

Stephen J. Silverberg: “How Can I Help?”

By Wendy H. Sheinberg, CELA

The first time I met Steve Silverberg, I was providing ground transportation from the airport for a fellow NAELA member who was returning from NAELA IX in Las Vegas, and that member introduced me to Steve. Steve had his luggage and was walking with the aid of a cane, he was visibly tired, but above all, he was determined to get to his destination and under his own power. That is very Steve. I asked what had happened, and I was told that while on a vacation Steve had been in an accident and had broken his pelvis and sustained other injuries. I was amazed that someone who had been through such a serious accident would get on an airplane and fly across the country to go to a meeting. I thought, “Wow, that is dedication.” That is Steve. He is truly dedicated to this organization and contributes so much to NAELA.

Wendy H. Sheinberg, Esq., is a Certified Elder Law Attorney by the National Elder Law Foundation and a member of the law firm of Davidow, Davidow, Siegel & Stern, LLP. Wendy is a lifelong New Yorker, and she has practiced law in New York since 1992. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys and the proud mother of Kelsey, age 15.

Much More Beneath the Surface

A multidimensional and well-rounded person, Steve's family and personal life are as full and accomplished as his professional life — not an easy task — but Steve does it. Steve may be best known for his offbeat sense of humor and his love of good wine and good barbeque, but there is a lot more to Steve than what is apparent on the surface.

Steve was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., where he lived until he was five years old. From Brooklyn, Steve's family moved to Long Island.

Originally from Poland, both Steve's mother and father survived the concentration camps of the Holocaust. Steve's parents met and were married after the war and, like so many other survivors, they sought to build a new life in America. A relative who was an attorney sponsored their entry to the United States from Rosenberg, Germany, after the war. Later Steve would go to work in his office while in college.

Because of the war, Steve's parents were not able to pursue higher education, but they made sure their son had the opportunity. Steve attended Hartwick College and then Brooklyn Law School. Following law school Steve worked for two of the largest ERISA/pension law firms in New York. Transitioning from the pension arena to Elder Law was natural for Steve. He gets great joy from helping others and has a natural ability to communicate effectively with seniors and put them at ease, even in times of great turmoil.

Steve met his wife Robin in 1969 at synagogue during Yom Kippur services. Steve won Robin over on their first date to a pizza parlor by showing his sophistication and

ordering a Michelob. Steve and Robin married in 1974. They have two sons, Jared, 24, works for BNY Mellon in Manhattan and Scott, 21, who will be graduating from the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations later this year.

Service to NAELA

Steve has been a member of NAELA since 1992. He is a Certified Elder Law Attorney and a member of the Council of Advanced Practitioners. He has served as the Chair of the Tax Section, the Technology Committee and the Task Force on Estate Tax Reform.

In 2003, Steve became a Fellow of the Academy. The award was presented to him in Miami Beach at the Fontainebleau. There, in the middle of all those lawyers, sat a table of older women. Among them was Steve's mother, Helene, and some of her girlfriends. She was so very proud of Steve that day. Watching her son receive the highest honor bestowed by NAELA gave her much *nachas* (Yiddish for pride, joy, pleasure and gratification felt at the accomplishments of loved ones such as children and grandchildren). Steve's joy of making his mother so proud was visible to all in attendance.

Little Known Steve Facts

- Steve is a **Certified Barbeque Judge**.
- Steve has qualified for **Jeopardy**.
- Steve is a talented cook and referred to by some as a **gourmet**.
- Steve is **Jets fan** and season ticket holder.
- Steve has a **vegetable garden**.
- Steve thinks he is in charge but Robin and his assistant Esther really run the show.
- Steve is a **trivia guru**, his knowledge of movies and music is mind boggling.
- Steve is a **Mets fan**.
- Among Steve's favorite movies are *The Battle of Britain* and *The Godfather*.
- Steve can't live without **Comedy Central** and his daily fix of *The Daily Show*.
- Steve loves **new technology**. He was the first on his block to have a cell phone, a Palm Treo, TIVO and GPS and will undoubtedly have any other technological advancement before the rest of us have even heard of it.



Steve Silverberg may be best known for his offbeat sense of humor and his love of good wine and good barbeque, but there is a lot more to Steve than what is apparent on the surface.

A Straight Shooter

A good word to describe Steve is the Yiddish word *mensch*, which translates to a decent human being, a good, honest person, but it really means so much more. To be called a *mensch* is the ultimate compliment you can pay someone in Yiddish. Steve always means well, he lacks the capacity for resentment, retribution or vindictiveness; he harbors no grudges and will help anyone; and he always finds the time to answer a question or give advice. Steve is a straight shooter. He will never cajole you with the company line, he will tell you his honest opinion, and you always know where you stand with Steve.

Another great quality is his openness to other people's ideas. Steve will listen to you, he might not agree with you, but he will listen. Long after the conversation is over he will continue to think about what you said, and he is a big enough person that he will come back and tell you if his position has changed. He will also apologize. It takes a big person to say I am sorry and an even bigger person to understand how important saying I am sorry is. No matter how busy he may be, if Steve thinks an apology is in order, he will take the time to make it.

When I asked Robin what is the best thing about Steve, she said his willingness to help and not to expect anything in return, and that helping gives him joy.

I ask you all to take advantage of having Steve as our president. Get to know him, and you will see that even though he is a big *macher* now (a successful person) he is and always will be a regular guy and a *mensch*. ■