

Meet Kol Emeth Members: Irving Gold & Rivka Sherman-Gold

Family Arriving in Palo Alto

In 1982, Irving Gold and Rivka Sherman-Gold arrived from Israel to Palo Alto with their ten-year old son, Yoram Ron, and five-year old daughter, Donna. Rivka joined the Department of Neurobiology at Stanford University School of Medicine as a postdoctoral fellow, having been awarded the prestigious two-year Dr. Chaim Weizmann postdoctoral fellowship.



Family photo in 1982.

Irving's Education and Career

Irving is an electrical engineer with a B.S.E.E. from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (now NYU) and an M.S.E.E. from the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology (Haifa, Israel). In Israel, Irving worked for Elbit Computers and Telsys. In California, he joined the Silicon Valley high-tech industry in marketing, management, and executive positions at several companies, including Motorola, Matra MHS, and DSP Group.

Rivka's Military Service



Left: Rivka in basic training, cleaning her rifle, a WWII surplus. Right: Rivka in uniform – a corporal in the Armored Corps. The ribbon above the pocket signifies serving in the IDF during the 1967 Six-Day War.

After graduating high school, Rivka enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) even though she was eligible for a waiver from serving in the army because she was raised in a religiously observant family. Rivka believes that it was her patriotic duty and privilege to serve in the IDF, especially because she is a daughter of *Shoah* survivors.

Rivka's Education and Career

After completing her military service, Rivka pursued her academic education. She holds a B.Sc. with Distinction in Chemistry from the Technion, an M.Sc. from the Department of Biophysics and Physiology of the Technion School of Medicine, a Ph.D. in Neurobiology from the Weizmann Institute of Science (Rehovot, Israel), and an MBA from San Jose State University.

Rivka's B.Sc., M.Sc., and Ph.D. research findings were published in scientific journals, and she was awarded excellence prizes for her academic and research achievements at the Technion and the Weizmann Institute.

After completing her postdoctoral research at Stanford, Rivka joined the Bay Area biotechnology industry, initially in R&D at SYVA (the diagnostic division of the pharmaceutical company Syntex), and later in senior positions in business development and management at several companies, including Axon Instruments, where she headed the marketing and technical support department and was the editor of *The Axon Guide for Electrophysiology & Biophysics Laboratory Techniques*; Athena Neurosciences, a pharmaceutical company developing therapies for neurological disorders, where Rivka was responsible for new product evaluations, and establishing collaborations with life-science/pharmaceutical companies. One of these companies was the Irish company Elan, which subsequently acquired Athena.

Rivka then joined Abgenix, a biotech start-up with a novel technology for creating antigen-target specific, fully-human therapeutic antibodies. At Abgenix, Rivka initiated, spearheaded, and managed the negotiations of high-value licensing and collaboration agreements with major pharmaceutical and biotech companies, including Pfizer, Amgen, Schering-Plough, GlaxoSmithKline, Centocor, and Millennium. Abgenix was later acquired by Amgen. Rivka also worked with Israeli, European, and American companies in business development and management in consulting capacities.

Rivka in the Laboratory



Rivka at the Technion in 1968. Note: this photo was taken prior to prohibiting mouth pipetting, which was replaced by pipetting devices.



At the Weizmann Institute in 1980.

Family Background and Early Childhood

Irving and Rivka met at the Technion. Both were born in Europe to religiously observant (“Modern Orthodox”) parents who survived ghettos, forced slave labor camps, extermination camps, and “death marches.” Most of their family members were murdered.

Irving was born in a refugee camp in Germany. When he was two years old his family immigrated to the U.S. and lived in New York City. Rivka was born in Krakow (Poland). Her family immigrated to Israel as soon as they received a permit to leave Communist Poland, in which emigration was restricted and even halted for long time periods. Rivka was 20 months old when the family arrived in Israel in January 1950, the coldest winter ever recorded in Israel (snow in *Tel Aviv!*). After three months in an often-flooded tent camp in *Hadera*, a town south of *Haifa*, the family transferred to a refugee camp, euphemistically called *ma'abara* (transit camp) in *Kiryat Shmuel* (a small town north of *Haifa*), where they lived for three years. The immigrants in this camp were *Shoah* survivors and refugees from Europe, Middle East, and North-Africa.

