

"Reflections" For Golden Anniversary of Ordination

I'm glad I can look back on these past fifty years with a smile. As my wife Suzy says, "It was a charmed rabbinate." To serve one congregation for an entire career says more about them than it does about me. We had – and still have – a wonderful relationship, and there's not a minute of that half-century I'd trade with anyone else.

They were kind and very open to change and to challenge; they were involved with the broader community, with our movement; and I found that they cared for each other deeply. I hope I was part of that positive vibe that was felt by so many because I tried my best to foster relationships that spoke of the congregation as truly "sacred."

To me, that's what it's all about. My predecessor, Herbert Drooz taught me by example, by deed, that we were stewards of God's people, not overlords. And they responded in kind. In my twenty-fifth year, one of our classmates asked me what the best thing was about serving one congregation for so long, and I responded, "*Getting to know all the people.*" And of course when he asked me the worst, well, I had to say, "*Getting to know all the people.*" And now another twenty-five years have past and my answer is the same. I've become good friends with so many, most of my past presidents, in fact; and when they die as so many have, I have felt it deeply. There's a void in the pews and there's a void within me.

I couldn't have done it without Suzy, and those aren't empty words. There have been some tough times across our fifty-two years, but her love and concern for me have been the pillars, sometimes more than I deserved.

It's all in the relationships, how we view ourselves and others, recognizing our strengths and our faults and realizing that everyone has their own strengths and faults. After all, we're mortals.

It's been a charmed rabbinate for me.

I wish all my classmates health and strength, and many more years of dedicated service. Most of us may have retired as rabbis, but we sure didn't retire as Jews.