ELUL STORIES
Sharing our stories, sharing lives, creating community

Elul is the month leading up to Rosh HaShanah. Each day during the month, a different Temple Beth Torah congregant will respond to the question:

What is the best gift you have ever received?

Gift: How to live a Jewish Life - from my parents,
Nathalie and Herman Bernstein
Suellen Sommer

I was born and raised in Oyster Bay New York. My father was also born there and my grandparents were long-time residents of the town, having set up a family clothing store in 1906. My mother came from St. Paul, Minnesota, the youngest of 7 children, and part of a huge, extended, Orthodox family.

There were very few Jews in town or school, but my parents kept a kosher home, belonged to a temple, and imbued a sense of pride and joy in being Jewish. They were pillars of the community and synagogue. My friends were mostly Christians, and we played and sang Christmas Carols and Easter songs in school. We knew who we were, and our friends were inquisitive and wanted to know, as well: Bat Mitzvahs, lighting the Chanukah candles, Confirmation, and of course, being invited to the Passover seders, which my parents never got tired of explaining and teaching -- all were anxious to learn and participate.

My first experience of anti-semitism occurred in Oklahoma in my mid 20's, many miles away from Oyster Bay.

I am grateful for the person I am today, thanks to my upbringing, and have tried to instill these values in my life and children.

Suellen and Mitchel Sommer joined Temple Beth Torah 1 year ago and are very pleased and happy to be members. We feel very welcome here, and hope to participate more and more, as the years go on.
Would you like to share your Elul Story? Answer the question: What is the best gift you have ever received? You can interpret the word gift very liberally- a moment, a thing, a find, advice, a surprise. Send it to me at: ravsusie@gmail.com

If you missed any of the previous Elul Stories you can go to www.tbtny.org (media galleries/elul stories).