch of *deja vu* the Barons employed in renewing their vows. They reproduced as much of the original ceremony as possible, from the invitation design to the bride and groom on the wedding cake. The second time around, the Barons' children, Judith and Michael, and grandchildren Eric, Lauren, Suzanne Schnell, Lee, and Andrew Baron participated in the second ceremony. The Barons also had a new ketubah, which Rodwogin drew up when he agreed to perform the ceremony. "Talk about a nervous bride," says Ruth, 71. "I was a nervous wreck. I'm a very composed person."

Rodwogin doesn't remember the sermon he gave during the first ceremony. But during the second, he told the Barons they were a "blessed, beautiful couple" with a "beauty of heart and mind. You brought the blessing," Rodwogin recalls saying. "God helped you, but you brought the blessing."

After the second ceremony, Rodwogin and Abe cried. "I'm a softy," Rodwogin says. "I cry." A luncheon reception at the Colonial Hilton in Lynnfield, Mass., followed the second ceremony.

The Barons met in late 1944 when they both lived in Chelsea. After getting a hardship discharge from the Army Air Force, Abe started the Baron Tire Co., a retail outlet. He soon discovered he needed a bookkeeper. Someone suggested hiring Ruth, who lived two doors away. Abe did. They began

dating about five months later. "She was cute," says Abe, 74, now the director of special events for the Florida Culinary Institute. "She was a very cute girl." "He's just a good guy," says Ruth, who attended Chelsea High School with Abe's younger brother, David. "He's always been a good person." The couple became engaged a few months later; Abe proposed in his car on Powder Horn Hill in Chelsea. Abe funded the wedding by borrowing $1,300 from his business.

Today, both the Barons are very active and healthy. Is 'another 50 years together' in their future?

The Barons hope so, and Rodwogin would love to officiate at the renewal of their vows again.

"Send a prayer to the heavens to let us love," Rodwogin says. "Let us be happy." "We're going to try for 50 anyhow," Abe says. "We think we'll make 25."

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