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# Old City Jewish Art Center

A project of Jewish Heritage Programs

119 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, 215-923-1222 [www.jewishartcenter.com](http://www.jewishartcenter.com)

## First Friday Shabbos "Joy Breaks Through All Barriers" Art Exhibition" July 4<sup>th</sup> - 24, 2008

### *Biographies*

#### **Michael Neff**

Michael Neff [Mottke ben Nuta] is an old hermit living in a cave on a cliff overlooking his native town in a primitive country. In winter, he warms himself by burning those of his pictures that haven't blown away or fallen out of his window and down the mountain.

#### **Deborah Schafer**

I started "Art Girl" my caricature business, in 1991. It was an eventful year. My marriage was ending, and I knew that my "real job", as valuable and rewarding as it was (I was art and activities therapist in an acute crisis psychiatric hospital.), did not fulfill a gnawing urge that never subsided: I needed to create my art. A brief encounter with caricaturist, who was busy drawing at Macy's one day, changed everything. I stopped in my tracks and stood behind her, watching as she drew one person after another. It was as though divine providence set in. Focused on the face of the person she was drawing yet sensing my presence, she addressed me: "Do you do this?" she asked. I replied, "Yes." "Want a job?" I said, "Yes" without a blink. I took a leap of faith and after a summer of commuting 2 hours each way to the Sesame Place (I was living in Atlantic City at the time); I began to build my business closer to home. I started by working at every fair and craft event I could, developing my skill at drawing caricature as well as my business. I developed seasonal quick sketch businesses at a number of Jersey Shore Resorts, including Morey's Pier in Wildwood and the Steel Pier in Atlantic City. Winning my first international award as "Caricaturist

of the Year” from the National Caricaturist Network was especially good for business. As my good reputation developed by giving, I built a base of return customers who also sent referrals. Eventually I was able to let go of the retail business, maintaining the caricature entertainment business with clients ranging from large corporations and organizations to private parties. This enabled me to pursue my fine art.

As an artist it is my intention to connect to a greater consciousness that others are likely to relate to. I aspire to appeal to the senses, to evoke intellectual participation, and to invite the viewer to play. My guiding aesthetic principles are beauty, grace and humor. I endeavor to create images that open the heart, that summon compassion. Using deeply observed realism I try to communicate the sanctity of life. Using humor in the form of whimsical drawing, I sometimes caricature and sometimes cartoon as a way of relaxing social constraints and encouraging connection between one another. Humor is the shortest distance between two people.

### **Mark Segal**

Mark S. Segal graduated from Boston University School of Fine Arts in 1974 and has been a performing puppeteer since 1977. Over 40,000 people see Mark’s shows each year. He is best known for “Tooth Buddy Tales” a show that appears regularly within the 5 county areas each year. Since 1985 Mark has built and performed shows for Jewish organizations. His professional involvement in the Jewish Community was due to an association that started with Lubavitch and Rabbi Menachem Schmidt in 1985. Mark is honored to be part of this exhibit as well as to be considered a “friend of Lubavitch”.

### **Al Wiesner**

For Al Wiesner, drawing was his first love, especially trying to duplicate the masters who drew comic books, but there was always a void because there were no Jewish superheroes for him or any Jewish children to relate to.

Al, the creator of *Shaloman*, was born and educated in Philadelphia, PA. He received his post graduate commercial art training at the Dobbins Vocational School as well as The Philadelphia Sketch Club and The Fleisher

Memorial Art School. While serving in the U S Air Force as an Illustrator-Draftsman, he continued his fine arts training at Hobart College and the University of Louisville.

Upon completing his service, he practiced his craft of drawing and painting as well as teaching art courses and cartooning. However, there still lingered a passion for creating a comic book with a Jewish superhero, which did not exist as yet. As a result, *Shaloman* was born twenty years ago. These forty-one books of Jewish content deal with stories of Purim, Passover, Chanukah, as well as time travel and Sci-Fi, and these stories are as exciting as the serial cliffhangers of the 60s and 70s. Some books deal with and explain vestments of the Jewish religion such as talit, shofarim, and the Torah.

At present, Al has recently illustrated a children's book, and is preparing to publish a coffee-table book consisting of the eight books of the *Saga of Shaloman*. He still practices his craft as a caricaturist by drawing at weddings, bar mitzvahs, parties and corporate events. He recently received recognition by the National Liberty Museum at the Annual Awards Presentation of "Cartoons that Care" Caretoons.