

Lindy publishes novel about running the Temple

By Lee J. Green
Deep South Jewish Voice

Though technically, his is a fictional work with a light-hearted tone blended seamlessly with serious questions about religious tradition, in writing his first novel Malcolm Lindy culled some of his themes and characters from his experiences in Jewish community leadership in Huntsville as well as other places he has lived in the Deep South.

In November, the former Temple B'nai Sholom president and current owner of several Popeye's Chicken franchises in Alabama, published "The Temple President" to show that the best way to deal with serious challenges — as Jews well know — is through humor.

"This idea started several years ago when I was writing letters to the editor and working on the Temple Times (B'nai Sholom's bulletin)," said Lindy. "After a while I realized I had a book in me. A couple of the characters are based on people I know and some of the situations might be familiar to those who know me, but this is not based on any individual congregation. It's designed to appeal to someone who realizes that you can blend religion and humor while not intending to offend anyone."

In "The Temple President," a new president assumes the leadership of a temple and is somewhat aware of the challenges he will face. However, he didn't know that during his term of office a dispute between the rabbi and the temple's major financial contributor would develop and threaten the very life of the temple.

That is topped off with leaking roofs, local anti-Semitism and a congregation

divided by apathy. But the temple president deals with all of these issues with humor and in an egalitarian nature.

"This looks at how we see ourselves as Jews and how those in other religious communities see us. It's about cultural exchanges and asking ourselves why we seem to have certain 'unwritten' traditions," such as going to Chinese restaurants and movies on Christmas, said Lindy, adding that some of the more humorous stories within the story include the temple brotherhood's exchange with a church, along with 'Jews at a Christmas party.'

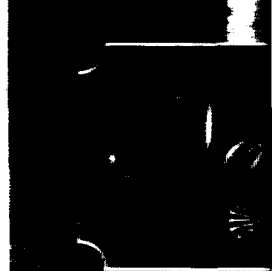
Lindy was born and raised in Jackson, Tenn., before going to the University of Alabama and graduating with a business degree. He then lived in Memphis for 18 years followed by Gadsden for eight years and Huntsville for the past 20-plus years.

He now splits his time between homes in Huntsville and Atlanta. Son Jeff runs the Popeye's franchise locations.

"I came up with the concept for the book a few years ago. I would pick it up and put it back down. But the inspiration and the ideas stayed with me," said Lindy, who now is in his late 60s.

Asked if anything surprised him about the publishing/editing process, Lindy said he was surprised that the editors (from Nebraska) knew so little about Judaism.

"I thought about the Jewish communities I have been in, of course, when writing the book. But the themes, problems, issues and the desire to overcome I think have more universal relevance," he said. "It was written to appeal to those outside of the Jewish community as well as in the Jewish community."



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