



THE OLIVE PRESS

BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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Here we are, the April Olive Press “Humor Edition” ... and what’s so funny?

With what’s going on in the world, plus Passover and Yom HaShoah at the end of April I am not seeing the joke. But humor is our theme and perhaps we unconsciously chose it, as good medicine on how to cope with the turn of events 2025. We start with the essay below by resident Dorothy Auerbach.

Allison Rodman
Director of Sales & Marketing



Comments welcome
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From This Day Forth

by Dorothy Auerbach

He hung up on me; or I hung up on him. I don’t remember which. We had quarreled about whether to put our suitcases in the car that night or the following morning, our wedding day. I don’t remember who was on which side.

So, when my mother dragged me out of bed that morning, I was not at all certain there would be a groom. In the firm belief that Hal’s mother would insist on his showing up, the three implacable females who constituted my immediate family poured me into my dress, arranged my hair and veil, and applied the various floral-scented items of make-up I had never worn before and would never wear again. The colorful, but just short of garish face I saw in the mirror looked like no one I knew. My mother pronounced me “passable” just as the rabbi arrived, and gave me the marriage contract to sign.

Having been taught from early childhood never to sign anything until I had read it thoroughly, I began to scrutinize the document. Unfortunately, it was written in Aramaic, a language to which I had no former exposure, but which I stubbornly kept attempting to read. Finally, my mother, a woman of unbending will, forced me to affix my signature.

My college roommate, Dolly, a music major, struck the familiar chords of the wedding march on the piano, and my uncle, a triumphant smile on his face, escorted me down the hall to the living room

and the waiting groom and rabbi, who stood flanked by the funereal scent of calla lilies, and gleefully gave me away. For the exchange of rings, Hal gave me his right hand. “The other hand, stupid,” I stage-whispered. I guess no one else heard me; the rabbi’s expression did not change, and my mother, who was not known for her reticence, never mentioned it.

The morning preparations had included for me neither breakfast nor lunch. I was famished. As tray after tray of seductive-smelling foodstuffs impaled on toothpicks passed by me, I eagerly helped myself. What to do with the toothpicks?

My bouquet of small white flowers had in its center a little glass vial containing a white orchid corsage, which my mother had removed and put in the refrigerator to await being pinned to my going-away suit. The vial vacated by the corsage was the obvious solution to the toothpick storage problem.

At last, it was time for us to leave on our honeymoon. I had one more ceremonial function to perform. As seven presumptive virgins waited at the foot of the stairs, I tossed the bouquet. A shower of toothpicks rained down on the young hopefuls. We all pretended not to notice.

Despite the wedding, after more than seventy-two years, Hal and I were still hung-up on each other.

Cover: Groucho Marx from Retro Movie Posters

“If you find it hard to laugh at yourself, I would be happy to do it for you.”
-Groucho

Dedication to Len Sperry

Even in his final days, Len maintained an incredibly gracious and joyful sense of humor: “An optimist fell off the Empire State Building. Passing each floor, he called out: ‘Well, so far so good!’”



To Laugh Often and Much

by Ralph Waldo Emerson

To laugh often and much;
to win the respect of the intelligent people
and the affection of children;
to earn the appreciation of honest critics
and endure the betrayal of false friends;
to appreciate beauty;
to find the best in others;
to leave the world a bit better
whether by a healthy child,
a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition;
to know that one life has breathed easier
because you lived here.
This is to have succeeded.

“Did you hear the one about...” —Len Sperry

Baseline Humor Assessment

An Olive Press humor edition would not be complete without remembering Len Sperry, whose jokes, puns, songs, and suspenders are dearly missed here at RGP.

Twice a semester, I bring a small group of my SF State nursing students to RGP to learn about Assisted Living first-hand. In past semesters, I made sure to include Len on our nursing rounds. We brought him his “morning” medications around noon (Len liked to sleep in) – and conferred with Len about his ongoing state of health. One thing that I emphasized with the students was that we wanted to assess his sense of humor. If Len didn’t tell us a joke, we would worry that he wasn’t at baseline.

One of my favorites was a story about Alan Ginsberg taking a ship across the Atlantic, eating dinner each night with the same passenger, a French-man. The passenger would say something in French and Ginsberg, not understanding, would try to introduce himself by saying: “Ginsberg.” After a week or so, Ginsberg tried to learn some French and greeted the man at dinner with “Bonsoir!” The French man laughed and replied “Ginsberg!”