This refugee camp was previously a British army base and was not suitable for long-term use by families. The family of four (Rivka's brother was born in Israel) lived in one tiny room in a wooden shack surrounded by sand. There was no running water (water was carried in pails from centrally located faucets), no heating, no kitchen, and no indoor bathroom/toilet. There were shortages of food and necessities, and no books or toys. Rivka remembers standing in long food lines with other children, which she thought was fun; she used expired food stamps for her “art projects.” Rivka was four years old when the family moved to a small apartment in *Kiryat Bialik*, a town north of *Haifa*.

Notwithstanding their early childhood harsh conditions, Irving and Rivka received an excellent education in public schools – Irving in New York and Rivka in Israel – and were highly motivated students, encouraged by their parents to excel in school. At age 15, they each decided on their future professions. For Irving it was electrical engineering; for Rivka it was chemistry. They have always been very happy with their education and career decisions, which provided them interesting, varied career opportunities.



This Ten Commandments olive-wood carving was created by Ya'akov Scherman z"l, Rivka's father, for the synagogue he co-founded in Israel, and is dedicated to the memory of his three young sons, murdered in 1942 in the death camp Belzec (Poland) with their mother Sara (Bachner) Scherman, grandmother Rivka Scherman, aunts, uncles, and cousins HY"D.

Joining Kol Emeth



*Yoram's Bar Mitzva –
Reading Torah.*



Donna's Bat Mitzva – seen here left to right: Ron, grandfather Moshe Gold, grandmother Malka Scherman, Donna, Rivka, grandfather Ya'akov Scherman. Irving took the photo.

These photos were taken on a weekday.

Irving and Rivka joined Congregation Kol Emeth shortly after arriving in Palo Alto. Their positive experience at Kol Emeth influenced their decision to stay in Palo Alto. Irving and Rivka appreciate the friendship and support of Rabbis Lewis, Graff, and Booth, and the learning and teaching opportunities at Kol Emeth. Ron and Donna attended Kol Emeth Hebrew School and celebrated their *Bar-Mitzva* and *Bat-Mitzva* at Kol Emeth.

Kol Emeth provides Irving and Rivka a meaningful egalitarian Jewish experience. Over the years, Rivka read Torah and Haftarot and taught classes on Biblical women and other Biblical topics. Her interest in *Torah* and *Haftarah* reading led her to write the book *The Obs and Abs of Torah Reading*, in which the two types of *Kamatz* vowels are explained. Rivka is currently working on an expanded edition of this book. She is also writing stories based on the *Shoah* memoirs and testimonies of her parents and other family members.

Children and Grandchildren

Both Ron and Donna are UCLA graduates. Ron is a pilot at a major US passenger airline, and Donna is an architect with a Master's degree. In 2022, the family celebrated the *Bat-Mitzva* of Donna's eldest daughter at a Modern Orthodox synagogue.

Community Service

Rivka is a volunteer mentor, assisting and advising women and men students and scientists on networking and career options in biomedical sciences and related fields. She was a board member at Meira Academy, the Jewish girls' high school in Palo Alto, where she established and managed a monthly career speakers' program and guided students in advanced-level science projects.

In 1984 Rivka founded AWIS Palo Alto (AWIS PA), the Bay Area chapter of the Association for Women In Science, serving as this chapter's first president. At the time Rivka founded AWIS PA there was no active AWIS chapter in Northern California.

AWIS, a national organization with 30 chapters across the US, was founded in 1971 by three Jewish women scientists with distinguished academic careers: Judith Graham Pool of Stanford University School of Medicine, Neena Schwartz of Northwestern University, and Estelle Ramey of Georgetown University.

In 1985 Rivka was awarded the Syntex Community Service Award for founding AWIS PA. In 2022 Rivka received *The Professor Judith Graham Pool AWIS NCC Award* (Association for Women in Science, Northern California Chapters) for founding the AWIS PA chapter, and for her contributions and dedication to advancing the careers of women scientists.



Did you know that Irving and Rivka met at a dance at the Technion's Student Club? They continue to dance to this very day – ballroom (rhumba and cha-cha are their favorites), line dancing, and disco. They also enjoy the opera and art museums, and are working on their Family Legacy website.

Irving and Rivka are grateful to their parents for teaching them the importance of faith, resilience, perseverance, courage, self-sufficiency, resourcefulness, good deeds, working diligently to achieve worthy goals, and Jewish continuity.

Irving Gold & Rivka Sherman-Gold 2023