

**From:** [David Kraemer](#)  
**To:** [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)  
**Subject:** FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 5.19.20  
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**From:** Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>  
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**Subject:** One Person's Response to Communal Fear 5.19.20

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 6 Cars 5 Trucks 1 Motorcyclist 2 Walkers 1 Runner 1 ISD#197 School Bus #1916 day 2 of #STAFESAFEMN

I was a little startled [this morning](#) when I walked into the bathroom and began to look into the mirror. No, it wasn't what I saw in the mirror that startled me—I am used to that already. Sitting on the bathroom counter were 2 quarters and I realized I haven't handled money or even probably actually seen physical currency in 9 or 10 weeks. I already live in a pretty cashless world, so when I told Phyllis this she said— "you never have any cash on you, you don't write checks, you do everything on-line." I corrected her. "I once made sure I had a dollar or two in my pocket every morning, so when I went to morning services, I could give a little Tzedakah." And for that moment, I thought of the esteemed individuals who carried the little cannister around, collecting a dollar or two from the other 12 or 15 or 20 people who gathered for our 715 AM services.

There was Sid Langman(zl). ((zl)— is a transliteration of the Hebrew letters that stand for may his/her memory be for a blessing). Sid lived in the Montreal Hi-Rise and rode his one speed bike all over town. His pants never quite fit and he had to pull them up consistently as he first walked around [Room 107 at the St. Paul JCC](#) and then inside the Chapel at the congregation stopping in front of each person, breathing heavily and not leaving until you ante up your nominal free will offering for the day. A frequent visitor to the McDonalds on West 7<sup>th</sup>, he would always say to me that he saw some of our members eating there or having coffee-but they rarely spoke—except for one guy who grew up with him and never forgot where he came from either. Sid died at Regions Hospital, his cousin Libby Siegel(zl) crying over the sadness that his life never quite was right after he returned from the service.

There was Beyla Ginzburg(zl). An émigré from the former Soviet Union, Beyla and her husband Grigory(zl) never mastered the English language. She also never missed a morning service at our synagogue or a [Friday night](#) one at Temple of Aaron. She never left empty handed from a kiddush, her purse was bottomless it seemed. At morning minyan she was fierce. She took no prisoners in her collection responsibilities. Having watched Sid in his heyday, she perfected the stance and the ask. When she came towards you, if God forbid you had forgotten your funds that day—you quickly asked your neighbor. You did not want to earn the enmity of Beyla. So well-known were her collection skills that one year at a Synagogue fundraiser a life size cut-out of her appeared at the door with the tagline "Beyla wants you to Give." I will never forget the morning that our then

President, Mark Savin, said to me, you can hear her leaking her breathe when she walks and sure enough a few days later she left her earthly pursuits to the heavenly collection society where hopefully they accept all currency.

Who can forget her rival for the position—Sara Witkin(zl). They often rode together to synagogue and lived on different floors in the Cleveland Hi-Rise. But Sarah's proper Superior, Wisconsin upbringing often clashed with the more brutish Soviet manner displayed by Beyla. Sarah holds a special place in the lore of the early years of my rabbinate and deserves some serious reflections all her own. But her style was simply that of a courteous soul walking around with a cannister for donations—and if you gave you gave and if you didn't you got a smile. The list goes on—and I don't want to leave you with the impression that everyone who collects the daily dollar or two met their death in the process. There were the Markon kids who came each morning [at 7 am](#) with their mom during the year she was in mourning for her father and who raised significant dollars simply because of their cuteness and irresistibility. Along the way there have been the Paper boys (their last name is Paper), a Johnson child or two, and numerous other young folks and older ones too who have served as the daily collectors when no one permanent is in place. In more recent times, the task has been lovingly assumed by Henry Lipman—may he live and be well. Henry, who Paul Wellstone(zl) once said was who he wanted to look like when he grew up, honors Paul each year on the anniversary of Paul's passing. But on a daily basis, there is no kinder soul you would ever meet. He is the kind of person who would go out of his way to give a ride to people who live in the opposite direction which he was going. He holds every cause as equally important and has probably never missed his local DFL caucus or even a routine coffee hour. And when he walks around the Chapel—he makes sure everyone is credited with giving. For in his pocket are extra dollars and if someone has nothing in theirs—he hands you one of his and in return you deposit it in the container.

I tell you these brief vignettes because these are the type of people who made our community a vibrant and decent place. The kind of people who actually make every community and organization a caring and decent place. These are the type of people who expect to live in a community or be active in an organization with a solid social contract and one where one's word—be it on the professional or lay level would be as good as gold. If someone was asked to do something or for something, they accepted the challenge. And if someone was asked to do something, they didn't find out that their services were suddenly not needed when the tides changed. You earned becoming the Tzedaka collector. In the world we are living in today, where such places are now the exception and not the rule, I long for those simple days of common decency and honesty where trust and joy and laughter were always evident. I imagine we all do and one day soon, I'll have a dollar or two in my pocket and I'll find such a place where to daily gift them. In the meantime, 2 quarters on a counter evoked some very special memories of a very special part of my life and, for many of us, our collective lives. Morris

Sent by my iPad