Even in his final days, Len maintained an incredibly gracious and joyful sense of humor: “An optimist fell off the Empire State Building. Passing each floor, he called out: ‘Well, so far so good!’”



Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN
Director of Health Services

Shu Fen Chou



Shu Fen “Su” Chou moved into RGP in May 2024. Born and raised in Zhejiang Province in China, she came to the United States for graduate school, initially studying horticulture in Wisconsin. When she realized that horticulture was not her passion, she transferred to Virginia Tech to study biochemistry. After graduation she moved to Chicago to be close to her sister and work in microscopy research at the University of Chicago. Su had extensive training in Electron Microscopy and was a researcher for 30 years.

In Chicago she met her husband, who was a fellow researcher, and they were married for 61 years raising 3 children who are all in the medical field. She has 5 grandchildren. After Su and her husband retired, they moved to a retirement community in L.A. when her husband passed in 2023, she moved to SF to be closer to her son.

Su loves to walk and enjoys exercise; she also likes to read. Her big smile is always shining!



Peggy O'Brien
Resident Services



Rita Semel at Ceramics Class



Paula and Jane enjoying the Sausalito Ferry Trip



Alice, Jane, Phylis, and Sylvia at the SF Botanical Gardens



Jane exploring the SF Botanical Gardens



Oakland Zoo Trip with Lydia and a SHARK



Priscilla, Barbara, Phylis, and Lydia take a trip to the Oakland Zoo



Jim, Jane, Lydia, and Sylvia in the beautiful Muir Woods



Aubrey and his walking stick



Ruthie at the Tu
BiShvat Event



Tu BiShvat event with Shupin Club kids. Eileen and Joan
decorating new succulent pots



The SF MOMA group outing with Paula and Emma



Barbara at the SF MOMA

Creative Ways to Bring Humor

There are many ways we bring laughter and humor to the community, but one of my favorites is our monthly visit from the Medical Clown Project on the Terrace! The Terrace Memory Care Program is an organization that I have had a working relationship with for over 10 years. Using theatrical play, music, and specialized clowning techniques, these trained healthcare clowns spark joy and generate smiles all around! The first half of the visit is spent with residents, the second is spent in the activity room as a large group. We sing songs, dance, learn magic tricks, and use our imagination. It is also great to see RGP staff take a break from their hard work and laugh along with us. Even short laughter breaks can have great benefits. (According to the Mayo clinic, laughter can relieve pain, improve mood, stimulate organs with the intake of oxygen and improve your immune system.) In the spirit of bringing laughter to our community, stay tuned for a Laughter Yoga session in April!



Emma Davis, LMFT
Director of Life Enrichment

Pharaoh's April Fool's Day

While the theme of this month's Olive Press is humor, in accordance with our American April Fool's Day, this is the Jewish season of the miraculous escape from Egypt, accompanied by 10 horrific plagues, which doesn't make for a lot of humor. And, I must say, the Torah is not really a repository of jokes.

However, there are two moments of ironic humor in the Exodus story. One is when the rebellious midwives, whom the Pharaoh instructed to kill every Hebrew male child at birth, are called before Pharaoh to explain why they have not followed his orders. Their reply: "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, but are like animals, and before we can get to them, they have already given birth." In other words, those clever midwives played right into the Pharaoh's prejudicial thinking, that the Hebrews were 'like animals,' and so he accepted their excuse for letting the Hebrew boys live, including Moses.

The other moment of what we might call humor occurs when Moses and the Hebrews have finally been thrust out of Egypt, due to the devastating 10th plague. They were on the run for 3 days, only to find the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea) in front of them and hear the thunder of 600 Egyptian chariots chasing them from behind. They yell out to Moses with a question, (imagine this in a New York-stand-up-comedy accent) "Were there not enough graves in Egypt, that you brought us out here to die in the wilderness?"

So... even in the most challenging of times, even in the Torah, there are brushes with humor....



Rabbi Me'irah Iliinsky
Community Rabbi, Rhoda Goldman Plaza

Firsthand Account of (Not Taking) the RGP Tour

I had an appointment to take a tour and eat lunch at Rhoda Goldman Plaza I stepped off the elevator to meet the Sales Director and saw my friend, an RGP resident.

