

## Chapter 9

# FWFTY is Nifty

*Your old people shall dream dreams, your young shall see visions.*

—Joel 3:1

The Miriam Club. The OT Club. The Council of Jewish Women Juniors. Young Judaea. Aleph Zadek Aleph. B'nai B'rith Girls. United Synagogue Youth.

Throughout the congregation's first five decades, an assortment of youth groups captured the energy and interest of Fort Worth's Jewish teen-agers. Few of these groups were co-ed. None was exclusively for Reform youth.

When Beth-El recruited Rabbi Robert Schur in December 1956, the 35-year-old rabbi stipulated that he have the latitude to launch a Temple Youth Group affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY). Similar youth groups were already working their magic at synagogues in Dallas and Houston.

NFTY, an offshoot of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, had begun in 1939, focusing on young adults in their 20s. The movement took off after World War II when it switched its attention to teens.<sup>36</sup>

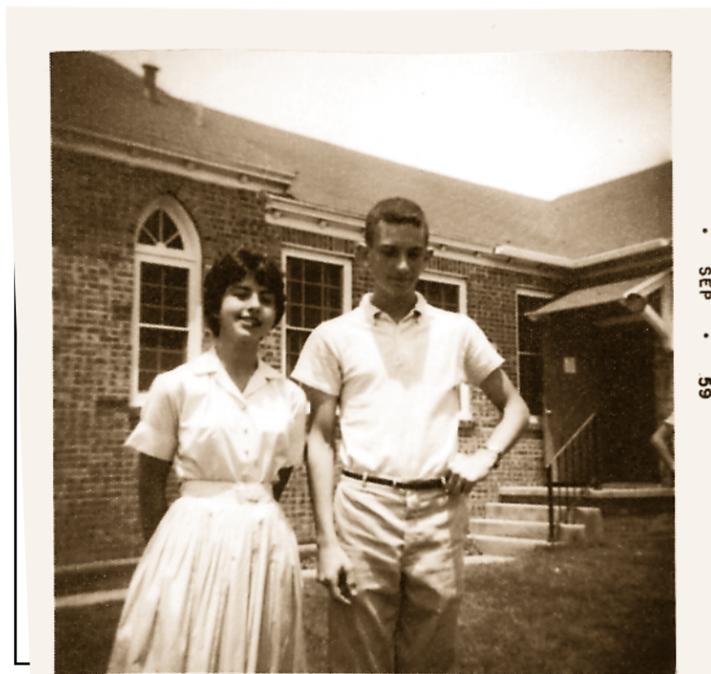
NFTY's purpose was to imbue the younger generation of Reform Jews with a religious consciousness via a trendy, sociable approach. To this end, it fostered an extended-family feeling—calling youth group advisers “aunt” and “uncle” and arranging home hospitality during regional conclaves. A small-town teen, accustomed to being virtually the “only Jew” in his or her age group, became acquainted with a network of Jewish friends across the state and throughout the country. For adolescents from Fort Worth, where Jews comprise less than 1% of the populace, the discovery of a Jewish world was often electrifying.

NFTY stayed current, adapting Jewish rituals to trends in American culture. During the 1950s, for example, the accent was on jazz with discussion groups in beatnik-coffeehouse surroundings. During the 1960s, the lingo and altruism of the Peace Corp inspired the Torah Corps—a weekend of study—and the Mitzvah Corps—a good-deeds brigade. Still later, Temple “lock-ins”—where teen-agers spent the night at the synagogue talking Jewish philosophy, snacking, singing, and occasionally sleeping—borrowed its terminology from the sit-ins and

teach-ins of the civil-rights and Vietnam War eras.

During Rabbi Schur's first six months in Fort Worth, he explained to the Temple board the youth group's focus. It would be aimed at high-school students, grades nine through 12, whose families belonged to Beth-El. The rabbi was firm that only children of Beth-El could belong to FWFTY—the acronym for the Fort Worth Federation of Temple Youth. The membership restriction was peculiar to Fort Worth. In most cities across Texas and Oklahoma, such youth groups were open to all Jewish teens, regardless of synagogue affiliation. Fort Worth's membership policy was a source of continuing friction and discussion until the 1990s, when Beth-El's board dropped the membership requirement.

