

## Bio

### Beyond Chicken Soup: Writing With a Jewish Flavor

During her extensive media career, Helen Zegerman Schwimmer has written about everything from Buicks to babaganooch. She began as a copywriter creating newspaper, radio and television commercials for a variety of clients.

She then went on to write and produce several documentaries including the autobiographical *Miracle on Seabreeze Avenue* for which she received the Women's History Month Video Award. Her Jewish cooking video, *A Taste of Shabbos*, has been acclaimed worldwide for its contribution to promoting Jewish culture. Helen's new book, *Like The Stars of The Heavens*, is an anthology of her popular columns originally published in *The Jewish Press*. She received her B.A. in English from Brooklyn College and has attended the New School and Parsons School of Design. Helen and her husband, Dr. Richard Schwimmer, live in New York.

Inspired by the Shabbos Meal she first experienced in the home of her husband's patients, Rabbi Zushe and Rebbetzin Esther Winner, Helen teamed up with Esther to create *A Taste Of Shabbos*, a sixty minute video that demonstrates how to prepare and serve a Shabbos dinner. But along with the fifteen recipes which include a six-braided challah, baked salmon a la Seabreeze and a chocolate cornucopia filled with rugelach, Esther, aka the kosher Martha Stewart, also explains the traditions that are so meaningful to the entire Shabbos experience. Garnering rave reviews from Scotland to Singapore and from Alaska to Australia, Esther and Helen appeared on several radio and t.v. shows including "Food Talk With Arthur Schwartz" and "Good Day New York" with Donna Hanover and Frank Field. The popularity of Helen and Esther's video gave birth to a motivational seminar, *Life Is Like A Block Of Chocolate*, "which took us on the road and brought us into the homes and synagogues of women who represented the diversity of contemporary Jewish life." During a memorable trip to Los Angeles, the dynamic duo were introduced to Leah Adler, proprietor of the Milky Way Restaurant, who planned to show the video to her son, 'the' Steven Spielberg. "Esther and I never did hear from 'the coast.' But as we traveled from Maine to Florida and from New Jersey to California we did hear from a new generation of women who were eager to reconnect with their roots." When word of Esther's expertise reached England, British Television, in collaboration with PBS, asked her to host a program on Jewish cuisine as part of their multicultural series, *The United Tastes of America*. Helen joined the project as the story editor and food stylist. "As I watched Esther prepare the meal and then light the Shabbos candles," Helen says, "I imagined her taking tiny sparks of Yiddishkeit and fanning them into raging bonfires in millions of homes across America and Europe just as she did one Shabbos night when she reached out to me." Professionally, Helen found herself in the kitchen once again when she collaborated with master chef, Levana Kirschenbaum, to establish the first gourmet Jewish cooking school in New York, Levana's Place at Lincoln Square Synagogue. Helen describes Levana as "An innovative chef who has had an ongoing romance with food. Born and raised in Morocco where she apprenticed at her mother's side, she learned to create exotic dishes that tantalize the senses." This passion carried over to her personal life when the escalating violence against the people of Israel compelled Levana to launch the Million Cookie Project. Her goal was to bake and sell one million cookies to help the victims of terror in Israel. Aided by a phalanx of dedicated volunteers, Levana reached that goal in 2002.

Helen's life took a turn in a new direction when she returned from a solidarity mission to Israel and received a call from Molly Resnick, a veteran journalist with NBC, who is the founder and director of MATCKH, Mothers Against Teaching Children to Kill and Hate.

Since 1998 MATCKH has developed educational programs to inform the public and lobby officials to oppose groups teaching bigotry, hatred and murder to children. To counter the destructive effects of this type of curriculum, MATCKH mobilized children across the country to get involved with the "Kids For Peace" quilt project. By writing letters to Arab children, which were to be gathered together to form a giant good-will message, children would become the messengers of peace.

Helen joined MATCKH and she and Molly Resnick wrote and produced *Creating Peace One Quilt At A Time*. The documentary was endorsed by the Greater New York Board of Jewish Education who mailed copies of the video to all of its member schools with instructions for each school to create its own peace quilt.

Helen, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, was born in a displaced person's camp located on the grounds of the St. Ottilien Monastery in Germany. She weaves together personal vignettes about her parents, her husband and her three children with inspiring stories about luminaries in the fields of medicine, the arts, education, law, religion and the media in her critically acclaimed new book, *Like The Stars of The Heavens*.

### Awards

Women's History Month Video Award (1997) "Miracle on Seabreeze Avenue"

Woman of the Year Award (2001) Project Neshama

Community Service Award (2002) Yeshiva of Ma

## Breaking The Silence Award (2002) Rachel's Children Reclamation Foundation