

Athletic Coach for Rabbis

A joking throwaway line. The deadline passed. I didn't come up with anything better, so that's what my **Ramaz** High Yearbook lists as my ambition. There was more truth in it than I knew. It is the road I have taken, wandering from it, losing my heading, often blown off course, yet the way I have come, becoming what some have flatteringly called -a rabbi's rabbi.

Perhaps the path that led to my wanting to be a young "Lion" was the residual influence of those imposing statues, "letters" and "knowledge" presiding over the entrance gate at 116th Street. I passed them countless times in elementary and high school, heading up Broadway to the 125th street ferry, to cross the majestic Hudson to home in New Jersey.

The path led to four wonderful years at Columbia. It was 1950, with the flood of WW II beginning to ebb, I was accepted.

A plethora of memories: Meeting and chatting with Ike while walking with my beanie clad fellow freshman Nick Poulos on 116th towards Morningside. Being asked, at freshman orientation to try out for the line on freshman football. Though large- couldn't imagine pushing or being pushed around. "Playing freshman "B" basketball. Scorekeeper on the rotunda track for the undefeated basketball team of 1950-51: Doing the core curriculum and not realizing what a gift I had been given until years later. Singing Handel's Messiah in the glee club with Hunter College:

The path led to fourteen years in a 6-block radius. The College, Jewish Theological Seminary, and then back for a PH.D in clinical psychology. When taking my 8-year-old grandson to see where "Papa" had been educated, hearing him exclaim. "Fourteen years Papa, -after one hour I'm bored".

I was never bored at Columbia. Who could be with teachers like Fritz Stern, Charles Frankel, Jacques Barzun, Andrew Chiappe and Douglas Moore among others.

Teaching my daughters about adversity at repeated Yale-Columbia games. We were *building character!* -Much more worthwhile than *winning*.

Ten successful years in a pulpit in Fairfield, CT. Feeling isolated and alone. Returning for that PhD. The thesis "The Rabbi as Symbolic Exemplar" was really, "how come I enjoyed everything about being a rabbi, except being a rabbi.

An honor from my ordaining alma mater:

Your unique understanding as both rabbi and psychologist has made invaluable contributions to the Jewish community and its spiritual leaders...a vital source of support for your rabbinic associates in the Reform and Conservative movements...you have worked with colleagues and students in rabbinic training institutes, Jewish Theological Seminary...Director of Professional Career Review for the Central Conference of American Rabbis, a program you created to assist rabbis in shaping their future... provided advice and guidance for individual rabbis who have sought your help from all over the country and from all movements. You have published extensively on the experience of being a rabbi.

Your love and respect for the work of your colleagues has made you the quintessential rabbi for rabbis

It's been a good path. Thank you, Columbia