

Passover greetings help celebrate the season

BY SUSAN B. TAUBER
STAFF WRITER

When Gary Barris goes to his aunt's house next week for his first night of Passover, he's taking a rabbi as his guest.

He's a traditional, kind-looking rabbi, complete with the proper prayer shawl under his shirt, a dark beard and mustache.

He isn't very tall, however. He only weighs 10 inches high.

The rabbi is a soft, stuffed cloth doll that came out of Barris' imagination. The cartoon-like figure is sold in various retail stores in West Bloomfield, Southfield, Bloomfield Hills, Royal Oak and Oak Park.

Barris, 31, is a graduate of West Bloomfield High School

and Oakland University. He's the audiovisual manager at the Novi Hilton hotel.

He also has his own businesses. He videotapes special events, such as weddings and bar/bat mitzvahs and produces documentaries of inspiring life stories. He's taped such celebrities as Kildar Rock and Goldberg, the professional wrestler.

The rabbi doll is also a part of what Barris is.

He named it The Rabbi Says, because the rabbi doll has a colorful greeting card tied around his wrist. People can write different greetings or wishes on it and give it to others as a gift.

Dawn Bowles, owner of Baskets, Buds and Beyond on Commerce Road at the corner of Green Road, is selling The Rabbi Says at her store.

"Gary called me about carrying the doll. I was skeptical at first but when I saw how delightful it is, I agreed to carry it," she said.

The Rabbi Says dolls are displayed "front and center" on her main counter, she said. She only began selling it about a week ago.

"We do a considerable amount of business for Jewish clientele. I think he would be a delightful addition to centerpieces and bouquets," added Dowles.

Barris is marketing the doll right now as a nice hostess gift or table decoration for special feasts, called seders, for Passover. Passover, or Pesach (Pay-sach) as it's called in Hebrew, begins at sundown, Wednesday, April 16.

The eight-night holiday



Gary Barris, creator of The Rabbi Says dolls, prepares to fill orders for the upcoming Passover holiday.

commemorates the liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery in about 1200 BCE and resulted in the exodus of the Jews from Egypt.

The celebration begins with a seder for the first two

nights. The seder is a ceremonial dinner marked by the retelling of the story of the exodus from Egypt through the use of prayers, songs and ceremonial foods.

Also, during the time of Passover, Jews refrain from eating any leavened bread or other foods that contain yeast.

Rabbi Avie Shapiro helped Barris in a cute, respectful way. There were three different prototypes leading up to the final design.

Shapiro works part time at the Edward and Freda Fleishman Residence on the Jewish Community Center campus in West Bloomfield. He's also director of pastoral care for The Jewish Hospice and Chaplaincy Network in Southfield.

Barris met Shapiro while working at Fleishman as a high school student.

"I've known Gary for a long time. He continues to call me with religious questions and I've been glad to help him with this doll," said Shapiro.

Barris and Shapiro have collaborated to write "10 Things You Should Know About Passover" to accompany The Rabbi Says when brought to a seder.

Barris said people can print this list from the Web site: www.therabbisays.com.

"It's a way of educating people," said Shapiro.

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BUSINESS NEWS

Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C. announces another expansion of its Health Care practice group as of April

New arrivals to Foster Swift are highly regarded Health Care Law attorneys Gilbert M. Frimet, Alan T. Rogalski, and Deborah J. Williamson.

Rogalski becomes a shareholder of Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C. and Frimet and Williamson are Of Counsel to the firm.

Frimet began his career in law in 1955 after graduating from Wayne State University Law School.

His background includes membership in the State Bar of Michigan, its Health Care Law Section, Senior Lawyers Section, and Mediation Section, as well as the American Health Lawyers Association.

Rogalski has practiced in the area of Health Care Law for over a decade.

He graduated from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law in 1990 and holds a degree from Wayne State University in the field of Pharmacy. Rogalski became a licensed Pharmacist in Michigan in 1984.

He is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, its Health Care Law Section, the American Bar Association, the American Health Lawyers Association, South Eastern Michigan Society of Hospital Pharmacists and he is an American Society of Pharmacy Law Fellow.

Williamson, with a specialty in Health Care Law, graduated from Michigan State University's Detroit College of Law, magna cum laude, with the distinctions of Mortar Board and Phi Beta Kappa. She is a published author and is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, its Health Care Law Section, and the American Health Lawyers Association.

With offices in Farmington Hills, Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing, the law firm of Foster, Swift, Collins and Smith, P.C. provides general, local and special counsel to businesses and individuals throughout Michigan.

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