

Leaders meet



Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, right, and PA President Mahmoud Abbas meet in Jerusalem. Despite the tension and uncertainty over possible confrontation on Israel's northern border, Olmert and Abbas will continue to meet every two weeks as originally agreed to try and broker some form of peace agreement. The two men last met on Feb. 19.

Online debate

Online poll question for this week: In reference to our page 5 story, would you support Rep. John Tobin's proposal to hold municipal elections in Boston on Saturdays?

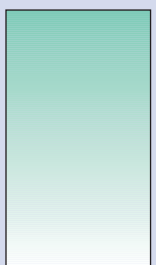
- A. Yes
B. No

Tell us what you think at www.thejewishadvocate.com or e-mail editorial@thejewishadvocate.com.

Palestinian refugees

With regard to the Palestinian refugee issue, do you think some or all of the 3.7 million should be granted the right of return or given compensation in the event that a Palestinian state is created?

77.97%



Yes

No

When the physician becomes the patient

New memoir documents doctor's struggle against Parkinson's disease and dementia

By Lorne Bell
Advocate Staff

For Dr. Thomas Graboys, practicing medicine always meant more than just treating disease. Although he had achieved national renown as a cardiologist at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, Graboys prided himself on caring for patients in their time of need. But after Parkinson's disease and dementia forced him into early retirement in 2006, he quickly realized that finding hope was a lot more difficult than giving it.

"I was at the height of my career, living a charmed life, and then everything started to unravel," said Graboys.

That unraveling, and the unflappable strength that Graboys continues to demonstrate in his daily life, are part of a compelling new book titled, "Life in the Balance: A Physician's Memoir of Life, Love, and Loss with Parkinson's Disease and Dementia."

After 30 years as a healer, Graboys, now 64, is a patient in every sense. The legs he used to make his rounds have slowed to a shuffle. His posture is now stooped and his body is wracked with uncontrollable tremors. But perhaps

the worst of his symptoms are the result of Lewy body dementia, a degenerative disease that often affects Parkinson's patients and impairs cognitive ability.

"I can't predict on any given day how I'm going to be," said Graboys. "The Parkinson's is not simply Parkinson's alone; it is Parkinson's with pieces of Alzheimer's [disease]. That lack of predictability makes this a challenging clinical problem."

Before his symptoms forced him to retire, Graboys had a thriving practice at the Lown Cardiovascular Group in Brookline, was a senior physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital and served as president emeritus of the Lown Cardiovascular Research Center. He was part of the 1993 "Cardiology Dream Team" that diagnosed Celtics basketball star Reggie Lewis' fatal heart condition, and in 1985 he shared the Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

"Tom [Graboys] is a consummately good clinician and a first-rate doctor," said Dr. Bernard Lown, founder of the Lown Group and one of the country's leading cardiologists. "He has put

up an enormously good struggle at a time when he was constantly worried about losing what defines every one of us a human being: our mind."

Graboys first experienced symptoms in his late 40s - around the same time that his wife passed away from colon cancer - but denied he was ill for over a decade. He has since remarried, and refers to his current wife, Vicki, as the "real unsung hero."

But not too long ago, Graboys was himself a hero to scores of patients. They marveled at the way he was able to listen and give of his time, according to Peter Zheutlin, Graboys' friend and the book's co-author.

"I interviewed several patients, and they all said that Tom just had a way of listening to what you had to say and helping to lift the burden of illness by taking it on himself," said Zheutlin. "He really believes that the greatest diagnostic tools a physician has at his disposal are his ears, and that is very uncommon, particularly today."

Zheutlin and Graboys worked on the book for 2 1/2 years. They would sit for hours in Graboys' home as the doctor dictated his experiences to Zheutlin. It was a challenging process and often Graboys' symptoms would cause him to trail off or lose his train of



Dr. Thomas Graboys

thought completely.

"Tom's ability to communicate had clearly taken a hit, so we had many conversations where I left not sure of what I was going to be able to extract," said Zheutlin. "But I realized that what seemed disjointed might not be, and I looked for connections. As best I could, I wanted to portray the experience as he was living it, and to do it in a way that people reading the book would say, 'That sounds like Tom.'"

For Graboys, the book is more than a memoir of personal tragedy. It is a resource for Parkinson's patients and their families, and a continuation of his work as physician caretaker.

"I am continually humbled by hearing patients' stories, and that is a privilege," he said. "I want people [with Parkinson's disease] to realize that they don't have to and shouldn't go it alone. The issue is not dying from Parkinson's, but living with it, and I want to find the best way of doing that."

Kaplan: Hillel is not targeting non-Jews

Continued from Page 1

"There is a fine line between welcoming and targeting non-Jewish students," said Jonah Kaplan, a Boston University senior and former president of the university's Hillel chapter. "We are the center for Jewish life on campus, and the only change in our mission was to attract and welcome all Jewish students, regardless of their Jewish educational background."

Larry Sternberg, executive director of Brandeis Hillel, agreed.

"When the program speaks to the values of the campus as a whole, it is naturally going to attract a number of people, Jews and others," said Sternberg.

But the story went a step further, suggesting that Hillel's mission has recently changed in response to a disengaged generation of Jewish students. The article noted that in order to "reach the majority" of current Jewish collegians, Hillel's leaders have implemented new pro-

gramming to change perceptions of a "Jews-only venue."

Not so, according to Rabbi Joseph Polak, director of Boston University Hillel.

"If gentile students wander over with Jewish friends, that's one thing, but to say that we are programming for non-Jews so that Jews will come is a joke," Polak said.

But JTA Editor Lisa Hostein defended the March 31 story's accuracy and conclusions.

"We didn't suggest that Hillel is less committed to reaching Jewish students," she said. "Our understanding and the quotes from Hillel's leaders in the story suggest that Hillel is trying to reach more Jewish students by appealing to a more universal element."

But even if the JTA article is over-arching, it speaks to the reality of an increasingly pluralistic university setting where interfaith initiatives abound. The challenge for Hillel is to address changing demographics

and global communities from a uniquely Jewish perspective, according to Samuel Mendales, executive director of the Hillel Council of Massachusetts.

"We live in an assimilationist society, and [Hillel] sees the results of demographic change sooner than most other Jewish institutions," said Mendales. "Our programs reflect the world of the university by providing opportunities for students to participate in community service, such as our alternative spring break program, under the auspices of and within a Jewish context. But we are not doing this to bring non-Jewish students into the fold."

At Tufts University, the vast majority of Hillel's programming is aimed at deepening Jewish religious and cultural life on campus, according to Executive Director Rabbi Jeffrey Summit.

"Our goal and role on campus is to be the foundation of Jewish life, and that's where our focus is," said

Summit. "But because we're at a university, and the Jewish tradition has very valuable lessons to teach, our programs also appeal to the broader university community."

One of those programs is Moral Voices, which uses Jewish history to teach students about genocide. And last Monday night, Tufts Hillel hosted a lecture by a local Holocaust survivor and her granddaughter, an undergraduate student. The event attracted both Jewish and non-Jewish students.

But increased interest in Hillel's programming does not reflect a shift in the organization's mission, according to Steinberg. Instead, he said, it speaks to Judaism's relevance in contemporary life.

"The Jewish story is a global story," said Steinberg. "Hillel is designed to empower Jewish students to see themselves as part of the Jewish story, and to enable them to be the authors of the next chapter."

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