



# Coming full circle

Bend woman among older adults honoring faith through Jewish rite of passage

By Alandra Johnson *The Bulletin*

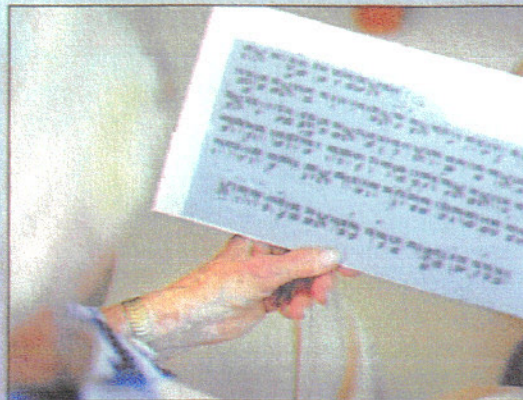
As a girl growing up in Alabama, Ceil Hermann knew she was Jewish, but that was about it. As a member of one of only three Jewish families in town, she didn't go to temple or study the faith.

Now, at age 92, Hermann feels she is coming full circle. She is preparing to go through a bat mitzvah as part of a group of adults at Temple Beth Tikvah.

"This is the crowning jewel of my Jewish life," said Hermann. Members of her family from across the country are coming to Bend to attend Saturday's ceremony, which will include the group members leading the service and congregation in prayer and reading in Hebrew from the Torah. Hermann isn't shy about calling this moment a big deal in her life.

Being part of the group has energized her. It's also proven something to her. "No matter how old you are, you can always learn something new," Hermann said.

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Photos by Tyler Rosemer / The Bulletin

Ceil Hermann reviews a portion of a Jewish prayer in Hebrew. She will read the prayer aloud Saturday as part of the bat mitzvah to be held at Temple Beth Tikvah in Bend.

# Hermann

## Continued from E1 Dedication

Bar or bat mitzvahs typically take place when a person turns 12 or 13 as a rite of passage in the Jewish faith.

A bar or bat mitzvahs (bar mitzvahs are for boys, bat for girls) signifies that the individual is now considered an adult member of the religious community. The terms bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah mean son or daughter of the commandments.

But it isn't simply a matter of ceremony. The event will mark the culmination of much hard work and dedication. For about a year, the Bend group of nine women and one man has met once a week to study Hebrew and examine questions of Judaism. Most of the other members are in their 50s or 60s.

The decision to form the group was made after members of the temple attended a bat mitzvah for a 13-year-old and the adults realized that they, too, wanted to go through the process.

Kathy Schindel, a member of the group who helped offer Hebrew instruction, says it isn't terribly unusual for older adults to decide to go through a bat or bar mitzvah.

Rabbi Alan Berg offered instruction once a month. Group members worked on their own the other weeks. Berg and the group discussed religious ideas and personal experiences. While the preparation is the same at all ages, Berg believes that for adults the "experience is wholly different than it is for a 13-year-old." Adults are able to work on the religion issues on a whole different level. Berg says they talk about big questions such as, "What are we here for?" and "What is the purpose of my life?"

## Camaraderie

"We've been each other's cheerleaders," Schindel said.

Hermann decided to join the group after seeing a picture of a few ladies from Cleveland. The women were in their 90s and had gone through a bat mitzvah. Hermann felt inspired. "I never really thought much about it," she said. "I just kind of went for it."

Learning Hebrew has been tricky for Hermann. She says so many letters look alike, and the



Bend resident Ceil Hermann, 92, has studied with a group from Temple Beth Tikvah for a bat mitzvah that will be held Saturday.

Tyler Roemer  
The Bulletin

pronunciation is complicated. Also, written Hebrew is read from right to left. And when group members read from the Torah, they will be voicing words that, on paper, contain no vowels. She's gone over and over and over her Torah portion.

"The hardest part is just learning it, period."

Berg knows learning Hebrew hasn't been easy for Hermann, but he thinks she's mastered it. Berg says it is unusual for people in their 90s to go through this. "Her personality is of someone who is much, much younger," Berg said.

Hermann says her friends in the group kept her going. "My classmates wouldn't let me quit. They kept encouraging me."

Through this process, they all became good friends and share a strong connection. "We're really proud she's part of us," said Schindel, who calls Hermann "amazing."

"We all say we want to be Ceil when we grow up."

## Hermann

Hermann married a Jewish man and moved to Cleveland after World War II. They were members of a congregation, and that was how she learned more about her faith. "It was good to know

about something I was supposed to be a part of," Hermann said.

She has two children. Her son had a bar mitzvah when he was 13. Her daughter, Ann Rosenfield, who lives in Bend, had her bat mitzvah when she was in her 40s. Berg explains the event didn't become commonplace for girls until the 1980s.

This is one of the reasons why Hermann didn't experience a bat mitzvah until now. Hermann, who used to work as an executive vice president for a legal publishing company, moved to Bend seven years ago to be near her daughter.

Hermann is excited to have her family come to the service. Her son from Montana, a granddaughter from New York and a grandson from Seattle will attend. "My family is very proud of me," she said.

Hermann sees the bat mitzvah as the culmination of her faith journey. "I went from really no Jewish life to a full and exciting (one)."

Although the process hasn't always been easy, she is very happy she has done it.

"I think it's important when you're older, to do things."

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