

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Established 1980



Summer 2003

APRIL ANNUAL GATHERING A HUGE SUCCESS

The 24th Annual Gathering of the Texas Jewish Historical Society held in Dallas April 25 – 27 was by all accounts a success. Gladys Leff and her committee did an outstanding job, and I wish to thank them again for all of their hard work.

The Hilton Hotel staff went out of their way to make our stay enjoyable. I received many favorable comments about the hotel and the high quality of food at our meals.

We attended Friday night services at Temple EmanuEl and yours truly and wife were honored to be invited to participate in the service. Saturday morning, we were happy to have Dallas Mayor Laura Miller take time out of her busy schedule to be our Breakfast Speaker. She charmed us all! She won re-election the following week, and will serve as Mayor of the City of Dallas for a four-year term.

Allan and Cynthia Mondell presented their film, "Legacy of the Zale Family." This true rags-to-riches story culminated in the Zale Foundation, which continues the philanthropy of the Zale family. Lunch was highlighted by Dr. W. David Nelson's delightful talk on the Parallels between Ancient and Modern Judaism.

(See Gathering, page 6)

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TJHS Executive Board 2003-2004, elected at the Annual Gathering in Dallas (left to right): Selma Mantel, Corresponding Secretary; Beverly Beck Trachtenberg, VP; Ben Pfeffer, Treasurer; Marvin Rich, VP; Blanche Sheiness, Historian; Charles B. Hart, President; Mitzi Milstein, VP; Barbara Rosenberg, Recording Secretary; Ima Joy Gandler, Archivist; Howard "Rusty" Milstein, Parliamentarian.

Turn to pages 6-7 for more details regarding the Texas Jewish Historical Society's Annual Gathering. A photo spread depicting many of the April 25-27 weekend events can be found on pages 12-13.



August 1st Is Deadline To Apply for Grants

The Southern Jewish Historical Society supports research in the field of Southern Jewish history in a variety of ways. One way is through issuing grants to individuals involved in qualifying projects. Grants are intended to facilitate the completion of projects relevant to Jewish history in the Southern United States. Projects may include publication of books or exhibit catalogs, or preparation of exhibit modules. Grants may not be used to fund research or travel. The SJHS allocates \$4,500 among grant recipients each year.

The application deadline is August 1, 2003. For more information regarding the grants program and guidelines for submitting proposals, visit the society's website at www.jewishsouth.org or contact Grants Committee Chairman Scott Langston, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Southwest Baptist University, 1600 University Ave., Bolivar, MO 65613, SLangsto@sbuniv.edu, 417-328-1742.

TJHS' HOLLACE WEINER AWARDED JEWISH WOMEN'S ARCHIVES RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

TJHS Board Member Hollace Weiner of Fort Worth is one of six recipients of the Jewish Women's Archives inaugural "Jewish Women Making Community" 2003 research fellowships. Mrs. Weiner's proposal was selected after a rigorous evaluation process conducted with the assistance of eight members of the Jewish Women's Archives Academic Advisory Council.

According to Historian in Residence Dr. Karla Goldman, Mrs. Weiner and the other five scholars awarded fellowships will form the basis for a proposed academic conference and a published volume sponsored by JWA. The conference and resulting book, illuminating the nature of women's contributions to the distinctive communities that have defined American Jewish life, are slated to be among the major scholarly contributions to emerge from the celebration of the 350th anniversary celebration of Jewish communal life in North America in 2004-2005. JWA's effort is to ensure that one legacy of the anniversary will be a historical narrative that reflects the richness and diversity of the North American Jewish experience.

Acceptance of the fellowship includes a commitment to submitting a research essay by March 15, 2004, attending any conference that JWA may plan in which such papers may be presented and discussed, and revising the paper for eventual publication. JWA will provide an additional \$500 stipend to the appropriate archive. Congratulations to Hollace Weiner for her inclusion in what promises to be an exciting community of scholars exploring the meaning of community in American Jewish life.

Have you visited the TJHS web site?