During FWFTY's first decade, Rabbi Schur



JOAN BERGER ROSEN and Steve Ritzwoller stand outside Lubbock's Congregation Shaareth Israel while attending TOFTY's first regional board meeting in 1959.

kicked off each year's activities with a barbecue, serving his home-cooked beef and sauce. One year the barbecue was at Benbrook Lake, followed by a hayride. Another year it was at Marcia Rosenthal's house on Hildring Drive and included a dunk in the pool. The next year, Judy Wisch hosted the kick-off. Wherever it was staged, the rabbi relished his role as barbecue king.

He also enjoyed planning weekend conclaves, where the focus was on his favorite Jewish philosopher, Leo Baeck. Another weekend gathering, called “Let My People Go,” explored the plight of Soviet Jewry, with parents masquerading as Russian KGB agents.

The cornerstone of the Temple Youth movement

was the summer camp experience. Religious Schools throughout the country had begun sending their teens to rented camping facilities. In a rural, relaxed, outdoor setting, teen-agers were more open to learning and conversing about religion than in Sunday School. They enjoyed mingling with Jewish teens from across the region and talking about their beliefs while they built an esprit de corps and lifelong friendships.

The Texas-Oklahoma Federation of Temple Youth (known by the acronym TOFTY and later called NFTY-TOR), was formed in 1959, with its first board meeting in Lubbock. (Previously, Texas had been a region unto itself.) Three Beth-El teens attended TOFTY's first meeting, among them FWFTY President Martin Frost, a future congressman who got his start in politics through Temple Youth. Also in Lubbock for the expanded region's first executive board meeting were Carl Uhrmacher, who was elected regional treasurer, and Joan Berger Rosen, who was tapped to organize a co-ed slumber party.

That August, TOFTY's summer camp was held at

**FWFTY LEADERS, 1959** (below): Front row, left to right: Leslie Gerolde, Betty Uhrmacher; Second row: Stuart Glass, Melody Tuchin, Carl Uhrmacher, Joan Berger Rosen, Steve Ritzwoller. Third row: Rabbi Robert Schur, Martin Frost.

Day or night Martin is on call  
As FWFTY Prexy, he gives his all.  
Frost loves to travel and make friends,  
Invite him to your town any week-end.



Martin

Though Joan Berger is not very tall  
She really has lots on the ball.  
Her minutes keep our chapter up to date  
As Secretary we think she really rates.



Joan

Advisor Anita Uhrmacher assures  
Her culinary art is the best  
Our supper meetings are  
Her cooking can



Carl

Our Veep is one of wh  
We sing his  
Carl's



Camp Stewart in Hunt, Texas. The next year, the setting was Waco's Camp Val Verde for a weekend filled with Israeli folk dancing and "social dancing" to a rock 'n' roll beat. Two summers later, the venue was Echo Hill Ranch, a camp outside Kerrville, Texas, operated by Tom and Min Friedman, the parents of author, songwriter, and cultural commentator Kinky Friedman.

During the mid-1960s, TOFTY settled down to annual outings at Camp Carter on Fort Worth's Lake Worth. A four-to-seven-day session was held for the younger teens followed by a seven-to-10-day experience for the oldest. FWFTY adviser Ted Hoffman ("Uncle Ted"