As we talked, we decided to have tea in the Café. On the way, we stopped to work on a puzzle, where I put down my glasses. After a few moments my friend realized she was missing Roryography, dance exercise. She insisted we go, “that it is not to be missed.” (On our way to the Activity Room, I saw the water fountain, which reminded me to hydrate before exercise).

But before I could take a sip, I spied a bookcase full of books by residents. My friend started telling me about a recent book talk by one of the authors. Another resident rolled up and the conversation turned into an invitation to see her apartment.

We went upstairs to the 3rd Floor, walking through the Patio Terrace and enjoying the succulents and roses. We were exiting out on the other side when there was a practice fire alarm. We ran (walked quickly) to my friend’s apartment. And once it was over I remembered why I was at RGP and that at the end of morning.

- I had missed the appointment.
- I was hungry and thirsty.
- I had a puzzle piece to give back.
- I was missing my glasses.
- I did not exercise with that cute guy, Rory.

Then, when I tried to figure out why nothing got done that morning, I was baffled because I knew I had been busy. I do realize this was a serious problem and I’ll try to get some help for it, but first... I’ll check my email.



Allison Rodman
Director of Sales & Marketing

Meet Charlie

Hey everyone! Thank you for welcoming me in with such open arms! Everyone here has been so kind and warm. Allow me to introduce myself! I am Charlie Karam and I am the new Administrative Assistant with Rhoda Goldman Plaza. I am thrilled to be here and I am incredibly excited to be here.

I was born in the Philippines and moved to America when I was six, where I grew up in the Bay Area. I was also wonderfully lucky to bump



into my now wife McKayla whom I married last November.

If you need to find me or would like to chat, you can find me at the Administrative Office. I look forward to meeting all of you!

Overheards from Mary Swope

“Do you know know where you’re going?”
“I’ll let you know if I remember”

“I cannot find something”
“Just lie down and sleep”

“And now what we do is wait”
“I’m very good at that”

“We’ve been married seventy years”
“I attribute it to inertia”



Wish Them a Happy Birthday!

April Birthdays

Residents

4	Carol J	16	Toni B.
8	Priscilla S.	16	Charlotte P.
16	Maureen S.	22	Alice Y.
16	Joan L.	22	Evelyn A.
19	Anita W.	27	Barbara B.
21	Jack H.		

Staff

1	Perriesha B.	22	Enat M
12	Ha T.	24	Miroslava M.
14	Youlian J.	25	Aiqin Y.
17	Man W.	25	Santosh KC.
18	Masako M.	26	Bainian J.
19	Shaoling S.	27	Alfonso H.
19	Christine L.	27	Xiuying P.
22	Ofelia B.	30	James W.

Tallulah Grant, Life Enrichment Coordinator

Tallulah has been a member of the Life Enrichment Team since August 2023! Born and raised in San Francisco, she attended Mercy High School. After high school, she graduated from Chico State with a degree in Public Health. Tallulah was drawn to Rhoda Goldman Plaza because she grew up helping her grandmother throw parties for her friends. She has always felt a connection with elders. Tallulah felt that working at RGP would give her a chance to get to know older adults from all walks of life. She especially enjoys using humor to brighten someone’s day. “Tallulah has a caring, welcoming presence in activities. She is really an asset to the Life Enrichment Team!” said Emma, Director of Life Enrichment.

When asked what her career aspirations are, Tallulah said she wants to keep working in geriatrics and is exploring the study of speech language pathology with older adults. But for now, she loves loving getting to explore the city’s vast cultures especially the farmer’s markets and nightlife.



Emma Davis, LMFT
Director of Life Enrichment

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A DIVISION OF JEWISH FAMILY
AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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“then I had inspiration”

ANNUAL RESIDENT ART SHOW

March 30 – June 22, 2025

Resident Painting, Ceramics, Sculpture

PLEASE JOIN US

Artist Reception | Sunday, March 30th | 2PM–4PM

Refreshments Served | RSVP: AllisionR@JFCS.org

RGP Art Gallery

Established in 2019

Specializing in San Francisco Bay Area artists.

Four shows yearly.

Founded to enliven resident life.



*Portraits of Rhoda Goldman
Plaza Residents,
from the sketch book of Jack
Herman.*