Check it out at <http://www.txjhs.org>

Email: txjhs@yahoo.com



Recipients of JWA "Making Community" Fellowships Announced May 2003

The Jewish Women's Archive received 18 full research proposals for JWA's Jewish Women Making Community fellowships focusing on topics drawn from a broad geographical range including Colorado, Maine, New Mexico, California, Canada, New York, Rhode Island, Illinois, Florida, Missouri, Oregon, Virginia and Texas.

Nine candidates already have doctorates. A number of others are experienced writers. With the help of eight members of the Academic Advisory Council, six proposals were selected for funding in 2003.

As reported on the previous page, one recipient is Mrs. Hollace Ava Weiner, writer, M.A. student, University of Texas at Arlington, "The Jewish Junior League: The 101-Year Rise and Demise of the Fort Worth, Texas Section of the NCJW, 1901-2002."

Other recipients include Dr. Jeanne Abrams, Associate Professor, Penrose Library, University of Denver Director, Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical

Society and Beck Archives, "Bountiful Ladies: How Early Jewish Women Shaped Philanthropy in Denver."

Aleisa Fishman, Ph.D. student, American University, "Jewish Women Making Community in Suburbia: Nassau County, NY 1946-1960."

Dr. Adele Hast, Scholar in Residence, The Newberry Library, A Study of Chicago's Women's Aid.

Mary Ann Irwin, Instructor, Diablo Valley College, Chabot College, "Jealous of Their Powers," The Emanu-El Sisterhood for Personal Service and the Jewish Center Movement in San Francisco.

Barb Schober, Ph.D. student, University of British Columbia, A Study of the Vancouver, British Columbia Section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

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If your address, telephone number or area code have changed, or if you would like a change made to your mailing label, please tell us.

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DECADES OF EXPERIENCE HAVE EARNED PHILIP BRIN UNIVERSAL RESPECT

By Mike Elswick

(Reprinted with permission, Longview News-Journal, Feb. 2003)

As a student of law for almost eight decades, Jewish resident Philip Brin still draws the respect and admiration of his fellow attorneys.

"He's a legal icon, a lawyer's lawyer who has forgotten more law than most of us ever knew," says Peppy Blount, himself a longtime Longview attorney. "He's still very well respected by lawyers, judges and others in the profession from throughout the state and nation. On top of that, he's a marvelous person."

Brin, who soon will turn 90, arrived in Longview in 1935 in the middle of the Great Depression. He was just a few months out of the University of Texas Law School.

His original intent was to become an engineer, so he enrolled at Texas A&M University where soon he realized he could not read a slide rule or do mechanical drawing.

"Most of us drift in life, and I did," Brin said. But he found his calling at the UT law school. He returned to his native Terrell directly out of school, but after two months without a single paying client, he decided to move to Longview where things were happening.

"Here in Longview, they were having an oil boom," Brin said. He wrote to Angus Wynn —whom Brin called one of the greatest trial lawyers ever — to seek a job in Wynn's Longview offices. Brin's initial job was looking up information in law books for the firm's more experienced attorneys. While some might have found that research boring, Brin found a labor of love and said those oil boom years were good ones to be learning the legal profession.

"It was an exciting time," he said. "And I was able to learn a lot by observing and doing. Eventually, I got a handle on some small jobs."

Even in the Gregg County boom years of the 1930s, it was difficult to find clients with cash to pay for legal services, Brin said. "The big hope was to get a contingency on an oil lease that would do good," he said. "People just didn't have money, so damage suits, except against the railroads, weren't lucrative."

Brin got experience in the energy business learning about property titles, royalty agreements and other details tied to the oil business such as getting legal papers through the Texas Railroad Commission.

He said the oil industry provided the client base for many local attorneys over the years. As oil was discovered on the property of poor East Texans, the legal community discovered many property titles were in bad shape.

"Things were a mess," Brin said. That led to big oil companies arriving with highly paid legal staffs attempting to take advantage of the situation. In some cases a property owner's primary legal right to property they and their families had worked for for years was the simple fact that they had possession. In spite of that, Brin said their rights prevailed.

"I don't recall one old-timer that ever lost their land," Brin said. But he does recall a time when there was no air conditioning at the Gregg County Courthouse. ►

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