### NFTY-TOR Regional Presidents from Fort Worth

Bill Schur	1965
Eddie Feld	1968
Mark Weiner	1990
Sara Horton	2001

### FWFTY Presidents

Larry Ferstenfeld	1958	Fred Glasser	1980-81
Martin Frost	1959	Robert Simon	1981-82
Carl Uhrmacher	1959-60	Marilyn Lamensdorf	1982-83
Melody Tuchin	1960-61	Jill Greenman	1983-84
Bette Uhrmacher	1961-62	Sandy Mack	1984-85
Sandra Gernsbacher	1962-63	Craig Goldman	1985-86
Bob Archenhold	1963-64	Rachel Kay	1986-87
Marcia Rosenthal	1964-65	Elise Granek	1987-88
Susan Samson	1965-66	Kendra Fisch	May-Nov 1988
Richard Schwartz	1966-67	Doreen Schussler	Dec- May 1989
Mike Archenhold	1967-68	Lisa Ginsberg	1989-90
Faye Lynn Schwartz	1968-69	Michael Gilbert	1990-91
Pam Winston	1969-70	Michael Berenzweig	1991-92
Laura Lande	1970-71	Rachel Bzostek	1992-93
Judy Wisch	1971-72	Melissa Chud	1993-94
Tricia Krauss	1972-73	Caleb Causey	1994-95
Nancy Glazer	1973-74	Sharon Bzostek	1995-96
Alyson Wolens	1974-75	Heather Chud	1996-97
Rusty Feld	1975-76	Kenneth Berman	1997-98
Sally Scharff	1976-77	Amanda Hollander	1998-99
Jordan Schweitzer	1977-78	Jason Rivera	1999-2000
Howard Baum	1978-79	Adam Hollander	2000-02
Lisa Mack	1979-80	Geoff Finucane	2002-

to the kids) used his vacation time from General Dynamics to volunteer as a camp staffer. "The kids put out a camp newspaper, pitched in with the cooking, and planned their own programs," Hoffman recalled. "They wrote 'creative' worship services. . . . We put a large Magen David over the cross in the outdoor chapel." The "creative" service allowed campers to substitute their

own interpretations for familiar Hebrew prayers. "They were not only learning Jewish history but becoming part of it," Hoffman reflected.

Pediatrician Frank Cohen was the camp doctor. His backup was Dr. Eugene Steinberger. When a camper fell off a horse one summer, the injured youth was driven to Cohen's office and then referred to another caring congregate, Dr. Louis Levy, a nationally prominent ortho-

## Temple Youth Provides 'Constructive Activities'

BY ROBERT SIMON  
President, Beth-El  
Temple Youth

What is the greatest organization in the world? In my wholly unbiased opinion, it is the Fort Worth Federation of Temple Youth.



Robert Simon

FWFTY provides thoughtful and constructive activities, in a Jewish context, for the Reform Jewish youth of Fort Worth and Tarrant County. Youth group activities cover a wide range from community involvement (social action) to social activities for the enjoyment of the membership. FWFTY has raised money for several service agencies such as UNICEF and the American Cancer Society. It has also served

ensdorf (First Vice-President), Jennifer Kay (Second Vice-President), Mike Sankary (Treasurer), Lorin Goldman (Corresponding Secretary), and Mark Rubin (Recording Secretary).

After a productive summer of planning and rewriting an obsolete constitution, FWFTY expects to have a great year ahead. This is our 25th anniversary year, and the celebration will be this winter. Details of the Silver Jubilee will be forthcoming as planning continues.

### TEXAS JEWISH POST

Dedicated to Truth, Liberty and Justice  
Editor and Publisher . . . . . J.A. Wisch  
Associate Editor . . . . . Rene Wisch

Congreg serving gational patting worship serious the Beth Group summer August fifty ped celebrate gether.

FWFT iated with homa Fe Youth. youth gr the opp with Je Texas, C nation. hold th tions: TOFTY dent; Ma TOFTY person; F ship Cha executive follows: (Presiden



### UP A TREE WITH FWFTY in 1972.

First row, left to right: Sherrie Lande, Anndee Schwartz, Tricia Krauss, Sara Cristol, Nancy Glazer, and advisers Margot Feld and Ted Hoffman.

Second row: Felice Antweil, Sherri Evans, Alyson Wolens, Marla Lande.

Third row: Cindy Rosenthal, Bill Echt, Ellen Rubinson, Sally Scharff, Mitch Reitman.  
Top row: Bruce Fine, Monica Freed.

