

Introduce Yourself: Bob White

What's Your Story?



Hello, my name is Bob White and I was born and raised in Chicago. My dad was raised as an Orthodox Jew in Russia, but when he emigrated to Chicago, he rebelled and joined a Conservative synagogue. He was president of our temple, seemingly forever, was active in the Zionist Organization and was always selling Israel bonds to anyone who would buy them. He may have walked away from Orthodoxy, but I still had to attend Hebrew school three afternoons/nights a week and continue with Hebrew high school after graduation. Our whole family also attended Friday night services and my dad and I went to Saturday morning services.

As a result, I wasn't able to participate in many sports activities with my friends. I felt that being Jewish was inconsistent with having a normal childhood. Not surprisingly, I rebelled. After graduation from high school, I did not join a synagogue for almost 20 years.

I moved to Los Angeles after law school in 1972 and joined a large law firm, where I practiced for 35 years (much of my time back East). I finally joined Temple Emanuel when I was in my mid-30s (and after my father's death). My wife, Penny, attended Judaism classes at the temple and later converted in an Orthodox ceremony. Rabbi Geller presided over our daughter's bat mitzvah (and will be presiding over her marriage next year). Several years ago, Penny and I participated in a group Rabbi Geller brought together to workshop the curriculum that became the prototype for Wise Aging groups around the country. Among other issues, we discussed the kind of community we would like to have available as we aged. Not long thereafter, ChaiVillageLA came into being. I recently served on ChaiVillageLA's governance committee, where we recommended certain structural changes to the steering committee. When I was in basic training (many years ago), I learned to stay quiet and never volunteer for anything. I forgot that. I am now serving as chair of the finance committee for ChaiVillageLA.