Knowledge. On the first night of camp, he instructed campers to deposit cigarettes, marijuana, and other contraband in the box—no questions asked. “He said, ‘We are not here to have you arrested. We just don’t want you taking this stuff for the next 10 days,’” recalled former camper Rusty Feld. The last night of camp, the box was returned to the Tree of Knowledge. Under cover of darkness, campers retrieved their contraband.

The most important participants at youth group gatherings were the song leaders. A camper with a guitar would sit in the shade of a tree, strum a tune, and attract a cluster of other guitarists and singers. “People felt safety in music,” Feld said. “It was a route to acceptance.”

Music serenaded every event. Adviser Ted Hoffman recalled renting a station wagon, driving a carload of kids to a conclave in Beaumont, and singing all the way to the music of guitarist Robbi Sherwin, who today is cantorial soloist at Austin’s Congregation Kol Haleb. “There are different paths to Judaism: social action, cultural, intellectual, gastronomic, artistic, musical,” Sherwin observed. “What jelled my Jewish identity and spirituality was the music of the movement.” Bill Echt, Michael Glazer, and Ralph Archenhold were also FWFTY guitarists and song leaders.

Nell (“Aunt Nellie”) Hall, FWFTY adviser from 1969 to 1973, accompanied the

teens south of the border to a conclave hosted by MEXTY, the Temple Youth Group at Mexico City’s Beth Israel Jewish Community Center. The JCC there was home to a Reform congregation. “They sent kids to conclaves all the time,” Hall recalled. In later years, the Mexican congregation became a mix of Reform and Conservative Jews. It dropped its UAHC affiliation and its connection to TOFTY.

FWFTY’s membership rolls waxed and waned. When membership dipped to 11 people in 1975, advisers noted the upsurge in B’nai B’rith Youth Organizations (BBYO), which were open to all Jewish youth. A few years later, when FWFTY membership was strong, its members wanted friends from Ahavath

**FWFTY IN 1966.** The chapter swelled to more than 40 members. Seated, left to right, Rabbi Robert Schur, FWFTY President Susan Samson, vice president Rebecca Winesanker, Bill Simon, Mike Archenhold, and advisers Ellen and Ted Mack.



**FWFTY Advisers Through the Years**  
Rabbi Robert J. Schur

- Anita Uhrmacher
- Doris Frost
- Anna Widess
- Roz Rosenthal
- Esther Winesanker
- Ellen & Ted Mack
- Louise & Gordon Appleman
- Nell (Aunt Nellie) Hall
- Kenneth Meyerson
- Margot (Aunt Margot) Feld
- Ted (Uncle Ted) Hoffman
- Faye & Harry Chud
- Mr. & Mrs. Miles Hirsch
- Eddie Feld
- Paul Fogel

- Russ Feld
- Marge Fleck & Bob Van Geisen
- Marc & Connie Moise
- Kathy Berkman
- John Broude & Judy Rosenblum
- Diane & Sherman Langer
- Denise & Lewis Schwartz
- Lisa & David Friedson

- Carol Minker
- Marcy & Greg Phillips
- Janis Meyerson
- Arlene Schwartz
- Russ & Luann Feld
- Marc and Jude Slotter
- Scott Slotter

Sholom to attend social events and to join the chapter. The latter was still not permitted. Some chapter presidents threw their energy into organizing joint social events with BBYO as well as discussions about the differences between Judaism’s denominations. Some years, representatives of FWFTY and BBYO convened for a calendar clearing meeting to avoid conflicting events. Inevitably there were conflicts, leading to resentments. Another problem FWFTY encountered was competition with its regional organization. Rabbi Schur noted



**FWFTY IN 1970.** Advisers Mr. and Mrs. Miles Hirsch, standing at left, with Nell Hall on the right standing in front of Rabbi Schur.

First row: Judy Wisch, Anndee Schwartz, Karen Stenzler.

Second row, Faye Schwartz, Eddie Feld, Pam Winston, Van Stenzler.

in 1980 that Beth-El’s teens were putting their energy into TOFTY activities, sapping strength from the local chapter.

Despite periodic dips in membership and activity, FWFTY has lasted for decades and carved a strong legacy of social action. During its early years, FWFTY hosted holiday parties for mentally retarded children at the Denton State School. The congregation’s first Mitzvah Day was instituted by FWFTY on March 8, 1964, when the teen-agers hired themselves out to wash cars, clean houses, mow lawns, polish silver, and wash windows, with the proceeds going to charity. The event was nicknamed “M” Day on a flier.

FWFTY kids went trick-or-treating for UNICEF, one year raising more than \$1,000 “and having a good time.” The good times ended in 1975, when the United

**TO CONCLAVE**  
**Teen Group Of Beth-El Plans Trip**  
Eleven members of the Beth-El Temple Teens will attend the annual summer conclave of the Texas-Oklahoma Federation of Temple Youth Aug. 26-30 at Camp Stewart near Hunt.  
The group will go to the camp by chartered bus. They are Joan Berger, Larry Perstenfeld, Martin Frost, Steve Ritzwoller, Paul Shapiro, Andy Speigel, Larry Steinberger, Melody Tuchin, Bette Uhrmacher, Carl Uhrmacher and Mike Weisberg. They will be accompanied by advisers Mrs. R. R. Uhrmacher and Rabbi Robert J. Schur.  
The featured conclave lecturer, Dr. Abraham Cronbach of Cincinnati, will be assisted by six rabbis from Texas congregations. Discussion topics will branch from the conclave theme, “Reverence for Life,” and will include crime and punishment, intergroup relations and life in the atomic age.  
Martin Frost, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Frost Jr., 4306 Hill-dring Dr., is vice president of the Texas-Oklahoma Federation of Temple Youth and Carl Uhrmacher, son of Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Uhrmacher, 3531 Westliff Rd. S., is treasurer. Local officers are Carl Uhrmacher, president; Berger, vice president; Miss Tuchin, secretary, and Weisberg, treasurer.

**SUMMER CONCLAVE**  
*at Camp*

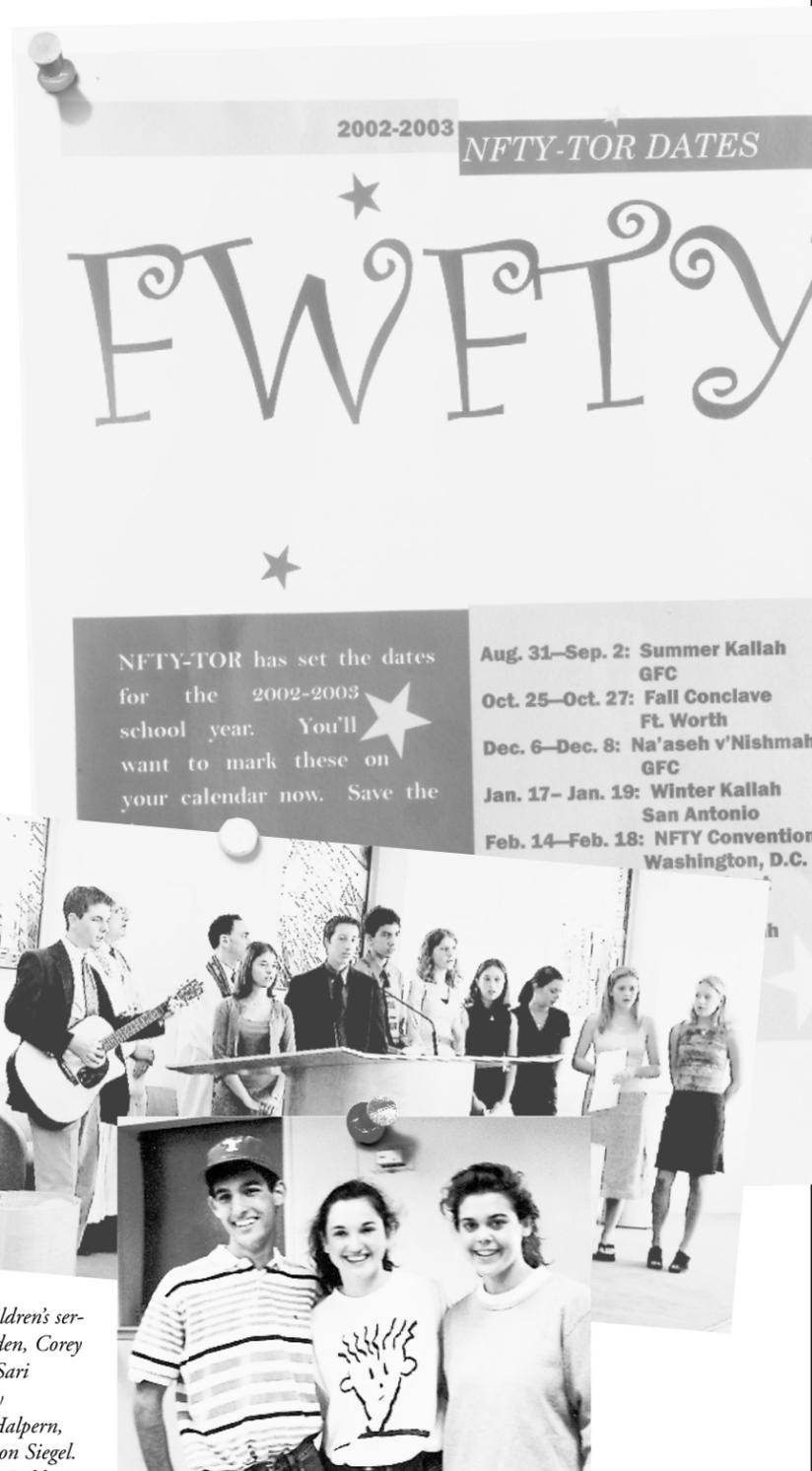
*Stewart near Hunt, Texas, was publicized during August 1959 in the Texas Jewish Post.*

Nations passed a resolution equating Zionism with racism. FWFTY turned its energy in other directions. By then, the teen-agers had participated in a civil-rights march downtown with Rabbi Schur on behalf of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. They supported the United Farm Workers and picketed Safeway to protest the supermarket's sale of non-union grapes and lettuce.

TOFTY advocated boycotting Pepsi Cola soft drinks, but the Fort Worth chapter opted to leave PepsiCo alone. The local franchise was owned by the Glazers, who donated soft drinks to every FWFTY activity. "You don't bite the hand that feeds you," Rusty Feld remarked.

In later years, the teens volunteered at the Presbyterian Night Shelter, raising \$800 for the facility to purchase a washing machine. The chapter began coordinating the annual school supply drive for DeZavala Elementary, the congregation's adopted school. On Rosh Hashanah, FWFTY's president informed the congregation of the DeZavala students' needs—from pencils and crayons to backpacks and underwear. The teen-agers handed out empty sacks, which congregants returned on Yom Kippur filled with the requested items. During the High Holy Days, FWFTY members led the children's services, providing role models for the next generation.

FWFTY has flourished, nurturing social consciousness, leadership, spirituality, and friendships. It has sometimes served as a matchmaker. Jill Greenman met her future husband, Rabbi Ronnie Segal of Bryan, through Greene Family Camp, the regional Temple Youth camp that opened in 1976 in Bruceville, Texas. Alyce Hoffman met her husband-to-be, Dennis Alter of Beaumont, through Temple Youth get-togethers. That is also how Rusty Feld met Lubbock's Luann Post. The latter couple began dating as young adults, married, and became advisers to the next generation of Fort Worth's Temple youth. 🌟



**HIGH HOLY DAYS SERENADE.**  
 Temple teens led Rosh Hashanah children's services in 2001. From left: Shayna Oden, Corey Pew, Adam Hollander with guitar, Sari Hochberger, William Kelfer, Geoffrey Finucane, Marissa Sands, Rebecca Halpern, Jessica Siegel, Samantha Siegel, Allison Siegel. Behind the teens, in white robes, are Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger and Cantor Meir Finkelstein.

**MICHAEL GILBERT, DAWN WEINER, AND MELISSA MINKER** coordinated Maccabiah, a regional Temple Youth Group olympics at Greene Family Camp in 1990.